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Secular and Islamic Schooling in Senegal: Reconfiguring Knowledge and Opportunity in  
Uncertain Times

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a dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the  
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## Abstract

### Secular and Islamic Schooling in Senegal: Reconfiguring Knowledge and Opportunity in Uncertain Times

By Ana E. Schaller de la Cova

This dissertation examines how Islamic and secular schooling figure into youths' negotiations of modern personhood and the idiosyncrasies and challenges of contemporary Senegalese life. It is based on 22 months of field research in Dakar, Senegal and was funded by the Social Science Research Council, the American Council of Learned Societies, and Emory University (the Graduate School Fund for Internationalization and the African Studies Association). Drawing from Marxist educational theory, the dissertation suggests that contemporary education serves both to potentially enable young people in Senegal and as a source of much frustration and disillusionment. This lived reality of schooling undercuts state and international development discourse, which claim that education is the key to national prosperity and to the realization of people's personal goals for success.

The project's two Islamic and public school case studies are informed by data collected from students' households and their urban neighborhoods. This ethnographic data is complemented and contextualized by archival research into the development of local Islamic and secular schools, media-based analysis of the Senegalese state and public discourse, and anthropological literature on African urbanity, globalization, and modernity. The goal of this study is to examine the reciprocal influence of school socialization and daily living—with particular attention to dynamics of gender, birth order, and household composition with regard to power and agency—in the formation and pursuit of projects of the self.

It argues that urban Senegalese youth attempt to reconcile the disjuncture between conventional belief and their ambitions, on the one hand, with that of their economically-strained circumstances, on the other, by engaging in making do and by cultivating particular public personae. The term "making do" refers to a range of non-mainstream, improvisational, and creative practices people employ to pragmatically negotiate and manage in difficult conditions. While this project examines school choices within the context of Senegalese understandings of the person, it speaks to larger issues about how to deal with changing conceptions and practices of knowledge in the modern world that concern us all.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines how tensions between education and economic instability in urban Senegal have emerged in the discursive practices of classrooms among students, teachers, and administrators, in family settings, and in the post-colonial public sphere. Informed by practice theory and critical approaches to the anthropology of education, I examine how changing epistemologies with regard to both Islamic and secular schools affect youths' engagements with these formal institutions of learning, and, for some, prompt a turn toward more pragmatic managing efforts in their quest to survive and become socially-valued persons.

In the modern age, the transformative power of education is a credo held and asserted by people across a wide political spectrum. Leftist theorists like Paolo Freire (1970) hold that if we could only have the right kind of education, namely a participatory, dialogic, "problem-posing" pedagogy, the oppressed of this world would be capable of self-liberation, and could become fully human subjects on the pathway to plenitude. Liberal and humanist scholars challenge their readers to think about the possibilities of an educational system rooted in local systems of value and in creative, popular participation rather than an educational system that reinforces hierarchies and dominant canons.

In the United States, mainstream political debate has, in the past years, focused on methods by which all schools might attain certain standards of achievement and what to do about institutions that fail to achieve such standards. Furthermore, schools are seen as the key to a healthy national economic future in a post-industrial United States that faces tough economic competition from abroad, particularly fast-growing Asian nations like China and India. The

Obama administration states; “Our nation’s economic competitiveness and the path to the American Dream depend on providing every child with an education that will enable them to succeed in a global economy that is predicated on knowledge and innovation,” (The White House 2010). In this respect, the current administration’s educational agenda largely reflects those of previous administrations. The fact that American students consistently perform at a level inferior to those of other First World nations seems to be yet another indication of the U.S.’s decline.

In Senegal, state messages promote ideas about the dynamic between education and economic success similar to these notions of education for international competition that dominate American political discourse. And while there is no exact equivalent to the “American dream”, proximate jingoistic versions under the tenure of president Abdoulaye Wade (2000-2012) include “*le Sénégal qui gagne*” (a winning Senegal) and the exhortation “you must work, work a lot, always work, and work some more.”<sup>1</sup> The state’s largely instrumentalist view of education casts schooling as a technical endeavor that prepares people for their role in the national labor force and the global economy in a way that will transform Senegal into a prosperous, developed nation. This way of thinking has roots in the approaches of Wade’s predecessors, who oversaw the birth of the nation following the end of colonial period, and, concurrently, the exodus of an elite class of educated whites.<sup>2</sup>

Léopold Sédar Senghor, the first Senegalese president (1960-1981), led the construction of a highly centralized state dominated by older, Western-educated elites (the *évolué* and *originnaire* classes), whose “messianic mission” of modernization and nation building were to be realized in large part through education and the invention of national cultural reference points

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<sup>1</sup> *Il faut travailler, beaucoup travailler, toujours travailler, et encore travailler.*

<sup>2</sup> The numbers of colonial settlers in Senegal and other French territories in the AOF and AEF were significantly smaller than that of former Anglophone colonies in eastern and southern Africa. See Rita Cruise O’Brien (1972) for a discussion of French in Senegal before and after independence.

(Diouf 1993).<sup>3</sup> Abdou Diouf, Senghor's oft-labeled "technocrat" successor (1981-2000) spoke of "betting" on a battle for development, which he suggested would be won through a "national jump start", of which education reform was a fundamental part (Diop and Diouf 1990). This approach to education is also echoed by local branches of the international development community.<sup>4</sup> For example, at the 2005 award ceremony of a USAID-sponsored scholarship fund for high school girls in three outlying regions,<sup>5</sup> then-U.S. Ambassador Richard Allan remarked in the local press, "successful across-the-board education of girls represents the most important way to combat inequities in poor areas and make development profitable," (Mane 2005a).

In this respect, functionalist sociological research (Durkheim 1956, Parsons 1961) and modernization theory's (Inkeles and Smith 1974) understandings of education have had a profound influence on how education is popularly understood and worked upon by policy makers and political actors in the global public sphere. Functionalism suggests that educational institutions have a positive influence on social development and the development of common social values and cohesion through the work and achievements of students. Modernization theory argues that education and economic development and modernization are closely connected; the development of mass school systems is an important contributing factor in economic growth and successful development projects. This phenomenon supports Pablo Escobar's (1995) suggestion that development discourse has attained a place of certainty in the global social imaginary. While different programs and approaches can be discussed and

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<sup>3</sup> At the same time, this new post-colonial state's policies were designed to demobilize ordinary people and were hostile to the younger class of university educated youth, whose voices represented a challenge to their power. Reforms in the 1970s and late 80s/early 90s have prompted some "opening" of space to political negotiation and contestation by Senegalese citizens, but this continues to be an important point of tension between people and the state in Senegal, as I discuss further in Chapter Six.

<sup>4</sup> This is not to suggest that there isn't tension or disagreements over educational agendas and projects between the Senegalese government, on the one hand, and international organizations, on the other.

<sup>5</sup> Fatick, which is a central Atlantic region, and Tambacounda and Kolda, which lie in the southeast part of the county, just north and south of the Gambia, respectively.

disagreed upon—and this is an important point in terms of the extent to which Wade sought to incorporate Islamic schooling into his vision of an educated, productive youth and thus, new Senegalese nation in a way that differed from the approach of international development organizations<sup>6</sup>—the underlying global assumption is that “the fact of development itself, and the need for it, could not be doubted,” (1995: 5).

### *The Scholarship of Schooling*

Critical studies of education emerging in the 1970s (c.f. Althusser 1971, Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, Bowles and Gintis 1976, Carnoy 1974, Willis 1981) have cast modern education in a more problematic light than their intellectual predecessors and the contemporary political class. This turn reflects the understandings of many people around the world whose concerns are not visible in mainstream political and institutional discourse on education. In addition, this critical understanding of education elucidates the very real ways in which schooling is a key part of the structure and exercise of power and hegemony in modern capitalist societies. Early works in this new sociology of education pointed to the ways in which schools serve to reproduce and reinforce existing class hierarchies. That we, as the general public, think that schools enable upward mobility, through people’s acquisition of new knowledge and skills and the achievement of diplomas, is an important part of this obfuscating illusion, these scholars argue. The meritocratic, liberal discourse in and around schools has helped to legitimate unequal outcomes of achievement. Research that followed in subsequent decades looked at how, through their practices, educational actors have interacted with and even resisted the forces of cultural reproduction (Apple and Weis 1983, Hall 1993, Yon 2000). School, these scholars concluded, is

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<sup>6</sup> Wade’s own hybrid vision of the Senegalese modern draws on Islamic religious identity, specifically Mouride identity, to express a relationship between local cultural history and potential national development.

most decidedly a contradictory resource and a site in which persons are not only culturally produced, but also act as cultural producers (Levinson 1996).

It is worth noting that much of Bourdieu's work and early Marxist informed studies of schooling have taken place largely in the West or in indigenous communities within Western political borders. In what ways, then, could their work inform research in other world areas? In the past, much of anthropological educational research in non-Western contexts has focused on the role of schools in processes of cultural transmission within a kind of polarized tradition-modernity dichotomy. As put by Douglas Foley (1977: 314), these works essentially seek to understand "the degree to which modern, Western schools create either cultural continuity or discontinuity through socialization or enculturation." In many ways, this dualist orientation also reflects some of the very earliest concerns of Africanist research, as anthropologists in Southern Africa and parts of Western Africa examined the phenomenon of urban migration under colonial rule and the formation of towns and small cities (c.f. Epstein 1964, Gluckman 1961, Little 1957, Mitchell 1956). One might also argue, following John Ogbu (1981: 7), that dualist thinking reflects the strong and enduring influence of the culture and personality school on the anthropology of education, such that education is understood primarily through the lens of cultural transmission and enculturation and is cast "a social problem for natives in colonial and trust territories and for immigrants and ethnic and racial minorities in their own countries".

In some respects, this dissertation engages in these long-asked questions about what kinds of people contemporary schools are trying to create, and to what extent this is commensurate with the kinds of socialization that occur in the home and with regard to local historically-important ideas of the person. Yet it goes beyond this dichotomy. I draw from anthropological re-workings of the culture concept of the past several decades that emphasize "the cultural" instead of cultures as bounded, internally-homogenous, and discreet entities (Fox 1991). This important turn in the

discipline casts culture as something both public and private, individual and collective. Here, culture is something that continually changes and is transformed, even when it may appear on the surface as if the status quo is being maintained. Within the anthropology of education, recent research has been influenced by the discipline's increased attention to the macro and micro politics of globalization, de-territorialization, hybridity and the ways in which the postmodern turn has recast how anthropologists—working on all manner of subjects—understand our fieldsites and interlocutors. For example, Daniel Yon's (2000) research in an urban Toronto high school reveals in concrete ways how people embody multiple subjectivities, which each may come to the fore in different social contexts. In this post-industrial, multi-ethnic Canada, Yon argues that “blackness” and “whiteness” for these young students are made up of a complex range of subject positions, despite their popular representations as unitary sameness. As such, it is not simply reductive to talk about to what extent Western schooling has or has not “penetrated” the “rural hinterlands” of one “developing nation-state” or another. Though this dualist thinking might be the very sorts of ways local actors use to describe and reflect upon their reality, it largely misrepresents the processes at work.

In the following dissertation, I will use these critical perspectives on education to inform the data I have gathered in contemporary urban Senegal, where, I suggest, education works both as an enabler and thwarting disillusioner of young people.<sup>7</sup> On one hand, school authorities and parents talk about school as the key to the future; “School is important to being successful, to having something,” remarked one suburban Dakar mother, a comment that echoed throughout my fieldwork, repeated by my parents, educators, political actors, the media, and by some students, as well. On the other hand, many students expressed ambivalence toward school and even

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<sup>7</sup> This contradictory duality is not restricted to schooling; in her Ph.D. dissertation on youth style and commodity consumption in Senegal, Suzanne Scheld (2003: v) suggests that “youth are liberated and oppressed by clothing consumption in the current context of globalization.”

profound disappointment. For example, a university student lamented to me, “I don’t believe in school anymore...It doesn’t work, one treads water and doesn’t go anywhere. One can study for years and not go anywhere.” Likewise, on national television, the former education minister Souleymane Ndiaye argued, “A diploma no longer ensures a well-paying job.”<sup>8</sup> These contradictory and competing natures of modern state schooling frustrate and alienate students. Most of these young people do not see their aspirations realized in the globalized urban spaces and the resource-strained family environments in which they reside. Their lived realities contradict state and international discourses on development, which claim education provides for the achievement of personal and national success.

In this way, Senegalese youth have much in common with young people in societies around the world, whose education levels and access to education have increased, but not their employment. Cracks in this culturally pervasive narrative of “education=success” are felt by generations of young people in diverse locations around the world, from England (Willis 1981) to Ethiopia (Mains 2007), and India (Jeffrey 2010) to Kenya (Parkin 1975) and Madagascar (Sharp 2002). In urban Ethiopia, Daniel Mains (2007: 666) describes this as a phenomenon of neoliberal African life, in which expectations are not actualized, and enduring narratives of progress do not become reality—there, expectation and experience never meet.

Importantly, Senegalese Islamic schools are also implicated in these modern dilemmas of personhood and existence/subsistence. The population of this officially secular nation is over 90% Muslim, most of whom belong to one of three main Sufi orders; the Qadiriyya, the Tijaniyya, and the Mouridiyya. Islamic schools constitute the first formal institutions of learning in the area and were known as *daaras*. Historically, *daaras* have had a very different goal than Western-style schools; namely, to create ostensibly Muslim persons. Islamic schools must now

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<sup>8</sup> *Le diplôme n’assure plus un emploi bien énuméré*. Souleymane Ndiaye on *La Palabre*, RTS, March 30, 2005.



do so in an environment in which social and cultural roles and economic structures are changing and realigning in ways that trouble their instruction. Efforts to reform and “modernize” have created a new motley group of private Islamically-based educational institutions, known locally as Franco-Arabe schools. However, the emergence of these hybrid institutions, which continue to exist alongside historically all-male, esoteric *daaras*, has not brought about an *en masse* abandonment of traditional public schools. Further, under the Wade administration, several new points of educational policy have been articulated which trouble long-standing divisions between the public secular educational sphere—the domain of the state—and private Islamic education.

This dissertation examines how lower middle-class and working-class youth in Dakar, who attend or have attended these public secular and private religious schools, try to negotiate the idiosyncrasies and challenges of contemporary Senegalese life. In so doing, it looks at the ways in which schooling and knowledge—both Islamic and secular—figure into young people’s projects of the self and their negotiations of modern personhood. In it, I will argue that Senegalese youth attempt to reconcile the disjuncture between their ambitions and desires with that of contemporary reality by engaging in making do (*góorgóorlu* in Wolof) and by relying on the reputational politics of seeming or *paraître* (which entails displays of wealth, status, and piety) rather than being or *être* (in which desires for status and wealth are actually realized).

Making do—in all its myriad forms—informs contemporary theories of culture. First, an examination of these pragmatic managing strategies links up with James Ferguson’s (1999) emphasis on culture as style that emerged from his work on modernity and decline in the Zambian Copperbelt. By “style”, Ferguson means the material practices and performative capacities that hold ideological significance with regard to identity and systems of social relations, which are continually produced in relation to each other. Here, he draws upon Hebdidge’s (1987 [1979]) research on youth styles in Britain, which pointed to the importance of

style as a signifying practice. Early urban African ethnography also looked at the relationship of style to identity and culture change (as people moved from rural farming communities to growing cities), and the extent to which actors consciously used style in their social interactions. The importance of style as constituent of and a crucible for modern personhood and social life, more broadly, is a point examined by a range of prominent social theorists and ethnographers over the past several decades (c.f. Appadurai 1996, Bourdieu 1984, Giddens 1991). This includes the linguistic forms and modes that perform, signal, and communicate modern social identities in specific world contexts (c.f. Spitulnik 2002a).

The school is an important site for the construction and performance of our stylized selves, but in a way that reflects its institutional hierarchies and the social and economic differentiation of the larger world of which it is a part. As Wendy Luttrell (1996: 94) notes, “Schools are...places where certain styles of selves and knowledge are authorized amidst race, class, and gender inequalities.” Moreover, being an “educated” person, or the experience of particular genres of education—such as *daaras*, Franco-Arabe schools, Islamic institutes, or more standardized, mass forms of public secular education—in a given cultural context is itself a certain style. And the choice and usage of particular styles of discourse in the classroom help construct a linguistic habitus for students and teachers that reproduce a system of social differences distinguishing “educated” persons from others (Bourdieu 1991). The cultural capital education affords its attendees, as Bourdieu (1998) suggests, is connected to other forms of capital. In some contexts (such as 20<sup>th</sup> century Senegal in the pre-independence period), academic capital may lend itself to the acquisition of political and economic capital, but in other contexts (like contemporary French and American academia), it may not. The gap that often emerges between these different types of capital (as well as the exclusion from some) give rise to

a sense of alienation, frustration and managing efforts of bricolage and making do that are designed to fill such gaps.<sup>9</sup>

Terms like making do and managing indicate a range of practices, often non-mainstream, ad hoc, and creative, in which people engage order to survive the difficult and contradictory situations that characterize post-colonial Senegalese urban life. These improvisational “acts of survival” are common in Senegal, especially for young people, for whom, “making do is the rule”<sup>10</sup> (Diop 2002: 82). Youth’s participation these improvisational strategies reflect an important tension on several levels between the normal and the exceptional, majority and minority, and the dominant and the marginal. Due to the nature of fertility and life expectancy rates, people under the age of 20 make up the majority of the Senegalese population, yet as a rule, youth have little social, cultural or economic power relative to adults, and women relative to men. Society places great importance upon convention and cultural routines, and power is concentrated in the hands of elders and elites and an increasingly corrupt state of empty promises (both under the tenure of Diouf’s Socialist and Wade’s PDS<sup>11</sup> parties). Likewise, making do and managing strategies are pervasive ways of being, but take place on the margins, in the robust informal sector of (sub)urban Senegal and in rural, agricultural communities struggling to deal with the exodus of residents to the city and the precariousness of farming when water and loans are scarce and market prices unstable.

Paul Willis (1981), in his landmark study of working-class young men, or “lads”, in British schools, looked at culture as a performative style and practice. He asked how lads’ lifestyle, given that it was so antagonistic to British social structure of the day, ended up

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<sup>9</sup> Likewise, there exists an important gap between the demographic weight or presence of young people in Senegalese society and their social, economic and political weight.

<sup>10</sup> *Pour les jeunes, la règle est la débrouille...*

<sup>11</sup> Parti Démocratique Sénégalais.

reproducing those same structures, rather than liberating them from it. My questions about youths' creative efforts at getting by in a 21<sup>st</sup> century globalized postcolony link up to Willis' query about the lads' fate in 1970s post-industrial Britain. I want to examine whether *góorgóorluisme*, which is the most prominent local term for such managing strategies, truly signals alternative ways of being for young men and women—a utopian rewriting of social norms—or if it simply ends up buying back into the dominant episteme of social hierarchy, convention (including strong age-based and gender inequality), and hard work. Does it, or could it, manage to lift what Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) call the meritocratic mask of modern education?

In addition, I aim to look at the potential future implications for the uneasy status of schooling and knowledge in the country. Are public school reforms a solution that would enable young people to break out of this system of reproduction? Joel Samoff (1999), a researcher in comparative African education, argues that it is falsely assumed that modifying the content or type of education will increase graduates' employability. He suggests that young people's frustration in not finding work is primarily an issue of job creation and economy and not education, per se. As such, this disjuncture could breed further tension between the state and society in Senegal. Might public secular schools, particular those in rural areas, be “de-skilling” (c.f. Rival 1996) their students? How are recent evolutions in Islamic schooling—the monetarization and increasing precariousness of *daaras*, the growth of co-ed neighborhood Franco-Arabe schools, and the incorporation of religious education in public schools—changing the place of religion in Senegalese young peoples' projects of the self? These are some of the further questions this dissertation aims to engage.

### *Study Design and Location*

My interest in the role of education in the shaping of selves goes back to work I conducted as an undergraduate into the transformations of all-male Qur'anic schools, or *daaras*, in Senegal in 1999 and 2000. My interest in the *daaras* had been initially sparked by the close relationship I formed with a *taalibe* (Sufi disciple and student) who begged in and around the upper middle-class neighborhood Dakar where I had a host family. This young boy's friendly openness and resourceful determination touched me deeply and made me curious to learn more about this very different system of learning and about the experiences of *taalibes* around the country. When I left Dakar to begin classes at the second national university, the Université Gaston Berger of Saint-Louis, I continued in this vein. Most of my fieldwork for that project took place in the small villages that lie around the Université Gaston Berger, situated on dry sandy terrain just ten miles east of Saint-Louis, and in the damp old city itself, the former colonial capital of French West Africa, whose crumbling buildings and empty downtown streets serve to constantly remind residents and visitors alike that its glory days have passed. There, I sat in on classes at several boarding schools run by Haalpulaar'en marabouts and a Franco-Arabe day school patronized by the university professors' children. My undergraduate work analyzed the transformation of *daaras* as they became further integrated into a monetarized, urbanized nation-state in the decades following independence and how that affected the day-to-day experiences of their students.

When I returned to Senegal several years later for further language training and pilot studies, I felt discouraged from the possibility of trying to conduct a large-scale study of *taalibes*. As a young white woman, gaining access to marabouts and their schools on a wide-scale in Dakar was problematic. From an emotional standpoint, I was also not sure if I was capable of conducting an entire dissertation study on the subject of *taalibes*' schooling. Moreover, I was

increasingly interested in how the difficulties of *taalibes* connected to those of public school students; two categories of young people, whom, on the surface, seemed to have little in common with each other.

Public school students, unlike most *taalibes*, lived at home with their families. They attended school each day fully clothed, their supplies in tow, pockets jingling with coins they had been given to buy a snack at the corner *boutique* or from a lady who hawked them at the school gates. *Taalibes*, on the other hand, spent several hours a day begging for money in the neighborhood in order to give these funds to their marabout, the religious guide and scholar whose home served as an urban *daara*. They did not wear lace up sneakers or clean, pressed shirts, but rather walked around barefoot, or in beat up plastic sandals, wearing an assortment of thin, oversized, and tattered clothing.

I could go on in this vein, evoking the contrasts between *taalibes* and their peers, but further time in Senegal made me think that these differences between *taalibes* and public school students, while important, were also somewhat misleading in terms of the larger picture of education and knowledge practices in the country. Over the summers of 2002 and 2003, I lived in a suburban Dakar household where several young men and women in their twenties, all of whom who were born and had grown up outside of the city, were attempting to build a professional career for themselves or were in the process of making decisions about post-secondary education and how it might fit in with their hopes for their future and their present capacities. Several of these friends who had attended university struggled with a lack of opportunities for employment that would be in any way commensurate with their level of schooling or the type of studies that they had pursued. My theoretical assumption at the time was that much of their struggles had to do with how the inherited colonial school system had been incorporated historically into the nation-state at independence, and then again in the 1980s under

structural adjustment, and with changing values of knowledge tied to capitalist globalization. I felt the stories of secular and religious school students were in fact parts of a larger, diachronic whole: that whole being the changing episteme of knowledge practices in this part of West Africa over the past several decades. I wanted to better understand how schooling and ways of being in the recent Senegalese past are maintained, transformed, and re-appropriated in present-day politics of knowledge and personhood. Though I was highly motivated to study this cardinal issue that seemed to touch almost everyone I was in contact with in Senegal, it also seemed to me that such a project might make some compelling contributions to a larger global context in which we speak a lot about development and education but seem to understand it little.

As such, I designed an ethnographic study with a strong historical component, focused on public schools and a hybrid kind of Islamic schools referred to locally as *écoles franco-arabes*. Although I had initially hoped to include *daaras* in comparison with the other two schools, ultimately, I opted not to include them in my dissertation research, for the reasons of access and feasibility I discussed above. Moreover, while attending a *daara* in Dakar or elsewhere remains a prevalent choice for boys from some of the rural areas of Senegal and bordering regions of Guinea and Guinea-Bissau and a formative life experience, now the vast majority of Senegalese children, rural and urban, attend either private co-ed Franco-Arabe schools or public secular schools like those that were the focus of my field research.

The study took place over a 22 month period, from February 2005 to December 2006. It was comprised of several months of participant observation and interviews with students and teachers in a public junior high school and small Franco-Arabe school in the suburban Dakar neighborhood of Parcelles Assainies, participant observation and interviews with a smaller subset of students and their families at home and in neighborhood spaces, historical research into the local archives documenting Islamic and secular schooling initiatives during the colonial period,

and a popular culture-media component that examined a range of issues relating to schooling, religion, youth, gender relations, family life, success, work, migration, and politics. My research was conducted in French and Wolof and also relied upon my ability to read Arabic and to use French and Wolof interchangeably and somewhat simultaneously in the heteroglossic code of “urban” or “Dakar” Wolof (c.f. Auzanneau 2001, Mc Laughlin 2001, Swigart 1994). The archives were the only exclusively French language context of my research; public schools and mainstream media in Senegal are primarily French-speaking with some Wolof usage, Islamic schools are Wolof-speaking with Arabic as a written language, and the family, neighborhood, and popular culture spaces in Parcelles and elsewhere in the city are mainly Wolof-speaking (as the national lingua franca) with the addition of several national languages such as Pulaar and Diola/Jola.

Age group is a salient category in Senegalese social relations and an important part of my study. However, the significance of age varies across school contexts. Many parents send their children to Franco-Arabe school for a preschool-type education prior to obtaining the age of enrollment for elementary school (usually around age 6 or 7), or delay their enrollment in public school for a few years to have them continue with Islamically-based schooling. The Franco-Arabe school at which I conducted research had two classes—a much larger one made up of several dozen children who ranged in age from about 3 to 10, and another smaller class of students between the ages of 10 and 15 or 16. The class of older students, then, represented those who had essentially opted out of the public school track in favor of private religious education. In that their presence at the Franco-Arabe school indicated a clear choice of that school track over the public school one, I chose to work with a class of young adolescent students (ages 12-16) in the Franco-Arabe school and a public junior high school cohort of similar age.



Early adolescence is an important time of transition and reflection for young people in Senegal. In the United States, concerns about dropping out or leaving school typically involve high-school age youth, whereas in Senegal, junior high school (which comprises 4 years/grade levels) is a seminal point at which many students (together with their parents) begin to reflect upon and make decisions about whether or not to continue their education. For example, if the children in the cohort of public school students' with whom I conducted research would finish their junior high education (at the point of my research they were in their second year of a four year program), they would be more educated than most of their parents,<sup>12</sup> whose schooling had included elementary school and perhaps a few years of junior high school before dropping out.

Further, the decrease in the number of civil service positions prompted by structural adjustment policies' austerity measures and a changing job market has also put into question, for many, the import of continuing one's public school education.<sup>13</sup> In the first two decades following independence, well-paid positions in the civil service could be obtained with just a junior high school diploma. Now, young people with diplomas (whether junior high, high school or college) constitute an important portion of the unemployed, a phenomenon not in the least restricted to Senegal. In leaving public school, these young adolescents might opt for vocational education or apprenticeships, wage-earning opportunities, household work, marriage, or travel.

The schools in which I conducted research were both located in the Dakar neighborhood of Parcelles Assainies. During the summers of 2002 and 2003, while conducting pilot research and language study, I lived with a family in the neighborhood whose eldest son attended the junior high school and whose third born son attended the Franco-Arabe school. I then visited the

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<sup>12</sup> Students' mothers' levels of education were less than that of their fathers.

<sup>13</sup> Minvielle et al. (2005: 142) remark that SAPs have "shattered" (*rendu caduque*) "the Senegalese socio-political model which steered young degree holders toward almost guaranteed public-sector employment." *Le modèle sociopolitique sénégalaise qui conduisait à l'emploi quasi assuré des jeunes diplômés dans la fonction publique.*

junior high, which was the only public secondary school within close vicinity, sitting in on some English classes and interviewing the then-principal. I also made contact with some of the teaching staff of his Franco-Arabe school and tour and interviewed the staff at a few other Islamically-based schools, including *daaras* (traditional all-male Qur'anic schools), in the area, for there were many, although all were rather small and modest. These trips were essential in helping me to formulate this project's scope and concern, assess its feasibility and lay the groundwork of contacts necessary to promptly commence my dissertation fieldwork once I secured funding and returned to Dakar.

Much of the ethnographic research on education and knowledge practices focuses on the classroom almost exclusively, what Ogbu (1981) calls "microethnographic" studies which ask largely "transactional" (e.g. relating to cultural transition) rather than structural questions. In order to look at the relationships between schooling, opportunity, and personhood for young people in urban Senegal, it was important that I broaden the ethnographic scope of my study to also examine students' lives after school. I accompanied a small group<sup>14</sup> of the students to their homes to get a sense of the background that they brought with them into the classroom each day and to know where they took their school knowledge once class was let out. This was a key part of trying to see how young people in Senegal make sense of and understand their schooling experiences and of teasing out the dialectic between the school environment and school knowledge, on the one hand, and that of the home and neighborhood street, on the other.

As such, Parcelles Assainies served as the setting for the school component of the project, as well as most of my family and neighborhood research. A few of the students did live in the adjacent neighborhoods of Camberène, Cité Fadja, Cité Soprim, Patte d'Oie Builders and the Cité des Impôts et Domaines, where I also rented a small apartment. Parcelles is a newer "suburban"

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<sup>14</sup> Five male and five female students, out of a class of about 80 students total.

area of Dakar first settled in the late 1970s as urban migrants looked for new places to live (I will go into further detail about its relationship to the rest of the city in Chapter Four). This densely-populated neighborhood, which is subdivided into 26 units,<sup>15</sup> is home to at least 200,000 people. As a place in which many new migrants to Dakar settled,<sup>16</sup> it is ethnically diverse in a way that adequately represents or recreates ethnic diversities within and across the country's different regions. At the time of my research, the Parcelles municipal government's website described the neighborhood as a "real 'melting pot'", using the English term.

This melting pot lies between the ocean and large, busy thoroughfare that extends from some of the closer-in and wealthier residential areas of the city to even more outlying suburbs. Its yards and streets were mostly sand, save for a few major paved roads, until President Wade began some public works projects in the neighborhood in 2006. It has a kind of crowded, chock-a-block feel; from the rooftops you can look over a sea of houses, mostly faded whitewash concrete structures with rebar sticking out of flat top stories that serve as laundry areas, places to store household odds and ends, and roofs until the next story is built. There are a few dedicated commercial areas in the neighborhood, but many houses also have a small business on their first floor, such as a dry goods store, barber shop, or until recently, a "telecenter".<sup>17</sup> The flat, largely treeless neighborhood is a monochromatic beige of sand and faded whitewash, save for the hand-painted signs of storefronts or the bright clothes of the women pedestrians as they walk about the neighborhood at their daily tasks.

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<sup>15</sup> Parcelles Assainies units (or *unités*) 1 through 6 are located on the eastern edge of the neighborhood, adjacent to the large suburb of Guédiawaye, and are governed under the Commune de Guédiawaye.

<sup>16</sup> According to Minvielle et al. (2005) between 40-60% of the Parcelles population was born in a rural area. Given the fact that the neighborhood is a very young one, in which a significant portion of the residents are minors (more than 15% are under the age of 5), this means that Parcelles' adult population is made up of a significant number of migrants.

<sup>17</sup> Telecenters, which were once an important social place in Dakar neighborhoods for people to chat and to see and be seen have largely been made obsolete by the advent of cell phones and cheap, small units of chargeable cell phone time. Most have now closed their doors.

Though categories used in post-industrial Western nations to identify and describe social class do not necessarily map on well to a Senegalese context, Parcelles could most reliably be identified as a largely lower middle class area that is also home many working-class and some middle-class residents. That assessment is supported by Minvielle et al.'s (2005) research into dimensions of poverty across Senegal and within the Dakar metropolitan area. In it, Parcelles falls in the middle of important measurements of poverty, such as the rate of malnutrition (10-20%), the number of children under age 15 who attend school (50-60%), the proportion of salaried residents (less than 40%) in the actively working population,<sup>18</sup> household food and non-food expenses (40-50,00 FCFA/month for the former and 50-100,000 FCFA/month for the latter<sup>19</sup>), relative to the city's other neighborhoods and suburbs. The statistical data used for such analysis was gathered between 1999 and 2001. I have little reason to believe that in years hence, this data has changed significantly, except perhaps in terms of the number of children under 15 attending school and in household food expenses, the former having risen nationally under the Wade administration and the latter having risen globally with the increase in world food prices (which reached peaks in 2008 and again in 2011). In their overall analysis, these demographers classify Parcelles as "poor" neighborhood<sup>20</sup> in a 5-level typology that ranges from "Rich", "Fairly Rich", and "Middle Class" to "Poor" and "Very Poor"<sup>21</sup> (Minvielle, Diop, and Niang 2005: 156).

This portion of the research was also prompted by the idea of the household in Africa as an important place from which and through which members' life projects are conceived and

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<sup>18</sup> This refers to the percentage of the working population that receives a monthly salary from work in the private or public sector, as opposed to those who many earn varying amounts of daily money from informal sector work.

<sup>19</sup> These numbers correspond to around \$100 for food per household per month and between \$100-200 for non-food expenses.

<sup>20</sup> Camberène was classed as a "poor" neighborhood and Patte d'Oie Builders and Cité Soprim as "middle class", respectively.

<sup>21</sup> "Riche", "assez riche", "classe moyenne", "pauvre", and "très pauvre".

mounted (Hansen 1997). This is especially true of the urban households in which my projects' participants resided. A key characteristic of post-colonial Senegalese life is that people define and redefine their communities through their negotiations of expanding and contracting economic opportunities (Lambert 2002b). As I touched upon earlier, this has meant the continuing migration of generations of rural inhabitants to Dakar and its environs, in pursuit of opportunities lacking in the country.<sup>22</sup> It has also prompted the expansion of migration paths and circuits abroad, as potential economic opportunities in the city have not kept pace with the number of people seeking them.

The students whom I accompanied home most often lived in large households with a range of extended family, whose relationships with each other were complicated by polygamy, divorce, international migration, and illness. Some students lived with their parents and other non-married extended family members (cousins, aunts, and uncles) who were in the city to pursue work and employment opportunities. But a larger portion either lived in household where only one or neither parent was present; again, most often for the complicating factors I cited above. As I go into greater detail in Chapter Four, the membership structure of students' households, and how it mapped on well or not so well to their kin relations, played an important role in influencing the kinds of choices that students made and were able to make about school and the futures they envisioned for themselves. In Senegal and across the Sahel, there is strong emphasis on one's public persona and self-worth as constituted through respectability, honor, and work for material aid of kin.<sup>23</sup> Students articulated and pursued future goals because of personal

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<sup>22</sup> These days, growth through a high urban birth rate is also a significant factor contributing to the growth and expansion of urban Senegalese communities.

<sup>23</sup> The importance of charisma, reputation, and nepotism is continuously emphasized and legitimated the state and political elites' reliance on such principles and modes of action in their conduct and maintenance power. This is also true in the Senegalese religious sphere. Power, authority, and the simple ability to perform one's job for marabouts and noted clerics within Sufi brotherhoods draw from their charisma, or *baraka*, and the labor and financial support of followers.

preference or inclination and also in order to provide for or satisfy people in their family and household.

The family-based work I conducted in students' homes and neighborhoods consisted primarily of observation and informal interviews. My visits were conducted on weekends and after school during the week. I was able to share in mundane, everyday moments, such as family members sitting around watching television together in the courtyard or women gossiping together in a bedroom over papaya and beer, as well as critical life moments, like when a student's mother miscarried and died. Students' older siblings and extended family offered multi-generational glimpses of longitudinal info about schooling, life choices, and outcomes relative to currently-enrolled adolescents. My understanding of their lives was also framed by and fleshed out through informal discussions and interviews with friends of mine in the city, of several different generations. With the Franco-Arabe school, my home visits focused on teachers' lives more than that of their pupils. Though I informally taught some English courses there for both students and teachers at their request, my ease of access to the homes and private lives of the latter was much better.

To supplement my observations and interactions with people in and around contemporary schools, and to gain a more diachronic purview, I conducted archival research on colonial era Islamic schooling (there are a limited number of secondary sources) and drew from a number of secondary source materials on the history of Western-style schools (which include public and private institutions) in the area. This portion of my research was conducted with the aim of understanding the role the institutions played in an evolving Senegalese society, relative to current day institutions, and the kinds of ideas and expectations that the colonial administration, educational authorities, and students and their families may have had about schooling and

specific types of institutions. In particular, I was keen to discern the relationship of education to changing economic conditions, social customs and roles, and religious identity and practice.

Finally, I also gathered a great deal of media-based popular culture data while in the field, that, for me, was one of the most interesting and rewarding aspects of my research. The data I collected came mostly from Senegalese television, daily newspapers, and lifestyle magazines and addressed a variety of topics: education, politics, jobs, money and consumer spending, religion, fashion and style, travel, music, dance, cuisine, sports, family relationships, marriage and dating, and so on. In my everyday interactions with students, teachers, neighbors, and friends I paid close attention to the ways in which people consumed, referenced, or rejected these ideas and forms of culture. Though diverse and wide-ranging in their subject matter, these media-based forms of culture—what Willis (2003) calls a “grounded aesthetics”—inevitably revealed important aspects of the Senegal’s cultural discourse around personhood, and connected with my interlocutors’ projects of the self. As Levinson et al. (1996) write, media are increasingly understood by anthropologists as important sites of identity formation, socialization, and meaning-making. Whether media are more influential than schools, or vice-versa, is not my concern.<sup>24</sup> Rather, I am interested in looking at the ways in which popular culture media might signal and provide an important forum for the reworking of aspects of culture for youth and students, both in and out of the classroom. As Debra Spitulnik (2002b) suggests, alternative media, particularly small media, represent vital undercurrents and resources of/for political critique and mobilization as well as subaltern solidarity. This is particularly important in repressive media environments, or contexts in which state-run media systems are dominant, conditions which mark post-independence Senegal, particularly under Wade (c.f. Havard 2004).

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<sup>24</sup> Willis (2003: 411) addresses the relationship between popular culture and studies of education and youth socialization thusly; “Accepting popular culture does not mean a lazy throwing open of the school doors to the latest fad, but rather committing to a principled understanding of contemporary cultural experience.”

### *Analytic Articulations*

As stated above, in this dissertation I seek to show the ways in which secular and religious schools in contemporary Senegal simultaneously enable and disillusion their students in the genesis and pursuit of their life projects. In so doing, I draw upon a rich established body of research and theory about modern education in a range of world areas and contexts. The word *enable* here refers to the advantages that having a school diploma and having been molded by the daily experience of attending school confers upon modern persons. In this context, Parsons' (1961) ideas about the positive functions of norms with relation to society and individual action, which I referenced briefly above, are relevant. He theorized two types and sources of status for modern persons; the first, ascribed status, encompasses those aspects of the person with which one essentially comes into the world, i.e. gender, birth order, one's family's social-economic status, etc. The second, termed "achieved status", is understood as a reflection of the social position individuals obtain through their work and individual achievements in the world. He argued that school helps to foster a sense of shared values and community, as well as provide the opportunities for individuals, particular those of a working-class background, to obtain the knowledge and skills important to the modern world. It thus reorients pupils from ascribed to achieved status, but in a way that fosters harmony and solidarity within society as a whole even as individuals are differentiated.

I, however, would argue that the functionalist dichotomy between ascribed and achieved status is largely false. I see them as intertwined and reinforcing of each other, delineating a field of possibilities in one's life. This understanding of their intertwined nature runs contrary to American political ideology about individual achievement, and calls into question modernization and development theories, whose global reach now borders on the hegemonic. Probing further, I



would suggest that these categories do not very accurately show how relationships between personhood, identity, status, practice, and power might work on the ground.

Moreover, I think it is important to look critically at the idea of education as a possible enabler, as I have first put it. That assertion is admittedly rather vague without some context. Education is enabling for, or of, what, precisely? A lifelong job in the civil service at a middle-class wage? Living in the city in a large, well-furnished villa? Being able to marry and provide for one's relatives? These are some of the ways in which personal goals and notions of success have been expressed by the students, teachers and families with whom I conducted fieldwork and by everyday citizens in Senegalese print and television media. At issue here is how students and young people define success and achievement and the kinds of ideologies and cultural forces that shape their aspirations.

It is also key to examine the identity of the persons involved. For whom is education potentially enabling? Are young women in Senegal affected differently by having the “distinctive” mark of a diploma à la Bourdieu (1984), than their young male counterparts? I would argue yes, given the pervasiveness of gender inequality in Senegal and the disparity between ideals of male and female behavior. And one must also ask if education does enable its pupils, what *kind* of education enables its pupils? This is the main impetus behind a comparative study of education, given the reality of diversity in scholastic institutions in Dakar and elsewhere. Might one type of school be more enabling than another? Does the educational institution matter? The curriculum? The length of study? These are not simply academic questions; rather, the perceived answers to these queries play a role in the educational choices and life decisions Senegalese actors make.

What I hope to indicate in my contention that education can, in some ways, serve as an enabler, is to signal the importance of knowledge with relation to power. This is true in both

religious and secular contexts. As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter Two, esoteric knowledge (or *baraka*) is a key aspect of what it means to be a marabout, or Islamic holy man and cleric, in Senegal. It helps constitute his sense of self, his social identity, and is a practical means for conducting his work and life. The selective sharing of this knowledge from teacher to disciple (*taalibe*) forms links in a chain of loyalty, devotion, and meaning that stretches back in time and, its participants hope, into the future. Moreover, it connects the earthly world to that of the divine. This is an explicitly male enactment and expression of personhood and identity. How do Muslim women then fit in to this relationship between self, God, guide, and holy knowledge?

In a more secular domain, the restructuring of Senegalese society in the colonial period through monetarization and integration into a global system of capitalist markets has meant that work and the pursuit of livelihoods have moved away from agricultural and practical knowledge (that one learns directly on an informal or apprenticeship basis) towards a model of knowledge-power that is bureaucratic, managerial, centralized, and in which French language literacy is increasingly important. In this way, attending state schools and non-Arabic/non-Wolofal<sup>25</sup> based private schools and acquiring such literacy—to whatever degree—favors its graduates in the modern Senegalese labor market over those candidates without such knowledge. Moreover, the former also learn certain postures, practices, and ways of being in school through which the formal educational content is transmitted (what Bourdieu would call styles of pedagogic communication), that also may afford these youth some advantages or ease (what Ferguson (1999) might talk about as the ability to carry off a style) in the labor market and more elite, French-language based social milieu. It is in this sense that I suggest that attending school may

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<sup>25</sup> Wolofal refers to Wolof language (the most widely spoken of oral African languages in Senegal) written in Arabic script.

indeed enable Senegalese young people in the pursuit of more highly paid work opportunities and social standing.

Fundamental to understanding the connection between different domains of action in the social world as they relate to power and inequality is Bourdieu's (1977) theorization of different types of capital; academic capital, symbolic capital, cultural capital, economic capital, and so on. In so doing, he articulates a strong connection between the symbolic, or discursive, and the material realms. Here, knowledge is profoundly political and power is about the ability to impose principles of the construction of reality—what is thinkable and unthinkable. And language, for Bourdieu (1991), is a fundamental part of this exercise of power and style. Linguistic exchanges, stylistically marked, represent conscious practices which serve to reproduce social difference “constituted outside the spheres of consciousness and constraint” (Bourdieu 1991: 51).

Bourdieu is not the only major theorist to articulate such views that were initially fleshed out in the work of linguistic anthropologists and sociolinguists in the 1960s; Foucault (1972), similarly, looks at the production of discourse according to social rules designed to include certain persons (establishing fellowships of discourse) and exclude other persons, as well as certain socially-dangerous<sup>26</sup> utterances, through the rarefaction of language. This phenomenon of inclusion and exclusion, Foucault argues, is supported in large part by networks of institutions, like schools. On one hand, through educational systems, individuals are able to access to a wide variety of discourses. On the other hand, he states, “every educational system is a political means of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourse, with the knowledge and power it carries with it,” (Foucault 1972: 227).

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<sup>26</sup> For Foucault, politics and sexuality are considered the most socially dangerous, and thus provoke the most prohibitions of speech around them.

So it is in these ways that religious and secular schools may be seen as enabling institutions for young people, granting them access to certain kinds of knowledge and opportunities increasingly important in contemporary Senegalese society, to which they might otherwise not be privy (i.e. exclusion from these fellowships of discourse and personhood). In the modern age, formal Western-style schooling and literacy have taken on an overwhelming legitimacy throughout the world and this is strongly supported by both the policy discourse and practices (i.e. the funded projects) of major development NGOs and international organizations. Moreover, Western-style schools are so closely attached to global capitalist modernity that it is impossible to discount their importance to people's pursuit of livelihoods and of projects of the self in a wide variety of contexts around the globe.

Yet, the power and preeminence of this model of achievement and aspiration is severely undercut by the ways in which it fails to connect young people in Senegal and elsewhere to opportunities for work and subsistence, and in so doing, provokes feelings of alienation and disillusionment. In Senegal, the problem of a lack of opportunity for young graduates and school leavers has been exacerbated the economic problems of the past three decades (about which I go into more detail in Chapter Four) and in particular by the austerity measures that the state has implemented as a condition of international loans. Structural adjustment policies (SAPs) have decreased the size of the civil service, which in post-independence Senegal, was the primary avenue of employment for young graduates out of junior high school and high school, as well as university. Willis' seminal work (1981) on the problems and tensions young working-class lads encounter in navigating the educational system in 1970s Britain was conducted just before the advent of significant job losses in the industrial sector that were relatively well paid. Reflecting upon this from his vantage point in the new century, Willis (2003: 397) contends that these skilled and semi-skilled industrial jobs of the past and the wages that accompanied them afforded

young workers a certain “enfranchisement” and independence, providing access to cultural commodities and services and the “forms of informal meaning-making that these commodities and services frame and facilitate.” This includes important aspects of the life course such as marrying and having children.

Over the past two decades, however, this model of work and livelihood in what is now the post-industrial U.K. has been strongly undercut, and it threatens to disappear completely. “The old expectations often continue on in some form or another,” Willis adds, but now they do so in a state of “permanent crisis”. There are strong similarities between the decline of industrial sector job opportunities for working class youth in Britain, and the erosion of civil service employment in Senegal, both beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The latter, coupled with the declining viability of the Senegalese agricultural sector (caused by severe drought and the volatility of commodity prices on the world market) sparked heavy migration to Dakar and other urban centers. Dakar, like many other African cities, did not emerge out of an industrial impetus, but rather in administrative and commercial service to the metropole (c.f. Banton 1957, Gugler and Flanagan 1978) in the colonial period.<sup>27</sup> The recent decline in state employment opportunities at a time when the population is growing (through rural migration and high urban birth rate) and more children are attending school has meant fewer real possibilities of employment for school leavers and young graduates.

Critiquing functionalist, modernist approaches to education which aimed to establish universal, compulsory schooling, Willis (2003) cites an inherent tension between the “socially integrative ideologies and egalitarianism” and what he calls the “obvious, practical logic” of sending out graduates into a hierarchical, divided society. This basic contradiction or conflict is

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<sup>27</sup> These cities are thus strongly linked to, and, as Epstein (1964) writes, “at the mercy of” the global capitalist system.

then further exacerbated by the shrinking opportunities in the very domains into which school graduates—whom Willis calls the “foot soldiers of modernity”—had been delivered in the past and for which they continue to hope in the absence of other strong possibilities.

As I have suggested above, young people in contemporary Senegal look to bridge the gap between their expectations and hopes for their future and the realities of their living situations by engaging in improvisations. In this improvisation, they combine every-day practices of making do (*góorgóorlu*), on one hand, and acts of seeming (*paraître*) (my vernacular shorthand for individuals’ engagements in the politics of reputation<sup>28</sup>) on the other. Chapter Five of the dissertation will delve into this phenomenon in more detail. The nature of the urban African environments of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries are what simultaneously make possible and incite these creative responses of material practicality and meaning-making. Certainly, if looked at from the point of view of networks, African cities occupy important positions in the circulation of goods and ideas through small and large media that favor heterogeneity and extra-local connections and open up certain possibilities for their residents. Yet, studies of African urbanity express a sense of contradiction and complexity to life in African cities. Just as the school can be seen as both an enabler and disillusioner, the city, as Auzanneau (2001) is a place of distinction that also can tend toward the heterogenization<sup>29</sup> of behavior and also to its uniformity—or what Bakhtin (1981) refers to in his discussion of language as the “centripetal” (the generative principle at work) and the “centrifugal” forces (e.g. heteroglossia), respectively.

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<sup>28</sup> Which may involve carrying off of a particular sartorial or bodily style signaling wealth, international sophistication, or religious piety.

<sup>29</sup> In urban Senegal, this is evident in the growth of an urban Wolof as a predominant language among speakers who are not ethnically Wolof—and even in some cases as a generic ethnic identification among subsequent generations, especially those of ethnically mixed heritage. Mc Laughlin (2001) incisively suggests that Wolof language and ethnicity in Dakar and other north-central Senegalese urban centers has become a kind of cover for a new hybridized and inchoate identity. Auzanneau (2001) and others also argue that urbanization has brought about a homogenization of religious practices around normative versions of Islam.

Anthropologists working in urban African contexts have long problematized the city as a unique space and in so doing, interrogated the dynamics and outcomes of urban culture change. Some of the earliest works in the rich body of African anthropological theory and ethnography coming out of the Manchester School and the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute asked the question: with the migration of Africans en masse to cities, are kinship or ethnically-based ties breaking down in favor of new forms of association, roles, and sources of status? In some respects, these dualistic concerns about the effect on towns on people mirror those I spoke about earlier with relation to education in a modernization paradigm. Here, schools, like cities, are viewed as potentially culturally-alienating institutions/spaces that create “modern” persons, distinguished by their achievements in a professional, market-based, and rational world. Subsequent urban research has examined the re-articulation of social ties in intra-urban and urban-rural networks (Ferguson 1999, Lambert 2002b). It has also focused more on interrogating the role of African cities’ economies (in the context of a larger global economic system marked by inequity) and political systems of power as they relate to the dissolution of recognized forms of social value and the restructuring of the possibilities of personal advancement (c.f. Buggenhagen 2001, Hansen 1997). These represent important shifts in the perspective from which anthropologists conceive, conduct, and analyze their work, and this project draws strongly from them.

In addition, the work on African popular culture, particularly in urban contexts, is an important part of this project’s genealogy. As Johannes Fabian (1998) suggests, this research reflects a post-structuralist shift in the field and contests the view that some “authentic” Africa is lost to forces of industrialization and urbanization. Rather, culture is decidedly plural. This vital point is also expressed by Lila Abu-Lughod (1997: 127) in her reflections, through fieldwork in Egypt, as how to understand and study culture in our hybrid and mediatized world of discrepant cosmopolitanisms; that the work of imagining and making the self is worth tracing to “particular

configurations of power, education, and wealth in particular places.” Much like Ferguson’s (1999) exploration of culture as style in the Zambian Copperbelt decline, or my emphasis on the role of pragmatic making do practices (*góorgóorluisme*) and seeming (*paraître*) in helping young people in Senegal to bridge the gap between their aspirations and their circumstances, culture is understood here as creative expressions, products, and social performances shaped by and *shaping* relations of power in shared space.

Researchers focusing on urban Senegal and citified Senegalese youth, in particular, have engaged with and written about their subjects of inquiry from a post-structuralist perspective. Jean-François Werner (1993a), working in the very large and rather poor Dakar suburb of Pikine (est. pop 1,000,000+ inhabitants), characterizes his research setting as “a vast field” where ingenious *bricoleurs* created an original urbanity. For Werner, Pikinois (and in particular the prostitutes, drug users, and other marginals) occupy a both literally and figuratively peripheral status vis-à-vis some of the city’s more affluent residents. The residents of Parcelles Assainies are slightly more affluent than in Pikine, in general, but there are important similarities between the two areas of the city. The lack of employment opportunities relative to the increasing number of people looking for work in the city has led to the emergence of an informal sector which now involves more people than the formal counterpart—a phenomenon not isolated to Senegal and common in many cities across the African continent. Here, the urban peripheral becomes the city center, as seen from a different view. Moreover, the informal (e.g. illegal,<sup>30</sup> ad-hoc, irregular) offers a rich terrain within which to examine cultural production and power in the city, in a way that highlights the creative practices of actors in meaning-making.

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<sup>30</sup> Cooper (1983) suggests that the post-colonial African state essentially defines lower-class life as illegal and therefore legitimate, but that the strong presence of informal sector activity in people’s livelihoods emphasizes the state’s impotence.



Youth is understood here a social category (just as adulthood and childhood are also constructs) whose features and parameters, including temporal periodization, vary across and according to milieu and historical context. Studies of “youth culture” first emerged in the 1940s, led by sociologist Talcott Parsons (1942), who examined how middle-class American youths’ worlds were structured by age and sex roles. Anthropologists like Margaret Mead (1928, 1930) had already been interested in non-Western young peoples’ lives as they related to culturally-specific family and kin relations and locally salient rites of passage. Later, Birmingham School (CCCS) sociologists (c.f. Hall 1975, Hebdidge 1987 [1979], Willis 1981) examined how class and age intersect in the subjectivities of working-class British youth.

Helena Wulff (1995) lauds the status of youth as a central concern of more recent anthropological inquiry into globalization and transnational experience. Yet she suggests that as a whole, young peoples’ lives remain largely under-theorized and their agency is often underestimated in social science research (see also Scheper-Hughes 1998). In research specific to Africa, writes Deborah Durham (2000), scholars typically portray youth as saboteurs, victims, and unruly forces. She favors utilizing the concept of generation to better elucidate the diverse experiences of young people, rather than the homogenizing and problematic term “youth”, which absorbs and erases all sorts of differences. Youth, Durham cautions, should be thought of less as a precise age group or cohort, but as a “social shifter” whose significance is relational.

As categories of social scientific inquiry, I use the terms “youth” and “young people” here in a rather broad manner. This is in part because the emic usage of the youth designation has also broadened in Senegal. Local actors use terms as *la jeunesse* or *les jeunes* in French, and *xale yi* slangily in Wolof (voiced by persons of middle and advanced age) to indicate people’s youth status. In Senegal, youth and adult are not strictly aged-based distinctions, but rather reflect persons’ productive and reproductive roles. Juridical designations of minor or adult status hold

little weight outside of bureaucratic contexts. In order to be considered an adult in Senegalese society, one must be married and to a certain extent, also have children. For men, adult standing is further complemented by wage-earning and the ability to support dependants and extended family.

The issue of supporting one's family came up numerous times in my discussions and interviews with male students about schooling as it related to their plans for the future. This social convention remains powerful despite demographic data which suggests that women actually play increasingly prominent roles in supporting and heading households (Buggenhagen 2012, Konte 2006), which I discuss further in Chapter Four. Given that many young men of adult age in Senegal are not able to marry because of unemployment and poor financial prospects, they occupy a kind of ambiguous or in-between status relative to childhood and married adulthood. There is also a sense that as adulthood has been pushed farther back, so, too, has the end of childhood been pushed forward, as a Senegalese university student explained; "now the only children are those still carried on their mother's backs."

In his work on young urban men in Ethiopia, Mains (2007: 660) characterizes youth as a kind of perpetually in-process category of identity and experience; "Youth is defined increasingly on the basis of an individual's inability to take on the responsibilities of adulthood." Youth, therefore, it seems to me, is about a kind of impotence or lack: it defined more by what it is not here, than what it is. Moreover, in African contexts, the status of youth and children as a clear demographic majority who hold a little political, economic, and social power makes for a complex and interesting dynamic. Achille Mbembe (1985) charges that African states' discourse with regard to young people is largely homogenizing and interventionist; more generally, social attitudes encourage submission and obeisance, while at the same time, much is expected of young people with regard to the "emerging" and "developing" African nation.

Within the scholarship on Senegal, this same critique is echoed by T.K. Biaya (2001, 2002), Momar-Coumba Diop and Ousseynou Faye (Diop and Faye 2002), and Mamadou Diouf (2002), to cite just a few, in their analyses of power in Senegalese society. Further, I write with the argument of Jean-François Havard (2001, 2004) and others, such as Donal Cruise O'Brien (2002) and Biaya (2001), in mind, namely that we consider the last twenty years as a period in which there a profound break (*rupture* in French) in the post-colonial way of being established under Senghor. This was a system of values and notions of success and achievement that centered around formal Western schooling and employment in the civil service or small private sector, and in which the state controlled and directed cultural politics. This is now no longer the case. For Havard, two key dates during this period stand out; 1988, in which youths protested the reelection of Abdou Diouf (Senghor's successor) to the presidency and 2000, when the first democratic regime change, or *alternance*, occurred when Abdoulaye Wade and the Sopi ("change" in Wolof) Coalition were elected after 40 years of the Socialist Party, due in part to strong support among young people.

Young people now struggle to access things of social value that are important to creating a sense of modern adult personhood and identity (such as employment/income, marriage, children, and houses). The *alternance*, Havard suggests, was a kind of big, outward symbol of a larger movement or collections of breaks, driven by youth, who saw the old system of social and political values in Senegal as corrupt and self-serving, with little room in which they could succeed. However, the *alternance*, which has devolved from a coalition of several opposition parties and their members to a situation in which one-party dominated, e.g. Abdoulaye Wade's PDS (Parti Démocratique Sénégalais), has now alienated the vast majority of young people who were jubilant and hopeful when democratic regime change was realized in April 2000. Yet again, youth find themselves outside the structures of power, estranged from political and economic

institutions that they perceive have little genuine interest in their welfare. Early 2012 has brought about another democratic regime change in Senegal with the election of Macky Sall to the presidency, a onetime PDS member and prime minister under Wade. However, it is not likely that this event will bring about a substantial change in the gap that young Senegalese students, in both private religious and public secular schools, find between their lived realities and the lofty political discourse of local state actors and the international development community.

### *Dissertation Map*

The dissertation weaves back and forth between school, home, and city neighborhood settings, between historical developments and contemporary events, and between discourse and policies on a large scale, on one hand, and the ground-level experiences of my interlocutors, on the other. The first body chapter, Chapter Two, discusses the historical processes by which Islamic education was introduced to the Senegalese region and expanded in the centuries leading up to colonialism and in the colonial period. It focuses on the structures and ways of doing things that mark Islamic religion and schooling in the region. These structures include the prominence of Sufi Islamic brotherhoods, or *tarixa*, and the hierarchical master-disciple, or marabout-*taalibe* relationship in Senegalese religious practice. Maraboutic power and influence in Senegal was further expanded with the colonial restructuring of traditional subsistence farming around the peanut and gave rise to a phenomenon called the “*marabout de l’arachide*”. By the term “ways”, I mean the strong belief in *baraka*, or blessings, an emphasis on hardship or asceticism, and a sensory orientation in religious experience and communication practices. Using data from the AOF documents at the National Archives in Dakar, I examine what the expansion of French colonial rule and the implementation of a system of Islamic school surveillance and regulation meant for these institutions at the time and how it may have affected their subsequent

development. I also discuss some of the changes that early Islamic school reforms wrought (beginning in the 1940s).

I then present a case study of a Franco-Arabe school in the Parcelles Assainies neighborhood of Dakar. I discuss the school's institutional history and development, its structure and composition (who are the teachers, students, and administrators involved and their various backgrounds), funding, and curriculum. In this section of the chapter, I address the teaching pedagogy and the nature of the student-teacher interactions and dynamics I recorded as they relate to Franco-Arabe schools on the whole and to patterns of authority, speech, and social relationships in Senegal. Lastly, I take a look at the kinds of life messages that are disseminated to students at the Franco-Arabe school. These include statements and advice about the proper way to live that are explicitly framed as Islamic or religiously-based, as well as messages that come from teacher's rebukes of students for their bad character traits or lack of good character.

Chapter Three begins with a brief history of the colonial school system, namely how and why French-language schools were established and their relation to colonial economic goals and administrative needs and ideologies of civilization, in particular. I examine the elitist structure of the educational system—who were the *évolués* who attended and had access to the schools and what did that mean for their social status and economic pursuits after school? The questions of how class and status, cultural change, economic restructuring, authority, alienation, and local participation played out in colonial schools are quite relevant to discussions of contemporary education, given the degree to which contemporary schools are modelled on their predecessors.

The ethnographic material from a Parcelles Assainies junior high school that follows deepens the discussion of young people's experience of schooling and knowledge as it connects with the past. As with the previous chapter devoted to Islamic schooling, I approach the school as a situated institution made up of particular actors. I tell the story of what it is like to attend the

school based on the months I spent research there (almost the entire 2005-2006 school year) and in particular the 5<sup>e</sup> class (equivalent of that of 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade in the U.S.). In terms of the school's curriculum and teaching pedagogy, I look at the notion of the "lesson" and the way it is taught—largely without books, via copying from the board and teachers' dictation of his or her notes—as a kind of whole or unit. Like at the Islamic school, student boredom and teacher authority are also important aspects of the schooling experience. But this authority is expressed differently than at the Franco-Arabe school—through invocation of teachers' professionalism and statements about familial roles in the school space—and this coexists with a considerable amount of student responsibility and independence. As in Chapter Two, my aim is to show how these aspects of teacher-student relationships in the school link up to patterns in interpersonal relationships outside the school that shape young people's lives.

Chapter Four moves from the schoolyard and classroom to the living spaces that school actors inhabit and which importantly shape what transpires inside the classroom and the kinds of educational engagements people make. This chapter is comprised of three sections, the first being a section about the nature of urban spaces in Senegal and the kinds of economic changes that are a part of the urbanization process. There, I describe the suburban environment of Dakar, namely the Parcelles Assainies neighborhood, and look at what "suburb" (*la banlieue*) means in this context. This section is followed by a discussion of urban migration and growth in Senegal and how my fieldwork setting fits into a context of migration, urban growth, economic instability, and social transformation, historically. The "rural exodus" of the 1960s and 70s and the economic decline and structural adjustment policies of the 1980s and 90s made urban living increasingly precarious and shaped the dynamics of present-day urban communities.

Having established some of the important historical events and relationships that underlie the urban spaces of Senegal, I then address of how urban families and individuals live in the

present day, using ethnographic material from the homes of the junior high school students, stories from around the neighborhood, and popular culture materials and secondary sources. How are their households composed? What are their living situations and familial relationships? What different roles do household members play? Where do power and authority lie in the family, and what kinds of ideas do people draw upon to legitimate or contest those arrangements? How do their home lives have an impact on their experiences as students? Central to these considerations is personhood—how and what people are imagined to be by others and how one knows oneself as the person one should be in a given social situation. In particular, this means exploring how gender and age work and their relationships to power, authority, and resources in students' families and larger Senegalese society. What role do state and religion play in the formation or privileging of certain models of personhood? What kind of messages do they send to the public about proper ways to be and act?

Here, the voices of individual students emerge more clearly than in the previous chapter on the school, where the teachers' perspectives and statements tended to dominate and, as a result, also dominate in my account. This reflects the very real conventions of speech in the school space between those who have linguistic authority—teachers—and those who don't—students. In the sessions where I observed at home, parents, if present, also tended to dominate the linguistic space. However, my home and neighborhood visits were generally much more conducive to finding moments and places (in the houses and courtyards, themselves, or in neighbourhood streets and common areas) in which students' expression was more vocal and not as dominated by cultural or familial elders and other authority figures.

Chapter Five focuses on another side of the way in which students and school graduates/leavers negotiate the idiosyncrasies, challenges, and blockages or postcolonial urban Senegalese life, namely by engaging in practices of “making do”. I use excerpts from the

Goorgoorlou comic books as a way to illustrate the polysemic nature of managing and getting by (*se débrouiller* in French and *góorgóorlu* in Wolof) in an everyday way in Senegal. I also look at what pragmatic improvisation might mean in contemporary social theory and the political economy of the “developing” world. I then analyze the concrete usage of *góorgóorlu* and related terms in Senegalese discourse and in the lives of my interlocutors in suburban Senegal. How has the post-colonial Senegalese state provided the impetus for and the environment in which making do happens? How might this be similar to patchworking practices in other African settings, historically?

In the second half of this chapter, I discuss how making do and managing surfaces in the class settings of my school case studies and in the students’ home lives. I examine the important role contemporary kin and extra kin relations play in managing strategies and the articulation and imagination of people’s futures. Households in Senegal act as sites of solidarity between members, as well as much tension, conflict, and competition. As such, where do young people, specifically my interlocutors, fit in? What does pragmatic improvisation tell us about their sense of personhood and how it is shaped? Lastly, I examine the attempts of tens of thousands of West Africans in 2006, mostly young men, to reach and enter Spain’s Canary Islands via open boat and without legal documentation, as a most desperate example of making do, and how this phenomenon was interpreted and discussed by teachers and students in and around Parcelles.

Chapter Six addresses recent school development and reform projects in both state secular and Islamic schools, as well as school strikes, violence, and issues of democratic participation. In a way, this chapter picks up where Chapters Two and Three—which were devoted to the history of religious and state schools and a contemporary case study of each—left off. It focuses on school reform and contestation, from both an institutional/state perspective and from a grassroots, youth-based level. The chapter begins with a discussion of the relationship between forms of



popular culture, particularly music and youth's engagements in social critique. An analysis of this topic helps illuminate local understandings of personhood and power. In the second part of this chapter, I discuss student strikes, which are important ways through which young people challenge state power and attempt to take a more proactive role in their future. I use the turbulent strikes of February 2005 as a window into how and why strikes transpire, arguing that their chronic occurrence on the political and educational scene over the past few decades stems from the declining status of university students and their diplomas. The last part of the chapter examines secular and Islamic school reform projects. The former is a largely bureaucratic exercise involving foreign donors and NGOs, as well as local state personnel. Islamic school reform, on the other hand, is linked to ongoing debates about the cultural legitimacy of secular education in a Muslim-majority society. State-driven Islamic education reform, articulated through Abdoulaye Wade's idea of the *daara moderne*, co-opts some of these Islamic reformist critiques while simultaneously blurring the line between public, private, secular, and religious domains.

Chapter Seven, the concluding chapter of this dissertation, examines the question of whether *góorgóorluisme*, or making do, truly signals alternative ways of being for young people or if it simply ends up buying back into the system of social hierarchy, convention, and hard work in Senegal. Lastly, I reflect on international policy and public debate in the West about education in developing countries, including Western discussions of Islamic schools, which are oftentimes as politicized as they are ill-informed. I hope that this dissertation will contribute to a more critical understanding of the complexities and contradictions that school presents for young people and for modern, pluralistic societies.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SENEGAL

It's a hot and humid morning. The hard, backless wooden benches we sit on offer nothing to rest against and nowhere to slouch down into as the sun shines strongly through the bars on the small window. The small square classroom of the Islamic school is cramped and its walls are bare, save for a blackboard at the front. Luckily, the classroom door, which opens onto the building's third floor courtyard, is kept open to provide some ventilation as well as light, for there are no electrical lights in the room. As we shift our weight on the benches, our sandal-clad feet scrape sharply against the sand speckled floor, which is covered by a roll of linoleum whose tears and large holes show through to the plain concrete floor underneath. Students are looking to the board and copying down into their thin, flimsy notebooks a verse from the Hadith that their teacher has written on the blackboard. Once they are finished copying, they will then have to recite these few lines together over and over, for what seems an interminable stretch of time. I watch them and take notes, and then I watch them some more.

In this chapter, I will analyze the path (*tarixa*—Wolof, also meaning “history”) that Islamic schools have travelled in West Africa, from the earliest training relationships within 11<sup>th</sup> century minority Islamic communities, to the development of numerous all-male Qur'anic *daara* schools across the region, to the advent of tuition-based co-ed neighborhood schools with hybrid curriculum. I use archival and secondary sources and ethnographic field data. Islamic schools in the region have not followed a singular, progressive path of development. Moreover, one should not mistake the urban Franco-Arabe schools that are a prominent focus of this dissertation as the

culmination of such a process. As I indicated in Chapter One, there co-exist a range of different kinds of Islamically-based schools in contemporary Senegal, including *daaras*, Franco-Arabe day schools, Islamic preschools and vacation period-only schools, and Islamic institutes for secondary study and post-secondary study. Around the world, Islamic education is marked by a diversity of institutions, orientations and ideas, and actors. They are embedded in specific social arrangements whose changes over time importantly affect them. This fact is often obscured in totalizing mainstream Western political discourse about Muslim societies and Islamic schooling, particularly following the World Trade Center attacks of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Contemporary Islamic education in Senegal—in all its permutations—is built on the complex and at times, contradictory, ways in which Islam was adopted by people in West Africa and the processes of change that local religious structures and practice have undergone over the years. This process, and the co-existence of a range of Islamic schools in contemporary Senegal along with public and private secular schools, importantly informs identity and subjectivity. This diversity and plurality of Islamic religious and knowledge practices constitutes a point of tension through time and across space that informs personhood, religiosity, and educational engagements in the present day.

The different ways in which Islam has been adopted and is lived in Senegal has often been negatively compared to a kind of “true” or “authentic” Islam of the Middle East by French colonials, Arab Muslims from the Middle East and North Africa, and secularly-oriented scholars. In this pejorative vein, individuals use terms such as “Black Islam” (*l’Islam noir*) or “African

Islam” to describe Islam on the sub-Saharan portion of the continent.<sup>31</sup> The idea that Islamic religious practice in the region is an *other* than needs excising, purifying, and returning to an original and untainted Islam has been articulated and utilized by Africans themselves in local reform movements for hundreds of years, from the *jihad*s of late 1700s and early 1800s to the Salafi or Wahhabi-oriented *hibadou rahman* or *arabisant* movement which began in the 1940s in Senegal. It even provided the basis for the most significant reform movement in Senegalese religious history. The founding of the Mouridiyya *tarixa* (lit. way or path—meaning Sufi brotherhood or order) in the late 1800s was led by Cheikh Amadou Bamba Mbacké, who advocated “a holy war of the soul” (Babou 2003: 312). The development of Franco-Arabe day schools was strongly influenced by these reform movements and the political pressures *daaras* have faced from both internal and externally-based elites and sources of power (such as NGOs and the international aid community), which I explore further in Chapter Six. However, Franco-Arabe schools are not co-terminus with Salafism or other conservative Islamic movements. Again, this is a point that is often obscured in Western political discourse about Islamic schooling across the *umma*.

In engaging with Islamic religious education in Senegal as a whole, the key structures and ways that shape people’s practice include the prominence of Sufi brotherhoods (*turuq*; sing. *tariqa*; plural in Arabic, Wolofized as *tarixa* and *tarixas*) which are structured through hierarchical relationships of discipline and submission between believers and learned, spiritual guides who are called *marabouts* (from the Arabic *al murabit*); a strong belief in *baraka*, which are the blessings and magico-religious powers with which marabouts are endowed and can transmit to their *taalibes*, or disciples; an emphasis on hardship or asceticism, and a sensory

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<sup>31</sup> To this day, the term *Afrique noire*, or “Black Africa”, is commonly used in mainstream French academic publications. However, one could argue that the Anglophone academic term “Sub-Saharan Africa” when juxtaposed with North Africa serves simply as a euphemism for the same racial division of African-ness.

orientation in religious practice. Strong emphasis is placed on correct action, or orthopraxy, and the five pillars—(1) the *shahada*, or profession of faith; (2) *salat*, or daily prayer; (3) *zakat*, or charitable giving; (4) *sawm*, or fasting, and finally (5) the *hajj*, or pilgrimage to Mecca. An examination of these vital structures and ways, including their historical development, is crucial to understanding the personal and social significance of contemporary Islamic learnings—plural—in the region and the debates and dilemmas that have come up around them.

In this sense, I examine different temporal significances of Muslim subjectivity in Senegal and the role schooling and Islamic study play in these practices and experiences. As I will discuss below, at different times in Senegalese history when Islam was not a religion of the majority, being Muslim took on particular meanings for different people. Early on, it may have facilitated one's job as a trader and opened one up to a whole network of Muslim brethren. Being versed in the Qur'an and able to read and write in Arabic may have granted one access to powerful state rulers, including their material support and protection in times of war. In this sense, young, learned Muslims could connect up with a evolving, and at times, very immediate genealogy of Islamic clerics—from grandfather to father to son. As Rudolph Ware (2004) suggests, local elites may have been most able to commit their sons to prolonged study under the tutelage of a marabout, whereas poorer families were less able to give up the potential fruits of their sons labor.<sup>32</sup>

Still, for others who converted to Islam, conversion may have meant turning one's back on traditional authority and gaining some status in a caste society where one previously had none, or, at the most, only a small and circumscribed amount of social capital. In a 2005

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<sup>32</sup> Paradoxically, contemporary discourse portrays the reasons for parents' sending their sons to faraway urban *daaras* in exactly the opposite way. *Daara* attendance is seen as a way for rural parents to essentially offload surplus children that they are unable to feed (c.f. Perry 2004, Schaller de la Cova 2001).

lecture,<sup>33</sup> University of Dakar literature professor Dr. Bassirou Dieng emphasized freedom of this new Islamic culture and the historical relationship between the written word, memory, and educational systems in West Africa. Wolofal writing (Wolof language written in Arabic), he argued, connected converts to a larger Islamic world of information and news. For these new converts, Islamization gave rise to a new “Islamic” memory opposed to that of pre-colonial Africa.

In many cases, converting to Islam entailed violent censure from other Africans and Europeans. At the turn of the century, Michael Lambert (2002b) describes a situation in egalitarian Jola (or Diola) societies where converting meant breaking with one’s elders and incurring the scorn of one’s village. Yet Islamic affiliation and practice in the South also became a means through which people could legitimately access and interact with an increasing expanding colonial presence, he suggests. This is true of the evolving relationship between Islamic and colonial authority in other parts of Senegal, as well. Under colonial expansion, Islam had taken on an anti-colonial status, but later negotiations between the administration and emerging brotherhood leaders (*xalifas*) repositioned the latter as powerful political and economic intermediaries and beneficiaries (particularly within the Mouridiyya) in the new colonial cash-crop export system (Cruise O'Brien 1971).

In his dissertation study of Qur’anic schools in the 20th century, Ware (2004: 320) suggests that the new social and political order colonialism wrought created a “bifurcated understanding of education”, in which French school was considered practical and pragmatic preparation for life on earth, and the *daara*, preparation for life in the next world. A curious and intellectually quick Peul *taalibe* from Guinea Bissau who used to frequent my Dakar neighborhood remarked the same thing. He said that French and Portuguese, languages he was

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<sup>33</sup> May 15, 2005 at the West African Research Center in Dakar.

anxious to learn (several years later, he now attends public school in Dakar), were for this life. His Qur'anic studies (referred to colloquially as “*al-Xuran*”), he continued, were for the afterlife. Perhaps this bifurcated understanding of esoteric Islamic knowledge (*‘ilm*) relative to rationalist secular knowledges is apt for local communities in which Islamic practices had a significant presence prior to colonial expansion. However, as Lambert’s research in Jola communities where Islam came comparatively late suggests, conversion to Islam and the cultivation of Islamic subjectivity through practices like religious school attendance were also ways in which people engaged *strategically* with the economic and political dimensions of their changing world. Embracing Islam was not simply a rejection of the secular world.

Nowadays questions around religion and choice of religious study are even more different for people in Senegal, given that the Muslim community, which constitutes over 90% of the country’s population, no longer grows in any significant way through converts. Rather, Senegalese Muslims are born into Islam. In some ways, then, the impetus to attend Qur’anic boarding school or an Islamic day school in contemporary Senegal, is as Hefner (2007: 2) writes, a way of responding, through action and one’s life choices, to the question of “just what is required to live as an observant Muslim in the modern world?” Below I want to discuss briefly the historical development of some of the ways and institutions of Islam in Senegal that have been formative in the construction of people’s contemporary Islamic religious practice and identity and through which they enact it.

In the latter part of the chapter, I will look closely at a particular Franco-Arabe day school as a case study through which to understand how local notions of the person (*nit*—Wolof) are articulated and cultivated. I analyze the school as a space for distribution of certain kinds of religious knowledge and the acquisition and expression of local Islamic identities. Unlike in some social contexts around the world, normative messages about how to properly behave as

good Muslim (*jullit*—Wolof) were openly and explicitly articulated on a daily basis both in the actual curriculum of the Franco-Arabe school as well as the teachers' speech. In Bourdieuan practice theory, these practical taxonomies or systems of classifications (what Bourdieu calls "doxa") are thought to be essential to the reproduction of social order by producing seemingly objective practices that conform to such order (Bourdieu 1977: 163-164). In addition to the ideological messages teachers advanced, they also cultivated particular postures of obedience and submission that helped to reinforce these spoken messages. In practice theory, these postures are unconscious embodied memories that construct identity and both reflect and reproduce the social order of things. Though I include observations of the students in class in my analysis, the teachers' voices are much more prominent here, in large part as a reflection of the real characteristics of speech in and around the classroom. Talk was dominated by teachers and students expressed themselves more through non-verbal behavior. This is also much the case in the public secular schools, as we shall see in the case study of a Parcelles junior high school in the next chapter.

Overall, the institutionalized discourses the teachers expressed and the challenges the school faced in terms of materials and manpower reflect pervasive economic realities and dominant ideas about authority, piety, and the family. Notions of making do are expressed in the classroom through the vernacular idiom of *góorgóorlu*; it is not an absent concept. However, as we will see in Chapters Five and Six, the subjectivities cultivated in *daara* and Islamic day schools do not dovetail as well with the kinds of creative, unorthodox practices of managing and getting by. Nor do they foster youth movements that resist traditional age-based arrangements of authority, which give power to elders and elites and expect submissive postures on the part of the young.



### *Contact and Conversion*

Historical narratives usually aim to start at the beginning, but returning to “the beginning” of Islam in Senegal proves somewhat elusive. While scholars generally agree that the practice of Islam in the region goes back roughly 1000 years to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the literature tells different stories about Islam’s subsequent expansion. Many scholars, particularly those associated with the History Department at the Université of Dakar, talk about Islam’s growth in terms of progressive periods or stages—some say three, others four—but each representing a growth in the number of Muslim adepts in the region and the adoption of a more rigorous Islamic practice. David Robinson (2004: 26) suggests that these kinds of periodizing frameworks, while having merit as a way to organize and conceptualize the history of Islam in Africa, do not do enough to “capture the complexity of Islamic practice in African history.” In addition, much of the literature on Islam in Senegal focuses mainly on historical events concerning the Wolof states of Walo, Jolof, Kayor, and Baol, and to a lesser extent on Haalpulaar<sup>34</sup> communities, consigning the development of Islam there and in Serer, Mandinka, and Jola areas to a peripheral position within Senegalese religious history (Diouf 2001, Robinson 2000), and, I would argue, Senegalese national history, more generally.

According to this narrative, the first conversions in Senegal involved merchants living in towns linked to the trans-Saharan trade in the northeastern part of the country and to Almoravid Berbers. Early converts were minorities who often lived in Muslim designated areas within the

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<sup>34</sup> “Haalpulaar” is a term used to designate Pulaar/Fula speakers in Senegal. According to McLaughlin, Haalpulaar’*en* actually constitute two distinct ethnic groups; the Toucouleur/Tukolor and the Fulbe (also referred to as Peul or Fulani). Both these groups have historically lived along the Senegal River in what is known as Fuuta Toro. Nationally, their numbers are augmented by the large immigrant population of Guinean Peuls from the Fuuta Jallon. In Africa, Fula speaking communities stretch from Senegal all the way to Cameroon (c.f. Mc Laughlin 1995). That said, many Tukolor do not like the use of that word to describe them, instead preferring the term “Haalpulaar”. One of my own interlocutors, a young university student, suggested to me during my fieldwork that the word Tukolor, or Toucouleur, carries with it a racist colonial legacy, which, he explained, was why he objected to the use of that term. He held that the French used this term to classify and label Haalpulaar’*en* because they exhibited great variation in their skin color and features, from paler-skinned to dark, i.e. “*toutes les couleurs*.”

larger non-Muslim majority; hence the label “minority” or “quarantine” Islam that some use to designate this period (Robinson 2004: 28). The next phase in many historians’ models is referred to as courtly Islam, during which time state rulers and the local aristocracy nominally adopted the religion, while retaining many pre-Islamic practices. Attached to these kings (referred to generally as *buur* in contemporary Wolof, with specific titles for each state at the time, such as *damel* for Kayor) were aristocratic groups of marabouts called *doomi soxna*, who counseled the *buur* in Islam and whose abilities to read and write in Arabic were valued resources. This period saw increased conflict both within and between states, causing a generalization of violence as well as economic difficulties and large migrations of certain ethnic and social groups in the Senegambian region. Mamadou Diouf (2001: 112) argues that this widespread unrest gave rise to the “marabout’s war” of the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, in which Muslim clerics and holy men attempted to wrest power from the traditional aristocrats, whose authority was backed up by the threat of violence from a rowdy, aggressive warrior class, known as the *ceddo*, and by the guns of their slave trader allies. He concludes these militant marabouts of the 17<sup>th</sup> century were largely unsuccessful in their campaigns.

Nevertheless, the events set up an oppositional relationship between this nascent group of marabouts and the traditional elite in Senegal, in which the marabouts were able to gain the support of peasant farmers and the lower classes. These new configurations of religion, authority, patronage and (at times violent) power represent key dimensions of Islamic expansion during this third period, referred to as “majority” Islam and entailing the last 200 years of Senegalese history. This period is marked by the conversion of large numbers of rural freemen or *jambur* to Islam, beginning with the *jihads* led by Islamic militant El-Hadj Omar Tall in the Upper Senegal and Niger River valleys. Tall was a member of the Tijane *tarixa*, or Sufi brotherhood, and his movement did much to expand the brotherhoods’ membership and to

connect it to a sense of Haalpulaar identity. Moreover, Tall's hostility towards the traditional "pagan" aristocracy and to the expanding French colonial project invoked the ire of the colonial government, who branded the Tijaniyya "fanatics" warranting close surveillance in order to check any insidious activities (Robinson 2000).

In the Serer states of Siin and Saluum to the southwest, a *jihad* led by Tijaniyya affiliate Ma Ba Diakhou in the 1860s aimed at spreading Islam and consolidating his political power, but was short lived due to his subsequent death in battle. Yet in the decades that followed in Saluum as French colonial control was consolidated, Islamization continued, a process Klein (1968: 219) sees as both the cause and effect of the decline of the traditional state. In neighboring Siin, residents did not engage in large-scale conversion within a short period, rather, Islam spread slowly, steadily, and peacefully under the colonial regime and on into the decades that followed independence (Villalón 1995: 63). In light of this reading of history, the process of conversion to Islam and the adoption of Islamic religious practices in Siin show similarities to that of Jola communities in Casamance. There, Mandinkas, like the Haalpulaar'en in Fuuta Toro, were among the first to convert, pushing Islamization from the east to the west, in contrast to the north-south movement of Islam that occurred in rest of Senegal. Islamic Mandinka leaders like Fodé Kaba and Birame Ndiaye engaged in *jihads* aimed at forcibly converting Jola areas, but most Jola villages resisted, aided by the French, who were keen to extend their control in the region.

Shortly thereafter, however, a network of Mandinka and Mauritanian marabouts established themselves in the Casamance region (Lambert 2002b). The French, though wary, sought to use these figures to their advantage and the marabouts, largely unfettered, were able to convert individuals in several Jola villages to the north of the Ziguinchor River. Although initially estranged from the other village inhabitants who practiced traditional religion, the enterprising success of these early converts established them as "the vanguard of an ideological

and political organization that mediated between the village and a strengthening French colonial political and economic structure,” Lambert (2002b: 71) argues, providing the practical and symbolic impetus for villages’ eventual widespread conversion in the Fogny and Buluf regions on the north bank of the Ziguinchor.

While the religious histories of areas like the Casamance or Saluum are often referenced as marginal or peripheral in relation to the Wolof center and its history of Islamization, the kinds of processes and significances of Islamic practice mentioned here—particularly the adoption of Islam as a key element of ways in which individuals mediated a changing society and sets of power relations within and across communities, and simultaneously contributed to such changes and realignments—link up importantly with that of Wolof areas. For example, the colonials’ Orientalist fear of “militant” or “bad” Muslims<sup>35</sup> that came to a head during the period of Tall’s *jihads* and the Tijane brotherhood expansion (which I touched on briefly above) also had important implications for their dealings with other Muslims in colonial Senegal. It made a particular mark on the life of Mouride saint Amadou Bamba Mbacké, arguably the most influential figure in Senegalese Islamic religious history even to this day, eight decades after his death. Bamba, or “Serigne Touba”, as he was later to be called by his disciples, was born in the kingdom of Kayor into a family of courtly clerics and trained as a young man under Cheikh Sidiyya, a Moorish marabout from the Qadiriyya, the oldest Sufi brotherhood in the region, which was particularly strong in the Mauritanian territory. According to historians, Bamba may have also been briefly associated with the Tijaniyya *tarixa* (Cruise O'Brien 1971, Cruise O'Brien

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<sup>35</sup> According to David Robinson (2000), although the French generally feared Islam, they did not seek to eradicate Islam in their territories or to convert their Muslim subjects en masse. Rather, the French government sought to erect institutions of control through which to expand and consolidate its empire and establish itself as a “Muslim power”. In doing so in West Africa, the French colonial government tended to adopt racial distinctions that had developed in Saint-Louis and the Senegalo-Mauritanian zone in which Moors were classed as “whites” (*bidan*) and “Arabs”, i.e. “natural” Muslims, who were racially and religiously superior to “blacks” (*sudan*), recent converts to Islam who ran the gamut from “fanatic militants” to “semi-pagans”.

1975, Robinson 2000). He grew up in a time of great violence, and because of his family's aristocratic connections, had an intimate vantage point on the power struggles between warlords that marked his day and which greatly repelled him. Though he sought out and trained with many renowned Muslim teachers in Senegal and Mauritania, Robinson (2000: 213) suggests that he was dissatisfied with these mentors.

Bamba developed a new religious approach (referred to in Wolof as *yoonu Murit*, lit. the Mouride way) that synthesized spiritual education and work, and emphasized religious practices as opposed to ideology (Babou 2003). The word Mouride comes from the Arabic *murid*, meaning seeker or novice. I should stress that Bamba's Mouridism developed over many decades of the founder's life in his search for spiritual meaning and peace. Yet, early on he distinguished himself by the intense commitment of the disciples whom he attracted, many of whom were from the Wolof underclasses; casted artisans and slaves, the *ñeeño* and the *jaam*. Of primary importance to Bamba was the establishment of an autonomous Muslim community where his vision of religiosity could be realized and where he could find the seclusion and tranquility to pray and study that he so desired. Bamba's spiritual community-building activities and his increasing number of adoring followers sparked French suspicion and fear of a *jihad*. In 1895, Bamba was sent to exile in Gabon.<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately for the French, Bamba emerged from his Gabonese exile unbroken<sup>37</sup> and a popular hero—his accounts of the ordeals he suffered while in exile and house arrest were taken up by his followers and are still recounted by faithful Mourides to this day as evidence of Bamba's saintliness.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> This was to be first of three exiles to which he was subjected; the latter was essentially a house arrest that was officially revoked in 1912, but which really lasted, for all intents and purposes, until his death in 1927.

<sup>37</sup> Robinson (2000) quotes Bamba as writing upon his return, "I have left behind in Congo the robe of misery which I was wearing. I will never voluntarily put it back on, and if anyone tries to force me it will cost him a great deal," .

<sup>38</sup> These include, in particular, an occasion when Bamba is said to have been forbidden by the French authorities to pray on the ship bound for Gabon, and Bamba therefore proceeded to unfurl his prayer rug upon the water and pray, to the other passengers' amazement.

### *The Master-Disciple Relationship*

Bamba's Sufi order of the Mouridiyya, particularly in the ways by which it expanded and strengthened under his descendants and close followers during his exile(s) and after his death, did much to bring a certain kind of Muslim subject to the fore. This development would have important implications for Islamic schooling and for power and subjectivity in Senegal, more generally. Coming from a Sufi orientation and having studied with Qadiriyya (and perhaps also Tijane) marabouts in Senegal and Mauritania, Bamba stressed the need for submission (referred to as *jébbalu* in Wolof and as *njébbal* in noun form) to a religious guide in his own teachings. His early disciples also played a significant role in the construction of Mouride followers', or *taalibes*', relationship of submission and devotion to their marabouts, particularly Ibra Fall, the founder of the Baye Fall sect, and an important figure in Mouride religious history. Ibra Fall came from an aristocratic background, looked like the consummate *ceddo* warrior—"brightly coloured robe with a wide leather belt, hair worn in long tresses, great wooden club always in hand,"—and was reputed to be a real drinker,<sup>39</sup> writes Donal Cruise O'Brien (1975: 43), a noted scholar of the Mourides. When Ibra Fall first met Bamba in 1886, he continues, Cheikh Ibra reportedly "dropped to his knees, removed all his clothes, and crawled naked to Amadu [sic] Bamba's feet; there, he prostrated himself and declared his allegiance in words which have since become standard for a Mouride disciple—"I submit to you in this world and in the next. All that

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<sup>39</sup> In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the Baye Fall *taalibe* style has evolved to include colorful patchwork clothing, military camouflage, and regular use of marijuana, which is called *yamba* locally, in addition to alcohol. Based comparative study of the Jamaican Rastafarian movement in West Africa, Savishinsky (1994) found that the Baye Fall closely resemble Jamaican Rastafarians in their appearance and behavior. He argues that the resurgence of Mouridism and Baye Fallism among urban youth in the 1970s and 1980s may have been influenced by the increasing popularity of reggae and its Rastafarian ethos. Despite their claims to be the "original" or "true" Rastas, and the sense they express of belonging to a global pan-African Rasta brotherhood, Savishinsky's informants rejected the notion that Baye Fallism owed anything to Jamaican Rastafarianism or the pre-Islamic *ceddo* warrior caste, insisting that their practices were modeled directly on those of Cheikh Ibra Fall.

you order me I will do. Everything you forbid me I will abstain from doing,” (Cruise O'Brien 1975: 44).

This kind of behavior, Cruise O'Brien argues, reflects that of a slave rather than disciple and imitates the kinds of relationships that existed between the *ceddo* and their *damel* before the collapse of the Wolof aristocratic state. It is a “semi-pagan” rather than a Muslim idiom. Moreover, much of Cheikh Ibra's religious practice was decidedly heretical. He did not pray or fast and was reputedly a heavy drinker. But his devotion to his guide, Cheikh Amadou Bamba, was without question, as was his commitment to backbreaking physical labor. It was Ibra Fall who organized disciples' agricultural labor at Bamba's early Darou Salaam settlement, an enterprise that gave rise to the significant Mouride presence in peanut farming, the main source of revenue for the country under the French and for many decades after independence. Subordination and submission also marked the attitudes of the many thousands of early Mouridiyya followers. The *tarixa* drew greatly from the ranks of Wolof slave society and occupational castes. Cruise O'Brien (1971: 84) writes that these artisans and slaves “brought with them a habit of subordination (and an acute need for patronage and guidance) which found new expression in religious terms.”

In discussing the particular significance that submission took on in a Mouride context and the profound and enduring impact it has had on the construction of subjectivity in Senegal, I want to avoid falling into the trap of “mouridocentrisme” (Villalón 1995), however. I should stress that marabout-*taalibe*, or master-disciple, relations of power and authority fundamentally structure religious practice and mediate religious experiences and personal identity for all Sufis. Sufism began in the Middle East in the seventh century as an elite, ascetic reform movement, a way of purification (*tasawwuf* in Arabic) whose aim was to know and experience God through his direct presence. It subsequently transformed into a popular mass movement by joining with

devotionalism and through the establishment of brotherhoods, structured through the master-disciple schemata, which did much to organize and formalize the movement.

A marabout's legitimacy and authority stems from his connection to a genealogical chain of charisma, or what one could call quasi-hereditary cultural capital. In Morocco and the Middle East, this may mean a set of links going back to the prophet Muhammad. In West Africa, *cheikhs*<sup>40</sup> trace their spiritual lineage back to the order's founder and saint, such as Cheikh Amadou Bamba for the Mourides, or to the founder of a local branch of the order, such as El Hadj Malick Sy or El Hadj Abdoulaye Niassé of the Tijaniyya, or to their descendants who make up the formal structure of authority in the brotherhood.<sup>41</sup> Yet the ultimate end of these chains is, of course, God.

A marabout's legitimacy is also heavily based on his reputed *baraka*. "Baraka" is a term that denotes spiritual grace, blessings, and charisma. It also supposes magico-religious powers. Over the course of Senegalese religious history, marabouts, particularly those in high level positions in the brotherhoods, have been able to consolidate and expand the polysemic nature of *baraka* such that it has come to mean, as Cruise O'Brien (1975: 10) puts it, "a special spiritual grace, a special position with God which may include the power to redeem souls....it also....has come to imply political as well as economic power, in other terms a special position with the authorities of the state." "The power of the saint, spiritually sanctioned," he concludes, "is truly a legitimate authority." Much of the economic and political dimensions to marabouts' charismatic power stems from the wealth collected by the maraboutic elite through their disciple's donations,

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<sup>40</sup> The correct Arabic plural form is actually *chouyoukh* in French transliteration, *shuyukh* in English; "*les cheikhs*" is used vernacularly in Senegal.

<sup>41</sup> In Senegal, the formal head of the brotherhood is called the "*xalifa-générale*", a term that emerged in colonial times. He is usually a direct descendant of the original founder and serves as the head until his death, at which time his successor is chosen by a council made up of the highest *cheikhs* in the brotherhood.



gifts, and the fruits of *taalibes*' labor<sup>42</sup> and the close relationships they developed with the colonial administration and the post-colonial state, particularly the Senghor government.

However, it is important to remember that the orders' elite are not representative of the vast majority of religious guides, for marabouts exist at all levels of Senegalese society. Further, as Villalón (1995) reminds us, though marabouts generally enjoy power, status, authority, and influence, they have clear responsibilities to their *taalibes*, both material and spiritual. There is a clientelistic relationship. *Taalibes* in need will go to their marabouts for monetary assistance and he is under strong, long-standing social obligations to help them.<sup>43</sup> More than material aid, *serignes* must also be available to offer their *taalibes* assistance with life problems on magico-religious terms.<sup>44</sup> This clientelistic relationship between master and disciple is importantly a contingent, interdependent one. Although a marabout can allude to his saintly genealogy in order to validate his authority and legitimacy, it is ultimately through *taalibes*' patronage that one's reputation is cultivated and reinforced, for, without disciples, one could not claim to be a marabout. Likewise, for many Senegalese, submission to a religious guide is at the core of what it means to be, or rather to *become*, a Muslim person.

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<sup>42</sup> Traditionally, most of *taalibes*' donations emerged out of agricultural activities like peanut cultivation. Yet, with urbanization and international migration, these wealth-generating activities have been significantly supplanted by commerce, particularly in goods from China, Dubai, and to a lesser extent Europe and the United States.

<sup>43</sup> As Cruise O'Brien (1971: 96) writes, "generosity is incumbent upon a shaikh [sic], just as it was dependent upon a Wolof chief."

<sup>44</sup> Marabouts may "read" a disciple's fortune in the positions of cowry shells and coins that they reshuffle several times on a mat or shallow reed platter, or via a series of hash marks they have made on a piece of paper using a pen upon which the client has prayed. Remedies can involve the wearing of protective amulets or other talismans, showering with or drinking various powdered herbal or bark mixtures (*saafara*), giving "charities" to children and the elderly such as kola nuts, sugar, or biscuits, or the sacrifice of a chicken, goat, or cow. Most often one's prescription involves some combination of several remedies. These magico-religious dimensions can also involve Muslim men (also called marabouts and *serignes*) and sometimes women (called *gisaanes*, meaning seers) who are not affiliated with a brotherhood as such. In addition to Muslims, I also once visited a blind Christian man who was a seer at the behest of a Muslim friend, whose family regularly consulted him in their personal affairs. He used a technique in which he would hold the persons' hand in his and then stroke and tap their open palm with his fingertips.

Historical research looks to the turn of the century as the point at which this new Muslim subject—a committed disciple and brotherhood member who has submitted in a profound way to a religious guide—emerged, given the great number of conversions this period entailed, coupled with the changes that an increasingly-involved colonial administration wrought and the rise of charismatic and well-organized *tarixa* leadership. These scholars also importantly suggest that this new Muslim subjectivity draws significantly on established aspects of Senegalese social relations and personhood, for example that of pre-colonial Wolof relations of caste, class, and authority (Cruise O'Brien 1971), among others.

Likewise, master-disciple relations in fact predated Sufi orders in the Middle East and in Africa. These were fundamentally educative relationships in which rarified Islamic knowledge was personally transmitted to initiates. In this sense becoming a Muslim through the personally transformative experience of submission to a marabout does not depend exclusively on Sufi brotherhoods. It links up with *tarixas* and overlaps them in many ways, but it also precedes them historically. In contemporary Senegal this means that although the master-disciple schema is a key aspect of the brotherhoods and much learning and initiation transpires in and through the orders, *tarixas* are not coterminous with Qur'anic schools, nor with other Islamic institutions such as mosques (*jumaa* or *jàkka* in Wolof).

This line of argument concerning the historical development of Islamic education and the interpersonal relations that structured it in Senegal is corroborated by Louis Brenner's (2001) research in colonial and post-colonial Mali. Here, Brenner argues that much of what we take to be key aspects of Sufi Islamic religious practices and institutions in the western Sahel in fact come out of the "esoteric episteme", which is "deeply imbued" with analogical and metaphorical forms of thought. What we typically think of as quintessentially Sufi modes and styles are really pre-Islamic aspects of African life, he suggests. In this vein, Brenner (2001: 19) calls the

Qur'anic school a “first essential phase” in the construction of a Muslim subjectivity through postures of submissiveness and an emphasis on a specific form of consciousness.

Brenner (2001: 6) engages the esoteric episteme from a Foucauldian point of view in which an episteme is understood as a kind of implicit knowledge that “exercises a fundamental influence on shaping the body of discourse”. It is not a “thing”, however; he treats it as “a set of relations which unites the discursive practices of a particular period.” In an esoteric episteme, as Brenner conceives of it, Islamic knowledge is hierarchical—there is a hierarchy both between Islamic and secular knowledge and within different “kinds” of Islamic knowledge—and it is secret, meant to be personally transmitted only by qualified and authorized individuals. “All knowledge is not meant to be available,” he writes (Brenner 2001: 7) . Those who acquire this knowledge are “transformed” and are made qualified to receive even higher and more secret levels of religious knowledge. Under this episteme, teachers, learners, and the knowledge itself are imbued with a sense of authority, status, and profound spiritual and mystical value. Drawing on Dilley’s (1994: 4) work on the significance of knowledge in Haalpulaar’ en artisan circles in the Senegalese region of Fuuta, I suggest that the acquisition, control, and reproduction of Sufi knowledge-power (*xam-xam* in Wolof, *savoir-pouvoir* in French) socially defines these teachers and their initiates.

### *Colonial Confrontations*

As people converted to Islam, many pre-Islamic modes of being were displaced. Some scholars, such as Robinson (2004), talk about processes of Africanization, in which Africans adopted Islam on their own terms in ways that were compatible with existing cultural practices. Brenner (2001: 19-20) argues that Sufism is derivative of esoterism, which was a characteristic of all pre-colonial African societies, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. Yet, data from Jola

communities in southern Senegal, which were some of the last to convert to Islam in the country and still also include many Christians, show that the advent of Islam meant the passing of certain kinds of traditional religious knowledge, specifically those concerning village spirit shrines (Andrewes 2005, Lambert 2002b).<sup>45</sup>

In the latter half of 1800s and early 1900s, as the French consolidated and expanded their colonial enterprise in the AOF, the advent of Western schooling and the policing of Islamic schools, which was part of a larger project of surveillance designed to protect and further French interests, gave rise to new educational configurations and cultural institutions. Other than newly-established secular and Catholic religious schools, Qur'anic schools were the only formal schools that existed in Senegal at the time; informal modes of education included apprenticeships and initiation, such as the Jola initiation rite for young men, the *bukut*, or *futamp*, as it is also called. In the local discourse of the time, which is still articulated today by some people, French school, or *l'école française*, was viewed as an alien institution and a cultural and moral threat.

The French, on the other hand, viewed Qur'anic schools, or *daaras*, as a threat; in this case, to their expanding control in Senegal, particularly their interests along the Senegal River. They began issuing decrees which forbade the establishment or severely limited the operation of Qur'anic schools. The first of these came in 1857 under governor Faidherbe and stipulated that Qur'anic schools may not be established without the permission of colonial authorities; all marabouts must prove their knowledge to a jury and pass an exam, furnish a certificate of good

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<sup>45</sup> Some Jola speak of this as a regrettable loss, but others, in particular certain Muslims, act ashamed of their “pagan” ancestors (who often are only a generation or two removed) and are eager to dissociate themselves from this part of their past. A rejection of fetishes, “idolatry”, and polytheism—viewed as sin—are an important part of Islam’s historical legacy. Islam was born out of a context of tribal polytheism on the Arabian Peninsula; it distinguished itself by denouncing this *jahiliyya* (ignorance) and calling for reformation. In this sense Christianity has been more hospitable to traditional Jola practice than Islam in Senegal, though it has also had its own periods of tension and conflict (Andrewes 2005).

character and morals, and arrange for their pupils ages 12 and under to attend French school (either a secular or missionary school) every evening (Ndiaye 1985: 76-78).

In his 1988 article, Robinson argues that Faidherbe developed a strong institutional base of Islamic policy in which his institution of innovations in the educational domain was an important element. Among these innovations, Robinson cites the reorganization of the *Ecole des Otages* for chiefs' sons, which was previously a Christian school, into a secularly oriented school with some additional instruction in Arabic, as well as the commission to regulate Qur'anic schools under the above law. He sees this as part of a broader effort on the part of the French to embrace and encourage "Francophile" marabouts (contra Cruise O'Brien). Yet, outside of the cosmopolitan *métis* city of Saint-Louis, records indicate that there were very few Francophile marabouts to be found among the regional ranks of everyday *daara* instructors. The rules and regulations borne out the 1857 decree did not so much encourage the establishment of Qur'anic schools through what might be considered more organized channels, but rather worked against the autonomy and independence of school instructors by imposing bureaucratic roadblocks and conditions that they could not meet.

Importantly, the 1857 decree also established a surveillance commission to monitor schools. Some of the first school inspection reports of the time in the archives come from a set from Saint-Louis dated February 21, 1870. Each report is headed with the name of the teacher and the date his instruction permit was granted, followed by about a paragraph or two in length of description and cursory assessment; most are concerned with the marabout and his qualifications, the student body composition, pedagogy, funding, sanitation, and whether the students attend French schools in the evenings. A typical report from this period that I consulted in the National Archives in Dakar reads in its entirety;

He [the instructor] was still in bed at half past 8 in the morning. The pupils, who numbered 7, including a little neighbor girl, played in front of the door. The teaching consists of several verses from the Qur'an, written on tablets. One spends several years learning and writing them on other tablets. After that, one's schooling is complete and the pupil becomes a marabout! Neither the instructor nor the children know a word of French. I needed an interpreter in order to make myself understood. Presently, they will go fish for him and will cultivate his [undecipherable]. That's the teacher's recompense. In the evening, they go to the brothers [*les frères*, indicating a Catholic missionary school]. The eldest leads the younger ones. The [undecipherable] is Friday morning; there is no class. Mr. Dieng doesn't know arithmetic (Sénégal 1864-1871).<sup>46</sup>

I should mention that just several months after the June 1857 decree, it was ordered that it was illegal for Qur'anic schools to include female students among the male pupils and that girls were required to attend separate schools which also required colonial approval and registry.

This set of reports is adjoined by a long letter summarizing and assessing the inspection of Qur'anic schools in the area, addressed to the Director of the Interior. This letter reveals much of the colonial government's fear of so-called Islamic religious fanatics and their perceived threat to civilized French expansion that marked the administrations' attitudes and policies in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; it was in this same vein that Cheikh Amadou Bamba was exiled to Gabon. It concludes;

This simple exposé reveals, in a peremptory manner, to what extent this state of matters responds so little to the aspirations and needs of the country. Must we perpetuate the status quo? Must we wait for the tree to have sprouted vigorous roots to sap it? ... This schooling is not only insufficient but continues to paralyze our efforts and alienates us even more from the native population. The majority of marabouts are themselves little schooled; to read and write a few pages of the Qur'an, that's the entirety of their literary toolkit... What confidence can the French government have in these men who are so refractory to our laws, our morals, and our customs? In these men who oppose us [and our] force? ... harboring feelings of hate towards us in their hearts?

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<sup>46</sup> *Il était encore au lit à 8h et demie du matin. Les élèves sont au nombre de 7, en y comprenant une petite fille de voisinage, jouaient devant la porte. L'enseignement consiste en quelques versets du Coran, inscrits sur des tablettes. On passe plusieurs années à les apprendre et à les inscrire sur d'autres planchettes. Après cela, l'éducation est terminée, et l'élève devient un marabout ! Le maître, ni les enfants ne savent un mot de français. Il m'a fallu un interprète pour me faire comprendre. Tantôt ils vont à la pêche pour lui tantôt ils vont cultiver ses [undecipherable]. C'est là la rétribution scolaire. Ils vont le soir chez les frères. Les plus grands conduit les plus petits. La [undecipherable] c'est le vendredi matin, il n'y a pas de classe. M. Dieng ne sait pas calculer.*

...Are we to ignore then the considerable influence these marabouts exert on the black population? It is certain that as long as the country's youth does not attend more regularly our schools, there will be no intellectual or moral progress for which to hope. In my opinion, the Muslim schools have had their time and did not merit the consideration or the confidence of the higher authorities. Far from increasing their number, acquiescing to their continuous everyday demands, it was time to arrive at their gradual extinction, by not according any new authorizations, (Sénégal 1864-1871).<sup>47</sup>

Before concluding the letter and signing off, the inspector closes with these two indignant and cautionary comments about French language education and the schooling of young Senegalese Muslim women;

The study of the French language seemed such an extraordinary thing to the marabouts and their pupils that, when I invariably asked if they knew it [French], they all would let out a great laugh, responding with ironic scorn; “dedet” [sic; “no” in Wolof], as if I had just told them the most astonishing, the most monstrous thing in the world.

I close in calling your attention...to these girls' schools that have been established next to the others. With the ideas that reign in this country, do they not add to the religious fanaticism of women? And it is of note that these young women do not attend any French school: they don't go to the sisters [*les sœurs*; French missionary school run by nuns] (Sénégal 1864-1871).<sup>48</sup>

Just a few days later, a second decree would be issued, one that considerably expanded the provisions of the previous decree, in particular, concerning French language instruction.

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<sup>47</sup> *Ce simple exposé fait ressortir, d'une manière péremptoire, combien cet état des choses répond peu aux aspirations et aux besoins du pays. Doit-on perpétuer ce status quo ? Dont-on attendre que l'arbre ait poussé de vigoureuses racines pour le saper ? ...cet enseignement est non seulement insuffisant, mais encore paralyse tous nos efforts et tend à éloigner de plus en plus de nous toute la population indigène. La plupart des marabouts sont eux-mêmes peu instruits : lire et écrire quelques pages du Coran, c'est là tout leur bagage littéraire, et souvent ils ne le savent que d'une manière imparfaite. Quelle confiance le gouvernement français peut-il avoir en ces hommes si réfractaires à nos lois, à nos mœurs, à nos usages ? ...en couvent dans leurs cœurs des sentiments de haine contre nous ? Sommes-nous donc à ignorer l'influence considérable, immense, qu'exercent les marabouts sur la population noire ? Il est certain que, tant que la jeunesse du pays ne fréquentera pas plus régulièrement nos écoles, il n'y aura aucun progrès intellectuel ni moral à espérer. A mon avis, les écoles musulmanes ont fait leurs temps et ne méritait ni la considération ni la confiance de l'autorité supérieure. Bien loin d'en augmenter le nombre, en accueillant toutes les demandes qui se produisent journellement, il y avait lieu d'arriver à leur extinction graduelle, en n'accordant pas de nouvelles autorisations.*

<sup>48</sup> *L'étude de la langue française paraît une chose si extraordinaire aux marabouts et à leurs élèves que, lorsque je leur demandais invariablement s'ils la connaissaient, ils partaient tous d'un franc éclat de rire, en répondant avec mépris ironique ; « dedet », comme si je venais de leur dire la chose la plus étonnante, la plus monstrueuse du monde. Je terminerai, en appelant votre attention...sur ces écoles de filles qui s'élèvent à côté des autres. Avec les idées, qui règnent dans ce pays, n'est-ce pas augmenter par là le fanatisme religieux des femmes ? Et il est à remarquer que ces jeunes filles ne fréquentent aucune école française : elles ne vont pas chez les sœurs.*

Now, the instructors would be required to teach French in their own schools (Ndiaye 1985: 97). A third decree, issued in 1893 struck further at Qur'anic schools by requiring students to attend a French school and receive a certificate before entering the *daara* and imposing fines and jail sentences on those instructors who taught illegally (e.g. without authorization). In addition, they also required that schools be "kept clean" and made the practice of begging by Qur'anic school pupils illegal (Ndiaye 1985: 99); both of which are evidenced in the reports above as colonial concerns as early as the 1870s. Interestingly, these colonial concerns with the dirtiness of Qur'anic schools and the exploitation of *taalibes* by marabouts through begging would form a key part of NGO discourse in their campaigns for urban *daara* reform in the 1980s and 1990s (Gouvernement du Sénégal/UNICEF 1991, Perry 2004). In addition, this kind of language is also reflected in local Senegalese talk about *daaras* and *taalibes*. For its part, the postcolonial state occupies an uneasy position between NGOs, on one side, and powerful marabout lobbies, on the other.

In 1903, the governance of local educational institutions in Senegal was subsumed under the newly erected Educational Organization of the fledgling AOF, which established a kind of charter for education in French West Africa. Records from a few years later reveal that under this new administration, the colonial apparatus of Islamic school surveillance had been expanded to cover a greater amount of the Senegalese territory than simply the Saint-Louis region of previous decades. Reports from 1911 concern the Qur'anic schools of many colonial "circles", east from Saint-Louis to the river towns of Dagana and Matam, south to Dakar and its suburbs, the Wolof heartland of Baol, Serer regions of Siin (Sine) and Saluum (Saloum), as well as "Haute Gambie" and Casamance to the far south. These reports, whose title, "Statistiques des écoles Coraniques" clearly signals their bureaucratic orientation, consist of large pre-typed template charts in which the answers are written in by inspectors following their visits. Those that do not



utilize the forms have had the chart carefully sketched out and drawn by hand on regular paper before the field data was entered in.

The reports document the name and age of the instructor, the location of his school and permit number, the order or brotherhood to which he is affiliated, his own teacher and where his studies took place, the nature of his teaching and the books he uses. Additional categories include whether or not the marabout has an “embryo” of a library and the number and type of works it includes, the numbers of students, and of this number, how many attend only Qur’anic school and how many occasionally attend French school, and finally, if the marabout has a “large influence”—where and whether it is favorable or hostile to “*notre action*”, e.g. the colonial enterprise. The chart concludes with an “observations” category. The data from the different “circles” largely repeats the same information with little variation except for the age of the marabout instructors (which range from 30 to 80) and the class size (from 5 to 50 students). Although a few marabouts are listed as “*suspecte*” (suspicious) or “*à surveiller*” (to watch), the vast majority are judged either favorable to the French cause or without any influence. Most inspectors did not add any comments in the observations section, but in line with the data above, one report from Matam reads; “The marabouts’ influence does not really exist from a political point of view; they are more or less known and sought after from the dual points of view of religion and instruction. None of them attack us overtly, but there are also none that heartily hate us. They are all fairly quiet,” (Sénégal 1907-1911).<sup>49</sup>

The impetus for this more detailed reporting and statistics gathering is, by all indications, years in the making. A letter from a colonial agent on Gorée Island dated 1907 and addressed to the Governor General of the AOF as well as Lieutenant Governors in Senegal, Haute Senegal-

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<sup>49</sup> *L’influence des marabouts n’existe pas en réalité au point de vue politique ; ils sont plus ou moins connus et plus ou moins recherchés au double point de vue religieux et de l’instruction. Aucun ne nous attaque ouvertement mais il n’en est aucune également qui ne nous déteste bien cordialement. Tous se trouvent tranquilles.*

Niger, Guinea, the Ivory Coast, Dahomey, and to the *Commissaire* of Mauritania stresses the importance of gathering detailed and exact data on Qur'anic schools "which serve to diffuse religious doctrines and widespread political 'suggestions' unknown to us by more or less secret agents of the large religious brotherhoods,"<sup>50</sup> given that data already gathered by the administration "leave no doubt about the organizational effort currently attempted by the Muslim brotherhoods in the AOF of the political and religious role of marabout preachers that is circulating around the country," (Sénégal 1907-1911).<sup>51</sup>

Yet the reports from all over the country in 1911 indicate that the marabouts instructing at local *daaras* had little to do with the kind of anti-French religious fanaticism the colonials so feared. This is reinforced by a letter to the Lieutenant Governor of Saint-Louis in late 1911 that states that after careful and exact data gathering at Qur'anic school sites in the Casamance, that "aside from a few individuals whom I will discuss later, the vast majority of these teaching Muslims have no political or moral influence, their principal objective, in attracting the pupils to whom they transmit the 'light religious toolkit' they possess is to increase their daily revenue" (Sénégal 1907-1911).<sup>52</sup>

The 1903 reorganization of educational policy under the AOF charter laid out types of schooling that were in the colonial interests for the given territories; elementary schools which would have different curricular orientations for rural and urban areas, respectively; middle schools with a commercial and administrative focus; normal schools; and girls' schools (Diop

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<sup>50</sup> ...qui servent à la diffusion des doctrines religieuses et des suggestions politiques répandus à notre insu pas les agents plus ou moins secrets des grandes ordres religieux...

<sup>51</sup> ...ne laissent aucun doute sur l'effort d'organisation qui tente actuellement les confréries musulmanes en Afrique occidentale française sur le rôle à la fois religieux et politique des marabouts prédicants qui circulent à travers le pays...

<sup>52</sup> A part quelques personnages sur lesquels j'appellerai plus loin, votre haute attention, la grande majorité de ces musulmans enseignant n'ont aucune influence politique ou morale ; leur principal objectif, en attirant à eux des élèves auxquels ils transmettent le mince bagage religieux qu'ils possèdent est d'accroître leurs revenus temporelles.

1996). In this vein, a French *médersa* (referred to as “madrasa” in the Middle East and Asia) school was founded in Saint-Louis in 1908. It drew on the legacy of the *Ecole des Otages* as it had been reformed by Governor Faidherbe decades earlier. There, Arabic grammar and literature was taught alongside French in the curriculum, though not with equal weight. In fact, the Médersa of Saint-Louis had no connection to the esoteric episteme that guided Qur’anic schools in the region. Ndiaye (1985: 114-116) concludes that the institution was a strange mix of several different objectives; to educate agents to implement colonial policies and help run the administration, to educate the young Muslim elite, and to appease the local native population. Brenner (2007: 200-201) makes similar conclusions based on his historical studies of the colonial *médersas* of Timbuktu and Jenné in neighboring French Sudan (now Mali); that they were essentially a political manipulation of Qur’anic schooling to serve French interests. In the years that followed, these colonial *médersas* did not grow greatly in number, but the network of formalized secular schools—*les écoles françaises*—continued to expand.

In the end, it is difficult to make hard and fast statements about colonial policies related to Islamic practice in Senegal. Established historians of the area like Robinson and Cruise O’Brien themselves disagree in their readings of French policy during the hundred years or so that marked concerted French involvement in the Western Sahel. Cruise O’Brien (1967), in an early article, argues that the French had a rather ill-defined and indistinct policy toward Islam in the 1800s. Robinson (1988) argues the contrary, suggesting that the French tried to squelch Muslim groups viewed as a threat and alternately privilege those believed to be sympathetic to their cause. Moreover, in later years, he suggests, they made a concerted attempt to become a “Muslim power” (Robinson 2000). What they both agree upon is that assessing French Islamic policy requires attention to temporality, for policy changed importantly over time, and became much more elaborate after 1900, in particular.

From my much more limited research on the period in the National Archives in Dakar, I conclude several corollary points. It seems that whatever the time, and whatever types of collaboration the French in which were involved with local elites or Muslim authorities, a sense of wariness, fear, and perhaps even disdain for Muslims underlay their actions. In relation to Qur'anic schools, I found that the kinds of data gathered by field inspectors and the conclusions they came to in their reports were not necessarily reflected in the larger policy adopted toward Islamic schools of that particular time. That is to say, one inspector could file hundreds of reports saying that the marabouts in the schools he surveyed were of little political influence or threat, and the prevailing colonial policy might still be oriented towards undermining *daaras*. Finally, despite aggressive efforts on the part of the administration to limit and impede the efforts of *daara* marabouts, local scholars (c. f. Ndiaye 1985) suggest that ultimately this did not result in the widespread closure of *daaras*. Most marabouts continued to operate their schools, despite the threat of heavy fines and even jail time. Rather, I suggest, French policies promoting Western-style secular schools, together with monetarization, the advent of wage-labor, and other profound changes that go beyond the colonial government and link up to the larger evolving world order, had a much more insidious effect, in the long term, on local systems of knowledge production and dissemination than any of their restrictive, bureaucratic laws ever could.

### *New Muslims and Early Reform*

In the 1940s, a new kind of *médersa* emerged on the scene in Senegal and Mali. These first local *médersas* were founded by young Muslim men, who upon returning from study abroad in Morocco, Algeria, or Egypt, had little opportunity to enter in the colonial job sector, given that it required a French education. Across the board, this was an era of significant social and political change in which people struggled with ways to come to terms with a changing world

under colonialism. One example of a cultural innovation that emerged out of this environment are *daa'iras*,<sup>53</sup> which are local cells of the Sufi *confréries*, or brotherhoods, founded in order to unite urban disciples by Muslims who had migrated to the city in search of work opportunities. The first of these voluntary organizations were founded by Tijanes in the interwar period. In the decades followed, this Senegalese institution of politico-religious organization was also taken up by Mourides and expanded greatly in number in Dakar and other small cities. The impetus for *médersas*, in many ways, was similar to that which spawned the *daa'iras*. For example, drawing on his extensive historical research on Islamic schooling in Mali, Brenner (2001: 85) concludes that the young Muslims involved in the opening of *médersas* “were not so much seeking an Islamic alternative to French hegemony, as trying to reshape Muslim institutions to function effectively in the prevailing conditions.” The same could be said of those involved in the earliest *daa'iras*.

However, in many ways, these young graduates and returnees of whom Brenner writes self-consciously distinguished themselves from the modes, mores, and ideologies of their local Sufi peers. Inspired by their experiences in Arabic institutions of high learning and having different expectations from that of their parents' generation, these young men sought to “explore and test new ideas of what it might mean to be a Muslim in the mid-twentieth century,” Brenner (2001: 86) argues. In Senegal, these returned students and their later generations are commonly referred to as “*arabisants*” (Arabizers) or “*les hibadous rahmans*”—“hibadous” for short. *Arabisant* reformers, though not organized into a single cohesive group, are notable for their Salafi orientation, hostility to the “corruption” of Sufi brotherhoods and *grands marabouts* with their interest in mysticism and magic, and rejection of local cultural practice, such as *sabar* dance and music, in favor of a conservative dress and demeanor. I should note that not all of these

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<sup>53</sup> Note that *daa'ira* and *daara*—school—are not the same.

practices entail a rejection of Sufism or the orders—within brotherhoods some affiliates have also taken up a more conservative, orthodox orientation. Moreover, not all *médersas* were founded by Salafis. Many founders were Sufis who felt the need to reform Qur’anic schooling so that children could better learn the fundamentals of their religion.

The *médersa* schools, which are more commonly known under the name “*écoles franco-arabe*” or as concerns secondary institutions, “*écoles islamiques*” or “*instituts islamiques*”, were quite limited in number at first; many of them were semi-rural institutions. Though they initially encountered hostility from the colonial and post-colonial state (particularly the colonial state, which was wary of the founders’ international Islamic connections), as well as traditional Muslim authorities, they gradually grew in number, particularly in urban and peri-urban areas, as the country’s population also urbanized. The past few decades has seen a significant growth in Franco-Arabe day schools and their popularity.

Contemporary Franco-Arabe schools are essentially hybrid institutions that emerged out of these self-conscious attempts to adapt and “modernize” Islamic institutions of learning in the wake of significant changes in the socio-political order under colonialism and in the post-colonial era of economic instability, urbanization, and globalization. Much of their appeal is due to the popular perception that they are an alternative to both the *daaras* of old and to the secular state schools, which evolved out of the colonial system of French schooling. Their subject matter is essentially Islamic, but goes beyond what is typically taught as religious material at Qur’anic schools, and French language-studies and mathematics are also often included in the curriculum. The schools generally draw a great deal on Western-style administrative modes; they are fee-paying institutions, teachers are professionals without the sense of *baraka* or moral authority marabouts possess, and students are organized into classes, submit to exams, and oftentimes receive diplomas or certificates.

Below I would like to examine in detail the case of a Franco-Arabe day school in the Parcelles Assainies suburb of Dakar. I do so with an eye towards understanding more concretely the range of actors and modes involved in these new schools, and how they connect up to other formal institutions of learning as well as the more intimate social spaces in which Senegalese persons are created.

### *A Contemporary Case: The u13 Franco-Arabe School*

Walking past this small Franco-Arabe school in Parcelles Assainies, one would not necessarily know it was a school unless one knew where to look. From the outside, it appears like any of the other houses in the neighborhood, with their cement block construction, dusty whitewashed walls, and small courtyard gardens; just a little bit bigger, perhaps. Sure, there is a small painting of a marabout on the side wall next to an entrance door, dignified and stern in his voluminous *boubou* (caftan), leather *babouches*, and holding a long set of prayer beads (*kuruss*) that dangle from his hand. But a lot of people have sketches of Bamba and other saints painted on the walls of their homes' courtyards, mechanic's shops, or the dry goods stores that dot almost every neighborhood street corner in the city. Yet if one looks up, high on the second floor, one will see a small painted sign which says "Ecole Franco-Arabe" and lists the name of the director, and the location and telephone number. And if one happens to walk by on a weekday in the morning and late afternoon hours, one will hear the sounds of children singing songs and reciting verses in Wolof and Arabic wafting down from the small window at the very top of the three-story home; "*mu jubal nu...mu jëm ci lu baax...mu sore ñu...ci lu bonn*," trans.; "it (Islam and its teachings) keeps us on the straight and narrow, it makes us try to do good acts, and keeps us away from evil/bad things."

The director and founder of this Parcelles Assainies Franco-Arabe school is an older Wolof widow and Mouride who has strong ties to the Mouridiyya ruling family of elites in Touba, the sainted city in central Senegal. The school, however, is not a Mouride school, as such. She lives in the house with some of her grown children, their spouses, and children. Two of her sons travel much of the year and have residences in the U.S. and Italy, respectively. The director's own business card lists her address and telephone in Dakar, as well as an office suite and telephone in Jersey City. She has been to the United States on several occasions to visit children in Memphis and the New York area. Once, in the nineties, she traveled there as part of a Mouride delegation sent by then-president Abdou Diouf, Senghor's impossibly tall technocrat successor who was voted out in the 2000 elections in the tide of calls for *sopi*, or change. She proudly showed me Diouf's official letter, with which she and the other members of delegation traveled, over one of our first interviews in 2003.

On that occasion, she also showed me the deeds and architectural plans for a large Islamic Institute and boarding school that she was planning to build out in the sands of Mbao, on the edge of Dakar's city limits. At the time, she was still raising funds for the extensive project, but in the summer of 2006 a ceremony for the laying of the first brick was held, attended by government representatives, and included in a small spot on the RTS evening news broadcast. In addition to director of the Franco-Arabe school, her business card lists her as president of an Islamic association which she has founded as a corollary to her educative activities. She is, as Brenner (2007) has written generally of *médersa* founders in West Africa, an "educational entrepreneur". Unlike the marabouts of *daaras*, he continues, "they must not only address questions of how to raise and employ the basic capital required to start a school, no matter how small, but also manage the finances of the school in order to pay their staff as well as maintain the structures...the larger the school is, the more onerous the burden," (Brenner 2007: 207).



The director is assisted in running the school by her children, who take up tasks and projects as they come along, such as hiring a new teacher from the neighborhood to take on a certain class, verifying and updating student enrollment, or collecting students' monthly tuition. The director can usually be found in her bedroom or in the living room, praying, receiving visitors, or engaging in quiet study. She is by no means an inactive or silent person, but as befitting someone her age and authority in Senegal, it is for others to come to her and for others to initiate conversation (c. f. Irvine 1974). She would quietly tell me several times during the years that I knew her that she had founded the school in order to provide for the religious education of young people. She was not running the school, she said, to make a living or to make a profit. And by all indications, she did not, for student tuition payments were barely enough to pay the teacher's salaries. I suspect that the money on which she lived and used to keep the house running came from a different place entirely, most likely her children and their international business activities.

When I first visited the school during pilot-study research in 2003, the students were divided up into three classes, each taught by a teacher in his or her small room that adjoined the rooftop courtyard where students played during recess. Upon my return to conduct dissertation research in February 2005, I found only one of those teachers still there, a Wolof woman in her mid 30s. The other two teachers, both men, had departed—one had opened up his own small school just a block or two away—and their replacement was a young woman in her early 20s. The older woman taught the youngest pupils, who ranged from about 3 years old to about 7 or 8. They call her Seydatou, an Arabicized version of her real first name. Her young colleague, Kine<sup>54</sup> taught the older students, who were subdivided into two classes, in a classroom just adjacent. Her pupils called her “*ustaaʒ*”, a transliteration of the Arabic word for teacher and a

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<sup>54</sup> All names of informants are pseudonyms.

common form of address for religious teachers in Senegal (the feminine form of *ustaad* is *ustaadha* in Arabic).

“Seydatou” is originally from the city of Touba, and a Mouride, like the school’s founder. She attended a co-ed, fee-paying Islamic school as a girl in Touba. I assume that she did not receive any French training in school, for she speaks no French and whenever I have seen her write names or information down, she always uses the Arabic alphabet. After she received her B.F.E.M-equivalency diploma, which marks the end of one’s junior high studies, she got married and pregnant. That put an end to her education, she told me; “*yakk na sama jàng*” lit. “it spoiled, or messed-up, my studies.” A few years later, she moved to the Dakar with her husband, a *commerçant*, or petty trader, and began teaching. She lives in a small, impeccably clean two-room apartment in the same section, or unit, of the Parcelles Assainies neighborhood as the school, and so she just walks a few hundred yards to and from work in the mornings, evenings, and at the beginning and end of the midday break. She lives there with her three school-age sons, who all attend the public elementary school next door. Her husband and her younger half-sister, who works as a secretary in the city, live there on weekends.

Her fellow teacher, the young *ustaaaz* Kine, also lived in unit 13 when I knew her. Not long after I began conducting research at the school, I attended Kine’s wedding. It was a more sober affair than typical Senegalese weddings, for she was a religious conservative, and so certain aspects of the traditional wedding pomp and circumstance were judged “un-Islamic” and not engaged in; for example, some of the music and dance that usually are part of a local wedding, itself not just one ceremony, but a series of social gatherings and ceremonies that take place over two or three days. After the papers were signed and prayers were said, the men returned from the mosque to the second-floor apartment where she lived with her parents and younger siblings to join the other wedding guests. Upon her marriage, she continued to live there with her husband.

Kine was relieved from her teaching duties in the afternoons for French class, which was taught by a different instructor. The younger class, taught by Seydatou, continued with their religious instruction in Wolof and French during the afternoon session. The French teacher was tall, athletic young man who lived just adjacent to the school and who tutored many students in Parcelles, private and public school students alike. He made his living circulating from small school to small school, and pupil's home to pupil's home, teaching for a few hours at a time at each place. The young *ustaaaz* did not last through the end of the school year when school did not let out for vacation after exams and she had had enough of teaching. She was replaced in the late summer by a stern young man in the late fall of that year. After Ramadan had passed, the school opened again, but Kine did not return. Afterwards, I seldom saw her around the neighborhood, but I would often see her husband returning from work in the evening as I walked home in the opposite direction. Rumor had it that she joined him at the computing center/email café where he worked and then later became pregnant. The director then hired a very warm young Wolof woman, Mariama, also in her mid-20s, to teach the two classes of older students. She stayed on through the end of my fieldwork in December 2006.

All of the students at the school live in the Parcelles neighborhood; most of them quite close by. The youngest are about 3 years old and the oldest perhaps 15 or 16. The number of boys and girls are essentially equal. Like the neighborhood, the students come from a wide variety of ethnic and financial backgrounds. However, most are Wolof and come from lower middle-class families. A few of the students in the younger class come from somewhat wealthier families. Seydatou's way of articulating this was to say, "*Nu ngi sant*", literally, "They thank God." Several have migrant fathers who live abroad in Italy, France, and the United States, she told me.

### *Curriculum and Pedagogy: Rote Repetition*

The school curriculum and teaching methods had much more to do with each teacher's own education and pedagogical approach than the school director's. All of the classes are taught in Wolof; neither Arabic nor French are used as teaching languages. A typical day in the lower class starts at 8 a.m. as the young students slowly trickle in, clothed in their green school blouses with the school logo stamped in white on the back, carrying backpacks and water bottles. The girls' heads are wrapped in a small kerchief-style cotton veil that matches the green of their blouses. Entering the classroom, they will each hold out their hands to Seydatou to be shaken, and some of the girls also curtsy (*sukku*) as they shake before they take their places at their wooden desks—girls on one side, boys on the other, and the youngest in the front rows. She starts the class each day by writing the date on the board, along with the phrase "*bismillah al-rahman al-rahim*" which is used to commence anything in a holy way; "In the name of God, the all beneficent, the most merciful".<sup>55</sup> She might have the students repeat the phrase several times after, followed by the phrase "*alhamdulillah rabil al-amin*,"; "Thanks be to God."

Class with the younger students, who number about 40 in total, Seydatou would often remark, is a lot like "*le jardin*" (kindergarten or preschool) in its tone. As a teacher, one must proceed gently and slowly—"ndank, ndank"—and review is important, for children quickly forget what they have learned. In the morning, she typically teaches students verses from the Qur'an, which she will write on the board in Arabic. She will teach them to the students by having them repeat the verse after her in Arabic, piece by piece, until they are able to repeat the whole thing in Arabic. She will then intersperse the Wolof translations with the Arabic parts and say the two together several times, having the students repeat after her each time. She will

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<sup>55</sup> Colloquially, *bismillah* is used in a variety of ways. It serves as a way to say "welcome", and to entreat someone to enter a home, a room, or to take a seat. It is to oneself and to others before eating, drinking, or beginning any sort of task.

continue having the students say the verse by selecting an older student volunteer to come up to the chalkboard at the front of the room and lead the class, tapping the board as she does with her wooden pointer and repeating the verse in Wolof or Arabic. Then she might have the students say the verse all together on their own, without a leader to initiate call and response.

This repetition of verses and phrases might go on for a long time without a break, particularly towards the end of the year when students are being prepared for their end of the year “*conférence*”; a kind of school exhibition or recital. She would frequently urge the students on, saying “*aywa*” (Arabic) or “*ci kow*” (Wolof, meaning “out loud” or “with gusto”), as they recited. Often the students will try to compensate for their imperfect knowledge of a verse by reciting very loudly. As the recitation wears on, the younger students often fall asleep. The older ones get restless and start to talk amongst themselves, play with their school supplies, or fight with each other. When students make trouble in such a way, they are publicly reprimanded or given a hard smack, or two, with her wooden pointer.

In the morning, students are given a half an hour break around 10 a.m. or so. In keeping with the young age of the students, much of this time is spent helping students open their snacks or water bottles, assisting in bathroom trips, or breaking up scuffles in the tiled, open-air area on the third floor where they are allowed to play. For a long time, this area was rather plain, but it was painted and decorated during the vacation months in 2005, and an awning was added to shelter the open-air area from the hot midday sun. The walls were painted with slogans and murals, which is common practice in elementary and preschools around the country. They include the Arabic and Latin alphabets, scenes of boys and girls (wearing their short veils) walking to school and washing their hands, and slogans below these images which tell the students of the importance of washing their hands, or that it was important to study hard in order to serve one’s country, and other phrases emphasizing the importance of cleanliness and school.

Senegal saw several major cholera outbreaks in the years of my dissertation fieldwork. During this time, the director instituted a policy that no student should buy hand-made milk-based “creams” or home-made juices sold down in the street during their break. The pupils were to drink water from a special carafe she brought upstairs, as well as to clean their hands with soap and bleachy water or hand sanitizer before going home. Though the cases of afflicted people reached the thousands nationally, the cholera was confined to smaller cities and never became terribly widespread in Dakar. It did present serious problems for the organization of the Mouride *grand màggal* to Touba in 2005, however.<sup>56</sup>

Morning class lets out at noon and reconvenes again for the afternoon session from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. In the afternoon, Seydatou teaches students from the Hadith, using the same call and response methods as with the Qur’an. She also teaches them songs about persons of particular significance in Islamic religious history or how to correctly perform one’s ablutions before prayer. She will call students up to her chair at the front of the class to learn the Arabic alphabet. Students have small chalkboards on which she will write several letters. She will pronounce them and they are instructed to repeat after her and then return to their desks to copy the letters down below. She will quiz them, individually, on their letters. Occasionally, she will engage in a short lecture or story about the history of Islam and proper behavior for Muslims and afterward

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<sup>56</sup> Major religious groups typically organize important annual pilgrimages to sainted cities in Senegal, such as the Tijane *gammu* to Tivaouane for the Prophet’s birthday or the Catholic community’s gathering in Popenguine, along the Petite Côte. More generally, the Arabic word *ziarra* has been appropriated as *siyaare* and is used to indicate disciple’s communal visits to marabouts or colloquially, any sort of holiday visit. *Gammu* and *siyaare* can also be used in verb form, for example; *Maa ngi laay siyaare* (I have come to visit you). The Mouride *màggal* to Touba is the biggest of these pilgrimages and attracts hundreds of thousands of disciples, perhaps even over a million in recent years. This presents much of an organizational and logistical challenge to local and national authorities in terms of transportation, food, lodging, sanitation, and even cell phone service. Many young Mourides run Dakar’s *car rapides* and small *Ndiaga Ndiaye* buses; the ubiquitous informal transportation cars that get most Dakarais to and from work. As a consequence, Dakar becomes like a ghost town for several days and virtually shuts down at the time of these annual pilgrimages. It is viewed as the state’s responsibility to help facilitate a successful *màggal*. Poor organization can engender serious political consequences. In 2005, cholera was of particular concern in the *màggal* planning. Following the *màggal*, many cases were reported in Touba, and some Dakarais were quite wary of returning pilgrims and their potential to spread the disease in the capital, despite state efforts to play down the seriousness of the epidemic in the media.

ask them questions. She tells the class that God created (*bind*) people, the sky and the earth. God has no equal; “*yalla, amul moroom*”, she would say.

In the other classroom, which is run by the young female *ustaaaz*, Kine, there are 17 students total, made up of 8 boys and 9 girls, and they are subdivided into two classes; one for the intermediate students and one for the more advanced pupils. There, the curriculum consists of Qur’anic verse study and Arabic reading and writing on an everyday basis. In addition, each day of the week has special designated material; the Hadith on Mondays, followed by studies in the unity of God (*tawhid*), religious law (*fiqr*), mathematics, and, finally, “comportment” studies on Friday. Here, the students are expected to take more initiative in their studies than the young students next door, and are expected to recite their lessons individually—perform—on a daily basis. The idea that they are learning daily lessons—whole, indivisible units of learning—is emphasized in every subject except for math.

Class begins with students reviewing their material from the previous day on their own. The younger pupils study from their Arabic language book, *Attilawa al-Iffriquia 1*. The more advanced students are hunched over their copies of the Qur’an; a few of the students possess nice hardback copies, but most of their books are frayed and yellowing paperbacks. Intermittently, when they feel that they are ready, they will come up to the front and kneel down in front of Kine and quietly recite their material. When everyone has come up to the front and recited their lessons, then the *ustaaaz* will commence the instruction for the day. Her teaching involves a good deal of speaking (or singing) and having the students repeat after her, like Seydatou. Kine uses this method with the religious texts, and with the Arabic language book.

The older students learn largely through memorization of paragraphs and the intermediate students’ lessons focus on learning letter combinations and memorizing vocabulary words. Each time the *ustaaaz* speaks a sentence or a vocabulary word from the Arabic language book, she will

also repeat it in Wolof. When the older students learn Arabic, they are not taught grammar or how to construct or deconstruct sentences. Rather, they learn specific sentences by rote in Arabic and a correlate sentence in Wolof. This contrasts strongly with my own learning of written and oral Arabic as university in the United States, which was focused on learning vocabulary and grammar in order that one might creatively put together sentences or engage in conversation in order to express one's own ideas. At times, Kine will engage in long explanations of the texts, but they are usually not grammatical explanations or theological exegesis. Instead, her explanations in Wolof expound on a particular theme that a text has raised, such as the different jobs in society, how to be a good and proper student, or how to be generous. She asks few questions and does not engage in discussion.

While in some ways the Kine's teaching represents a real departure from the *daara*, in its study of Arabic as a contemporary language, attention to religious law, and long explanations, it also draws strongly from the historical modes of Qur'anic schools. Rote memorization and recitation has long been the central method of *daaras*. There, students are taught to recite and write the Qur'an from memory. In Sufi philosophy, the very act of speaking the Qur'an is a mystical act by which the divine words of God are revealed and faith is affirmed.

In the afternoon, these Franco-Arabe school students have their French class with Haroun, an unmarried male teacher in his early 30s who lives around the corner and tutors and teaches in several non-religious private schools in the neighborhood. Haroun even privately tutors some of the students from the Parcelles public junior high, as I found out later. His teaching methods and approach differ from that of the young *ustaaaz*, particularly in the more relaxed way he carries himself and in the mood he brings to class, which carries over to the students' bodily postures and behavior, too. Haroun's clothing is also different than his fellow instructors at this school —



instead of wearing a caftan (*sabador*) or Western dress pants and shirt, he typically wears a T-shirt, relaxed cotton pants or jeans, and rubber sports sandals.

In these classes, the older students use an old French language book, *Nouveau Syllabaire de Mamadou et Bineta*, which is ubiquitous and cheaply available in the local markets and upon the tarps of the most informal booksellers who set up their wares on the ground. The book emphasizes syllabic learning in the development of French literacy and contains many illustrations and sketches to assist students in the development of their French vocabulary. Haroun follows the book quite closely in his teaching. It consists of first learning to read a set of letters, then the way they look and sound in combination with other vowels or consonants, subsequently a set vocabulary words that includes the letters, and finally a paragraph of prose that includes those words. He explains the significance of the French words in Wolof. Students are asked to read aloud individually to the class from the *syllabaire* and copy from the board, but they are not expected to memorize the paragraphs of material and what they mean. Haroun emphasizes learning how to read and write, and to recognize letters and the sounds they make.

Haroun's instruction for the older students also includes mathematics, but for this subject he does not utilize a book or manual. Students copy down exercises he writes for them on the board, which consist of addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and word problems. The younger students' mathematics teaching focuses on simple addition and subtraction problems. For their French lessons, he does not use the *syllabaire*. Instead, they focus on the alphabet and identifying and pronouncing very simple letter combinations he writes in their notebooks for them.

In these afternoon French classes, I sit silently in the back of the classroom on the desks alongside the students. In contrast, I sit up front in a plastic chair next to the blackboard for the morning religious and Arabic instruction, on the opposite side of the students. The front

area is also where the teachers—Seydatou, Kine, and then Mariama—sit or stand as they write on the chalkboard. Looking upon the students' faces from that position, as I sit silently and observe, taking notes, I feel more of a sense of separation from the students than I do in the afternoon French classes, where I can almost pretend I am just another one of the students by copying down the lessons from the board as they do, silently following along with my copy of the *syllabaire*, and shifting my weight as they do to try and find some more comfortable position on the hard wooden benches. For me, too, the French class is more relaxed and enjoyable; the pedagogical style, though still repetitive, is more familiar, as is the language, and I fear less that I might have to witness the meting out of various corporal punishments that made me quite uncomfortable, especially when they have provoked tears among the students.

Moreover, the afternoon French class is perhaps the most dynamic moment of the pupils' school day. Franco-Arabe school, on the whole, involves hours of daily repetition and memorization. In some ways, the repetition is helpful, for the "drilling" facilitates memorization. With call and response, students are guided through the material. When they are asked to lead the call and response or to perform perfectly their memorized material in front of the teacher and the class audience, they are required to demonstrate their mastery of the material. Many students in the school viewed this as a kind of personal test or challenge. For some, this was a positive incentive, and the pride they felt when they did well and were praised motivated them to further engage with the material. Yet for others, particularly those who were shy or routinely struggled, they looked on this recitation with dread. Their negative feelings towards school were further exacerbated by the disciplinary measures certain teachers implemented.

Seydatou routinely scolded and upbraided her young students who were misbehaving or not doing well. At times she would do this jokingly, like saying that those who didn't study well wouldn't get to have breakfast today. She also used incentives in this manner; those who studied

well today would be her “friends” or would get to come back with me to the United States. She also often relied on corporal punishment to discipline her young students; she would hit them on the shoulder or the head with her wooden pointer several times. The most disobedient pupils would be made to come up to the front of the classroom to do squats (colloquially referred to as “*pomps*”).

Kine was even more of a disciplinarian with her intermediate and advanced classes. Seydatou was alternately warm and stern with her young students, but Kine maintained a very strict and distant tone with her class at all times. She would beat several of her younger students to tears with her wooden pointer and insult them harshly. For some of her students, these raps and verbal slaps were doled out on a daily basis and made them fear her. In some situations, fear can serve a motivator, but from my observations in this class, it impeded students’ many progress. Curiously, I never saw any of her successors engage in corporal punishment. Haroun only very occasionally would discipline his students physically—the worst punishment came when several errant male students were required to continuously perform squats, or “*pomps*”, at the front of the class for 20 minutes. Yet the structure of authority in the classroom was such that none of Kine’s students dared challenge or question her behavior.

Historically, corporal punishment has been a part of both religious and secular schooling in Senegal. Though it has been discouraged in public schools in recent years, it is still rather normalized in Islamic schools. It has a long and storied legacy in Qur’anic schools, in particular. Cheikh Hamidou Kane’s classic novel, *L’aventure ambiguë*, which critically examines the life of a young Haalpulaar nobleman from his early years in a *daara*, to the difficult decision to send him to *l’école française*, to his years as an alien “other” in Paris as a philosophy student, begins with these powerful words;

“That day, Thierno [the Pulaar version of the Wolof ‘*seriñ*’] had beaten him yet again.

Samba Diallo knew his verse, though.”

He continues,

It was just that his tongue had tripped him up. Thierno had jumped as if he had walked on one of the incandescent slabs of géhenne [hell] promised to unbelievers. He had seized him by the meat of his thigh, had pinched him between the thumb and index finger and held it. The small child had gasped under the pain, and his entire body began trembling. On the tip of a sob that tied up his chest and throat, he had had enough force to get a handle on his pain; he had repeated in a small voice, broken and trembling, but correctly, the phrase from the holy verse that he had mispronounced. The instructor’s rage rose a degree higher... (Kane 1961: 13).<sup>57</sup>

Because of the emphasis on memorization and repetition, the pace of the classes was often quite slow and monotonous. Students spent also large periods of time doing nothing, due to the material constraints of the school. Though the students do use their Qur’ans and an Arabic language book in class, they must copy down much of the material from the board into their own small, soft-bound notebooks in order to learn the day’s lesson, for lack of other materials. The copying is meant to be precise and exact, including underlined text and text written in colored chalk. In this way, the teacher is the sole source of knowledge, closely monitored in its transmission. This is not a method original to the modern Franco-Arabe school; it reflects an esoteric Sufi philosophy of knowledge power that marks the master-disciple relationship in *daaras*. Sometimes, for the younger students, the *ustaaaz* would copy down the texts in each of their notebooks, particularly when it involved religious texts. This took a long time, and when Kine was doing it, students usually just sat in their desks, waiting for her to finish. Likewise,

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<sup>57</sup> *Ce jour-là, Thierno l’avait encore battu. Cependant, Samba Diallo savait son verset. Simplement sa langue lui avait fourché. Thierno avait sursauté comme s’il eût marché sur une des dalles incandescentes de la géhenne promise aux mécréants. Il avait saisi Samba Diallo au gras de la cuisse, l’avait pincé du puce et de l’index, longuement. Le petit enfant avait haleté sous la douleur, et s’était mis à trembler de tout son corps. Au bord du sanglot qui lui nouait la poitrine et la gorge, il avait eu assez de force pour maîtriser sa douleur ; il avait répété d’une pauvre voix brisée et chuchotante, mais correctement, la phrase du saint verset qu’il avait mal prononcé. La rage du maître monta d’un degré...*

when she was teaching one group of students, the other group usually had to sit in their desks quietly, unless they had something to do, which they usually did not.

Boredom was a palpable state of mind on most days in the classroom, as I alluded to at the beginning of this chapter. It was echoed in the physical environment of the classroom, in its spare walls, hard benches and crowded desks, hot, stuffy air, and limited didactic materials. After a certain point, the repetition also began to bore students. The teachers were conscious of the negative effect boredom had on students. Kine often complained to me that it was very difficult to teach two different classes (e.g. the intermediate and advanced groups of students she had within her one classroom). She said that she had talked to the director about this and asked to be given only one class. Yet I imagine the director found this request difficult to accommodate, financially, given that a smaller class would not generate the amount in tuition payments necessary to pay another teacher. For her part, Seydatou lamented on several occasions that her school did not compare favorably with “French” kindergartens and preschools. They do a lot of things, she would say; they play games and sing songs all of the time. It is worth noting that Seydatou, the instructor of the youngest class of pupils at the u13 Franco-Arabe school, often negatively compared the school at which she taught to secular preschools in precisely this way—learning was not fun there, like at preschools. She was acutely aware that the Franco-Arabe schools were part of a competitive capitalist market of/for schooling and knowledge. They have the means to do these activities because their school fees are high, she would say. Still, I did not witness the teachers attempt to modify their teaching methods in order to alleviate student boredom.

When students were bored, I would see them “disconnect” from the activities and material at hand; they would begin fidgeting in their seats, looking out the window, talking to their neighbors, staring off into space, and playing with their chalkboard or pen. When the teacher

would catch them at this behavior, he or she would reprimand them, and in the case of someone like the *ustaaaz*, might give them several hard smacks. At times, these things—boredom, repetition, fear, violence, lack of materials, strong teacherly authority, postures of submissiveness, the heat—would seem to connect up to each other in a kind of chain, or ball, and for me it was hard to tell where one ended and the other began.

As a researcher, I was also often profoundly bored as I sat observing classes at the Franco-Arabe day school in Parcelles Assainies. Sometimes it seemed as if the physical environment of the school, without even mentioning the course pedagogy and content, was actively conspiring to make class sessions as unbearable as possible. Bocar, a middle-aged Haalpulaar male friend who worked at a language center for American students and foreign researchers, gave me some interesting insights as I confessed to him these difficulties early on in my fieldwork. From his point of view, boredom was one of the biggest drawbacks of Islamic education and one reason why he didn't attend an Islamic school for long. There is a different mentality concerning education than in the Occident, he ruminated. Here, Bocar said, for education to be considered valuable, the students must suffer—it must be a painful experience.

By contrast, in the Occidental system, teachers are constantly looking for ways to make learning enjoyable and fun, he declared. Bocar underlined that “it”, i.e. *daaras* and Islamic schools, wasn't a very progressive system. Teachers are always looking to maintain distance between themselves and their students and they do this in part by not teaching their students everything that they know, he said. Though not a Mouride himself, he cited the historical case of the learned Cheikh Amadou Bamba, Mouridiyya founder, who had to go from school to school to accumulate his knowledge. No teacher would teach Bamba everything that he (the teacher) knew, he told me, for fear of losing his... here, he trailed off. “Social status?” I asked. He might

have even wanted to say *baraka*, in the sense of knowledge as magic power, source of charisma, identity, and power for generations of marabouts.

But Bocar nodded and continued, saying he agreed more with an “Occidental” model of education where knowledge is freely shared and that people think advancement (this was the exact word he used in French; “*avancement*”) comes when students are able to go beyond what their teachers know or can do and thus come up with new information, and innovative ways of doing and seeing. As Bocar alludes to here, and as we have seen in this chapter, the modes and pedagogies of Islamic schools in Senegal reflect the historical genesis of these diverse institutions. The discourse of hardship as a moral and social value that was evident in the teachers classroom speech and I noted time and time again in Senegalese public discourse resurfaces again here in Bocar’s comments, this time as the object of criticism—i.e. how Islamic schooling is overly rigid and “behind the times”, rather than being a venerated principle of personal identity and experience.

### *Discourses of Personhood and Pragmatic Challenges*

Franco-Arabe day school socializes students on multiple levels. It is but one institution within a larger field of experiences that contribute to the making of a person, however. In trying to identify what are particular practices of this Franco-Arabe school, and how they relate to the modes of Franco-Arabe schools more generally, I do not want to suggest this must necessarily affect students in a certain way or suggest that all experience attending Franco-Arabe school in the same way. Rather, I want to point out what are possible ways in which students are shaped; ways that, in turn, may or may not be reinforced but larger social discourses about the person (*nit*) that circulate in West Africa. As Ivan Karp (1977: 392) suggests, the existential dilemma of

personhood is not just about common sense, but involves vernacular theories of the person that “provide guides to classifying different people and categorizing the experience of self and other.”

At this Franco-Arabe school, students are exposed to educational material like math problems, verses, or vocabulary words, which are presented and interpreted in certain ways by the teacher that signal what is worth knowing (and what isn't) as well as how one should know it, or access it. Some of this material, in the way that it is presented by the teacher, makes moral statements about the nature of the world and social relations in it. This is often directed toward the students' selves. Students are presented ideal versions of the person and are then urged to reflect upon their own actions and behaviors. In the classroom, much of this emerged in the teaching of the Hadith, a collection of the Prophet's sayings on the proper way to live and conduct oneself, as well as the Arabic language textbook. For example, one day in the beginning class, the young students memorized a Hadith which Seydatou, the teacher, translated into Wolof as “All who build a mosque for God, God will construct something for them in return.”<sup>58</sup> Afterwards, she asked the students who wanted to go to heaven (*ajjana*), and they all raised their hands and shouted out their agreement.

In addition, teachers like the *ustaa*z also engaged in what are essentially monologues that used a text as a springboard from which to expound on. For example, one day the students in the advanced class were taught to memorize a text in their Arabic language book which was about being a good student and working hard at school. The text, as Kine translated it into Wolof, said that if they work hard (*ligéey bu baax*) and have the will/desire to succeed, that God will help them (*yalla dimbali leen*). The text also discussed the different kinds of jobs, or social roles, that exist outside of being a student (teachers, bureaucrats, etc.), the ways in which the people who hold those jobs should behave, and the potential implications of their behavior for society.

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<sup>58</sup> *Képp ku tabax jàkka ngir yalla, yalla dina la tabaxal.*



One of the main vocabulary words the students were to learn via this text was *wasaf*, which means civil servant and which the *ustaaaz* translated as “*fonctionnaire*” in French. *Fonctionnaires*, she said, are people who work for and are paid by the government (*nguur gi*). They provide services to people, and include police, fire-fighters, and hospital workers, she told them. Kine repeated her translation of the text in Wolof; “*danuy taxawu ci bëgg-bëgg nit ni*”—“they help people with their needs”—and “*ligéey bu sell la*”—it’s an admirable job. She contrasted the *fonctionnaire* with the *citoyen*, or citizen, which was also a word the text included. Whatever job one does, she explained, one must do it well and do it well for God in order to advance society. Here, I use “well” to translate the meaning of the Wolof words she used; *sell* (lit. clean) and *rafet* (lit. pretty, beautiful). To say “social progress”, she used a Wolofized French phrase, “*avancer société*”, which she repeated several times in her explanation. Her use of Wolofized French is a common practice of urban Wolof, even when there are “pure” Wolof equivalents (c. f. Mc Laughlin 2001, Swigart 1994).

On another occasion, the students were taught a Hadith about neighborly relations.<sup>59</sup> The *ustaaaz*’s translation of the Hadith was that it important to be nice to one’s neighbors and to act correctly. She used examples to further explicate the Hadith, saying if you cook meat or fish it will smell (*xeent*) such that your neighbor will be able to smell it. Perhaps your neighbor doesn’t have anything to eat, she continued, so you should always cook a large quantity so that you can give some to your neighbors should they need it. Kine then asked them if they know what a neighbor is. She explained that a neighbor is somebody with whom you share your neighborhood, someone who lives in the same area as you do. She continued, saying if you don’t do this, God will get mad (*mer*). She concluded that God notes everything we do—good things and bad things—and writes it all down.

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<sup>59</sup> *Kèpp ku gëmm yalla, ak bés bu mu jub, bul lal sa dëkkando...*

At times, Kine's explanations of texts and Hadith seemed to reflect an extreme view of the world, one that I doubt the school director would approve of. In explaining the inter-Muslim community (*moroom jullit* lit. one's Muslim equals), she told students that other Muslims are one's family/one's comrades ("*ku jullit mooy mbook*"), but those are not, one should associate with. Kine continued, saying that they should like (*bëgg*) all those who are Muslim and respect them (*jox cër*). She said that other non-Muslim people, such as Christians, aren't your family (*du sa mbokk*) even if they are one's biological brothers or sisters, because they are not Muslim. It is important to say hello to and greet other Muslims, she added, but one should not offer one's hand to non-Muslims. She repeated this general theme over and over again...*jullit mooy mbokkam, ku nekkul ci diine Islam, du sa mbokk.*

These examples represent the most overt methods by which messages about the order of things and how to be good Muslims were conveyed to students. Yet some of the most powerful ways in which students were socialized was through a combination of the said and unsaid in the classroom space. By the unsaid, I mean a whole range of bodily practices and logics, from postures of submissiveness, to the carriage of in-class performance, to manners of sitting, standing, speaking; these are what Bourdieu (1977: 77) calls the *body hexis*. This is policed and reinforced through teachers' abstract discourses on proper behavior, but even more so through their discipline. In this vein, Bourdieu (1977: 77) writes,

...practical evaluation of the likelihood of the success of a given action brings into play a whole body of wisdom, sayings, commonplaces, ethical precepts ('that's not for the likes of us') and, at a deeper level, the unconscious principles of the *ethos* which, being the product of a learning process dominated by a determinate type of objective regularities, determines 'reasonable' and 'unreasonable' conduct for every agent subjected to those regularities.

For a student, this "learning to be" can be personal and direct, but much of what students learn about being in this context comes from watching each other. They see, for example, the other

pupils excel and be praised, or make a mistake or goof off and be punished, or maintain a “middle-of-the-road” tack and go unnoticed.

As I have written above, students’ punishment was often meted out in a physical and violent manner, but it was also frequently coupled with scolding or angry insults. These insults took the form of criticism about the students’ behavior and character (which are glossed together as *comportement* in French and *jikko* in Wolof) in personality terms. Likewise, when students were praised for doing well, teachers did so by complimenting them on their personalities and persons. For example, when one student in the beginner class sung a verse well in front the class, Seydatou praised him, saying he was brave/courageous (*jambar*), that he was a teacher/savant (*ustaaaz la*). Or she would say tell a student he or she had tried well (*yaa ngi góorgóorlu*). Often, she used the good performances of some of her students as an occasion to then publicly scold reputed “bad” students or misbehavers. She would say things like “this one is a little kid, you’re older, you should do better,” or “this student has been here 4 months and can recite this, and you’ve been here 2 years and you can’t.” Students who performed well would also be told all the names of the students whom they were better than.

If students made mistakes or did not know their verses, they would be told “*danga ñakk fayda*” or “*danga ñakk xorom*”, meaning they lacked personality and dynamism (*xorom* literally means salt). She would also say that they lacked *jom*, which is a difficult word to translate into English. One might say *jom* means self-esteem or a sense of honor, but it translates most simply and truly as dignity. Some of her other common refrains were “*lekk rekk*”, “*fo rekk*”, or “*ceeb rekk*”; “you just eat”, “you just play”, and lit. “just rice”. Students who would goof off class were told that they were rude (*réew*). She would often call the class’ attention to things about students that deviated from the norm, such as a child with no shoes, a funny outfit, a runny nose, or the

particular child who was praised as an *ustaaaz*, above, but who also had a strange habit of eating soft synthetic sponges, which are commonly used as chalkboard erasers in Senegalese schools.

The *ustaaaz*'s insults were harsher. Kine would tell her students that they were crazy (*dof*) and they were “spoiling” or “ruining” the material if they made a mistake (*dangay yakk*). On one occasion she said to a misbehaving boy, “*Xanaa, doo nit yow?*” In English, that phrase might translate as, “Aren't you a human being? Can't you act like one?”, but that translation does not adequately convey the question's bite in Wolof. She did not often praise her students, but in her lectures about *jikko* (personality and behavior) and *melokaan* (character), she emphasized *kersa* (modesty) and *russ* (lit. being ashamed; used to signify deference and humility with an elder or someone of higher status).

From my observations, these common insults and less common praise seemed to create binary oppositions of behavior and of the person for the young students who attended the school. What was good *jikko* for a proper Muslim was to be an *ustaaaz*, *jambar* in front of an audience, appropriately *russ* with God and the right people, and to be polite (*yaru*) and considerate with one's neighbors. Furthermore, to be good was to be *sell* (clean) and *rafet* (pretty) and to *am* (have) *kersa*, *jom*, *xorom*, and *fayda*. In fact, one of the highest compliments in Senegal is to be told that one is simply “good” (*baax*). Being good is viewed as in large part as the result of one's education; both formal and informal (*yar*). An alternate way of saying someone is good is to say “*Dafa baax yaay*”; “He or she has a good mother”. This saying is painted on public transportation cars (along with things like “Thank God” and “I swear by Amadou Bamba”).<sup>60</sup> People also often say, “*Doom ja, ndeye ja*”, which translates as “like mother, like child”.

On the other hand, to be bad is to lack *fayda*, *xorom* and so on. To be bad is to be *réew*, *dof*, to literally *not* be a person (*nit*). Thus the experience of students at the Franco-Arabe is

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<sup>60</sup> “Alhamdoulillahi” and “Barke Serigne Touba”.

often quite arduous, both psychologically and physically. The students are subject a great deal of corporal discipline in the heat and stuffiness of the classrooms, the hardness of their benches, the class hours that seem to drag endlessly along through repetition, and through the scholarly performances of material that they are asked to give. This hardship is further reinforced by the violence teachers employ. And these challenges are largely normalized and defended by popular discourse. People say that what is easy (*yomb*) is bad (*baaxul*); it has no value.

My observations and interviews with the teachers of the U13 Franco-Arabe school revealed that the monotony of teaching also weighed on them and that their professional situations presented many difficulties. A recurring theme in my conversations with Seydatou was just how difficult the profession of teaching and her life was. “*Jàngal, dafa metti*”, lit. “teaching hurts,” she would often remark, coming to school, leaving school, in the middle of class, or on the weekends. And she would often miss days because of illness, or show up to class with a terrible cough. One of the first times I walked home with her to visit at her apartment after class, I noticed a pair of framed photographs of an attractive woman with her hair and make-up elaborately done, smiling and posing for the camera. When I asked if this was an older sister, she told me that the woman in the photographs was her, and that they were taken at her sons’ baptisms (she has one son and another set of boy twins).<sup>61</sup> Seydatou told me that she no longer looked as nice as in her baptism pictures what with her work and the stress and fatigue (*coono*) it caused. She had lost weight since she had started teaching. That wasn’t good, she concluded, for Senegalese (i.e. Senegalese *men*) like women with curvy bodies and some weight to them.

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<sup>61</sup> Children’s baptisms are important life events for women in Senegal. It is the only event where she is the center of attention, other than her marriage or a religious event such as the *hajj* or first communion/confirmation. They are usually day-long affairs attended by over a hundred family members, friends, and neighbors. Women wear expensive clothing (usually *bazin cuub* or *brodé*) and will get their hair and make-up professionally done at a salon. Some women will wear multiple outfits and make multiple trips to the salon to readjust their hair and makeup. Photos from the event are then carefully guarded in photo albums that are brought out and shown any time a newcomer visits.

That life is hard and tiring is a common refrain in Senegal. “*Aduna, coono la*”, people will say; “The world, i.e. life, is tiredness, is a pain.” Yet this is not said in anger or particular despair. More often than not it is accepted fatalistically as the natural order of things. And if one expresses a particular pain or problem, even interpersonal problems, more often than not one is told, “just be patient” and “what hurts, does not endure/last too long”.<sup>62</sup> Pain, fatigue, and hardship are often understood as God’s will or as one’s fate for that time in life. In this vein, one often hears the Wolof adage, “*Jaam ak bëgg-bëggam, yalla ak dogalam*”. This is often blithely translated in to French as “*l’homme propose et Dieu dispose*,” but a more accurate translation into English would be something like; “man has his desires and aspirations, and God has his way of working in world...and they are not necessarily the same or coterminous.”

Alone at home most of the week with three boys, Seydatou often had much fatigue, or *coono*, particularly in managing her teaching schedule and the housework, what Nigerian novelist Buchi Emecheta (1983) calls the “double yoke.” She did not have a refrigerator or any domestic help and shared a kitchen and bathroom with the other residents of her apartment building. She would wake up very early in the morning to clean her two rooms, and if it was her designated day, the common-living areas of the apartment, i.e. the bathroom and the kitchen. At lunchtime, she would rush home for the three hour break to cook lunch. And Senegalese cooking is not a speedy affair; most rice dishes, which are the conventional lunchtime fare, take at least 1 ½ to 2 hours to prepare. She would often be late to class because she had been doing laundry, cooking, or cleaning. Once class let out in the evenings, she would walk to the market to pick up fresh provisions.

Not only does she have her immediate family to think about, she expressed to me, but her parents and siblings, as well. Generosity and mutual aid (*solidarité, jappante*) is an important

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<sup>62</sup> *Nga muññ rekk. Lu metti yaggul.*

part of Senegalese affective and kin relations. In fact, these relations are largely defined through these acts. She is the only child of her mother and father, Seydatou explained. Her father passed away when she was fairly young and her mother remarried and had several children with her second husband, but only one son. He is not married, she told me, and doesn't have a job. Therefore, there is a lot of pressure on her to help her family out, given that she is the oldest and her brother is currently unable. Older siblings, in particular, have heavy responsibilities towards their parents and to younger, dependent siblings, and this can weigh heavily on these individuals, as Seydatou's comments illustrate.

These family relations of support and dependency link back to the way in which authority, status, and resources work in Senegalese society, more generally. Individuals in Senegalese society, even among the historically non-casted Jola, are ranked relative to each other in terms of age, sex, and other characteristics. Inequality and authority are inalienable parts of identity, kin relations, and social relations. As Villalón (1995: 58-59) writes, along with one's place in this social hierarchy also comes certain notions about roles in work and resource distribution; "Slaves, griots, younger family members, and any other individuals in an inferior position are judged not only to have less authority but to be dependent on others...this dependency involves degrees of authority but also obligations on the part of the holder of the superior position." Her job, Seydatou told me, was poorly paid, for the tuition fees were low and many students did not pay regularly. Her goal was to open up her own Islamic school and work there as a director, not a teacher. That way, she concluded, she would have time to take care of herself and her house.

The *ustaa*z was eventually replaced by Mariama, a warm young Wolof woman, also struggled with juggling work and family life while her husband, an electrical technician, worked abroad in Mauritania. Though she was just a few years older than Kine, she had four children, three of them school-age and one of them a rambunctious baby. Commuting to work from her

father's home in the Camberène neighborhood took about 15 minutes by public transportation car and another 20 minutes of walking. She would bring her young baby with her to class in the mornings and care for it while she taught class. They would stay in the neighborhood during the three hour lunch break, and she would return again with her baby to teach two hours of class in the afternoon (students' French classes had been dissolved by this time) before they went home.

Yet there was more to these teachers' lives than simply being fatigued or overwhelmed, likewise for the students and their tribulations. Given the tiredness of which Seydatou and the young mother both complained in managing their professional and personal lives, I was surprised and incredibly moved when they became my most dedicated "students". During the 2005-2006 school year, I organized an English class that I held two days a week for an hour after class had let out, at the behest of several of the students at the Franco-Arabe school, particularly the young teenage girls. I am not sure that in the long term they retained much of the English they learned, other than perhaps the alphabet and how to count. The students' favorite part was learning children's songs and nursery rhymes like "Row Your Boat". After several months, the students lost much of their initial interest, but Seydatou and her colleague remained dedicated and enthusiastic about my informal course, even though this meant a precious hour out of their days twice a week at a time in the evening when I can imagine that all they wanted was to go home and attend to what awaited them there.

Though it is clear that the formalized pedagogy and moralizing socialization of the Parcelles Franco-Arabe school has little in common with an improvisational ethos and off the cuff sensibility of pragmatic making do practices and the informal sector in Senegal, these teachers' personal lives show that the school and its actors are part and parcel of a world in which formal channels to work and well-being are often inadequate and therefore incite creative strategies at patchworking. In Chapter 5, I will examine more closely the ways in which ideas



and practices of *góorgóorluisme* were both present in and excluded from the hybrid Islamic school classroom. It is worth noting that a significant portion of those who are involved in the informal sector in Senegal (a “marginal” sector paradoxically dominant and pervasive in its demographic strength) are those who received *daara* or Islamic day school education. These scholastic modes of socialization and transmission of sacred knowledge, while on the surface antithetical to the ad-hoc and situational know-how of making do, certainly do not preclude or inhibit these school leavers and graduates’ activities in the informal sector relative to their secular school peers.

### *Conclusion*

The societies out of which *daaras* emerged in Senegal no longer exist as they did. They have been radically transformed over the past decades by the collapse of local states, the advent of colonial rule, economic restructuring, monetization, wage-labor, globalization, and Western-style secular schooling. Out of these changes, hybrid Franco-Arabe day schools, with which I include Islamic schools and *médersas*, have emerged. For some people, they represented a pragmatic vision of serious reforms to Sufi practice, in an effort to access a more orthodox or “true” Islam. For others, like the director of the u13 Franco-Arabe school, they are understood as a way to serve God and benefit the youth’s of one’s community by providing a different way to learn religious values and sacred religious texts. For urban parents, Franco-Arabe schools provide a way to introduce children to Islamic religious practice and values, without sending them away to a *daara* for several years. Though local girls occasionally studied alongside boys in the Qur’anic schools, the advent of co-ed Islamic, or Franco-Arabe schools, has opened up a more significant path for girls and young women to Islamic and Arabic studies.

Franco-Arabe schools, whether run for philanthropic reasons or to make a living, occupy a diverse educational “market”. Parents, if they have the means and are so inclined, have a wide range of schools to which to send their children. Franco-Arabe schools are demanding to manage and if directors want to avoid financial problems, they must attract sufficient students to pay their costs. At the Franco-Arabe school in unit 13, the school year was late in starting for several years, because parents were slow to enroll their children, or enrollment was insufficient. Directors must also manage their teaching personnel. During the time I was conducting research, the teacher of the older class changed three times and class often did not meet because a teacher was sick or had personal problems and there was no one to replace him or her. The French classes were dropped in the fall of 2005, for lack of funds, so, after that, the school no longer really counted an *école franco-arabe*, as such.

Moreover, after my months of observation in the advanced class in the spring of 2005, the class lost half its enrollment. The school director had sent the oldest boys to another Islamic school in Parcelles, for the boys could not continue their studies at the school at a higher level, in part because the school lacked the funds to continue to pay two teachers. Each year the youngest class also loses many students as they come of age and their parents enroll them in the public secular elementary school next door. The majority of the school’s enrollment and revenue comes from students whose parents approach the Franco-Arabe school as a kind of religious preschool education. The future of those students who stay on to study at more advanced levels is unclear; they may be able to go on and teach at an Islamic school one day, but their competitiveness as candidates on the job market, as well as their practical knowledge and skills, is limited. “What can an adult graduate of an Islamic school or institute do, other than teach Islamic school?” I was asked by a Muslim math professor at a public school when he learned of my research.

These issues link to Hefner's (2007) query about that which is necessary to live as a Muslim in modern times, a concern which also motivates the Ivoirian research of Robert Launay (1992), among many others. During my research, I found that most people—from an imam, to a Franco-Arabe school teacher, to fruit stand operator—would be perfectly able to give a clear answer to this question when put to them. In their answers, attending an Islamic-minded school and being education in the basic of Islam would make up just one part of a whole set of “proper” Muslim practices. However, even if individuals might answer this question similarly, such common answers would not necessarily translate into them adopting the same religious behaviors and practices and making the same decisions with regard to schooling.

I would suggest that this is due, in large part, to the advent of Western-style schooling and the integration of people's livelihoods and personal economies into global capitalism. It may also stem from the diversity of Islamic religious practice and affiliation in contemporary Senegal, an historical product of the ways in which Islam was adopted and appropriated by people. Moreover, it may also link up locally with the historic idea that Islamic religious practice in Senegal is less than authentic and needs to be purified and returned to a more “true” Islam—an idea that underpins the Salafi philosophy of the *arabisants*.

This orientation, in its contemporary popular form, reads Islamic religious history in Senegal through an idealized lens. It focuses on Islamization in the abstract rather than on the changing ways by which people appropriated Islam. In this way, the sense of an Islamic “frontier”—perhaps a reality of centuries past, but not of the present—is brought into the contemporary context and is used by people to make moral judgments about others. Personal piety is then made self-conscious and public, and is continuously signaled and referenced in order to cultivate or maintain one's reputation as appropriately pious. This takes many forms, stylistically, in contemporary Senegal. For example, sartorial styles related to Muslim

personhood range from wearing the *voile* and loose-fitting, long sleeve clothing; to sporting a beard and carrying a Qur'an and rosary (*kuruss* in Wolof); to adoption of dread locks, military pants, and iconic photographic necklaces; to the exhibition of voluminous, expensive *boubous en bazin*, enormous sunglasses, and expensive cars such as Mercedes 4x4s or Hummers. Each style may be used to signify a general sense of being a pious, proper Muslim as well as affiliation with a particular group or ideology such as the Salafi-minded *arabisants* or the Mouride Baye Falls, or to a leader such as Serigne Bethio or Serigne Modou Kara, respectively. Given that Muslim affiliation is no longer a question of conversion, but is practically hereditary, these affiliations become a way for younger generations of Muslims born into the religion to distinguish themselves from their elders.

In this sense, Hefner's question—which is one that many researchers invoke in their writing—gives way to a corollary question that Dilley (1994: 3) poses as well; “what is necessary for a person to be a full member of a local community of Muslims?” Here, being Muslim is brought out of the abstract and put into relation with the socio-cultural and political-economic worlds in which Muslims live. One becomes or is Muslim in relation to specific religious communities and specific interpretations and orientations toward Islamic doctrine that are historical products bound up in larger sets of power relations, or epistemes. In Senegal, people are fully conscious that there are a range of different Islamic “communities”, as it were, and a range of ways to be Muslim. This includes people, who when asked about the brotherhood affiliation, profess to be “simply Muslim” (“*musulman tout court*”).<sup>63</sup>

The ambivalence of schooling in Senegal, borne out of “colonial confrontations”, deepened by the difficulty of people's post-colonial experiences, and combined with this

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<sup>63</sup> The idea of being “simply Muslim” is particularly common among Jola folks to the south, whose elders converted to Islam fairly recently, and who are less involved in the *confréries* and reform movements.

religious plurality means that the “ambiguous adventure” of becoming a person in Senegal continues, more than 40 years after Kane (1961) wrote his seminal novel. In the next chapter, I want to turn to what is also the next period in little Samba Diallo’s journey of the self—public secular schools.

### CHAPTER 3

#### SENEGALESE PUBLIC SECULAR SCHOOLS

In *L'aventure ambiguë*, Cheikh Amidou Kane's classic 1960s novel, the author critically examines how becoming an adult member of Haalpulaar'en society has changed under colonial modernity through the story of Samba Diallo. The reader follows the protagonist's life as he first attends Qur'anic school as a young boy, is then sent to "French school" as he grows older, and, finally, as he journeys to Paris as a young adult to attend university. In Samba Diallo's community of origin, Kane portrays the local elders' eventual decision to send their sons to French schools—institutions whose arrival in the area is rather recent compared to that of the Qur'anic school in Haalpulaar'en communities—as a struggle between the two cultures, or civilizations, for the community's future *and* for its residents' souls. Early in the novel, in a discussion among several male elders, including the Qur'anic schoolmaster (*ceerno* in Pulaar), the following question is asked; "Do we still have enough strength to resist the school?"<sup>64</sup> Samba Diallo's father replies, "Surely nothing has invaded our lives as loudly as the needs that their school allows one to satisfy... we no longer have anything... thanks to them [the colonizers] it is by this point that they have a hold over us. Whoever wants to live, to be able to support himself, must compromise himself."<sup>65</sup> When one male character concurs that "their" school (i.e. French school) does a better job of teaching its students how to do the practical work of life (*lier le bois*

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<sup>64</sup> *Mais avons-nous encore suffisamment de force pour résister à l'école...*

<sup>65</sup> *Il est certain que rien n'est aussi bruyamment envahissant que les besoins auxquels leur école permet de satisfaire. Nous n'avons plus rien... grâce à eux, c'est par là qu'ils nous tiennent. Qui veut vivre, qui veut demeurer soi-même, doit se compromettre.*

*au bois*--lit. to “attach wood to wood”), Diallo *père* asks; “Even at the price of His sacrifice?”<sup>66</sup> The man responds, “I know, too, that He must be saved. We’ve got to construct solid homes for men and God must also be saved within these houses. That I know. But don’t ask me what should be done tomorrow morning, for I do not know.”<sup>67</sup> The conversation, Kane writes, “would go on like this, bleak and interjected with long silences,”<sup>68</sup> before it ended and the men dispersed (Kane 1961: 20-22 ).

Here, school is envisioned as a foreign institution that alienates young people from their families, their culture, and ultimately from God. Through their pedagogical methods, their scholastic content, and the cultural values that discern and elevate this material as the scholastic content and pedagogical methods of choice, these schools are seen to create and mold young people to be different from their ancestors and from the living communities from which they are issued. Kane locates the novel in his own homeland of Fuuta Toro, or the “*pays des Diallobe*”; the northwest region of the Senegalese interior peopled mostly by Haalpulaar’en, the country’s first converts to Islam.<sup>69</sup> Yet this historic struggle, he suggests, is one in which the whole African continent has become implicated.

Kane’s romantic construction of this continental cultural struggle does not fail to engage the contradictions of European rule. The colonials (though Kane does not use this word, however, he simply calls them “the ones who have come”) know how to kill with efficiency, yet they also know how to cure, he writes. Kane continues, evoking the paradoxes and the strangeness of the colonial conquest and the system of governance they put in place; “Where they

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<sup>66</sup> *Même au prix de Son Sacrifice?*

<sup>67</sup> *Je sais aussi qu’il faut Le sauver. Il faut construire des demeures solides pour les hommes et il faut sauver Dieu à l’intérieur de ces demeures. Cela, je le sais. Mais ne me demandez pas ce que qu’il faut faire demain matin, car je ne le sais pas.*

<sup>68</sup> *...dura ainsi, morne et entrecoupée de grands silences.*

<sup>69</sup> In contrast to early Berber and Pulaar conversions, Cruise O’Brien (1971) argues that much of the other sectors of what is now the Senegalese population converted to Islam in the last 150 years in a “sacred nationalist” response to the restructuring of indigenous societies under colonial rule.

have prompted disorder, they also create a new order. They destroy and they also create.”<sup>70</sup> The colonizers most effective tool of domination, he writes, has been the school, not the canon (“*le canon*”); e.g. the military might or threat of violence that emerges from the end of a gun. In part, the school, or “the new school” as Kane intermittently calls it here, echoes the canon, but it is even more effective, for it “perennializes the conquest”. Yet in important ways, school is different from military might or the threat of force, Kane contends. It is like a magnet, he suggests, which fascinates African souls. It brings about a resurrection and a kind of peace—a new order (“*un ordre nouveau*”). Kane concludes that in this new order, the relationship between the new school and the new man is rife with tension, for each is dependent on the other. On one hand, men must submit to the experience of the school in order to ultimately be free and prosperous. On the other hand, he suggests, the school relies on men to grow and expand as an institution in Africa.

Though some make take issue with Kane’s interpretations of the dual nature of African colonialism, it is worth noting that critical scholars of education cite the contradictory and conflictual nature of school knowledge(s) throughout the modern world (c.f. Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, Willis 1981). This contradicts a modernization reading of the school which supposed that school works as an instrument to reorient students away from “traditional” ascriptive status to “modern” achieved status (c.f. Parsons 1961). And it adds more complex nuances to a Bourdieuvian reading of education that suggests schools reproduce existing class inequalities in a masked form that ultimately legitimizes their existence. In this context, Bradley Levinson and Dorothy Holland (1996:1-2) suggest that school, as a “contradictory resource” can offer certain freedoms and opportunities to young people, but it can also draw students farther into dominant nationalist projects, capitalist labor, and system of class, race, and gender

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<sup>70</sup> *Où ils avaient mis du désordre, ils suscitaient un ordre nouveau. Ils détruisaient et construisaient.*



inequality (c.f. Bloch 1998, Morrow and Torres 1995). For Willis (2003) and Yon (2000), school is a site in which the disjunctions and contradictions of modernity play out.

The concerns over the advent of Western schools in Senegal at the heart of *L'aventure ambiguë* echo people's real dilemmas of that era, but such problems are not confined to the early to mid-1900s. Questions about Western schools and their implications for social change, cultural identity, and economic survival reach back well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the French began to expand their presence along the Atlantic coastline and up the Senegal River, building forts, establishing trading posts, and asserting their nascent power. While in the earliest times of French involvement in West Africa, the colonials sent their children back to France for their education, the establishment of schools in the Senegalese urban centers for these French children, which included mixed-race pupils from the créole class, and their later expansion to include black Muslim children, signaled an important shift in colonial engagement in Senegal. This change would have far-reaching and enduring consequences—most immediately for the sustainability and legitimacy of colonialism and later for local political and social leaders in the anti-colonial movement.

In the *longue durée*, the construction of this standardized system of public secular schools has had a profound impact on Senegalese youth and workers as they seek to construct a productive life for themselves. In the early post-colonial period, Western-style school knowledge, and more importantly, the diplomas they bestowed on graduates were a source of respectability and authority and helped connect young generations to real possibilities for employment, particularly in the public sector. As I suggested in the Introduction, reductions in state personnel prompted by structural adjustment policies concurrent with an increase in the number of school attendees and graduates over the past several decades in Senegal has undercut the power of local schools to reliably connect their graduates to well-paid work and opportunities

for advancement. While on a global scale, the connection between literacy and academic capital, on one hand, and white-collar employment remains strong, these gaps between education and employment locally have prompted many youth to look less favorably on formalized school knowledge and to question its value. As such, though the impetus is different, contemporary populations are questioning formalized secular schools in a way that recalls the educational and social dilemmas of Cheikh Amidou Kane's era.

In the following section, I want to examine the historical development of formal Western-style schools in Senegal from their inception in the early 1800s up to the point of Kane's novel in the mid 1900s, to better understand and contextualize the relationships of power and knowledge at play as they have been constructed over time. I will then carry this historical examination through the post-independence era to the present day—a time when debates over the meaning and role of educational knowledges are as active and urgent as ever, carried out on a variety of social, political and organizational levels. This will be further elaborated as a focus of Chapter Six.

In the literature, periodizations concerning the history of Senegalese schools abound and scholars tend to emphasize the many changes Senegalese school have undergone in their functioning and objectives over the course of their evolution. These changes reflect larger ideological transformations about role of knowledge in society over time, beginning in the early colonial era with the idea of education for Africans as civilizing duty of whites, moving to an emphasis on school as promoter and inculcator of French ideals of being and behaving in the colony, and subsequently to school as forum for the training of administrative personnel as part of the larger goal of the *mise en valeur* of the colony—a notion which might translate to harnessing the productive or income-generating capabilities of the colony.

In recent decades, much debate and policy has been driven by the idea of “development” in various guises; national development, human development, local development, and sustainable

development (“*développement durable*”). Public schools are presented by the state and other political actors as essential elements in Senegal’s development as a modern and prosperous African nation. Nowadays, this discourse importantly locates the nation as both grounded in its historical and cultural particularities and open to wider world of exchange and interaction—as well as competition—among nations and peoples on a global scale. In his speeches, Abdoulaye Wade, who was president at the time of this research, vacillated between laudatory comments about the great work Senegal and the Senegalese are doing as a nation and admonitions as to how young people need to be “serious” and “responsible” if they are going to catch up. The latter emerged when the state’s authority was called into question by student strikes, such as those which burned brightly in the spring of 2006, and admonitions about how the country was behind (*en retard*—lit. “late”) relative to developed countries (here Wade did not use these words but rather relied on the racial term “*les blancs*” as a way to gloss or reference the United States and European countries).

Taken as a whole, these readings privilege the voices of colonial and African elites, states, and powerful international organizations like the World Bank over those of the great majority of middle-class and working class people in Senegal, young and old, who have been heavily involved in such educational endeavors in recent decades and upon whose lives such policies have had considerable impact. In the second half of this chapter, I will explore the workings of contemporary schools through the case study of a public junior high school in suburban Dakar, to examine present-day visions of education and how they are lived and negotiated by the people directly involved.

### *Colonial Schools in the Two Senegals*

The first formal Western school in Senegal was established in Saint-Louis (*Ndar* in Wolof parlance) in 1817 by Jean Dard, under the guidance of Mère Javouhey, the Mother Superior of the sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny. Dard was a liberal progressive and member of the anti-slavery movement in France (Colin 1980). His early correspondence indicates that he envisioned education as a key element in the spread of civilization and progress among Africans (Colin 1980). Once in Senegal, Dard used Wolof in his classroom to translate from French to the students' native language. His self-directed linguistic studies lead him to develop a system for writing Wolof and its grammatical codification. He was the first person to do so. Dard's inclusion of Wolof in classroom teaching was not appreciated by religious authorities and other colonial elites in Saint-Louis, however, and he was soon fired (Prinz 1996). His replacement subsequently switched from a dual language approach to a French-only curriculum. The assimilationist and Franco-centric colonial logic of the time maintained that the study and mastery of the French language was the pathway to the achievement of "cultivated" mentality and adoption of "civilized" behaviors by Africans. The speaking of Wolof was deplored and students were even forbidden to speak it outside of class (Colin 1980).

Colonial surveys and reports from the mid-1800s, which I consulted at the National Archives in Dakar, show that French language promotion was a key concern for the administration. A government questionnaire, distributed in 1864, asks each of the primary school directors (there were 16 recorded schools in the colony at the time) whether French is the object of special instruction in their schools and if their teaching exerts a French influence. The schools all report in similar tones that French language, culture, and morality are primary aspects of their pedagogies and *raison d'être*. To the question about developing French, one school responds; "Progress is slow. The Wolof language is a big obstacle; within the families, this is the only

language spoken.” It concludes, “The stimulus has been given and success is certain,” (Sénégal 1864-1871).<sup>71</sup> The correspondence of d’Erneville, an young schoolteacher posted to Dagana, a small trading post in the hinterland along the Senegal River, with the Head of the Office of the Interior in the late 1860s demonstrates a different, much more positive attitude towards Wolof language in colonial schools and students’ parents—one that was perhaps existed mostly on the margins after Dard’s departure. He writes, “Above all, I am keen that the students know how to speak French well. I do not let even a word go by in reading before they haven’t given me its meaning in Wolof, so that I may see if they understand what they have read.” He continues in another letter from that year, “I very much thank the parents of my students for they have encouraged me through the good advice they would give to their children,” (Sénégal 1864-1871).<sup>72</sup> In contrast, school correspondence from a school in Bakel, also in the Fleuve region, suggests that students read and write French without comprehending the meaning of the words. I would argue that this kind of participatory style is very much on par with the historically esoteric pedagogy of Qur’anic schools (*daaras*).

Despite d’Erneville and perhaps many other less visible teachers’ inclusion of Wolof (albeit in a secondary role) in the classroom, the exclusion of native languages for the promotion of French remained the official and predominant pedagogical orientation of Senegalese schools into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It has also been so in the post-independence era, despite efforts by some educators, activists, and members of the political class to include national languages in school curriculum.<sup>73</sup> The French language’s enduring status as the official and the only acceptable

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<sup>71</sup> *Le progrès est lent. La langue ouolof est un grand obstacle ; dans l’intérieur des familles on ne parle que cette langue. L’impulsion est donnée est le succès est certain.*

<sup>72</sup> *Je tiens surtout à ce que mes élèves sachent bien parler le français. Je ne les laisse passer un mot en lisant avant qu’ils ne m’aient donné la signification en oulof : afin que je voie s’ils comprennent bien ce qu’ils ont lu. Je remercie beaucoup les parents de mes élèves car ils m’ont bien encouragé par les bons conseils qu’ils donnaient.*

<sup>73</sup> The designated “national” languages in post-independence Senegal are Wolof, Pulaar, Sereer, Jola, Soninké and Malinké, languages whose status was reaffirmed by the State in 2001. French is the “official” language of Senegal.

language in this context has been a critical element through which Senegalese young people interact with the school as an authoritative state institution and their educational experiences are mediated.

In a recent study of school-family relationships across a range of class backgrounds in Dakar, Souleymane Gomis (2003) notes that the distance between contemporary students' maternal languages and school language is generally greater for those of working class background than that of students who come from middle-class or bourgeois families. As such, that fact (a) different language(s) are generally spoken in the home and than in the school is taken as a factor in students' educational failures and success in ways that reflect class divisions in Senegalese society and the connection between linguistic, academic, and social forms of capital. However, Gomis' argument goes beyond the issue of language choice, itself, to take into account the influence and significance of discursive styles within language, as well. From his research, he concludes that families with a high level of instruction tend to exhibit more individualistic and abstract language use in which the focus is placed on the child's development of individual autonomy and access to knowledge. Gomis also found that students from working-class ("*populaire*") families have a more restrained language use, regulated by the family's patriarchal authority figure within a larger context of submission and emphasis on the group's well-being. In these families, he suggests, there is little place for negotiation of conflict. The designation of

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The accordance of national status of a language marks the way for their introduction into school curriculum, but according to the Ministry of Education, this project is still in its experimental stages. The politics of incorporating national languages into schools are fraught, given the multi-ethnic composition of local schools, particularly in the Cap-Vert Peninsula and in major cities. Many Haalpulaar'en and Jola, in particular, resent the growing predominance of urban Wolof language use, a process sometimes referred to in academic literature as Wolofization. Wolofization as a process of linguistic and cultural change encompasses both language and conceptions of/claims to ethnicity (*xeet* in Wolof). In local talk about Wolofization among non-Wolofs, Wolof is sometimes represented as something that is brought by young people into the familial space of the home from the street. If national languages were taught in public schools many non-Wolof parents would likely object to their children learning Wolof in school at the expense of their own maternal language, and I would expect the reverse would also be the case in Casamance and the Fleuve region with Jola and Pulaar, respectively, where they are the predominantly spoken languages. Trying to teaching multiple national languages in a given school would also likely present serious logistical difficulties and may lead to ethnic segregation of students for part or all of their school day.

these two types of language use, Gomis writes, does not preclude hybrid situations, of which he encountered many in the field.

The significance of this data stems from his suggestion that the discursive modes of the school are much more aligned with that of upper-class families' language socialization. As such, this tends to favor the success of bourgeois children at school and to create further difficulties for working class students in their families. However, the general conclusion Gomis draws from his field data is that the continued use of French in school as a teaching language increases students' difficulty at school and contributes to students' alienation from school and from their family life, as well as that of parents, who often withdraw from involvement due to their sense of inferiority with regard to well-schooled and highly literate teachers. Official use of French language in schools and in other state institutions serves to mark off an area of expertise and know-how and exactly whom might have access to and mastery of such areas—a phenomenon termed “elite closure” (Myers-Scotton in Villalón 1995). In the era of the modern Senegalese state, the political scientist Leonardo Villalón (1995: 83) writes, “An emphasis on literacy and the use of the French language in a country where only a small percentage of the population has such skills serves not only to symbolically demarcate the domain of the state, but more concretely as an exclusionary barrier that precludes much societal intrusion into the state's domain.”<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> I would argue that this was particularly the case in the first two decades after independence, during the tenure of Léopold Sédar Senghor, Senegal's “poet-president” who had a largely French education and a well-noted love of the French language. Senghor viewed the state and himself, as head of state, as authoritative arbiters of “culture” in the nation. More recently, President Abdoulaye Wade and his prime ministers and cabinet members have made several state speeches in French and Wolof, as have opposition leaders. Yet Wade's speech-making Wolof is not a “pure” or “deep” Wolof (as it is vernacularly referred to; *Olof piir* or *Olof bu xoot*). Rather, it is peppered with French lexical borrowings, particularly clauses, for which there are very well-known Wolof equivalents. On the other hand, television news broadcasts in Wolof language use almost entirely Wolof, even for words like “development” or “sexually-transmitted disease”. Still, the main evening news is a French-version broadcast; I am unsure whether such uses of Wolof in an official capacity do much to de-center the state as a master of French literacy and knowledge-language power. See Swigart (1994) for an interview with Wade and discussion of his lack of self-awareness regarding his official use of urban Wolof.

Linguistic research into urban language forms in Senegal—in particular “urban Wolof”—generally supports these ideas, while also exploring the ways in which people self-consciously use French, Wolof, and other local languages in different social milieu. The use of urban forms of Wolof or plurilingual code-switching (as is the case in Ziguinchor, largest city in the southern Casamance region) in which speakers will intersperse French, English, Mandinka, or Jola into the grammatical structure of their Wolof speech utterances (or vice versa with Jola and Mandinka) is particularly important to the enactment of a young, cosmopolitan Senegalese subjectivity, challenging older ideas about the importance of speaking good French (c.f. Dreyfus and Juillard 2001, Mc Laughlin 2001, Swigart 1994). As Leigh Swigart writes (1994: 179); “The use of French without at least some recourse to Wolof expressions or lexical items in a friendly conversation, or even in an informal discussion in the workplace, marks a Senegalese as *assimilé* [assimilated], a perhaps too willing victim of the French civilizing mission. To speak French is desirable; to speak French too much is inappropriate. Most Senegalese do not wish to display that kind of admiration or closeness with the cultural ‘centre’ of colonial times,” [author’s emphasis].

### ***Race, Inequality, and Identity***

That lingering cultural “center” of colonial times was first constructed through the educational endeavors of the Catholic Church, with the encouragement by the French government. Two groups, the Frères de Ploërmel and Javouhey’s Soeurs de St. Joseph de Cluny established several schools in town of Saint-Louis and on the tiny island of Gorée, just off of present-day Dakar, including a school for girls in 1819. In these two urban communities, a strong race-based class system developed in which education was a key perpetuator and legitimator of social status and inequality. Roland Colin (1980) describes the class structure in Saint-Louis and



Gorée as an “intermediary” in the articulation between the French socio-economic system of the capitalist bourgeoisie and the lineage system of many pre-colonial Senegalese societies. One can conceptualize the social system in this context as a set of concentric circles (Colin 1980) or more typically as a triangle. At the circle’s center, or triangle’s apex, are the white administrators and traders (*métropolitains*), followed by the créole or *mulâtre* (mulatto) class of mixed-race (*métis*) inhabitants, who were also actively involved in trade and elite cultural affairs, and, finally, the town’s black residents (referred to as *originaires* or *habitants* in colonial discourse) at the bottom or outermost circle. While missionaries later tried to establish schools aimed at educating blacks in Senegal, early schools were intended for and attended mostly by Christian créoles.

With the growth of colonial schools in subsequent years (both in terms of sheer number and complexity with the establishment of a secondary school in 1848 by the Abbé Boilat) more educational opportunities opened up for *originaires*, but within clear limits. For example, at mid-century, Governor-General Faidherbe oversaw a program of school expansion and secularizing reform that allowed Muslims to enroll and attend French schools, and which also included the renaming of the elite *Ecole des Otages* in Saint-Louis as the *Ecole des Fils des Chefs*, designed for the sons of French-chosen colonial chiefs as a training ground for this new generation and for interpreters. Faidherbe’s educational policies strongly reflected the prevailing French assimilationist politics of the day, which, as a guiding policy in the French colonial project, drew from two contradictory ideological sources; Enlightenment ideals about the equality of mankind and a strong undercurrent of ethnocentric, racist ideology, which cast French civilization as superior, Africans as inferior, and African culture non-existent (Vaillant 1997: 683-684, Crowder in Villalón 1995: 80). In this context, Janet Vaillant writes, French education and culture were considered “a gift” to Africans. She echoes *L’aventure ambiguë* novelist Cheikh Amidou Kane’s language in her historical narrative analysis; “Once African military opposition had been crushed,

the French fortified their power by transmitting a conviction in the superiority of their culture, and therefore their right to rule, through their education and religious practice, ” (Vaillant 1997: 684).

The class structure in Senegal that mediated Africans’ access and participation in colonial educational projects was further elaborated in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the creation of the French colonial empire. Though its formal declaration was made in 1885 at the Berlin Conference, the Empire’s actual organizational and infrastructural construction in Senegal took place over the decades proceeding the conference, particularly under the tenure of Governor-General Louis Faidherbe (Colin 1980: 206). The establishment of the Four Communes was a critical factor in the evolving relationship between class inequality and entitlement, education, and identity of this era. In 1848, Senegal was granted a seat in the House of Representatives (*Chambre des Députés*) in Paris and in 1872, the creation of the communes of Senegal was officially decreed. The communes were initially comprised of Saint-Louis and Gorée Island, and the towns of Rufisque and Dakar were added in 1880 and 1887, respectively. In these municipalities, male residents, including blacks, enjoyed citizenship and voting rights the same as their counterparts in the metropole. These rights inspired black, *métis*, and white inhabitants of the communes for much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although they were not “seriously practiced” , Robinson (2000: 98) argues, until the emergence of electoral institutions like city councils in the 1870s under the Third Republic.

Of the Four Communes, Saint-Louis, which had definitively become a French holding in 1815, had in fact served as the center of French commercial and administrative operations in French West Africa from the mid-1500s and would continue to do so through the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Johnson 1971). Dakar and Rufisque did not become important urban centers until the turn of the century, when peanuts were developed as a cash crop for export to the metropole

to be used in soap and cooking. In 1912, the capital of AOF officially switched from Saint-Louis to Dakar. Of Saint-Louis, Johnson (1971) writes that it was somewhat arrogantly considered “a city apart” by its residents; a great modern cultural leader ahead of its time. He describes the urban Saint-Louis elite as a self-perpetuating group, clannish and rife with nepotism. These notions are themselves echoed in the historiography of Saint-Louis, and the other communes, as well as contemporary popular discourse about Saint-Louis, particularly Saint-Louis women.<sup>75</sup> Mamadou Diouf (2001: 135) describes historical research into the communes, above all Saint-Louis, as a way to trace the emergence of a “distinct native civility” (*une civilité indigène distincte*).

Particularly notable in Saint-Louis, for Diouf, is the important presence of *both* Islam and Christianity. He suggests that particular tangles of Islamic and Christian religious practices rework local codes of being and social relations, contributing, as the trope goes, to the emergence of a *savoir-faire* in the culinary arts as well as manners of attiring and perfuming oneself, and architectural ways of appropriating faith. The Catholic faith was much stronger in mixed-race and black circles on Gorée than in Saint-Louis, he argues. It was marked by syncretic or hybrid

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<sup>75</sup> Though Saint-Louis’ 20<sup>th</sup> century decline as a cultural reference and economic hub is well acknowledged in popular discourse, admiring talk about Saint-Louisian women continues to reference this gloried past of Senegal’s northern city as a place of cultural mixing and cosmopolitanism. Saint-Louisian women (*les Saint-Louisiennes* or *doomu Ndar yi*) are noted for their beauty, refinement, and their domestic abilities in cooking, decorating and perfumery (the use of incense or *cuuraay* to perfume one’s house, clothing, and intimate areas of the body), that are considered key elements in women’s sexual and seductive prowess. Historically, this image of Saint-Louis women emerged out of the figure of the “*signare*”; wealthy and socially influential black or mixed-race women who married and engaged in commerce with the white French population of Saint-Louis. A recent article in the lifestyle section of a Dakar daily newspaper discussed the merits of Saint-Louisian women and was subtitled; “Modesty, elegance, femininity, submissiveness among other trump cards [*atouts*] that make men crack/give way.” One of the Saint-Louisian women interviewed for the story remarked that she wouldn’t be able to tolerate being in a polygamous relationship as she was very “jealous”, but, as a Muslim woman, would be obligated to accept it. Her strategy for avoiding this occurring in her marriage was to be “know how to go about it with men, which is something that we Saint-Louisians knew how to do.” For her, this included adopting a posture of submissiveness at home in which she would follow her husband’s orders and take care of him when he got home from work, making sure she was elegantly dressed (“*je m’habille classe*”) when she served him his meals. A mother interviewed about why Saint-Louisians have such a reputation responded that “from a young age, we teach our children to assume their responsibilities as a wife and a mother...our children are educated to cook their husbands meal and to take care of his clothes,” (Tall 2005).

practices, for example, the circumcision of infants and the use of Qur'anic verse talismans and amulets (*gris-gris*), much to the consternation of leading French priest-missionaries like the Abbé Boilat. On the other hand, Diouf writes that Islam as it was adopted and practiced by the residents of the communes—and he views it as the “primary cultural expression” of the *originaires*—was characterized by its universalistic tone and emphasis on Arabic reading and writing. It was, he concludes, an Islamic outlook that had accommodated the French presence, and was quite opposed to the vision of faith and community that Cheikh Hamidou Kane puts forth in *L'aventure ambiguë* (see also Lambert 1993).

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the claim to Frenchness had been an important part of créole identity politics in Saint-Louis for several decades. Compared to the *originaires*, most créole or *métis* (referred to in colonial documents as “*français indigène*”) were Catholic and possessed greater wealth and social status. Together with white French residents, they dominated local electoral institutions (Robinson 2000: 98). As the century came to a close, however, *originaires*' access to participation in French-style education had increased and many were branching out from their base in commerce and trade. Throughout the colony, the adoption of Islam and the development of corresponding Islamic religious practices via the Mouride and Tijane movements were on the rise. Conversely, the Catholic Church—or rather local Catholic authorities and actors—were losing much of their influence and role in official colonial policy in Senegal. In this context, *originaires* increasingly aspired to the vision of modern African “Frenchness”, organizing politically and participating to a greater degree in electoral institutions. Importantly, the adoption and performance of this identity did not require abandonment of Islam and conversion to Christianity.

Though blacks in the Four Communes were officially republican citizens with the right to vote, such freedoms were still a contentious issue in the colony and with the French government

back in Paris, likely in part because of their increased involvement in commune politics at this time. Moreover, once the French empire in Africa and Asia was consolidated, white Frenchmen were troubled by the idea that if such a policy were extended to all French territories, they would be a clear minority (Villalón 1995: 80). In his introduction to a chapter on colonial Saint-Louis, David Robinson (2000: 97) makes the obvious yet important points that while some subjects were more empowered than others, “colonies consisted of subjects not citizens” and that “imperialism and colonial rule were processes of domination, not participation.” This was most evident in the case of the vast majority of Africans who resided in Senegal’s coastal areas and hinterland and not in either of the Four Communes. Under colonial law, they were considered “subjects” and not “citizens”, and as subjects, lived under the harsh *indigénat* rule of law—basically, rule of law by decree from administration officers.

In 1903, eight years after the establishment of the Occidental African Federation, a series of edicts were issued that reorganized schooling in Senegal and the rest of the AOF under a sole, centralized “Service” (e.g. a Bureau or Department of Education in English parlance) and the Governor-General’s stewardship. They were, in the words of a local archivist and historian, “the first real charter of education in the AOF” (Diop 1996: 6), framed by an official colonial discourse that emphasized its “civilizing duty” and the need to assure peace and security in its territories (Bouche 1997: 1058). The development of organized, comprehensive educational programs on the African continent like that first outlined in the 1903 edicts was a key element in the larger exercise of colonial power. At the time, schools in the territories of the AOF were quite heterogeneous. An important goal of the 1903 laws was to develop a standardized educational system with an organized and regulated corps of instructors. Yet, on the ground, the broad nature of the changes called for by the 1903 edicts was tempered by the colonial administration’s own worries over the impact on their budget, a perennial concern. More

generally, Colin (1980) notes that the French struggled to assert a clear educational policy in Senegal in periods of economic expansion and political transitions, given the many actors involved and the lack of funds. A case in point, the majority of the 1903 reforms were not actually put in place until 1912 by Georges Hardy, the AOF General Inspector under Governor General William Ponty (Fall 1997).

A key provision of the 1903 edicts was to reorient schools away from the Catholic clergy to a more secular framework, mirroring trends at work in the metropole (schools and hospitals), as well as the colony. In an archival document dating from that same year, the Mayor of Rufisque (a smaller and newer Commune town than Saint-Louis and Gorée) declares its two schools secularized, following a council vote of 4 to 3 in favor of secularization, saying “the law impresses upon you the obligation to pay secular instructors; whether you want it or not, secularization is gaining credence,” (Sénégal 1903-1904). Even in some of the first colonial information-gathering regarding Senegalese schools in the 1860s, inspectors make a point to distinguish between public instruction and religious instruction (referred to as *écoles ecclésiastiques* or *écoles congrégationalistes* and far outnumbered secular “public” schools) in their statistical reports and assessment (Sénégal 1864-1871).

The 1903 reforms effectively shifted the debate around *l'école française* away from the politically-charged question of attending religious schools, to that of how to get the best possible education (Johnson 1971).<sup>76</sup> A more utilitarian approach to education thus came to the fore, both

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<sup>76</sup> This was not the case in the Casamance, particularly Basse Casamance, as presented Vincent Foucher’s (2002) reading of educational history in the region and its relation to migration, modernity, and Casamançais nationalism. There, Church-run schools continued to dominate the educational scene long after the 1903 edicts and more generally the region was the place of considerable Church investment, the heaviest in Senegal in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While school was first perceived in the Casamance as a foreign and suspicious institution, as in much of Africa, attendance grew significantly after WWII in light of the possibilities in public sector employment Casamançais believed it offered. The region is now has the highest rate of primary school enrolment in the country. Foucher argues that the role of this schooled class of *évolués*, influenced also by high migration rates, has been instrumental

for French colonials and Africans. Back in the metropole, the French school system had been reorganized in the 1880s under Jules Ferry to make elementary education free, secular, and required, for in his republican discourse, equal rights could not be achieved without an equal education (Colin 1980). The notion of accessing and achieving the best possible education was highly important to aspirational *originaires*, in contrast to Senegalese who wished to have no part in Western-style schools or “*l'école des blancs*”.

Part of *originaires*' continued struggle to assert their right and status as African Frenchmen and to participate in the social and commercial world such a designation endangered was their insistence on the development of “non-adapted” educational institutions in the Four Communes that were on par with schools in the metropole and would facilitate access to French *colleges* and *lycées*, as well as more famously, the obligation to perform French military service.<sup>77</sup> Denise Bouche (1997: 1063) characterizes the *originaires* as “ferociously attached” to these “metropolitan educational programs” with their diplomas and the access they could potentially grant to social mobility. The *originaires* in the Four Communes had to contend with a local social hierarchy dominated by lighter-skinned créoles and whites, but towards the turn of the century, these four major towns also started to see a significant influx of migrants from rural areas. Now a minority with respect to these new black African arrivals, the commune-born *originaires* sought to exclude these newcomers from registering to vote and claiming republican citizenship (Johnson 1971).

Though the major colonial educational organization and reform projects, first passed in 1903, then in 1918 and 1924, could not address the issue of increasing rural-urban migration for

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in the articulation of idealistic and neo-traditional Jola identity that also simultaneously and strongly engages with modernity.

<sup>77</sup> The demand to be included in French military as citizens was an important part of the political platform of Blaise Diagne, Senegal's first black representative to the French Assembly (in 1914) and a civil servant hailing from Gorée. The legal confirmation of full French citizenship rights for *originaires*, passed in 1917, is named after him.

the *originaires*, they did much to keep to colony's population of *sujets*—all the inhabitants of Senegal who were not born within the borders of the Four Communes—at a clear disadvantage when it came to public school access and to any accompanying social and economic gains. Under the 1903 edicts, existing schools were categorized and new schools were opened according to a variety of designated types; elementary, professional secondary (e.g. vocational), commercial secondary, secondary, and normal. Much of the colonial government's interest in developing vocational education programs was prompted by the advent of agricultural development projects and a larger shift in colonial economic engagement from river trade in hides and gum to that of intensive peanut farming in central land areas and a more hands-on "*mise en valeur*" of the colony. This new direction for colonial economic activities in the colony would become particularly strong after the First World War.

More important, however, than the designation of the above types, was the regional structure of public education that was sketched out with these first edicts, further developed with the school reform laws that followed, and to which the school types were hierarchically assigned. As such, the French articulated a three-tier regional structure of schools; village schools, regional schools, and urban schools. They had a different vision for each of the regional schools in terms of the schools' aim or purpose, the resources and infrastructural adjustments they would be allotted, and the educational track and possibilities for the students that attended those schools. The schools' curriculum was also not the same, nor was the composition of the instructors (the number of white European personnel in village schools was quite low and increased along the spectrum from village school to urban school, and vice versa for black African instructors), and the diplomas and certificates students were awarded upon completion of their studies were not equivalent (Sénégal 1903-1904).



As laid out in the colonial texts, rural schools were considered a “taming organ, an instrument of material civilization”, not for selected students, but meant as an obligation for the “crowd of children” (Colin 1980: 309). Of the aforementioned educational types, only elementary education was available in villages. Because a schoolmaster could not be responsible for an “unlimited” number of children there, the administration stated would limit the length of a student’s schooling unless they showed real promise, in which case, they would subsequently be sent to the regional school. Those regional schools were designated as the “meeting place of a social and intellectual elites” and a “nursery of leaders/chiefs, civil servants, retailers, and artisans” but the 1903 edict text cautions, “it’s not about stupefying the pupils under the weight of Germanic discipline, we only have to open the doors of our educational institutions and our administrative offices to those who bend to our authority,”<sup>78</sup> (Colin 1980: 310). A wider variety of educational tracks were available at regional schools—elementary education as well as vocational education.

Finally, the urban schools are conceived of as the epitome of the kind of urbanity to which “we” aspire in the colony—“healthy/morally pure [*saine*], industrious, occupied with useful tasks...and that all these elements contribute...to the grandeur, richness and elegance of the city,” (Colin 1980: 310).<sup>79</sup> Here, students received a diploma upon completion of their elementary education and could theoretically pursue any of the other educational tracks, for the top schools were all based in urban areas— the Ecole Pinet-Laprade for vocational education, the Ecole Faidherbe (which was comprised of three section; commercial, administrative and college-preparatory) in the domain of professional secondary and secondary education, and the normal

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<sup>78</sup> *Il ne s’agit pas d’abêtir les élèves sous le poids d’une discipline germanique, il suffit d’ouvrir les portes de nos établissements scolaires et des nos administrations à ceux-là seuls qui se plient à notre autorité.*

<sup>79</sup> *L’école urbaine, quant à sa population est l’image même de la ville. Il faut qu’elle soit, quant à son enseignement et son activité, l’image du type de ville coloniale que nous rêvons, saine, industrielle, occupé d’utiles besognes, et que tous ses éléments concourent, selon leur origine et leurs dispositions naturelles, à la grandeur, à la richesse, à l’élégance de la ville.*

school (later l’Ecole Normale William-Ponty). In village schools and regional schools, Arabic was also included in the curriculum. The apex of the colonial Franco-Arabe educational initiative was the Médersa in Saint-Louis. Together with a policy of surveillance and control over Qur’anic schools, the French thought this two-pronged approach would be effective in destroying popular support and patronage of locally-run Islamic learning institutions—but they were incorrect.

Importantly, the 1903 edicts also called for the establishment of schools and educational programs for girls and young women. These schools included some of the same basic curriculum to which girls’ male peers were exposed, but also exhibited a strong focus on domestic arts of cooking, cleaning, sewing, laundry, as well as hygiene and infant care (Diop 1997b: 1089). The colonial government saw educated African women as key potential vectors for “civilizing progress” because of their domestic roles as primary caregivers of children (Bouche 1997: 1067). This notion of a “special” added effect of educating women continues to be articulated in contemporary Senegal with the slogan “To educate a girl is to educate a whole nation.”<sup>80</sup> The promotion of the education of girls and women is major point of national education policy, as well as the platforms of funding organizations such as UNICEF, the World Bank, and USAID.

Returning to colonial times, the educational infrastructure for women would be expanded in subsequent years to include normal school, secondary and secondary professional schools, as well as training opportunities in health care. Yet, in each of these sectors, notes Papa Momar Diop (1997b), the head AOF archive conservator, girls and women did not receive the same quality of instruction as their male peers. Women’s professional schools were “sub-schools” (*sous-écoles*; in terms of their rigor and the social value of the diplomas conferred) and their

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<sup>80</sup> *Eduquer une fille, c’est éduquer toute une nation*. The Geule Tapée Elementary School wall along the Avenue Cheikh Anta Diop (a main thoroughfare into downtown Dakar that runs next to UCAD campus) is decorated with many murals, including one with these words and an accompanying illustration.

position in terms of education and professional development was one of profound “blockage” (*blocage*). Diop attributes this blockage to Islamic ideological hostility to Western schools (though he suggests that the cases of AOF colonies without a substantial Muslim population put this thesis into question), the circumscribed status of women in pre-colonial local culture (in which French school is viewed as subversive, and threatening of male authority), and the “equally unenviable” status of women in French society of the times. “In such a context,” he concludes, “is it not illusory to think that the administration would make efforts to raise the level of instruction of women in the colonies, who were black Africans to boot, with a status already even lower than that of the white women of the metropole, themselves sub-citizens?” (Diop 1997b: 1092).

Alongside the clear gender gap in Senegalese schools, the disjuncture between urban and rural schools; one an institution of/for the masses and the other of/for elites (with regional schools occupying an intermediate position that tilted towards the urban school), continued as the status quo in the years that followed the edicts. From 1903 to 1912, modest gains in student enrollment were achieved in the AOF as a whole (Diop 1997b: 1090). The next eight years would show moderate increases in the number of male students, but the number of female students declined. Following WWI, the number of students in the AOF tripled from 1920 to 1930 (without a concurrent increase in instructors, which compromised the quality of teaching) (Colin 1980, Fall 1997). In 1936, the schooling rate for the AOF was such 3.5% of the total federation population (Colin 1980). Schools remained, overall, elite institutions, particularly when annual population growth for the period is also taken into account. During WWII and in the years that led up to it, Colin (1980) judges that the rural schools were “out of breath”. In the post-war period, education in the colonies was increasingly oriented towards the French model and the urban school (which was most closely modeled on schools in the metropole)—the rural schools were slowly being

pushed out. In addition, international organizations like UNESCO began to play a role in educational policy and reform in Africa (Fall 1997: 1078).

What comes across most clearly in the literature on Senegalese schools of the colonial period is a pervading sense of disjuncture, contradictions, and barriers. Of these, the most obvious is the discordance between the prevailing ideologies of the day; colonial domination, racial inferiority, the civilizing mission, assimilation, citizenship for *originaires*, and equality among men. In contrast to pre-colonial models of identity involving caste, lineage, and esoteric knowledge, the colonial political and cultural elite proposed two dichotomous models of identity; that of the “*sauvage*” on one hand and the “*civilisé*”, “*assimilé*”, or “*évolué*” [lit. evolved one] on the other (Colin 1980, see also Mamdani 1996 for a discussion of the ramifications of a bifurcated colonial state on identity). This corresponded to the two Senegals; that of elite Four Commune citizens, on one hand, and rural subjects, on the other. The decision to attend or to send one’s children to French school was taken as one of the most significant acts within this larger political question.

The role of education and learning in reproducing the acute hierarchy of Four Communes society was extended to the rest of the colony in the establishment of the village/rural, regional and urban school designations with the 1903 edicts. Here, the schools were separate and not equal, and were explicitly designed not to be so. Rather, they were intended to further the colonial vision of African society and French economic interests in the countryside and in nascent urban areas. In this context, social inequality (in both French colonial ideology and policy, as well as local social relations) and the hierarchies of schooling worked off of each other, legitimating, reproducing, and adding further layers to the complex and changing relationship between status, wealth, knowledge forms, and identity in Senegal. As Gomis (2003: 25) suggests from his contemporary research in Dakar, school is at the heart of a number of debates

about class, inequality, and opportunity, particularly about the inequality of chances. This inequality is so insidious because it persists while changing form and place.

The expansion of the market economy, whose influence was particularly strong in urban areas, and monetarization were important elements in the reworking of social inequality during the colonial period. An influx of money and the growing predominance of monetary exchange did not overwrite established sources of power and status (such as the saintly charisma of *cheikhs* or the status of certain freeman artisanal castes relative to royal elites or slaves), but provided new means and terms through which they could be expressed. The French bureaucracy and business activities constituted the locus of capitalist power in colonial Senegal. Senegalese schooled in urban and regional schools, by way of their educational experience, diplomas, and elite status, had the advantage in access to this sector over those who attended rural schools, Qur'anic schools, or no schools at all. The institution of the French/ Western school was seminal in the creation of a class of modern, bureaucratic elites (Wallerstein 1965). This elite class, while its modes and base of appeal are distinct from that of traditional elites, drew some of its members from families of high traditional prestige, and in other cases, from low-caste backgrounds.

One's status as a schooled *évolué*—expressed both in a diploma or certificate and one's French language skills, helped young Africans to access positions in the colonial administrative-bureaucratic sector, which were perhaps some of the most lucrative jobs available at that time. Western-educated and degreed persons were a minority within the overall population—in contrast to the contemporary situation—so one would imagine there was much less competition for positions. However, Johnson (1971) argues that the numbers of early school graduates who went on to find success and wealth as civil servants in the colonial administrative bureaucracy have been overestimated—that the colonials engaged a restricted amount of trained Africans

within the administrative workforce, and generally in more subordinate and auxiliary positions. He cites data from 1910, and some the earliest data collected by the colonial administration on the professional outcomes of its school graduates in Saint-Louis corroborates this conclusion. Johnson writes of a revolution in rising expectations that took place of the following decades, but for Gomis (2003), the opportunities for employment in the colonial administration were still quite restrained until after independence with the departure of French personnel.

### ***Independence: Schooling a New Nation***

Rokhaya Fall (1997: 1079) argues that the more practical and utilitarian orientation towards education in the AOF colonies that the French administration adopted in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was really a way for them to continue the strange balancing act that was at the heart of the colonial mission—through education, improve Africans' quality of work and investment in the colonies, but not to the extent that the legitimacy of colonial rule would come into question. Yet as the 20<sup>th</sup> century wore on, this balancing act became increasing tenuous, and for many the contradictions of the colonial system more and more clear. The French had worried for quite a while about the potential politicization of the schooled urban elite, as well as rural school attendees and Muslims, more generally (Colin 1980, Johnson 1971). It was indeed those Senegalese who had been educated in Western schools—Galandou Diouf, Lamine Gueye, Blaise Diagne, and members of the *Jeunes Senegalais* group, or party, took an early lead in the political struggle for African participation in the French empire. In the 1950s, a new generation of French-schooled elites—most notably Léopold Sédar Senghor, issued from a large and wealthy Sereer family and who had had a long and illustrious career in France as a student, teacher, and poet in the 1930s and 40s—would become key actors in the Senegalese

political scene and play a leading role in the official imagination and construction of an independent Senegalese nation in the 1960s.

Together with friend and colleague Aimé Césaire, who had also come to France from Martinique in the early 1930s to attend high school, Senghor coined the term *négritude*. *Négritude*, as a literary movement, asserted the validity and value of African culture within an idealized framework that suggested an African personality, mentality and essence—a deep-seated *Africanité* that existed in dialectical relationship with European culture. As Senghor became more active in the political area, his notion of African Socialism, which expressed an idealized vision of communal, traditional African society would emerge and serve as a guiding philosophy in his policies as Head of State. Senghor's first years in power were marked by the presence of fellow politician Mamadou Dia, with whom the official political vision of this socialist project was elaborated as they set out to establish a new relationship between culture and economy in Senegal, particularly in the *animation rurale* program that sought to render the countryside more dynamic and promote the involvement of rural actors in development. Yet, overall, Dia favored a much more radical approach than Senghor with regard to the participation of those Senegalese who had traditionally been on the margins of power. Threatened also by Dia's own use of power, Senghor had the prime minister arrested for attempting to commit a coup d'état and sentenced to life imprisonment in 1962.

In this era of the newly independent Senegalese state, the power and public presence of civil servants and political cadres rose, for school knowledge increasingly became the key to social power (Colin 1980). The disparity between the earnings of rural farmers and salaried urban civil servants widened, and many school graduates turned away from farming and manual labor, in order to pursue other tracks in the city. This rural to urban migration would only intensify toward the late 60s and early 70s with systemic drought (*la sécheresse*), contributing to

what was called the “*malaise paysanne*”. Colin (1980) argues that Senghor, in fact, enacted little substantial change in the relationship between culture and economy under African Socialism. Instead, Senghor maintained the two tier system of a modernist urban track, on one hand, and a rural track, on the other. He also devoted much of the state’s efforts to promoting school attendance in primary schools in order to obtain attain 100% enrollment; a focus on increasing the national attendance figures is also a key point of the contemporary state’s education policy. Yet, longitudinal data from a cohort of students in Senghor’s time showed that attending primary school did not serve as a decisive factor in opening social and economic doors to young people, rather, it was much more important to have attended secondary school than elementary school (Colin 1980).

Through the reforms enacted by Senghor and his successor Abdou Diouf in the decades that followed and on up to the present, schools in Senegal have been the sight of considerable contestation and conflict between students, teachers, and the state, particularly at the university level, where they rocked UCAD in 1968, emerged again in the late 1980s and 1990s in the context of severe economic problems, and have since remained strong in their critique of the state’s management of schools. At a discursive level, many of the reform laws have focused on reclaiming or reasserting secular schools in Senegal as importantly “African” and “Senegalese”, anchored in local values. Colin (1980) identifies several “leading myths” (*mythes directeurs*) of Senegal’s educational policy including the idea of progress, responsibility, belonging to a community, and belonging to a nation. The following case of a contemporary public school in Dakar illustrates the on-the-ground workings of some of these broad school reform projects of the modern Senegalese state, as well as the continued legacy of colonial educational institutions and the relationships of knowledge, power, and identity through which colonial schools worked.



### *Contemporary Urban Public Education*

Like the Franco-Arabe school in Parcelles, the public junior high school in Parcelles also sits among modest one and two-story cement residences in the sandy corridors that constitute streets in the interior parts of the neighborhood. When students are in class, this part of Parcelles is almost deathly quiet, for only a handful of residents tend to sit outside and pedestrians are few. This is strange, given that just one block in each direction is a modest-size neighborhood market with cosmetic shops, textile stalls, and an herbal remedies to the northwest, and a major traffic roundabout to the east. This roundabout, effectively dubbed the “hut” (*la case des Parcelles*) is flanked by two gas stations, SGBS and CBAO bank branches, several Lebanese-style fast food and pastry shops, an inexpensive open-air market which sells discount vegetables, a clandestine taxi (“*clando*”) meeting point, and municipal bus and *car rapides* (ubiquitous private transportation cars) stops. As a banking center and market locale and an important point that connects Parcelles and neighborhoods closer to the city to the more outlying communities of Camberène and Guédiawaye, the roundabout is a bustling place, particularly at peak commuting hours—morning, noon (for siesta), and early evening. Yet, at the junior high, tucked away just a block inside of these main streets, one senses little of this activity. The school’s whitewashed cement walls, which run the length of the courtyard and connect up with the classroom buildings on three sides, forming a giant rectangle, serve to mark off the school’s domain from the rest of the neighborhood and add to the quiet.

Here at the school, the hubbub occurs with a more punctuated frequency that of the roundabout; between classes, students will mill around the front gates on one side of the wall, waiting for them to open so they can get inside the courtyard and go to class. Likewise, students who are coming from class move about inside the courtyard, chatting with their classmates, some exiting the school yard to buy a snack from the women (and one man) who prepare and vend

food to the students from makeshift tables (*taabals* in Wolof slang)—breakfast items like a section of French-style baguette filled with chocolate spread, spaghetti, or fried bean paste balls (*accara*) and sauce; snacks like sugared or roasted peanuts; and frozen milk-based juice creams (*crèmes*) made from Old World hibiscus shrub leaves (*bissap*), the baobab tree's fruit (*bouye*), and other indigenous fruits.

Inside, the school is laid out in four cement buildings with zinc roofs that each abut the sides of the courtyard walls: one, an administrative office building that also contains the teacher's lounge; two, a long one-story row of buildings whose classrooms open out on the courtyard; and, finally, a two-story classroom building of the same design. On the concrete wall of the steps leading up to the second floor, someone has painted an AIDS awareness mural that cautions students against drug use, participating in non-monogamous relationships (the illustration shows a man with a woman on one arm, leering at a female passerby in a tight mini-dress under the title "*l'infidélité*"), and the danger of sexual relations without protection (a discreet silhouette of an embracing couple has been drawn with a red AIDS ribbon between their torsos). Along the far wall lies a raised cement athletic field, with basketball hoops on the sides. A large sandy courtyard area, peppered with a few wispy willow-like trees and a drinking fountain, is set in the middle between the school buildings and the athletic field that dot the perimeter of the compound. Like the front gates, it serves as a gathering place for students before and after class and as a staging ground for the students' physical educational ("E.P.S") classes. The classrooms' interiors are bare, simple and without electricity, the cement floors unsealed and uneven, and the students' desks are hard, uncomfortable wooden "*bancs*" or benches, often in a semi-broken state, in which they sometimes sit in threes due to large class sizes. The basic, even dilapidated state of their classrooms is a daily sensory reminder to students of the extent to which the state neglects, or even fails them; a situation that they have little or no power to change.

The school was established in the early 1990s, as part of a government push to open up more secondary schools close to students' homes in outlying areas of the city (as opposed to larger, more centralized secondary schools that students would commute long distances to), called "*écoles de proximité*". During the 2005-2006 school year, when I conducted the majority of my ethnographic research at the school, there were a total of 1,792 students enrolled, 880 boys and 912 girls, and 44 teachers who worked there, 13 of whom were women—the latter a self-conscious statistic that the school, like all other public schools, took pains to document and point out. The principal, who was assisted in his job by a cadre of registrars, secretaries, and "*surveillants*" (the equivalent of vice-principals or deans of students, however, *surveillants* have less authority), was the third of the school's history. A forty-something man, slightly balding, with glasses, a pockmarked face, and a penchant for wearing the plain gray and khaki handmade "*tenue*" of civil servants and authorities, he had come to the school as principal in 2003 after a career as a French teacher in area high schools.

When we sat down for an interview one Saturday morning,<sup>81</sup> for I thought that it would be a time when the principal would be the most free and we would have the fewest interruptions, I was quite incorrect. Throughout our conversation students, teachers, school personnel, and parents would come in with an issue or problem that needed to be addressed. The principal spoke of coming to his job after more than two decades of teaching, feeling somewhat down or bored (*démotivé*—lit. "dismotivated", somewhat different, I think, from being unmotivated), and looking to take on a new challenge before finishing his career and retiring. He found that

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<sup>81</sup> Students at all levels in the Senegalese public schools (as well as a secular private schools and Catholic schools) follow a French weekly calendar in which class is held from Monday through Friday, with Wednesday afternoon off and then a half day of classes on Saturday morning. In France, the longtime schedule is being amended for elementary school students as of 2007-2008 school year, such that students will now no longer have classes on Saturday mornings. There is talk of changing it soon for junior high school students as well. In Senegal, recent changes to the prevailing schedule in certain schools have involved changing the schedule from that of a siesta day in which school is let out between noon or 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. to a continuous day (*journée continue*). Students at the junior high school in Parcelles were asked to vote on this change in the fall of 2005, but it was not adopted.

principal's work took different skills than that of being a teacher. Being a principal is most prominently about learning how to manage people and their moods or humors (*humeurs*), he remarked. He mostly had to learn his job in practice (*dans le bain*—lit. “in the bath”), having had no formal training for administrative work except a series of seminars after one year on the job. But he must take on (“*assumer*”) his responsibilities, he continued, and he was glad to be able to serve. The principal's sentiment, in this regard, struck me as similar to that of the Franco-Arabe school director's, who ran her school at little or no profit in order to provide for the religious education of young people in her neighborhood. Yet he tended to talk much more in the abstract, speaking of “serving the Senegalese school” (*servir l'école Sénégalaise*).

My conversations and interviews with teachers over the course of the school year revealed similar notions about the profession of teaching and the value of education, as well as frustrations with poor pay and difficult working conditions. The most established of all the teachers were those who taught Life Science and French teachers. These men shared the same Haalpulaar last name and had been in the teaching profession longer than most at the school. The French teacher, a balding and portly man in his late 40s who always dressed smartly in a button-down shirt, slacks, and shades, had begun his own education at a Qur'anic school. Born into a middle-class family of modest means in a small city of Fatick to the southeast of Dakar, his father had been a municipal employee and his mother a housewife. He said that his parents did everything to ensure the best education possible for him. He then entered the public school system and recounted how when he attended junior high school in a neighboring city, he had to lodge with some relatives, walking long distances to school, and paying for his expenses with a small scholarship.

When he went on to the university in Dakar, he again had to board with relatives, but he said that since he was not a card-carrying member of the PS, or Parti Socialiste, the party in

power at the time, he was not eligible for a scholarship and soon left the university, applying for recruitment as a teacher. The story that followed was one of numerous teaching posts around the country, during which time he pursues several programs in pedagogical study, including the Ecole Normale, before he settled upon the junior high in Parcelles. Highly active in administrative and pedagogical committees and groups at the school in addition to his teaching responsibilities, he told me how much he enjoyed his job for the great human relationships it permitted one to have. This was his richness, he espoused—he was not rich in money, but considered himself rich in human relationships. He felt that teaching was part of his moral duty (*devoir morale*) to God, to society, and to himself. In spite of the difficulties of being a teacher and managing students, he was proud that he was able to do it and earn his living honestly, he concluded.

Like his colleague, the Life Science teacher, an introspective man of about the same age had also attended Qur'anic school as a young boy, as well as public secular school. A self-described religious conservative or *hibadou rahman*, he always dressed in the North-African inspired long-sleeve *sabador* tunic and drawstring pants. He attended junior high and high school in Dakar, which meant boarding with a host family in the city and assuming much of the cost of his education. He went on to study biology at the Université de Dakar Cheikh Anta Diop, for he had hoped to become a researcher in parasitology or pharmacology, but he stopped his studies after three years and turned to teaching because of “family responsibilities”. Now, years later, he told me that he has really come to enjoy his job, in large part because he was “a religious person”. As a teacher, he said he had much more autonomy and was less “subordinate” than a civil servant or someone who works an office job. He appreciated the independence and serenity his job offered, though he added that he was lucky he had a small family and lived modestly, for a teacher's salary did not really cover all of one's needs. Ironically, though family

responsibilities prompted him to first take up the profession as the oldest child in his family, if he did, in fact, have a large family, his salary would be quite insufficient, he concluded.

The idea of one turning to teaching as a career when other tracks did not pan out also came up in my conversations with the Geography and History teacher, Mr. D., a charismatic Wolof man in his early thirties. He had perhaps gone the farthest educationally of his colleagues, having received his masters (at UCAD) and worked as a researcher on various projects, including the ESAM II, the Senegalese National Household Survey Project, where he supervised the project in the city of Kaolack. There, he and the other researchers would spend the day with a local family, noting their living conditions, expenses, and dietary intake, even weighing the food they consumed at each meal. It was difficult to get an accurate representation of the households, for some of the families who were quite poor would change their eating habits that day so that they ate better than normal. The families did this out of *sutura*—discretion and personal dignity—he said. But this time off to work on research projects, coupled with average grades at the university, had made it unable for him to secure an acceptance to universities in Europe where he hoped to do his Ph.D. Moreover, posts were limited and competition was fierce when he looked for employment with urban planning projects in the NGO and private sectors.

Having come to the realization that he couldn't just give up and do nothing (“*rester les bras croisés*”; lit.—sit with crossed arms), Mr. D. enrolled in the Ecole Normale and has been teaching at the Parcelles school ever since graduating. He enjoyed teaching and liked it well enough, but it's just not something he would have chosen for himself, he concluded. He didn't plan to stay on much longer, he said, and was in the process of submitting applications for various openings, including ENAM, the prestigious National School of Applied Economics and Management in Dakar. It was just too difficult without the proper material support, he said. Mr. D. would bring a map of Senegal with him to class from time to time but had yet to receive the

other maps he requested. The bare minimum, he lamented, was to have at least one map of each continent. And with only three days of History and Geography class per week, and constant interruptions for strikes, holidays, and so on, it was impossible to teach the years' worth of lesson plans that the Minister of Education had designated for them.

### *Shadowing Class 5<sup>e</sup> E*

School in Senegal, reflecting the French grade system, consists of 13 grade years; elementary or primary schools consist of C.I. or *cours d'initiation*, followed by C.P., or *cours préparatifs*, then C.E. *cours élémentaires* levels 1 and 2 (C.E. 1 and C.E. 2), and *cours moyens* levels 1 and 2 (C.M. 1 and C.M. 2). Upon completion of C.M. 2, students receive a diploma and must pass an exam in order to continue their studies. The Senegalese Ministry of Education's statistics reports from 2001 show that nationally just 50% of those who took that test in that year, passed, with a marginally better percentage of 53% in Dakar and its environs (Gouvernement du Sénégal/UNICEF 1991: 79). Junior high schools consist of four grades; 6<sup>e</sup> through 3<sup>e</sup> (with the ordinal grade numbers declining as the grade levels advance). Likewise, students must pass an exam in order to go on to high school (made up of just three grade years; 2<sup>e</sup>, 1<sup>ère</sup> and terminal, respectively). Less than half of students who attempt this exam successfully pass in a given year. Data from 2001 shows that approximately 47% of the candidates passed, nationally (Gouvernement du Sénégal/UNICEF 1991: 80).

Like at the Franco-Arabe school, much of my research at the Parcelles Junior High took place inside the classroom. The size and diversity of the school relative to the Franco-Arabe school prompted me to pick a class of students to shadow for the 2005-2006 school year. Like in American junior high schools, the students there would move from subject to subject during the day, each time changing their classroom and teacher. However, within each grade level, students

were organized into separate classes for their grade year, such that they took all of the courses with the same students in that class. For example, the 5<sup>e</sup> grade level would be organized as classes 5<sup>e</sup> A—5<sup>e</sup> F, and each class would have its own schedule. Each year, these classes would be reconstituted with a new group of students, so that in advancing on to the next grade level, one would find oneself with different students, only a handful of whom had been in the same class the previous year.

Unlike at American junior high and high schools, students' courses were not organized in periods and did not fill their entire day; i.e. they did not have the same subjects each day. Instead, students might have English three days per week, Geography two days per week, Music one day a week, and so on. The school day in Parcelles ran from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m., at which time school would break for students to go home and have lunch, resuming again from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Saturday morning, with the exception on Wednesday afternoons (when students did not have class). As such, on Mondays, one class (5<sup>e</sup> A) might have Math class from 8-10 a.m., E.P.S. from 3-5 p.m. and Music from 6-7 p.m.; 5<sup>e</sup>s B-F would have different classes on Mondays at different hours of the day. This meant that within the school, students had diverse schedules and were often not on campus for large portions of the school day, depending on their designated class schedule. Some teachers also taught at other schools or conducted private tutoring sessions (to supplement their income), and were only on campus during the periods they had to teach, further adding to the dispersed sense of the school. Though teachers took daily attendance in each of their classes, and these attendance sheets were submitted to the administration, in many ways the students were essentially responsible for their own attendance and had to police themselves.

In the 5<sup>e</sup> class I shadowed, one female student was so habitually absent from class and silent when she was in class that it took several weeks for teachers to notice and to find out that



she had withdrawn from school. From time to time I would find boys who had been absent from a class period I had just sat in on playing at a makeshift foosball table several yards away from the school wall outside. It was relatively easy for some students to evade their teachers and parents and skip class, provided they did not miss a homework or test day and their absence did not become chronic. This lack of student visibility was due, in part, to the large class sizes, for classes at the school were generally made up of between 60 and 80 students. This kind of learning environment, in which students at the school have different schedules, different teachers, and are part of large classes that change from year to year, in which it may or may not really be noticed if one is absent, contrasts strongly with the atmosphere of the Franco-Arabe school in Parcelles. There, classes were small, heterogeneous, and tightly scheduled and students were directly surveyed by their one teacher throughout the school day. Though the Franco-Arabe teachers did not have the same mystical, personal connection of reputation to the knowledge they transmitted to students, as is attributed to the marabout instructors of all-male Qur'anic schools (*daaras*), the learning in the Franco-Arabe school was significantly more personalized and direct than that of the public junior high.

The 5<sup>e</sup> class that I chose to follow through their school day over the course of the 2005-2006 year had an intense schedule on Mondays and Tuesdays, but only classes in the morning for the rest of the week. Their courses were all mandatory and the students met for 5 hours of Mathematics each week, 4 hours of French and English (German and Spanish were available as language electives at the next grade level), 3 hours of History-Geography, and 2 hours of Life Science (S.V.T.), as well as physical education, music, and Arabic language. I sat in most often on their French, English, History-Geography and Life Science courses, usually from a desk in the back, quietly observing and note taking. Yet as I got to know the teachers and the students better, the teachers would often talk to me during the course (as did the students, for we were usually

crammed together into a *table-banc*), publicly ask me questions about the material or how the students were doing (at times, as more of a rhetorical device). The English teacher would often ask the students questions like, “Ana is going to report back to the folks in the United States that you are all really bad students, is that what you want?”, for at the beginning of the year she had presented me to the class as an American university student who was conducting research in Senegal for her dissertation.

She often asked me to help out in her classes, as a native English speaker, and would expect me to teach the class on my own if she was late in the morning or absent that day. In these situations, I tried to follow her pedagogical approach. For me, this entailed explaining English grammar through exercises and examples on the board, teaching “lessons” from the students’ textbook, and assigning and grading students’ homework or *devoirs*. I was initially a bit reticent to become involved in English classes in this way, though, in fact, I had come to know students and teachers at the school during pilot study research I conducted in 2002 and 2003 in a similar context. Then, I would sit in on English classes in a variety of grades and occasionally help to teach material or lead a question and answer session about the United States. I had continued this on Saturday mornings in the spring of 2005 while I was sitting in on classes at the Franco-Arabe school, as a way to get to know some of the current students and ease into my next year of research at the school that would begin in the fall. In the end, helping out with the English classes for the 5<sup>e</sup> class I was shadowing helped to facilitate my rapport and further my relationship with those students. Though sometimes the progress of my English lessons suffered for it, most of the students did not relate to me as an authority figure. Likewise, the fact that I was assisting one of the faculty members with her teaching helped endear me to the administration and other teachers, but it became a bit awkward when some of the other English

teachers asked me if I could take some of their classes and teach them, too (fortunately, I was able to make enough polite excuses that this never came to pass).

The 2005-2006 school year started slowly and well after the official commencement date for several reasons. In the days preceding the first official day of school, the principal and the administrative staff were busy registering students. For certain returning students, registration was a relatively uncomplicated process, but required a one-time payment of 6,000 FCFA. Many students were required to repeat the year (*redoubler*), for they did not have the required scores; their names were posted on a board in the courtyard. Repeating grades is a constant, chronic issue in Senegalese schools. State data from 2001 show that around 15% of students in public middle schools had to repeat their grades that year. I recorded almost the same percentage from an informal survey I took in the 5<sup>e</sup> class I shadowed. In part, the repeating of grades reflects a longstanding structural orientation towards progressively weeding out and reducing the number of pupils at higher grade levels. There is not the same strong stigma attached to repeating a grade in Senegal as in the United States, but it often carries with it some sense of failure and disappointment for students and their parents. Within a larger discourse of nostalgia about the state of Senegalese schools in the past, educators cite high rates of grade repeating as evidence of a crisis or systemic problem in contemporary schools.

On these pre-term days, many students were to be found milling about sandy courtyard, or queuing in a long line outside the principal's office to transfer into the school, most often because they had received bad grades (referenced most frequently as not having the average or "*moyen*") at their previous school, public or private, and were looking for a fresh start. Sitting behind his desk, surrounded by piles and piles of papers, a few loosely organized into dossiers, and boxes of textbooks and office supplies, whose use was centrally controlled, the principal told me he was reluctant to take on more students in the already crowded school, particularly those who had

performed poorly elsewhere. The steady stream of students or their parents would approach him, usually with a deferential or nervous manner, their backs bent and heads inclined, hands clasped behind their backs or clutching a sheaf of papers, and most would be turned down or sent away to return with whatever elements of the paperwork they lacked. Schools throughout the city were full up, he told me, suggesting that many of these later applicants were going to find themselves perpetually denied and in a lurch.

These administrative issues, by all accounts perennial, occupied the principal and school staff well into the official start of the year. Nationally, the school year's beginning had also been retarded in 2005 by the intensity of rainy season<sup>82</sup> (*nawet* in Wolof, *hivernage* in local French usage) that year. Severe floods had displaced many people who lived in less affluent, unpaved neighborhoods in the outer suburbs of Dakar and created general hardships for those who lived or worked in these areas as they tried to go about their daily business. Numerous schools in Dakar and other regions were still inundated with floodwaters when the school year officially started. Moreover, the state had set up temporary camps for residents whose homes had been made inhabitable by the flood waters, and were also using public schools to shelter the displaced persons. In an op-ed piece from a local daily that autumn titled "Chronic of Improvisation", the author talks of Dakar as a city of decay, above all in this rainy season where it "shows off a displeasing anatomy, a depraved and clipped rhythm, made of thousand blisters that burst as much as fetid cesspools," (Kande 2005).<sup>83</sup> The author goes into further lively detail about the state of the city's dirtiness in its gutters, open canals, markets, piles of garbage and so on that are

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<sup>82</sup> The rainy season in Senegal typically runs from June to October, and is longer-running (starts earlier and ends later) and more intense in the more verdant and tropical southern part of the country. In Dakar and other towns that lack adequate sewer and drainage systems, even a small amount of rain can cause blocked roads and severe transportation problems. In neighborhoods in and around Dakar where the sandy soils of the Cap Vert Peninsula are unable to soak up the rain, it will stagnate around homes and on pathways and roads, becoming progressively more putrid and polluted with bio-organisms and garbage as the season wears on.

<sup>83</sup> *La capitale du Sénégal, surtout en cette saison de pluies, étale une anatomie déplaisante, une allure dépravée et écœurante, faite de mille cloques qui éclatent en autant de cloaques fétides.*

exacerbated by the rains. Within this “explosive cocktail” of rain and heat, the public has done little to improve the situation, such as not littering or throwing household garbage just anywhere for the state to “take care of it” and likewise the state has been ineffective and irresponsible in waste management and sanitation. Likewise, much the same attitude has been applied to public education in Senegal, she suggests, and wonders where the supposed 45% of the national budget that is said to be devoted to schools has actually gone, or rather, why is it difficult to see its effects. In the aftermath of the summer of 2005, she concludes, a new type of “Homo Senegalensis” is being born; “the *sinistré* of knowledge [*savoir*].”<sup>84</sup> The displaced persons of the floods were most often referred to in public discourse as “*sinistrés*”—“disaster victims” in English.

The Parcelles Junior High itself did not have any significant problems with flooding, nor did it end up housing any of the rainy season’s homeless itself. However, when it rained several times during the first week or so of school, the tin roofs would leak and water would pour down onto student’s desks and the unfinished cement floor. When this happened during the 5<sup>e</sup> class’ math lesson, the students had to try and move to different desks to avoid the dripping water. That same class had to be cut short and ultimately changed to another time a few weeks later, for as it neared 6 o’clock, the sun began setting and it was difficult to see in the classroom, for there were no electric lights. Fortunately, finding another vacant and dry seat during the rains did not pose too much of a problem for students, for they were not yet all attending school, and so classrooms were not yet full to capacity, as they would normally be. The beginning of the school year also coincided with Ramadan (referred to as *koor gi* in Wolof, or *weeru koor*) for which most Senegalese fast between sun up and sundown. Many students chose not to attend class until after

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<sup>84</sup> *Assurément un autre type d’Homo Senegalensis est en train de naître après l’hivernage 2005 : « le sinistré du savoir ».*

the Ramadan month was over. Once it had passed and Korité ('Id al-Fitr) had been celebrated, the school year started in earnest.

The students in the 5<sup>e</sup> class I shadowed were a diverse group and reflected the diversity of the Parcelles Assainies area and surrounding neighborhoods. Most were born in 1990 or 1991, making them 15 or 16 years old at the time of my research. A handful of students were age 16 going on 17, and a few were 13 or 14. One female student was only 12 years old. Given that the 5<sup>e</sup> grade is the equivalent of 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade, the students were a bit older than their peers in the American school system. This can be attributed to the fact that students generally start school later in Senegal than in the United States (usually around 6 or 7 but also even later) as well as the phenomenon of repeating grades (about 15% of the students in the class had had to repeat a year at the junior high level, and may have also repeated a year as elementary school students). However, sometimes young people in Senegal arrange have their birth dates officially changed to a younger date, so I am unsure as to what extent the information I was able to gather from students accurately reflects their real age.

In a written survey I took of the class, a little less than half of the students identified as Wolof and significant portions of the students also identified as Haalpulaar, Sereer, and Jola. Other students responded as Bambara, Mankañ, Lebu, Saraxolé/Soninké, Baïnuuk, and “Naar”, or Moor. All of the students spoke Wolof in addition to the French that they had learned in school. Wolof was the language the students used to communicate with each other inside the classroom as well as in the schoolyard and around the neighborhood. More than a quarter of the students reported speaking an additional language, of which Pulaar was the most common, followed by Jola.<sup>85</sup> Most of the students in the class were Muslim<sup>86</sup> and about 10 % were Christian. Of the

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<sup>85</sup> This language would most likely be students' maternal language. This may be the dominant language of the home that students speak with their parents and older relatives who live in the home. Oftentimes, non-Wolof students of

elementary schools (and 2 had attended other junior high schools) prior to coming to the Parcelles Assainies Junior High, the ratio between public and private secular schools was 3 to 2. A handful had also attended Qur'anic schools and Catholic religious schools as children.

### *Curriculum and Pedagogy: Copying the Lesson*

A lack of resources strongly shaped teaching and students' learning experiences at the junior high. Few classes were taught using textbooks. A textbook was used most often in students' English classes, but the books belonged to the school, not the students. Each day, the student helper or "*responsable*" would be asked to go bring a stack of the textbooks from the principal's office, which the teacher would distribute and then collect again at the end of class. The English teacher told me as an aside that in the past, students had been able to check out the books for the entire school year, but when all were not returned, she adopted this method. In students' Math and French classes, exercises were occasionally assigned from a textbook, which only a few students owned, so students were obliged to share it within a small group. In the students' other classes, such as Life Science and History-Geography, textbooks were not used at all. Instead, students were directed to copy down exercises, text, figures and so on that the teacher had written on the chalkboard into their notebooks.

Teachers also used dictation on an almost daily basis. The only class in which dictation was not used was English. Teachers had various ways of utilizing dictation within the larger structure of the class; they might start out the class by reviewing concepts from the last class

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will speak not speak their maternal language with their siblings of the same generation, or if they speak their maternal language, it will also include elements of urban Wolof code-switching and French, depending on the educational background of their siblings. With schoolmates, friends, and others in their neighborhood, non-Wolof students will typically speak Wolof.

<sup>86</sup> Of the students who responded as Muslim in the class survey I distributed, most responded that they were affiliated with the Tijane *tarixa*. About a third responded that they were Mouride, and a little over 10% checked the box indicating "no affiliation". Only one student responded that he was Layenne.

session or by explaining new material in a more free form manner only to clearly break with that pedagogical style and then dictate paragraphs summarizing what they had just spoken about. Oftentimes, the teacher would switch back and forth throughout the class between the different “codes” of dictation and a more free-form explanatory style. On other occasions, most of the class would consist of sketches on the board or practice problems only to conclude in dictation at the end. And at other times, the class would commence with dictation and it would drive the entire class session, with the teacher only stopping momentarily to explain a concept within the dictation as kind of aside.

The material that students would write into their notebooks via dictation and by copying from the board was the central element of a class. The copied material was referred to as the day’s lesson or *leçon*. A *leçon* was essentially defined by its immutability, indivisibility, and its authoritative representation of the material. Moreover, it served to define the limits of what is worth knowing. In this way, students’ notebooks acted as textbooks in an environment in which actual textbooks were expensive and scarce. Maintaining a neat, accurate and complete notebook was an important part of students’ classroom activities and participation from the teacher’s point of view. In the Life Science class, students had to turn their notebooks in each semester for review, for they were a significant part of students’ grades. In other classes, students might have one thin notebook that they used for exercises and practice problems and another that they used for dictation and official board content.

The *leçon* was articulated in a very formalized manner. The text portions of the material were structured in outline and prose form, complete with definitions, and “observations” and “remarks” and “commentary”. It is debatable as to whether this evoked a sense of closeness to the material and participation in the process of generating knowledge in that students and students were expected to copy the lesson exactly, and were told by their teachers what text



should be underlined and what should be written with special red ink as opposed to the default blue or black colors. In students' Math, Life Science, and Geography classes, students needed to use compasses, colored pencils, and rulers in order to record the charts, diagrams, maps, and illustrations that were drawn on the board in their notebooks; most students typically carried a small zippered bag of these tools around with them, but inevitably students lacked the necessary school supplies or a compass turned out to be half broken, so these materials would be tossed and traded around the room, sometimes frantically, as students strained to copy the material down before the teacher moved on. Other students took a decidedly more nonchalant with dictation and would zone out in the middle, leaning over to ask their neighbor what had just been said, and their notebooks were inevitably worn, full of bad penmanship, scribbles, and hastily drawn anatomical diagrams of small animals or cells.

For example, here is a period of Life Science class as it transpired;

The teacher begins by saying that so far they've looked at several ways of moving in the course. He calls on students to tell them what they were; students suggest movement such as walking, jumping, and swimming. He then writes on the board;

### **III. How to Move in Air**

#### **Flying**

As they listen, he tells the class that those animals which fly have a form similar to those which swim. They have such a form for their speed and efficiency of movement. He then draws a spherical shape on the board, in which one side is wider than the other, and which tapers on the thinner sides. This is an aerodynamic form, he says. There are different kinds of flight, he continues, and writes the following on the board;

#### **Gliding Flight (wings don't move)**

**Beating Flight** [perhaps better translated as "Active Flight"]

**Rowing Flight (turning wings)**

At this, he clears his throat and begins repeating the same content, but this time in the form of complete sentences. Students scramble to open up their designated dictation notebooks. The dictated text includes sentences such as; “Example bird: The form of a bird is aerodynamic, the wings attached firmly to the chest, carrying out lateral movements in the course of flight.” He then stops dictating and lectures for some minutes on the three phases of flight: takeoff, flight, and landing. He then recommences his dictation, the students copying down his speech word for word; “Flight consists of three phases. Takeoff: the bird prepares for flight by bending its legs like a Z in order to more easily leave the ground. Flight: The whole body leaves the ground and the animal finds itself in the air with wings that behave in three ways; gliding flight, beating flight, and rowing flight.” He frequently interrupts his dictation to explain something to the students or to prompt them. He continues, “Landing: The wings are spread out at the same time as the feet in order to absorb the shock of the ground.”

He then constructs a chart on the board that the students are to copy down in their notebooks. He explains the chart and writes the answer for the first column. Then he says that they are to fill in the rest on their own—with a sharp pencil, he reminds them. However, as they are doing this, the teacher goes up to the chalkboard and fills in the content of the boxes on the board himself, talking out loud to himself as he goes. Here is the chart in question;

<b>Types of movement</b>	<b>Walking</b>	<b>Jumping</b>	<b>Flying</b>	<b>Swimming</b>	<b>Crawling</b>	<b>Climbing</b>	<b>Burrowing</b>	<b>Floating</b>
<b>Body Type</b>								
<b>Limbs</b>								

When they finish copying, he writes the following on the board;

### **Chapter III : How do living things breathe ?**

#### **I. Breathing in air**

Off to the side, he asks the students to tell them that the different gasses that are present in the atmosphere and their percentages. They are able to tell him a few of the gasses, and he fills in the rest on his own. The majority of what is in the atmosphere is oxygen and ozone. He then goes over the percentage of oxygen, ozone, and carbon gas with relation to inhalation and respiration to show that living beings take in oxygen and get rid of carbon gas as they exhale. He becomes quite frustrated with the students at one point when they don't respond to his questions to draw conclusions (i.e. what I just articulated about the difference in gasses in inhalation and exhalation and the relative usefulness of the various gasses to living things) from the percentages on the chart. He calls the students sheep, tourists, and other things in his displeasure. He has them copy the chart (see below) from the board into their notebooks and then dictates to them the "commentary" and conclusion that they are to write below the chart.

<b>Atmospheric Air</b>	<b>Nitrogen</b>	<b>Oxygen</b>	<b>Carbon Dioxide</b>
<b>Inhaling</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>Trace</b>
<b>Exhaling</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>5%</b>

While the students were working on the chart, the teacher occasionally comes by to their desks and looks over their shoulders to see their progress. After they finished the copying and dictation, he returns to board and under Roman numeral I, he adds “1) **Lung breathing**”. Class then ends with the ringing of the school bell.

This pedagogical orientation of the dictated lesson is pervasive in Senegalese public and private secular schools, all the way up to the university level. It may be rooted in the pedagogical methods of colonial schools—which reflected Western style schools across the globe in their emphasis on memorization, recitation, and dictation in their teaching of “the letters”—as well as constraints in resources, particularly in the rural schools of “the masses”. This legacy has stayed with Senegalese schools through the post-independence period and it touches even the highest educational levels. Friends studying at the University of Dakar (UCAD) during my fieldwork would tell me that professors would often ask them on exams to “*rendre mes mots*”—literally “to give me my [the professors’] words”—i.e. to regurgitate the dictated text and lessons. As a student at the University of Gaston Berger in the late 90s, I myself recall taking classes which consisted primarily of hours of dictated, monotone text that students were to copy into their notebooks as the professor simply sat and read.

Textbooks were not the only pedagogical materials teacher and students had to do without. Classrooms were not equipped with overhead projectors or televisions from which to show films, and the cost of photocopies was prohibitive. The school had no library and there was no public library in the city. The Life Science teacher lamented that he had no laboratory for his students to use. Without fail, he would show up to class with a box of multicolored chalk that he would use to sketch visual representations of flora and fauna on the board that would make up the students lessons, such as plant cells or the respiratory process of insects. His well-drawn illustrations, diagrams, and charts were the sole visions of the natural world to which the students

were exposed in class. There was also no official budget for field trips. However, halfway through the semester, he was able to arrange an informal fieldtrip for the class to the zoo, the Parc Zoologique de Hann.

In Geography class, the young teacher, Mr. D., relied on a topographical map of Senegal that he carried around with him from class to class, hanging it on the blackboard and referring to it in his lectures. Other maps of the Senegal, such as political maps or ecological zone maps, he would draw on the blackboard himself. Early in the semester, much of the focus of his lectures was on the different climatic areas of Senegal; their elevation and topography, soils, vegetation, rain-fall patterns, and so on. As a young boy and adolescent, Mr. D.'s father worked in the civil service as a railroad station manager and so he was frequently assigned new posts. As a result, he lived in almost all of the regions of Senegal, except the Casamance, and was able to witness the great natural diversity of the country. Yet few of his students had been outside of Dakar and the sandy Cap Vert peninsula, whose vegetation is almost non-existent, save for the *niayes* of Guédiawaye. The effect of his teaching was blunted by the fact that students had a hard time envisioning and relating to the kinds of ecological terrains about which he spoke. On another day, when discussing mountains, he brought up the subject of volcanoes, unsure if they knew what he was talking about. "Had they seen one on television?" he asked hopefully. Mr. D. often encouraged students to find out more by going to cybercafés and looking up more about the class topics online. He supplemented the official *programme* of his courses with documents and information he obtained online, which was not typical of most teachers at the school.

In our interviews Mr. D. underlined the difficulties lack of pedagogical materials and overall educational infrastructure posed for students and teachers alike. In late afternoon, one had to stop class because the classrooms get dark and the students cannot see without electricity. It is important for a teacher to be tolerant under these circumstances, he told me. And, he added;

“*c’est le sous-développement*”, lit. “it’s underdevelopment”. Apart from the difficulties of learning in an environment that lacks the necessary tools, students have their own problems with lack of money and resources. These are the suburbs, he reminded me—“*c’est la banlieue*”—there are students who do not have the money to pay for their school supplies and who do not eat three square meals a day. In another interview, the school principal also brought up this issue of the “suburbs”. Here in the suburbs, he told me, students do not have the help and support from their families that one would like. Most parents do not come to school much, he says, and are preoccupied with money problems and the “*recherche de la D.Q.*”<sup>87</sup>, or finding the daily household expenses—at one point he used the word “obsessed” (*obsédé*) to describe these parents. Some parents do have money, he added, but they are not in the majority.

Overall, these pedagogical methods of the junior high (as well as elementary school, high school, and university), based on the notion of authoritative knowledge dissemination in discreet lesson units that are dictated, copied, and memorized, contrast profoundly with the improvisational and self-directed nature of making do and managing practices. Unlike at school, there is no textbook for patchworking and there are no wrong answers. Making do is about locally-specific, situational knowledge that is pragmatic, not academic, abstract, or transmittable from one person to another in a linear manner. This type of survival knowledge is perhaps

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<sup>87</sup> D. Q. stands for *dépense quotidienne*, or daily household expense. The D.Q. is an important aspect of contemporary families’ monetary strategies in Senegal. Typically, household staples like rice, powdered milk, coffee, sugar, margarine and oil are bought each month when a pay check or large sum comes into the family. The daily expense is the costs of feeding the family in addition to these items, for which one needs liquid currency. These items typically include bread for breakfast and the elements that go into making rice or millet for a family’s lunch and dinner—fish or meat and vegetables, which are bought daily at markets as well as “condiments” like tomato paste, mustard, vinegar, and bullion cubes. In the gendering of work, women do the food shopping and cooking, and men are seen as the suppliers of the D.Q. (although women often secure the D.Q. themselves) through their salaried money. Families may invest more or less money in food ingredients, such that rice may be the only item bought in bulk and other items are bought in single-serving packets and small quantities. This strategy reflects a controlled, limited distribution of “their” money of the part of men to their wives, as well more precarious financial situations of urban households in which only a little money is coming in at a time, or a context in which financial decision makers in a family try keeping assets as liquid as possible in case of an unforeseen event in which they would need money that they could not otherwise get.

learned through observation and practice in the informal spaces of house and neighborhood, but most likely is not something that is explicitly taught, contrary to the rote forms of authoritative knowledge to which students are exposed in the Parcelles Junior High School and u13 Franco-Arabe day school.

### *Authority, Discipline, and Responsibility*

The History-Geography teacher, Mr. D., spoke of understanding students, yet when he was frustrated or tired, students would hear from him, “If you don’t understand it, it’s your problem.”<sup>88</sup> As a rule, the disciplinary measures I witnessed in the 5<sup>e</sup> class were considerably less harsh and personalized than that of the Franco-Arabe school. Most of the time, students would be reprimanded as a group. For example, frustrated by their lack of attention to his lecture and to his drawings on the board, the Life Science teacher would occasionally call the students “sheep” or “tourists”. As I mentioned earlier, the English teacher would say something about my research and how the students would be negatively perceived in the United States from what I observed and noted in the classroom. Mr. D. had the habit of asking a student rhetorically, “*Tu te fous de moi?*” which translates loosely as “Do you not give a damn about me or this class? ... Is this a joke to you?” Most often, if an individual student’s behavior caught the attention of the teacher, for example, for talking too loudly, not having their necessary school supplies, not copying from the board or doing exercises in class, or fighting with other students, the teacher would react by simply dismissing the student(s) in question from the class. Sometimes this would entail a simple “Please leave the classroom.” Other times a teacher might say sharply, “*Fous le camp!*”; “Beat it!” or “Get the heck out of here!” in English.

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<sup>88</sup> *Si vous ne comprenez pas, c’est votre affaire.*

On a few occasions, teachers would mete out physical punishments to the students reminiscent of the “*pomps*” of the Franco-Arabe school. Students would be made to stand up at the board with their backs to the class for the duration of the class period, or to crouch on their knees on the hard, uneven concrete floor. On two occasions I saw two male teachers hit their male students, once with a wrap of the knuckles on the chest, and another time a smack on the back of the head. When I spoke with university students and graduates, they related their experiences of getting hit and smacked as young pupils, telling me that corporal punishment used to be much more common in public schools, and that now it is technically not permitted, though some teachers still practice it occasionally, as I saw at the junior high. Typically, the former students with whom I spoke would make these comments within a larger discourse of nostalgia in which they would compare their schooling experiences to that of students today, expressing that students these days had things much easier than they did and were much more “undisciplined” than the students of their generation.

For example, one night over the remains of dinner, a friend of mine, a law student at UCAD who struggled with whether to continue with his studies or pursue something else, told me that people used to have a will to go to school and believed that in so doing, they would acquire knowledge. Now, he said, they have lost that will; they only go because they are required and for the “ambiance”. Ambiance has a much more polyvalent meaning in a French African context, connoting a special atmosphere, but also fun, gaiety, and frivolity.<sup>89</sup> The Life Science teacher remarked to me that he felt that students had become less focused in the decade since he had begun teaching at the school and wondered out loud if television was perhaps the cause.

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<sup>89</sup> Wolof and Jola speakers integrate the French word *ambiance* into the grammatical structure of their languages as both noun and verb.



Teachers often spoke of the challenges of trying to “manage”<sup>90</sup> or *gérer* students. For the French teacher, that he was able to do this successfully was a source of pride in his work and in himself. When I asked Mr. D., one of the youngest teachers in the school, about his relations with students, he told me that they were generally good, because he and the students were not so terribly far apart in age. He tried to be likable (*aimable*), he said, but added that it is also important to keep your distance and maintain the idea that you are the teacher and they are the students, for they are young and can cross boundaries. He related incidences of student gossip in which it was said he had relationships with some female students.

Age and kin relationships are very important to Senegalese in the playing out of interpersonal relationships and one’s sense of social identity. For the actors involved, they give a kind of narrative meaning to these amorphous interactions, and serve as cues as to how each participant should behave and what should expect from the relationship. Roland Colin (1980) portrays the interplay of power in intergenerational relationships as a kind of social game, part of a larger mechanism of social regulation in Senegal. In his comments, the principal also drew on idioms of kinship to explain his interactions with students to me, saying that he has more of a paternalistic relationship than authoritarian one; he was like a father (*comme un père*), he added. He saw school as an extension (*prolongement*) of the African family. As the head of the school, he said, he was open and sympathetic to the students, for this helped him to better know them, and this knowledge, in turn, helped him to solve problems at the school. Because of this style, students who have misbehaved will often feel ashamed (*avoir honte*) and end up ceding (*finir par se plier*—lit. “end up bending themselves”). He confided that he was generally a very humble

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<sup>90</sup> Here, “manage” is used in the sense of management, which is different from the managing of making do type practices or *góorgóorluisme*.

person and that he was there “to help the pupil change, little by little” (*aider l’élève à changer, petit à petit*), which he called a “*politique d’éducation souple*” or flexible educational approach.

Moreover, he expressed similar ideals to the students themselves at the beginning of the year when he circulated from class to class, greeting the students together with one of the school *surveillants*, an older woman. He began by telling them that the administrators were there because they wanted the students to succeed and encouraged the students to do well and to work hard. Again, he told the students that the administrators and teachers are their family, or at least an extension of their family. The administration was there to help them, but their teachers, whom he called their uncles and fathers, mothers and aunts, were also there if students had any problems. In fact, he encouraged students to go first to their teachers with any issues. He added that the administrators were in the process of setting up a system whereby each class in each grade had a certain teacher to act as its *responsable* (lit. responsible one) to deal with any problems and act as a liaison to the administration.

Students also used metaphors of kin and family authority to portray their relationships with teachers. Walking home from school one day with one of the boys in the 5<sup>e</sup> class who had a well-deserved reputation for being a troublemaker and class clown, he recounted to me what he thought of each of the teachers. I was not surprised when he told me that the teacher he disliked the most was the English teacher, for though she was always very nice to me, she had a heavy-handed and strict approach with the students and her reputation was that of unsympathetic grader and a bit of a hard-ass. He related a recent incident in which he had been eating a frozen *crème* in class and she took it out of his hand and threw it out of the window. This gesture stunned him. His philosophical approach towards teachers was to treat them like parents or elders (though I could not say that I really saw him practice what he preached). As strict as his father was with him (and I had personally heard of his parents’ reputation in the neighborhood for being strict),

he said, his father would never do something like that to him. His comments indicated that the English teacher's behavior was, for him, a real transgression on her part, and put his imagined scheme of parent-child, teacher-student relations in a bind. Yet he told me that he concluded he had no way to react to her behavior except to keep quiet about it and accept it, which is what Senegalese children and youth usually do with their elders (*much* more so than in the United States).

Class size was also a key element through which student-teacher relationships were enacted, particularly around ideas of authority, identity, and individual responsibility. The teachers often expressed how difficult it was for them to convey material to their classes and to monitor and assess whether the students were learning effectively. A constant refrain was “*les effectifs, les effectifs*”; class size was more often cited and discussed at greater length than any other teaching “problem” or “challenge” when I spoke with teachers, even more so than the lack of materials. Moreover, the large class size contribute to the sense of difference between students and their teachers—it was easy for students to feel just one of many and to hesitate when they wanted to ask questions. As I sat in on classes, it was often palpable that there was not enough time for teachers to teach all that they had to teach, and too many students to teach. Teachers complained that were able to get only a part of the annual curricular program taught, and this was aggravated by number of missed classes due to holidays, student strikes and teacher union strikes, and the semester exam schedule.

Yet at the same time, students often grew restless and bored as they sat through long lectures and dictation. Few classes were only an hour long—most were scheduled for two hours without a break. The large class sizes made relatively easy for students to disengage from the material and then hide this from the teachers. Most often, there was a sort of persistent buzz around the classroom as students, who were seated two to a “table-bench” (*table-banc*, or more

colloquially, just “*banc*”) and more often three—packed like sardines into their desks would chat, whisper, goof off, and pass pencils, rustle papers, fidget, and so on. For me as a researcher, those two hours often seemed interminably long, and I would sit, shifting uncomfortably on my *banc* and counting the minutes until class let out, while attempting at the same time to focus on observing and note-taking, trying not to let my boredom show. By all accounts, the students were bored, but I often wondered just how they felt. Could the students have been as bored as I was? Perhaps they were more so, for I was much older and had been “trained” to sit and listen to long lectures throughout high school, college, and graduate school. We tend to think of adolescents as having short attention spans and trouble sitting still for long periods of time.

The students, however, were responsible for knowing their lessons, an expectation that was continuously drummed into them by their teachers, and for many, also by their parents and older family members at home. Teachers often read students’ grades aloud in class when handing back exams, scolding those who did poorly. There was little sense on the teachers’ part that students might be embarrassed by their poor performances being made public, and if so, that this mattered any. Students also regulated each other on a daily basis. When teachers wrote practice problems on the board and asked students to come up to the board and solve problems, the students’ at their desks watched closely for the first mistake or hesitation, which would send students leaping out of their seats, their arm stretched to the sky, fingers frantically snapping, yelling “Monsieur, Monsieur”, or “Madame, Madame”, to get the chance to go up and solve it themselves. Moreover, student mistakes at the board or upon reciting a literary passage at the front of the class would be greeted with laughter, sometimes friendly, sometimes less so.

Perhaps the psychological pressure of performance and responsibility allowed students to keep boredom at bay and focus on the material in a way that I was not able to as an observer. Moreover, the experience of attending school was fundamentally a social one—it gave a chance

for students to see and to be seen, and to participate in a social world that they would not be able to otherwise. Though it may not have been enough to motivate some students to pay close attention in class, it may have been an incentive not to skip class. The “center” of students’ normative social behavior was differently defined by teachers and students. Teachers wanted their students to “behave” and to be respectful and perform well academically, whereas what was coolest for a student was to do well academically but not “too well” and with a certain nonchalance. Students had to mediate these differences in the classroom when making choices about their behavior. One way for students to relieve boredom and to get teachers’ attention—as well as that of other students—in a class where they might have gone unnoticed was to act out or misbehave (boys more so than girls).

For their part, the teachers’ pedagogical approach vacillated between treating the students as one big group entity, and recognizing and encouraging both positive and negative distinction. Though students were continuously changing classrooms, the English teacher would often scold the 5e class if their classroom was not clean in the first period she taught. She would see to it that several of the female students would sweep out the entire classroom, while the rest of the students stood around and watched, before she would commence teaching. Distinction was demonstrated most blatantly in students’ P.E. class, where at the beginning of the year, the teacher organized the students into male and female groups, and within their gendered groups, into three groups by size and weight—“strong”, “average”, and “weak” students. As he lined the students up in a circle outside, assessed them visually, and told them to which group they now belonged, he specified that the “weak” students were those who were fat, obese, and sickly, such as those who suffered from asthma. The teacher, who had a good-sized belly himself, maintained these groups in most of his class sessions and differentially assigned work to the groups; such that strong and average boys might be asked to run laps for 10 minutes, subsequently weak boys for 8 minutes,

strong girls for 7 minutes, and so on. Though the other P.E. teacher on staff separated his students by gender and not also by size or weight, this pedagogical approach does not seem at odds with a more general emphasis on distinction and inequality as a constituent element in the elaboration of social relations and identity.

The walls in many of the classrooms bore the marks of student's illustrations and graffiti, which was another way for students' to insert their voices into the controlled spaces of the classroom, aside from the public flouting of teachers' authority I mentioned above. The graffiti drew upon English slang and figures in hip-hop music as well as Wolof and French. It read things like *Tupac* (e.g. the late rapper Tupac Shakur), *Akon* (a platinum-selling hip-hop artist who was born in the United States but is of Senegalese parentage), *Thug life*, *Represent Jamaica City*, *Young buck*, *Fuck you*, *Sweet Girls 5<sup>e</sup> E*, *Je t'aime à la folle* [sic] (I love you to death), *Gros bisous pour la 4<sup>e</sup> A*, with a big pair of lips next to it (Big Kisses for the 4<sup>e</sup> A Class), *SIDA: Syndrome Inventé pour Décourager les Amoureux* (AIDS: Invented Syndrome to Discourage People in Love), *Donner un élève un zero, c'est augmenter le taux de chômage au Senegal* (To give a student a zero is to increase the Senegalese unemployment rate), *Le bon ne fait pas de bruit, le bruit ne fait pas de bon* (A good one doesn't make noise and noise doesn't make any good), *Ne vous fichez pas de nous, Mister Ba* (Don't mess with us, Mister Ba), and *Allah* written in Arabic over the main door.

While some of the graffiti looked the type to have been surreptitiously scrawled during a boring moment in class, much of it was also boldly and prominently written on the walls. Its intended audiences are multiple; words like *Tupac* and *Akon* signal other students about the style and consumption choices and thus identity of their writers in a high/alternatively modern context in which the self is constructed through particular lifestyle choices (c.f. Bourdieu 1984, Ferguson 1999, Giddens 1991, Hebdidge 1987 [1979], Knauff 2002a) that reference and connect students

to a larger imagined world of fashionable African-American youth culture and the rebellion and social critique of the hip hop, rap, and reggae music scenes (see Chapter Six for a more detailed discussion of youths' music consumption). As such, the schoolroom graffiti can be understood as a gesture that resists the failings of the local postcolonial state and educational development projects evident in other aspects of the school's physical body. Some of the graffiti messages are addressed to a broad audience of both teacher and students—the school community, as it were. Still other graffiti conveyed direct messages from students to teachers that sought to explicitly trouble or challenge the teachers' authority. This includes the aforementioned graffiti, “To give a student a zero is to increase the unemployment rate in Senegal,” which I found written in many of the classrooms. On another occasion, a boy named Sekou wrote on the board for their math teacher to find upon entering the classroom; “Mr. Diop is dead.”

The students' clothing also signals a kind of modern heteroglossic code through the juxtaposition of multiple cultural influences, styles, and domestic and international sources of material. As Suzanne Scheld (2003: 149) writes in her study of youth clothing styles in Dakar, “because the city is socially and culturally fragmented, there is no one set of images, practices, and meanings that structure youths' clothing consumption. Diverse forms of public culture coexist, and in some cases overlap. Within this context, clothing commodities ‘talk’.” She creates a typology, based on her informants' responses, of several “modern” and “traditional” styles prominent in Dakar youths' dress practices, including a few religious or foreign (Jamaican) that are considered neither traditional or modern.

Some of the male students reference hip-hop fashion in their dress, wearing oversized T-shirts and baggy low-riding pants (“check down” style in local vernacular) with stiff, squarish baseball caps on their heads; Scheld calls this “*Américain*”. Other male students would reference a sportier or more clean-cut look with close-fitting Nike or Adidas T-shirts or button-downs and

slim fitting pants with plastic rubber sport sandals; “*Italien*” or “*Français*”. In fact, all of these clothes come from the same local market stalls, imported from China or Dubai, through informal and personalized channels. Scheld’s informants suggest that both these styles of dress speak wealth and success to others, even if the wearer is not either. She writes, “The contradiction of appearing wealthy while having no wealth is familiar to youth,” (Scheld 2003: 164). A few of these clothing items may have also been bought at a discount from the *fëgg jaay* (shake and sell) vendors who sell piles of clothes from Goodwill and other Western charities that are shipped and sold to African vendors by the pound/kilo (c.f. Hansen 2000). The wearer would then carefully wash and iron the item so as for it not to appear so used. The quality of the *fëgg jaay* clothing is better than *les Chinois*, or “that Chinese stuff”, people often remark, and so it is more well-regarded, despite its second-hand origins.

Some of the boys would also wear simple *sabadors* and tops of low-grade *bazin* and print *lagos* cloth or patchwork shirts that Baay Falls sometimes sport; this is “traditional”, according to Scheld. In comparison to the boys, more of the girls in the class would wear locally-tailored clothing items—typically the age-appropriate *taille-basse* (fitted top and long skirts of an infinite number of creative, or “invented” styles, typically decorated with coordinating lace or satin ribbon) made out of *wax* and *lagos* and intended for *jànqs* (young, unmarried women) than the more ample *boubous* of *soxnas*—as well as ready-to-wear clothing items like jeans, stretchy slim-fitting pants, and brightly colored and decorated tank tops, also foreign imports. Scheld suggests that young women’s sartorial practices in the city reflect diverse and at times contradictory “speech” about female respectability and sexuality in contexts where status comes mainly through marriage. In the fall of 2006, the school began requiring female students to wear thin blue blouses, which would button over their tops and come to mid-thigh; the same blouses that both male and female students in secular private schools and Franco-Arabe schools typically



wear. The justification for this new policy was concern over indecent or risqué—too tight, too skimpy, or too low-cut—clothing of female students and the blouses were considered an effective remedy. Overall, the sartorial style of the pupils of 5<sup>e</sup> E and the rest of their peers at the junior high was a motley mix of styles, and many times students would incorporate multiple clothing styles within one hybrid outfit; this, too was consistent with the heteroglossia Scheld found in her research. I would argue that their style ultimately challenges neat binaries of traditional and modern and is an important part of Senegalese urban personhood and sociality.

### *Conclusion*

Under colonialism, French power was asserted in large part through the revaluing and reordering of ways of knowing and ways of being (c. f. Bianchini 2004, Brenner 2001), and this legacy has continued to mark the relationship between people, power, and knowledge in the modern era. This scholarly critique of power's workings in colonial and post-colonial African schools also continually surfaces in Africans' own discourse about education and social change. For example, the elders in Kane's novel view the advent of French schools as a portent of the destruction of Haalpulaar society in Fuuta and, importantly, of the very means of reproducing that society: Qur'anic schooling. School, personhood, and identity are clearly linked in minds of the French, créole and black elites, and rural Senegalese in colonial times, yet these actors constructed the Western-style school and its possible implications very differently. In the French discourse of the time, the idea that the development of an extensive Western educational system in Africa—"adapted" or not—might lead to cultural loss or alienation was not viewed negatively. African cultural life was most often considered either lacking value or nonexistent; French colonial governance and institutions could only bring progress, civilization, and enlightenment.

On the other hand, from the perspective of some local black actors, like the rural elite of Kane's novel, attending school meant the loss of one's identity, as a Muslim, Haalpulaar, and African.

For other black Africans in the colony, like the elite *originaires* of the communes, school represented an opportunity to gain status and to participate in a new way of being. These perspectives also changed significantly over time, and as the colonial situation evolved, *originaires* advocated for greater recognition and political participation. From this elite schooled class emerged some of the most influential political actors in early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Léopold Sédar Senghor's *négritude* and African socialist philosophies that marked the 1940s, 50s, and 60s represented a dramatic shift from earlier black elites' discussions of assimilation<sup>91</sup> (Lambert 1993). Lambert argues that *négritude* and African Socialism reflect black intellectuals' preoccupation with identity, newly defined through an assertion of racial and cultural difference. Yet I suggest it is significant that Senghor and the others in his circle formulated *négritude* while living in France and not in Africa or the Caribbean. More than 60 years later, however, both *négritude* philosophy and Senghor himself seem passé to a new generation of Senegalese, schooled and unschooled, elite and working class alike. In a special 2006 edition of "Jeune Afrique" magazine devoted to Senghor on 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth, a young journalist writes of the "legend" and "reality" of Senghor;

We grew up hearing our parents lament the time of Senghor [*"temps yi Senghor"* in urban Wolof]. Nostalgic, they continue to recall this period where, to hear them speak, all was for the best in the best of worlds; the cost of living wasn't high, the state was respected, schools and hospitals ran well, all who graduated from university were able to find jobs, structural adjustment, which came about in the 1980s, and its perverse lot of effects were

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<sup>91</sup> Senghor himself addressed the topic of assimilation in a speech at the Franco-Senegalese Friendship Society in Dakar in 1937 in which he argued that Africans must be active assimilators, not assimilated in a passive sense. In his speech, he also suggested that African intellectuals must study their own heritage and help to restore the excellence of its values and truth (in particular through bilingual and bicultural education) while forging an Afro-French future. Janet Vaillant characterizes his speech as "complicated double game, a subversion of code and discourse from within" in he quietly but boldly questioned assumptions shared by the French and the "westernised African elite" for over one hundred years ( Vaillant 1997).

unknown, social plagues like delinquency and insalubrity, were far from attaining the level we now know, even AIDS, which didn't exist....(Seck 2006: 101).<sup>92</sup>

The journalist goes on to relate how his generation gradually discovered other sides of Senghor in high school and college, coming to the “brutal realization” that the reality of Senghor was much less idyllic than its legend. In particular, the appellation “the era of Senghor” or “*temps yi Senghor*” hid many of the times’ injustices and problems. For some of today’s youth, he writes, Senghor appears as a kind of unfinished symphony and for others, following Fanon’s characterization, he had a “black skin, white mask”. The journalist concludes that this current generation, aspiring to “another Africa” (in this sense, a implicitly “better” Africa) and having not experienced colonialism first hand, has trouble imagining Senghor as more than “a man of an old past” (*un homme d’un passé révolu*) (Seck 2006: 101).

Just as the legend of Senghor and the new Senegalese nation of the 1960s as clean, productive, and livable now seem remote and at times false and hollow for current generations of Senegalese, many people speak nostalgically of a past era of Senegalese schools in which they are consistently represented as far better than the pieced-together (*takkale* in Wolof, *rafistolé* in French), slap-dash and bungled (*baclée*) schools of today. Middle and working-class Senegalese have consistently approached secular school knowledge in practical terms, unlike Qur’anic school, and have looked to public schools to engage their practical needs. In his field research in Dakar schools and homes, Gomis (2003) observes that the prestige of school has declined in the economic crisis of the last 15 years. Parents and pupils have lost confidence in the power of

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<sup>92</sup> *Nous avons grandi en entendant nos parents regretter « tang i Senghor » [sic], (l’époque de Senghor, en wolof). Nostalgiques, ils n’ont pas cessé, jusqu’à aujourd’hui, de faire référence à cette période où, à les entendre, tout allait pour le mieux dans le meilleur des mondes : la vie n’était pas chère, l’Etat était respecté, les écoles et les hôpitaux fonctionnaient bien, tous ceux qui sortaient des universités trouvaient du travail, l’ajustement structurel, apparu au début des années 1980, et son lot d’effets pervers étaient inconnus, beaucoup de fléaux, comme la délinquance, l’insalubrité, étaient loin d’avoir atteint son ampleur qu’on leur connaît maintenant, voire, comme le sida, n’existaient pas...*

school to better their lives; they realize more and more, he writes, that school is not the only route to happiness, nor is it a job machine (*une machine d'emploi*).

In a television interview in 2005, Souleymane Ndiaye, an elderly, but still prominent figure in the Senegalese educational scene, who worked for decades at the National Education Ministry as well as a consultant in other African countries and with UNESCO, spoke of the decreasing power of a diploma to assure a well-paying job. He admitted that people in the informal sector (referred to colloquially as the “*modou-modous*” or the “*bana-banas*” have proved one can earn more making-do there than one can as a teacher—“*Le modou-modou a prouvé que la débrouillardise peut gagner plus d'un professeur.*”

Official state discourse, however, celebrates the school, makes it obligatory (though this policy is not enforced), and represents it as a necessary part of Senegalese life as a modern, productive nation. These latter notions were echoed in the statements of the Parcelles Junior High principal, who declared that the world is now one big global village and school, a capital experience. Parents, he said, were convinced of the necessity of attending school as part of children’s preparation for modern life. Children, for their part, also wanted to go—it was socially embarrassing for them not to attend school. Even if it is only for a few years, and even if the child grows up to be a small-time salesman, shopkeeper, mechanic, the principle concluded, it was indispensable for students to be able to speak French and English and to be familiar with computers. In between these two somewhat incongruous perspectives—that expressed by research Souleymane Gomis and educator Souleymane Ndiaye, on one hand, and that of the state and the Parcelles principal, on the other—students, teachers, and even administrators are left to mediate these contradictions and gaps on any everyday basis. In the next chapter I will focus more on the junior high students, as I explore the dialogue of urban and family environments and the school as it is voiced through their life stories and everyday conversations.

## CHAPTER 4

### OUT OF THE CLASSROOM: EDUCATION'S HOME

In last chapter, I recounted how when the students' young and charismatic History-Geography teacher, Mr. D., discussed the challenges of learning and teaching the Parcelles junior high school, he emphasized the significance of the neighborhood and students' home environments. If the school lacks funds and adequate resources, so, too, do the students. "*C'est la banlieue*", Mr. D. reminded me; "It's the suburbs". He would repeat this phrase again and again during that conversation, as would the principal and the head *surveillant* during formal interviews I conducted with them after months of informal interviews and questions. *Here, we're in the suburbs, this is a suburban school, these are suburban pupils.*

For any Dakarois, what "the suburbs" mean, and the socially problematic nature of such a place is perfectly clear. While in the United States, the suburbs are seen as a place of largely white middle and upper-middle class affluence, tranquility, and respectability that emerged in the post WW II economic boom, the *banlieue* have quite the opposite sense in Senegal. Here, the suburbs and their residents are often talked about by other Dakar residents in derogatory terms. The *banlieue* are viewed as crowded, dirty, disorganized places of crime, delinquency, and poverty and whose residents possess a kind of backward mentality (*mentalité*). Moreover, the *banlieue* is both the stereotypic and actual home of the informal sector of making do, juxtaposed against the agricultural, rural realm of productivity, on the one hand, and close-in bourgeois urban neighborhoods of formal, salaried work, on the other. In this context, the "official" city of Dakar is really quite small relative to the urban agglomeration as a whole. The *banlieue* is "other" and geographically and social marginal, but demographically, it is at the center.

These meanings and pragmatic realities of Senegalese urban space are a product of the historical development of Dakar and its greater metropolitan area on the sandy Cape Verde peninsula over the last century or so. In the following chapter, I will first trace the trajectory of the city's development, examining how resources and power are organized in contemporary urban families and households. I then examine changes in the ways in which African cities, more generally, have been understood in anthropology and how this might inform our understanding of place and urban processes in Senegal. The city as a driver for, and locus of, cultural and social change was an important point of interrogation in early social scientific research. The advent of world-systems and dependency theory, and a Marxist turn in history, led to research focused on the generation and circulation of capital to and from cities within a stratified global sphere in which money was increasingly revising local systems of value. Recent work on the nature of urbanity in Africa has highlighted the importance of popular culture as a realm in which people, as producers and consumers of symbolically-charged materials with hybrid and extra-local provenance, actively take part in the construction of urban social life and modern selves.

The city, and specifically the densely-populated suburb as a part of differentiated urban space, does not simply provide the context in which students' experiences at school, notions of self, and aspirations for the future play out. Rather, I argue here that this heterogeneous urban environment is constitutive of the public educational institutions like the Parcelles Assainies Junior High School and Islamic institutions like the u13 Franco-Arabe school that were the focus of my study, as well as urban Qur'anic schools, or *daaras*. Moreover, it is central to the making of schooling experience for these students, and to their sense of self and self-possibility, shaping their perceptions, their relations, and their actions in the world. For the teachers, administrators, and parents who participate in the reproduction of Senegalese educational institutions, this is also

true. Each occupies a position in the chain of structure and practice, both in terms of their own life course as individuals and in the larger social history of Senegal.

In the latter half of this chapter, I ground this larger discussion of youth and urban society in examples and stories from the lives of a few particular Parcelles Junior High students with whom I conducted family and neighborhood studies. These personal accounts will take us into Chapter 5, where I explore further issues of people's efforts to bridge the gap between socially pervasive messages of success and urban economic realities through the practice of making do. The African suburb is a key site for and instigator of creative managing and patchworking-type behavior as its residents, decidedly less mobile and affluent than their city-center counterparts, seek not only to pragmatically bridge the gaps between ambition and opportunity, but to construct lives of respectability and value in locally-meaningful ways.

### *Dakar's Modern Genesis*

The class and racial hierarchies that marked Dakar's historical growth into a global city continue to resonate with and affect how space, place, and identity works in the contemporary moment. Before the expansion and intensification of French colonial rule, the Cap Vert peninsula, which is the westernmost point of continental Africa as it hooks and stretches its way out into the Atlantic, was home to a few Lebu fishing villages like Yoff, Camberène, and Thiaroye. It was not until 1857 that the town of Dakar was officially founded there, as the peninsula's location and potential as a deep water port became increasingly attractive to the French in order to facilitate the extraction and export of peanuts (which usurped gum Arabic and hides as the main focus of colonial enterprise). Dakar was established as the last of the Four Communes of the AOF, following Saint-Louis, Gorée, and Rufisque. With the relocation of the French

commercial and administrative headquarters to its shores, becoming the AOF capital city in 1912, Dakar would soon surpass the other Commune cities in population and influence.

That first decade of the new century attracted many Europeans to Dakar. The city's population rose from a small group of a hundred or so merchants in 1900s to over 2,500 by 1910 in a city of about 10,000 total residents (Cruise O'Brien 1972).<sup>93</sup> With the influx French and Italians, as well as number of Lebanese traders<sup>94</sup> during these years, mixed areas in Dakar gave way to distinct European and African neighborhoods and, finally, official geographic segregation. This represented a real shift in the system of colonial power relations and social identity that marked Saint-Louis and Gorée in the 1800s, with their historically large and influential *métis* (mixed-race) class and citizenship for black *originaires*.

Much of rhetoric and rationale behind the adoption of such a policy lay in French concern with disease and hygiene in the colonies, particularly yellow fever and cholera. They sought to protect Europeans from Africans, who, due to racialized constructions of African living conditions and intellectual competence, were believed to constitute a hotbed of disease and infection (Ngalamulume 1997: 1208-1209). The white neighborhood of the Plateau, located on the tip of the Cap Vert peninsula and now the downtown center of the contemporary Dakar, and its counterpart, the African quarters of the Medina, located on sandy soils farther inland, were thus established as formally dichotomized spaces. Interestingly, a failure to extend the newly-

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<sup>93</sup> The number of Europeans (mostly French) in Senegal would keep growing annually until independence in 1960, at which time the number of French was approximately 30,000, including a substantial number of women. Large migration of Europeans to Dakar after WW II resulted a tripling of the city's European population. This growth rate was higher than the growth in the number of the cities African residents, and included a significant number of unskilled working-class whites who were looked down upon by the more elite European residents of Dakar. The latter worked as colonial administration personnel or in the private sector. Most French would leave Senegal after independence with the end of the French colonial administration in Africa and more gradual changes in employment opportunities for Europeans in the private sector. In all instances, Europeans in Dakar remained a minority, whose relationship with Africans was marked by power asymmetry and, in many cases, racially-motivated hostility.

<sup>94</sup> Together with Abidjan, Dakar has the largest Lebano-Syrian population in Sub-Saharan Africa (Sy 1992). For an in depth look at colonial European society in 20<sup>th</sup> century Senegal, including the experience of Lebanese migrants to the country, see Cruise O'Brien (1972).



developed colonial sanitary services and policy to the “native zone”, or ghetto, of the Medina aggravated sanitary conditions generally in the town, though Africans were of course the most severely affected. As Angelique Diop (1997a: 1227) argues, it was only in subsequent years when the colonial government expanded its medical and sanitation services to include Africans that the colony saw a real retreat of the epidemics that had marked the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and killed thousands.

Subsequent residential growth in Dakar proceeded along racial and class lines, though the arrival of working class European migrants, or *petits blancs* (to use the popular and pejorative term), and the increasing tenuousness of the colonial project’s legitimacy following WWII meant that strict residential geographies based on racial law in Dakar would give way to the emergence of class as a more powerful shaper of residence, albeit slowly. One could argue that trumping of class over race really was not possible until the departure of the majority of the French colonial residents, following the creation of an independent Senegalese nation-state in 1960. And race and class continue to be intertwined in the production and reproduction of structural inequality both within the Senegalese national landscape, where non-blacks are a small but wealthy minority, and for Senegalese experiences in the larger field of global North-South relations, more generally. In the 1950s, working-class whites still had the advantage over Africans even in the lower echelons of the civil service and skilled labor. Rita Cruise O’Brien (1972: 73) describes a competitive and racially tense urban environment of the time, in which working class whites attempted “to identify with a homogenous white community (which of course no longer existed)” and minimize objective distinctions in material conditions and social positions among Europeans so as to further bolster this racially-based advantage over Africans inherent to the colonial relationship.

The newer urban neighborhoods stamped with such social and class meanings in the post WW II period have largely retained these affiliations into the present day, though of course their racial dimension has been tempered. European overflow from the Plateau prompted the construction of upper-class neighborhoods Fann and Point E on the west coast of the peninsula beyond the Medina in the 1950s. Some of the luxury houses in these neighborhoods have been converted into embassies or NGO offices, and others remain residences for the city's upper class, including President Abdoulaye Wade prior to his election in 2000. Newer construction of homes for the wealthy has extended north from this zone between the coastline and the VDN (Voix de Désengagement du Nord, the second city highway after the Autoroute Nationale) forming the neighborhoods of Mermoz, Fênêtre Mermoz, and the Foires (Nord, Ouest, and Sud), connecting up with the affluent beachside communities on the west side of the airport, such as Ngor and the Virages beach.

According to Dakar gossip, many of these multi-storey homes with terracotta tiled roofs, balconies, rich, thickly painted walls and colorful trim, and well-groomed gardens were built with the money of prosperous international migrants. These are also the neighborhoods of Senegal's cultural elite. And so, on a taxi ride through the area, one's driver might point out the home of a famous singer like Thione Seck or a loquacious television variety show host. With their wealth on such display, the residents in this area, including celebrities, are often subject to "home invasion" type robberies that are then reported in salacious detail in many of the daily newspapers. The presence of uniformed or plainclothes security guards who sit watch each day from plastic chairs out front is altogether common and normal.

Let us take a trip out to this neighborhood together. The typical path to these villas of Mermoz and the Foires from the downtown Plateau is to take avenue Lamine Gueye, past the greasy auto parts shops of the Medina, the Tilène market with its colorful fruit displays, and the

University Cheikh Anta Diop's gates, which are almost always decorated with students' large painted cloth banners announcing a club meeting or campus-wide event. If one then turns right onto Bourguiba Avenue at the Ecole Normale instead of continuing on north, one enters into a different side of the Dakar life and further dimensions of the city's social and economic history. On the left, the middle class villas of the SICAP (Société Immobilière du Cap Vert) neighborhoods roll by, built by this semi-private company on a government contract in the 1950s to house upwardly mobile Africans. Along the right side of Bourguiba Avenue lie the more working-class quarters of Grand Dakar; Benn Talli and Ñarri Talli (which translate literally as *One Paved Street* and *Two Paved Streets* in Wolof, for the rest of the neighborhood's streets are generally sand, even though these are considered close-in neighborhoods relative to many other areas). This is a densely-populated place that some SICAP residents might caution you from walking around in at night, saying that it's not safe (*woorul*) and that a person could get mugged there.

Beyond Grand Dakar lie the HLM neighborhoods, 1-5. HLM stands for *Habitations à Loyer Modéré*, or Modest Rent Housing, which represented a kind of middle ground between SICAP neighborhoods and *quartier populaire* of Grand Dakar for the expanding urban population. They were founded at the beginning of the 1960s, after a decade of over 8% annual population growth (Minvielle, Diop, and Niang 2005: 121).<sup>95</sup> From here, the road out to Parcelles Assainies, site of my research with the students of the u13 Franco-Arabe school and the Junior High and their families, isn't long. One travels the length of the Rues du Front de Terre and Thiandoum (ex Arafat), passing by working-class neighborhoods of Khar Yalla and Grand

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<sup>95</sup> In the three decades prior to this period, the Dakar region grew at a 5.8% annual rate. After independence the annual growth rate of the Dakar metropolitan area was recorded at 4%; however, this includes substantial internal variation. Within the city proper, with its natural boundaries of the sea, the growth rate was about 2.5%, whereas in the suburban areas of Pikine and Guédiawaye adjacent to Parcelles Assainies, the neighborhoods grew at 8.5% per year.

Yoff on the right and wealthier HLM Grand Yoff on the left. To get to Parcelles Assainies, one must continue east on rue Arafat, crossing the narrow bridge over the highway that leads to the airport and the ocean. It is a steep climb and there is only one lane in each direction, so, riding in a *car rapide* public transportation car, one is subject to lurching stops and starts as the traffic and the narrowness combine to make the crossing a slow-going one. The wind whips through the car's glassless open windows, but they offer passengers a clear view of the Stade Léopold Sédar Senghor below, the now faded and graffitied national stadium that was built when Senegal played host country to the African Cup of Nations in 1992. Next to the stadium are low, tightly spaced cement houses and lodgings of scrap wood and zinc; Grand Medine, a poor neighborhood that looks in places like a shantytown or *bidonville*. Stretching east beyond Grand Medine and north to the sea is Parcelles Assainies. From the top of the overpass, one can also see south to the large highway roundabout, less than half a mile away.

The roundabout, or *rond point*, is significant, for it essentially marks the divide between the suburbs and the rest of the city's residential quarters. Past it lie the neighborhoods of Parcelles Assainies, as well as Guédiawaye, Pikine, Dalifort, Thiaroye, Diamageune, Malika, Keur Massar, and Mbao, among others. Because of population growth,<sup>96</sup> construction of new houses and expansion of neighborhoods on this east end of the Cap Vert peninsula has progressed each year, such that soon there may be no clear demarcation between Rufisque, the smaller Four Communes city located on point where the peninsula and the mainland meet, and Dakar. Rather, people expect that before long the area between them will be entirely built up, such that while

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<sup>96</sup> In recent years, studies suggest that internal growth (e.g. birth rates) represents a greater portion of the annual population growth on the Cap Vert peninsula than in-migration from other areas of the country (Minvielle, Diop, and Niang 2005).

they will most certainly maintain their political and administrative distinctiveness, they will essentially form one large, continuous, and highly heterogeneous, metropolitan area.<sup>97</sup>

### *Conceptualizing African Cities*

Khar Yalla, which we passed on the ride out from the city center to Parcelles, evocatively translates as *Waiting for God* in Wolof. This neighborhood, similar to Parcelles in its date of first settlement, working-class population, and ethnic composition, was the urban site of Michael Lambert's (2002b) research into the evolving sense of place and community ties for migrants from Mandégane, a Jola village from the Buluf area of Casamance in southern Senegal. Lambert conducted research along this continuum of connection between Dakar and Mandégane, one that is constituted through its members—some who were born in Mandégane and are now definitive migrants to Dakar, others who are Dakarites whose family origins are in Mandégane and actively retain their ties through their social affiliations, activities, and return visits<sup>98</sup>, and still others who are circular migrants who move back and forth between the two locales. Though many of his interlocutors have left the physical boundaries of the village for Khar Yalla, they bring their

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<sup>97</sup> As space becomes an issue in Dakar, people build up as well as out. Home construction in Dakar typically consists of cement blocks (which are molded on site using a mix of cement powder, produced in a Rufisque factory, and water) enforced with metal rebar. People's roofs (which are places to store old odds and ends, hang laundry, and sleep on hot summer nights) are often left flat and unfinished, with the rebar left uncut, so that should the family come into some money, they might easily be able to build on top.

<sup>98</sup> For Jola who live in Dakar, other parts of the country, and even abroad, the most profound of these return visits is the *bukut* or *futamp*, a initiation ceremony for young Jola men which is organized by each village on a revolving 30 year or so basis. The *bukut*, whose constitutive events (some public, most secret) now take place over several weeks (in previous times it entailed months, not weeks) and include hundreds of village participants and visitors, require much financing and organization in order to carry off successfully. In the summer of 2007, the *bukut* took place in Baïla, a large village in the Fogy area of Casamance. Baïla Dakarites met on a monthly basis for over a year prior to the event, in order to collect monetary contributions (*cotisations*) required by each man and woman for the village, their village section or neighborhood, and patrilineal family group, as well as to discuss plans for lodging arrangements, prepare clothing and jewelry, and to practice the dancing and singing that are an important part of the event. *Bukuts* can be so expensive to host that some villages begin their *cotisations* years in advance of the announcement for the village, which generally comes little over a year before the *bukut*, so that they might have enough time to save the required money in a way that wasn't so financially difficult or "painful" (*metti* or *saf* in Wolof). These preparatory meetings gather together family, village sections, and different gender and age groups. I suggest that they are another manifestation of the kinds of urban associative ties and activities that Lambert argues serve to integrate contemporary urban Jola communities and persons within a larger multilocal village structure.

social worlds with them, Lambert suggests, which they then rearticulate across urban space and through time in the different generations of people who trace their origins back to the village. In Khar Yalla, where many of his interlocutors rented rooms in large, open apartment buildings, he recorded robust participation in a range of village-based clubs and associations such as women's savings groups, youth groups that organize dances (*soirées*) and a soccer league, and a variety of community development projects (largely unsuccessful) in which people's familial and community links to the village are affirmed as well as their urbanity and individual status and achievements. Lambert argues that such engagements blur the boundaries and distinctions that are often drawn between urban and rural spaces in African contexts.

Lambert's work joins a large field of research and scholarship in African anthropology which attempts to expand upon and rework earlier notions about the nature of urbanization in Africa and its effects on the social life of modern communities. Anthropologists working in Africa as early as the 1920s under the aegis of the Rhodes Livingstone Institute were concerned with social process and social problems in emergent African cities and industrial centers, rural areas, and the movements of people between these respective locales. The Institute's first director, Godfrey Wilson, put forth the idea of two systems of social relations and values in Africa; an urban system based on modern industrial production and a rural counterpart rooted in traditional subsistence production (Werbner 1984). Within Wilson's schema, Africans essentially had to choose, or commit, themselves to one domain at the expense of the other—one could not be both a modern urban worker and a tribesman present. For him, urbanization meant gradual, unidirectional change away from rural life, custom and tradition.

In contrast to Wilson's detribalization model, Max Gluckman (1961), also at RLI, put forth an alternation model of African urbanization which suggested that people continued to move back and forth between urban and rural areas and, in so doing, made links across the two

spheres. Gluckman's colleagues A.L. Epstein, J. Clyde Mitchell, and Aiden Southall also suggested that the circulation of people between town and country, and the kinds of dialectical cultural feedback processes it involved, were key characteristics of evolving African societies. They were keen to explore urbanity as a multi-dimensional and varied phenomenon. These Manchester School anthropologists were conducting research in South and Central African contexts where mining and industrialism helped drive the growth of cities.

In contrast, coastal West African cities like Dakar had relatively little industry to speak of and this aspect remains true to the present day. Dakar was established in order to facilitate French capitalist interests in the AOF. It served as an administrative headquarters for the colonial government and a center of collection and distribution because of its deep port and strategic peninsular location, as I noted earlier. Peanuts, the main cash crop, were transported to the city via a railroad network built in the 1880s and were then put on ships to Marseille and other French port cities where they would be used in soap and as cooking oil.<sup>99</sup> Manufactured goods and food staples, such as textiles, tools/pots, plastics, rice (imported from Southeast Asia), sugar, and oil (in early years all the refineries for peanut oil were located in France) from the metropole came into the country through the port of Dakar and were disseminated throughout the countryside to local markets and by circular migrants upon their visits home.

Dakar was like a big heart, which as it beat, would bring peanuts in and pump consumer goods and supplies out. The country's railroads and roadways functioned like the body's arteries

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<sup>99</sup> The emergence of peanut, or groundnut cultivation, on a large scale for export, was predicated on colonial destruction of existing imperial, caste systems of power and production in Wolof and Sereer communities in central Senegal as briefly outlined in chapter 2. The traditional power holders were replaced by marabouts as local figures of moral and political authority, and more officially, canton chiefs (though their moral authority was next to none). Much of the land for peanut agriculture was obtained by Wolof Mourides migrants at the expense of Haalpulaar'en (Fulani) herders in large tracts granted to major marabouts, which were then divided. Though the great majority of peanut farmers were independent producers, Mouride marabouts were influential in the agricultural affairs of their disciples and in mediating between them and the colonial and independent states. In subsequent decades, peanuts also fueled the growth of cities outside the traditional peanut belt, such as Bignona and Ziguinchor in Casamance. See Cruise O'Brien (1971) and Lambert (2002b).

and veins. Ultimately, however, what really was circulating around this anthropomorphized *corps sénégalais* was money and power in the place of blood. This centralized and controlled collection and distribution of capital speaks to what Frederick Cooper (1994) has called the arterial nature of power in colonial Africa, more generally. Capitalist markets and enterprise were a key element in this exercise of power, transforming African societies under colonialism in deeply-penetrating ways. In Senegal, the peanut was the pillar of evolving monetary economy. Crops grown for subsistence were displaced by the cultivation of peanuts for export, whose prices and terms of trade and credit were controlled and manipulated by French *maisons de commerce*. Further, French capital did not pay the full costs of this production to the people and land it involved. Instead, rural households bore the brunt of the cost of the construction (or invention) of French profits and productivity under this *pacte colonial* (Boone 1992: 46). This is also an important point for Gluckman (1961) in his articulation of urban and rural spheres in a total social field; here, the urban sphere is able to attract and to utilize labor without having to pay the full social costs of reproducing that labor.

Concurrent with the development of the peanut as a cash crop, manufactured goods became increasingly visible and commonplace in Senegal as the French expanded their presence in local markets. Yet obtaining these goods was not always easy within existing social and economic modes. For example, the increasing attractiveness of plastic basins and pails and metal pots and utensils as a kind of trousseau (a new phenomenon) for rural Jola women in Casamance led them to seek out work in the city (Ziguinchor or Dakar). They most often worked as domestics prior to their marriage, for there was little opportunity for them to obtain the means to buy items for their trousseau in their villages (Lambert 2002a, Lambert 2002b).<sup>100</sup> In both these

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<sup>100</sup> These activities constituted a point of tension between women and their fathers, brothers, and husbands; in interviews women of this generation remarked that an important factor in their decisions to seek out work to buy



realms of agricultural production and consumption, money was a key component of one's participation and of the construction of one's identity. And with those engagements, currency became more and more a part of the acts of living and surviving in Senegal. This increasing entrenchment of money and monetary value of things (labor, goods, crops, etc.) is complicated by the fact that under the colonial system Africans' ability to acquire capital was circumscribed, as it was also the case for individuals (like the young women of Casamance) within the modes of local social systems.

In many ways, the issue of money and incorporation into capitalist markets recalls novelist Cheikh Amidou Kane's suggestion that colonizers' most effective tool of domination was the institution of the Western school and not military might or threat of violence, an idea I spoke about in the last chapter. School helped advance colonial domination in a deep-seated, long-term way by "perennializing" the conquest. And the school is like a magnet, Kane suggested, which fascinates African souls and ushers forth a new order. In such a new world, the new man the new school have a tense relationship with each other is rife with tension, for each is dependent on the other. I suggest that there are important similarities between the institution of the school, as Kane presents it in his novel, and money. In this vein, analyses of currency both as "revolutionary" (Bohannon 1959) and as an unstable "interface" whose inherent functions are less significant than the changing relations amongst its functions, e.g. the ways in which money matters in African communities as both a means of exchange and a store of wealth (Guyer 1995) are cogent ways of theorizing the evolving roles and significations of money on the continent.

In this context of capital circulation, scholars have increasingly tried to understand urban spaces in Africa by looking critically at their historical development and how it has shaped cities'

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these housewares was the fact that they couldn't count on their husbands or male kin to provide this for them. The successful assemblage of a trousseau became a source of prestige for their mothers.

structure, functions, and character, as well as the social worlds of their residents (Cruise O'Brien 1979, Epstein 1964, Epstein 1967, Gugler and Flanagan 1978, Little 1974). This approach, which can be linked with world-systems theory in anthropology more broadly, engages a total African field—from small rural communities in the hinterland, to towns that serve as regional centers, to large cities—conceived as interdependent places and spaces. In Senegal, these places are points within a multi-level hierarchy in which Dakar lies at the apex (Ngom 1988). Importantly, these scholars situate this heterogeneous, yet interrelated, African terrain within the larger international sphere of colonial metropolises and global capital flows, in order to understand the processes and challenges of African life. It critiques African cities as superimposed artificially-created environments, which, because they were developed in response to external interests, fail to satisfy the needs of local populations. Ironically, it was precisely the idea that the city might be a place where the fulfillment of one's needs and, importantly, aspirations that prompted the great majority of voluntary urban migration in Africa in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In Senegal, the multiform pressures on rural residents under the colonial system were fundamental to this large post-war migration to Dakar in search of work and opportunities for adventure and a new life—a “better” life. Peanut farming was a difficult and precarious enterprise from the start, and in the countries of the Sahel, like Senegal, a severe drought, or *sécheresse* that occurred during the 1960s and 70s exacerbated these problems in the largely rain-fed agricultural realm, prompting further migration to the Cap Vert peninsula. Some of this migration of farmers to Dakar was circular migration during the off-seasons, largely in line with the historic phenomenon of the *navetane* (rainy season migrant workers) and the *noorane* (dry season migrant workers) Many of these migrants worked as day laborers or in the informal sector of the city (Sy 1992: 112).

With the advent of independence in 1960, a substantial number of positions for Africans with some level of education also opened up within the civil service of the new Senegalese state. The majority of these positions were based in Dakar, for its dominant position in the national sphere (if not sub-regional sphere under the AOF) made it more than just an economic trade hub but a center of administration, planning, and public infrastructure and institutions. As such, government ministries and offices, company headquarters like the water board, electric, telephone, and municipal transportation companies (which were national enterprises owned and run by the state under the politics of African Socialism until the 1990s), as well as educational institutions (including the University of Dakar Cheikh Anta Diop), hospitals, clinics, banks, hotels, and so on were all concentrated in the city. These institutions and opportunities in the post-independence era attracted an increasing number of rural residents, many of whom were inclined to stay on in Dakar permanently or for an extended time.

This rural exodus, or *exode rurale*, is one of most important characteristics of social change in contemporary Africa, argues Kenneth Little (1974). In the present day, virtually all of Mandégane's young men and women leave for Dakar or Ziguinchor, the regional capital, Lambert recorded in his study. Their leaving is expected and thought of as inevitable—it is no longer considered a subversive or rebellious act of young men in the first decades of this past century. Mandégane and Casamance are not unique in this regard; extended urban migration has become the norm for rural communities throughout Senegal.<sup>101</sup>

The cost to rural areas with the loss of such a substantial portion of each successive adult generation has been heavy. Villages are left largely to the elderly and to young children. Rural

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<sup>101</sup> The Senegal River valley has had one the highest levels of out migration in the country. Abdoulaye Bara Diop's survey of Haalpulaar'en in this area recorded that over 90% of men left the area to look for work in Dakar (1965: 232). For a detailed historical account of migration from the river valley and eastern Senegal among Soninke populations see Manchuelle (1997).

development projects and state efforts to “decentralize” have not succeeded at reversing the gross disparity in opportunity between urban and rural areas that residents, particularly young people, feel so acutely;

There is a lack of prospects, educational or otherwise, which makes young people feel that the world is passing them by, and that only towns offer the possibility of success. In time rural adults also come around to this opinion. The feeling of hopelessness is worsened by the chronic underemployment experiences in the dry season...the deterioration in terms of trade, which multiplies months of hard work by zero...only one prospect has any drawing power: the prospect of getting out, the dream of getting a job in town (Sy 1992: 118).

### *(Sub)Urban Struggle Anew*

Where has that opportunity gone in 1980, 90s and the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? It seems difficult to locate in Dakar or the countryside these days. People feel “passed by” and discouraged in villages and towns alike. Going abroad (usually to Europe or the United States) has replaced African cities as the new specter of hope and opportunity. Almost everyone in Senegal has a family member, friend, or neighbor who has migrated abroad. This phenomenon is most common in cities, where residents are generally more affluent, but rural communities are not divorced from this phenomenon, either.

The effects of this mass out-migration on some of the more well-off urban neighborhoods in some ways parallel eerily the rural exodus. Visiting with my undergraduate host family one Senegalese Independence Day eve, I decided to take a walk around Sicap Baobabs, their generally quiet “bourgeois” (in local parlance) neighborhood, with my youngest host brother, Jean-Pierre. At the time, Jean-Pierre was in his late teens and enrolled as a student in an expensive five year program at a private post-secondary technical school in the city. As we strolled along, I was struck by how quiet and empty the houses of people I knew and the places in this neighborhood that had been significant to me seemed, relative to just two or three years ago.

These were basketball courts, park benches, and local shops and bars where Jean-Pierre's older brother, cousin, and their friends used to hang out, chat, and play lively pick-up games. Their own family house, too, was decidedly less animated, we both lamented—hardly any young people stopped by there anymore.

When I asked after the friends of his cousin, Vincent (as the oldest male in the household of that young generation), I learned that most of them had left the country. Vincent, for his part, was one of the few people in his group of friends who had stayed. But then again, he had been childhood sweethearts with the next-door neighbor, and they had recently married. Jean-Pierre's older brother, Luc, (the second oldest male in the household of that generation) had left, as had most of his friends. And Jean-Pierre commented that pretty soon, he and most of *his* friends—many of whom were studying at private schools, another who was at the University of Dakar, and one who dropped out and was working as a waiter—would leave, too.<sup>102</sup> Senegal, he remarked, was a country of immigrants and migrants. It was as if each generation of these upper-middle class young men in the city had reached a point where they had to leave the country for opportunities that could not be found in Senegal, or at least opportunities they *perceived* they could not find there. Of course, the socio-economic status of Jean-Pierre and his friends made leaving a much more realistic option than for their working-class peers in the suburbs, but the desire to leave is widespread across socio-economic class (c.f. Lambert 2002b, Mbembe 1985).

In the past, many scholars and citizens alike viewed African cities as socially-progressive, modern “opportunity” societies. But in the years following the early optimism of independence, these notions have given way to an image of the city as a place of stratification and inequality, and as a site for the exercise of social control where people struggle to realize their ambitions and make ends meet (Ferguson 1999, Hansen 1997, Harts-Broekhuis 1997, Little 1974, Marie 1981).

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<sup>102</sup> Jean-Pierre is now studying in France, as is his sister and the other female household members of his cohort.

In popular discourse, these understandings often draw a clear contrast between the city of now and the city of the past, expressing a sense of decline, degradation, and loss—change as negative. In the academy, it has led scholars to revise their analyses and images of African urbanism, past and present, placing greater emphasis on inequity, power, and domination and the ways in which residents negotiate, contribute to, and resist these systems and phenomena.<sup>103</sup>

In Senegal, well-paid positions in the civil service are no longer as easy to come by as they were in the post-independence era, when the state needed people to replace departing colonial personnel and help manage the expanding state apparatus of management and services. Here, under Senghor, the state was viewed as the sole qualified vehicle for “realizing the nation”, a notion which continues to dominate Senegalese administrative politics in the present day (Villalón 1995: 97). These opportunities for the kind of salaried employment through which a man might support his kin, and thus maintain or assert his status as authoritative head of the family, were further reduced by structural adjustment policies of the 1980s and 90s that were aimed at shrinking the state’s employment rolls. Competition for such posts has also increased as more people are obtaining the required diplomas and obtaining even more advanced ones.

In her recent novel, *Festins de la détresse* or “Feasts of Want/Misery”, Aminata Sow Fall (2005) critiques this situation in a scene in which the main character, Biram, answers a want ad for “young M.D.s who specialize in infectious diseases”. This entails lining up with hundreds of other candidates at 7:30 am outside an upper middle class villa to wait for the well made-up young secretary to arrive (“she’ll arrive in just a minute or two” was the refrain). She does arrive several hours later, only to say that she had no idea that her boss, who was abroad, had put out an advertisement for a position. And, when the “executive” secretary finally arrives a little

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<sup>103</sup> In addition to its connections to world-systems theory, this view resonates with the Chicago School’s interest in inequality and marginality in American cities in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

while later after her, he tells the crowd; “This time, we’ll take three of you,” (Sow Fall 2005: 37).<sup>104</sup> This garners no reaction at all from the crowd, Biram comments as the scene narrator, for the unemployed doctors in front of him are used to showing up at such appointments where two hundred people would jockey for one or two spots. Then the executive secretary tells them the elimination process will entail more than a week of interviews and exams, from which a trial group of doctors will be sent out to do fieldwork in the countryside and an exhaustive report on rainy season diseases that affect rural women and children, and only the accepted doctors will be reimbursed for this once funds come in. He adds that, of course, they will give the candidates a little something for their expenses “...and besides, in the countryside, the people are quite hospitable; it is not out of the question that they might put you up and share their meals with you.” At that, the crowd of out of work doctors, spurred on by a lone voice, then erupts in a mass of angry cries, “pained for themselves, for the country that that only hoped to serve, and for the ideal that was still dear to most of them and had thus been sullied by ‘these parasites sated from the suffering of others,’” (Sow Fall 2005: 38).<sup>105</sup>

Like people with educational qualifications and skilled work experience, people who work non-salaried jobs also struggle with instability and competition for jobs and customers in contemporary Dakar. The informal economy is a part of everyday life all around the city, but its presence is especially strong in outlying areas of the city, as the peninsula nears its meeting point with the mainland. There, in the *banlieue*, roughly 60% of the “active” adult population is engaged in the informal economic, a sector in which wages are generally significantly less than that of

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<sup>104</sup> *Pour cette fois-ci, nous en prendrons trois.*

<sup>105</sup> *Naturellement, on vous donnera une petite chose pour vos petites dépenses. D’ailleurs en milieu rural, les gens sont accueillants; il n’est pas exclu qu’ils vous logent et partagent leurs repas. Tous avaient mal pour eux, mal pour le pays qu’ils n’aspiraient qu’à servir et mal pour l’idéal qui animait encore le plus grande nombre et qui se trouvait ainsi avili par ces parasites repus de la souffrance des autres.*

salaried positions in the public and private sector, and pensions and other benefits are non-existent.

### *Parcels in the City*

Relative to the rest of the country, the Dakar region has long been highly privileged in terms of the institutional and infrastructural resources. But the overall affluence and concentration of resources in the area when compared to other more rural regions of the country masks interregional deficiencies in Dakar, namely of poor “suburban” neighborhoods in terms of sanitation and water, medical clinics and hospitals, roadways, and schools, as well as revenue and buying power. The heavy summer rains that flooded the country in 2005 and caused a delay in the start of the academic year that fall hit most of the suburban areas of the city harder than the downtown or close-in areas of Dakar. In the latter areas, the majority of streets are paved and accord better drainage of the annual *hivernage* rains. In the outlying suburbs, only a few major streets are paved—the rest of the thoroughfares are sand. While the flooding of 2005’s summer was particularly bad, for many in the city’s outlying areas, sections of the neighborhood become virtually impassible each year as the sand is unable to absorb the water and it has no place to go. Residents are forced to abandon certain streets altogether in their daily activities and movements where the water is too high. Often the stagnant rainwater combines with household waste and garbage, for sanitation and garbage services in these neighborhoods are often limited, and the water becomes a murky and putrid, studded and rimmed with bright green algae.<sup>106</sup> Other streets become obstacle courses in which people are obliged to precariously skirt the sides and walk on stones, old tires, or planks to get by.

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<sup>106</sup> Stagnant polluted water serves as a breeding ground for malaria infected mosquitoes, as well as a vector for the transmission of cholera and diarrheal diseases.



The polyvalent poetics of the suburbs' sand is compellingly examined in Jean-François Werner's (1993a) ethnography of life on the margins in Pikine, one of Dakar's largest suburban areas, founded in the early 1950s, in which more than one and half million people presently reside. In this "double" or doppelganger of Dakar, the sand—soft and deep in the hot weather that dominates most of the year—reveals the ambivalences and particularities of Pikinois society. Werner observes that it serves to keep cars from the rest of the city out, for its dense softness makes driving almost impossible. Instead, in Pikine, residents walk most everywhere. As Werner learned, this can be strenuous exercise unless one wears inexpensive malleable rubber flip-flops and walks with a gliding motion on the top of the sand. Pikinois (*waa Pikine*) are also often forced to walk places for which there is public transport when they don't have the money to pay the fare (*paas*).

Without many cars, roads become places where people gather to sit and socialize, where children can play and fall down without getting hurt. They are both conduits for movement elsewhere and neighborly gathering places. The sand gets pushed into people's doorways and courtyards with everyday wind and activity and it seems to hold on to what is discarded on its surface, rather than letting people's everyday drips and droppings go—cigarettes, fruit peels, plastic bags, used tea leaves, fallen fake hair extensions and braids (*meches*). Sweeping out the sand and sifting it of garbage, leaves, and other debris is a daily activity for the women of most households, the kind that is performed in the cool grey morning as children walk to school, storekeepers open their shops, and commuters set off for work. Life in Pikine doesn't mimic of foreign models of urbanity, Werner argues, but it is rather a place of creative improvisation where, at the end of one's life, one returns to the sand, wrapped in linen, face turned towards Mecca in the east.

The predominance of sand is also characteristic of Parcelles, where only a limited number of streets were paved until Wade mounted a series of major national public works projects.<sup>107</sup> One of these new streets ran right by the house of student in the 5<sup>e</sup> class I shadowed at the junior high, prompting her to call him jokingly; “*Sunu presi-talli*”; *sunu* meaning “our” in Wolof and *talli* meaning “paved street”. Parcelles Assainies, which translates literally as “cleaned-up parcels (of land)”, was born in 1973 out of government efforts to control city expansion, supported by funds from the World Bank. Parcelles was designed as a neighborhood for lower income people, particularly those who worked in the informal sector, and might otherwise settle in illegal or makeshift accommodations for lack of affordable housing and land, according to government and NGO discourse.<sup>108</sup> As Karen Hansen (1997) discovered in her Lusaka research, control of space—i.e. a house of one’s own—is an important part of migrants establishing a foothold in the city and as a way for residents to improve their lives. It was thought that Parcelles homeowners might use their new houses to secure loans to fund activities in the informal sector.

There has been tension between city planners and residents around land and the construction of unapproved, “irregular” or “spontaneous” residences going back to the colonial period in Senegal. The post-war boom saw the construction of the SICAP neighborhoods, HLM 1-5, and Pikine for middle and working-class urban residents (followed by Guédiawaye in the

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<sup>107</sup> Through these efforts, bus stops, intersections, and certain main roads in Dakar were reconstructed and repainted, and barriers and lights were added. Then, in 2005, two major projects were mounted reconstruct the national highway on the east side of the peninsula and the *Corniche*, or coastal highway, on the left side of the peninsula, in preparation for hosting the summit of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), of which Senegal is a member. Ever since, residents of the city, whose major thoroughfares in and out of the city on both sides are under construction, have struggled to get around Dakar. Hotel and road infrastructures deemed necessary for the OIC summit were not finished in time, and charges of corruption and mismanagement have been made against the project and its organizers, headed up by the young PDS party twosome of Abdoulaye Baldé and Wade’s only son, Karim. Frustrated by what they felt was poor planning and misplaced priorities on the part of Wade, and the exhausting trek that their daily commutes became, Dakar residents criticized Wade, saying “*Kenn du lekk goudron*” or “One cannot eat asphalt”.

<sup>108</sup> This reflects statements from the ENDA Tiers Monde (a Senegal-based international NGO engaged in a wide variety of development activities in Senegal and other countries) and Parcelles Assainies municipal websites. Sources include the sites <http://www.sip.sn/parcelles> accessed on July 8, 2005 and [http://www.enda.sn/rup/senegal\\_parcelles\\_assainies.htm](http://www.enda.sn/rup/senegal_parcelles_assainies.htm) accessed on July 8, 2005.

1960s). Yet these neighborhoods were inadequate to make up for widespread housing shortages and beyond the financial reaches of many. Unable to afford to buy a house, migrants to the city would rent a small room, stay with relatives, or squat. The increasingly expensive and crowded housing market in Dakar was further exacerbated by the passage of the National Domain Act in 1964 which brought all land that was not already classified as part of the public or registered under a title to a private individual under the control of the state (Mbow 1993: 207). As such, young Dakarites and new arrivals to the city continue to pursue such pragmatic solutions to the problem of lodging. These unauthorized, “illegal” construction projects have consistently been razed by the state. As recently as 2003, bulldozers were dispatched to a section of Dalifort along the national highway to raze more than a dozen partially constructed cement block homes (the most common kind of construction). Over half of Pikine is currently made up of “unplanned” housing and “irregular” zones. Continued use of such terms like “spontaneous housing” by the state and development organizations obfuscates the historic reality that these kinds of residency practices in Dakar are essentially people’s reactions to the inadequacies of housing policy and the power asymmetries of the modern city (Marie 1981).

Divided into 26 units which function as smaller sub-neighborhoods, Parcelles stretches across the sand from the Route des *Niayes* (a kind of wetlands formation) north to the ocean in shape of a turtle shell—land that was essentially unsettled until the 1970s. In the years since its inception, it has quickly become a highly populated place, such that several of the lower units on the east end of the neighborhood were reapportioned under Commune d’Arrondissement de Guédiawaye in 1996. Population estimates from 2007 suggest that almost 144,000 people live in the Commune d’Arrondissement des Parcelles Assainies or CAPA (units 7-26), which measures about 14 km<sup>2</sup>, a population density of 10,285 people per km<sup>2</sup>. Dakar’s average population density is only about 4,000 people per km<sup>2</sup>. To put that data into further perspective, the U.S.

city with the highest population recorded density in the 2000 Census was New York, at 10,194 people/ km<sup>2</sup> (the borough of Manhattan had more than twice the overall population density of the city of New York, however).

Today, Parcelles is home to many of the lower-income, informal-sector residents for whom it was originally designed. It also includes a fair amount of middle-class residents who work in white-collar jobs, particularly on the more affluent west end of the neighborhood. As a whole, Parcelles is classified as a lower middle-class neighborhood by government-sponsored demographers and scholars who supplement state data sets<sup>109</sup> with their own research. When one probes this designation, a series of scores and rates within so-called salient categories for Parcelles is revealed. For example, Parcelles was recorded as having a malnutrition rate of between 10-20% of the total residents (most of the other suburban areas measure at 20-40% of their total population; suburban Diamageune and affluent Fann Residence/Mermoz represent the city's extremes at over 40% and under 1%, respectively) (Minvielle, Diop, and Niang 2005: 141). It has a high percentage of young people. Between 15-20% of the Parcelles population is younger than 5 years old (Minvielle, Diop, and Niang 2005: 138). This is considered important to an analysis of poverty because of the very dependent (and hence non-productive) nature of young children, and the extent to which this represent a high annual population growth rate.

In this context, poverty is measured both in monetary and "human" terms (malnutrition, education, and literacy rates ) and understood as a deficit in well-being that is the product of historical economic and social dynamics and political choices (Minvielle, Diop, and Niang

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<sup>109</sup> Key data include two Senegalese national household studies ESAM (Enquête Auprès des Ménages) I and II, conducted in 1994-1995 and 2001-2002 as well as smaller studies conducted on family spending, unemployment, and the informal sector in the Dakar metropolitan area in the 1990s and early years of the current decade.

2005).<sup>110</sup> Typically, rather than try and record salary information, these studies look at household spending on food and non-food items in order to assess the relative poverty of individuals, families, and neighborhoods. Parcelles households were recorded spending approximately 40,000-60,000 CFA francs (around \$90-130) per month on food in the early 1990s; this contrasts with between 60,000-100,000 CFA that households in the middle-class SICAP neighborhoods spent and more than 100,000 CFA/month in upper-class Fann during the same period (there was an even greater disparity between Fann and the others in non-food spending) (Minvielle, Diop, and Niang 2005: 147).

However, this data must also be understood within the context of household sizes and their class differences. At that time, Dakar households averaged over 9 members. Longtime demographer in West Africa, Philippe Antoine, argues that upper-class households tend to be more extended in structure whereas poorer households follow a nuclear pattern (Konte 2006). Clearly, the poorest of households that see little in-coming money are necessarily circumscribed. But I would suggest from my observations that many working-class and middle-class households are larger than their elite counterparts, particularly because migrant extended kin who come to the city for schooling or work opportunities do not have the financial means to set up their own households. In this sense their large size may serve as an economic asset—for the various and diverse economic strategies each member might pursue—but more typically as a liability, since a large portion of these families are young, non-working children.

It is also important to note that this ESAM I study data was collected just following the devaluation of the CFA franc by the CBWAS under pressure from the West in 1993, which

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<sup>110</sup> Different poverty indicators used in Senegal, such as the HPI, or human poverty indicator, (advocated by the UNDP in 1997), and modified versions of the HPI, such as AHPI or adapted HPI and the NAHPI or normalized AHPI result in different poverty scores and produce divergent maps or geographies of poverty in Senegal (c.f. Minvielle, Diop, and Niang 2005).

resulted in the instant doubling of the price of imported foodstuffs families eat on a daily basis, such as rice, and other important items such as gas. This was just three or four years before most of the students at the junior high and Franco-Arabe school in Parcelles were born. These students' infancy and early childhood was marked by vigilante violence between Senegalese and Mauritians in Dakar and Nouakchott, a school year rendered void by strikes (*année blanche*), a highly contested election in 1993 between the incumbent Abdou Diouf and Wade, and the economic hardships of the devaluation. Corollary data gathered in the early years of this century also reveal continued important differences in spending power and consumption, between families whose heads of households work in the different sectors of the economy—the public sector, private formal sector, and informal sector—and, as such, take home very different salaries. Public sector employees usually earn the most and those working in the informal sector the least. The average annual food spending in families where the head of household works in the public or private formal sectors is more than 100,000 FCFA (or over \$200) per person than that of families where the head of household earns money in the private informal activities.

These kinds of statistics are valuable in elucidating the socio-economic geographies of Dakar and where Parcelles might fit into this larger picture, but tell us little about how money, resources, obligation, and opportunity actually work in the lives of individuals—particularly for young people as “dependents”—and their families in the city. Senegalese families, like the rest of Senegalese society, are hierarchically organized. This asymmetry is based on beliefs about people's “natural” or biological status with relation to power and authority. As such, Senegalese elders are ranked higher than young people and likewise men in relation to women. This structure of social hierarchy, and the beliefs which support it, is not ethnically specific in Senegal but rather broadly shared (even among non-casted societies like the Jola, Balant, and Manjak in

the south).<sup>111</sup> Likewise, in my research with the ethnically diverse student bodies at the junior high<sup>112</sup> and Franco-Arabe schools in Parcelles, I did not notice significant differences in gender and age hierarchy with students' families or in the neighborhood as a whole that might be attributed to ethnicity rather than other factors.<sup>113</sup>

Certainly, people often talk about ethnicity in relation to gender and age authority, work, and urbanity. In these instances, ethnic stereotypes are frequently invoked. Mandinka (Soce) men are reputed to be especially chauvinistic, Haalpulaar'en are said to keep closely to Islamic religious tradition ("*la religion*" or "*dinne*") as longtime converts and therefore follow patriarchal family structures. Seerer and Jola women are considered much harder workers than Wolof or Haalpulaar women (who "dislike work"; *bëgguñu ligeey*) and therefore make great maids and laundry women, or so the everyday discourse goes (*ay ligéeykat lañu*). The Wolof, as historic collaborators with the colonial regime and early urbanites, are often pejoratively spoken about as coarse, materialistic, dishonest, and lacking cultural values like respect for elders. In this sense, Wolof are equated with what other urban residents critique about urbanity and modern social

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<sup>111</sup> Leonardo Villalón, citing the work of Paul Stoller and Thomas Hale, suggests that nature of social hierarchy and beliefs about its appropriateness is shared across the major ethnic groups in Senegal and that this may be part of a common Sahelian culture that reflects both Islamic and pre-Islamic traditions.

<sup>112</sup> Survey data I collected from the 5<sup>e</sup> class I shadowed revealed that the student body was ethnically diverse, reflecting the Parcelles neighborhood's overall ethnic diversity. 32 students (49% of the total 65 completed surveys I received back in a class of around 75 students) self-identified as Wolof. Haalpulaar and Seerer students also represented another 20% of the student body (10% or 7 students for each). There were 6 students who self-identified as Jola. Other student responses included Bambara, Mankañ, Lebu, Saraxolle, Soninke, Baïnuk, and "Naar" or Moor. It is important to emphasize that these are the students own self-identifications. The spread of Wolof language in urban areas has led to changes in people's ethnic self-identification, particularly among young people. Youth who are first generation urbanites and speak only Wolof, regardless of their parents' ethnic or linguistic background may identify as Wolof. This is also often the case for principally Wolof-speaking young people whose parents are of two different ethnic backgrounds. With the students at the Parcelles Junior High, I noticed some slight slippage in their reported ethnic background in relation to that of their parents. For example, 10 fathers and 10 mothers were identified as Haalpulaar, but only 7 students identified as Haalpulaar. And while 6 fathers were identified as Bambara, only 3 students identified as Bambara. With non-Wolof languages, the differences between parents and children of this generation were more clear. While over half of parents spoke a language other than Wolof and French, less than a third of the students did.

<sup>113</sup> One may argue that this general dynamic of male authority over women takes on a different inflection in Catholic and Jola families (which are not mutually exclusive categories), where ideas of companionate marriage are more predominant, in the case of the former, and women have historically had more economic and social independence (in the sense of gendered sphere of influence and activity, in the latter instance.

change, such as crime and delinquency in the city—muggings, theft, prostitution, drug use, etc.—and serve as scapegoats in public discourse for the city’s disappointments and injustices.

A key dimension to relations of authority and subordination in Senegalese social relations—both kin and non-kin—is the distribution of resources. People in positions of authority, such as male heads of household, have real material obligations with regard to their subordinates, who are perceived as dependent. Similarly, marabouts are also charged to come to the spiritual and material aid of their disciples (*taalibes*) in need. This material obligation and one’s ability to satisfy or to carry it off is highly important to the respectability, honor (*jom*), and public persona of people in positions of authority. In most Senegalese families, men are viewed (and view themselves) as the primary breadwinners—payers of rent, food, clothing, and school fees/supplies for their wives, children and other dependents. Married women who earn wages (whether through formal salaried employment, or, more informally as vegetable or fish sellers at a local market, confectioners of street-side snack food [*borooms taabal*], mobile hand-made broom sellers [*vendeurs ambulants*] or casual sales of cloth and makeup among friends and neighbors) may choose to use that money to pay for basic household needs or to cover extra expenses for children or themselves when what their husbands provide is insufficient. Though the precariousness of modern life and the increased cost of living might make women’s contributions necessary for their survival and that of their families, from a cultural point of view they are not under an obligation to provide in the same way men are.

Yet one could argue that this non-obligation on the part of women is a kind of public cultural fiction about money (or resources) and masculinity in Senegal that both men and women try to maintain. Even with men earning paid wages, in how many families did what women earn make an essential difference for that month? Women who are the primary breadwinners or who contribute substantially to family income often try to keep this fact hidden, saying “*Dama koy*



*sutural*”, meaning, “I am being discreet on his behalf.” *Sutura*, or discretion, like the notions of *jom* (dignity, honor), *fayda* (character), *baax* (goodness) we saw emphasized by the teachers of the Franco-Arabe school in Chapter Two is a quality of the person (*nit*) and his or her behavior (*conduite, jikko*) that is emphasized as culturally and morally important for the order of things.

Recent data suggest that women-headed households make up almost 25% of households in greater Dakar and over 60% of households in other Senegalese urban areas (when taken as a group) (Sénégal 2004c). Of these women, the ESAM II report suggests, about 70% are identified as the legal heads of household by choice or circumstance—because they are single, divorced, or widowed. About 30% are de facto heads of household in the absence of their husbands (who are most international migrants or polygamists who maintain several residencies). Antoine argues that the matrimonial circumstances of women head of households on the continent are highly diverse; for example, 2/3 of these women in rural Guinea are married, whereas less than 1/5 of their counterparts in the Congo are (Konte 2006). In Senegal, a substantial number of these female heads of households are widows. Moreover, he cautions, whether they are *de facto* or *de jure* “*chefs de ménage*”, gender relations as a whole continue to confine women to dependent status with relation to men. For a widow in Dakar, this might mean that her deceased husband’s brothers and her own adult male kin play influential economic and social roles in her household.

### ***Logics of Family and Personhood in Parcelles***

Relative to their American peers, the teenage students in Parcelles receive an early education in the emotional and financial challenges that losing a parent engenders. Out of 65 students in the 5<sup>e</sup> class who responded to my survey, six of them had lost their fathers. One student’s mother was also deceased when I took the survey, and just before final exams at the end of the 2006 school year, another student, Sekou, with whom I conducted one of ten student

family studies, would also lose his mother. A housewife in her mid to late 30s, I would often find her at home when I stopped by their modest house in Parcelles in the afternoons. She would usually be sitting and chatting with extended family members, watching television, selling peanuts and fruit at a table set out in front of the house, or getting her hair braided. She and her husband, an informal vendor/seller (*commerçant*) had both come to Dakar from the same Jola village in the Buluf region of Casamance. Upon my first visit, I recall being introduced to the assembled family members, which included the student's younger and older siblings. When I asked if his grade-school aged brother was the “*caat*”, a Wolof appellation meaning last-born child, she told me that she hoped not, for she would like to have more children. A couple of months later, I was also at the house when she came home from the neighborhood clinic after having suffered a miscarriage. Weakened, she couldn't walk by herself from the taxi out front, so some of the adults carried her in, supporting her on both sides, and lay her down in the front bedroom, where women sat around her fanning her and rubbing her back. Three days later she was dead.

Sekou sat for the 5<sup>e</sup> class' final exams the following week, but did not pass and had to repeat the academic year. I did not know the particulars of his mother's medical situation, but I remember thinking bitterly at the time what a senseless thing it was and wondering if she would have died had she been an American, living in the United States. Did she hemorrhage? I couldn't bring myself to ask. Friends and interlocutors in Senegal have often recounted to me the reasons for the death of their parents and siblings, and unfortunately I have also “*assisted*” in more than my fair share of funerals over the years I have studied and worked in Senegal—very rarely did it seem to me that they were the kinds of problems or diseases one thinks of as potentially fatal. How many other school-age children and teenagers in Dakar have lost parents

to accidents or health problems for which comprehensive affordable treatment is readily available in the United States? How are their lives compromised in the aftermath?

In fact, very few of the students in the Parcelles Junior High 5<sup>e</sup> class with whom I conducted family studies lived in a house with both their mother and father—only two out of ten. Of the other eight, two of them lived with me in the Cité des Impôts et Domaines, a wealthier neighborhood originally designed for public servants who worked in the Imports and Exports Office, just across the Route des Niayes from the Parcelles Police Station and the rest of Parcelles. Gora, a tall and lanky boy who was athletic, studious, and popular with his classmates, was originally from Saint-Louis, where his parents still live. He was sent to Dakar to live with his aunt and uncle and go to school. Gora's classmate, Celestine, an outgoing Mankañ girl who wanted to be a professional cook when she grew up, lived in her parents' spacious but sparsely decorated home just a few hundred yards away. Her parents were away much of the year at their second home in Guinea Bissau, however. Celestine's aunts and uncles at the house, most of them in their 20s or 30s, acted as supervisory figures for her and her older brother, Christian, in their absence. Though she usually joined them in Guinea Bissau for summer vacation, she said she doesn't like going, for there is no money there and no electricity; there's nothing to do there, she concluded.

In large Senegalese families, the age difference between the oldest (*taaw*) and youngest (*caat*) siblings can often be 15 or 20 years. And the age difference in polygamous families can be even greater. As such, brothers and sisters are often be at very different positions in the life cycle—one sibling might be at university while the other is learning to walk, or married with children and a job while the other is in middle school. Once older siblings establish their own households, it is not uncommon for parents to send their younger children to live with them, or with other relatives or namesakes (*tuurando*), until they, too, become adults. In most cases, this

separation is conceived as good for the child—the environment might be more favorable for study, with better schools or a chance for an apprenticeship, and he or she might benefit from the steadying moral influence and discipline of their uncle or aunt. Many parents find the expense of children hard to manage—school fees, clothing, food, medicine—and as they age and their earning power declines, this gets more difficult, having already heavily invested in their firstborn children. Older siblings are expected to pick up the slack. A widowed friend of mine with four boys, ages 16 to 2 (herself the oldest girl of 14 children), would often tell me that felt was imperative for her oldest sons to succeed, for in so doing, they would assure the success and prosperity of their younger brothers and the rest of the family. Her oldest son's success at school, where he had failed the high school entrance exam several years in a row, was her constant worry. What's more, children essentially serve as their parents' embodied retirement accounts. Parents count on their children to take care of them, as well as their younger siblings, in their old age.

These ideas about and practices of family support and mutual aid are inflected with gender as well as age. Girls (*jànq*) are charged with looking after their younger siblings when they themselves are children, along with a host of domestic chores, but most boys are not. Girls are also sometimes sent to live with their older sisters, upon marriage, to help the new bride out around her house.<sup>114</sup> At times, these kinds of practices, for both male and female children (*gune* or *xale*) are spoken of as an exchange. “*Dafa ma ko maay*”, “She gave her to me” are the words Seydatou used when a female relative of hers sent her elementary school-aged daughter, adding that it was because she had three sons and no daughters. The former scenario is the basic premise

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<sup>114</sup> In most Senegalese contexts, marriage for women is defined through the act of leaving her house to join her husband—either in his family home, or his own independent residence. Muslim marriage ceremonies which include prayers and paper-signing at the mosque but not this act of relocation for women are referred to as an engagement (*fiancailles*). Even if the couple does not live together for a while following the marriage, the symbolic act of picking the bride up at her house and escorting her to her husband's family's house is considered very important.

of Abdoulaye Sadjì's (1958) novel *Maimouna*, in which young and innocent country girl Maï, as she is nicknamed, is sent away from her mother Yaye Daro and their modest “*case*” (hut) in the region of Walo—domain of tradition, or *cosaan*—to live with her older sister Rihanna in Dakar, who had married into comfortable circumstances. In that city of perdition, dominated by the politics of reputation and social competition, Maimouna, now promised in marriage to a wealthy young man, becomes pregnant out of wedlock by another. When this secret is revealed, not only is she publicly embarrassed, but it brings shame (*gacc*) on her entire family. She leaves Dakar, leaves Rihanna's fancy villa, and returns to Walo, where, after a small pox epidemic, her baby is still-born. Only at the very end of the novel does Maï make peace with her destiny (for her misfortune had been foreseen by her mother's marabout in Walo and by a *gisaane* clairvoyant in Dakar through the arrangement of cowry shells), and is able to confront life (*faire face à la vie*), becoming a market woman like her mother and finding in it personal peace and tranquility (*jàmm*).

If scholars and artists were focused on rural-urban migrants (as key agents in and symbols of modernity and social change in the 1950s, 60s and 70s), recent scholarship also has turned its attention to international African migration. Beth Buggenhagen's (2001) research examines how the actual and imagined earnings of itinerant Senegalese traders who live most of the time abroad reworks gendered kin relations and the politics of personal identity in and around the home. She gathered much of her data in Wolof Mouride families in the city of Touba. However, the argument she makes reflects the same dynamics at work in Dakar—that male and female family members come into conflict around the (sometimes very modest) fruits of this labor, because while for young men it represents a kind of “salvation” through which they might establish themselves as respectable, home-owning married men (*borom kër*, one might say), women look to this money to help establish their own public personae and reputation as *grande dames* among

their kin and in their neighbors by engaging in displays of wealth at important life cycle events like baptisms (*ngente*) and marriages. In a Mouride context, the remittances from men working abroad (given both to kin and to the *khalifa-générale* of the Mouridiyya), have usurped the peanut as a source of wealth, thereby by-passing the state's traditional control and creating new spheres autonomy for religious communities and individuals (van Hoven 2000).

That having a male kin member residing abroad and sending home money lends itself to complicated dynamics of gendered autonomy and subsistence in Senegalese families was also evidenced by my observations in the home of another girl from the 5<sup>e</sup> class, Ouli, who lived in the same unit or unite of Parcelles as Sekou. At the time of my research, her father was living in the U.S., but she wasn't sure where or what he did for work there. Ouli's household back in Parcelles consisted of her grandmother, her young mother, and several younger siblings, including a little brother about 2 years old, to whom she was quite attached. When I first visited her at her home, a small one-story cement house with unfinished outside walls whose courtyard was laid nicely with mosaic tiles nonetheless, I was struck by how different her demeanor was than at school. At the junior high, she and I had had problems, for I found that she cheated on a letter-writing assignment that the English teacher had asked me to read and grade. Rather than write her own letter, she copied a letter from their English textbook and was indignant when I gave her a failing grade. Yet at home, she was mature, graceful, and kind. Each time I visited, she seemed entirely comfortable in her own skin and around the house, graciously introducing me to her mother, grandmother, and younger siblings, showing me her photo albums, and chatting amiably over Coca-cola in a bedroom off of the main courtyard.

This relaxed attitude contrasted strongly with the bashful, quiet demeanor of a classmate of hers who lived just several hundred feet down one of the sandy lanes in their unit from her own house. Fatou and her family resided in what was a typical multi-storey open-air apartment

building in Dakar. The apartments were basically a series of rooms around square courtyard, from which a staircase led to each additional floor. The rooms on the upper floors opened up to a balcony that overlooked the courtyard below. There were no designated apartments or closed off area, for depending on the tenants' means and availability within in the building, one could rent one or more rooms to constitute an apartment. Kitchens and bathrooms were generally shared on each floor.

Upon visiting Fatou, we (Sekou and I) were received in the family living room, which like many living rooms in the city, was filled with a hodgepodge of furniture—plastic chairs, a bed and bed frame in the corner, a mat and mattress laid upon the floor, and a bookcase filled with papers, cassettes, a radio, and other odds and ends. We sat in plastic chairs on one side of the room, next to the mat upon which her father was sitting. Fatou, her mother, other female relatives, and siblings, sat on the bed in the corner near the doorway, on in other plastic chairs, or stood in the doorway. Yet in that living room on that hot October day of Ramadan, the only person with whom I would talk during that visit—in fact, I did much more listening than talking—was her father, who was part of the staff at a Franco-Arabe school. It began when he asked me about visas to the United States, for at each students' house I would introduced myself as an American university student who was conducting research at the junior high and helping out with English classes. I, unknowingly, opening the door to his long monologue by responding that, well, after September 11<sup>th</sup>, the American government had tightened up on the visa regulations and expanded the kinds of bureaucratic steps one had to go through.

Seizing upon this, Fatou's father held forth for the next hour and a half in Wolof and Arabic—taking pains to prove to me, by reference to verses in the Qur'an, that Islam was not a violent religion and asking me about my research and my impressions of Senegalese schools. He then told me of his own experience as a boy of going to Islamic school and of his efforts as an

adult to become literate in French through a correspondence course (here he stopped to show me his cassettes), and, finally, how hard it was for him to manage things financially—paying rent, food, and other bills, for since his older brother had passed away, he had the “charge” of his brother’s family, too. We were all given a chance to participate somewhat in the conversation, when after finishing his lecture on Islam, Fatou’s father prayed aloud in Arabic and in Wolof, upon which we would refrain “*amiin*” or “amen” after each prayer, as is the custom in Senegal. After he finished his prayerful entreaties, he asked each of us to offer up a prayer (in Wolof), to which everyone would respond, “*amiin*”, too. *Yal na yalla nu may wer gi yaram ak guddu fann, yal na yalla nu sutural, yal na yalla nu dimbali ak sunuy soxla.* May God grant us health and a long life, may God protect us from gossip, may God help us with our needs.

So, other than moments where the Fatou’s father directly solicited participation of his wife, children, and other family members in the conversation, he dominated and directed the visit. For Souleymane Gomis (2003), this style of language use and in the home—wherein it is dominated by male authority figures—is an important part of the relationship between home and school in Senegal and in the lives of Senegalese students. In working-class families, he writes, language is restrained, and there is little place for negotiation and conflict; the culture is one of the group. In contrast, he suggests that families with a high level of instruction are more individualistic, exhibiting more abstract language use patterns and focusing on the development of individual autonomy and their access to knowledge. Language use in most of the students’ families in Parcelles reflected the former category or a hybrid between working-class and elite modes, which generally contrasts with the kind of speech that teachers at the junior high employ and expect students to use, as well. For Gomis, this creates a psychological and practice gulf between home and school for students who don’t grow up in these sorts of linguistic environments, thus putting them at a disadvantage relative to their school peers (in an American



context see Philips 1983). For me, the contrasting experiences I had in Ouli and Fatou's homes indicates that the absence, temporary or not, of a male head of household can open up possibilities for children's autonomy and self-expression at the same time it may create financial difficulties that negatively affect students or provide an important contribution with which they family might have trouble doing without.

Several of the boys in this set of students from the 5<sup>e</sup> class whom I got to know well actively sought ways to alleviate such money problems. Again, as was the norm in this group, they did not live with both of their parents. Pierre, a Sereer teenager, lived just a few hundred yards from the school in a one story house with his aunt and her four daughters, in their teens and early twenties. Though raised a Muslim, he had been cared for by his mother's older sister from the age of 7, at which time she baptized him Catholic. Pierre's parents were divorced and his father had remarried to a woman who didn't want him coming around their house in Guédiawaye. His mother, who lived in Nord Foire, couldn't take care of him because she was ill, he said, though he visited her regularly. She wanted him to convert back to Islam, he added. He and his aunt, a preschool instructor, clashed around his habits—she felt Pierre ran around the neighborhood too much and should be at home working, whereas he felt she treated him like a girl, like she did with her daughters, and that around the house, there was nothing to do.

In later weeks, his mother would prove to be a sticking point in his relationship with his aunt and guardian. Frustrated with his poor performance at school—on his latest grade report the “not to be allowed back” box had been checked, the lowest possible evaluation—Pierre's aunt thought to send him to his mother for the weekend, so that he might see the “*réalité*” of her situation. She pulled out his report card to show me. He had always gotten good grades, she continued, but this year was convinced that he needed to help his mother by quitting school and finding a job. That's why Pierre no longer tries in school, she said. He did cut class often that

year, after which I would find him playing foosball in a small alleyway between his house and the school yard gates. That day in one of the house bedrooms, over beer and papaya, with her daughters also stretched out around her, she asked me rhetorically, “What will people say if I don’t make sure he stays in school? That I don’t care about him?” Her daughters had gone far in school—they had high school diplomas (*Baccalauréats*), a technical bachelor’s degree in business, were studying at the elite public service E.N.A.M. (Ecole Nationale d’Administration et Magistrature) school, and so on. Even if he does want to help his mother, she added, he wasn’t in a position to do so. If he left school now, he wouldn’t be able to find a well-paying job. He would more than likely find work as a mechanic, she said. In fact, several weeks earlier when we had walked over to Sekou’s house, Pierre had pointed out a former classmate of his on the way who had dropped out of school last year to become a mechanic. She concluded that her nephew could ultimately do more to help his mother if he stayed in school and afterwards found a good job.

Like Pierre, his classmate Omar also pondered dropping out. He lived in one of the eastern *unités* of Parcelles near the old Lebu neighborhood of Camberène. He and his mother slept in a small one-room apartment there. During the day, they joined the rest of his extended family in a modest house not far away. Omar’s father was an elderly retired accountant and had a second wife in Mauritania, on the other side of the Senegal River.<sup>115</sup> He was originally from Dagana, a border town and split his time between Dakar and the two locales. He had urged Omar to hurry up and finish junior high and get his BFEM (*Brevet de Fin d’Etudes Moyennes*) certificate. Would he continue on to high school? It was doubtful, for Omar’s younger brothers had already dropped out of school. But would he make it to his 3<sup>e</sup> year? He was his mother’s

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<sup>115</sup> Financial means permitting, most polygamous families in Senegal establish separated residencies for wives and their children, except among Jola families, who generally emphasize the importance of having one house and eating all together.

oldest son...here, he trailed off. I sensed he felt a need to earn money now; for her, as much for the family as a whole.

And why for her in particular? In part, because masculinity and adulthood are defined through this ability to provide for one's family. And in part because Omar's mother's own position within social relations of power and status in her married, polygamous household. Demographer Philippe Antoine (Konte 2006) argues that polygamy implicitly entails competition (*rivalité*) among women, to which T.K. Biaya (2001) adds complicity. There is little social room for adult women in Senegal not to marry. Single women are spoken about as morally and sexually dangerous,<sup>116</sup> and it is through one's husband that one is said to access heaven (*ajjana*). Divorced and widowed women are also subject to social pressures to remarry. And though men are not subject to the same kinds of moral pressure to marry as women, there exists no social model of swinging bachelorhood to which to aspire. Rather, it is through marriage and fatherhood that men also gain social status and a sense of personal worth.

As such, this competition for marriage partners concerns both middle-aged and young generations of men and women inside *and* outside of marriages. Older men may see younger men as competition for potential wives. Men sometimes use the threat of marrying an additional wife or wives against their spouse(s) on whom they wish to exercise power or with whom they are in conflict.<sup>117</sup> Men may also use polygamous marriage as a way to pursue a legitimate, new conjugal life, when one feels one's marriage has soured but does not wish to divorce because of children, or family or reputational concerns. In this context, non-married women represent

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<sup>116</sup> “*Ku amul kilifa jinne di sa kilifa*” is a Wolof proverb which intones that if one doesn't have a master or leader (*kilifa* is the Wolof word, from the Arabic *khalif*, used in Senegal to refer to a married man as well as a religious leader with the hierarchy of the brotherhoods), the “jinn” or genies, e.g. evil forces will be one's master. Otherwise put, if one does not subject oneself to the authority of one's family and of society one will fall under the influence of the devil (c.f. Sylla 1978).

<sup>117</sup> Civil marriage papers in Senegal allow men the option to sign for monogamy or polygamy, and polygamy, with the choice of two, three, or four potential wives. No option is put to women.

potential rivals to married women, both for the affection and financial support of their husbands.<sup>118</sup> Moreover, within established marriages, one's co-wives are also considered rivals. Here, women are given titles corresponding to their order of marriage; *aawo*, the first wife, *ñaareel*, the second, *ñeeteel*, the third, and *ñeenteel*, the fourth. These titles are said to correspond to the nature of a husband's relationship with each woman and their power relative to the other co-wives. The word one uses for co-wife in Wolof is *wujj*; literally "rival". Should co-wives resent each other and not get along, their rivalry is not simply limited to their own person. Rather, it often widens out to include their respective children, as it may have in the case of Omar and his family. His achievement and financial success represents a potential source of pride and support for his mother as well as a key weapon in this terrain of social rivalry (this can entail blood relations or marital rivals).

### *Conclusion*

Scholars working in a Marxist world-systems theory tradition talk about the city in Africa as an artificially-created environment, but it is equally important to look at how it is made and remade by Africans despite the constraints of a capitalist colonial model. This on-the-ground, small-scale action and meaning-making has received considerable attention in urban African anthropology for several decades. In particular, anthropologists have been keen to elucidate

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<sup>118</sup> These polygamous intrigues are the subject of much talk and gossip in Senegal. The question—Are you for or against polygamous marriage?—was put to young contestants in a beauty contest organized by Radio Télévision Sénégal in 2006. For some women the idea of having a co-wife is actively feared, other women say that they wouldn't prefer it, but since Islam accepts polygamy, they would accept it too, if it "happened" to them. The irony of the contest question is that polygamy is mostly talked about as a male choice and not a female one. There are however, a fair number of women who talk about their polygamous marriages favorably in the media, such as a local fashion designer who says that the fact that she is a third wife gives her more time to focus on her work, and less time "taking care" of her husband (*s'occuper de son mari*). This trope of "taking care" and "pampering" one's husband is commonly referenced, but it is more often used as a positive declaration of how one is a "good wife". Not only is polygamy and co-wives a lens through which women see themselves, but also other women. A woman who stays in her polygamous marriage despite her unhappiness may be spoken about as someone who suffers nobly for the welfare of her children. Alternatively, when a woman's husband marries another, women who dislike her, including her sisters-in-law, may express satisfaction for this "well-deserved" come down.

differences in people's social relations in urban areas as opposed to rural communities. The picture that has emerged is one in which traditional ways of conferring roles and status through kinship and lineage has given way to the emergence of voluntary associations and clubs as important sites of social organization (Banton 1957, Banton 1965, Little 1957, Muller 1990), as well as considerable class-based and ethnic inequality (in fact, it is in these spaces that ethnic categories take on meaning). In Senegal, Tijane and Mouride *daa'iras*, or brotherhood cells, represent important urban associations going back to the interwar period (Diop 1981b). Yet Lambert's (2002b) work with Jola migrants shows us that urban clubs also serve as forums for the reproduction and rearticulation of kin-based village community ties in geographically distant urban places.

The emphasis on voluntary organizations in analyses of modern African urbanity effectively cuts off youth. Yet demographic data from Senegal, as in much of Africa, suggest that young people far outnumber their parents and grandparents and that such trends will continue on into the future. Some of the students in Parcelles were involved in what one would call voluntary organizations, such as religious clubs, camps, and organized sports teams, but again, the vast majority was not. Rather, I argue, youths' primary social interactions in urban places take place in and around the institutions of the school, family, and household (for they are not coterminous, though most people in one's household are people with whom one has a connection by blood or marriage). These modern urban spaces and experiences are hybrid and multi-faceted, for in each of these contexts, the teenagers of Parcelles inhabit different roles. With their parents, teachers, and eldest siblings, they are young people—*waxambane*—who are under elders' authority, a position which entails postures of deference and linguistic restraint. With their classmates and friends, they are age-set equals—*moroom* or *nawle*—bringing with it certain freedoms from authority as well as a conformist desire to be considered “cool”, which can entail

much reflexive self-policing. With younger siblings and students in lower grades, these students take on the roll of *magg*—an elder who may exercise authority and power, but is also charged to assist and support. We also saw that in the financial precariousness of contemporary living, these roles of assistance and responsibility between parent and child can be inverted. And at school, one is called on to speak as a *nawle* or *magg*, but at the same time occupies the low position of a child.

Hybridities and intersections have been key concepts for Africanists who urban research examines language use and popular culture (Auzanneau 2001, Fabian 1998, Larkin 2002, Spitulnik 1998, Swigart 1994). Their work suggests that attention to flows, mixing, and the *carréfour*, or intersection, and how they are tapped and used by people in their everyday lives are effective and accurate ways to look at urban systems across the board in Africa. The city, and the lives of urban residents, then, unites what may appear to be disparate or contradictory elements. Cities are both profoundly connected to the countryside and are distinct. They are a place of possibility as well as disappointment and closed doors. Status and power in the city is achieved through education, work, money, consumption and the politics of reputation, as well as ascribed in kin relations, age, and gender ideology. These domains braid together and reinforce each other. Family and household—which are distinct but intersecting realms—represent supportive, emotionally-positive settings for the realization of one’s goals (in fact one’s personal goals are in large part defined through family and family socialization). They are also sites of conflict, burden, and domination. This is expressed in Wolof through the words *njaboot* and *mbokk*—which, taken from their linguistic roots mean “the people whom I shoulder/have shouldered me” and “the people with whom I share”, respectively—and *waa kër*, perhaps the most commonly used appellation, which simply means “the people of the house”. Finally, while the city can be a place of depersonalized anonymity (Ferguson 1999), it is also a place where one is never free

from the gaze and gossip of neighbors and extended kin. In the next chapter, I will explore further people's strategies for survival and for bridging the contradictions and challenges of modern Senegalese living through practices of making do, or *góorgóorluisme*.

## CHAPTER 5

### IMPROVISATION IN THE SENEGALESE MODERN

A middle-aged Senegalese couple is arguing about money. Indignant words fly back and forth, hands are on hips, outstretched, and index fingers pointed, expressions alternately angry, defensive and bewildered. The husband wears *babouche* slippers, paired with a dark *caaya*, traditional-style baggy short pants which are gathered loosely in the front without a zipper. On top, he sports a locally-made striped short-sleeve tunic. A *teere*, a protective amulet fashioned from paper on which a marabout has written Qur'anic verses folded into a thick square wrapped in weathered leather and stitched closed, hangs from his neck on a long black string. His physique is short and muscular. His wide, expressive face is shaped almost like a pumpkin, largest at his mouth and then narrowing as it moves up to his forehead, where a fez or *coppeti*, exaggerated in shape such that it is almost a tall cylinder, is perched atop his very closely-shaved head. His wife dons cheap imported rubber flip flop sandals (*carax*) that are commonly worn by both men and women around the house in Senegal. Her sturdy, solid body is clothed in a wrap skirt made of patterned cotton *lagos* fabric and a short-sleeved top of cotton *brodé* cloth, both of which are cheaply available at any neighborhood market and easy to sew, and a kerchief (*musoor* or *mouchoire*) is wrapped around her head.

With their attire and mannerisms, they could be any working class couple in Senegal. But they aren't. This is Goor Ndiaye and his wife, Diek—arguably the most famous married couple in the country, aside from the President and his wife. Unlike the First Couple, Goor and Diek aren't real people, however. They are comic strip characters that emerged out of the creative mind of Alphonse Mendy, pen name T.T. Fons, a Manjak artist and illustrator who grew up and



still lives in the large, densely-populated suburb of Pikine. That Mendy meant for the Goor Ndiaye character to be a working class everyman is clear from the selection of his characters' names; *góor* means man/male in Wolof, *diek* is a word for an attractive adult woman, and Ndiaye is the most common Wolof surname, like Smith or Jones in the United States. Mendy titled his comic "Goorgoorlou"<sup>119</sup>, meaning to make do or manage in Wolof.

First appearing in limited form in *Le Cafard libéré*, a satirical political weekly, Mendy then expanded *Goorgoorlou* to nine full-length comic books that he published out of his own studio in the 1990s, and most recently to a live-action Wolof-language television show, directed by Moussa Absa Sène. Millions of people in Senegal watched Goor Ndiaye's adventures on television in the early years of this decade. Importantly, they watched Goorgoorlou and his family together with *their* families. It was broadcast on RTS, the national television station, every weekday, just before the dinner hour. Unlike the print version, which was in French and relative expensive, the *Goorgoorlou* television show was oral and in Wolof, which made it both accessible to and meaningful for a larger audience. The Goorgoorlou character became an icon of the struggles of the urban working class Senegalese in the post-Senghor era, a hard-luck hero of the people who manages to survive and provide for his family in the face of adversity and poverty; a *góorgóorlu* for all *góorgóorlus*.

The word *góorgóorlu* is a polysemic term, whose social meaning has been deeply influenced by the comic, but is not reducible to it or to its various English translations; *make do*, *make like a man*, *man up*, *struggle*, *make an effort*. Mendy's comic is just one point in the larger constellation of what I call making do practices and ideologies in Senegal. In the following chapter, I examine the contemporary politics of surviving and making do in Dakar, a *mode de vie*

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<sup>119</sup> *Goorgoorlou* with an "ou" ending is a French orthographic translation of the Wolof and the most commonly used spelling in Senegal, a nation in which literacy is overwhelmingly Francophone. The correct Wolof orthography of the word is *góorgóorlu*.

which has become pervasive over the last several decades of economic instability and crisis. *Góorgóorluisme* has become an incredibly powerful idiom—and fact of life—for the current generation of young people growing up in urban neighborhoods like Parcelles. As I will show, it is contrary to the epistemology that pervades private Islamic and public secular school institutions in Senegal. At the same time, it is central to the practices in which teachers, students, and other educational actors engage on an everyday basis in order to teach, learn, and simply get through the day in resource-strapped environments like Parcelles. As such, these improvisations are both reactions to the failures of public institutions in Senegal and cogent alternatives to the dominant model. Moreover, *góorgóorluisme* serves as lens through which young people in Senegal evaluate the value of attending state secular schools as well as a kind of organizational logic through which these institutions are able to share knowledge and dispense diplomas. Finally, “it” is an important pragmatic style through which people, especially men, hope to subsist on a daily basis and achieve status and respectability, and through which others’ attempts to do so—subsist and prosper—are also understood.

I begin by delving into playful and comic hermeneutics of making do using examples from the *Goorgoorlou* comic strip. Next, I examine the multiple meanings of the term with regard to the history of capital, modernity, and African economic and social processes. An examination of vernacular and comparative African meanings of making do, or *la débrouillardise*, follows. Next, I look at specific instances of *góorgóorlu* discourse and managing practices in the lives of students and their families in the schools and working-class urban neighborhoods of my Dakar fieldwork. Finally, I examine the wave of undocumented open-boat migration that occurred in Senegal during the time of my fieldwork, and how for many of my informants in Dakar, this signaled the most desperate possible kind of improvisation. I

would suggest, in addition, that these journeys articulated the idea that, structurally speaking, succeeding in post-Senegal was impossible for young people of the current generation.

### *Reading Comics*

In its hyphenation of the French word *pénurie*, the particular *Goorgoorlou* comic strip to which I referred to above, titled “Les pénu-riz de poisson” or “Fish Shortages”, makes a play on words for readers about *riz au poisson*, or “ceebu jën” (Fons 2001). This is a rich, lunchtime dish of rice and large cuts of aromatic, spiced parsley-stuffed fish (*jën bu rof*) whose signature element consists in the cooking of the rice in the savory fish broth as a final step in the cooking process. This one-pot meal includes both white (*ceeb bu weex*) and red (*ceeb bu xonq*) varieties, the latter the result of adding large amounts of canned tomato paste to the broth. It was first developed in the refined homes of the colonial capital Saint Louis, or *Ndar*, from both local and imported ingredients that were available in the port city: a place where home cooks—women—are still reputed to cook it better than anywhere else.

*Ceebu jën* is often called the “national” dish of Senegal, despite the fact that in Casamance and Eastern Senegal it is cooked rather infrequently. But for many Wolof in central and coastal Senegal, including Dakar, eating a robust plate of *riz au poisson* for lunch, made succulent and savory by a generous hand with oil and with the addition of numerous vegetables and “condiments” like dried hibiscus leaves, tamarind pods, pumpkin, eggplant, and even garnishes of mustard—expensive little touches that mark a “good” *ceebu jën*—is a sign of the good life, of a comfortable prosperity. When visiting students in their homes during fieldwork, I took care to avoid stopping by close to mealtimes, lest their families feel pressure to serve an elaborate meal in the tradition of Senegalese hospitality (*teranga*) that might be a strain on their resources. However, when lunching at the home of brother and sister Adama and Awa—both

students in the 5<sup>e</sup> class at the junior high—at their invitation, it was a rich and well-garnished (*orné* in urban Franco-Wolof slang) *ceebu-jën* that I was served in a separate room to eat just with Awa and her adult female cousin, while the rest of the family all ate out of a low common bowl (*ndën*) in the foyer.

In the opening frame of “Fish Shortages”, Goorgoorlou stands with his arms out, palms open and up, saying “Are you happy?! You succeeded in making my financier (*bailleur de fonds*) leave.” While most of the characters’ dialogue is in French, the comic is peppered with Wolof exclamations, Wolof slang, and usages of French characteristic of urban Wolof’s grammatical structure. “*Maa teey*,” Diek responds—in this context, Wolof for “Whatever, so what, I don’t care.” Goor’s “financier” or “sponsor” was a French tourist, Marianne Dupont, who in the proceeding pages of “*Tourisme intégré*” or “Integrated Tourism”, asked to stay with them on her visit to Senegal because she didn’t like hotels. There, she seemed to admire everything in their working-class neighborhood, even the overflowing piles of garbage, and proceeded to cook up a plate of coq au vin with potatoes and frogs legs for Goor and then sun herself in a bikini in the dirt courtyard. Diek, anxious that Marianne was on track to become Goor’s second wife, got angry at their French guest, despite Goor’s entreaties not to mess up his “deal”, for Marianne paid him French francs in order to stay at their house. In one frame Diek yells, “You can’t steal my *góorgóorlu!*”<sup>120</sup> Marianne cannot understand a word she is saying, for Diek, like many working class women of her generation, speaks Wolof and very little French. Despite the linguistic gap between the Frenchwoman on holiday and Diek, an unschooled housewife, Diek succeeds in driving off Marianne with her yelling and aggressive body

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<sup>120</sup> *On ne me volera pas mon goorgoorlou!*

language, who is shown in the last frame running off to the airport in her bikini, saying “Senegal, a welcoming country...these tourist brochures will say anything...”<sup>121</sup>

Marianne was contributing 5,000 FCFA to the “D.Q.” or “*dépense quotidienne*”, Goorgoorlou now reminds his wife. The D.Q.—daily expense—reflects the household strategies of many urban and peri-urban working-class families like the Ndiayes who struggle with chronic financial insecurity and unemployment. In such a context, families will only buy a few essential staples, such as rice, in large quantities. Aside from those items, all other food, be it tomato paste to add to a meal of *ceebu jën bu xonq*, a cube of salty bullion to spice up (*safal*) a sauce, or a bottle of soft drink to serve to an unexpected guest, is bought each day. Together, these daily purchases make up the D.Q. This strategy of household management can be equated, in part, with a lack of refrigerators among the poorest city residents and concerns about the freshness of produce and meat. Yet it is also fundamentally a question of money. Working-class Senegalese families do not generally buy household provisions more than one day in advance because either the money is not available and/or it is important for them to keep the money that they do have liquid because they do not have credit cards to fall back on in times of need. This is particularly the case for people who work in the informal sector and do not receive a monthly salary, but rather are paid day to day or job to job. Local manufacturers and market vendors are very much attuned to the pervasiveness of D.Q.-style consumption habits; as such, the number of items available “by the piece” or in single-serving bags and packets at corner stores and market stalls is astounding—cigarettes, laundry soap, sugar, tea, pastilles, tomato paste, spices, soy sauce, powdered milk, coffee, mustard, and so on and so on.

Diek, tapping her index finger on Goor’s forehead for emphasis as she speaks, responds indignantly, “I said, *maa teey!* I know what you were planning in your little head there...to

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<sup>121</sup> *Le Sénégal un pays accueillant...ces dépliants touristiques disent n’importe quoi....*

marry her and leave for France and abandon me here with the kids and the DQ problems. Your plan failed.”<sup>122</sup> At that, she sends him off to the market—which is typically not something husbands of Goor’s generation do—with 1,000 FCFA in hand and directions to buy rice and fish...and to hurry up! But once at the market, Goor finds that the only rice for sale is being offered at 500 FCFA per kilo and the *yaaboy* (herring) he hoped to buy is unavailable. The fishmonger only has deluxe *coof* (grouper) that she is selling for 7,000 FCFA each. He continues walking, undeterred by Diek’s attempt to “fool” or “trap” (*piéger*) him, vowing to return home with rice and with fish that he has caught himself. So he heads off to the beach, where he borrows a *pirogue* from a reluctant fisherman, and heads out into the Atlantic. There he comes upon a foreign trawler. He threatens to report their illegal presence in Senegalese waters unless they fill his boat with fish. When he returns to shore, a group of women offer him 75,000 FCFA for his catch.

In the next frame, we see Goor walking toward the house, accompanied by a man with a pushcart loaded with two large sacs that he bought with the proceeds from his lucrative fish sales. Once home, he tells his wife that one of the sacs contains rice—“large rice”, i.e. whole rice kernels—and the other, *kecax*, or dried smoked fish. These are precisely the wrong ingredients for *ceebu jën*, which requires *riz brisé*. This rice, imported from Thailand, is more commonly eaten in Senegal because it’s cheaper than whole rice; *riz brisé* consists of the small “broken” rice bits that are left over from the hulling process. Likewise, *kecax* is not at all suitable for cooking *ceebu jën*; what is needed for the recipe is a thick piece of quality fresh fish. Diek then walks off in frustration, but Goorgoorlou, mulling over the situation, vows to produce what is needed. He proceeds to soak the dried smoked fish in ice water and takes out two large wooden clubs with

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<sup>122</sup> *Maa ne, maa teey! Je sais ce que tu mijotais dans ta tête-là...l’épouser et partir en France avec elle... et me plaquer ici avec les enfants et les problèmes de DQ. Ton plan a échoué.*

which to pound the sack of whole rice he bought. Upon her return, Diek finds the necessary ingredients are, in fact, on hand. “How did you do it?” she asks. “Just making do!” he replies—  
 “*Góorgóorlu rekk!*”

These sorts of creative adventures in basic day-to-day survival, which often end in (temporary) failure rather than success for the character of Goorgoorlou, form the foundation of “the *goorgoorlou* story” and the essence of the comedic element in Mendy’s Goorgoorlou oeuvre. “Les pénu-riz de poisson” is just one comic devoted to how Goorgoorlou and his neighbors in the city deal with the constant shortages and price hikes they face in both everyday staples like rice, sugar, and bread, as well as things like electricity, propane for cooking (“gaz”), and gasoline. In Goorgoorlou’s world, the Senegalese state and international organizations do little to help him and his brethren survive, rather they must rely on their own wits and creativity in order to make ends meet. The “international community” is portrayed as understanding little the reality of poverty in Senegal and the so-called Third World. The prologue of Mendy’s 2001 edition of Goorgoorlou comics, titled, “Goorgoorlou, Devaluation Survivor” tells a story wherein James Wolfensohn, then president of the World Bank, visits the Goorgoorlou household. Goor is anxious to pay his debts from Korité (‘Id al-Fitr) and when he hears that Wolfensohn is from the World Bank, imagines this as the perfect opportunity to make some money. Upon his arrival, “Mousse [Monsieur] Wolofson”, in the grand tradition of Senegalese hospitality, or *teranga*, is directed to sit down on a mat under a tree in the courtyard, take off his shoes, and make himself at home, while Goor runs off to catch Diek on her way to the market before she buys the day’s *yaaboy*, a decidedly down-market fish. Somehow, she manages to make a delicious *ceebu jën* for her guest (*gan*), accompanied by all the “condiments” one could ever ask for.

Wolfensohn enjoys the meal immensely, saying he sees now that people in Senegal live will, eating grouper that sells for 5,000 FCFA. “I don’t regret having decided on the structural

adjustment program (SAP), the emergency plan, and above all for the devaluation of the CFA franc,”<sup>123</sup> he continues.<sup>124</sup> “You?!...you’re the one who brought all this on us?” Diek and Goor exclaim. “Yes,” Wolfensohn replies, “in order to allow you to live better and develop yourselves.” Goorgoorlou is indignant, telling Wolfensohn that he has been unemployed for 10 years and yelling for Diek to bring a shovel. He then proceeds to dig a hole the size of a grave. A bubble shows Diek thinking, “Oh, he’s going to bury himself alive again.” Wolfensohn doesn’t understand what a shovel has to do with all this, nor what Goorgoorlou is up to. “The truth is not what you think,” Goor tells him. “Then what is the truth, the reality?” Goorgoorlou holds up a skeleton he has just unearthed; “This is the reality.” “What is it?” “Me.” “Do you take me for an idiot...aren’t you in front of me, perfectly alive?” “No, I’m dead,” Goorgoorlou replies, “Devaluation killed me, I’m just a ghost!”<sup>125</sup> And at that, Wolfensohn, thoroughly spooked, runs off, papers trailing out of his briefcase. Diek is disappointed that the papers aren’t money, since she went into debt to buy the ingredients for the lunch. It’s okay, Goor concludes, “we’ll sell his suit jacket.”

The Senegalese state, on the other hand, is portrayed by Fons as much more aware of its citizens’ problems than the IMF or World Bank, but this awareness is blunted by its endless

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<sup>123</sup> The CFA franc (XOF) is the currency for Senegal and the other 7 members of the UEMOA, the West African Economic and Monetary Union and issued by the BCEAO. Created in the 1940s with a fixed exchange rate to the French franc, it is now pegged to the Euro. Its devaluation in early 1994 was designed to help African exporters and to redress economic inequality between elites and working-class farmers. Yet the consensus among most Senegalese has been that it has done more to hurt and weaken the economic position of middle and working-class families than to help them.

<sup>124</sup> This corroborated what the “real” Wolfensohn concluded on the “success” of the SAPs.

<sup>125</sup> Wolfensohn—*Je ne regrette pas d’avoir décidé le programme d’ajustement structurel, le plan d’urgence, et surtout la dévaluation du franc CFA.*

Goor and Diek—*C’est vous qui nous avez imposé tout ça?*

Wolfensohn—*Oui, pour vous permettre de vivre mieux et vous développer.*

Goor—*La réalité n’est pas ce que vous croyez.*

Wolfensohn—*C’est quoi donc la réalité?*

Goor—*C’est ça la réalité.*

Wolfensohn—*Qui est-ce?*

Goor—*Moi!*

Wolfensohn—*Vous me prenez pour un idiot?...C’est pas vous qui êtes là devant moi, bien en vie?*

Goor—*Non, je suis mort! La dévaluation m’a tué. Moi, je suis un fantôme.*



bureaucracy, pervasive nepotism, and the largely uncaring attitude of its civil servants who are more preoccupied with maintaining their own positions of power than in serving the population. This kind of self-interested every-man-for-himself (*chacun pour soi*) attitude is colloquially expressed as “*bopp sa bopp*” in Wolof. Government work and development initiatives are revealed to be hollow at the core, political machinations of little impact for most working people. To wit, when Goorgoorlou hears a government minister saying on television; “I invite all Senegalese men and women to put themselves to work,” he jumps up excitedly and heads down to the minister’s office, exclaiming, “That’s all I’ve ever wanted to hear. Finally the change I’ve been waiting for. God is great!” Bursting into the minister’s office, he announces “Well then! I see that I’m the first. Hurry up, Diek is waiting for me.” “What!?! What is this about?” the minister replies. “I am unemployed and you spoke about work on the television,” explains Goorgoorlou. “So?! That’s just politics...you’ve got to make do on your own to find work.” “But I’ve been doing just that for years,” Goor offers, as sweat trails down his face. “Then continue!” the minister shouts.<sup>126</sup>

What is perhaps most compelling about Goorgoorlou, and what makes him such a beloved popular icon in Senegal, is the kind of everyday calendar localism of the comic narratives—a localism which complements the regional, international, and historic elements of the tales creates a kind of personal connection and intimacy between the comic and its readers. These annual events and experiences that mark life for most Senegalese urbanites include religious holidays, children’s school vacations and the start of the school year, recurrent strikes

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<sup>126</sup> Minister (on television)—*J’invite toutes les Sénégalaises et tous les Sénégalais à se mettre au travail.*

Goor— (to himself) *C’est tous ce que voulais entendre...enfin le changement que j’attendais...Dieu est grand!*

(to minister) *Hé bin, je vois que je suis le premier. Gawal, Diek m’attend.*

Minister—*C’est à quel propos?*

Goor—*Je suis chômeur et vous avez parlé de travail à la télé...*

Minister—*Et alors? C’est la politique ça...débrouilles-toi pour te trouver du travail.*

Goor—*Je ne fais que ça depuis des années...*

Minister—*Alors il faut continuer!*

(by teacher, healthcare workers, garbage collectors, etc.), shortages, and political affairs and scandals which seem never-ending. Religious holidays are an especially fruitful terrain for stories of *góorgóorluisme* to be told; they include, among other things, the bodily and psychological difficulties that fasting during the daylight hours of Ramadan engenders, the cost and care devoted to the breaking fast meal (*ndogu*), the expense of buying a goat to slaughter for Tabaski (‘Id al-Adha), or the sense of obligation one feels to buy children new clothes for each the holidays so that they may fit in with their peers.

An important part of the comic’s appeal is its scope and breadth of the subjects it takes on in the constant of everyday efforts to survive. International events and characters like Bill Clinton’s 1998 visit to Senegal, the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, and the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 (which Diek attends), create grist from which to tell humorous stories of making-do in the city. Googoorlou’s Dakar is a cosmopolitan, vernacularly modern world that is both connected to the international sphere and remakes such events, trends, and cultural flows in ways that are locally meaningful. Over the years, sex education comes to town, rap and hip-hop make fans and artists out of young people, and the *génération bul faale*<sup>127</sup> movement of wrestler “Tyson” (real name Mohammed Ndao) emerges. And Goor’s cousin, an immigrant to Europe, comes back home for a visit, unable to adapt to the “just managing and making do” (*góorgóorlu rekk!*) ethic—he only knows “boulot-metro-dodo”; work, commute, sleep. Moreover, the comic narrative is also integrated into the regional landscape—for example, farming kin from the countryside often come to the city for money and further stress the Ndiaye’s

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<sup>127</sup> The “don’t care/indifferent” generation. This slogan of Senegalese wrestler Mohamed “Tyson” Ndao draws from an album title by Positive Black Soul, often cited as the first local rap group. Quoting a Senegalese journalist, Diouf (2002: 278) suggests that the movement represents the fed up Senegalese generation of youth who are left to themselves in dealing with a socio-economic crisis that gets worse each day.

household's budget and one of Goor's closest cronies (and at times adversaries) is Abdallah Ould, a pastoralist Moor (Fr. *Maure*, Wolof *Naar*) from neighboring Mauritania.<sup>128</sup>

The Goorgoorlou comics of Alphonse Mendy are a compelling representation of contemporary Dakar life, one whose critical lens is as sharp as its humor. The comics effectively connect the high and low and the local, national, and international spheres in ways that faithfully represent the hybridity and particularity of everyday life in Senegal. As such, Goorgoorlou has been an important part of local Senegalese discourse on the idiosyncrasies and challenges of modern life. However, there is much more to the question of pragmatic survival practices and informal knowledge in Senegal than this emblematic figure, however rich, as I explore below.

### *Defining the Terms and Concepts*

What really is making do? I conceive it as a congeries of practices, approaches, and thought patterns that help people negotiate and survive difficult, complex, and contradictory situations. Importantly, one makes do by utilizing non-mainstream, ad-hoc, and creative methods. Its forms are many, as are the terms and names used to describe such behavior and thinking. "Making do" is a decidedly informal, if not colloquial word, which reflects its popular nature. It appears rarely in the academy—more commonly used terms in the literature are creative *bricolage*<sup>129</sup>, the pragmatic imaginary, personal survival strategies, or coping, which is often used in a medical anthropological context. Managing, getting by, scraping by, patch-working, making ends meet, fending for oneself, pulling oneself up by one's bootstraps and even

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<sup>128</sup> The significance of the Abdullah character lies in part because of violence that erupted between Moors and Senegalese in 1989 after an incident between farmers and ranchers along the border and then spread to both countries' capitals where immigrant Senegalese and Mauritians were raided, killed, and in some cases, mutilated (c.f. Diop and Diouf 1990).

<sup>129</sup> *Bricolage* is a French term used to indicate making do behavior and sensibilities. I do not employ the term as a reference to Levi-Strauss's theories of ethno-cognition and his use of *bricolage* to describe "savage thought", nor do Senegalese actors and scholars. Jean-François Werner (1993b), a contemporary French anthropologist also highlights the prevalence of *bricolage* as a creative form of inventive managing and surviving in his ethnography of the Dakar suburb of Pikine.

recycling are also related terms used in the academy as well as in popular articulations and everyday discourse (c.f. Kratz 1995).

At first glance, these pragmatic improvisations might seem to map closely on to what Harvey (1990) calls flexible postmodernity's "structure of feeling" à la Raymond Williams. In such a model, postmodernity (or high modernity) is marked by qualities of pastiche, eclecticism, surface, ephemerality, play, entrepreneurialism, and flexible work: elements which lie in stark contrast to the more formal and structured modes of its antecedent, Fordist modernity. As Chapin (2003) writes regarding recycling and reuse efforts on the Mexican side of the U.S.-Mexico border, the economy of disassembly stands in stark contrast to the ideal linear trajectory of production in a consumer capitalist economy and brings an element of play into the routine struggles of everyday life. However, though compelling in the way the links cultural aesthetics to larger material and political regimes, Harvey and others construct these historical metanarratives from observations and data drawn largely from the West. For example, in speaking about the contributions of different world areas and states to the modern age, Harvey (1990: 27) suggests that the United States (in particular the urban conglomeration of Chicago) has been the greatest catalyst for modernism since the late 1800s, while the "history of intellectual and aesthetic modernism is much more Euro-centered." In the global metanarratives of Fordism and post-modernity, the focus of analysis rests firmly on the West, with Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East only emerging in discussions of the transition to flexible accumulation, Third World migration, and deterritorialization (c.f. Appadurai 1996).

The qualities and contradictions of contemporary African societies, then, and their historical genesis, are lost within the broad analytic strokes of these epochs. There is almost no mention of the role of Africans and or even African resources in the rise of Fordist modernism in Harvey's work. Moreover, within the wider academic literature and in political discourse,

Africans' claim to modernity is largely seen as derivative and their participation or incorporation into such processes partial or incomplete (c.f. Ferguson 2006, Piot 1999 for critiques of this idea). This is a view that world-systems theorists and many anthropologists reject, arguing that Africa is not an anti-modern repository of tradition, but rather that African labor, materials, and cultural practices are central to the modern project. In this context, a careful look at the historical record shows that creative economic and social strategies of managing and getting by in fact predate the postmodern moment, though they may certainly resonate with aspects of what Harvey sees as the postmodern condition.

### *Economies of Making Do*

Widening our temporal scope, then, most of the contemporary world is also a stage for making do, if one understands it as trying to survive in difficult circumstances where formal or institutional avenues to subsistence are less accessible. A 2006 UNICEF brochure, "Essential Points in the Situation of the Children around the World: "Excluded and Invisible", which I picked up at its Dakar office during my fieldwork—important in the sense that these are the kinds of official documents and sources of development knowledge that circulate in Senegal—takes care to document the demographic indicators for populations around the world, including survival rates, health, nutrition, education, share of the gross national product, etc. in its assessment of children's lives. Populations are assessed as part of geographic regions, such as Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as how their respective nations figure into a development scale. Here, there are three hierarchical levels; that of an industrialized country, a developing country, and a least-developed country (*pays les moins avancés*). Of a world population of approximately 6.4 billion people, less than a billion live in "industrialized" countries, this UNICEF brochure states. The vast majority—approximately 5.2 billion—of the world's population reside in "developing"

countries where more than 20% of people live on less than a dollar a day, and another 742 million live in what are termed “least-developed” countries where more than 40% of people live on less than a dollar a day.

Senegal, for its part, is categorized as a “least-developed country” by the United Nations (“LDC” in UN-ease), but as an “emerging and developing country”<sup>130</sup> by the International Monetary Fund (United Nations Development Program 2007). It is difficult to say when Senegal might “graduate”, as the term goes, from the status of a “least-developed country” a “developing country” in the eyes of the U.N. That the past tense verb form is used with the former, suggesting a condition or state of being, whereas the latter designation uses the present participle of the verb to develop, suggesting ongoing action, is telling. Moreover, a change in these categorizations does not necessarily reflect substantial positive economic growth; human measures such as literacy have much to do with Senegal’s classification as a least-developed country. Yet scholars also argue that substantial positive annual economic growth for a country, i.e. an increase in the GDP or GDP per capita, also does not translate directly into substantial increase in the economic well-being for the neediest citizens, particularly in countries with high levels of economic inequality (Firebaugh and Beck 1994). In order to do that, economic growth must be “pro-poor”, in the word of economists, that is to say growth must lower a nation’s rates of economic inequality at the same time it raises the overall GDP and the GDP per capita.

Senegal’s post-colonial economic history shows slow growth in the first decade and a half after independence under Léopold Sédar Senghor, poet-president and philosopher, at around 2% annually (Fosu and O’Connell 2005). In the late 1970s, drought, a failing peanut export system,

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<sup>130</sup> The IMF maintains two levels of country classifications, unlike the UN’s three-tier system. Countries are assigned one of two classifications, that of an “advanced economy” or an “emerging and developing economy”. Advanced economies are further subdivided into what are salient designations for the IMF; “Euro area” “major advanced economies” (which includes the United States), “newly industrialized Asian economies” and “other advanced economies”. Certain “emerging and developing economies” are also designated “heavily indebted poor countries”, including Senegal.

and rising petroleum prices prompted a decline in the annual growth rate decline to just 1.2%. The next fifteen years, under Senghor's successor, Abdou Diouf, who was trained as an economist and had a strong reputation as a neoliberal technocrat, saw a similar pattern—a growth rate of just over 3% for a decade, and then a precipitous drop down to 1.5% in the first half of the nineties. This was the time of the CFA franc's devaluation (which doubled the country's external debt) by 50% and the very lean years in which most of the Parcelles teen cohort at the u13 Franco-Arabe and public junior high were born.

Since then, Senegal's annual growth rate has generally stayed above 2%. But most Senegalese say they do not "feel" (*sentir*) this prosperity. That is to say, they judge its impact on their own lives as faint or even nonexistent, a perception that the USAID Senegal's annual report for 2005 corroborates in its opening paragraph; "The country's longstanding democratic tradition and stability, however, have not translated into a better living standard for many of its 10 million people...population growth has averaged 2.6% while economic growth has averaged only 5% per year -- not enough to provide jobs for a rapidly growing, young population...while economic growth has picked up (estimated at 6.5% in 2004), it has not yet had sufficient impact on alleviating overall poverty." So, too, does the Senegalese state acknowledge this phenomenon in some of its own policy assessment summaries; "Despite these realizations [more than 2% growth in the annual GDP since the early nineties, mastery of inflation, and a reduction in the state's deficits], people's living conditions *remain* difficult,"<sup>131</sup> (Sénégal 2004a, my emphasis and brackets). Paying the household bills and providing for the basic needs of its members remains a day to day, month to month problem, for the great majority of Senegalese citizens, and in particular the poor, which as of 2001 represented 72 to 88% of the rural population and 44 to 59% of those in urban areas (Minvielle, Diop, and Niang 2005).

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<sup>131</sup> *Malgré ces réalisations, les conditions de vie des populations restent difficiles.*

Since the publication of the UNICEF brochure in 2006, where the number of people living in developing and least-developed countries constituted an overwhelming majority of the world's population, the everyday difficulties of many people in latter two contexts have undoubtedly increased with rising fuel and food prices. In Senegal, the increasing cost of important staples like powdered milk, bread, and rice in the past few years have strained families' budgets significantly within the context of a global economic downturn. Moreover, the amount and frequency of remittances from kin abroad, which constitute a significant portion of many families' monthly incomes and which Dahou and Foucher (2004) characterize as “the veritable motor” of the Senegalese economy, have also been affected by the weakening world economy. In the early years of the 21st century, their conservative estimates of the number of Senegalese émigrés living abroad—most commonly in France, Spain, Italy, and the U.S.—was about 1.5 to 3 million vis-à-vis a national population of around 11 million persons. Further, the contribution of these transnational migrants to the GNP was estimated at around 5-10% [which, again, is a conservative estimate].

Yet as wide as the sphere of making do stretches in the world's “developing” and “poor” locales, *góorgóorluisme* is most definitely not confined to such borders. We know that the designation “industrialized country” obscures the poverty and large disparities in income and wealth among people in many of these countries face—millions of citizens in industrialized countries also struggle with low wages, underemployment and unemployment that make satisfying their basic needs and those of their family members a day-to-day tasks. It is safe to say, then, that there are billions of *góorgóorlus* in the world, engaging in similar practices of recycling, repairing, mending, reusing, scrimping, and stretching. The world of *góorgóorlus* is one in which cracked plastic lawn chairs and calabash gourds are sewn together, not thrown



away, where shoes are polished nightly because the dirt and the sand of neighborhood streets quickly dirties even the most shiny, rich leather with a coat of brown, white, or red dust.

To many, this kind of frugality does not represent novel behavior, but seems rather a normal part of people's everyday living through the centuries, and on into the present day, both in the industrialized West and other parts of the world. What changed this? How did managing become marked out as something different? One can look to the Industrial Revolution and the advent of mass produced commodities and markets for these goods. Under capitalism, people were incited to sell their labor for money, and money became increasingly central to the exercise of living and surviving. Markets in the West were progressively saturated with consumer goods, whose affordability increased as the social costs of their labor were subsequently exported abroad—what we might call a transnationalized “fetishism of the commodity” à la Marx.

Commodity exchange in Africa clearly predated the colonial period. In Senegal, the dual “coastlines” of the Atlantic to the West, along which Portuguese, French, and English trading ships trolled, and the sandy Sahel (which comes from the Arabic *sahil*, meaning coast) to the north, which acted as a gateways for Arabs and Berbers and as a conduits for the circulation of goods, and in the case of the later, Islam (Robinson 2004). However, with the development of an international exchange economy under colonial rule, to which agricultural production was also tied, Africans also came to depend on manufactured consumer goods and capitalist markets for their very survival (Mamdani 1996: 146).

With independence came the establishment of a relatively powerful, sometimes coercive postcolonial state<sup>132</sup> in which power was centralized, highly bureaucratic, and at the same time personalized through an “economy of affection” (Hyden 1983). The postcolonial Senegalese state was also the primary source of wealth, resources, and employment during these early years.

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<sup>132</sup> See Villalón (1995) for a discussion of African states' relative 'hardness' and 'softness'.

So, if Senegalese came to depend on currency, consumer goods, and markets for their subsistence and well-being (which also served importantly as institutions/structural relationships through which life goals were formed and pursued) during the colonial period, the post-colonial era was marked by the state's preeminence as a gatekeeper of and selective distributor for resources essential to livelihood as well as social status and respectability, including both market-based revenue and millions of dollars in development aid and loans. The establishment of demographically and economically-strong diasporic communities abroad in the last several decades, particular those of Mouride traders who make charitable donations to the brotherhood and development projects in the city of Touba, has meant that some of the state's dominance in this regard has been diminished.<sup>133</sup> However, people continue to look to the state and its personnel for needed employment and resources, even if they recognize its weakening ability (and perhaps desire) to provide. This long-standing tension between citizens and the state around resources and power strongly shapes the way people envision and pursue their subsistence strategies, as we will see below.

### *Vernacular Meanings*

So how are these improvisational practices conceptualized and articulated locally? In Senegal, Wolof verbs like *góorgóorlu*, *tappale* (var. *takkale*), *foratu*, and *lijjanti* are the most common words used to indicate managing strategies. One of the most basic ways is through interpersonal greetings with extended kin and non-kin persons. Greetings are important in all human societies, and Senegal is no exception. Taken together, the work of Paul Riesman (1977) and Judith Irvine (1974), who conducted research in a pastoral Pulaar (Jelgobé/Fula/Fulani)

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<sup>133</sup> I would argue that this is the case despite Abdoulaye Wade's very public Mouride persona and what Van Hoven (2000) characterizes as his very nationalistic, selective and discriminatory promotion of "Bambaism".

community in Burkina Faso and a Mouride Wolof village located in the heartland of Senegal's peanut-growing region, respectively, suggest that greetings follow a particular pattern—even formula—among societies across the Sahel.<sup>134</sup> In Senegal, as in Burkina Faso, greetings usually begin with the Islamic salutation, “*Asalaam aaleikum!*”; May peace be with you. Variations on the same phrase or question are repeated in French and local languages by the interlocutors in a series; “*Ca va?!?*” “*Na nga def?!?*” “*Yaa ngi ci jàmm?*” One’s health is asked after (“*Naka yaram wi?*”) as well as the health of one’s family (“*Ana sa waa kër?...Mbaa ñepp ñu ngi ci jàmm?*”). It is not uncommon for the exact same questions to be repeated several times during the greeting sequence, so that there is a continual rhythm of speech with few breaks. As Riesman (1977: 172) writes, the point of the greeting is not to exchange news, but rather to participate appropriately in the social ritual of greeting, for one’s ability to speak correctly and follow the larger script signifies “that one is a member of the group, not in the sense of a kinship group, but in the sense of *wondiibe*, people who share the same life and same experience of the world.” Importantly, *góorgóorlu*, and the related word *takkale* (which has more of a youthful, slang connotation than its counterpart) also figure into these cultural routines as a common, daily response to questions about one’s health and well-being. Instead of replying, “*Maa ngi ci jàmm*” or “*Jàmm rekk*” (“I am at peace” or “Only/just peace”), one would say, “*Maa ngi góorgóorlu rekk*” or “I am just making do”.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> I should note that Riesman and Irvine differ on their interpretation of the importance and function of greeting in social inequality, which is a feature of both Pulaar and Wolof societies, which have historically been caste. Whereas for Irvine, the speech act of greeting serves to reenact or reassert social differentiation among interlocutors, Riesman argues that greetings in his research context were neutral with regard to social status.

<sup>135</sup> That sort of response—others of its genre include statements like “*Maa ngi ni di ñakk solo rekk*” or “*Ñakk njariñ.*” (“I’m just here being of no importance” or “[I’m] just useless”). On one hand, as sort of casual, matter-of-fact, and self-effacing statements, they reinforce the sense of *woondiibe* of which Riesman. On the other hand, one could interpret this kind of speech as a break with social convention in that the speakers actually may be telling their interlocutor something—i.e. that they are not fine, instead of responding as such.

As is the case with urban Wolof code switching, people often use *se débrouiller* in French (the act is *la débrouillardise*, the actor is *un débrouillard*) in place of the Wolof verb *góorgóorlu* in their daily conversation and in any principally French-language social interactions. In the French slang of the metropole, the mentality and milieu of *la débrouillardise*, which literally means to unscramble or to uncloud, is referred to as “système D”. Implicit in the connotation of these words is the sense that the actor is drawing on his or her intelligence, what one might call in English a certain craftiness or ability to “think outside of the box”. In Wolof, this intelligence (*xel*) is referenced anthropomorphically, as in “*Kii, dafa muus!*” (Man, that guy is clever!) or “*Yow daal, muus nga!*” (Hey now, you’re pretty sharp!). *Muus* means cat; here it is used to mean a catlike intelligence. These sorts of comments can be complimentary, but calling someone “muus” can also be a criticism that one’s sly intelligence is ultimately self-serving.

In the Goorgoorlou character’s case, his intelligence is not the result of long schooling, for he is of the generation of older working-class men who, as one would say, “*n’ont pas longtemps fait les bancs*”, lit. they didn’t sit for long on the school benches. Goorgoorlou has this in common with many of the fathers of Parcelles Junior High students, though I should stress that this character—one could even argue caricature—does not encapsulate them all. When asked what their father’s most advanced degree was in an anonymous survey I conducted of the students in the 5<sup>e</sup> class, 25 out of 65 the students’ responses indicated that their fathers had no diploma at all, including the diploma one receives upon completing elementary school, the CFEE or *certificat de fin d’études élémentaires* (formerly CEPE). Four of the students’ fathers listed this as their highest degree, two a junior high school diploma, six a high school diploma, one a B.S., and one a M.A. A whole hodgepodge of other highest-level diplomas and certificates were listed for other students’ fathers, including three accounting degrees, an agricultural degree, teaching, hostelry, and mechanics certificates, and even a French medal of honor. Eight students

listed diploma acronyms that neither I, nor anyone I knew, could decipher their signification. I should also mention here that 53 of 65 students (81%) responded that their father's education had included Qur'anic schools, Franco-Arabe schools, and/or an Islamic institute, and 5 had engaged in apprenticeships.

The level and type of students' fathers' education differed from that of the students' mothers; generally, mothers went to school for a shorter amount of time and their diplomas were less diverse and more uniform in nature. In addition, students' fathers' jobs reflected a great diversity of professional activities both overall and in relation to their spouses. Using the survey data, I grouped fathers' professions into 3 categories of my own designation;<sup>136</sup> highly-skilled (engineer, teacher, veterinarian), semi-skilled (police officer, hotel management, customs officer) and informal/unskilled. Though the total number of fathers in the first two categories (19 and 13 respectively) outnumbered those in the latter category, it was this category of informal/unskilled workers that engaged the most number of fathers in any category at 25. Their professions included that of laborer (*ouvrier*), small-time salesperson (*commerçant*), artisan (leatherwork, weaving, dyeing), tailor, electrician, farmer, driver/chauffer, and even marabout. Four students reported that their fathers were retired, two marked the category unemployed/no profession, and two responses were omitted. Finally, if the students of the 5<sup>e</sup> E class were simply able to continue on another two years and finish their junior high school studies by passing the BFEM

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<sup>136</sup> In many of the Senegalese government publications, economists, demographers, and sociologists use a similar three-tier system to classify jobs; those belonging to the public sector (e.g. civil service), the private formal sector, and the private informal sector, which are also often subdivided into three groups—officials/administrators (*cadres*), mid-level employees (*employés*), and laborers (*manoeuvres*). Though persons employed at the highest level of the private formal sector (e.g. *cadres*) make the most of any one subcategory, overall, workers in the public sector category have the highest total earnings on average, and, I would add, better job security and benefits. Workers in the private informal sector make the least (though *cadres* in that category make an average salary slightly greater than *manoeuvres* in the public sector). In addition, government data collected in 2002 shows that more than 3/4 of employed persons in Dakar work in the informal sector (Sénégal 2004a).

exam (*brevet de fin d'études moyennes*), most would have an equal or higher level of education than their parents.

So, like a significant number of fathers in Dakar, rather than drawing from codified units of knowledge acquired in state secular schools like his own children and the younger generation of kids in the city more generally, Goorgoorlou's clever ability to survive draws on his robust local knowledge. One might call this a pre-schooling knowledge, a knowledge that contrasts greatly the memorization and recitation of discrete facts and "scripts" which characterizes local secular and Islamic schools. Like many real Dakarites, Mendy's Goor Ndiaye character has an uncanny ability to be able to assess a situation and generate a workable solution, and his perseverance in the face of adversity and failure, even at the cost of his dignity.

Perhaps a most obvious example of Goor's lack of concern for his personal dignity lies in an episode in which he takes up a job as a "*coxeur*" for *car rapides*. These are roughshod private transportation cars which are ubiquitous in the city and a cheap and essential way for working class residents to get around. The *coxeur* position consists of soliciting riders at *car rapide* stops for the cars as they come by. It is the kind of job which is almost wholly unnecessary, both for passengers and for cars, but *coxeurs* in Dakar have now been able to create a market for their work, and arguments and physical altercations may break out if they don't receive a few coins from the *car apprentis*, or apprentices, upon handing off a few passengers. *Coxeurs* also often act as repositories of small change for the *apprentis*, for a small commission. Goor performs this service one day in hopes of earning enough money to pay for a nice meal<sup>137</sup> for the upcoming Islamic New Year festivities ("*Tamxarit*" locally). Running after the car, he misses the step as he tries to jump on, landing with a great belly flop on the pavement below. Comments like "Ooh, he

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<sup>137</sup> *Cere*, or millet, is the conventional Tamxarit dish in Senegal.

bought it”, “Looks like he’s new to the job” and “He’s kind of old to being doing this”<sup>138</sup> come from the riders inside (Fons 1994: 27). Returning home, he is in such pain that his wife thinks he has come down with malaria. In another episode, when, after weeks of chasing after it, Goor’s voter registration card finally arrives with his name misprinted as “Gologolou”, which means “to behave like a monkey” (*faire le singe*), he vows—“*Barke seriñ bi!*”<sup>139</sup>—to vote with it anyway, much to his wife and teenage son’s embarrassment.

So, while making do, in the case of the Goorgoorlou character, may entail creativity and craftiness, in which its practitioners deploy robust local knowledges of the inner working and nuances of social and economic relations, it also concerns one’s dignity, or *fulla*, an essential quality of the person in Senegal. Although Goorgoorlou’s efforts occasionally lead him to embarrass or injure himself, importantly, he does not lose his honor (*jom*), however. His sly strategies and cat-like behavior (*muus*), though they might entail manipulation or stretching the truth, do not cross over into lying, theft, or other serious social and moral transgressions. Those sorts of ethics are referred to locally as a hyena-like character, or *bukki*. Goorgoorlou, for all his faults and imperfections, is portrayed a God-fearing family man. Most contemporary popular understandings of *la débrouillardise* in Senegal corroborate this kind of narrative—that making do is about surviving, but rarely in a morally-transgressive way. Further, as the root noun *góor* indicates, the verb *góorgóorlu* is traditionally about men’s activities and efforts to get by on a day-to-day basis. Thus masculinity in this context is defined and obtained through work and good-faith efforts, and how these might provide for one’s kin.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> *Wooy, dee na; Xanaa, il est nouveau dans le metier; Il est vieux pour ça.*

<sup>139</sup> “*Barke seriñ bi*” is a Mouride utterance meaning “I swear by the *seriñ*, e.g. Serigne Cheikh Amadou Bamba, the sainted founder of the Mouridiyya brotherhood. *Seriñ* is the Wolof word for marabout. Its Pulaar equivalent, which is also commonly used in Senegalese religious discourse, is *ceerno*.”

<sup>140</sup> As described above, “*Maa ngi góorgóorlu*” and “*Góorgóorlu rekk*” are common response phrases in Senegalese greeting practices. As a joke, I would often respond with an entirely-invented phrase of my own “*Jigéenjigéenlu rekk*”, which replaces the root noun of “*góor*” (man/male) in the verb *góorgóorlu* with that of “*jigéen*”

Mendy's *Goorgoorlou* comics and their live action television spinoff have had a considerable influence on public discourse regarding the lives of informal sector workers and urban/suburban working classes in Senegal, now represented as perpetual *débrouillards* and *góorgóorlus*. Private media, in particular (mostly daily newspapers and radio, for private local television media was in its infancy at the time of my fieldwork, although it has mushroomed in the years since), have become important sites for critical discussion about poverty and managing in contemporary Senegal as a result of their liberalization in the 1990s and continuing expansion.<sup>141</sup> As Debra Spitulnik (1996: 162) suggests, mass public media serve “as reservoirs and reference points for the circulation of words, phrases, and discourse styles in popular culture”, but little analytic work has been conducted on these smaller genres like comics and radio, which connect and intertwine/overlay more visible speech genres. She argues that these smaller genres play important roles in the constitution of communities' discursive fields and intertextual styles.

Spitulnik's point about the potential significance of small media in a place like Senegal is underlined by linguist Fiona McLaughlin (2001) in her analysis of two privately produced Senegalese comics; *Boy Dakar* and *Ass et Oussou*. These comics are critical chroniclers of urban social problems (especially unemployment) and feature many pragmatic, *débrouillard* characters like Goorgoorlou Goor—experimental improvisers whose ability to survive in the city rests on their urban knowledge as a distinct from schooling knowledge. These texts were some of the first instances (along with T.T. Fons' Goorgoorlou, I would suggest) of urban Wolof in written form.

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(woman/female). For me, it was a way of re-appropriating some of the maleness around the notion of making do. It was always understood and usually met with a chuckle or a smile.

<sup>141</sup> A phenomenon which Havard (2004) argues was one of the main catalysts in the realization of the historic regime change or *alternance* in 2000, after 40 years of Socialist governments.



The emergence of these popular hybrid language texts, McLaughlin contends, has helped to legitimate and bring to the fore a nascent form of de-ethnicized urban Senegalese identity.

In contemporary local news media, the *góorgóorlu* label is also extended beyond the character of Goor Ndiaye and used as a shorthand for all working-class Senegalese. For example, a reporter wrote in the satirical weekly, *Le Cafard libéré*, that with the release of a new ferry boat in 2005 to serve the needs of travelers between Dakar and the Casamance region south of the Gambia<sup>142</sup> (whose prices were considerably higher than its precursor); “The least that one can say about the *Wilis*, which set sail on its maiden voyage last Saturday, connecting *Ndakar* (Dakar) to Ziguinchor, is that it is really not destined for the great mass of Goorgoorlous and Dieks [Goor Ndiaye’s wife].”<sup>143</sup> A large percentage of the boat’s prospective passengers are small-time self-employed traders who have historically found the ferry service one of the best ways to transport goods between the capital and the south.<sup>144</sup> As such, the article’s title intones, “The ‘Wilis’ doesn’t seem to serve the purpose of the *Góorgóorlus*”<sup>145</sup> (Ndiaye 2005). The informal sector is understood as the milieu of longtime *góorgóorlus*, in which newcomers are also quickly obliged to adopt ad-hoc, improvisational strategies in order to survive.

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<sup>142</sup> Transportation to and from lower and middle Casamance and the rest of Senegal (particularly Dakar as urban center with a monopoly of economic, political, and social power) has been a contentious issue between residents, businesspersons and traders, and the Senegalese government for decades and was exacerbated with the sinking of the Joola ferry in 2002, in which more than 1800 people died. Aside from the Dakar-Ziguinchor ocean route, travelers have two other options by land; to take the very long route around the entire country of Gambia via Tambacounda, or to pass through Gambia on the Transgambian Highway, which entails numerous customs and immigration checkpoints, very poor roadways, and a long wait to cross the Gambia River by a small ferry. Coming from Tambacounda and the Gambian border, the roads that lead to Ziguinchor, Casamance’s largest city and the final destination for many travelers, can be dangerous due to the presence of armed rebel soldiers in the continuing low-level Casamançais conflict. Intermittent driver strikes and rising gas prices have made the land route less desirable to travelers in recent years. Airline service between Ziguinchor and Dakar existed at the time of my fieldwork, but its high cost made it prohibitive to only the wealthiest of people, and as of 2009 it was no longer available.

<sup>143</sup> *Le moins qu’on puisse [sic] dire, c’est que le “Wilis” qui a effectué son premier voyage inaugural samedi dernier en reliant Ndakar à Ziguinchor, n’est vraiment pas destiné à la grande masse des Goorgoolou [sic] et des Dieks.*

<sup>144</sup> Lambert (2002b: 92) argues that the movement of Casamançais along this north-south axis—in which Dakar was the preeminent point of economic activity, and political and social power—helped to give rise to the political consciousness and critique of the contemporary separatist movement (MFDC) and the resultant armed conflict.

<sup>145</sup> *...le ‘Wilis’ ne semble pas faire l’affaire des Goorgoorlou.*

Further, a full-page story feature in a 2005 edition of the *Sud Quotidien* newspaper devoted to examining the smallest or lowliest of activities in the modern informal sector—urban youths, who hawk bags of water and shot glasses of strong Senegalese-style black tea (*attaya*)—indicts Dakar as “*ville de la débrouille*” or “city of making do”, in which these vendors have “invented a new form of subsistence” and constitute a “new race of enterprising persons for whom the credo is to do business on the street corner,” (Konte and Diallo 2005b).<sup>146</sup> Local economists and demographic researchers (c.f. Minvielle, Diop, and Niang 2005) suggest that these commonly used terms like *góorgóorlu*, *takkale*, *lijjanti*, and *foratu* (which they translate as “*se débrouiller pour ramasser quelque chose*”—make do in order to generate something—drawing from the Wolof root word “*for*” which means to gather, e.g. *ramasser* in French) accurately illustrate the precariousness of life in poor and working-class urban settings in Senegal. Many of these street vendors, referred to colloquially as *bana-banas* and *borooms pousse-pousse* (push cart vendors) are Guinean and Malian in origin. Yet the way they frame their own activities is similar; two young Guinean émigrés who have worked in Dakar for the past 10 years are quoted in a related article as saying about themselves and their colleagues, “It’s the lack of professional qualifications and the desire to bring something back home that pushes them to endure this type of job, so that they may live in dignity,” (Konte and Diallo 2005a).

Concurrent with talk which locates making do lifestyles in the suburban informal economy and depressed rural locales—both national and regional—is the practice of speaking about *all* Senegalese as *góorgóorlus*, given the demographic predominance of working class persons in Senegal and the extent to which the great majority of people are touched by problems of daily survival and managing life’s expenses in large households and networks of dependent

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<sup>146</sup> *Ils ont inventé une nouvelle forme de subsistance...une nouvelle race d'affairistes dont le credo est de faire du business au coin de la rue.*

kin. Here, a modern Senegalese person (or *homo Senegalensis* in the ironic style of newspaper editorial writers) is expressed as someone who improvises by definition—the citizen, or *citoyen*, and the *góorgóorlu* become one and the same. This discourse suggests that managing and getting by are not simply the daily activities of and for some urban underclass of street vendors, juvenile delinquents and the like, but are everyday behaviors for just about everyone, save the country's bourgeois and wealthy elites.

Moreover, this discourse is part of a strong public critique of the failings and abuses of the Wade presidency (2000-2012), which has disappointed many in the years since the jubilation and hope of 2000's *alternance* (democratic regime change). For example, following Wade's under-the-radar vacation to Europe in the fall of 2005, a front page op-ed commentary from the *Sud Quotidien* chides him for his clandestine escape; "In any case, it's not nice for the rest of us *góorgóorlus* who travel with you, even if in virtual form or simply in spirit...we would love to fly to all these marvelous cities where you are warmly received....there, streets are clean, houses are well lit and comfortable, hospitals treat you before presenting you with a bill, and there are jobs," (2005).<sup>147</sup> Other articles from that same period decry the "yes men" that surround the president and the *Ndiaga Ndiaye* car caravans of paid supporters (usually with the promise of a sandwich and a few thousand francs) that are organized to welcome Wade on his tours around the countryside or upon returning from a trip abroad, saying that he would be better served by exposure to everyday *góorgóorlus* (Wane 2005). They also take the PDS (Wade's Parti Démocratique Sénégalais) to task for passing a law delaying the legislative elections and effectively prolonging their elected mandates under the guise of saving 7 billion CFA francs and

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<sup>147</sup> *En tout cas, ce n'est pas gentil pour nous autres gorgorlu qui voyagent en même temps que vous, même si c'est de manière virtuelle, simplement par esprit. Nous aimons voler vers toutes les villes merveilleuses qui vous accueillent....là-bas, les rues sont propres, les maisons éclairées et confortables, les hôpitaux vous soignent avant de vous présenter les frais et il y a du travail.*

helping “disabused, hungry and thirsty *góorgóorlus*” (e.g. citizens, the people) avoid never-ending campaigns (Mane 2005b).

The notion of *citoyen*, or citizen, does not connote an exclusively secular status opposed to religious identity and affiliation as a Sufi disciple (*taalibe*), however. For example, the title of a short piece in an edition from the *Observateur* daily in 2005 lamenting the doubling and tripling of watermelon prices during the month of Ramadan<sup>148</sup> reads: “*Flambée des prix de la pastèque à Saint-Louis: le “goorgorlou” [sic] contraint de s’en passer à l’heure du “ndogou” [sic]*, meaning “Watermelon Prices Rocket in Saint-Louis: The “Making Do Man” Has to Go Without for the Breaking Fast Meal”. Nevertheless, in all of these mediated contexts, acts of making do and managing are understood as largely noble and honorable efforts; to this effect, a young girl is quoted in the street hawker article as saying “It’s my desire to live with dignity, to be useful to my family, and above all a refusal to beg and to fall into perversion [e.g. prostitution] that have led me to embrace this line of work,” (Konte and Diallo 2005b).<sup>149</sup>

### *Improvisation in Comparative Context*

These notions of *la débrouillardise* in Senegal contrast somewhat with the social understanding of the same word in Francophone Central Africa, namely Congo-Kinshasa (now the DRC) and Congo-Brazzaville (Republic of Congo). In their ethnography of transnational traders along the Congo-Paris axis, Janet MacGaffey and Rémy Bazenguissa-Ganga (2000) translate *la débrouillardise* as “fending for oneself” in English rather than “making do”, as I have. Here in the context of Central Africans’ relations to cosmopolitan Paris and to the global

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<sup>148</sup> Because of its high water content, watermelon is a popular food to consume after breaking one’s daily fast (*woor*) during Ramadan (*koor gi*).

<sup>149</sup> The girl’s statement was most surely translated by the reporter from its original Wolof or Pulaar into a more formal-sounding French for the article; *C’est la volonté de vivre dignement, d’être utile à ma famille et surtout le refus de tendre la main et de tomber dans la perversion qui m’ont amené à embrasser ce métier.*

world of commodities, *la débrouillardise* is no less prevalent a way of life than in Senegal. MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga (2000: 53) conclude “it is widely recognized that...it is the only way to survive.” Yet they find a real temporal difference in the signification of *la débrouillardise* over the decades. Around the 1940s, *se débrouiller* was defined in Congo-Kinshasa as the opposite of formalized, salaried work, such as vending at the market (Comhaire-Sylvain in MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga 2000). Salaried activities were “work”; petty independent commerce was just “fending for oneself”. Importantly, what constituted “work” here was the sector of employment borne out of colonial commercial and administrative activity. Moreover, in the Congos, as in Senegal and the other parts of colonial Africa, colonial secondary schools were designed to prepare a class of young, literate, and ultimately subservient Africans for this colonial administrative and business sector, rather than teaching.

Despite evidence of the early use of *se débrouiller* in Congolese public discourse, MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga argue that the meaning of *la débrouillardise* emerged from the legitimization of illegal artisanal diamond harvesting in southern DRC in the 1960s. People in the breakaway state of South Kasai were advised by their new political leader to fend for themselves. Moreover, the entire nation of Zaïre was told “*débrouillez-vous*” by Mobutu Sese Seko—the dictator’s so-called Eleventh Commandment—while he siphoned money into Swiss bank accounts (Gourevitch 1998: 284). *La débrouillardise* “has since become associated with all illegal activities: corruption, theft, diamond smuggling, and so on,” MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga (2000: 54) conclude.

This is not as much the case in Senegal, where activities which are understood as “making do” by actors can sometimes be judged by others, particularly the Senegalese state, as illegal or illicit, but not always. Making do in Senegal can include activities that one might consider morally reprehensible—thrift, prostitution, selling drugs, etc.—as well as those which are largely

morally neutral, such as the phenomenon of clandestine pedal-taxis in Kaokack (Morice 1981), the midsized Senegalese trading town and central crossroads, or the building of unauthorized homes on “state” land in and around Dakar (in 1990, an estimated 60,000 to 70,000 residences were considered “illegal” or “*irrégulières*” in this context) (Minvielle, Diop, and Niang 2005: 128). All of these activities are vexing to the state in that they elude and trouble authorities’ efforts at control. For example, Biaya (2001) critiques the economic crisis in post-colonial Senegal as leading to new forms of urban polyandry that he argues are the most widespread or common forms of contemporary Senegalese sexuality, particularly in the post-Senghor period. According to him, the main form of this new sexuality takes the form of *ménage à trois* and *ménage à quatre* in which young single women survive by engaging in a series of sexual relations with “boyfriend”-type peers, older, married, and financially-secure “sugar daddies”, and in the case of students, with more advanced “tutors”, which are sustained by money, gifts, and expensive outings.

Alain Morice (1981) defines the state’s attitude toward the latter in recent Senegalese history as a kind of perpetual vacillation between a *laissez-faire* attitude and crackdowns. Moreover, in state discourse, poor residents and youth are often spoken about precisely the terms of delinquency—morally-transgressive illegality and bad behavior. These kind of talk also bleeds into some of the daily newspapers in the city, which devote sensationalistic coverage on a daily basis to events that take place in urban neighborhoods such as assaults between co-wives, rapes, drug busts, scams and out-of-the-ordinary thefts at the same time that others celebrate the efforts of people to survive as noble.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> One’s “honest” efforts to survive are signaled in Wolof by the phrase “*Damay daan sama doole*,” and in French as “*Je travaille à la sueur de mon front*”, meaning, “I work by the sweat of my brow” and understood as implicitly contrasting with those activities judged dishonorable or immoral.

For the transnational traders whom MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga interviewed, the term *la débrouillardise* has become key to their self-articulations and presentations as modern adventurers and *mikilistes* (people who have traveled or “been around”) and their desire to become “someone”. Likewise, for young people in Senegal, making do is often about the quest to become “someone” (*quelqu’un*) in the social sense of the word, to be considered a respectable person of value. Their strategies, then, may be qualitatively different that of African *pères de famille* like the Goor Ndiaye character, whose managing has less to do with trying to become something or someone than to survive and to *maintain* his reputation as a good husband and father. The term “fend for oneself” would also not be inappropriate in a Senegalese context, particularly in more anonymous urban milieu. However, fending for oneself via illegal or morally questionable means cannot be generalized as a way to understand the ethics and practices of *la débrouillardise* and *góorgóorlisme* across the board in Senegal and what they mean to people.

In post-colonial India, the Hindi word “*jugār*”, which translates as “provisioning”, and the persona of a “*jugāru*”, correlate strongly with that of *góorgóorlu* or *la débrouillardise* in Senegal (Jeffrey 2010, Jeffrey 2012, Kanodia 2013). There, it is also a highly polysemic term. In some Indian contexts, *jugār* is synonymous with corruption and bribes and is understood pejoratively as pervasive rule bending and less-than-honorable quick fixes by any means necessary—essentially jerry rigging. Kanodia (2013) writes that in the 1980s, *jugār* was “just the Indian way of doing things”, much like the *góorgóorlu* figure is discussed in Senegalese media as *the* Senegalese man, or *homo Senegalensis*. This, too, was a time of a “shower-down” Indian educational system in which note-keeping, rote memorization, and regurgitative exam-taking predominated and *jugārus* took shortcuts because the ends were valued more the process of education.

In other settings, *jugār* is seen positively as resourceful and creative improvisation—even gaming—in order to fix things. It is also a gendered discourse that links these practices of shrewd and sly cunning to male identity and male power, particularly in the informal economy and political sphere (Jeffrey 2010). Women’s ability to practice *jugār* is seen as limited largely to mending and household economizing. Now, the Indian state, as well as NGOs, are increasingly turning to—or perhaps trying to harness or co-opt—*jugār* as a development strategy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The state has set up a “national improvisation council” charged with encouraging *jugār* (Jeffrey 2012).

Writing from the Cameroonian context, but with an eye toward elucidating pan-African trends, Achille Mbembe (1985) portrays *la débrouillardise* as part of urban survival strategies for youth, many of who live in poverty and whose parents have little social and economic power to improve family circumstances. Their recourse is to engage in a variety of cobbled together jobs in the informal sector; shoe shining, hawking, even stealing. Mbembe even cites here the practice of *taalibes*’ daily begging for money in Muslim countries in the Sahel. In Louis Brenner’s (2001: 246) history of Islamic schooling in Mali, *la débrouillardise* is a predominant motif in his interviews with contemporary students; he suggests that by the late 1980s, it “had replaced the prospects of sustained productive work and regular income for most Malian youth...” One of his interviewees calls this new lifestyle of making do “the American game” (Brenner 2001: 246). These pragmatic realities in Mali, Brenner contends, placed considerable pressure on inter-generational and family relationships and brought issues of money and power to the fore. This was manifested in stereotypes and discourse about gender relations in which men and women struggled over how the reduced economic potential of men affected ideals of and practices with regard to marriage and sex. As in India, Cameroon, and Mali, I would suggest that there are also important generational and gendered dimensions to the act of creative survival in



Senegal, some of which emerged in the secular and Islamic school classrooms in Parcelles and other times in students' homes and neighborhood spaces, and which I would like to examine below.

### *Managing in Parcelles Assainies*

At the u13 Franco-Arabe school, the word “góorgóorlu” was employed on multiple occasions. Most explicit and mundane was the use of *góorgóorlu* in the class of younger students as part of the teacher Seydatou’s repertoire of encouragements, entreaties, and scolding that draw on Senegalese notions of personhood and character, such as *fayda* and *baax* that I discussed in detail in Chapter Two. To spur on and encourage students as they recited after her from verses of the Koran, Hadith, and songs she had written on the board, Seydatou would often say “*War ngeen góorgóorlu!*”, meaning “You (pl.) need to make a good effort and work hard!” in this context. She also would praise students upon finishing their recitation of a verse or a song, “*Yaa ngi góorgóorlu!*” or “You’re working hard!”

Moreover, almost every year, the teachers would organize a *conférence*, a kind of end of the year recital to which parents and the neighborhood residents were invited. Students would recite verses individually and sing songs together as a class to show what their parents what they had learned that year. Preparations for the conference took many weeks during which students were led through their practice in class. One of the songs performed by the class of older students from the 2005 conference also uses the word *góorgóorlu* in the aforementioned sense of hard work and effort.

*Yeen waajur yi jere ngeen jëfete.  
Dëgg dëgg yeen, jambar ngeen.*

Parents, we thank you greatly.  
Truly, you are brave people.

*Jël sa doom, yobbu ko ci daara Soxna Amy  
ngir jàngal ko al-Koran.*

To take your child and bring him/her  
to Soxna Amy's school to teach  
him/her the Qur'an/religious  
knowledge.

*Konn ñun, li ñu war mooy góorgóorlu.  
Am yar, am ngoor, am diine.  
Jamono ji, kepp ku ci jàng  
soo magee war diyetaate.*

So that what we must do is work hard  
and try our best.  
To be educated, honest, and pious.  
These days, everyone who learns  
must then help to communicate this  
knowledge to others when they grow  
up.

Yet *góorgóorlu* was not reducible to individual scholastic effort and achievement at the u13 Franco-Arabe school. In my observations there in the spring of 2005, I noted that the students were often exposed to the Hadith—a collection of the prophet Muhammad's sayings that guide Muslims in the correct manner to proceed in everyday life from prayer, social relations, business, to personal hygiene—and other texts that their teacher would write for them on the board in Arabic to copy, recite, memorize, line by line, whose meaning she would then explain in Wolof in a free form manner (this pedagogy was also used with the texts in the students' Arabic language book, *Attilawa al Iffriqiyya*, rather than a grammatical approach). One text in particular concerned a young boy named Mansour, who in observing the human and natural world around him, notices how everyone is industrious and hard working, even the animals. Mansour, the teacher told her pupils, then felt ashamed (*russ*) not to be doing the same himself. "*Góorgóorlu*" was the most prominent word she used to explain the efforts of people and creatures in Mansour's community, and the implication goes, in the students' own communities.

Unlike in the Franco-Arabe school, I did not observe the use of *góorgóorlu*, or its French equivalent, *se débrouiller*, in "official" moments of teaching and learning in the classrooms of the

Parcelles Junior High. Rather, students and teachers largely spoke about such topics outside of the classroom. Inside, they learned musical scales, English vocabulary words, the high jump, diagramming sentences, geometrical figures, human development, Senegalese climactic regions, and the history of Islam. Perhaps the only time issues related to survival and making do came up in class lecture and discussion was in the students' Geography class, which as a discipline in Senegal includes both physical and human geography.

During a session devoted to the contours of Senegalese population, Mr. D., who, as I described in Chapter Three, has both a strong academic and practical research background, having worked on several social-scientific field data-gathering projects in the country, drew several charts and diagrams on the board and asked the students to copy them down along with a text that he subsequently dictated. The graphic information on the board indicated that the majority of Senegalese—roughly 58%—were younger than 20 years old and the number of aged persons (older than 60), was quite small at only 6%. At this, he drew a triangle on the board to represent the distribution of ages in the Senegalese population, remarking that underdeveloped countries (*les pays sous-développés*) were characterized by this sort of age distribution, whereas developed countries tended to exhibit the reverse. He repeated the appellations “underdeveloped” and “poor countries” several times.

Moreover, Mr. D. told the students, the cities of Dakar, Thies, and Kaolack housed the majority of this young population. Here, he broke with his dictation and asked the class, in a rhetorical manner, why there were more young people in these three cities. Young people all come to Dakar, he concluded, because they are looking for work, or because for them the city represents a stepping stone to their eventual desired destination of Europe. According to the statistics, he continued, men tend not to live as long as women. This is because, he joked, men are stressed and worried about meeting the D.Q. (*dépense quotidienne* or daily living expense)

and about taking care of their families, whereas women just hold out their hand (*tendre la main*) and ask for money. This was typical of Mr. D.'s teaching style; he would often joke around with the students and make provocative statements, I suspect to cut through the rather dry and tedious nature of dictation. That the students resided in a country that was considered poor and undeveloped was certainly not news to them, for this message was continually underlined in the TV and print media by journalists and the domestic and international political class. However, their Geography class lecture may have reinforced this idea in more concrete and specific ways. That Senegal was a "poor" place came up in class on more than this one occasion; for example, in lecturing to the students on the agricultural potential of certain rich wetland soils in the southern part of the country that necessitated the building of dikes in order to be viable, he concluded as a kind of out loud aside that this kind of building "is expensive...and since we're in a country that is...kind of...not even kind of...in a poor country..."

Despite the dearth of official classroom discourse about poverty and making do, the school spaces themselves were rife with talk about such matters. Teachers and administrators often spoke about the lack of available funds and resources and how that made their jobs tougher, whether amongst themselves in their lounge, or outside in the courtyard and the hallways of the administrative building where the students could overhear. The difficulties people had were a reoccurring subject in the interviews I conducted with them towards the end of my research, yet, from the beginning, the teachers of the 5<sup>e</sup> E class would also bring them up in casual conversation with me as I sat and observed in class, usually when students were busy copying down material from the board or working on in-class exercises individually in their notebooks. They calmly lamented the large class sizes, lack of books and teaching supplies and equipment, and the broken-down state of many of the classrooms. The pedagogical *bricolage* in which these teachers were required, by circumstance, to engage, was accurately understood by many of the

older instructors as a decline and a *dégradation* from educational conditions of the 1960s and 1970s, when they were students themselves. Some cited a lack of commitment and follow-through on the part of the state as reasons for the poor state of Senegalese schools, others wondered to me both privately and publically about a cultural propensity for laziness, for taking the easy way, or for de-emphasizing the individual, and about the influence of television and the hot climate on efforts toward national development.

It is worth noting here that in many ways this discourse about national or African inadequacy echoes that of state actors, including then-president Wade. The latter remarked in his annual Independence Day speech in 2005 that “Africa [and thus Senegal] is behind” relative to many countries of the world and that in order to “develop and catch up to the whites”, youth, in particular, needed to work harder. For their part, teachers’ dissatisfaction with the status quo was evident not in grand speeches, but rather in even simple, everyday greetings between faculty members and me; e.g. Greeting: “How are you doing”, Common response: “*Sénégalaisement*”, a slang term which translates awkwardly into English as “Senegalese-ly” or “like a Senegalese person would”.

For the junior high’s students, their studies and everyday experiences at school fit in idiosyncratically with their lower middle class home lives in Parcelles and evolving projects of the self. Pierre, like several of the other students in his 5<sup>e</sup> class, was decidedly ambivalent about continuing on in school, as I described in Chapter Four, and this ambivalence was a real point of contention between himself and his aunt, who served his guardian. A pre-school teacher herself, she told me during our first conversation, as the three of us sat in the family living room, that she considered school central to being successful, and that education was important to her personally. Instead of leaving school, he needed to stay in school and “*góorgóorlu*” (here, again, the word is used in the sense of trying and making an effort). Speaking of her own daughters, who were

several years older than Pierre and who had were attending high school, university, and other post-secondary schools, she told me that they didn't yet have jobs, but that their education was important and would be important to their success and making something of themselves, to their being able to survive and make a living, which she expressed through the Wolof "*am daara*"—lit. have something—in our largely French-language conversation.

As we saw in Chapter Four, Pierre's classmate, Omar, also wanted to leave school to obtain work in hopes of supporting his mother, for whom he was the eldest son, though not of his aged father, who had children with his other wife in neighboring Mauritania. When we first met at school in 2005, Omar had already lost a year of schooling due and had to repeat that grade, after being struck by a car while riding his bike. His broken leg was repaired with metal rods at the time, but in the spring semester of 2006, he had to have the metal removed. Omar's older sister, Nabou, with whom he shared a father, took charge of overseeing his operation and hospital care. This was no small task, for since there was no meal or beverage service at the downtown hospital, as is typical of most Senegalese health facilities, she had to bring him everything he needed each day. Their residence in Parcelles was more than an hour away from the downtown hospital via Dakar's slow and congested public transportation system, and the cost of a faster and less physically-draining taxi ride was prohibitive.

Again, Senegalese families are multidimensional, often marked by a wide range in children's ages, in large part due to the practice of polygamy and the high birth rate. Furthermore, this heterogeneity extends to members' educational and professional qualifications, such that families often include siblings with very different levels of education. Older, adult siblings take on parental roles with regard to their younger siblings, which can be heightened in circumstances in which parents' financial position and/or familial status is compromised due to poor health, loss of formal job, death, and divorce. This social expectation for elder children to

support their “dependent” siblings remains even if a given person’s actual ability to carry off such a duty (*wareef* in Wolof, *devoir* in French) is negligible. Nabou thus quit her job as a maid—one of the worst paid jobs<sup>151</sup> a young woman in urban Senegal can undertake, but quite obtainable for those with little schooling—in order to take care of Omar. Later, when he was out of the hospital, she asked me if I knew of any suitable job openings, saying that she was looking for something that paid decently. She lamented that most of what was available around the city were what she called “*sous-metiers*”, which one might translate as “sub-par jobs” or a “jobs that are even less than jobs”. In her household, her father had been the only person with a job in the formal sector; as far as I could tell, her mother and female relatives did not earn formal wages and she had several unmarried male cousins in their twenties who labored as metalworkers, which is understood as an informal sector occupation.

While some of the older siblings of the students at the Parcelles Junior High, like Nabou, struggled to make ends meet and provide for their families, frequently finding some small recourse in the informal economy—milieu par excellence of *góorgóorlus*—or, like Pierre’s cousins, in the hope that their own investments in advanced schooling and degrees might afford them financial security in the future, many of the young students in 5<sup>e</sup> E were also beset with dilemmas about education and work, due in part to their respective households’ financial situation and the particular nature of their kin relations. In my written survey of the class, a little less than half of the students indicated that they wanted to continue their schooling at the high school level and more than a third at the university level. However, in person, their concerns about their future emerged more clearly, for example, in the case of Adama, the male half of a brother and sister set in the 5<sup>e</sup> E class, whom I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

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<sup>151</sup> In Dakar, salaries for live-in maids who have Sundays off generally start at 20,000 or 25,000 CFA (approximately \$40-\$55 per month) and go up from there. Maids’ salaries in smaller cities such as Ziguinchor can start as low as 10,000 CFA (a little over \$20) per month.

Adama frequently stopped by my apartment in the neighborhood to visit, as did many of the boys of the 5<sup>e</sup> class, in contrast to the girls who didn't visit unless they lived quite close by. Awa may have also been held back from visiting because of her domestic responsibilities (everyday chores such as mopping, sweeping, laundry, cooking, etc.) at home, which Adama did not share—the day I lunched at their house they were late returning to school for afternoon classes because Awa had to sweep up the food mess before they could leave. Because of his visits, Adama and I were able to talk at length about his life and plans for the future in a way we couldn't at his home or around the schoolyard.

Adama and Awa, like that of many of their peers, didn't live with their parents, but rather in a large household and multidimensional family. Their aunt was head of the household, which was made up of several older cousins and younger children, in addition to her and the twins. Over that lunch of savory *ceebu-jën*, Awa showed me photographs of their mother and father, who were divorced. Their mother had since remarried and had more children with her second husband. Awa implied that neither parent was actively involved in their day-to-day lives nor did she see her father very much at all. She was, in fact, two years older than Adama, but they were both in the same grade because she had repeated several years in elementary school.<sup>152</sup> When they were in elementary school, they had both attended a neighborhood Qur'anic school at the residence of their aunt's friend after school and during the long months of summer vacation.

Adama expressed a desire to continue on with school and to obtain his *Baccalauréat* (high school diploma) or at least his BFEM, which signifies completion of junior high school and permission to continue on to high school. He also told me that he would very much like to travel

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<sup>152</sup> Though Parcelles is a large and densely populated neighborhood, in some ways it is also a very “small world” layered with overlapping personal connections. By chance, I encountered Adama and Awa one afternoon attending regular group tutoring sessions in a private home that were led by the young male French teacher from the Franco-Arabe school over in unit 13!



to Europe in order to study and work. When I asked what his family thought of his plans, he replied that they approved, in as much as he is an individual with the right to pursue what he wants in life. Yet as we talked more, his anxiety and sadness about his future and about making do in the present came to light. He repeated over and over—“it’s hard” (*c’est dur*). Adama wanted to help out at home and expressed that it was hard on his aunt to support everyone. He felt pressure to find avenues to earn money, and suggested that it would be easier on his household’s D.Q. if he left to go to Europe. I will discuss further the desire of thousands of Senegalese youth to immigrate to Europe, even without proper papers, and the way in which this all came to a deathly head in the summer of 2006 later in this chapter.

There in France, Adama had a “*sœur*”—not a sister in the Western sense of a sibling with whom one shares a parent, but rather a close female relative—who lived with her husband and children. But this female relative didn’t have proper visas and the financial means for Adama to come stay with her. He was of the opinion that his biological sister, Awa, a fellow student in the same class at the junior high, didn’t have the same problems and worries for his present and future that he did as a “man”. He told me that she simply had to think about getting married to a man who could provide for her. He would say to me again and again that his future, abstractly put, depended on God’ will; “God will provide for us”, *Dieu nous offrira, Dieu nous donnera*—a way of thinking and speaking about God, the individual, fate or destiny, and blessings and misfortune that resonates across West African cultural contexts.

The students’ personal dilemmas, played out in their families and in their school and neighborhood spaces, signaled social tensions not only about age but also about gender and individuality and kin solidarity. Here it is important to take into account the fact that biological and non-biologized characteristics of inequality overlap and intertwine, strongly shaping not only one’s public persona and interactions but one’s kin and extended kin relations, as well.

Following Abdoulaye Bara Diop's (1981a) rigorous analysis of inequality and domination in Wolof social contexts, I would argue that these hierarchical understandings of the person begin in the home and then are added to and rendered more complex in public institutions like the school, forming a kind of feedback loop of status, responsibility, and opportunity for actors in these spaces. Souleymane Gomis (2003), whose research focuses specifically on the family-school relationship in Senegal, suggests that French-language state schools are tied social inequality on a traditional basis. If a young person's schooling experience is disorganized and wanting, Gomis argues, the traditional bases and terms of inequality take on even more power in the life of a given young person.

The data I recorded from student interviews and observations typically reflected discourse and ideas about making do, rather than rich cases to examine their pragmatic patchworking efforts in action. Students and their families did not often reflexively identify their own specific behavior as *la débrouillardise*. More commonly, they would simply say, "I'm just making do" when reflecting on the difficulties of their lives. Moreover, in "real life", I encountered very few explicitly funny or comic instances of creative managing practices à la the Goorgoorlou Goor character. The only instance that comes to mind involves a young Jola man who boarded in my apartment during the course of my fieldwork. Cheikh had been a university student in Geography, but dropped out after two years. The second youngest in a polygamous family of fourteen children from the Casamance region of southern Senegal, he was determined to succeed on his own, rather than resorting to nepotism and the clientelistic networks of older kin, some of whom had, by this time, landed good white-collar jobs in the public and private sectors.

After quitting the University of Dakar, Cheikh spent the following months applying for competitive admission to all sorts of public service programs (referred to locally as "*concours*"), such as the police force, to which one of his older brothers had been accepted. When none of his

applications to these programs were successful, he tried another tactic; he would apply to travel abroad, but not to the typical destinations for Senegalese youth—France, Belgium, Italy, Spain, U.S., and Canada. No, Cheikh decided his chances were better at being accepted if he applied to a country that did not typically receive many Senegalese visa applications. He chose Poland. This strategy earned him the nickname of *le Polonais*, or Polish man, around our apartment and neighborhood, for people found Cheikh's idea both clever and hilarious—meaning that while it represented some creative, out-of-the-box thinking to his emigration problem, they ultimately doubted that it would be successful. Visiting friends and family would joke; “Oh, here comes the Polish guy” and, over dinner; “Pass the bread to the Pole”. Cheikh never did make it to Poland.

However, given that making do is largely an analytical category and, on the ground, involves banal, everyday acts of survival, it almost seems to disappear when examined more closely. Even as a polysemic term for local actors, much of this improvisation is simply about the reality of living in contemporary Senegal, if it means engaging in heterogeneous forms of entrepreneurial and piecemeal work in the informal sector and looking for ways to manage with little money when formal (often state-sponsored channels) to subsistence are not available. In that sense, cases of *góorgóorluisme* are everywhere. They are pervasive forms of living that engage the majority of people in the country; government statistics from the past decade suggest that 60% of all Senegalese heads of households were employed in the informal sector (Sénégal 2004b: 15). These statistics show that making do practices represent a critical break from the formalized knowledge and pedagogy of both Islamic and secular schoolings. Less than 5% of informal sector workers reported receiving any sort of formal training or vocational education relative to their jobs (Sénégal 2004b: 15). However, this same set of data indicates that the presence of a wage disparity in the informal sector between individuals with different levels of schooling (Sénégal 2004b: 13).

My examples above draw mainly on the lives of students at the public junior high, for I was able to cultivate much closer and more personal relationships with them outside of the classroom, as well as observations and interviews with public secular school leavers. But my more limited encounters with the teenage u13 Franco-Arabe students, who had clearly chosen the Franco-Arabe school as their educational path (as opposed to those young students who were there for a kind of pre-school education and they would continue on to public French-language elementary schools) only served to reinforce my data about the managing strategies of young suburban Parcellois and their families. For example, I could often find Coumba, a thin and gregarious student from the Franco-Arabe school, sitting with her sister after school had let out at a low, scrap-wood table, covered with peeling linoleum near a main neighborhood intersection and public transportation stop. She and her sister would work there to relieve their mother, who in Senegalese argot would be called a *boroom taabal* (“*taabal*” is urban Wolof slang for the French “*table*”), selling plastic bags of home-roasted peanuts (*gerte caaf*), small mangoes, and other very inexpensive snack food.

*Borooms taabal* occupy one of the lowest rungs of the informal sector, perhaps just higher than the ambulatory vendors of water and tea detailed in the newspaper article I cited above. However, despite what some might consider their lowly status, they are ubiquitous in Dakar and around the country, in part because they provide an effective way for women with little capital (and often other engagements/responsibilities) to make some money each week—money that can oftentimes can have a very substantial impact on one’s survival. Again, while male-headed and supported households are a dominant cultural ideal in Senegal (read through local interpretations of male roles in Islam), the reality is that women and even youth play increasingly significant roles in family subsistence, despite a professed desire by many women to keep this under wraps (*sutural*) in order to protect men’s honor and status as breadwinners. In their study of poverty

across the metropolitan area of Dakar, Minvielle et al. (2005) found female-headed households made up roughly 1/3 of their sample. The women were typically widows with children or single mothers who had less schooling than male heads of household. They generated much of their money in “micro-commerce” enterprises within the informal sector and through participation in *tontines*, which are small, informal savings clubs.

### *Another Side of Managing*

People around the world engage in pragmatic acts of survival from the small, like *borooms taabal*, to the large. Yet what happens when these actions are blocked or impeded? How do people then make do when there is a gap between their hopes and expectations and what they find possible? And is making do simply about the material? The stories and concerns of teenage students in Parcelles and their working-class and middle-class families show that these efforts are not just about tangible things like food, clothing, and a roof over one’s head, but they are also about identity, status, and reputation, not as fixed conditions, but as evolving and interactive constructions. The language we use to talk about such abstract concepts illustrates that they are not so very far removed from discrete objects and goods. Like a dwelling, one’s reputation can be torn down, undermined, and destroyed. Like a garment, it can be shredded, dirtied and abused, and like food, one’s good will can rot or be “used up”. So, too, can one’s status or reputation be grown, built, and decorated.

Giddens (1991) tells us that under high or late modernity, consumption of commodities, including those related to the body and the fashioning of appearance, became a central element in what he calls the “reflexive project of the self”. That lifestyle, or taste, in the form of selective engagement with commoditized cultural practices, is a powerful way in which modern people communicate and signal class and social origins, educational background, and a cultivate a sense

of self *distinction*, as compellingly and meticulously presented by Bourdieu (1984). Both Giddens and Bourdieu's context for theorization and argument is the West (Bourdieu's research in the Maghreb does not figure prominently in this part of his work). More recently, however, the anthropological literature is rife with interesting and nuanced work which critically examines dress, grooming, media such as television, film, and radio, and other domains of consumption around the world as they relate to personhood, social relations, and the global flows of goods and information in which we now all live. Yet in spite of these robust areas of new research, I feel compelled to caution here against a tendency, both academic and popular, to subscribe to a romanticized view of people's patchworking efforts around the world. The world of *góorgóorlus* is not a pristine place removed from the circulation and consumption of cheap goods from China or Dubai, where everything is "environmentally-friendly", notions of materialism are foreign, and principles of equality, mutual-aid, and human kindness abound.

One aspect of managing and getting by in contemporary Senegal that has the potential to be particularly insidious is the practice of engaging in public shows of wealth and prosperity that have little to do with the reality of one's financial situation. This phenomenon is known as *paraître* in French and *feeñu* in Wolof—seeming—as opposite to being or *être* (c.f. Diouf 2002). It is not unique to Senegal; people's concern with status and reputation is arguably a human cultural universal. What is remarkable, however, is the extent to which has become so preeminent in contemporary Senegal and, as such, powerfully shapes the perceptions and interactions of such a wide variety and class of people. In this context, displays of wealth intertwine with those of piety and religiosity, as well. At first glance, this might seem counter-intuitive, given that Sufi philosophy emphasizes asceticism and a rejection of world materiality in order to access God. However, the ruling political and economic classes in Senegal have close connections with religious elites, relationships which go back to the colonial period.

Though at times these alliances have been fraught, the links between wealth/power and religion in Senegal are evidenced in the wealth that the Mouride brotherhood leaders were able to accumulate following the death of Cheikh Amadou Bamba, founder and saint (*wali*) in 1927, at which time his son, Mamadou Moustapha, became the *xalif*, ushering in a new era of agricultural development and collaboration with the colonial administrators focused on the cultivation of peanuts for export. In the present day, entrepreneurial activities by Mourides living abroad have supplanted the peanut as a source of wealth for the *tariqa*. In many ways, these diasporic connections liberate the brotherhood from some of the influence and control of the state. These connections are also revealed in the great ability of certain high-level marabouts, such as Serigne Modou Kara and Serigne Bethio, to mobilize their disciples or *taalibes*. In the past this was manifested through the electoral *ndigël* (command from a marabout to his disciple), and now with the *ndigël*'s increasing decline in relevance and importance, through the organization of large, often televised, rallies and prayer sessions where considerable sartorial wealth is displayed and many head of cattle and such slaughtered to feed all the attendees.

The influx of money and goods from abroad has done a lot to change expectations of the good life in Senegal and even what people consider essentials for living. Beth Buggenhagen (2001: 376) describes the contemporary neoliberal Senegalese landscape as “littered with half-built villas, which are iconic of half-built families.” She goes on to say that homes “contain many relations (and are extremely overcrowded) but often with the ‘wrong’ kind of relation: unmarried daughters and out of work sons,” (author’s parentheses and emphasis). For families’ like Omar’s, the presence of his unmarried older sister Nabou around the house might have been welcome for their elderly parents, particularly when he was laid up the hospital downtown with his broken leg and needed daily care and logistical aid. On the other hand, Adama and Awa’s

(the two Parcelles siblings) testimonials speak in a foreboding way to this tension in the domestic sphere regarding resources, roles, and status.

In addition, from her research in an urban and specifically Mouride Wolof context, Buggenhagen suggests that money from the diaspora has rejuvenated life cycle rituals over the past decade, turning what was once important primarily for male lineage heads into a chance for women to acquire and reinforce public prestige in the absence of men. These life cycle rituals, like marriages and baptism of children, constitute centrally important events in women's lives and the cultivation of a social identity and reputation, both those in which a woman is centrally implicated as a bride or new mother, as well as those of extended kin, friends, and neighbors, which provide a forum for women to perform social and familial roles. For adult men, the ceremonies of others are not as important as they are for adult women. The latter use the occasion to assert that they are persons of value through elegant and expensive *boubous* in rich *bazin* (damask) and *cuub* (batik) fabric that are matched to bright handbags and high-heeled shoes, elaborate makeup and salon coiffures which include jewels, glittery paint, and artificial hair, and the public giving of gifts.

In any given year, a woman can attend more than a dozen of these functions, each representing both an opportunity to assert herself as well as the pressure to do so, and a sense of failure and inadequacy if she does not have the financial means to do so or also the inclination. Single women and teenage girls, like the young students at the junior high and Franco-Arabe school in Parcelles, are also implicated in this challenge. There is air of competition to such events between women about looking and dressing well (*sañse*; a Wolof reworking of the French word *changer*, to change), which Heath (1990: 31) calls the "dominant sartorial code" in Senegal and the Gambia. In my judgment, this competitive quality of life-cycle events links up with a



larger dominant ethos of rivalry between women and men stemming from polygamy, patron-client relationships, and the importance of resources in family and marriage relations in Senegal.

Further, I would argue that women's practice of cultivating public prestige through display of wealth life-cycle events has a longer history than Buggenhagen suggests in her Mouride diaspora-focused analysis, one which links up to larger transformations in social relations and personhood under modernity in Senegal. In the traditionally caste societies of the Wolof, Sereer, and Pulaar, freemen, artisans, and slaves had little access to personal wealth. The destruction of these social systems under colonialism opened up new avenues for social and economic advancement. Lambert (2002b: xvii) argues that with the "culture of migration" from rural to urban locales in Senegal, status is no longer primarily achieved through production, instead, it is "won and maintained through consumption". In his work among historically "egalitarian" or non-caste Jola communities in Casamance, he documents how manufactured goods, such as aluminum pots for cooking and plastic tubs for washing, were introduced to rural communities there in the 1930s and 1940s by women who had worked as domestics in the region's small cities. Demand for such goods rapidly increased, such that soon they were no longer considered special addition a young newlywed might bring to her new family, but rather an expected part of her trousseau. As contact between communities in Casamance and the northern urban areas has increased, these attitudes have become more entrenched.

The establishment of a native bourgeois urban class in the postcolonial years has further injected wealth into the politics of reputation in Senegal. Locally produced television talk show and lifestyle programming, together with print media, help to circulate and normalize these images and include both "everyday" people like themselves as well as an emerging class of Senegalese celebrities—political figures, religious authorities, musicians, artists, sports stars, and

journalists.<sup>153</sup> The pervasiveness of the contemporary politics of wealth and identity in Senegal—which says “If you don’t have money, you are nothing”—is evidenced by the fact that while many of my Jola interlocutors critiqued flamboyant displays of wealth at life cycle events as vulgar “Wolof materialism”, these practices have, at the same time, become more common at their own baptisms and marriages. It is hard for anyone to escape from the powerful and pervasive game of wealth-centered self-presentation in urban Senegal. This ethos effects youth profoundly as they attempt to negotiate the everyday challenges of life and create a future for themselves—and the extent to which school knowledge and diplomas become important or are devalued in their eyes.

### *International Góorgóorlus*

In the previous pages, most of the examples of making do have focused on domestic strategies, save Adama’s and Cheikh’s desires to emigrate to France and Poland, respectively. Their strong aspirations to go abroad (with rather less specific plans as to what to do once there) reflect the desires of tens of thousands of their generation who have decided that it is structurally impossible—reminiscent of world systems theory—to succeed (of course, this is a word that is understood differently by different actors) in Senegal, as well as many of my other student informants in the suburbs. Africans, particularly young men, have been migrating to Europe and North America for decades. Recently, the Middle East and South Asia—specifically Dubai—have become popular destinations for short-term labor migration and informal international traders (hawking). As mentioned earlier, conservative estimates now put the diasporic Senegalese population at around 1.5 to 3 million vis à vis a domestic population of around 11

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<sup>153</sup> The establishment of a second national television channel, RTS2S, a “lifestyle” channel featuring shows on fashion, music, entertainment, and sports, as well as local talk shows and imported sitcoms, dramas, and soap operas from North and South America, has done much to promote this discourse, particularly among youth.

million; the diaspora is made up of both undocumented (or “irregular”) and documented migrants, as well as second and even third generations of migrants.

Since the 1990s, increasingly restrictive visa policies for sub-Saharan Africans in North Africa, which has served as a kind of gateway to the north for African migrants seeking to enter Europe, have pushed people to diversify and adopt alternative routes, often at great physical risk to themselves (de Hass 2008). So, too, have visa policies to Europe and North America become more restrictive and complicated since September 11, 2001. This has prompted those who might have previously emigrated legally to now attempt to do so without the proper legal documentation. Also, the shooting of 16 African detainees by Spanish border guards at Ceuta and Melilla and the “abandonment” of approximately 500 undocumented migrants in the Moroccan desert in the fall of 2005 profoundly affected the movements and strategies of potential sub-Saharan migrants, among them many Senegalese. As a result, migrants began attempting to reach Spain’s Canary Islands by boat, rather than by crossing the sandy “sea” of the Saharan desert. The Canary Islands, which lie off the coast of Morocco about 900 miles from Dakar and 1100 miles from Madrid, respectively, represented an opportunity for Senegalese to obtain work in the predominant agricultural sector (low-wage, unskilled). Migrants also used the islands as a kind of stepping stone to other mainland European locales.

Against this backdrop, attempted immigration to the Canary Islands spiked dramatically in 2006. By September of 2006, the arrival of more than 20,000 undocumented immigrants had been recorded in the Canaries, which was more than three times the number of recorded immigrants in 2005 (Bailey 2006). Just the month of August 2006 saw more arrivals than the whole of 2005 (2006b). These migrants, mostly young unmarried men, but also some married men and women, made the trip in open wooden fishing boats (called *pirogues*) that had been outfitted for the purpose with outboard motors, and occasionally, a handheld GPS. Typically,

each boat was headed up by organized networks of smugglers or traffickers (*coxeurs*) who had been paid between 250 and 400 FCFA (around \$500-800) for each prospective immigrants' passage. Thousands perished en route from dehydration, drowning, and sickness, and those who arrived alive in the Canary Islands were typically detained and forcibly repatriated.

And yet as 2006 wore on, the boats continued to depart from the Senegalese, Gambian, and Mauritanian coasts, despite the consternation of European states and the embarrassment of African political leaders, who sent out local policeman to police the shoreline and stop boats before they disembarked. From my vantage point conducting fieldwork in Dakar at the time, it was almost as if the terrible outcomes of these migrants' voyages further incited others' attempts, rather than quelling or deterring them. A local slogan emerged that encapsulated the do-or-die attitude of many migrants; "*Barça ou barsakh*", which could be translated as "Barcelona or bust", but which literally means "Barcelona or the afterlife"; a connotation of impending death that the word "bust" does not adequately capture.

The phenomenon was a central topic of public concern and debate, on television, in the newspaper, and in people's daily living spaces, including the schoolyards of the Franco-Arabe and junior high schools in Parcelles. Virtually everyone I encountered knew of someone—be it an extended family member, friend, or even neighbor—who had attempted the trip. Newspaper accounts called the striving migrants "the new wretched of the earth" ("*les nouveaux damnés de la terre*", in reference to the anti-colonial work of Frantz Fanon), "boat people" (in English), "the tired youth", "starving black African youth", and "*modou-modous*" (a migrant of low status who often works at menial or informal sector jobs). These news stories often recounted, in a sensationalistic manner, the harrowing experiences at sea of those who had lived to reach Spanish soil only to be detained and then forcibly repatriated. Moreover, the Canary Islands, and the potential door they represented for migrants into the rest of Europe was referred by journalists as

“the El Dorado” or, at times, “the improbable El Dorado”, “the promised land”, and “the new Western frontier” (“*le Far West nouveau*”). Their trip into “the unknown” was “a risky, uncertain odyssey”, taken by “any means necessary” (this phrase was written in English), to “go make one’s fortune in Spain”.

The language of the failed or aspiring travelers themselves who were interviewed by local journalists was decidedly less dramatic. Aside from the hard-edged slogan “Barcelona or bust”, they articulated their efforts using phrases like “try my luck” or simply “leave”. More generally, in any discussion about the future, about one’s goals, the meaning of the word “leave”, or *partir*, was clear—meaning one was not leaving one’s immediate surroundings but rather leaving Senegal entirely; getting the hell out, getting out of Dodge. When my cousin-in-law, who lived a rural community of southern Senegal, decided to join the boat migrants during this period, he gave his family little advance notice. The young father simply packed a bag and said as he left, “*damay wuut yoon.*” This Wolof phrase translates enigmatically in English to “I’m looking for a way, a path”. But for his wife and others the heavy meaning of his words was quite clear. Reportedly, he would not relent to her pleas for him to stay. This, along with his words, would be repeated by his extended family across Senegal in the weeks that followed, after a call came from a fellow passenger in Spain saying that he had died en route and his body dumped overboard.

In *Sunugaal* (which is a play on words between Senegal and *sunu gaal*, meaning our boat), his now world-famous song about the boat immigration phenomenon that was released in 2007, prominent Senegalese rapper Didier “DJ” Awadi sings in Wolof, “This isn’t what we were hoping for/if the country was alright/we wouldn’t leave in boats....we don’t have any paths

(*yoon*).”<sup>154</sup> It bears mentioning that in many ways this real life story of the young father’s departure recalls the typical beginning scene of a Goorgoorlou comic. Confronted daily with some domestic problem or another (usually a question of food or financial need), Goor Ndiaye is shown setting out into the busy streets of Dakar from the generally peaceful confines of his dirt courtyard, in order to solve this problem. As the story goes, while at first Goorgoorlou doesn’t know how he will solve the problem, through clever, ad-hoc, and patchworking practices of making do in the urban informal sector, is able to secure food and/or funds and returns home with his bounty as the male head of household. Here, then, any initial similarity between the two narratives quickly dissolves—there is no comic irony to the young father’s story and his quest does not end happily, but rather in unequivocal tragedy. He had attempted to find an alternative way to what he perceived as the blocked paths of opportunity, but in his case, even an alternative route would not deliver the desired result.

The majority of local public condemnation (as well as formal legal sanction) of the boat migration was directed toward the traffickers, but all manner of explanations and causes were invoked in the press; European racism, partisan politics, lack of political will, structural adjustment policies, but above all, “failed” development and a failure of the state with regard to the nation’s youth. One editorial remarked that youth prefer the uncertainty and exploitation of Spanish groves and orchards to “the certainty of social death and endemic unemployment,” (2006a). Ousmane Ngom, the then Minister of the Interior, defended state politics thusly in a plea for the additional involvement of local religious leaders as guides for youth; “that they comfort...youth in their faith so that they might consent to being patient, consent to being

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<sup>154</sup> *Du lii lañuy yakaar oon...bu reew mi neex oon, duñuy dem ci gaal...suñuy yoon dafay des.*

perseverant, and consent to battle<sup>155</sup> [in the sense of making an effort] (2006c, my brackets).

The schoolyards and classrooms of the junior high and Franco-Arabe school in Parcelles were also the sites of considerable discussion about the undocumented migrants. Mr. D. brought up the matter of immigration with his students in a class session on Senegalese demographics that I discussed earlier in this chapter. Senegal's population, he taught them, was structured according to sex, age, and socio-professional activity. Like many underdeveloped countries in the Third World, he continued, the distribution of ages according to population in Senegal takes the form of a pyramid, in which children (those persons under age 20) vastly outnumber adults and elderly, who represent the smallest portion of the population. In contrast, he lectured to his students, in most developed countries, the age distribution is the reverse and is represented by an inverse pyramid. The "Third World", a term he strongly emphasized as he dictated this text to the students, means "poor countries". Within Senegal, he continued, the cities of Dakar, Thies, and Kaolack house the majority of this young population.

At this point, he broke with his dictation to ask the students why there are more young people (*jeunes*) in these three cities [which are the largest and most populous cities in the country—though Dakar is the only one that lies on the Atlantic coast]. Answering his own question, he told the students that all the youth come to Dakar, because they are looking for work, or hope to stay here for awhile before continuing on to Europe. A few days later, in a formal interview, this geography teacher told me of his own desire to continue his studies in Europe at the doctorate level. So far, his applications to various programs had not produced any results. But regarding the spate of undocumented migrants seeking entrance to Spain via the sea, he said; that's a death wish. Even if he was offered a free place in one of the boats, he would not take it.

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<sup>155</sup> *Qu'il conforte... les jeunes dans leur foi pour qu'ils puissent accepter d'être patient, accepter d'être persévérants, accepter de se battre...*

He would love to leave and go to Europe or the U.S., Mr. D. continued, but if he could stay here and make a living and be successful, he would prefer it. “What would I do abroad, anyway?” he wondered aloud to me. He doesn’t speak English, and in France perhaps the only job open to him would be teaching, he remarked. Many of his friends have immigrated abroad, although not in such a dangerous way as those in the boats. Perhaps, he concluded, leaving Senegal is not in the cards for him.

In a discussion with Seydatou and Mariama, the female instructors at the Franco-Arabe school in 2006, it was revealed that Mariama had several young male relatives who had tried to enter Spain through the Canary Islands, but they were detained and eventually repatriated. It is much easier to get in if one has relatives in Spain, Seydatou remarked, and the Spaniards in the Canary Islands needed Africans to help out with the difficult and fatiguing farm labor that they didn’t want to do. Now, with so many boats going, it was not as easy to arrive and enter the Canaries successfully. There are many poorly equipped boats with less professional and knowledgeable guides, she added. The trip was a scary one, too. Not only did boat stores of food and water often run out, but mysterious things would happen at night. She had heard reports of ghosts and people, even babies, emerging from the sea and trying to enter the boat.

Mariama’s relatives had paid their guides between 300,000 and 400,000 FCFA for the cost of their passage. What a waste, both women remarked. Seydatou offered that it was better to stay in Senegal and wait for a more sure and legal way of entry. Moreover, one could do a lot with the money that one paid a guide. She suggested that if the potential immigrants put their money together and invested in a project of some sort, that it could be quite fruitful. It’s hard,



however, she acknowledged, keeping saved money in Senegal saved. There are so many needs that present themselves and eat quickly into one's savings, she said.<sup>156</sup>

In her comments, Seydatou alludes to what was, in large part, the cause of a gradual reduction in attempted boat trips to the Canaries as 2006 wore on, and, in particular, and more acute slowing in 2007. One on hand, there was considerable political and legal pressure put forth by the Spanish and Senegalese states to stop the boat trips, to be sure. Local state methods focused, on one hand, on the arresting and prosecuting of the *coxeurs*, or smuggler-guides, prior to disembarkation, rather than the attempted travelers. They also included explicit (speeches, televised meetings, conferences, and task forces) as well as implicit projects designed to encourage youth to remain in Senegal. For example, an implicit message for youth to “stay put” was evident in an advertising campaign that was mounted in Dakar in late 2006 to promote the state's large infrastructure projects or *grand travaux*. The campaign featured teenagers of both sexes; Amina, a girl, and her male counterpart, Aziz. Billboards were erected and posters distributed around the city with the highway ramp logo, the two teenagers' pictures, and various statements about how the construction project will benefit these young citizens and improve their lives.

One of the posters featured Aziz's image with the following text and layout: in large letters at the top, the words “The state's large infrastructure project” and underneath, “Aziz is fifteen years old, and he sees his country change and modernize. He knows that soon, like you, he will benefit, from the modern infrastructures that will permit him to blossom. At home, in Senegal. Aziz believes in his chances for tomorrow. Aziz knows that his future is being built

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<sup>156</sup> See Shipton (1994) for a discussion of the social challenges of saving wealth in resource-strapped, extended family settings in the neighboring Gambia.

today.”<sup>157</sup> And, finally, at the bottom was printed, “My future is today”<sup>158</sup> in large letters, along with the project’s website address. Aside from its interesting emphasis on Senegal becoming and not already being modern, and the assumption that this is an unproblematic social good, the text implied that this development is occurring in Senegal as opposed to abroad, and that, like Aziz, the country’s youth should “believe” in the positive potential of their future lives, rather than being discouraged or pessimistic as so many of my interlocutors were. This campaign is clearly addressed at the phenomenon of undocumented boat migration to Spain, and to youths’ migrations abroad, more generally.

As 2006 drew to a close, further attempts at boat migration both decreased in Senegal and moved to other, less closely surveyed national shores as points of departure. I think that ultimately, the reason for the eventual decline in boat emigration attempts from Senegal was that the phenomenon could no longer support or replicate its initial success, as Seydatou alludes in her comments. As more and more boats landed over the course of that year, their visibility had increased and provoked ire from Spanish locals and the state, which then put pressure on the Senegalese state, which, in turn, put pressure on smugglers and coastal communities. Migrants were dying and being repatriated in the tens of thousands. Over time, this profoundly discouraged future attempts at a grassroots level. It would be foolish to suggest that a deep desire to leave Senegal no longer captivates many young people, but perhaps it has been reoriented toward somewhat less perilous methods.

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<sup>157</sup> *Aziz a 15 ans, il voit son pays changer et se moderniser. Il sait que bientôt il bénéficiera, comme vous, d’infrastructures modernes qui lui permettront d’être épanoui. Chez lui, au Sénégal. Aziz croit en ses chances pour demain. Aziz sait que son avenir se construit aujourd’hui.*

<sup>158</sup> *Mon futur, c’est aujourd’hui.*

### *Conclusion*

In his work on contemporary urban Senegalese sexuality, Biaya (2001) identifies the local term *góorgóorlu* as a signal to a perceived crisis of virility, given the increased number of female headed households and the pushing back of marrying age for men because they lack the necessary money to be a viable candidate and carry off the expensive wedding festivities. But if the last several decades of increased job competition, rising cost of living, little pro-poor economic growth, and social change in Senegal has made it difficult for men to “act like men”, as the literal translation of *góorgóorlu* goes, so, too, has it unsettled the order of things for women and for youth of both genders. It is readily apparent that the politics of making do in contemporary Senegal compel scholars to look critically at gender, but it is ultimately more revealing to look at the way in which ideas and practices of *góorgóorluisme* engage with what are even larger transformations in social systems and ways of being.

In many ways, the creative cognition that managing and getting by entails—thinking outside the box—is the complete opposite of the rote learning that is stressed in both Islamic and secular schools in Senegal, to varying degrees. But it would be unfair and too simplistic to conclude my analysis there, for improvisation is not external to or entirely antithetical to education in Senegal. As I have tried to illustrate here, public institutions like schools are importantly effected by and affect the larger socio-economic and political worlds in which they are situated. *Góorgóorluisme* is a lens through which young people in Senegal evaluate the value of attending state secular schools as well as a kind of organization logic through which these institutions are able to share knowledge and dispense diplomas. Likewise, the economic vicissitudes of the past several decades have meant that making do and managing have become entrenched modes of being for middle-class and working class families in a highly mediated environment in which images of the good life and conspicuous consumption circulate more

frequently and intensely than ever before. Hence, the importance for many to seeming (*paraître*), i.e. being able to carry off the appearance of wealth and distinction, even when material realities say otherwise.

The world of faith in Senegal is also not removed from the mundane realm of reputation, wealth, and ways of survival. It hasn't been for almost 100 years now, and some scholars may legitimately argue that it has never been. Essential religious knowledge continues to be valued, but the political and economic conditions under which Sufi Qur'anic schools of committed disciples were built and run are no longer. This has meant the emergence of a crisis of legitimacy—if not of relevance—for these *daaras*. Hybrid Franco-Arabe schools, which were first seen in the 1940s in the Western Sahel, are arguably an attempt to respond to this modern Islamic dilemma.

The following chapter will attempt to elucidate more fully movements of educational reform in contemporary Senegal in both private Islamic and state secular school systems. For if Franco-Arabe schools and Islamic institutes are supposed to be important sites for the development of modern Senegalese Muslims, in many ways they still rest on the margins and are confronted with considerable difficulties in their day-to-day operations, as we saw in Chapter Two. On the other hand, while the power and preeminence of state schools is continually insured by a global-local order promoting French-language literacy and knowledge as thing through the institution of the diploma, they have also seen their legitimacy decline as competition increases, unemployment remains high, and becoming a person of value—on new, more bourgeois terms—remains elusive for so many young people.

## CHAPTER 6

### SCHOOL REFORM, SOCIAL REFORM

In Chapters Two and Three, we saw how contemporary Islamic religious education and a system of secular state schools evolved out of pre-colonial and colonial political systems and social relations of power. In the case of older Islamic religious schools, called *daaras*, young men submitted to learned marabouts whose power and authority stemmed from the rareness, or special nature, of their magico-religious knowledge and blessings, or *baraka*, within the larger social milieu. In so doing, these young disciples were to learn the kinds of knowledge that would be essential to them in the practice of their religion. Moreover, students would also undergo the socialization that would allow them to become adult men who were considered respectable and of value in their communities. In fact, in the philosophy of the time, any distinction between these two aspects of the *daara* learning would be considered artificial, for they were taken to be one and the same in the local Islamic epistemology.

As such, for the older Diallobé (Haalpulaar) men in Cheikh Amidou Kane's landmark novel *L'aventure ambiguë*, the advent of French colonial schools meant a reorientation of education away from what historian Louis Brenner (2001: 18) calls the "esoteric episteme" towards the more practical, earthly dimensions of modern life. This meant, as Kane writes, learning "to join wood to wood" (*lier le bois au bois*) in a way that was wholly divorced from the sacred and the divine. This was a new atmosphere of foreign domination, in which labor was reorganized into a commodity that could be bought and sold for a price. The fruits of one's labor became discrete goods that were measured and valued on a universal scale of monetary currency,

to be sent away in large quantities to unknown markets and unknown persons in the metropole and beyond. Here, this currency, this cash, also became increasingly important to everyday life, serving to buy the items that one needed to survive and other things, which, while not exactly necessary for survival, seemed just as essential to people as those basic goods.

It was in this new world that secular colonial schools were founded, progressively growing in size and reach, and the hybrid Franco-Arabe day school was imagined and put in place. Brenner (2001: 18) argues that “the discursive practices and forms of power relations which gave birth to the secular schools also made possible the emergence of *médersas*.” As previously indicated, *médersa* (from the Arabic *madrasa*, sing., *madaris*, pl. for school) is a term used in Malian contexts which is largely commensurate with the Franco-Arabe schools of Senegal. This modern episteme, which we can understand as the dominant ways of doing and being under modernity, continues to shape how the ideological precepts of knowledge and schooling are understood and worked upon by a wide range of people and institutions in Senegal on an everyday basis.

In the following chapter, I examine this present-day nature of the relationship between Islamic and secular schooling in Senegal. How do the discursive practices and new forms of power relations under capitalist democracy in which local livelihoods are now linked to global flows of goods, services, and ideas influence this relationship? How in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, decades after the advent of these new scholastic institutions, are they conceived of and valued by Senegalese people, young and old? On what basis and with what goals in mind do people engage with and work upon these institutions?

I suggest that an exploration of these issues reveals important information about how the state and other institutions exercise power in contemporary Senegal and the ways in which young people interact with these forces and spheres of political, economic, social and cultural influence

in their quest to become persons of value. These youths' interactions take various forms, the following of which I will examine in this chapter; listening to rap and hip-hop and cultivating associated bodily and sartorial styles, student strikes at public secular schools, and qualified participation in state-sponsored reform projects and new educational initiatives that seek to modify the place of Islamic schooling relative to public secular schools. These are all diverse and divergent forms of public culture and political dissent, through which, along with the polysemic making do practices that we explored in the last chapter, Senegalese actors try to bridge the gaps between ambition and opportunity and respond to the ambivalent status of school knowledge and credentials in the contemporary moment.

### *Youth, Citizenship, and Personhood*

When it comes to this totalizing term of “youth” (*la jeunesse, les jeunes*), which emerges often in public discourse, used particularly by state actors and state-supervised media sources like the Soleil newspaper and the main RTS TV channel, Senegalese young people are understood through two binary, and ultimately contradictory tropes (Biaya 2000). These are that of the dangerous delinquent or rebel in need of control and surveillance and someone society needs protecting from, on the one hand, and, on the other, the bright, promising future of the nation (*le fer de la lance de la nation*), our innocent and unsullied “tomorrow” (*sunu ëllëg* in Wolof), and that which society needs to protect. T.K. Biaya locates the latter in the discourse of modern NGOs and international organizations as well as antecedent colonial rhetoric and policies, which, he argues, draw on largely bourgeois understandings of childhood that construct youths as fragile beings to protect.

Over the past centuries' moments of colonial rule, international travel and emigration, and increasingly rapid and easily-accessible flows of culture in media, Senegalese notions of children,

youth, and more generally, life-stages, have been influenced by Western notions of age and the person (themselves continuously in flux and non-monolithic) and have thus changed. However, Senegalese understandings of personhood have not become carbon-copies of the West. They continue to be marked, on a popular or non-judicial level, by an orientation towards responsibilities rather than individual rights. Here, a person is understood and takes identity and purpose through their relationship to others within a hierarchy of salient ascribed or natural (e.g. biologized) characteristics that originate in domestic spaces and arrangements and are largely unchangeable by their bearer—gender, birth order, and age. In addition, a person is known and knows him or herself through so-called achieved or non-biological characteristics, such as the mastery of rarified religious knowledge by Islamic school pupils, a marabout's *baraka*, French literacy and the possession of particular diplomas by public school students, and the accumulation of monetary wealth, just to name a few.

We learned this, along with the students, in the latter half of Chapter Two through the explicit and oft-repeated messages about the good and bad qualities of the Muslim person in the u13 Franco-Arabe school and the body hexis of submission that the school space and its staff cultivated. We also witnessed it in Chapter Four in the personal stories of the students at the public junior high school in Parcelles as they, their parents, and their siblings struggled with divergent understandings of success in a difficult urban environment. In Chapter Five I suggested that these pupils' dilemmas around everyday survival, personal achievement, and family responsibility signal an array of tensions around the ways in which these biologized and non-biologized aspects of inequality and identification intertwine and reinforce each other.

Within these larger cultural notions of the person across the life span, young people in Senegal are understood in particular through idioms of production and reproduction. Production—or work—in Senegalese societies is not seen as an exclusively adult endeavor or



domain. The extent to which children, or minors, are expected and made to work<sup>159</sup> is influenced by class and gender ideology, for children in working-class and lower-middle class families generally work more and at an earlier age than their wealthier counterparts (in some cases leaving or forgoing school in order to do so). In Chapters Four and Five, Pierre, Omar, and Adama all express, each in different ways, their hesitations about continuing on in school and their desire to land a paying job. These ambitions were, on one hand, a response to the kinds of economic pressures of their living situations in Parcelles among extended family and immobilized, or absent, parents. They also represent a way for each of the boys to realize masculine selfhood, a deeply felt and culturally-constructed understanding of who they are and hope to be that is more than simply the immediate effects of any family economic pressures.

Education, and the school as an institution, represents an important point at which these tropes of national promise and productive young citizenry, on one hand, and social danger or delinquency, on the other, intersect. While those who have forsaken school for the sandy streets and alleyways of Dakar are easy symbols of youthful delinquency, actively enrolled students who question the status quo are also targets of this charge. The primary way by which students do this in Senegal is through the organization of and participation in strikes, typically at the university level, but also in public high schools and middle schools. Below I would like explore this issue by first looking at music as a forum in which young people voice dissent, and, secondly, by

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<sup>159</sup> Here I use work as a broad category to indicate wage and non-wage (domestic, agricultural, and apprenticeship-based) work in, around, and outside the home. In a short article on children's work at the Dakar Tilene Market (mistakenly referred to as Teline), in the close-in neighborhood of Medina (which in the colonial era was the "native" quarters in relation to the white and Lebanese "Plateau" city center), Loretta Bass (1996) argues for the significance of age in social analysis, suggesting that if we consider children as a stratum within an age hierarchy framework, we better see "how socially constructed age influences children's workplace position, earning power, and overall life experiences." "Working children in Senegal have limited life choices because of their low status as children....I found that a child working for several years as an apprentice to a tailor continued to hold the lowest status even when novices of older age status entered the workshop," she continues. Bass makes the important corollary point that social arrangements and lived experiences reflecting age-based hierarchies are also affected by ideologies of gender inequality that put girls in "weaker" positions relative to boys in and out of the home.

recounting a particularly long and violent series of strikes over the winter and spring of 2005-2006.

### *Music and Social Critique*

One afternoon, over the course of a formal interview, I asked Mr. D., the young History-Geography teacher at Parcelles Junior High, what he thought about his students' future. He replied that he thought it was dark (*sombre*; a word other teachers there also used as a response to this question) for many of them. He added that the students had "the will", (*la volonté*), but not "the means" (*les moyens*). The majority of them, he told me assuredly, will not go on past their studies here at the junior high. In two years, the students of the 5<sup>e</sup> class would be due to take the B.F.E.M., which marks the conclusion of middle school studies and facilitates entrance into high school. Nationally, the passing rate hovers at around 30%. At this school, however, only ¼ of the students will pass, while another ¼ will repeat the year again, and about half will drop out, he said. Their future is not bright, he repeated again.

*Here it's sad and very dark...we've had to resort to using flashlights...a lot of vices...if you're not careful, you're gonna alert the police...get hauled off and charged in court...the state is complicit...we don't need to demonstrate our needs to you...you've seen them...help, blood's running, malaria's killing...what goes on in the suburbs is shocking..neither help, nor sacrifices...aren't we part of Senegal?...for those who don't have a voice, I speak for them...hit the brakes and get out of your Peugeot 406s...you've seen the kids just bumming around...when they grow up, they'll be muggers and thieves if they don't have anywhere else to go...working out, buffed up, they'll have the courage to attack, revolt, to take anyone on, young or old.<sup>160</sup>*

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<sup>160</sup> Fi dafa *triste* te lëndëm criis/dem nanu sax ba di ko niit/bare *vice*...bo deful ndank tarkiis ci loxo *police*/am tort ci kanam *justice/état* bi doon *complice*/sunu soxla, soxla wuñuñu leen koy tiis/yeen ko gënn gis/*au secours*, dërèt baa ngi tiis/sibiru baa ngi waañi bés/lu am ci *ghetto* bi dafa diis/du ndibaal, du *sacrifices*/xanaa ñun, bokkunu Senegal?/ñu amul baat lay waaxal/waacleen seen 406, *freinez*/gis ngeen xale yi di *trainer*/bu ñu magee ñooy *dégradés*/bu ñu amul fu ñu dem/*entraînés*, ceene, am fiit pour *dégené*/sës fiipu, *déconner* ci ku nekk ci magg, ci gunee. Note: Here, and in the song excerpts that follow in this chapter, the Wolof words are written in regular script and the French and English words are italicized.

Mr. D.'s assessment of his students' futures as unpromising and dark, on the whole, is powerfully echoed here in the lyrics of the song, *Ñaari kasso*, or *Two Prison Cells*, by the popular Senegalese hip-hop and rap artist Malal Talla, or Fou Malade, whose name in French essentially means "Crazy-Sick Guy". The song is from his 2005 début album, *Radio kankan*, which translates in French as *Radio trottoir*, or in English as *The Word on the Street* and was quite popular among teenagers and young adults throughout the country at the time of my fieldwork. Fou Malade began making music professionally after finding it difficult to fit in at the Université Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar, despite his family's long held desire that he become a journalist or administrator in the public service. He chose his stage name as a way to be unique and to highlight important matters such as mental illness<sup>161</sup> and poverty that are rarely spoken about in popular culture.

Here in *Ñaari kasso*, the subject of Fou Malade's commentary is not the mentally ill, but rather the poor residents of the urban suburbs, in particularly young people, for whom he wishes to advocate. In the above excerpt, the state and its elites are roundly critiqued for engaging in anti-democratic politics of self-interest and repression—the prison and state sanctioned modes of control are a frequent theme in his songs—and for neglecting people's basic needs. He tells these politicians to stop and get out of their cars; the comfortable Peugeot 406 sedan being the state's long-time vehicle and status symbol of choice. Images of the president and/or other state personnel zooming through dusty villages or concrete block suburbs in a fleet of 406s,<sup>162</sup> with

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<sup>161</sup> In a 2005 interview with a popular Senegalese magazine, *Thiof*, a lifestyle publication whose coverage generally focuses on the lives of the rich, famous, and beautiful (*thiof/coof*, the Wolof word for grouper, also means an attractive man in popular slang), Fou Malade argues that mentally ill persons are doubly sick, for not only are they afflicted with psychological problems and disorders, but they are typically rejected and abused by society.

<sup>162</sup> Displays of grandeur and wealth by political elites have been very important to the maintenance of political power in post-colonial Senegal, in this case by state actors, but equally so in the case of religious elites such as Mouride and Tijane *kalifas*. As many scholars, such as Jean-François Bayart (1989), Achille Mbembe (1992), and Michael Schatzberg (1993) have suggested, state authorities in postcolonial Africa have used accumulation (in the sense of things and persons that one "eats" and therefore masters and appropriates) and display of their

motorcycle police escorts, their lights flashing and sirens blaring, on either side, are shown several times a week on the midday and evening news programs of the national RTS channel, the most watched and widely available station in the country, and at the time of Fou Malade's song, the only channel with a local news broadcast.<sup>163</sup>

A few beats later in the song, which is sung in urban Wolof, and thus marked by frequent Wolof-French codeswitching and the self-conscious inclusion of several English words (such as *ghetto*, *jail*, *one love*, *freedom*), Fou Malade cautions the state authorities; "Don't take us for dough in the oven"<sup>164</sup>; e.g. as inert, malleable lumps. The imagery he uses in the song is explicitly dark as he evokes the blackness of the jail cell and the constraining force of its bars to talk about more than just prison as such. In this sense, he shares Foucault's concern with the state's disciplinary modes of control, as well as the ways in which mentally ill persons are subject to these normalizing forces as "anomalies" in the social body. Fou Malade's critique focuses particularly on the economic violence of the post-independence state, for as he then sings, "the ghetto [e.g. the suburbs like Parcelles, the poor sections of town] and prison, they're the same thing...to die from hunger or violence...to be subjected to the swings of the machete..."<sup>165</sup> His

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accumulations to testify to, and continually restate, their power. Here, power is not simply about material things, but about the structures of meaning in which such items become important signifiers that state actors and the public use and understand in their communications back and forth. Official ceremonial functions and rallies, where dignitaries arrive and return in the corteges of Peugeot 406s to which Fou Malade made allusion in his song can be key moments which show this state "corpulence". The state's affluence is emphasized to citizens in myriad small, everyday ways, particular through the use of television media.

<sup>163</sup> Recently, these French sedans have been replaced by American or Asian SUVs as mobile symbols of the state's wealth and authority. Following his visit to Senegal in July 2003, President Bush donated his large black tinted GMC Suburbans, which he had imported expressly for his use during his stay in Senegal, which lasted less than 12 hours, and in 2005, the Senegalese government gave luxury SUVs complete with leather and wood-paneled interiors and valued at over \$40,000 each to 120 ministers and national assembly members. Several months later, all the prefectures were given shiny silver 4x4 vehicles, and this "donation" was promptly shown on the RTS news with considerable fanfare. Yet the public typically received this news with indignation and frustration at the riches of the state when compared to their own modest lifestyles and everyday struggles to make ends meet. The purchase of the 120 SUVs was the subject of much derision in the private media (daily newspapers and radio). So, too, was Wade's decision to remodel the presidential airplane, the *Pointe de Sangomar* for 30 billion FCFA, or approximately \$60 million, in 2003 roundly criticized as just another vain and unnecessary discretionary expense.

<sup>164</sup> Jappul ñu mburu ci *four*.

<sup>165</sup> *Ghetto* bi, *jail* bi, kiif kiif/Di ci kiif walla siif dékku liif.

vision, however, also includes positive calls for change amid the shadowy images of violence and conflict. He implores his listeners; “son, we’ve got to be calm,”<sup>166</sup> (in the sense of being controlled in one’s actions and non-violent). The final lines of the song are an interesting juxtaposition of both the positive and critical; “It’s us and you (pl.), the fight (“combat”) will not end, one love, only peace, the ghetto equals prison, it will end, there will be freedom.”<sup>167</sup>

There is more to the connection between this song, which I’ve quoted here at length, and the Mr. D.’s concise assessment of his students than simply dark imagery. Mr. D.’s statement shocked me at the time, for while in my months at the junior high I had become accustomed to hearing teachers’ comments and complaints on the difficulty of teaching with little funds and few materials, I had never before heard such a frank and straightforwardly pessimistic summing up of the matter by one of the school personnel. Likewise, the rapper and hip-hop artist Fou Malade strongly critiques the state and established structures of power in a way that many of his fellow musicians in the Senegalese music industry do not. Though I would not suggest that the teachers in either the public junior high or the private Franco-Arabe school displayed overly positive attitudes, there does exist a real tension in the larger public discourse between frank, critical talk of the very real economic and social challenges Senegalese people face and a kind of downplayed, non-confrontational approaches to these issues that at its extreme ignores them completely and attempts to silence other voices.

This dynamic is not new to the Senegalese context. Rather it reflects long-standing tensions between speech, truth, and power in public and private Senegalese space. As linguist Judith Irvine suggests (1974), the ability to speak and the *choice* to abstain from speaking are closely related to subjectivity and age-based and gender-based authority in Wolof society. Elder,

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<sup>166</sup> *Fils*, “fokk” ñu giif.

<sup>167</sup> Nun la ak yeen, xeex bi du jeex/*one love*, jàmm kese/*ghetto* bi, jail bi, kiif kiif/dafay jeex, *freedom* dafay am.

male persons and their speech are privileged within a largely patriarchal and clientelistic society that is strongly influenced by the Sufi organizational motif and experience of master and submissive disciple. These are powers of speech which successive generations of Senegalese elites typically do not wish to see extended more democratically and widely in society. As suggests Harvard (2004), the *alternance*, or democratic regime change, that was ushered in with the 2000 elections benefitted profoundly from the gradual opening of speech freedoms and a more diverse press in their quest to gain political traction over decades of political opposition. However, once in power, the PDS party, in particular President Abdoulaye Wade, ushered in a new period of political control over media and a veritable “criminalization of democratic debate” (Harvard 2004:23) that sought to “shut up”, or *noppil*, speech by persons and organizations at a variety of levels (political parties and officers, media, and social movements such as student strikers) which were perceived as oppositional or challenging to their legitimacy. The gendered and aged based nature of discursive authority in Senegal also includes areas of private life which are not part of the public sphere.

In his detailed and compelling retracing of the history of post-independence urban music forms, Ndiouga Adrien Benga (2002) argues that there was hardly any tradition of protest music in Senegal before the advent of rap in the 1980s. Rather, most contemporary forms of popular Senegalese music, such as *mbalax*, Cuban-influenced styles, rock, folk, and various hybrid combinations thereof exhibit a laudatory quality in the deep-seated tradition of griots (*gɛwɛl* in Wolof, *gawlo* in Pulaar). These were the bards of pre-colonial caste society in Senegal among the Wolof, Pulaar, Serer and Mandinka. If contemporary Senegalese artists do engage with social and political problems in their songs, they typically do so in subtle and euphemistic ways—such as songs that wistfully narrate personal difficulties and tragedies—and generally abstain from very forceful criticism of particular persons in power.

For example, *Marchands ambulants*, or *Mobile Street Vendors*,<sup>168</sup> was one of the most popular mainstream Senegalese songs during my fieldwork tenure in 2005 and 2006. Its singer, Ndongo Lo, was a young man who had come from very humble circumstances in the Pikine suburb of Dakar. He had attained wide public acclaim in the early years of this decade before passing away in January 2005 from an undisclosed illness, just several weeks before I arrived in the field. The tragic nature of Lo's death for Senegalese music fans and the larger public—in that he was considered “taken from us all too soon”—no doubt resulted in an even greater popularity and emotional resonance of the song for local listeners as is often the case with musicians, actors, and other charismatic figures. In the song, which is dedicated to these least privileged members of the urban informal economy, the most critical moment comes when Lo sings, “for the love of God, pay attention to those who are powerless...”<sup>169</sup> Likewise, popular singer and sex symbol Viviane Ndour, ex-sister-in-law of the legendary Youssou Ndour, devoted a song on her 2003 album *Fii ak Fee (Here and There)* to Senegalese youths' desire to emigrate and the difficulty of obtaining visas. In the song she cautions, “A man shouldn't be behind bars...if you don't have anything, people don't respect you...”<sup>170</sup>

The verses in these songs, which adopt important social issues as their subject, largely narrate rather than commentate or critique. The songs ultimately end in a rather conciliatory manner. In *Marchands ambulants*, Lo sings, “hard work always pays off [a Wolof proverb]...I empathize with their [the vendors'] difficulties...sometimes you make sales, sometimes you don't.”<sup>171</sup> Ndour closes her song about the moral and social dilemmas of emigration with “here it's okay, there [Europe or the U.S.] it's okay, here it's difficult, there it's difficult...oh, the

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<sup>168</sup> From Lo's 2004 album title *Aduna*; “Life”.

<sup>169</sup> Ngir yalla, gëstuleen neewu doole yi.

<sup>170</sup> Doomu góor, caabi warul ko fetee ginaaw/soo amul dara/ñit ñi duñu la tegg fenn.

<sup>171</sup> Coono du reer boorum/ massa coono, leelee nga dem mu neex, leelee du neex.

immigrants...”<sup>172</sup> Moreover, the potential power of these songs’ lyrics is blunted by the highly rhythmic percussive beats that drive them, particularly those in the *mbalaax* and *mbalaax* fusion genres. The beat is an important aspect of music in Senegal that makes songs entertaining and danceable and therefore ultimately commercially successful—something to be enjoyed by young and old as they are played at tony downtown nightclubs and casinos, bare-bones suburban dance halls, and in the open air of wedding receptions and baptisms with their plastic lawn chairs and hired neighborhood DJs.

In recent years, a new genre of popular Sufi praise songs has emerged in Senegal that also draws from the griot tradition. The linguist Fiona McLaughlin (2000: 192) argues that these contemporary praise songs provide an important forum for discussion of Sufi leadership by upholding “an ideal of maraboutic behavior against which individuals can then be judged.” But in comparison to the direct style of locally produced rap and hip-hop, the praise song genre can seem rather mild. Like *mbalaax* and the Sufi praise songs, hip-hop music in Senegal is a commodity designed to appeal to the public and thus be exchanged in, or at the very least disseminated through, the channels of the capitalist market (here, the development of the RTS2S television station by the state, which largely broadcasts popular culture or lifestyle programming, has been very important to the youth in Dakar who received this signal, unlike their counterparts in the rest of the country, who did not). Certainly the young students of Parcelles Assainies and their peers, with whom the genre is immensely popular, relate to the rap artists as entertainers.

Yet there are significant differences between the songs’ content, musicality, and emotional registers that constitute an important change in the role of popular culture forms and young people in political and social discourse. The contrast between the lyrics I quoted above in the Lo and Ndour selections and those, for example, from a popular rap song of the same time

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<sup>172</sup> Fii baax na/fale baax na/fii jafe na, fale jafe na/*immigré* yi.



could not be more evident as the young artist Gaston sings in a collaboration with Fou Malade from 2004; “I’m letting out this anger that I’ve held in my heart for so long...what is Wade [e.g. President Abdoulaye Wade] waiting for to make public the secrets of the audit that tell the truth?... I’m gonna take the mike...I’m gonna erupt in the courtroom and piss on the penal code...I don’t give a damn about going to prison or the law.”<sup>173</sup> Offstage, I knew Gaston personally to be an unassuming and polite young man, whose modest height and stature was emphasized by his baggy clothes, but he and other artists of the hip-hop scene that has emerged in Dakar over the past decades, with the work of local pioneers like Didier DJ Awadi (who wrote and performed *Sunugaal* about boat migrants) and Duggy Tee of Positive Black Soul and the group Daara ji, have important critiques to make about power and resources in Senegalese society and in Africa, more broadly. Moreover, they do it forcefully and without euphemisms. As Benga (2002: 290) expresses, “it is with the advent of rap that the Senegalese public finds itself face to face with musicians who dare to tell the hardest parts of the truth.”<sup>174</sup>

It is important to note that the social critique in which Senegalese hip-hop artists engage in their music is not purely of their own invention. Rap music emerged in the United States in the 1970s among poor, urban youth and was subsequently taken up by young people across Europe, Africa, other parts of the world in the 1980s and 90s. Part of the music’s continuing attraction for youth in Senegal lies in those African-American origins and the mystique they held and still hold. Its appeal is also due to the fact that the rap genre in the United States, at least in its earlier, less-commercial forms, was strongly informed by the social realities and racial injustices of urban American streets. It was, as the socio-linguist Michelle Auzanneau (2001) writes, “a protest movement”, whose reading of historical injustice and solidarity struck a nerve

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<sup>173</sup> Merr gi ma yagg denc sama xool laay yootu/lu Wade di xar *pour* sulli mbootu *audit* bi.

<sup>174</sup> *C’est avec l’avènement du rap que le public sénégalais se trouve en face des musiciens qui font le pari de dire la réalité dans ce qu’elle a de plus dur.*

with young African youths at the time through the idea of a common origin—Africa—and common pains—colonization, slavery, and economic exploitation.

Senegalese artists (as well as their counterparts around the globe) often make nods to American hip-hop works of the past in present in their sartorial style, voicing, song content, and so on. As we saw in the Fou Malade excerpt, songs are typically sung in Wolof with liberal dosages of French and English terms within a grammatical structure that alternates between Wolof and French. Their codeswitching here reflects the everyday language habits of many young people in the city, in which French and English are used both unconsciously (as it has become *de rigueur* in certain contexts) and self-consciously to signal status and cosmopolitanism. Still, the most commercially successful and respected hip-hop musicians in Senegal, most of whom are male, do not simply ape the look and sound of their American counterparts. Rather, I would argue that what ultimately has made rap and hip-hop so popular among young people in Senegal is that artists have made the genre into their own, and as a result, produced music that in its creativity, hybridity, and unflinching engagement with issues of local social and political importance is a critical site of and force for the construction of cosmopolitan and modern urban Senegalese identities. Moreover, whereas the most-commercially successful rap and hip-hop in the United States has long-ago left behind critiques of power and injustice, the “protest movement” aspect of Senegalese rap remains at the heart of the genre and provides a key organizing point or narrative element out of which the music continues to foment creatively and in locally-salient ways that also enjoy success on the marketplace.

West African reggae, which, like rap, has its origins outside of the continent, joins the rap and hip-hop genres in their critique of power in postcolonial Africa. The Ivorian reggae artist and exile Tiken Jah Fakoly, a very popular musician in Senegal, was banned from reentering the country after making critical remarks about then-President Abdoulaye Wade in Dakar in

December 2007. Fakoly's song titles and lyrics include topics such as Pan-Africanism, social justice, racism, violence, the corruption and inefficacy of African political elites and states (the "*Mangercratie*" or "Eatocracy"), colonial exploitation, and xenophobia and alienation experienced by Africans living abroad.

### *Student Strikes*

When the strike first began at Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar (UCAD), it was hardly the first in its history, and would certainly not be the last. This time it started with a worm that was discovered in someone's dinner at the *Argentin* campus restaurant, or "resto", as one would say in casual or slang terms. The next day, a Friday in mid-February 2006 that would be written up in the newspapers as "the day the university burned" and "a Friday of rage", a group of students raided the freezers of the *Argentin* and another restaurant and discovered cases of spoiled meat and fish past their expiration dates. To be sure, university students in Senegal have long considered the *resto* meals unappetizing and even unsafe to eat, and suffer often from gastrointestinal troubles after eating there. When I was a student at the Université de Saint-Louis during the 1999-2000 academic year, exactly ten years after this second national university was founded, students would often try to obtain a pass that would allow them to eat at the *resto medical*, a special cafeteria for ill students, whose food, although still rather bad, was considered safer and of better quality. Yet only so many perfectly healthy students were able to cheat the system and obtain such a pass, so they continued to eat at the general *restos* both there and in Dakar en masse, because the *resto* meals are subsidized by the university and therefore less expensive than any other possible dining option. Lunch and dinner meal tickets cost less than 200 FCFA each, a sum with which one can barely buy a piece of baguette and two eggs to fry up over a hot plate in one's dorm room, much less dine at campus canteen or non-subsidized

restaurant. Most students who live on campus and are perpetually on a budget could not afford to eat each day if they did not patronize the *restos*.

Now in anger over the indignity of their situation and what they viewed as the university's negligence and the state's utter indifference, the students emptied the cases of spoiled meat on the ground in front of the COUD, the equivalent of an American university's Residential Life Office, as a defiant act of protest. Others took the cardboard boxes to the Avenue Cheikh Anta Diop just outside the university gates, where they spilled more of the inedible contents onto the pavement for the entire city to see. The images of the spilled bits and pieces of meat would run on the news for several days, which was surprising, as the RTS news rarely shows anything that would portray the state and its institutions in an unfavorable light. The students then blocked off the street with stones and large rocks and set tires afire, a tactic student strikers commonly employ to effectively block traffic on a significant portion of Avenue Cheikh Anta Diop, one of Dakar's main thoroughfares which helps to connect the V.D.N. highway to the downtown, as well as many of the nearby SICAP neighborhoods<sup>175</sup>, a largely upper middle-class area. While the strike had broad support among the student body, the students who were physically involved in these acts were almost all male students.

On this occasion, as they had in the past, the police and gendarme/GMI (National Guard) forces that were called to campus to respond to the situation did so in aggressive fashion, beating students and arresting them indiscriminately an effort to put down the students' rebellion. This time these police also entered the residential campus area where many scared students who did not seek to be involved sought refuge in their rooms. The condition of these rooms at the

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<sup>175</sup> Though this strike broke out rather suddenly in response to the discovery at the *resto* the previous day, strike days are often scheduled such that students will declare a 48 or 72 hour strike period in advance and on renewable basis on the condition that their demands are not met. In these cases, commuters know to avoid this route and to take a detour, but such efforts create traffic hams and make commuting by public transportation, which is always a tiring exercise, and even more difficult undertaking.

University of Dakar—an institution in which a significant portion of the student body also commutes each day from their parents or extended relatives' homes in the *banlieue*—contrasts strongly with the comfortable and clean lodgings of the Université Gaston Berger of Saint-Louis (UGB) 160 miles to the north, where the vast majority of students live at the sandy hinterland campus about 9 miles from the town's center. At UCAD, international students and Senegalese students hailing from outside the Cap Vert peninsula who are unable arrange accommodations with extended relatives living in the city live clandestinely 4, 5, 6 students or even more to rooms that were originally designed to house only 2 or 3 people. In the aftermath of the February strikes, local newsmagazine *Nouvel Horizon* estimated that 20,000 students were residing in quarters designed to house only 5, 200 students (Thiobane 2006). While the dormitory toilets are typically kept clean and sanitary and the gardens well tended and watered by the Residential Life staff at UGB Saint-Louis (the CROUS), the common bathrooms at UCAD, tended to by the COUD, are perpetually dirty and smelly in contrast, with broken faucets and little or no water available.

As I try here to evoke the living conditions on campus—a kind of chronic hardship that wears on students in little ways each day and can evoke flare-ups of discontentment and frustration—I glance at a photo of Amadou, a “little brother” of mine and a member of my extended family, who, along with another university student, lived with me at my apartment in the middle-class neighborhood of Cité des Impôts et Domaines while I was conducting my dissertation research. The photo shows him, a one-time student at the UCAD School of Law, together with his roommates—all 9 of them—at the Pavilion A dormitory. One of the oldest and most run-down dorms on the university campus, Amadou went to live in Pavilion A, which is all-male, in the fall of 2007 after I returned to the United States. In the photo, the group of young men sits together on an old sponge mattress that they have placed on the dusty tile floor of the

covered balcony that runs along the length of the building on each floor. In the inscription on the back, Amadou writes that they jokingly call their room “Fox River”, after the popular American TV series “Prison Break”, which was also broadcast, dubbed in French, on Senegalese TV and watched religiously by many young people. Fox River refers to the fictional locale of the Fox River State Penitentiary, the main setting of Prison Break’s first season and the place where one of the drama’s main protagonists, a man falsely accused of the vice-president’s murder, is incarcerated. In the show, his brother covertly gains access to the prison, and together they and a band of six other prisoners known as “the Fox River Eight” are eventually able to escape.

In the photo, most of these UCAD students appear casually dressed in jeans and T-shirts or cotton undershirts. Some wear button-down broadcloth shirts and slacks. Several lounge in their bare feet and one wears canvas basketball shoes. A single leather sandal, a pointed *babouche* slipper, and a grey metal crutch, the kind used by handicapped persons, all lie scattered haphazardly on the tile floor around them. One student sits on the window sill, his legs leaning over the wall behind the backs of the boys clustered on the mattress. With the window open, its large colonial-style shutters on each side, one can see the few personal effects inside in an open wooden cupboard that is mounted on the wall. Unlike American dorm rooms, full to bursting with mini-fridges, TVs, microwaves, and the many “essential” personal effects of just two or three students, Senegalese dorm rooms contain little for the number of students they house—usually a few piles of dusty notebooks, some toiletries and school supplies, old sponge mattresses, a small butane tank, a teapot for hot beverages, and a frying pan to make omelets in place of a missed meal or as a late-night snack. It was in crowded rooms like “Fox River” that the GMI forces entered that day, discharging tear gas, overturning desks and rickety old chairs, yanking mattresses from the floor, scattering papers everywhere and breaking things.

Residents of Dakar are used to student strikes, and while some tend to criticize strikers and university students as spoiled and childish troublemakers, the disproportionate level of violence used by the police in this February 2006 strike prompted many of the city's residents to take the students' side. Following that Friday's violence, the COUD publicly reported that more than 100 students sought medical treatment at the official Student Health Services Office (and many more sought treatment at home, one would expect). Four students had injuries severe enough to necessitate transport to local hospitals and another who had to be evacuated to France for treatment. The GMI forces remained stationed on campus for several days afterwards. As is common, student groups at UGB Saint-Louis also went on strike in solidarity with their Dakar brethren the next week, and, as is less typical, so did high school and junior high school students around the country, including the students at public junior high in Parcelles where I was shadowing the 5<sup>e</sup> class. While the younger students did not strike for long, the university students were on strike for many weeks before they finally accepted to resume classes, the medical and pharmacy schools relenting first and students in the Faculté de Lettres bringing up the rear.

As I have alluded here, school strikes are a chronic occurrence in Senegal, so much so that several undergraduate and masters' theses have been written on this subject in addition to being the subject of much journalistic and popular attention. In 1999-2000, when I was a student at UGB Saint-Louis, the university school year, which normally commences in November, had its start delayed until after the second round of presidential elections in April. At issue was the renewal of the university president's contract, the fairness of disciplinary action taken after a verbal confrontation between some students and a professor, and the perennial problem of resources—human, pedagogical, and infrastructural. Additional points of contention prompting past strikes also include non-payment or tardy payment of students' scholarships, which

happened to Amadou and many other of his classmates for several months in 2006, for example. For many university students, these partial or full scholarships represent the only funds available to them for transportation, lodging, meals, and school supplies. Therefore, when funds are late or unavailable, this can cause students serious hardships. The problem of resources and infrastructure has gotten progressively worse as university enrollment has increased dramatically, in particular since the election of Wade in April 2000.

The fact that strikes (some by faculty and staff, others by students) occur numerous times each year in Senegal leads to their normalization. Rather than representing out-of-the ordinary events in the lives of Senegalese students and professors, they have seemed to blur together in recent years, forming a kind of continuum, remarkable or memorable only when they are particularly violent, contentious, or long. The first major student strikes of the postcolonial era came occurred in May 1968 when the Senghor government proposed cutbacks in student scholarships (following violent student and worker protests in France that eventually comprised 9 million strikers and linked to the emergence of progressive social movements and dissent worldwide). Students also staged protests in the early 1970s when Omar Blondin Diop, a student who had been involved in the 1968 movement, was jailed and where he subsequently died, two years later, allegedly by suicide. On the whole, the student movement during this time suffered from internal political divisions and was limited in its ability to mobilize large sectors of young people beyond school walls (Bianchini 2002). The 1980s saw a real increase in contestation between the state and educational sector actors relative to the previous decade. With the 1988 elections, students mounted vociferous protests against President-Reelect Abdou Diouf and the longtime Socialist regime which resulted in an “*année blanche*”, invalidating any school work and school results for the entire year. For Pascal Bianchini, the level of discord that characterized student protests of '88 was the highest since 1968. The *année blanche* phenomenon was repeated



again in 1994. 2001 saw the death of a student, Balla Gaye, as a result of strike violence at UCAD.

Writing his DEA thesis (a level of study between a master's and a Ph.D. in which a significant independent research project is undertaken) in 2004, UCAD student Adama Mbaye (2004: 13-14) suggests that the University of Dakar has been subject to such “cyclical destabilizing turbulences” for the past fifteen years, turning it into a theater of violence in which the force of reason has given way to the reason, or rightness, of force. Here, Mbaye offers some simple, yet cogent hypotheses: (1) that these moments of violence at the university can be understood as the result of feelings of dissatisfaction, injustice, anxiety, and fear of failure on the part of student; (2) that the “chancy” professional gains university diplomas afford have undermined the university's mission as well as the status of being a student, causing young people profound worries about their future; and (3) that the general socio-political environment of the moment, marked by moments of violence, has importantly influenced the mode of social relations on campus.

On this last point, Mbaye's examination of campus violence as it relates to the larger milieu in which public educational institutions are located resonates with Marcel Mendy's (2006) critical oeuvre in which the Senegalese journalist chronicles diverse instances of political violence in the nation from independence to the early years of this decade. The book was published and promoted during a time in which the Wade regime baldly attacked the free speech rights of many political rivals, journalists, and media companies, jailing opposition leaders and reporters, raiding newspapers offices, and banning books.<sup>176</sup> In it, Mendy charges that violence,

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<sup>176</sup> Journalist Abdou Latif Coulibaly's (of the Sud Press Group) book *Senegal, Affair Me Sèye, un meurtre sur commande* or *The Seye Esq. Affaire in Senegal : A Murder for Hire*, published in December 2005 by Harmattan Press was “informally banned” after selling its first copies. The importation of any additional copies was forbidden and copies found in the bags of travelers promptly seized by Senegalese customs (Ghorbal 2006). In it, Coulibaly

a polysemic concept, is part and parcel of political life in Senegal, intimately implicated in its birth as a nation and inscribed and reinscribed in its political morals in the years since. Of course, violence in many forms was an important part of the establishment and maintenance of foreign domination during the colonial period. Likewise, in the formation of independent African states which followed, power was the defining quality of the state and state authorities and concentrated in the hands of the executive or *chef d'état*.

For the sake of this chapter's focus, I do not wish here to go into a detailed examination of the history of modes of violence and domination on the continent. My point here, corollary to Mendy's thesis, is this; Senegal is often lauded—both at home and abroad—as one of the few stable multiparty democracies, a country of “*teranga*”<sup>177</sup>, or hospitality, in which religious or ethnic affiliation is not a source of political mobilization or deep social tension. However, these notions mask the fact that Senegalese state exercises a predatory power on its citizenry. One might argue that the state, well aware of its relatively good reputation abroad, uses this reputation to aid in hiding, or perhaps diverting attention from, the abuses in civil liberties it perpetrates on its citizens, the ways in which laws are bent and institutions are manipulated to effect short-term political gains or line someone's pockets.

This predatory power was precisely the reason that high school students at Lycée Djignabo in Ziguinchor went on strike in December 2005, just two months before the big February strike of 2006. A school in France had made a charitable donation of some computer and audio-visual equipment to the public high school. Before it could be delivered, it was confiscated in Senegalese customs and resold by the government. In the strike, students

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suggests that Wade and his wife, Viviane, hired several hit men to assassinate Babacar Sèye, a high judge who had ruled in favor of Wade's Socialist rival and incumbent Abdou Diouf, following the hotly contested 1993 presidential elections. Sèye was murdered on May 15, 1993, just one day after the legislative election results were released.

<sup>177</sup> The Senegalese national soccer team, the Lions, distinguishes itself from the Lions of Cameroon by employing the notion of warm and welcoming hospitality as a national value. The Cameroonian soccer team is called the Indomitable Lions and the Senegalese team, the Lions of *Teranga*.

overturned cars and set them afire, and several businesses and gas stations were damaged, which prompted the arrival of the police. In one of the Dakar dailies, the students, who were reported to number in the thousands (this is a gross overestimation, I think) were characterized as “gangsters” who “sowed terror in the city”. Back in Dakar, university students went on strike in a gesture of support for the Ziguinchor high schoolers, blocking off Avenue Cheikh Anta Diop for several days. Police detained numerous students in the back of their police trucks. There, police kept the students confined and beat them repeatedly until late evening when they opted to release them, reported a friend of mine who was one of these detainees. That same month, high school students struck in Tambacounda, a town in eastern Senegal on the railway line to Mali. Fleeing police tear gas bombs downtown, several students saw their actions lead to the death of a 4 year old boy, who was crushed by a falling piece of furniture they had knocked over in their haste.

The events that transpired in February on the UCAD campus, then, were not isolated events, but rather came out of an atmosphere in which, for years, strikes had been the only conceivable resource in order to contest the status quo. Moreover, they emerged at the tail end of a winter that had been particularly “hot” in local slang parlance (*chaud*; French or *tang*; Wolof), meaning it had seen a high level of social tension and political contestation. Not only had there been several violent student strikes in cities around the countryside, but in December, Wade’s PDS (Parti Démocratique Sénégalais) members of the General Assembly succeeded, after many months of rumor and discussion, in passing a law to extend the terms of *députés* (representatives) from 2006, when they were due to expire, to 2007 in order to coincide with the presidential election that year. The government declared that the impetus for the law was simply to save resources and money by coupling the elections. For the opposition, however, it was a kind of stalling tactic on the part of the PDS in order to illegally hold on to their power for another year.

This constitutional-level amendment, which opposition members nicknamed “*la loi de la honte*”, or law of shame, was the subject of angry, passionate debate by citizens and politicians alike around town and over private radio airwaves for weeks well into the new year.

The abnormally high level of violence on campus that February the 17<sup>th</sup> was just one facet of the state’s response to student unrest. The talk that followed was an equally important tool of the state in defending its actions and discrediting those who would challenge its authority. Abdoulaye Wade, himself, was abroad when the violence broke out. He did not return from Paris until the following Tuesday, at which time he promptly held a televised press conference at the airport’s *salon d’honneur* that was televised in its entirety and rebroadcast several times again over the next few days. Visibly irritated, Wade brushed aside many of students’ complaints about their learning and living environments, recalling, almost proudly, days past when he himself was a young student in France and he and his peers had found cockroaches in their food. He then suggested that he understood students’ frustration, but cautioned his television audience that striking wasn’t the way for students to go about getting what they sought. He implored young people to study—not to strike—suggesting that there was much work that that the country needed to do in order to develop and catch-up, as it were, with regard to the Western world. Here he used the phrase “the whites” or *les blancs*, to reference the West, which was not unheard of for Wade but a little out of the ordinary in its bluntness.

To this effect I include here direct quotes from Wade’s speech that day as published in the press:

Whatever is going on, I ask them [students] to study. If one seeks knowledge, one must be ready make sacrifices, to work day and night. What whites are able to accomplish in two days, they must be able to accomplish in half a day. One cannot work less than whites and expect to receive the same degrees that they do...that’s impossible...I want them [Senegalese students] to realize that if Senegal is to develop itself, that it will do so through young people. The same with Africa as a whole. They must be conscious of

their responsibilities in this country and toward the continent, more generally. We expect more from them than strikes, than broken computers (Faye 2006).<sup>178</sup>

This last statement is a reference to the students' computers that were broken in the melee when GMI forces entered the UCAD residential campus. The state took pains to announce the establishment of a commission with which students could file for reimbursement of medical expenses and property damage, which had been demanded by student groups. All the while, state leaders defended their forced entrance into the residential campus and the students' quarters. Wade was reported to have visited those students whose injuries were particularly serious. And for the young man who needed medical evacuation to France, it was reported several days later in the press that the Senegalese government contributed roughly \$100,000 (or 50 million FCFA) to offset his medical costs.

What was particularly notable about Wade's statements that day, however, which he repeated in various forms over the days and weeks that followed, is the fact that he accused Senegalese opposition leaders of inciting the strikes in order to destabilize his government, and, most extraordinarily, political leaders of other African countries, as well. "Information indicates that there are people who are jealous of Senegal because we are more advanced than they are and they will never regain our level. They trying to sabotage us,"<sup>179</sup> (Faye 2006). In the days and weeks to come Wade would clarify his statements on this matter, no longer implying, but rather openly declaring that Laurent Gbagbo was part of this foreign contingent—"a foreign hand" in Wade's words—that was utilizing local opposition leaders and young people in order to trouble

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<sup>178</sup> *Quoiqu'il en soit, je leur demande d'étudier. Si on cherche à avoir des connaissances, on doit faire des sacrifices, travailler nuit et jour. Ce que les blancs font en deux jours, ils doivent pouvoir le faire en une demie-journée [sic]. On ne peut travailler moins que les blancs et vouloir avoir les mêmes diplômes qu'eux, ce n'est pas possible....Je veux qu'ils prennent conscience que si le Sénégal doit se développer, cela passe par les jeunes. L'Afrique de même. Ils doivent être conscients de leurs responsabilités dans ce pays et envers le continent de façon générale. On attend d'eux autre chose plutôt qu'on est en grève, qu'on a cassé des ordinateurs.*

<sup>179</sup> *Il y a des renseignements qui m'indiquent qu'il y a des gens qui sont jaloux du Sénégal parce qu'on est beaucoup en avance et qu'ils ne vont plus revenir à notre niveau. Il cherche [sic] à nous saboter.*

the Senegalese political scene and the stability of Wade's regime.<sup>180</sup> Gbagbo, then president of the Ivory Coast, was, at the time, someone whom Wade disliked personally and with whom he competed with for influence and status on the larger West African political scene (where Wade fancied himself a great mediator and someone upon whom the West relied). The irony of Wade's remarks about Gbagbo is that the support of young students, fed up and disillusioned with the corruption and inefficacy of the ruling Socialist, was critical to his own election as president. The campus had been a major arena on which those sentiments played out publicly over the years.

Moreover, Wade's statements at this press conference contradicted themselves and did not ring true with what people experienced on the ground in their interactions with the government. In his February 21<sup>st</sup> speech, Wade tried to sympathize with students at one point, suggesting he understood their frustration. Then in the next moment, he proudly declares, "What we do in the field of education, Senegal is the only country in the world to do it," (Faye 2006).<sup>181</sup> Wade also then avowed, "Personally, I support [people] making demands because that is what makes a country run. I accept these demands for I am not supposed to be aware of everything."<sup>182</sup> Yet this does not fit with the regimes' increasingly hostile attitude towards any speech critical of the government in 2005 (with the search and seizure of the *Sud Quotidien* newspaper office and imprisonment of some of its staff) and 2006 (with the jailing of political leaders Ibrahima Sène of the PIT and Jean-Paul Dias of the BGC). Nor does it *rime* (Fr.), or jive, with Wade's criticism just six months later, that "... all countries have problems, but in Senegal,

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<sup>180</sup> In Paris to celebration the publication of a book on his economic policies and philosophies, Wade made the following statement during a press conference: "...I told him [Gbagbo] to stop financing the opposition members' attacks on my government and their campaigns designed to topple my regime," (Cisse 2006).

<sup>181</sup> This is a reference, in part, to the fact that approximately 40% of the national budget is accorded to the education sector. In the national media, some journalists have argued that this is an exaggeration (c.f. Sy 2006 who suggests that a more precise breakdown of state funds suggests that education receives closer to 20%).

<sup>182</sup> *Moi-même je suis pour la revendication parce que c'est ce qui fait marcher un pays. J'accepte les revendications car je ne suis pas censé voir tout.*

people talk too much about them,”<sup>183</sup> a statement Wade made upon returning from the U.S. where he had received a prize from the Celebrate African Foundation, one of several international prizes he had been awarded that year and took noticeable pains to emphasize to the public (Mane 2006).

As we saw in Chapter Three, it was young men who had been educated in Western-style schools in the colony and the metropole who were most involved in the political struggles for greater African involvement in the French empire that marked the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And, as in most colonial contexts, it was this class of individuals who became the leaders and persons of power and influence in the fledgling nation. In his work on student movements in Senegal, Zeilig (2004) suggests that the early post-independence period might be considered a zenith point in student activism. By the 1970s, however, these youth felt less like they represented a modernist, leftist avant-garde, but rather that their difficulties signaled the failures of post-colonial transition. Clearly they were no longer the “power-brokers” that they had been in the colonial system (Bathily, Diouf, and Mbodj 1995).

This phenomenon can be linked to two factors that also strongly shape young people’s experiences with education and the state in recent years. First, the increase in the number of educated persons in Senegalese society meant that having attended school was no longer the marker of distinction it had been during the colonial and early post-colonial eras. Second, graduating students faced greater competition for jobs, as well, in a labor market that had difficulty absorbing them. The problem of jobs in both the private and public sectors was exacerbated by a series of structural adjustment policies which the Senegalese state first adopted in 1979 to secure loans from the World Bank and participation in various IMF programs, as I

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<sup>183</sup> *Il y a des problèmes dans tous les pays, mais au Sénégal on parle trop.*

touched on briefly in Chapter Four.<sup>184</sup> The streamlining of the parapublic sector and the limiting of growth in state expenditures, including the costs of paying civil service wages, were among the principal reforms outlined in these programs (Landel-Mills and Ngo 1991). This meant that not only were civil servants dismissed from their jobs, but that there was little reason for the large population of young people to envision that they, too, might find employment there upon the termination of their studies. In the first decade of the 21st century, the Senegalese civil service has grown according to UN-International Organization of Labor data, but not at a level to keep pace with a rising general population and the rise in young graduates seeking work.

Secondly, the student body (at UCAD in particular, but also in secondary school institutions) began to draw from lower middle-class and working class families who had trouble supporting or sustaining them. In their analysis of the Senegalese student movement, Bathily et al. (1995) characterize this “new reality” as one in which students’ sense of identity as privileged elites has given way to that of “needy marginals” or proletariats. Furthermore, they add, with the issue of racial equity disposed of (e.g. with the exit of the French colonials back to the metropole), “the enemy” of the student movement was not longer an “easily recognizable” white “foreigner”, but rather “more or less close fellow citizens who could neither be expelled or marginalized for good,” (Bathily, Diouf, and Mbodj 1995: 393). In this context, the term “fellow citizens” implies those members of the political class, economic elites, and others persons of authority and access whose corruption, materialism, incompetence, or laxness shaped and maintained the limited range of possibilities for young people in Senegal at the time.

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<sup>184</sup> Philippe Boquier (1995) argues that in the 1980s, persons working in the private sector (both formal and informal) were most effected by unemployment, and among them, women more than men. Among young people, he adds that native urbanites struggled more with unemployment than their migrant peers. See Catherine Boone (1991) for an analysis of the relationship between structural adjustment policies and the death of the Senegalese textile industry.



In many ways, these feelings of disappointment, alienation and frustration with the state, its authorities, and institutions endure—or perhaps are expressed anew and with greater fervor—among the current generation of 21<sup>st</sup> century students. If asked, they might see few similarities between themselves and these predecessors of theirs, who attended school in the 1960s and 70s when Marxist philosophy was fashionable and Islamism not. The Senegalese state relied heavily on the contributions of French language school-educated young adults to build and run the new country, like the colonial government before them. For its part, the state has become increasingly wary about the implications of wider democratic participation. This has occurred concurrent with democratization of its constitution and political life (e.g. the move away from one-party democracy to the legalization of multiple political parties, the liberalization of media, and so on).

In today's highly mediated environment, Wade, in particular, was sensitive to public discourse critical of his government to a degree that his predecessor, Abdou Diouf, was not. That Wade, as I mentioned above, would have the reggae star Tiken Jah Fakoly designated *persona non grata* after making some critical comments at a 2007 Dakar concert, illustrates this phenomenon all too well. It adds a new dimension of tension to debates and discourse around secular and religious education and the roles of school, state, and youth. Havard (2004: 35) analyzes Wade's tense hyper-personalization of power as head of state, writing that he "seems to perceive any and all criticism as a personal betrayal, and, by extension, as a betrayal of the *alternance* movement [i.e. the first democratic regime change after 40 years of independence under one party] and of the country itself."<sup>185</sup> During his tenure, Wade has also proved equally enthusiastic, if perhaps not very adept, at using his funds to publicly mobilize the citizenry—across a range of generations—in various ceremonial and official contexts in an attempt to

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<sup>185</sup> ...semble percevoir toute critique comme une trahison, à sa personne et, par extension, à l'alternance et au pays tout entier.

project positive and powerful images of his office and party (like the fleet of tinted-window Peugeot 406s that Fou Malade challenges government personnel to step down and out from) and to rebut youths' growing dissatisfaction.<sup>186</sup> As a whole, however, though Wade continued such efforts throughout his presidency, I would argue that he was unable to change or to wholly mask the fact that what felt like for many young people to be a victory of democracy and the people over the establishment succumbed, in a few short years, to total disgust and disappointment with the fruits of the *sopi* (change) movement, even though he was reelected in 2007.<sup>187</sup>

### *Reform and its Mediation*

Student movements and strikes represent one prominent aspect of postcolonial state-youth relations. Educational reform constitutes the other side of that coin. What are the kinds of reform projects being proposed and by whom? How do they relate to previous reform efforts and to the established ways of conceiving and running schools? First, student movements and strikes generally originate “from below”, contrary to Wade’s statements in the media about political manipulation. To be sure, the university is an important political site where opposition parties may try to recruit young members and activists, a technique that Wade knows well and relied on greatly to generate and grow his political capital as an opposition leader in the 1980s and 90s. But most forms of public educational reform come “from above” and are not generated at the grassroots level.

As during the colonial period, the educational policies and programs of an independent Senegalese state have been shaped by a range of forces, two of which I would like to underline

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<sup>186</sup> In the mid-years of this decade, the joke was that it would be a fairly savvy decision for someone who was unemployed (or underemployed) to attend one of Wade’s rallies, for one would be given a sandwich and some pocket money for having showed up, which was in many ways better than the no meal and no money of those who stayed home.

<sup>187</sup> The veracity of the election results, which showed Wade winning with over 55% of the vote, were contested by opposition parties.

here; (1) a belief or desire that education should be used to shape the country, and therefore should reflect its “national” values and goals, and (2) by capital and its relative abundance or lack thereof. The former has meant the development of educational reform projects designed to excise colonial influences and ground the school system in local African values in order to provide the means by which the country could productively develop itself into an economically independent, prosperous nation. In this vein, the National Educational Orientation Act of 1971, an important reform law, set out two dual principles of national education philosophy; *enracinement* (rooting) and *ouverture* (opening). The former focused on local cultural and language education, whereas the latter refers to an interest in science and technology and non-African cultures (Sylla 1993). The twin terms come from the state’s official discourse on the nation and had been circulating for several years by the time the law was passed in the early 1970s. During his presidency, Senghor actively pursued a process of national history-making—or “myth making”—from particular place-based historical data in and around Senegal in order to construct and consolidate national unity (Diaw 1993).

In recent years, debates about the cultural legibility of public education—in particular as concerns language<sup>188</sup>—continue, although with perhaps less ardor than in the past. Now, the idea

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<sup>188</sup> Though teachers and school staff at the Parcelles Junior High spoke mostly Wolof amongst themselves, as did the students, Wolof and other local languages were largely absent from the classroom, both as a text or thing to be studied and as medium for explaining or learning that text. Teachers varied to the extent that they would allow Wolof, the first language of the majority of students and teachers alike, to enter into the classroom. Some, like the 5<sup>e</sup> class’ English teacher, would never use Wolof herself and would scold students who used Wolof words or phrases in the classrooms. More often, teachers would use Wolof in a limited manner together with French words in their utterances, such as the 5<sup>e</sup> class’ Math teacher who, while demonstrating to students how to solve sample problems on the board, had a habit of saying “Dafay egal...” or “That equals...” Ironically, perhaps the teacher who used Wolof the most in the classroom was the students’ French teacher, who showed a strong appreciation and enjoyment of the French language and French language prose and poetry. His Wolof utterances were usually lighthearted and received with laughter. In contrast, Wolof was the only language of instruction at the Franco-Arabe school, whether the curriculum was Arabic, French, or religious material. Using Wolof as a language of instruction has been perennially suggested as a solution to the enduring, principally class-based problem of cultural alienation that Senegalese families and students feel vis-à-vis the institution of the school since independence (see Gomis 2003 for a thorough analysis of this issue). However, such reform measures are almost always proposed by people for whom Wolof is a first language, and the idea of Wolof being promoted above other local languages and/or the idea of their

of education as a key factor in national development, here articulated with reference to globalized markets and competitiveness, is the most prominent feature contemporary state-led and mass-mediated discussions of education. In this way, there is much continuity in elite-level educational discourse in Senegal over the past decades. So, too, do the realities of today echo the colonial past. Administrators in the AOF struggled with a Parisian government that was increasingly unwilling to shoulder heavy costs of colonial affairs as time wore on; this included their outlays for colonial schools. Likewise, the contemporary Senegalese state's relationship to the budgetary requirements of an educational system can be characterized as rather tense.

The state vacillates between proud and assertive public declarations about the amount of money (which is a significant portion of the budget) it accords to education, i.e. “*look* how much money we spend on education in this country!”, and, on the other hand, similar statements made in a defensive way to blunt criticism about the quality of Senegalese public education and the inadequacies of existing scholastic infrastructures, i.e. “*look* how much *money* we spend on education in this country!” Here, the same words are used, but with a very different meaning: to suggest that citizens should be more appreciative of the current budgetary allowances, for they could be decreased, if the state would so choose. In this climate, students, their families, and educators alike often feel like the state's promises matter little and that they must stay on their toes to ensure that the state follows through on its commitments to education.

To this mix, it is important to add private secular schools, whose presence, particularly in Dakar and its suburbs, has increased over the past few years. These schools offer classes at the preschool, primary, secondary, and post-secondary levels. At the lower levels, private non-religious schools provide instruction for Senegalese children in the same vein as the public

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children gaining literacy in Wolof *instead* of their maternal language bothers many non-Wolof parents, particularly Haalpulaar and Joola. Because of this strong opposition from certain members of the public, I do not foresee the widespread inclusion of Wolof in Senegalese schools, nationally, in an official manner, any time in the near future.

secular schools, but try to distinguish themselves from the national system in terms of the quality and rigor of their educational offerings. Until Wade's presidency, the state did not provide pre-school education on a nationwide scale; it was primarily a private, bourgeois endeavor in which private parochial schools maintained a strong presence. The few public preschools that existed were nascent institutions that served a largely urban and again, middle-class, public. Recently, the state has expanded its pre-school offerings (of which kindergarten is considered a part, in contrast to the United States), which remain non-compulsory, under the rubric of the "*cases des tout petits*" (or Little Ones' Huts), a program with which the former first lady, Viviane Wade, was involved, as well as the *cases communautaires*. State data from 2008 shows that since 2000, the share of private preschool institutions relative to the total number of preschools, nationally, has decreased by almost one quarter as a result of this growth in public institutions, particularly in rural areas (Sénégal 2008).<sup>189</sup> Overall, almost 9% of Senegalese children of preschool age attended preschool in 2008 (the region of Ziguinchor has by far and away the highest level of attendance followed by Dakar and Thies) from an estimated population of more than 1,300,000 pre-school age children. In 2000 this number stood only at a little over 2% of eligible attendees (Sénégal 2008).<sup>190</sup>

Parents' rationale for sending their children to private secular or Catholic school at the preschool and elementary levels (many Muslim students attend Catholic schools in Dakar and Casamance) is essentially to offer them a robust start to their schooling. At the secondary level,

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<sup>189</sup> This state data classifies private preschool institutions as either Franco-Arabe, Catholic, or secular schools. Their share of the private preschool category varies from region to region. Catholic and secular preschools are concentrated in Dakar, Thies, and Ziguinchor, whereas the majority Franco-Arabe schools are located in Dakar, the central peanut basin of Diourbel, and St. Louis.

<sup>190</sup> State data shows a slight improvement in gender parity in private and public preschool institutions over this time period, except for the Fatick region, which registered a 6% drop in girl attendees (from 59% of the total number of students to 53%) and Diourbel, where Franco-Arabe schools are historically very prevalent and girls' presence increased from 51% to almost 59% of the student body total. Overall, female students seem to be strongly represented in preschool institutions, for their presence in every region but one (Kolda) seems to equal if not surpass their male classmates.

many students seek to attend these private schools in order to better prepare themselves to take the difficult BFEM (*Brevet de Fin d'Etudes Moyennes*) and *Baccalauréat* exams necessary to graduate junior high and high school. They can also be an alternative for students who have failed to pass a grade level, or one of these important exams, one or more times, but still wish to continue on with their studies. At the end of the 2005-2006, when a significant portion of the 5<sup>e</sup> class in Parcelles failed to gain the necessary grades to pass to the next year, including Sekou, several students opted to leave the school to attend private junior high schools in the area, some just for a year in hopes that they could then return, others indefinitely.

At the post-secondary level, private secular schools and institutes distinguish themselves from the two public Senegalese universities and very competitive specialized schools, such as the Normal School and ENAM, which trains civil servants, by the vocational and technical nature of their offerings. These schools' curriculum offerings reflect the appeal of "modern" information technologies for Senegalese young people and their parents, for they provide diplomas and certificates in fields such as business management, international business and commerce, advertising, accounting, and computer science, as well as things like hotel and restaurant management. In the past decade, the number of these schools in Senegal has mushroomed, readily apparent from a quick glance through the yellow pages, a ride down any of the main city thoroughfares, and a weekend afternoon watching television. The Education Ministry's Division of Higher Education (Sénégal 2009) keeps tabs on 108 accredited post-secondary institutions (the overwhelming majority of which are located in Dakar); if one includes here those schools who offer vocational and technical certificate programs in a similar vein to young people who have not yet obtained their *Baccalauréat*, or high school diploma, I would estimate total number of schools be significantly greater.

During my fieldwork tenure, several of these private post-secondary schools had put together television commercials to advertise for enrollment. The commercials all showed similar images; the well-painted and maintained school buildings—often a large, converted villa and manicured grounds (colored paint and groomed gardens are urban status symbols)—and co-ed students dressed in sharp uniforms consisting of shirts, slacks, and ties, and carrying slim briefcases, messenger bags, or large leather purses. These snappily-dressed youth are also very visible on the main thoroughfares of the city as they commute to and from school on municipal buses and large white *Ndiaga Ndiaye* transportation cars. In many ways, these private post-secondary schools represent a grassroots and entrepreneurial reaction to the failures of the Senegalese universities to provide a contemporary curriculum beyond traditional offerings in arts, letters, and sciences, the declining power of their diplomas, and the crowded classrooms and dormitories in which students must live and learn. They have offered an alternative pathway to young people fresh out of high school as well as former university students who have dropped out due to academic<sup>191</sup> or financial problems, declining interest, or other circumstances before obtaining a degree. The government has since responded to the popular appeal of this curriculum by offering degree programs in information management and communications, tourism and hotel management, and computer engineering and network management at series of smaller public universities that opened in Ziguinchor, Thies, and Bambey, respectively in 2007.<sup>192</sup> These

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<sup>191</sup> It is important to take into consideration that academic departments in public Senegalese universities (particularly Dakar, which suffers most from overcrowding) are not focused on student retention for the three years it takes students to obtain a *license*, the rough equivalent of a bachelor's degree in the United States. Rather, competitive annual exams are designed to “weed out” those students who do not perform as well and to decrease enrolment over the lifespan of a given cohort of students.

<sup>192</sup> I do not mean to suggest that the reason for the construction of these universities was solely a response to the allure of the vocational and technical curriculum offered at private post-secondary schools. In fact, there were a range of motivating factors involved in their genesis. The regional universities were conceived under the guise of educational reforms and designed to deal with the growing number of high school graduates that the Universities of Dakar and Saint-Louis were unable to absorb/admit. Moreover, rather than duplicating the offerings of Saint-Louis and Dakar, the state sought to diversify the national curriculum by providing areas and opportunities of study at the regional schools that were not provided in their antecedents. Of the quality of their offerings relative to that of

universities, which also offer programs in agricultural sciences and forestry as well as other more traditional, currently have quite limited enrollments, but provided they receive the necessary funding, may establish themselves more firmly and perhaps expand in the future.

Though private technical and professional schools are now common in urban settings, the generally high cost of their tuition makes them unattainable for many lower middle-class and working-class youth, and, as such, not a viable educational alternative for the general population. As private for-profit institutions, there are no public scholarships for these schools. By contrast, with a government scholarship to a public university, a young person would no longer be an “expense” for his or her family, but rather might mean a certain level of self-sufficiency, or, in some circumstances, even a small contribution to the family budget if they are able to obtain a full scholarship.

I should reiterate that the precariousness of Senegalese university students’ financial situations is recognized by scholars as an important reality that helped shape the dynamic of youth-state relations and campus politics as early as the late 1960s (Bathily, Diouf, and Mbodj 1995). This is no less the case in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as I have tried to show above in my discussion of campus living conditions and the strikes that dominated the 2005-2006 academic year. In this sense, if the new regional universities maintain their professional and vocational orientations and are able to grow in the future, they may present a strong alternative to private institutions in light of the financial challenges Senegalese families continue to face. The

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Dakar and Saint-Louis, I do not yet have any data. Each of the new schools’ curricula has a decidedly technical and professionalized orientation, designed to “be of service” to “the community”, “society”, and “the nation”, in a context of globalization and national development. The university mottos, *By science, develop the country, by culture, integrate the nation, in order to live in peace and harmony*; *Humility, my choice, excellence, my way*; and *Excellence, my constant, ethics, my virtue* of Ziguinchor, Thies, and Bambey, respectively, could be considered to reveal both a great deal or very little about the way in which the state and key educational personnel view the schools.



appeal of the nascent regional universities might be especially strong, given that the costs of living for local students would be less than that of attending school in Dakar.<sup>193</sup>

In the past, the awarding of university scholarships was inflected with politics and nepotism. Mr. K., the 5<sup>e</sup> class' self-assured French teacher recalled to me in a interview that his future as a teacher was shaped by the fact that when he was in college in the late 1970s, one needed to be card-carrying member of the PS, or Parti Socialiste, in order to receive a scholarship. This led him, a self-identified middle-class kid, who was majoring in English and Modern Letters and boarding with relatives in the city, to drop out of UCAD after just a year and a half and apply to be teacher. These days, while the university remains an important training and recruiting ground for young politicians, full and partial scholarships are distributed much more widely, although their disbursement is not without persistent problems, as I noted above in the case of Amadou, whose payments were consistently tardy and did not fully cover the cost of attending school and living in Dakar. In addition, it is important to note that with the widely competitive labor market in Senegal, youth at private post-secondary schools, like their public school counterparts, are no way assured jobs upon completion of their studies—this is a fact from which all the enticing commercials and strident presidential speeches in the world cannot ultimately escape.

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<sup>193</sup> The establishment of the University of Ziguinchor, in particular, has a special political significance among the three in that it serves as a way for the state to respond to the contention, by Casamance residents, including separatists, that the region and its people has suffered long-term neglect from the “north”. The school is billed as a way for Casamançais youth to obtain an advanced education (through the level of Ph.D.) while remaining in the home region. Casamance has one of the highest if not the highest level of elementary school attendance in the nation, including Dakar. The fact that in the past, residents emigrated to Dakar for both work and educational opportunities, importantly shaped the development of the region through migrants' financial success and their cycles of absence and presence in their places of origin. Vincent Foucher (2002) contrasts the early generation of migrants, whom he calls “the cadres”, with a younger generation of educated persons whom he characterizes as “disappointed pilgrims” and “the Casamançais lumpen-elite”. He argues that whereas the former are largely removed from the separatist movement, the latter represent the MFDC's (*Mouvement des Forces Democratiques de la Casamance*) social base in the very least.

The state's decision to try to expand enrollment at the university level and increase the number of scholarships granted has put them at odds with the World Bank, which has been looking to cut back the number of students at UCAD. The global institution has played an important role in educational politics and reform on the continent since the implementation of structural adjustment policies in the 1980s, and in particular since 1996, when it granted the Senegalese government \$40 million in loans for the University of Dakar. Writing of the 1980s, Sylla (1993: 370) argues that with the increase of the World Bank's involvement in educational funding amid an array of domestic problems, the state had basically "abdicated its sovereign responsibilities and given up the planned management of educational investments and programs." World Bank funds continue to be important to the running of Senegal's schools. The United Nations (UNICEF, UNESCO, and UNDP) also influences educational reform, largely through policy-based funding projects, as do smaller international NGOs and the "cooperative development" structures of various Western nations, including France, Italy, Japan, and the U.S. through USAID.

Of these outside-funded projects, the most directly germane to the educational contexts from which I gathered my data is the PDEF (*Programme Décennal de l'Éducation et de la Formation*), an educational reform policy conceived within the United Nations Special Initiatives for Africa Program for the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The program was designed to improve the access, quality, and administrative oversight/management ("*gestion*") of schools from the preschool to the post-secondary level, including private schools of secular, Catholic and Islamic orientation, through a phased system of problem diagnosis, funds recruitment, and implementation of reforms. Divided into three stages, the program had begun in 1999 and was scheduled to last through 2008. When I had spoken with the Parcelles Junior High School's former principal during pilot-study research in 2002 and 2003, he had instantly referred me to the

PDEF, suggesting that through a review of the policy text, I would understand the school and its position. Looking from a textual perspective, it is clear that the PDEF dominated official Senegalese educational policy in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century—virtually all government reports in the field of education are either a response to PDEF policy objectives or are written through the eyes of the program. The PDEF created an official discursive vacuum.

On the ground, actors' experiences and perceptions with the PDEF were rather varied. Mr. C., the Parcelles principal's successor, whom I got to know much better over the course of my dissertation fieldwork, did not suggest that the PDEF had significantly affected his job or his school. From his vantage point in the program's latter stages, he spoke of a sense of a general improvement with the PDEF, but declared that if it had touched the school at all, it was mostly in terms of providing teachers with greater access to pedagogical materials and training. Those initiatives helped to reinvigorate the staff and their teaching, he suggested, and provided for the organization of seminars designed to improve the level ("*niveau*") of teachers. He added that this is necessary because many of the people currently being hired as teachers in the public schools since Wade had come into office were people who hadn't had a lot of rigorous, formal training, such as temporary staff (*vacataires*) and low paid "volunteers".

Yet even with PDEF initiative, schools in Senegal like the junior high in Parcelles are still confronted with the problem of means on a daily basis, for the number of admitted students keeps increasing without concurrent increases in personnel, infrastructures, and materials. As one of the administration staff members at the Parcelles school observed, the biggest change over the course of his more than 30 year career in public schools has been the increase in enrollment and in class sizes; now, he remarked, a class size of 100 students is now considered normal, whereas just 10 years ago it would have been unthinkable. This sentiment was echoed numerous times by the school's teachers as they unfavorably compared the quality of education that they received as

youth with that of current schools. According to Souleymane Ndiaye, a former education minister and prominent educator, the PDEF sets a goal of 40 students per class by 2015.<sup>194</sup> My data suggests that the state is not even close to realizing such a goal by the deadline and that in most schools, in fact, the opposite trend may be taking place as enrollment numbers rise without increases in teaching staff and classrooms at a concurrent rate.

Though the Wade administration's enrollment expansions at the university level have been at odds with the World Bank's approach, in general, the order of the day in international educational policy is to promote increased school attendance, particularly at the primary school level (here the word is "universalize") and among girls.<sup>195</sup> This is reflected in Senegal's recent educational policy, which has stressed the importance of increasing school enrollment figures, a point on which the Wade administration has largely succeeded over the past ten years. As a whole, media portrayal and official discourse regarding education policy exhibits a laudatory and unnuanced tone vis-à-vis the push to full nationwide enrollment; "Saint-Louis won the bet"<sup>196</sup> reads a title of newspaper article about how the region had achieved 100% enrollment in raw terms just 5 years after the *alternance* (APS 2006). Some key local personnel and international funding organizations have publicly admitted, however, that the push to educate more children and to overturn rural-urban and class-based schooling inequities has brought about a decline in the overall quality of schooling that each child receives.<sup>197</sup> Their concerns with the quality of

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<sup>194</sup> RTS interview, *Le Palabre*, March 30, 2005.

<sup>195</sup> School statistical data, from official publications of the Dakar Inspection Académique and National Ministry of Education to the schools' own assessments principal's office chalkboards, consistently indicate the gender ratio of students in enrollment data. Faculty data also records the gender distribution of schools' personnel.

<sup>196</sup> *Saint-Louis a réussi le pari*

<sup>197</sup> Abdou Sylla details the range of factors contributing this decline in his 1993 contribution to the Momar Coumba Diop's edited volume *Senegal: Essays in Statecraft* entitled "Reform Options for the Educational System". Reading his assessment of the problems of public schools in Senegal and possibilities for their improvement some 15 years or so years later, in which he wrote that a breakdown was imminent, I am struck by how little things have changed since then. Further, he questions "if it makes sense to continue investing so heavily in the educational system" given the fact that so many graduates are unemployed and the general rate of unemployment is so high. His conclusion that

education dispensed by Senegalese public schools resonate with the daily worries and concerns expressed by school personnel, parents, and students in Parcelles and elsewhere.

### *Islamic Public Education?*

If the proliferation of private secular schools in urban areas of Senegal represent a strong signal to the failures of the public school system in providing comprehensive educational opportunities whose merits are clear to the populace, one might argue that the rise of hybrid religious schools in Senegal—of which the Franco-Arabe day school in Parcelles where I conducted research is one example—represents a further alternative. Clearly, for the parents of students who remain enrolled in Franco-Arabe schools beyond the preschool level, these schools are an important other option to private or public secular schools. However, the position of Franco-Arabe schools vis-à-vis secular public institutions is changing. Wade's religious education reform plans concerned not only Franco-Arabe schools, but *daaras* and the role of religion what were formerly secular, or *laïc*, public schools. What constitutes the mainstream and the alternative, and the center and the periphery may be altered in the process.

First, let us look at the place of religion in the state system of public schools. Change did not entirely begin with Wade. In 1985, the state accepted the recommendation of the National Commission on Educational and Training Reform (which emerged from President Diouf's 1981 General Conference on Education and Training) to introduce religious education into the curriculum, as long as the diversity of religion in Senegal was respected as well as the overall secular nature of the school system. However, the commission's work did not result in the actual implementation of religious instruction [the reform commission's failures are not limited to

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"the educational system cannot be salvaged in isolation" is highly persuasive in light of my contemporary data, as well.

religious education but involve innovation of the educational system as a whole—in Diaw (1993: 318) called a “still born brainchild”]. In this context, the particular political choices of Wade made an important difference. Not long after he was elected in 2000, Wade proposed incorporating religious instruction in the public school system. A bill to this effect was first presented in 2002 (as a *loi d’orientation*) and was voted into law in 2004.

Though the legal language in the text does not specifically reference Islam, religion in this context is implicitly understood as Islam and not Christianity and applied as such (in fact, in much of Senegalese political and social discourse the word “religion” is used to mean Islam or Islamic religion). At the time of my field research, the 2004 law had primarily been applied at the elementary school level (grades C.I. to C.M.2), where students are exposed to two hours per week of Islamic religious instruction (some reports list this as four) and two hours of Arabic language class per week. Non-Muslim students and others who wished to could potentially opt-out of this curriculum, but were generally were not exposed to any alternative educational content during these hours. The principal of a Parcelles elementary school told me that he would take such students outside of the classroom and sit them in his office to wait quietly until the religion class was over. The state aimed to extend religious education in public schools to all levels. However, this had not yet occurred. During my fieldwork tenure at the Parcelles Junior High, Arabic language instruction had been implemented, but not religious instruction as such.

When queried about the 2002 educational reform program by the media, the head of the Arabic-learning division at the National Education Ministry remarked that “the state has noted that our children’s education has veered somewhat off course,”<sup>198</sup> for which the religious education program was a remedy (Seck 2002). Continuing, he presenting this new law as simply the state’s response to the citizenry’s deeply held desires, opining that “the state has a duty to

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<sup>198</sup> *Nous avons constaté des dérives dans la formation de nos enfants.*

assist parents in providing the education for their children that they wish, and to help change their behavior and make good citizens.”<sup>199</sup> This sort of sentiment goes beyond national borders. It is worth noting here that in Leo Villalón’s (2008: 28) trans-Sahelian research he heard similar statements uttered; Malian and Nigerien officials in charge of projects with Qur’anic and Franco-Arabe schools “insist that the programs have moved forward very successfully because the historical state efforts to suppress Arabic or religious education were no longer tenable in the context of a democracy, and given the crisis of education the state needed to do something that responded to popular demand.”

At the secondary school level in Senegal, though, little has happened at schools like the Parcelles junior high. So far, Wade’s reforms have meant renewed attention and interest on the part of the state towards the Institut Islamique of Dakar. Created in 1974 under Senghor, this public institution is characterized by more of an orthodox *arabisant* orientation rather than any Sufi brotherhood affiliation.<sup>200</sup> Prior to the Wade administration, the only classes available at the institute were evening Arabic classes for adults. Institute efforts to publicly organize stakeholders and develop a coherent plan for Islamic education nationally in the late 1970s failed to take off. Little happened with regard to the institute in the 1980s and 90s during Abdou Diouf’s presidency, the current director, Mamadou Ndiaye, suggested to me. With the election of Wade, the Institute’s religious education offerings have been the focus of greater attention and are being redesigned to play an important role in a larger, more comprehensive vision of rigorous, standardized Islamic education.

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<sup>199</sup> *L’état a le devoir d’appuyer les parents afin que ces derniers donnent à leurs enfants l’éducation qu’ils souhaitent, pour que les comportements se modifient et que l’on trouve un bon citoyen de ce pays.*

<sup>200</sup> Though the *grande mosquée*, which is adjacent to the Institute and part of the same walled-in complex was funded with monies from the Middle East, the Institute director, Dr. Mamadou Ndiaye, onetime chair of the Arabic department at UCAD, stressed that the Institute itself was a state institution built through contributions from local Muslim patrons.

In the 2002-2003 academic year, the institute began offering two programs: one, the DPAI or *diplôme professionnelle arabo-islamique* and the other, the DPEI, or *diplôme pratique d'éducation islamique*. The former is a secondary-level degree in Arabic and Islamic studies designed to help regularize Islamic learning according to more testable and regulated government standards and content. The latter prepares young people to serve as teachers in public schools in concert with the 2004 religious instruction law and includes three years of classes and a one year internship. In obtaining both degrees, the high-school aged students (recruited at the 3<sup>e</sup> and 1<sup>re</sup> grade levels) are exposed to a range of subjects in addition to religious instruction and Arabic, such as French, English, Math, Computer Science, and Physical Education. The aim of this curriculum, Mr. Ndiaye told me, is to assure the integration of students into modern society and to work on projects in the Senegalese private sector in concert with actors from Middle East. Further, he contended that if Islamic schools were able to teach Islam well and also teach what the state designates as important, public secular schools would then be virtually empty.

Note that Ndiaye used the term “teach Islam”, not “teach the Qur’an”. He suggested that Islamic, or Arabic, schools are very different animals than Qur’anic schools, saying that Arabic schools are “the school of now”. The state’s approach largely supports this point of view by adopting a reform strategy that goes well beyond the inclusion of Islamic religious curriculum in public elementary schools and the development of the institute. Since 2002, 117 *public* Franco-Arabe schools—not public Qur’anic schools—have been opened in the country, concentrated very substantially in the central regions of Louga, Diourbel, and Kaolack and as of yet non-existent in Ziguinchor (which has a strong tradition of public school patronage and Catholic schooling) and in Dakar (where the number of private educational institutions of all kinds is very high). In addition, the State is now in the process of constructing three high schools in the aforementioned regions of Louga, Diourbel, and Kaolack. With regard to traditionally all-male



*daaras*, policy changes have been articulated through what Wade calls the “*daara moderne*”. His idea of a “modern daara” was designed to steer Qur’anic schools away from daily forced begging for cash<sup>201</sup> and to expand their curriculum to include technical/vocational and jobs training.

The first *daara* of this kind was presented to the Senegalese public in an evening news broadcast on the RTS channel (whose programming tends to be pro-state) in May 2006. The short story began with the statement “the modernization of Qur’anic schools has become a reality” and then cut to a public speech by Wade in which he emphasized the vocational aspect of his proposed reforms as a way to “open horizons” to young people. The RTS then showed footage of a co-ed *daara* with clean, well-lit classrooms wherein the youngest students sat on mats and older students at their desks as teachers taught from large, wall-mounted blackboards. This layout is typical of co-ed neighborhood Franco-Arabe schools but not of *daaras*, where any rooms that are used are usually exceedingly bare. The *daara moderne* reform, as I understand it, has little to do with the episteme of historic *daaras* in Senegal, characterized by master-*taalibe* relationships of ascetic submission by the latter to the charisma and *baraka* (rarefied magico-religious knowledge and powers) of the former.

Debates about the form and content of Islamic religious education in Senegal strongly reflect local discourses and dynamics of power. Here, the international development community plays a less influential role than they do with regard to policies of the national public school system. Wade’s own political will, in contrast to that of his predecessors Senghor and Diouf and current opponents, has been important in the legitimation and promotion of religion in public institutions like the school. Moreover his reforms have brought about greater state involvement

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<sup>201</sup> The practice of obligatory mendicancy, together with corporal punishment, abuse, and the poor health of students are the main points of contention in debates about *taalibes* that involve Muslim clerics, on one side, and NGOs, on the other, with the state in between (for further discussion of this issue see Perry 2004, Ware 2004). Actual reform of *daaras* focuses as much on these issues as any purely scholastic or pedagogical ones through the Ministry of Women, Family, and Social Development.

in what was previously primarily a private religious educational sphere. As such, they trouble the established dynamic between public secular and private religious spheres in Senegal.

These reforms, it is important to recognize, have also been possible to advance because of larger more general changes in religious practice and attitudes in Senegal over the last several decades. Under Wade, religion has become a much larger part of the officially sanctioned political arena in Senegal than before. This was made clear from the very start of Wade's presidency, when upon winning the election, he immediately went to Touba to prostrate himself before the Mouride *khalifa-générale* as his most devoted and grateful disciple. A public sphere that was once heavily secular has now become a domain in which allusion to Islam and Sufi ways of being by state figures and other elites are now commonplace and viewed by many as entirely acceptable.<sup>202</sup> Wade's Mouride beliefs and affiliation have been strong, central elements of the persona he projects and cultivates as head of state.

Examining the issue from a regional perspective, Villalón (2008) argues that processes of democratization have helped to increase the role and presence of religion in public life both in Senegal and across the Sahel. This "religious effervescence", as he calls it, is characterized, by the participation of a heterogeneous mix of religious associations and organizations with a range of positions of the issues, not by narrow adhesion to one version of state-sanctioned Islam. The adoption of a more public religiosity is also due to the emergence and growth of Islamic reform movements in Senegal that are critical of the secular state and a secularized public sphere. These orthodox or *arabisant* reformers have shaken up and in some senses, redefined the terms of public religious debate. They have called for a return to a more "pure" Islam and the Islamization of state and society. Important, too, has been the reactions of the state and Sufi

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<sup>202</sup> On one hand, religious clerics have been figures of note in the political sphere in Senegal since colonial times and continued to play an important role in post-colonial politics. However, religion is largely unrelated to political cleavages or party affiliation.

leaders as they have tried to rebut, integrate, or instrumentalize Islamic reforms groups and their critiques (Loimeier 2000). Finally, while the participation of young people has been essential to the growth of the Islamic reform movement in Senegal, their voices have been considerably less present in calling for school reform in relation to the unabashedly strident ones of their peers in public secular schools.

### *Conclusion*

On a shared taxi ride from the city of Thies to Dakar late one afternoon in 2005, I sat next to two Sereer gentleman; one, a teacher, and the other, an office worker at a company with some connection to the U.S. and computer technology. Upon introducing ourselves, we quickly got into a discussion about Senegalese schooling. Though my two fellow travelers' views on education were largely divergent, they did agree on one thing; "The myth is broken." By this, the office worker, who first verbalized this sentiment, meant that the powerful mystique an advanced education and being an educated person (particularly for political and economic elites) held for the general (read: largely illiterate) public had dissolved. His implication was that now, everyone saw through such status, particularly young people. The teacher, our fellow passenger agreed, saying it was too bad children no longer respected their instructors. This sentiment was repeated in various forms throughout my fieldwork tenure, by educators, former students and parents, and even university students in their early twenties as they reflected back on their academic trajectories.

From my observations in Senegalese public schools, I did not come away with the sense of a widespread problem in discipline or respect, though the extent to which it was a concern in the eyes of my interlocutors is an interesting point on its own. To be sure, the public school environment is less violent or strict than that of Franco-Arabe schools and certainly of *daaras*,

Teachers, myself included, sometimes struggled to maintain students' close attention in large and crowded classrooms. However, one could argue that what has truly been undercut in the Senegalese society is rather the belief that school matters, and that school could provide one with the means to a financially comfortable life or even a viable future.

Attempts by the state to actively involve itself in the construction and routinization of Islamically-based religious schools, cannot, I think, be viewed as a viable solution to Senegalese schools problems in quality. On the positive side, perhaps such efforts will help ameliorate the sense of alienation or divergence some students feel between their worlds at home and at school. Islamic religious affiliation and practice in Senegal, as we have seen, is quite heterogeneous. State involvement in religious education, in which the Franco-Arabe model is privileged over the ascetic esotericism of the *daara*, tends towards a universalizing homogenization, something hardly to be advocated in this context. The Franco-Arabe school as a modern institution is a strange mix of the sacred and the mundane that in some ways accurately evokes the deterritorialized cultural realities of much of contemporary urban Senegal. In an environment in which concerns about everyday survival and reputation dominate (categories which are not so far apart in practice), the instrumentalization of knowledge, sacred or otherwise, for the purposes of “development”, “modernity” and “*sunu ɛllëg*” (“our future” in Wolof) seems to be the order of the day. Whatever the educational model the state and private parties adopt, it will continually run up against the stumbling block of limited resources—both with regard to the state's coffers and of the vast majority of the general public.

The ability to rectify these problems of resources is beyond the capacity of the teachers and school personnel, for they cannot affect this problem on a structural level (small NGO scholarship programs and international “cooperation” projects also fail in this regard). Nor do students feel able to solve this issue in their capacity as the largest sector of the population but the

one with the least political capital, economic power, and social status. The formal labor market in Senegal cannot absorb the numbers of graduates and young people, and thus people must resort to making their own work through participation in the informal economy and other entrepreneurial activities. People seek to bridge the gap between the means at hand and their goals and desires through creative efforts at making do and getting by—*góorgóorlu*. This was succinctly and powerfully put by prominent educator Souleymane Ndiaye during an in-depth television interview in which he remarked “the ‘modou-modou’ has proved that making-do (*la débrouillardise*) earns more than a teacher.”<sup>203</sup>

Negotiating these formal and informal systems is a tricky prospect for young people in Senegal. The disillusionment and vulnerability that many youth feel, as a result, may be articulated in a variety of ways; in a rap song in which the singer vows to urinate on the penal code, by a group of classmates who imagine campus dormitory life as a kind of prison, and through violent strikes in which major city streets are barricaded and buses burned and overturned. These are perhaps youths’ most vociferous or extreme forms of expression. They do not do adequate justice to the myriad of ways, large and small, in young people experience, make sense of, and react to their challenging and at times contradictory situation; as the demographic majority in Senegal, the hoped for future of the nation, and the individuals with the least power who are in the precarious position of trying to build something for themselves, to discover what they want for their future and to attempt to achieve it.

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<sup>203</sup> *Le modou-modou a prouvé que la débrouillardise gagne plus qu’un professeur* ; RTS interview, *Le Palabre*, March 30, 2005. Modou-modou is a slang term used to indicate a Wolof Mouride trader who had little education and made his living by participating in informal urban and transnational trading circuits (Diouf 2000).

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I have examined schooling in Senegal through a diachronic lens, but have focused on ethnographic data from contemporary Senegalese students and school case studies as way to understand how knowledge is being valued, disseminated, and transformed in a “developing” locale of our globalized world that is marked by a paradoxical quality of expanding communication and contact, as well as shrinking opportunities and emerging barriers. From the outset, I have highlighted the contrasts between differing epistemologies expressed by influential public actors and institutions in the political and international policy spheres, on one hand, and by critical post-structuralist social theorists and researchers, on the other. The former largely views schooling through a modernist, developmentalist lens. Here, education is understood as an essential transformative experience that engenders people with positive social attitudes and knowledges and prepares citizens for productive roles in national labor forces within a context of global economic competition. In contrast, social scientists in the latter group critique schooling systems as masked reproducers of existing class and cultural hierarchies.

My point of departure has been to try to understand the ways in which these large-level discourses about schooling and knowledge might connect to or resonate with, as well as miss the mark on or refract, the experiences of Senegalese young people with the project of schooling and their engagements therein. The construction of the school as an institution in Senegal, whether colonial Western-style schools, formalized Islamic schools, or a national educational system, highlights longstanding issues around tradition and modernity, religion and secularism, formal labor and the informal economy, and, particularly, power.

In examining the ideas and practices surrounding schooling and knowledge in contemporary Senegal, I have come away with a host of large and small tensions upon which to reflect, but perhaps fewer answers. These important tensions include school as a means of opportunity to access a white-collar world of status and financial security through literacy, diplomas, and mastery of a certain style or praxis; secondly, school as an institutional basis of hegemony; and finally, school as a spiritual experience and purveyor of religious and social knowledge essential to personhood and belonging. Schooling and knowledge remain contradictory and complex experiences and resources for social actors in Senegal. Many of these tensions are borne out of the way in which knowledge politics and educational institutions have changed and grown over the past hundred years under colonial rule and after independence. They signal common issues in and around schooling across “developing” and First World contexts as well as experiences specific to the Senegalese region.

In Chapter Two, I illustrated how Islamic religious schools were established in the region among island-like communities of believers that connected students through space to a larger Muslim network of traders and adepts and through time in a genealogical chain of disciples. Religious jihads and colonial expansion followed in Senegalese history, both of which contributed to the establishment of Islam as the majority religion in the area, particularly the latter which undercut existing systems of governance and political authority and social organization. Qur’anic schools, or *daaras*, were an important part of the construction of local Muslim subjectivities through esoteric knowledge practices in which religious learning was transmitted to male student disciples by marabout teachers and clerics. The experience of giving oneself up to these master teachers who possessed rarefied religious knowledge and magico-religious powers (*baraka*) connected pupil disciples back through time to a chain of believers. It

also distinguished them with regard to their contemporaries with whom they shared social and community space.

The expansion of French colonial power brought the *daara* under a system of surveillance and containment and introduced secular schools, out of which the national school system of post-colonial Senegal grew. The contemporary landscape in which these schools operate is marked by the substantial presence of national secular school system, as well as co-ed Franco-Arabe schools, which offer a hybrid curriculum between that of the *daara* and public secular school. Moreover, the dealings of *daaras* and the meanings and modes of discipleship have been profoundly affected by the monetarization of exchanges, large-scale urbanization, and the troubled status of agriculture and rural communities. In urban areas, attending a Franco-Arabe school is a more common experience for youth than a *daara*. For most Senegalese children, however, this rite of passage comes in the “pre-school” years before they are of age to attend public secular schools and again during summer vacation months. My ethnographic observations suggest that the end result of this experience for the children attending is less a question of gaining literacy in Arabic or committing a significant portion of the Qur’an to aural memory (this latter is an important achievement in the *daara* education of a *taalibe*) than the kinds of bodily disciplines its students undergo in the formation of what Bourdieu calls *body hexis*, through the embodiment of local structures of logic and personhood.

In contrast, attending a Franco-Arabe school or *daara* as an older child or teen means explicitly opting out of the public secular school system in favor of such a path. At the private co-ed Franco-Arabe school where I conducted my research the administration, teachers, and students struggled with a lack of resources. In this respect, it shared issues in common with the public, state-funded junior high school in Parcelles that was the focus of Chapter Three. In this chapter, I discussed how the public school system in Senegal, comprised of pre-school through



post-secondary schools (including the Universities of Dakar and Saint-Louis, and, more recently, the smaller universities of Thies, Bambey, and Ziguinchor) and professional institutions such as a normal school and school of administration, grew out of an uneven network of colonial schools.

Colonial-era educational institutions in Senegal were established in order to promote French economic interests and their vision for African society. Moreover, in their design and content, the schools reflected a strong division between the coastal society of the Four Communes (Saint-Louis, Dakar, Rufisque, and Gorée Island), in which men were accorded republican citizenship, and the residents of inland rural areas who were *sujets*, or subjects, of colonial rule and governed through law by decree (the *indigénat*). Hierarchy was pervasive element both colonial schools and the Qur'anic *daaras* of the time. In the marabout-*taalibe* relationship, the inequality of pupil and teacher was predicated on the esoteric nature of a marabout's knowledge. His mastery or possession of that knowledge way the key to his reputation and social identity and imbued his persona<sup>204</sup> with a sense of the inaccessibility and holiness.

Yet the ideology of personhood and identity driving colonial education in Senegal was very different than that of Qur'anic schools. Its ideas and suppositions were also inherently contradictory—one can be transformed from savage to civilized through the experience of attending French schools and acquiring French mentality, yet one can never becomes entirely French or entirely civilized. Becoming a new person, at least on those terms, was ultimately not achievable. If the *originaires* of the communes walked a strange tightrope line between an idealized egalitarianism and more deeply rooted inequities of policy and practice, for the majority of Senegalese who lived in the countryside, such an ideal was even less attainable. This was

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<sup>204</sup> Key figures in Senegalese Sufi circles like El Hajj Malick Sy (founder of the Tivaouane Tijaniyya), El Hajj Abdoulaye Niassé (who established the Kaolack branch of the Tijanes) of above all, Cheikh Amadou Bamba are extreme examples of the kind of awe and veneration such a saintly reputation can evoke.

reflected in colonial schooling policies, for a hierarchical typology of schools was erected in which rural students' opportunities for study were the least rigorous and most limited in scope; separate and not equal. Moreover, women and girls did not receive the same quality of education as their male peers at the time, an issue that has been of considerable focus of educational policy and outside funding projects in recent years.

In Chapters Three and Six, I discussed the range of these educational reforms adopted in Senegal as the colony grew and after independence. In particular, the latter has focused on building an educational system that is supposed to reflect and help positively shape local cultural values and ways of being. Reforms have also been strongly influenced by the concerns of powerful international lenders and NGOs and by a neo-liberal international discourse on development and education. As such, local leaders portray education reforms as a fundamental part of national development projects and economic success vis-à-vis both other African nations and countries in the developed West. Young students are encouraged to perform in school and parents to invest in the idea of schooling through this kind of explicitly comparative rhetoric about schooling and the nation; what Willis (2003) calls "competitive modernization".

With regard to Islamic school reform, the state's recent incorporation of religious instruction into public school curriculum and the public establishment/funding of Islamic schools are the most significant changes of recent years. In some ways, these policies advanced under Abdoulaye Wade's presidency can be understood as constituting a real break with what has been the postcolonial Senegalese state's largely secular orientation in official matters, until now. Given the incorporation of Islamic schooling into some colonial schools, and the establishment of *médersa* schools by the colonial administration, however, this move on the part of Wade is not entirely without precedent in Senegalese history. But unlike the colonial *Médersa* of Saint-Louis, which was designed to subvert and undermine existing Qur'anic religious education in the

region, the state's present engagements are designed to promote and support Islamically-based schooling along the lines of the hybrid Franco-Arabe model, while at the same time providing greater structure and a system of accreditation and standardization (and, one might say, and surveillance). Brenner (2001: 17) argues that Qur'anic schools may be thought of as producers of organic intellectuals during the colonial period, but that today those students and graduates have been "relegated to the role of 'traditional intellectuals'". These men may have a certain amount of political and cultural influence, but "for the most part are marginalized from the institutions of political power."

The most profound continuity between and across these eras and contexts is the extent to which schooling remains a touchstone for debates about class, inequality, and opportunity in Senegal. As I suggested in Chapter Three, this inequality is so insidious because it persists while changing form and place. Parents no longer object in widespread fashion to sending their children to "French school" or "modern school", i.e. non-religious public and private schools modeled on curriculum common to mass schooling systems around the world. In fact, it is now law that all children under the age of 16 must attend school, although what kind of school this encompasses is less clear, and I'm not sure such a stipulation has ever really been enforced. My ethnographic observations with middle-class and working class families in the city show that many parents and students in postcolonial Senegal relate to school instrumentally, considering the experience of attending school and particularly the resultant diplomas or certificates part of respectability and personal propriety—a normal part of the life-course for children and young adults—as well as a necessary step in trying to obtain stable employment as adults, outside of agriculture and the informal sector.

This interest in schooling as a marker of distinction is not confined to urban elites or the middle class. The Casamance region of southern Senegal has typically registered even higher

enrollment percentages than that of Dakar (at least at the elementary level, given the difference in schooling infrastructures between the regions). Based on research in Basse Casamance, the coastal part of Casamance, Vincent Foucher (2002) concludes that school attendance in this largely rural area was a key factor in young Jolas' access to civil service employment—where they have been represented at a higher percentage than their portion of the general population. Foucher characterizes this phenomenon as a kind of implicit pact, the result of what he argues are essentially actors' quotidian microdecisions. Furthermore, this is pervasive enough of an ideal to affect discourse about work, the state, and society even in contexts in which actors might have little real potential to obtain such positions. For example, in the class of upper level students at the Franco-Arabe day school in Parcelles, the figure of the *fonctionnaire* (Arabic—*wasaf*) or civil servant/bureaucrat, was the focus of several days' Arabic vocabulary and reading comprehension lessons in which students were told that people in such positions do honorable work that helps people and advances society.

The difficulty lies when these scripts of respectability (*kersa* in Wolof) and white collar success break down in application. In his work on African youth, Cameroonian scholar Achille Mbembe (1985) characterizes these models as “broken and fallen utopias of yesterday”, together with such ideals as (1) African socialism (a key part of the Senghorian vision of post-independent Senegal), (2) African unity (a cherished tenant of president Wade), and (3) national independence that at one point had such significance and mobilizing power for young people on the continent. My observations, along with those of others researchers in Senegal (Biaya 2002, Diouf 2002) suggest that there is notable difference between the extent to which older generations and parents, on one hand, and youth, on the other, may still be invested in this ideal. Younger generations are more likely to express doubt and cynicism about their ability to secure work and corruption and nepotism. And this is logical, given the kinds of changes in

employment and opportunity that economic instability and structural adjustment have wrought in recent decades. For example, in the 1980s, the civil service grew by about 3,000 persons over the entire decade, whereas in the two previous decades since independence, the state's average *annual* hire of staff was about 3,000 (Foucher 2002: 394).

This was precisely the decade in which many of the Parcelles students' parents (fathers more so than mothers) who participated in my fieldwork came of age and pursued employment opportunities. What struck me during the course of my research was that this generation of parents was not even more cynical than I found them to be. And why not, given the periods of economic instability in the 1980s and 90s that they had experienced as well as the current state of things? The reality of the present Senegalese economy and job market is incompatible with the subsistence needs of much of the population and wholly incommensurate with a politics of reputation that emphasizes the consumption and display of expensive goods (cars, cell phones, and homes) and bodily style (such as clothing, hair-style, skin color, grooming practices, and physique)<sup>205</sup> in order to be considered a person (*nit*—Wolof) of value.

The significance of these generationally-based ideals and their relevance to educational choices and subjectivity is complimented by Louis Brenner's (2001) work with hybrid Islamic schools (*médersas*) in Mali. At the *médersas*, which are similar to Senegalese Franco-Arabe day schools, Brenner found strong generational differences between parents and students regarding

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<sup>205</sup> I refer here to the high cost of women's hairstyles (both in terms of time spent at the salon and the actual price of supplemental hairpieces), skin-whitening regimens (*xeesal*), as well as achieving and maintaining body-size ideals (which differ between generations and map on to class, region, and social context e.g. the voluptuous, local-textile wearing *drianke* style of older, married women and the *diskette* or *gazelle* style of younger women for whom thinness is a necessary in order to dress in Western-style ready-to-wear clothing). For men, their engagements in a range of somewhat codified sartorial styles such as Baye Fall and PVD (different amalgams of camouflage, undershirts, linen tunics, beads, and patchwork), Rasta, Rapper/American, "*Italien*" (boat shoes, button-down shirts, pressed pants), "*Nak/Congolais*" (pointed leather shoes, tight and see-through shirts, snakeskin and loud textiles visible in music videos from Ivory Coast and Congo), "*Hibadou*" (beards, and often, but not restricted to caftans), and grand boubous signal class, religious, political, generational, and national affiliations. For a further discussion of commodity and style in Senegalese modernity see Andrewes (2005), Heath (1990), Mustafa (1997), Savishinsky (1994), and Scheld (2003).

expectations and realities. Parents who had not attended school were more enthusiastic about hybrid religious schools and saw the *médersas* as being “for religion” and the public secular schools as being “for work”. Interestingly, this is the same dichotomy expressed by venerated *L’aventure ambiguë* author Cheikh Amidou Kane, and by *taalibes* and former *taalibes* with whom I spoke in contemporary Senegal. Similar to my findings in Senegal, the Malian teens in Brenner’s study were more concerned about economic than religious matters than their parents. Malian youths’ preoccupations with their immediate and future social and economic welfare, judged as poor, were seen to affect every aspect of their lives, especially relations with parent and members of the opposite sex, and revealed strong generational and gender-based social tensions around power and agency at work.

The pervasiveness of patron-client relations at all levels of Senegalese society and within kin relations puts further strain on this uneasy co-existence between desire, duty, and means—something which my young interlocutors in Parcelles felt keenly. A political situation marked by corruption, nepotism, repression of speech and other anti-democratic practices imposes limits on how Senegalese can negotiate these tensions. Admonishments for the public to be quiet or *noppi* (Wolof) by political and religious elites in the public sphere (c.f. Havard 2004) further exacerbates the gap between the public and the state. For youth, these public admonishments to silence are laid upon a dominant social and family organization in which younger persons are usually discouraged from speaking up (Gomis 2003) and have little decision-making power. This scheme is likewise characteristic of young people’s place in the religious sphere and especially so with regard to the master-disciple relationship that characterizes Sufi religious practice and teaching modes.

Rather than suggesting solutions to these very large and multi-dimensional issues, in this dissertation I have sought to examine the changing relationship between knowledge and ontology

in Senegal. Further, I have looked at the ways in which people, particularly youth, work within the contradictions of institutionalized knowledge, self, and society; at times bypassing them, and other times confronting and challenging them in the formulation and pursuit of their life goals and in everyday existence and subsistence. I think this method reveals much about their historical genesis, the ways in which they intersect and reinforce each other, and potential spaces for change.

As we saw in the last chapter, Chapter Six, small media and popular culture represent forums for young people to express themselves as well as engage in projects of reflexive self-fashioning through consumption. However, these domains are not separate from a larger social and economic system of inequality; as such, they have the potential to reproduce hierarchy as well as to liberate. Likewise, pragmatic managing strategies—*góorgóorlu*, the focus of Chapter Five—can be a means for young people with little power to subvert the status quo. However, making do, like all social phenomena, is pursued within existing social relations of power and inequality and thus can also mean exploiting others or subjecting oneself to exploitation in the process (c.f. Biaya 2001, Werner 1993a). Further, it can also take dangerous and lethal form, for example, in the wave of undocumented migration to the Canary Islands that I explore at the end of Chapter Five.

The rise of new organizational forms and modern technologies has changed the way we experience space and time in the modern and postmodern periods, as geographers like David Harvey (1990) have so compellingly explored. The common takeaway lines in public discourse about globalization and modernization express the notion that through these technologies our world is getting smaller, and connections between people are faster and easier to make. This alteration in modes and materials goes to the very heart of identity, sociality, and personhood. The way we conceive of ourselves and others in the world is also changing along with

technological forms. Willis (2003: 403-404) argues that new symbolic order established by the mass availability of cultural commodities and commercial leisure constitutes an “epochal shift” in which young people find themselves “on the front line” as “subordinate expressive subjects”. Mbembe (1985), writing in a pan-African context, laments that the new model of success on the continent is largely consumptive, promoting the accumulation of goods that one neither knows from where they come or how to produce them, and at the expense of local accumulated knowledge, agriculture and local production<sup>206</sup>, sound financial management, and the poor.

In a similar vein, anthropological studies of modernity, given the discipline’s interest in human diversity and concern for power and domination, have offered critiques of the effects of modern processes through their grounded fieldwork observations with individuals, families, communities, and institutions. They have also problematized and undercut the idea that a global modern culture necessarily emerges out of these new technologies and modes. Studies of vernacular or alternative modernities in Africa and other world areas have demonstrated that even if, as Giddens (1991: 22) puts it, no one can ‘opt out’ of the transformations of modernity, we do not all experience, conceive of, or interact with modernity in the same way (c.f. Comaroff and Comaroff 1993, Ferguson 1999, Knauff 2002b, Piot 1999).

This emerging body of work has important implications for how we might understand the changing situations of knowledge practices in Senegal and of youth social and political engagements. Michael Lambert (2002b), in his book on Jola migration circuits within Senegal, evocatively titled “Longing for Exile”, argues that “frustration is the most common Senegalese experience of transnationalism.” The Internet and the advent of cellular telephones, for example, has importantly influenced the way in which Senegalese maintain social relations across space (particularly in the diaspora) and consume, produce and interact with cultural forms and

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<sup>206</sup> Particularly that which might help secure African food security and self-sufficiency.



commodities. Moreover, these are two spheres in which young people, including my interlocutors in Parcelles are highly interested and engaged. Yet for all of the connections that small media technologies help make possible, I would argue, following Lambert, that much of how Senegalese youth experience this era of late modernity and capitalist globalization is through bumping up against doors and closed borders and rather than their opening.

This phenomenon undercuts the validity of generalizations and optimistic meta-narratives that circulate about globalization in the academy, and to a greater extent, in public discourse. The dimension of class is important here, for the experience of restricted access to opportunity is most acute for working-class Senegalese youth who are not French-literate and is also highly gendered. Again, education in Senegal serves both to enable youth's projects for work and a respectable, prosperous future and as a disillusioner when graduates run up against fierce competition and closed doors. Although unemployment is a significant problem for diploma bearing youth from public state schools (even at the highest level), these forms of knowledge and French literacy are ultimately more valued and align more closely with the dominant model of work and employment under global capitalism. In this way, public secular school students may continue to enjoy economic and social advantages over their Islamic school peers, particularly *taalibes*, whose Sufi forms of esoteric knowledge are marginalized.

Making do is a source of recourse for secular and Islamic school graduates and drop outs alike as their credentials and knowledge fail to connect them to real opportunities for reliable and well-paid work. As forms of knowledge and practice, these patchworking and managing efforts are highly antithetical to the kinds of rote and abstract learning into which students in Senegal are socialized. At the same time, many of these school institutions reside in environments in which creative, entrepreneurial efforts in the informal sector are the dominant forms of subsistence. In the classroom, the lack of teaching and learning resources means that these forms of behavior, as

well as discourse about them, are never far from the surface. In fact, in these school, home, and neighborhood environments, making do, in practice, does not often reflect the comic play of the Goorgoorlou Goor character. Rather, it is usually a largely banal and unremarkable way of life that is both postmodern and pre-modern. And, at its worst, *góorgóorluisme* is a survival mode that includes the exploitation and objectification of less powerful persons in Senegalese society, namely women and children.

At the beginning of this dissertation, I asked the question of whether making do truly signals alternative ways of being for young people or if it simply ends up buying back into the system of social hierarchy, convention, and hard work in Senegal. Upon the conclusion of this research, it seems to me that the latter is truer about *la débrouillardise*, at least in practice. Most youths' efforts at constructing an adult self have been largely about respectability and social convention and have reinscribed local hierarchies of class, age, and gender, not overturned or challenged them. The same could be said with regard to education.

In the academy, this critique has been most compellingly put forth by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Willis (1981, 2003), and other reproduction theorists. Their work have been invaluable sources for better understanding the dynamic between inequality and modern schooling systems that push us to look beyond the facile rhetoric of meritocratic achievement. However, these scholars also put forth very pessimistic views of schooling that do not fully acknowledge the positive ways in which education can contribute to modern subjectivity and being in the world. The positive aspects of schooling would be heightened by a revised educational pedagogy that values greater student participation and places more emphasis on dialogic forms of knowing (Freire 1970). The ethos of pragmatic improvisation also deserves a larger seat at the table. Ultimately, the creative potential of making do as a kind of situational knowledge and pragmatic practice in Senegal—beyond that of the rote, and formalized

knowledge of local classrooms—has the power to go beyond simply the reproduction of existing forms of social value and hierarchy. Making do has the kind of dialogic ability to create real change with regard to the status quo.

Finally, amid all sorts of misinformation, rhetoric, and tropes about Islamic education, youth and schooling in the “developing world”, and globalization, I hope that this dissertation has showed that, in fact, the reality of people’s experience in these areas is more complicated and contradictory than we might believe. In so doing, I hope that I have also demonstrated the continued need for grounded research on these important topics. Much of what I have written concerns particular historical processes and locally specific ways of being. However, it is clear to me that many of the difficulties Senegalese young people encounter with schooling, opportunity, and their projects of the self resonate with those of their peers around the world, including post-industrial, developed nations in the West. In this beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we need to look more critically about how knowledge is understood and used. We also must face head on the contradictions, gaps, and inequities of schooling, rather than to paper over them with messages about achievement and success, that the majority of young people in Senegal and elsewhere have come to find often has little to do with them.

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