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Their Paths, Their Journeys: Transnational Mobility, Social Networks, and Coming Back Home amongst Senegalese Returnees in Dakar, Senegal

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Their Paths, Their Journeys:
Transnational Mobility, Social Networks, and Coming Back Home amongst Senegalese Returnees in Dakar, Senegal

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*Cover Photo: This collage was assembled by Miho Itabashi. It is based on a compilation of the author’s photographs during her time in Dakar, Senegal.
ABSTRACT

This study centers the voices, stories, and experiences of a sample of Senegalese individuals whose lives intersect with transnational migration. It draws upon ethnographic fieldwork, conducted in Dakar, Senegal between 2016 and 2017, comprising primarily of interviews and participant observation with Senegalese migrants who returned home after sojourns in European and West African countries and the United States, as well as staff working at a migration-related non-governmental organization that facilitates the voluntary repatriation of Senegalese nationals. In this study, I describe and analyze Senegalese migrants’ transnational paths and journeys using a multi-actor and intersectional lens that attends to questions of gender, class, age, race, religion, and nationality. This analysis specifically engages the images and experiences they construct of particular places, their departures from home, their lives abroad and the connections that they maintain with home, as well as their experiences with return, reintegration, and re-emigration. I argue that Senegalese migrants’ paths and journeys elucidate the collective and intergenerational strategies migrants utilize and rely on in order to pursue individual ambitions and desires; materially and affectively regenerate and redefine kinship and friendship-based networks within and outside Senegalese society; and circumnavigate political, economic, and social systems and structures.
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CHAPTER ONE ---
THEORIZING MIGRATION

I. Introduction

There is a word, an Igbo word that I think about whenever I think about the power structures of the world and it is nkali. It is a noun that loosely translates to “to be greater than another.” Like our economic and political worlds, stories, too, are defined by the principle of nkali. How they are told, who tells them, when they are told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power. Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person.

--- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, The Danger of A Single Story

Swarms of bodies. Vectors of crime and disease. Illegal subjects. Economic burdens. These dehumanizing tropes qualifying African and other Global South migrants, so pervasive in the public mind, reduce multifaceted human beings and situations into a single, monolithic narrative. Yet, as stated by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in the epigraph to this chapter, single-stories do not circulate in a vacuum. Rather, these discursive portrayals of African migrants respond to the historically-contingent, xenophobic rhetorics of mainstream media empires, policy-makers, and politicians looking to constrain certain individuals’ mobilities through more restrictive immigration laws. Thus, against the backdrop provided above, how do we, as scholars, diversify and equalize the production of knowledge to arrive at more geographically and culturally-specific representations of individuals’ life experiences?

It is impossible to deny the role that border militarization efforts, citizenship and visa status, and global politico-economic labor regimes have in the demarcation of migratory movements. Nonetheless, in order to disrupt essentialistic tropes surrounding African mobilities and identify the nuances of Senegalese migration, I draw from Abu-
Lughod’s (1991) discussion on ethnographies of the particular. This methodological strategy challenges bounded, homogenous, and mechanistic conceptualizations of culture. While acknowledging the shaping effect that “institutions, rules, or ways of doing things” (Abu-Lughod 1991, 153) have on individuals’ lives, Abu-Lughod warns against presuming a Durkheimian “degree of coherence that the culture concept has come to carry” (1991, 147). With this approach, ethnographic writing should “allow for the possibility of recognizing within a social group the play of multiple, shifting, and competing statements with practical effects” (Abu-Lughod 1991, 148).

Based on the notion that people’s experiences with migration are not one and the same, this thesis is rooted in the stories and experiences of a sample of Senegalese individuals, whose lives impact and have been impacted by transnational migratory movements. This includes: Senegalese migrants who returned home after sojourns of varying durations¹ in European and West African countries and the United States, as well as staff working at a migration-related non-governmental organization (NGO) in Dakar, whose work centers around facilitating the voluntary repatriation of Senegalese nationals.

In this thesis, I describe and analyze Senegalese migrants’ transnational paths and journeys using a multi-actor and intersectional lens that attends to questions of gender, class, age, race, religion, and nationality. This analysis specifically engages the images and experiences migrants construct of particular places, their departures from home, their lives abroad and the connections that they maintain with their home country, as well as their experiences with return, reintegration, and re-emigration. Altogether, I situate my argument at the intersection of three bodies of literature – transnationalism, return migration, and gender. By combining these frameworks, I argue that Senegalese

¹ Migrants’ stays abroad ranged between 1.5 to 32 years.
migrants’ paths and journeys, historical and contemporary in scope, elucidate the collective and intergenerational strategies migrants utilize and rely on in order to pursue individual ambitions and desires; materially and affectively regenerate and redefine kinship and friendship-based networks within and outside Senegalese society; and circumnavigate political, economic, and social systems and structures.

II. Frameworks of Analysis

This thesis engages critically with distinct theoretical frameworks that explain the complex dynamics imbued in migratory movements throughout time: push-pull, neoclassical, historical-structuralist, and migrant-network migration models. Ultimately, I align myself more with contemporary models, which address the social, economic, and political structures as well as the various actors at play in migration: migrants, migrants’ social networks, government institutions, and NGOs in both home and host countries.

**Push-Pull, Neoclassical, Historical-Structural, and Migrant-Network Models**

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, popular and scholarly thinking on migration largely drew from push-pull and neoclassical theoretical frameworks. Push-pull models should be understood as ‘‘purely descriptive’’ taxonomic schemes that ‘‘identify economic, environmental, and demographic factors which are assumed to push people out of places of origin and pull them into destination places’’ (Castles, Miller & de Haas 2014, 28). Push factors embody political, economic, and social conditions that make migrants dissatisfied with their home communities (e.g. conflict, political repression, high unemployment rates, low-quality levels of education). In contrast, pull factors represent the counter-conditions that draw migrants to particular places (e.g. political freedoms, low-unemployment rates, high-quality education systems). Operating primarily through a

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2 This is by no means an exhaustive list of migration-related theoretical frameworks and models.
developmental and an economically-deterministic lens, neoclassical migration theory sees migration “as a function of geographical differences in the supply and demand for labour” (Castles, Miller & de Haas 2014, 29). Driven by socioeconomic conditions and notions of productivity and high-wages, migrants rationally decide to move from low-wage, labor-surplus regions to high-wage, labor-scarce regions.

Push-pull and neoclassical models assume that social, economic, and political factors single-handedly cause migration and that migrants, defined as rational individual actors, embark on regional and transnational crossings by making a “systematic comparison of lifetime costs and benefits of remaining at home or moving to an infinite range of potential destinations” (Castles, Miller & de Haas 2014, 31). Both models ignore migrants’ social networks and how mobility is shaped more so by a mixture of migrants’ individual aspirations, familial and non-familial networks, and politico-historical constraints and relationships between countries, than by questions of “rationality” (Åkesson and Eriksson Baaz 2015; Castles, Miller & de Haas 2014; Cole and Groes 2016). Finally, by focusing on monodirectional movements from sending to receiving communities, push-pull and neoclassical migration theories both fail to explain the occurrence of return migration.3

During the 1970-80’s, scholars developed an alternative analytical framework for the study of global migratory movements. The historical-structural approach details that migratory pathways are deeply influenced, not by “rationality,” but by the legacies of colonialism and global capitalist structures that forge unequal economic, political, and social power relations between core and periphery economies, which perpetuate

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3 I define return migration through the lens of returnees “who have definitively resettled in the country of origin” and “others who come and go between worlds” (Sinatti 2015, 88).
hierarchized labor systems (Castles, Miller & de Haas 2014, 31). Within this vein of thought, migration serves as a way to mobilize and extract cheap labor and skills from rural, Global South populations for profit-accumulation purposes of urban, Western societies. While valid, the historical-structural approach renders migration as one-sided and migrants as passive actors succumbing to historically-contingent political and economic structures.

Addressing previous gaps in the literature and surging forward in scholarly conversations in the late 1980’s-90’s, migration network theory puts forward that social, economic, and politico-historical structures greatly shape migration processes for pioneer migrants. However, regional and transnational movements of subsequent generations’ migrants are more informed by the interpersonal relations, kinship and friendship-based networks, and distinct identities that are forged between migrant and non-migrant actors in sending and receiving countries (Castles, Miller & de Haas 2014, 39). Unlike push-pull, neoclassical, and historical-structural migration models, migrant network theory sheds light on the multi-directional nature of transnational flows of people, ideas, money, goods, and media and acknowledges the reality of return.

**Transnational World Orders**

With continuing global migratory fluxes, researchers across several disciplines developed transnationalism as a theoretical framework to explain how migrants form and uphold ties with a myriad of familial and nonfamilial social networks in sending and receiving communities (Castles, Miller, & de Haas 2014; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Sinatti 2011).
Despite being one of the most important concepts in migration studies, migration scholarship treats transnationalism as this “variegated phenomena” attributing different “meanings, processes, scales, and methods to the notion of ‘transnationalism’” (Vertovec 1999, 448). As such, I align with Basch, Glick, and Blanc-Szanton’s (1994, 6) understanding of transnationalism as “the processes by which transmigrants\(^4\) forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement.” Further developing the concept of transnational social relations and networks, King and Christou (2014, 5) argue that “transmigrants engage in a mixture of economic, affective, and symbolic ties usually based on principles of reciprocity and solidarity.” To further delineate the types of social spaces, both actual and imaginary, that produce and are produced by transnational migration, I draw from Appadurai (1996), Gupta and Ferguson (1992), Sassen (1991), and Cole and Groes’ (2016) theorizations of space and place.

Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1996) dismantles the myth of the isomorphism of place, space, and culture through the lens of deterritorialization, which he defines as the historical and contemporary “loosening of the holds between people, media, technology, finance, ideas” (49). Rejecting the claim of culturally unitary spaces, Appadurai argues that, more so now than in the past, “the landscapes of group identity - the ethnoscapes - [...] are no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogenous” (1996, 48), due to the role of new technologies and mobilities that facilitate an interconnectedness between places. Deterritorialized and multidirectional transnational cultural flows, without “logically or

\(^4\) I conceptualize transmigrants as “permanent settlers in the country of immigration and others who shuttle regularly between places of origin and of temporary overseas residence” (Sinatti 2011, 154).
chronologically presupposing either the authority of the Western experience” (Appadurai 1996, 49), also reconfigure constructions of place as imagined by individuals, as more people consider a wider set of possible lives than they ever did before.

Appadurai’s appraisal of place, particularly that of individuals’ increasingly-global imaginings of social life, is entirely valid. However, it is my contention that this framework prioritizes too much the extent to which cosmopolitan exchanges “transcend specific territorial boundaries and identities” (1996, 49), over an examination of the ways place has been reconfigured and remains relevant in our globalizing world.

Remaining in the field of anthropology, scholars Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1992) echo Appadurai’s understanding of how flows can create, reproduce, and transform geographic space. However, Gupta and Ferguson’s critique of the differentiation of cultures by “a seemingly unproblematic division of space, on the fact that they occupy ‘naturally’ discontinuous spaces” (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 6), sheds light on the often-silenced historical power dynamics between the Western ‘self’ and non-Western ‘other.’ The authors put forward that it is not enough to acknowledge that notions of place have always been formulated as a result of transnational exchanges between local and global spatial arenas. Instead, “spaces have always been hierarchically connected” (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 8). As such, hierarchical power relations imbued in culturo-historical, economic, and political systems - i.e. colonial projects and neo-colonial pursuits - play a critical role in place-making processes.⁵

In contrast to Appadurai’s deterritorialization-of-place framework, where place is secondary to transnational cultural flows, Gupta and Ferguson posit that notions of place

⁵ Gupta and Ferguson’s argument about places being hierarchically connected should not be mistaken for a cultural imperialism argument. Rather, “where “here” and “there” become blurred in this way, the cultural certainties and fixities of the metropole are upset as surely, if not in the same way, as those of the colonized periphery” (1992, 10).
have not become wholly deterritorialized, but re-territorialized in individuals’ imaginings of social life, particularly amongst mobile and displaced populations. Even amidst a transnational and seemingly deterritorialized world order, the authors argue, ideas of culturally and ethnically distinct places become perhaps even more salient (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 10). Despite the enduring relevance of ideal manifestations of place, Gupta and Ferguson remind their readers that ‘‘places are always imagined in the context of political-economic determinations that have a logic of their own’’ (1992, 11).

Sociologist Saskia Sassen (1991) also examines the centrality of place in the context of globalization by taking into account the spatial dispersion of capital and labor. Sassen argues that hierarchically-connected notions of place emerge from power-laden global economic systems of production. As such, the ‘‘numerous plant closings in all major industrialized countries and transfers of production jobs to lower-wage domestic or foreign locations’’ (Sassen 1991, 24) reveal how transnational flows of money and technology lead to material changes in the capital-labor base of countries, which, in turn, reconfigure place-making processes between ‘‘developed countries’ and ‘developing countries.’

In addition, Sassen also points out that despite the decentralization of capital and labor in the global economy, place remains central. The prevalence of place derives from how new forms of centralized ownership, economic and technological control, and top-level management have become concentrated in a few ‘First World’ financial centers, notably in New York, London, and Tokyo, providing these cities with the power to supervise a worldwide production system and labor force. As such, the ‘‘massive and parallel changes in New York, London, and Tokyo’s economic base, spatial
organization, and social structure” (1991, 4) should not be understood as mere outcomes of the effect of transnational flows of capital on ‘locality,’ but as the reorganization of economic activity and reterritorialization of regulatory practices that are situated in specific, hierarchically-connected places.

Overall, Gupta and Ferguson and Sassen underline that notions of place, often configured under power-laden contexts, have not been wholly deterritorialized. Rather, place remains relevant in their ideal and material manifestations. Nevertheless, their conceptualizations of the re-territorialization of place prioritize structural reconfigurations of place, driven by culturo-historical, economic and political systems of exchange, and fail to acknowledge the intimate and affective dimensions imbued in place-making processes.

Alongside scholars like Cati Coe, Pamela Feldman-Savelsberg, Julie Kleinman, Pamela Kea, Carolyn Sargent, Stéphanie Larchanché, Leslie Fesenmyer, Hélène Neveu Kringelbach, and Henrik Vigh, anthropologists Jennifer Cole and Christian Groes (2016) develop the affective circuits framework to critically study the intimate dimensions of place-making processes within the context of contemporary African migrations to Europe. Similar to the above-mentioned scholars, both authors reject the isomorphism of space, place, and culture and argue that notions of place are hierarchically-connected and re-configured by ‘‘the myriad exchanges of goods, people, ideas and money’’ (Cole and Groes 2016, 2), as well as the historical and contemporary political, economic, and social entanglements between Africa and Europe.

In contrast to Appadurai, Gupta and Ferguson, and Sassen, however, Cole and Groes examine the intimate and affective dimensions imbued in migratory movements
and transnational exchanges between migrants and actors in sending and receiving communities. First, transnational circulations of people, technology, money, and ideas constitute social processes that allow migrants to regenerate and rework their social relationships and moral obligations with kin and other social networks back home and abroad. Second, while material exchanges mediate the intimate ties between migrants and their social networks, emotions (e.g. love, obligation, pride, shame) are also entangled with these transnational circulations. Yet, both authors agree that migrants are not agents fixed to transnational social regeneration practices, but rather “honor, resist, or redefine inherited notions of social obligation as they reproduce, contest, and transform their social relations and cultural norms” (Cole and Groes 2016, 7). Thus, through the material and affective dimensions of transnational exchanges, ‘home’ is dynamically re-territorialized beyond its fixed spatial configuration.

Both authors also maintain that hierarchically-connected and re-territorialized notions of place remain central, particularly in contexts where South-North mobility is regulated and controlled. As such, actors in both sending and receiving communities (e.g. state actors, kin, friends, peers) embody new forms of “overlapping dimensions of political and social control” (2016, 8), which seek to block and manage migrants’ material and affective circuits. Offering an “alternative to the narratives of crisis, suffering, and exclusion” (2016, 5), however, both authors also focus on the material and affective exchanges of goods, ideas, and advice between migrants and social networks abroad, which help migrants find work, legalize their status, find somewhere to live, and effectuate their social obligations with their families back home.
Adding on to the existing scholarship that applies the affective circuits framework to studies of Senegalese transnational migration (Neveu-Kringelbach 2016), my work elucidates the collective and intergenerational strategies migrants utilize and rely on in order to pursue individual ambitions and desires; materially and affectively regenerate and redefine kinship and friendship-based networks within and outside Senegal; and circumvent political, economic, and social structures. In addition, Cole and Groes’ edited volume lacks an explicit examination of how these intimate and affective transnational social spaces are tied to processes of return migration. By examining the different strands of Senegalese migrants’ transnational paths and journeys, my work aims to fill this gap in the literature.

*The Question of Return*

Return migration is the great unwritten chapter in the history of migration.

--- Ronald Skeldon, *Generalizations from the History of Return Migration*

Many, if not all, migrants nurture the idea of returning to their home communities while abroad, and many of them do return for varying periods of time (Åkesson and Baaz 2015; Long and Oxfeld 2004; Sinatti 2015; Toa-Kwapong 2016). Thus, against the backdrop provided above, how do we begin to theorize the experiences of Senegalese returnees in ways that challenge static notions of place and integrate the sending and receiving poles of transnational migration into a single framework?

Early 19th-century geography and economics scholars studied migration as compartmentalized, mono-directional events, neglecting the possibility of return. In 1885, however, geographer Ernst Georg Ravenstein published the first section of his three-part essay entitled *The Laws of Migration*, a seminal text within the field of migration studies.
Addressing return migration, he claimed that “each main current of migration produces a compensating counter-current” (Ravenstein 1885, 199). Nevertheless, Ravenstein’s observations remained unnoticed until the early 20th century. At that time, neoclassical migration scholars viewed migration as “the outcome of a failed migration experience which did not yield the expected results for labour migrants” (Cassarino 2015, 255). Under this framework, labor migrants returned home driven by unfavorable employment opportunities and unmet expected earnings.

The 1960’s saw a shift away from migration as a discrete, individualized phenomenon and towards a system-based approach, acknowledging constant migratory movements and flows of money, technology, and ideas between host and home countries (Gmelch 1980; Tsuda 2009). Rather than framing migrants as rational individual actors, scholars conducted multi-actor analyses of migratory movements. Oded Stark (1991), a pioneer migration specialist on the New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM), framed return migration as the outcome of a calculated strategy, defined at the level of the migrant’s household, and resulting from the successful achievement of primarily-economic goals abroad. Despite viewing the migratory decision-making process as a collective, familial decision, the NELM model classifies returnees as foreign-income bearers, frames return as the endpoint of a migrant’s journey, and ignores migrants’ reintegration experiences.

Around this time, anthropologists and other social scientists framed return as the endpoint of a migrant’s journey. In his review of international return migration, anthropologist George Gmelch defined this term as “the movement of emigrants back to

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6 Referring to said migratory counter-current, Ravenstein points out that both first and second-generation migrants, defined as children of migrants, are increasingly returning homeward.
their homelands to resettle” (1980, 136). Distancing himself from economically deterministic interpretations of return migration, Gmelch argued that non-economic factors, like strong family ties and feelings of allegiance to the home society, constitute the primary reasons for migrants’ return home (Gmelch 1980, 139). Gmelch also distinguished himself from the scholarly conversation at the time by theorizing return migration as a cyclical, intergenerational process, rather than a finite, singular-life phenomenon, meaning, returnees spur desires to migrate amongst kin, friends, and other members of their home communities (Gmelch 1980, 153). Nevertheless, the shortcomings of Gmelch’s definition center around his contention that migrants return to their home countries to permanently resettle.

During the late 20th and early 21st centuries, transnationalism arose as a new modality of analysis for return migration. Operating within this school of thought, transnational migration scholars contended that return is not the end point of a migrant’s journey, as countercurrent movements do not preclude the possibility of re-migration (Åkesson and Baaz 2015; Boccagni 2011; King 2000; Long and Oxfeld 2004; Sinatti 2011; Toa-Kwapong 2016). Acknowledging that migrants forge and maintain transnational, material and affective ties with an array of social networks in their home communities, social scientists conceptualized return migration as the “outcome of compromises made between return and the conflicting benefits offered by staying in migration” and “a largely private affair that involves the individual and his or her kin” (Sinatti 2011, 153-55).
Since the early 2000’s, transnational migration scholars have increasingly examined the nexus between return migration and development.\(^7\) A large body of scholarship focuses on how governmental\(^8\) and institutional actors craft diasporic return policies that encourage predominantly high-skilled, male migrants to ‘‘come back, invest, and help advance the country’’ (Sinatti 2015, 87) through the transfer of money, social capital, and skills\(^9\) (Åkesson 2011; Åkesson and Baaz 2015; Black et al. 2003; Cassarino 2004; Long and Oxfeld 2004; Turner and Kleist 2013). Aiming to maximize migrants’ investments in the national economy, governments facilitate migrants’ economic reintegration through ‘‘tax exemptions, advice on savings and investments […] and help in starting up new businesses and emigrant-dedicated credit lines’’ (Boccagni 2011, 464). The underlying rationale of this argument is that migrants, residing in the Global North, accumulate financial, human, and social capital and thus, have the moral obligation to give back to their home countries (Åkesson 2011).

The ‘‘agents of change’’ (Turner and Kleist 2013) neoliberal\(^10\) trope attributed to migrants carries serious implications. First, return policies respond to the economic, security, and political concerns of host countries and governments’ interests in the repatriation of skills and resources, more so than actually being concerned with migrants’ return (Åkesson 2011; Cassarino 2004; Sinatti 2015). Second, the trope mimics a Eurocentric colonial imagery of place and space, whereby Europe is seen as the epitome

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\(^7\) Papademetriou and Martin (1991) put forward that return, recruitment, and remittance, the 3Rs, play a prominent role in development policies of home countries. My thesis, however, primarily focuses on how governments engage with return migration.

\(^8\) The African Union, for example, defines the African Diaspora as ‘‘people of African origin living outside the continent […] who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent’’ (AU 2011).

\(^9\) The expectation that migrants will participate in development projects assumes that migrants will automatically invest in the nation’s economy. Rather, Black et al. (2003) and Ndye (2016) claim that migrants are more likely to send and transfer money to their families than to improve human development indexes.

\(^10\) Duffield (2010) argues that the neoliberal discourse of development is characterized by the idea that development should be rooted on individuals’ and households’ adaptive self-resilience. Applying Duffield’s findings to the field of return migration, Åkesson (2011) puts forward that migrants are made responsible for development in their countries of origin through the transfer of skills and resources.
of civilization, cradle of knowledge acquisition, and land of endless opportunities, and reduces migrants to their skills and resources (Åkesson and Baaz 2015; Boccagni 2011). Third, low-skilled migrants are less likely to be lured in by the government and other parastatal entities for national development projects (Turner and Kleist 2013), given the existence of an ideal type of returnee: “resourceful, experienced, and eager to initiate innovative and profitable enterprises that would allow new economic sectors to boom” (Sinatti 2015, 90). Thus, “agents of change” predominantly encompass high-skilled migrants. Ultimately, scholarship within this vein of thought examines a migrant’s return through the lens of economic reintegration and ignores the social dynamics of reintegration.

Gendered Migrations

Woman is a greater migrant than man. This may surprise those who associate women with domestic life, but the figures of the census prove it.

--- Ernst Georg Ravenstein, The Laws of Migration

The story of women in global migration studies is one of hard-fought resilience despite an androcentric bias in the field’s research and theoretical models. In this section, I explore how, throughout the years, migration studies scholarship has adopted an intersectional framework that studies how mobility is shaped by migrants’ socio-demographic profiles, household dynamics, and politico-economic regimes of labor.

The first stage of feminist scholarship regarding gender and global mobilities surged in the 1970s and 1980s and is often labeled as the ‘add and stir’ or ‘women only’ phase due to the superficial incorporation of gender into migratory analyses. By taking

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11 By invoking feminism and feminist movements, I ask my readers to be critical of the imperialist intentions of white-centered feminist movements.
women into account, scholars sought to reframe a field that had previously been defined by a masculine bias (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1999; Pessar 1999; Wong 2014; Zlotnick 2003). However, scholars incorporated gender only “as a variable and measured with regard to, say, education and labor market participation, and then simply compared with migrant men’s patterns” (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1999, 6) or would exclusively focus on women. This superficial analysis treated gender as another variable and failed to grasp how gender, as a social system, shapes social relations and migration processes. By failing to nuance women’s experiences with regards to other markers of identity, scholars treated women as out-of-context objects of study.

The second and third-wave feminist movements12 and a global increase in immigration research13 led to the emergence of the second stage of migration-and-gender scholarship in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1999; Pessar 1999). Addressing the above-mentioned gaps, the advances of this stage are two-fold. Redefining central analytical concepts, such as woman and femininity, outside white, Euro-centered heteronormative discourses, scholars applied an intersectional framework14 to migratory analyses, which focused on the commonalities and differences within women’s multi-subjective experiences (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1999; Pessar 1999). As Abu-Lughod points out, “gender as a system of difference is intersected by other systems of difference” (1991, 140) like sexuality, ability, race, ethnicity, age, and class. Scholars

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12 Within academia, first and second-wave feminists critiqued the ways in which women had been ignored in studies of society and unveiled the power-laden processes through which “women have been made the other to men’s self” (Abu-Lughod 1990, 25). Third-wave feminists, on the other hand, exposed how the notion of a universal female experience of subordination and the fixed self/other binary masked and repressed other forms of difference.

13 The increase in immigration research is due to an overall increase in global migration. In Zlotnick’s (2003) study, the author points out that women accounted for 46.6% of all international migrants in 1960. This figure increased up to 48.8% by 2000.

14 First coined by black feminist and critical race theorist, Kimberlé Crenshaw. In her 1989 landmark essay “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” Crenshaw argues against the analytical and theoretical treatment of identity markers, such as race, gender, and class, as “mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis” (Crenshaw 1989, 139).
also focused on how migratory decision-making processes are deeply gendered (de Jong 2000; Konaté 2010), as well as how transnational mobilities transform gender roles and subjectivities and introduce new gendered frictions both in the workforce and in the household (Toa-Kwapong 2016; Wong 2014). Nevertheless, the largest critique of this stage of scholarship lies, as Hondagneu-Sotelo (1999, 8) warns, in how it implies that “gender resides almost exclusively in meso-level social institutions, such as family, households, community institutions, or social networks.” Thus, scholars failed to analyze how global political and economic regimes are also gendered.

From the 1990s onwards, academics belonging to the third wave of feminist scholarship posit gender as a “key constitutive element of migration [...] which permeates a variety of practices, identities, and institutions implicated in immigration” (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1999, 9). Within this vein of thought, scholars analyze the role that gender plays in mesolevel social institutions as well as in “changing politico-economic conditions in labor-exporting and labor-importing societies” (Pessar 1999, 29), and how it affects women and men differently depending on other markers of identity.

III. Crafting the Ethnography

Objective cultural fact, impartiality, and detachment in ethnography do not exist. Rather, ethnographic research, a methodological tool for learning about the cultural knowledge that people use to navigate their social worlds, constitutes a partial and multi-subjective “fiction” (Buggenhagen 2012; Clifford 1986; Geertz 1973). Far from representing one-way, neutral transfers of information, these “fictions” are constructed through “our personal interactions with particular individuals” (Abu-Lughod 1990, 27), which are situated within politico-historical determined worlds. To this end, this section
lays out the methods for this research and critically reflects on the interconnections as well as the inherently subjective, biased, and power-laden dimensions of my fieldwork.

My ethnographic research is situated in the urban landscape of Dakar, Senegal, where I resided for a total of six months: five months in the fall of 2016 and one month in the summer of 2017. Bibliographic research for this project, however, began in the summer of 2016 with the financial and academic support of the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship Program at Macalester College. From August to December 2016, I was a *toubab*\(^{15}\) student participating in the Minnesota Studies in International Development (MSID) study away program at the West African Research Center (WARC), located in Fann Residence. With the Spradley Summer Research Fellowship from Macalester College’s Department of Anthropology, I was able to return to Dakar to build on the data collected in 2016 during a month-long follow-up field study from June to July 2017.

Over these two periods of field study, I conducted and digitally recorded in-depth, semi-structured interviews, in French and English, with eight male and four female Senegalese migrants, who had returned home after stays in European and West-African countries and the United States. The Senegalese returnees I interviewed came from diverse economic backgrounds, had held varying legal statuses during their stays abroad, and ranged from 24 to 64 years in age at the time of the interview (see Appendix A). I also held interviews with staff working at a migration-related NGO, whose work centers around facilitating the voluntary repatriation and return of Senegalese migrants. I interviewed four of my informants two to three times; I consider them cultural life history

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\(^{15}\) A Wolof word which encompasses all those who are non-Senegalese. While the etymology of the word comprises Westerners, especially those who are ‘white,’ my Senegalese host family informed me that the term is now applied to individuals from other West African countries.
informants. Prior to starting each interview, I shared the goals, procedures, and risks and advantages of my research project, asked for verbal and written consent, and ended by inquiring if my informants had any questions for me. Each interview ranged from 30 to 150 minutes, and I used pseudonyms, both in the transcripts and in this document, in order to preserve my informants’ anonymity. In addition to semi-structured ethnographic interviews, I also conducted content of policy and other official government documents concerning Senegalese migration.

My access to the community of returnees stems from two Senegalese men, Malik and Nicolas, whose work centers around different iterations of migration. In sync with Abu-Lughod’s strategies for “writing against culture,” my connection to these two key individuals exemplifies the importance of focusing on the historical and contemporary interconnections between anthropologists and the places where they are doing research (Abu-Lughod 1991, 148). Far from embarking on existential endeavors, Abu-Lughod argues, anthropologists need to critically and self-reflexively inquire about:

processes by which it came to pass that people like ourselves could be engaged in anthropological studies of people like those, about the current world situation that enables us to engage in this sort of work in this particular place, and about who has preceded us and is even now there with us (tourists, travelers, missionaries, AIDS consultants, Peace Corps workers). We need to ask what this “will to knowledge” about the Other is connected to in the world (Abu-Lughod 1991, 148).

I met Professor Malik during orientation for my study away program. As the director of a prestigious research institute in Dakar, Professor Malik introduced himself as a former English professor at Cheikh Anta Diop University (UCAD) and director of an exchange program between UCAD and French and American Universities. Via these roles, Professor Malik served as a crucial resource for many upper middle class
Senegalese students who wished to pursue their postsecondary studies abroad. As I engaged with these returnees, who, as student visa-holders, headed primarily towards France and the United States to further their studies and then, returned to work in their respective fields, I recognized the relevance of Nader’s argument of reinventing anthropology by studying “the culture of affluence rather than the culture of poverty” (1972, 289). Earlier anthropological work focused on marginalized communities without examining how structures of power shape lived experiences. Studying affluent communities, Nader argues, has the potential of producing adequate theories that are conscious of power and class differentials and deepening our understandings of “whole cultures in a cross-cultural context.” (1972, 293). By documenting the migratory aspirations, strategies, and journeys of tertiary-level educated returnees, I hope to dismantle the myth that African migration constitutes the forced relocation of impoverished individuals as a result of politico-economic hardships on the continent.

Nicolas and I met during my internship at the Welcoming Point for Refugees and Immigrants (P.A.R.I.), a Dakar-based NGO. As the organisation’s Return/Reintegration project coordinator, Nicolas collaborated with CARITAS Belgium to assist working class, primary and secondary-level educated Senegalese migrants with their return and economic reintegration. Throughout the fieldwork process, Nicolas was an incredible ally as he scheduled several interviews with returnees who were favorably disposed toward speaking with me. I acknowledge, however, that contacting research participants via Nicolas might have resulted in an oversampling of Senegalese returnees from Belgium and dissuaded returnees from sharing certain aspects of their migration stories. Despite my best efforts at clarifying the confidential nature of the interviews, it is possible that
returnees were afraid that their stories might get back to the organization and limit funding opportunities.

Language played a central role throughout the process of conducting ethnographic fieldwork. Although Senegal is a multilingual country, most of my interviews were conducted in French, Senegal’s official language. Conducting research in French was possible because of my proficiency in the language and my location in an urban setting—Dakar. While Senegalese rarely speak French to their kin and non-toubab friends, urban Senegalese individuals are more likely to understand and speak French than their rural counterparts. A few of the interviews were also conducted in a mixture of English and French per request of the migrants who had returned from sojourns in the United States. Although not part of the formal interviewing process, I greeted my informants in Wolof, one of Senegal’s national languages, in order to build rapport with them and convey that I was genuinely interested in their culture and lived experiences. Finally, I transcribed verbatim all of the recordings in the language in which the interview was conducted. Following the transcription process, I began initial open coding of fieldnotes and interview data using the qualitative data analysis software package, ATLAS.ti.

Nonetheless, my presence may, more often than not, have affected people’s language use. Whether in conversations with Senegalese locals on the streets of Dakar, members of my host-family, scholars at WARC, and research participants, I saw that, often, people spoke French so that I would understand, even though under different circumstances they would probably be speaking Wolof, Serer, Pulaar, or one of the other national languages in Senegal. In addition, my limited proficiency in Wolof and
interviewees’ code-switching practices may have also resulted in me missing certain cultural nuances.

While this thesis centers on returnees’ stories and experiences, the entirety of this research incorporates myself and the multiple identities that I embody. As a Peruvian-American, 23-year-old, unmarried, middle-class, toubab woman in Senegal, privilege - expressed through language, skin tone, socio-economic class, and other identity markers - permeated my project as a whole. Especially when recruiting participants for my project, notions of class, gender, cultural capital, and urban space shaped whom I interacted, and did not interact, with. For example, during my internship at P.A.R.I., I would often ask Nicolas if he knew of other returnees whom I could interview. While I am eternally grateful to him for his active participation in my project, Nicolas would sometimes cancel interviews if returnees could not come to the office and instead, asked if I could meet them at their homes in Parcellles Assainies, or Guediawaye, which are arrondissements16 situated on the periphery of the nation’s capital.

To conclude, I ask my readers to ponder the implications of conducting ethnographic work in foreign communities for both the ethnographer and the reader. Should toubab scholars undertake research opportunities in other countries? What does it mean to be producing research in a language different than the one my participants use in daily conversations? How do you give back to people and communities that have helped build up your academic career? Aware of these standpoints, but lacking a definite answer to these questions at the moment, I choose to believe that there is value in employing ethnographic methodologies to understand the many dynamic and overlapping stories that

16 *Arrondissements* are administrative districts within a city. The *arrondissement* administrative structure was inherited from French colonial rule.
make up people’s lives and actively listen to people’s stories in order to work towards a critical reevaluation of a disputed topic: African migration.

The following subsection lays out the organization and content for the rest of this thesis.

IV. The Blueprint

The following chapter provides the historical, politico-legal, and sociological groundwork for transnational analyses of contemporary Senegalese migration. In Chapter Two, I argue that, although Senegalese migratory practices have endured through time - despite the various iterations of migration - the context in which they occur has changed substantially amidst increasing levels of political, economic, and sociocultural interconnectedness.

In Chapter Three, I tease out the etic and emic dimensions of what prompts Senegalese men and women to migrate. First, this chapter engages critically with three categories that seek to explain migrants’ reasons for departure - labor migration, student migration, and *experiential migration*. Second, this chapter addresses the prominent, yet shifting, role that migrants’ kin play in the migratory decision-making process. Overall, I argue that Senegalese migrants collectively strategize their departures by mobilizing and relying on all available kinship social networks, both at home and abroad. Within this framework, migrants’ mobilities are influenced by national and global economic, educational, and political systems, migrants’ familial obligations, and individual and collective aspirations and imaginings of life abroad.

Chapter Four provides a nuanced account of migrants’ lives abroad and the connections they maintain with home. In this chapter, I argue that, while abroad, Senegalese migrants regenerate and redefine transnational ties with kinship-based social
networks back home through material and affective exchanges of money, goods, and emotions. Senegalese migrants also forge and maintain familial and non-familial social networks, premised on reciprocity, solidarity, and hospitality. In theory, these collective and strategic social configurations help migrants navigate the daily realities of more restrictive global immigration policies and manage situations of vulnerability, uncertainty, and loneliness.

In Chapter Five, I propose a threefold argument about return, reintegration, and re-emigration. First, Senegalese migrants coordinate their returns alongside an array of actors - kin members, government institutions, and NGOs - each with particular rhetorics, attitudes, and expectations regarding return migration. Common across age groups, gender, and class, the decision to return responds to migrants’ individualistic aspirations and imaginings of home, migrants’ familial responsibilities, as well as the personal and professional opportunities available in Senegal. Second, through a multi-actor framework, I posit that Senegalese returnees’ experiences with social, professional and economic reintegration are shaped, facilitated, and regulated by their families, co-workers, NGOs, and government institutions. Finally, Senegalese migrants’ return does not necessary entail a permanent resettlement. Because returnees nurture hopes and aspirations of re-emigration, ‘home’ becomes one strand in their transnational lives.
CHAPTER TWO ---
UNEARTHING THE SEEDS OF SENEGALESE MIGRATION

I. Introduction

A Senegalese proverb contends that the future emerges from the past. Thus, to begin to comprehend the nature of the current and future state of affairs, we must attend to Senegal’s history and the economic, political, and social factors that have shaped the nation’s trajectory. In this chapter, I lay the politico-historical and sociological groundwork against and in response to which intergenerational Senegalese migratory movements occur. By focusing on distinct iterations of migration throughout three periods in Senegal’s history - pre-Islamic and pre-colonial kingdoms, colonial rule, and post-independence1 - I put forward that voluntary and forced regional and transnational movements of people and exchanges of goods, money, and ideas are a historical component of the Senegalese, and West African, social fabric that precedes the idea of the nation-state.2 This chapter also explores migration rationales, shifts in destination countries for Senegalese migrants, socio-demographic changes within the migrant population, and key Senegalese cultural values embedded in the migratory process, such as the importance of reciprocity and kinship-based social networks rooted in Islamic religious practices.

Before embarking on this analysis, it is imperative to situate Senegal within a geopolitical and demographic context. The Republic of Senegal is situated in the West-African region contoured by Mauritania, to the north, Mali, to the east, and the Gambia, 1

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1 While this chapter chronologically structured, the above mentioned categories do not convey a Eurocentric, linear, historically-ruptured model of “progress.” Rather, drawing from McClintock’s (1992) critique of the term postcolonialism, I attend to the “continuities and discontinuities of colonial and imperial power” (88) that run across the pre-Islamic and pre-colonial, colonial, and post-independence periods.

2 A review of migratory movements across Senegalese history also invalidates anthropologists’ traditional, static, and typologizing constructions of culture, place, and space (Abu-Lughod 1991; Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Appadurai 1996).
Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, to the south (see Figure 1) and is the westernmost country on the African continent. By the end of 2017, Senegal’s total population amounted to 16,162,834 people living within its geopolitical boundaries, out of which 2,476,400 people resided in the capital city of Dakar (World Population Review 2017). While Senegal is a secular state, approximately 94 percent of the population is Muslim, mostly belonging to one of several Islamic Sufi brotherhoods; five percent is Christian, including Roman Catholics and Protestants; and the remaining one percent adheres to indigenous religions (US Department of State 2014).

![Figure 1: Map of Senegal](image)

### II. Pre-Islamic, Pre-Colonial, and Colonial Mobilities

Senegal currently sprawls across the boundaries of mobile pre-Islamic and pre-colonial kingdoms that inhabited West Africa and that interacted with other areas of the continent primarily through trade. During the 10th and 11th centuries, the Soose, Manding,

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3 Senegal, no. 4174, Rev. 3 January 2004.
Serer and Wolof people settled in the lower, sandy valleys of what is now Senegal and the Gambia and established advanced civilizations (Callaway and Creevey 1994; Diop 1981). These kingdoms were highly mobile, engaged with trade, and made various technological and economic advancements as early as 1000 - 2000 B.C.E. (Gilbert and Reynolds 2008, 64). According to historians Gilbert and Reynolds (2008), up to 1500 C.E., West Africa had already been a region of dynamic economic, political, and cultural life and was connected to North, South and East Africa through a vibrant trans-Saharan trade route. The presence of these trade routes, paving the way for the movement of goods and people, brought about cultural and societal changes, such as the introduction of Islam into the African continent around 642 C.E. and in Senegal in 1100 C.E., during the Almoravid Empire (Diop 1981; Gilbert and Reynolds 2008).

Colonial mercantilist and imperialist interests, primarily of the Portuguese and French, also contributed to the constant ebb and flow of people, goods, and cultural practices in West Africa. Given Senegal’s long history of trade, European colonial powers were interested in annexing this territory to their own. The arrival of the Portuguese, in 1444, brought about the spread of Christianity and the establishment of the Senegalese coast as one of the primary ports for New World-Old World trading routes, where enslavement^4^ and the trading of gold, ivory, and spices took place (Gilbert and Reynolds 2008; Ring, Watson & Schellinger 1995). Between 1364 and 1413, French merchants traded with coastal populations in the Gambia and Senegal. However, it wasn’t until 1659 that France established a mercantile port in Saint-Louis, Senegal and in 1677

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^4^ The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, run by Emory University Libraries, the University of Hull, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, and Victoria University of Wellington, estimates that Sub-Saharan Africa lost over twelve and a half million men, women, and children to the trans-Atlantic slave trade between 1525-1867 (Emory University 2013). However, enslaved Africans did not walk quietly into servitude. For analyses on strategies devised by West African individuals to attack, defend, and protect themselves from the slave trade, see Diouf (2003).
when France ended up in possession of the island of Gorée (Gilbert and Reynolds 2008), both strategic locations for European ships to gain access to human and material commodities in the interior of the African continent.

The creation of French West Africa\(^5\) (FWA), a federation born out of the 1880-1890 French colonial conquests, further increased the aforementioned transnational flows of people and goods. West and Central African and French migrants circled in and out of Dakar, primarily for trade and labor purposes, as this city served as the capital of FWA (Devillard, Bacchi & Nack 2015; Gerdes 2007). Colonial economic regimes also informed Senegalese labor migration within and outside of Africa. During the 1960’s and 1970’s, Senegalese migration was directed to Mauritania, Mali, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville, Cameroon, and France because of the high demand for cheap labor as well as the geopolitical and cultural proximity of the aforementioned countries (Devillard, Bacchi & Nack 2015; Gerdes 2007).

In the realm of colonial schooling in FWA, local authorities implemented a system of scholarships that facilitated transnational migratory movements for Senegalese students. Beginning in the late 19\(^{th}\) century, colonial authorities in the Four Communes\(^6\) sent small cohorts of elite students, who were often the children of well-connected \textit{originaires},\(^7\) to France for secondary or postsecondary studies (Gamble 2017, 101). In 1920, however, the Governor General set up a new system of scholarships for a small cohort of non-elite\(^8\) graduates from the École William Ponty to continue their studies at

\(^{5}\) French West Africa (1895-1960) was a federation of eight French colonial territories in Africa including the present-day countries: Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Benin, Niger, Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, and French Guinea.
\(^{6}\) The Four Communes of Senegal (Saint-Louis, Dakar, Gorée, and Rufisque) were the four oldest colonial towns in AOF.
\(^{7}\) Africans who had been born in the Four Communes. Together with French nationals, mixed-race residents, \textit{originaires} were enfranchised and possessed other rights.
\(^{8}\) Ponty graduates did not hail from the Four Communes, and thus were not considered elite (Gamble 2017, 102).
the normal school in Aix-en Provence, France (Gamble 2017, 101). In both cases, colonial authorities required scholarship recipients to return to Senegal, upon completion of their studies, to serve in the colonial administration.⁹

In addition to labor and student migration, enforced migration also constituted an infamous reality throughout colonial rule in FWA (Lunn 1990; Riccio 2005). Specifically during World War I, over ‘‘half of the able-bodied men of military age in the colony’’ (Lunn 1990, 1-2) were conscripted into the French colonial army against their own will to serve as *tirailleurs sénégalais*, who would be tasked with sacrificing their lives in the battlefield in order to defend the metropole.¹⁰ Through the implementation of colonial levies, the French government institutionalized the forced and repressive recruitment of 3,350 rural Senegalese men by 1915¹¹ (Lunn 1990, 34). Given the colossal losses that the French army suffered during the first months after WWI broke out and the inferior status ascribed to black Africans, forced conscription programs only increased and reached a cumulative total of 13,339 Senegalese between August 1914 and November 1917 (Lunn 1990, 35). Regiments of *tirailleurs sénégalais*, under forced recruitment, also fought in the Franco-Malagasy wars, World War II, the Anti-French Resistance War in Vietnam, and the Algerian War of Independence.

III. Shifting Migratory Patterns in Post-Colonial Senegal

Towards the end of French colonial rule and throughout Senegal’s early independence years,¹² migratory fluxes changed dramatically, given economic instability

⁹ Despite lacking a precise answer, it is worth contemplating that Senegalese students, who were scholarship recipients, or African soldiers, who fought in WWI, constituted the original wave of Senegalese return migrants.

¹⁰ While the majority of West Africans submitted to the system of compulsory military service fearing persecution, local acts of individual and collective resistance produced frictions with the colonial administration. See Lunn 199, pp. 43-46.

¹¹ While statistics do not fully convey the violence and collective trauma experienced by West African, I believe these numerical figures are useful to display the extent of these forced migration programs.

¹² Senegal officially gained independence from France on April 4, 1960.
on the continent between the mid-1960’s to the late 1990’s. The sharp decline of Senegal’s GDP in the 1990’s, from 5.717 billion dollars to an all-time low of 3.877 billion dollars in 1994 (The World Bank 2017b), led to soaring unemployment rates and the deterioration of living standards in both rural and urban landscapes (Gerdes 2007; Sinatti 2011). Due to this economic chaos, immigration to Senegal and other West African countries, as a final destination, decreased. Nonetheless, emigration to member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), like France, Spain, Italy, and the United States, rose as a means of economic advancement (Devillard, Bacchi, and Nack 2015; Gerdes 2007; Sinatti 2011).

Senegalese migrants’ desire to reach European countries and the United States, via sea, land, or aerial routes, elucidates the difficulties of making a living on the African continent. In 2006, under the mandate of President Abdoulaye Wade, Senegal made headlines in West African and European journals via the Wolof phrase - *Barça wala Barsakh*13 (Schapendonk 2012; Willems 2014). The term stands for the increasing irregular emigration of Senegalese individuals, mostly young, male, and uneducated, arriving by *pirogues* to the shores of the Canary Islands, Spain and other European countries. These men, according to Nicolas, had lost all hope in their country’s ability to provide them with economic and professional opportunities and had chosen to migrate clandestinely14 in dugout canoes paying brokers approximately 400, 000 FCFA15 [Interview, 2016-11-18].

*Barça wala Barsakh*, however, should not be reduced to a purely economic phenomenon whereby working class Senegalese migrants are forced to leave home due to

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13 Literal translation: *Barça* (Barcelona) or death.
14 Ignoring, or perhaps choosing to ignore, the potential risks of clandestine travel and of life abroad.
15 The equivalent of approximately US$ 720.87.
the rising unemployment and deterioration of living conditions. In addition to particular systems and structures, Senegalese migrants’ mobilities are also shaped by individually and collectively-constructed notions of social prestige attributed to going abroad. As Willems (2014, 321) argues:

Until one or two decades ago, success and social prestige in Senegal were closely tied to knowledge and education (symbolised by a diploma), the French language, and a Western lifestyle, which paved the way for access to political power as well as employment in administration. Nowadays, social prestige (and the transition into adulthood) is also attainable when one acquires financial independence in order to support one’s parents and family members.

Given enduring colonial ties and long-established Senegalese transnational social networks, migrants envision Europe as a place where they can simultaneously attain social prestige through economic and educational advancement and fulfill societal responsibilities with family members back home.

A second change in contemporary West African African migration fluxes occurred in the late 2000’s, as a result of worsening economic and living conditions in Europe and an increase in surveillance of maritime and terrestrial borders. Due to international outrage after the aforementioned incidents of 2006, several European governments joined forces with Senegal and other sending countries in sub-Saharan Africa to more rigidly survey popular migration routes (Schapendonk 2012). In collaboration with the Senegalese government, the European border and coast guard agency, FRONTEX, has been patrolling popular migratory routes, like the Canary

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16 Tukki tekki, a Wolof expression, attests to how migratory movements can open new horizons and opportunities for migrants and their households.

17 While not part of the paper’s scope, we are experiencing a third flux of African migration. More and more, Senegalese migrants are opting for non-conventional sites in South America, such as Argentina and Brazil (Pimenta 2015; Zubrzycki 2011).

18 While the transnational circulation of images of sub-Saharan African migrants attempting to reach Europe is not part of my research, de Haas (2008) and Schapendonk (2012) provide a detailed analysis of how media sensationalization of these images contributes to the tropes of an ‘African exodus’ or ‘African invasion,’ which greatly inform European immigration policies.
Islands. These institutional bodies are slowly curbing South-North emigration rates primarily through the repatriation of irregular migrants (Gerdes 2007; Tremlett 2006). As such, the aforementioned events prompted an increase in regional migration, particularly amongst countries belonging to the Economic Community of West States (CEDEAO).\textsuperscript{19}

Since the mid-2000’s, migration scholars agree upon an increase in South-South migration and highlight that ‘‘African migration constitutes a marginal part of movements towards developed countries’’ (Bredeloup 2009). According to Bredeloup’s (2009) study on African migration routes, 86% of West-African migration occurs within the region of West Africa. Meaning, out of 100 West-African migrants, 70% stay in Africa (61 migrants stay in West Africa, 8 in Central Africa, and 1 in North Africa) and 30% migrate outside of Africa (15 migrants go to Europe, 6 to North America, and 9 to other countries). While it is true that the majority of West African migrations occur within the continent, many of these regional movements may serve as the basis for international migration, highlighting how migratory movements are not either/or processes. As Schapendonk (2012, 29) lays out:

\begin{quote}
A second important route is the trans-Saharan route from West Africa to Morocco from where migrants hope to make the ‘final jump’ to Spain. [...] Thirdly, many sub-Saharan African migrants have followed the central Mediterranean pathway through Libya or Tunisia from where European islands such as Malta or Lampedusa can be reached.
\end{quote}

Thus, the policing of the Canary Islands route by European and African governments led to smugglers’ and migrants’ use of new inland routes through Morocco and Libya.

While voluntary and forced crossings of African migrants to Europe have persisted throughout the years, indexed by Senegal’s 2017 net migration rate of -1.5

\textsuperscript{19} Established in 1975, the CEDEAO includes Cote d’Ivoire, Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sierra Leone.
migrant(s)/1000 population (CIA 2017), a new magnitude of South-North migration seized the West’s attention with the 2015 European migrant/refugee crisis. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), during this time, around 1,046,599\textsuperscript{20} African and Western and Southern Asian refugees and economic migrants ‘‘successfully’’ entered Europe, risking their lives in hopes of a better future. Within this figure, approximately 5,981 refugees\textsuperscript{21} and economic migrants were of Senegalese origin (IOM 2015). However, many African and Western and Southern Asian refugees and economic migrants perished during the journey. While none of my research participants crossed the Mediterranean by boat en route to Europe, at least 13 Senegalese men were amongst the more than 800 migrants, of varying ages and nationalities, who tragically lost their lives when the unseaworthy and overcrowded boat they were in capsized off the coast of Libya on April 19\textsuperscript{th}, 2015 (Roy 2015).

IV. Gendering Senegalese Migration

Reinforcing the belief that migration is a male act (Castles, Miller & de Haas 2014; Devillard, Bacchi & Nack 2015), women have largely been absent from migration-related research and underestimated and unaccounted for in statistics despite the fact that women’s participation in migratory movements is not a new phenomenon (Ravenstein 1885).

Within the context of Senegal, men continue to constitute the overall majority of emigrants. According to the United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs’ 2017 International Migration Report, of the 266,000 Senegalese emigrating from

\textsuperscript{20} This figure does not include refugees and migrants who entered Europe undetected.

\textsuperscript{21} Senegalese refugees tend to hail from the southern province of Casamance due to an ongoing low-level conflict that has been waged between the Government of Senegal and the separatist Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) since 1982 (UNHCR 2001).
Senegal,\textsuperscript{22} 53.1\% were male and 46.9\% were female (UNDESA 2017). Providing me with his opinion regarding why Senegalese men are more likely to embark on migratory movements than women, Nicolas explained:

Well, sometimes, it's the men who are a bit like the heads of the family […] I think it's related to that. People think that men are much more skilled or able to emigrate. People think that men are more in the measure of traveling than women. There is much more risk for the woman than the man [Interview, 16-11-21].

As I will elaborate in the upcoming chapter, while Senegalese gendered societal expectations, which assign men to the public sphere and relegate women to the domestic sphere, have long been challenged, men are more likely to migrate as they continue to serve as the primary ‘breadwinners’ (Riccio 2005; Sinatti 2015). In addition, as Sakho, Diop & Awissi-Sall (2000, 7) reveal, the invisibility of feminine migration finds its origins in the stereotype of women as being considered economically inactive and dependent on men.

Providing a sociological explanation for the increasing number of Senegalese female migrants, Sakho, Diop & Awissi-Sall (2011) attribute the feminization of migration, particularly in the city of Dakar, to recent social transformations, such as an increase in age of first marriage, a higher percentage of single women, and rising literacy and schooling rates. Nevertheless, all of these explanations relate to push factors in Senegal and overlook conditions in receiving countries that might fuel female migrants’ departures from home. Addressing this gap, an increasing number of Africanist migration scholars explore the feminization of migration through the lens of family reunification plans (Konaté 2010; Soda Lo 2015), greater professional and educational opportunities

\textsuperscript{22} This figure does not include female migrants embarking on regional movements.
abroad (Wong 2014), lax immigration restrictions (Soda Lo 2015), and asylum opportunities by choosing to give birth abroad (Shandy 2008).

Overall, while an increasing body of scholarship in the social sciences focuses on the feminization of African migration (Konaté 2010; Shandy 2008; Wong 2014), few scholars have written about contemporary Senegalese female migration or examined the feminization of Senegalese return migration. As such, the diversity within narratives of migration necessitates a greater examination and understanding.

V. Personhood, Reciprocity, and Migration

There is a scholarly consensus that migratory processes are usually arranged by and negotiated between all adult members of a migrant’s household (de Jong 2000; Fall 1998; Shandy 2007; Stark 1991). As Wong (2014, 439) argues, “migrants embody (and are embedded in) multi-scalar familial and household relations.” The salient nature of the individual-kin dyad, with regards to migratory processes, begs an analysis of notions of personhood within the Senegalese context.

Breaking away from Eurocentric, culturally-deterministic discourses of the “autonomous person,” Comaroff and Comaroff (2001) utilize their fieldwork amongst the Tswana people, in present-day South Africa, to lay out the groundwork for analyzing African notions of personhood.23 First, individuals are inextricably tied to their kin and communities as “nobody [exists] or [can] be known except in relation and with reference to, even as part of, a wide array of significant others” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001, 268). Despite the strong relationship between community, kinship ties, and personhood, individuals play a key role in constantly negotiating their status and ranks within this set

23 Important to note with regards to Comaroff and Comaroff analysis of African notions of personhood is that both authors do not “seek to arrive at a generic account of “the African conception of personhood” (2001, 268).
of social relations as “the identity of each and every one was forged, cumulatively, by an
infinite, ongoing series of practical activities” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001, 268).
Meaning, the individual is part and parcel of the collective, and vice versa. Nonetheless,
the fine textures and nuances of notions of personhood are place specific.

Within the context of Senegal, individual and collective identities are inextricably
linked to ideals of reciprocity and solidarity to one’s social networks (Buggenhagen
2012; Riccio 2005). These sociocultural processes of identity formation are rooted in the
enduring legacies of Islam in the country, particularly the ethical philosophy of
reciprocity and the zakat (Homerin 2008, 100). As stated in the Qur’an, individuals who
display “righteous” character traits, such as the Islamic moral dictum of treating others
with kindness, humbleness, and respect, will be granted spiritual health and ultimate
salvation with God (Homerin 2008; Parrott 2017).24 Nevertheless, the concept of
reciprocity extends beyond the realm of symbolic religious piety. One of Islam’s five
pillars, the zakat, asks all Muslims to cultivate humility, selflessness, and altruism in their
behaviors and display solidarity towards the poor through a tax system that obliges
believers to give alms to the less fortunate (Kochuyt 2009, 199). While reciprocity has its
symbolic and material roots in Islamic institutions, law, and values, this cultural value
permeates all spheres of Senegalese social life and informs individuals’ behaviors, as will
be explained and analyzed more thoroughly in Chapter Four.

VI. Conclusion

By situating distinct iterations of migratory movements within Senegal’s historical
social, economic, and political landscapes, Chapter Two precises that while migration is

24 As Homerin (2008) notes, social relations and ranks must be taken into consideration as the Golden Rule involves
“not so much treating everyone the same, but rather treating each person appropriately” (108).
not a recent component of the Senegalese social fabric, the context in which it occurs has changed substantially. Amidst increasing levels of political, economic, and sociocultural interconnectedness, Senegalese migrants’ images of life abroad and physical departures are shaped, in complex and interrelated ways, by ties to capitalist economic structures, educational institutions, political systems and agendas, and transnational social networks. These transnational links, I posit, also vary according to migrants’ sociodemographic profiles.

Finally, this chapter develops a larger thread of this study. By examining the myriad and complex ways in which Senegalese migrants’ lives weave together and are enmeshed within these local, national, and transnational processes, I provide the politico-historical, sociological, and economic context to understand the complex social spaces that produce and are produced by transnational migration and flows of money, technology, ideas, and emotions, which I describe and unpack in the upcoming chapters.
CHAPTER THREE --- CRITICAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF DEPARTURE: STRUCTURES, OBLIGATIONS, ASPIRATIONS, AND IMAGININGS

I. Introduction

Thirty-year-old Nicolas Ndiaye is tall and slender, dressed in black pants and a bright blue and purple long-sleeved shirt made out of wax fabric. As we begin our interview sitting down in the interviewing room at the Welcoming Point for Refugees and Immigrants (PARI), over the clamor of female street vendors inviting pedestrians to purchase peanuts, and the buzz of car rapides, tatas, and ndiaga ndiayes whizzing past the office, Nicolas shares with me that he was born in Bignona, a town located in the Ziguinchor region in southern Senegal. Like many young Senegalese men living outside the capital city, Nicolas migrated to Dakar in 2003 “to make something out of himself” after completing his baccalaureat\(^1\) [Interview, 2017-05-09]. The move to Dakar enabled Nicolas to pursue his and his family’s wishes of attaining a bachelor's degree in management, at Université Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD),\(^2\) and finding work.

Similar to the realities of many rural and urban Senegalese families, Nicolas is not the only member in his household who embarked on some form of migratory movement. His older brother, Luc, was the first sibling to venture out of Bignona. In search of a job that could ameliorate his and his family’s economic situation and with a strong desire to attain a “different lifestyle,” Luc headed first to Dakar and later to Belgium, where he currently resides. A couple of years after Nicolas moved to the capital city, his younger sister, Marie, followed in her brothers’ footsteps to pursue her dreams of living in a big city, attend university, and find a job that could financially sustain her life in Dakar and

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\(^{1}\) A French-inherited academic qualification that Francophone students take at the end of high school.

\(^{2}\) Described by many Senegalese nationals and non-nationals as one of the top research institutes in West Africa.
help out her family back in Bignona. In contrast to her brothers’ migratory experience, however, Marie’s journey was only possible thanks to the financial and logistical assistance of her older brothers and other family relatives in Dakar.

* * *

A few migratory trends can be inferred from Nicolas’ brief biography. First, migration in all of its forms - rural to urban, regional, and transnational migration - is commonplace and deeply embedded in the social fabric of Senegalese society. Second, Senegalese individuals do not embark on migratory movements haphazardly or in reaction to structures, institutions, and living conditions in sending and receiving countries. Rather, migrants strategize their departures through what I term *culturally-constructed rationality models*. Within this framework, migrants’ mobilities are largely influenced by national and global economic, social, and political forces, local and transnational social networks, and individual and familial aspirations, expectations, and imaginings of life abroad. This sociocultural reality reflects some of my initial research questions: What is it about the economic and sociocultural landscape in Dakar that informs the departure of Senegalese nationals to the United States (US) and West African and European countries? What role does idiosyncrasy play in engendering Senegalese migratory movements? How does a migrant’s socio-demographic profile influence the extent of their kin’s involvement in the migratory process? In this chapter, I argue that the decision to migrate is a collective, intergenerational transnational process strategically arranged by migrants and their kinship-based social networks within and outside Senegalese society, which manifests itself differently across gender, class, and age lines. These transnational arrangements respond in equal measure to national and global
economic and educational systems, migrants’ familial obligations, and individual and collective aspirations and imaginings of life abroad, and are creatively and ingeniously utilized by migrants to circumnavigate politico-economic systems, bureaucratic obstacles, and instances of familial control.

Migration scholars have extensively studied the interplay between macro-level institutional frames and individual-familial dynamics with regards to migratory decision-making processes (Castles, Miller, & de Haas 2014; Gmelch 1980; King 2000; Shandy 2007; Soda Lo 2015). In her study of Nuer refugee migration to the US, Shandy refutes the conceptualization of “flight” as an individualized, “swift, and perhaps unthinking, transit between two distinct geographic spheres and [...] devoid of social and cultural significance” (2007, 68). Instead, she argues, Nuer refugees draw on and are influenced by collective migratory strategies when departing their homes. More specifically, Nuer refugees mobilize all available kinship and friendship-based social networks, both local and global, to acquire information about migratory journeys and life abroad. In addition, “flight” is often a familial and intergenerational process as Nuer refugees must uphold and regenerate a set of familial values, beliefs, and goals and engender migratory opportunities for present and future generations (Shandy 2007, 68-69).

Employing this critical understanding of departure, this chapter first complicates dominant explanatory narratives for labor and student migration\(^3\) and proposes experiential migration as an analytical category for migrants whose transnational journeys are not fully encompassed by the aforementioned categories. The second part of this chapter nuances the migratory decision-making process by attending to the ways

\(^3\) While labor and student migration are analyzed separately in this paper, in actuality, it is hard to separate higher education from economic pursuits.
migrants make use of, and rely on, local and transnational kinship-based social networks to accomplish their own migratory aspirations, fulfill familial expectations, and manoeuvre within politico-economic systems, bureaucratic obstacles, and instances of familial control that hinder mobility.

II. Embarking on the Journey

_Labor Geographies_

Months after I returned to the United States from my first stay in Senegal, I received a WhatsApp message from El Hadji, a 23-year-old, Casamance-born coworker of mine when I was interning at PARI. After we both exchanged the customary _Salamaleikum, nanga deff?⁴_ greeting, El Hadji declared that he wanted to come to the US. As one of the 9.6% of unemployed male youth ages 15-24 in Senegal (ILOSTAT 2017a),⁵ he was having difficulties finding a paid job, despite being almost finished with his graduate degree in business administration.

Similar to El Hadji’s concerns about unemployment, several of the male Senegalese labor migrants⁶ I interviewed confided that the lack of work in Dakar propelled them toward traveling abroad in search of paid work, leaving their wives, children, and extended families behind. As born-and-raised _Dakaroise_, 62-year-old Madame Diallo, whom I will describe later, succinctly commented on the reasons _why_ Senegalese nationals choose to go abroad:

⁴ Wolof greeting that translates to: Peace be unto you, how do you do?
⁵ This statistic merits deeper considerations. First, the unemployment rate for male youth has remained stagnant since 2015 (ILOSTAT 2017a). Second, while this statistic represents unemployed male youth in both urban and rural contexts, I believe it is still useful given the high rates of rural-urban migration in Senegal. Finally, youth unemployment is heavily gendered as in 2017, 18.9% of female youth ages 15-24 remained unemployed (ILOSTAT 2017b).
⁶ I define labor migration as the internal and transnational relocation of individuals for purposes of employment.
Me, I think that especially amongst young people, it is because there is no work, there is no work, there is no work, THERE IS NO WORK. Because at times you realize that you are almost 30 years old, 25, 26, 27, 28 and that they [parents] are still raising you at home. You, who had to help your parents out, now, it is your parents who feed you. It is not easy. That is why young people, when you ask them, they tell you that it is because there is no work [Interview, 2016-11-28].

At first glance, Madame Diallo’s comment seems to indicate that the economic milieu in Dakar, characterized by enduring unemployment rates, determines the emigration of Senegalese nationals. Yet a more careful read of her comment depicts how these economic rationales are in turn shaped by societal agreements between individuals and their families, aspirations of self-advancement, and imaginings of life abroad.

Such a nuanced view of labor migration is reflected in M. Sarr’s experience with migration. A first-time migrant, 45-year-old, Dakar-born Ibrahim Sarr left his wife and his four children in Dakar to go to France in 2015, where he stayed for two months, and then to Belgium, where he lived for one year, “in search of a better life” [Interview, 2016-11-08] and to receive medical care for his diabetes. As we sat down in the small interview room at P.A.R.I., the fan on and the windows open to endure the scorching afternoon heat, M. Sarr let me know that before his departure, he was a well-respected butcher who owned his own neighborhood shop. However, the profit he made from this business was not constant; rather, “when there was money, there was a lot, when there wasn’t any, there wasn’t a lot of money” [Interview, 2016-11-08]. Thus, the lack of financial security and alternative jobs in Dakar juxtaposed with ideal and material tropes of France as a land of financial and medical opportunities, M. Sarr’s obligations as the main household provider, and his desire to provide for his family, led him to migrate to France.
Although Senegalese men have historically been more mobile than their female counterparts, an increasing number of women are leaving their homes in search of jobs (Sinatti 2011; UNDESA 2017). Now a widow with three kids, 23-year-old Madame Diallo left for Abidjan, Ivory Coast in 1977 by herself, shortly after finishing her post-high school secretary training, to pay a short visit to her estranged, recently-married younger sister and two aunts. After some weeks, Madame Diallo’s brother-in-law offered her work as a secretary at his job - a sports journal. While initially, her rationale for moving to Ivory Coast was not strictly economic, her responsibility to care for her mother, as the oldest sibling, colored her decision to take the job and stay in Abidjan. On the topic of her mother’s condition, Madame Diallo shared: “When her [second] husband passed away, she found herself with a lot of kids, little, little kids, so I helped her, I sent her money” [Interview, 2016-11-28]. In addition to familial obligations, Madame Diallo’s decision to move to and stay in Abidjan was also rooted in her own aspirations to tighten family bonds and meet her nieces and nephews.

M. Sarr and Madame Diallo’s life histories exemplify how Senegalese labor migrants, in pursuit of better jobs abroad due to the country’s current economic climate, do not leave Senegal simply to maximize their income. Rather, economic rationales are inextricably linked to migrants’ responsibilities with kin members, both within and outside Senegal, individual and collective imaginings of life abroad, and migrants’ individual aspirations and desires.
The Foreign Diploma Complex

An hour and a half before tisbaar, Mamadou Faye and I convened at the restaurant of the research center where he was teaching French to study abroad students to discuss his migration story over a plate of ceebiyapp, a Senegalese dish consisting of seasoned rice, boiled eggs, vegetables, and beef or lamb. Born in the city of Thiès and a recent UCAD graduate, where he obtained a B.A. in Linguistics, 35-year-old M. Faye left Dakar for the first time in 1999 to travel to Geneva leaving behind his wife and three kids. There, he was enrolled in a fully-funded, 2-year Master’s degree program in French linguistics. After graduating in 2001, M. Faye received a semester-long scholarship to study English at the University of Pennsylvania. The opportunity to perfect his English coupled with M. Faye’s interest in obtaining an American diploma convinced him to stay in the United States and pursue a Master’s degree at Indiana University Bloomington between 2003 and 2005, with a focus on French linguistics, and later a PhD at the University of Florida between 2005 and 2009, with a focus on African languages. After teaching at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for eight years, M. Faye returned to Senegal in December 2014. In pursuit of academic self-advancement, professional development to better provide for his family, and social prestige and recognition, M. Faye’s journey is a testament to the complexities of migratory rationales.

Often, student migration, defined as the movement of students who study outside their country of birth or citizenship, is examined by assessing the “strengths” and “weaknesses” of educational institutions in both sending and receiving countries. Such analysis is dangerous, in that it mimics a Eurocentric colonial imagery of place and space, whereby Europe is seen as the epitome of civilization and the cradle of knowledge.

7 Wolof word for the third Muslim prayer of the day. Occurs approximately at 1 p.m.
acquisition, and limited, in that it fails to consider the culturally-specific value, prestige, and status attributed to a degree obtained abroad by migrants and their families.

Throughout my conversations with migrants who left Senegal to pursue higher-education studies and non-migrants, I was struck by the rootedness of a certain mentality in Senegal’s collective consciousness - the idea than an education acquired abroad is more prestigious than completing one’s studies in Senegal. Eager to unpack this train of thought, I asked M. Faye if he ever considered staying in Senegal to pursue a Master’s degree or a PhD in his particular field, to which M. Faye quickly responded:

No, it is because, well, we all have the Foreign Diploma Complex. We always think that obtaining a diploma abroad is better than obtaining it here [Senegal]. Everyone that governs us, they all have academic backgrounds acquired abroad, with the exception of our President of the Republic [Macky Sall], he never studied abroad, he completed all of his studies in Senegal [Interview, 2016-11-11].

While not explicitly mentioned by M. Faye, the added value and status attributed to foreign diplomas is deeply rooted in Senegal’s colonial past. Despite an increasing number of top-notch universities and institutes in Senegal, France, like many other former metropoles, possesses an educational system of disproportionately higher quality compared to its former colony. In addition to the unequal resource and power distribution, the cultural, political, and military legacies of French colonialism, which remain deeply rooted in the consciousness of Senegalese individuals, attribute automatic social prestige and recognition to a European and North American degree. Thus, most Senegalese who can afford to advance their academic careers abroad enroll in European and North American universities.

Intersecting with the value and prestige attributed to foreign diplomas, familial expectations also play a role in the decision-making process of migrants’ departure.
Despite leaving behind his wife, three kids, and other family members, M. Faye’s family was “enthusiastic and very happy, as everyone thinks that it [traveling abroad or gaining a foreign diploma] is already a success” [Interview, 2016-11-11]. Driven by ideal and material tropes of France as a land of endless opportunities, M. Faye’s family permitted and encouraged him to pursue his ambitions of attaining a higher-education degree abroad in order to advance his family’s financial wellbeing and social status.

Student migrants, however, are not automatons who absent-mindedly reproduce communally-held values and familial obligations. Rather, student migration is a function of individuals’ desires for academic and professional advancement. When asked to compare the education systems in Senegal, Switzerland and the United States, M. Faye repeatedly gushed about the well-stocked libraries in Geneva, Bloomington, and Florida, the wide array of research opportunities, and the top-notch professors, and listed these as the main reasons for choosing to study abroad. Later on in the conversation, M. Faye brought up how, after completing his Master’s degree, he was determined to combine his passion for African languages and Linguistics. When researching PhD programs, he selected the University of Florida because of the university’s Center for African Studies, which hosted linguists specializing in Wolof.

Individual and familial perceptions of foreign higher-education institutions need to be examined in relation to the image associated with Senegalese institutes and universities. After completing a year of university classes at UCAD, born-and-raised Dakaroise, 18-year-old Ndea Gueye, the middle sibling of three kids, left for Paris in 1996 to study Economics and Accounting. Sitting down in the living room of her house located in Ngor, one of Dakar’s arrondissements, Ndea acknowledged the privilege she
had of counting on her parents’ financial support to pursue her studies abroad, all while reflecting on the educational realities in Senegal and France:

Well, it is hard here [Senegal]. You see how people study in the University of Dakar, but then if you study here, you're a big fighter. I respect them, because they are in very deep and hard conditions and we [student migrants] were [abroad], so we just had to succeed, and they succeeded in really difficult contexts here. It is REALLY crowded at the university. [In France] I liked my classes and the level of organization that I had around the institute. Like, how I could go to *bibliothèques* or libraries and really do research, and I had like tons and tons and tons of books available and the opportunity as well to get in touch with whomever I wanted in the university. The [French] institute was more flexible in terms of accessibility and knowledge acquirement [Interview, 2016-11-24].

Ndea’s comparative remarks on the educational quality of Senegalese and French institutes and universities sheds light on the historically-contingent processes of value attribution. Structural constraints to knowledge acquisition in public universities in Dakar, such as the over-crowding, the scarcity of document resources, and the limited interaction between faculty and students, motivated Ndea to pursue a degree in France with her parents’ support.

M. Faye and Ndea’s migratory journeys elucidate how underlying weaknesses in the Senegalese education system intersect with processes of value attribution to foreign diplomas, migrants’ familial obligations, and individual and collective aspirations and imaginings of life abroad to inform migrants’ departures from home. It is important to note, however, that both M. Faye and Ndea did not trivialize or diminish the efforts of Senegalese university students who, unlike them, did and do not possess the funds to embark on academic journeys abroad.

*Experiential Migration*

While Senegalese migrants certainly leave home driven by socioeconomic desires of wealth and status accumulation, either by accessing foreign labor markets or furthering
their academic interests abroad, nuanced analyses of labor and student migration still do not fully encompass the emic realities of Senegalese migration.

On multiple occasions, I encountered and interviewed migrants who did not feel comfortable categorizing their journeys as ‘labor migration’ or ‘student migration,’ or did not believe that these aforementioned categories fully embodied their transnational experiences. The son of a banker and seamstress, born-and-raised Dakarois Anta Sow belongs to Dakar’s middle class. In addition to profiting from his family’s social standing, at the age of 15, Anta did not feel the urge to travel in order to find a job and accumulate wealth. Rather, his departure from Senegal in 2007, under a month-long visitor visa, to Brussels, Belgium, then to Bologna, Italy, and then back to Belgium, where he stayed with family members, was primarily based on an urge to accumulate experience, or rather ‘a little bit of curiosity, because everyone was saying Europe, Europe, Europe, so, I told myself that I had to achieve my goal of experiencing how life unfolds over there. Was it better?’ [Interview, 2017-05-23]. While Anta ended up working once in Europe, his departure from Senegal was mainly driven by his individual desires of exploring the unknown, particularly the realities of life on the European continent. Anta’s migratory rationale should also be contextualized within myriad post-colonial relationships that exist between the African and European continent, influencing migratory patterns, meaning, European countries continue to attract a large number of Senegalese migrants due to the cultural, political, and economic legacies of French colonialism.

Similarly, Youssou’s experience with migration speaks to the fluidity within migratory rationales. Born and raised in the city of Thiès, a city east of Dakar, 16-year-
old Youssou left his mother’s home after finishing high school and moved to Dakar first to live with his uncle, where he was trained as a cobbler for three and a half years, and then with his brother and father-in-law, with whom he worked selling men’s clothes at marché Sandaga. 8 Despite counting with a stable job in Dakar’s informal economy, 24-year-old Youssou travelled to Spain in 2008 and then to Belgium in 2012 because, as he explained, he was destined to do so [Interview, 2017-05-24]. While Youssou would not consider himself a labor migrant per se, he still held multiple jobs in the informal economy whilst in Europe.

In addition to migration being inscribed in his life plans, Youssou’s reasoning for leaving subtly implies an escape from societal expectations placed on men:

> Up until now, [work] is going well. Work, if I tell the truth, I can’t say I migrated because of that. It is destiny. I spent 10 years in Europe because normally, if I had stayed [in Senegal], I would have to get married and build a house... [Interview, 2017-05-24].

In this way, Youssou shows how migration serves as a way for Senegalese individuals to postpone expected behaviors and roles. As he recounted, there is a “normal” pathway that individuals, both men and women, should follow. In the case of men, they must work to accumulate the means to sustain a family, get married, and settle down. Yet, within this predestined life plan, there is little space for Senegalese nationals to explore life for themselves, even if Youssou is not renouncing these societal expectations altogether.

Rose’s migration story best attests to migrants’ urges for self-exploration and discovery of life abroad. As I sat down in the English Department office at UCAD, Rose’s place of employment, calmly enjoying the air conditioning on an early Saturday afternoon and reviewing my interview questions one last time, Rose opened the door and

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8 One of Dakar’s principal markets.
asked the secretary: “*Fan la toubab bi nékk*⁹?,” to which the secretary simply pointed at me. Rose, who was wearing a loose navy-blue sleeveless cotton and wax-fabric dress with red and orange triangles on the neckline, golden hoop earrings, black-framed glasses, and a small electric-blue leather backpack, walked towards me with a certain boldness that I had not yet seen in many Senegalese women. After greeting each other, she matter-of-factly stated: “I’m starving, let’s go to the restaurant.”

Once we had each ordered our *fattayas*,¹⁰ *maafés*,¹¹ and cokes, Rose smoothly took control of the conversation and spoke about her and her family’s vast traveling experiences, before arriving at her migration story. Elaborating on why she left for Atlanta, Georgia, in 2000 at the age of 17, she remarked: “I actually went to the US because my first love had left me here and I figured I could no longer stay here. You know how [when] you’re a teenager, you feel like the world is just stopping?”

[Interview, 2016-11-05]. Trying to mend a broken heart, Rose persuaded her older brother, who was enrolled at the University of Georgia at the time, to convince their “overprotective” parents to allow her to go visit him. After weeks of pleading with her parents, they agreed to Rose’s proposition, but only if she traveled accompanied by her mother. Once in the US, under a 45-day visitor visa, Rose refused to go back and informed her mother that instead, she was going to stay and obtain her high school diploma. As rebellious as Rose’s decision seems, it is important to consider that her parents agreed to let her go and stay in Atlanta given that her brother was already living there and could help her enroll in high school.

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⁹ Literal translation from Wolof to French: Where is the foreigner?

¹⁰ A West-African deep-fried, empanada-like snack stuffed with onion, tomato, fish paste, and spiced ground beef.

¹¹ A West-African stew made from lamb, beef, or chicken and cooked with a groundnut and tomato sauce.
Altogether, M. Sarr, Madame Diallo, M. Faye, Ndea, Rose, Anta, and Youssou’s experiences with migration – either labor, student, or experiential – stress the collective and composite nature of migratory rationales. The decision to migrate is strategically and creatively arranged by migrants and their kinship-based social networks, both at home and abroad, and responds to local and global economic and educational frames, migrants’ desires to fulfill familial obligations, and individual and collective aspirations and imaginings of life abroad.

III. Negotiating the Journey

To a large extent, the family unit structures individuals’ social life in Senegalese society. Thus, it is not surprising that kin, within and outside Senegalese society, play a substantial role with regards to the decision-making process concerning a migrant’s journey. Drawing from Stark’s (1991) New Economics of Labor Migration framework, detailing that the decision to migrate is in part arranged by all adult members of a migrant’s household, I posit that the decision-making process is also contingent upon the household’s perceptions of place and migrants’ sociodemographic profiles.

Perhaps more so for female migrants than for their male counterparts, familial involvement and securing and receiving parental permission is key in realizing their future journeys. As Shandy (2007) notes, women’s substantially smaller participation in migratory movements lies in migration being equated with dangerous, uncertain border crossings and “culturally derived notions in Western societies” of women as “the most vulnerable [social group] and deserving of interventions and resources” (79). Born into an upper middle class family that has long participated in academic and professional-oriented transnational movements, primarily towards France, Ndea recounted a
conversation she had with her parents regarding the possibility of going to the United States, over France, for college:

[To Ndea] Oh no, maybe not [the United States] because of security and safety… you’re too young […] Paris is very close to Dakar and is a continuity, you won’t get lost because we have family there and you speak the same language and not that it is almost the same, but we like kind of have a mutual connection due to history [Interview, 2017-06-08].

The conditions of Ndea’s mobility are greatly shaped by members in her household, especially since her parents covered the cost for her flight tickets and university tuition. Ndea’s mom’s ideas of Paris as a preferred and familiar environment for 18-year-old Ndea, because of a shared mutual language and a mutual history, should also be framed within the enduring cultural and politico-historical legacies of French colonialism in the consciousness of Senegalese individuals.

Nonetheless, while ideal manifestations of hierarchically-connected places influence the decision-making process, they do not fully explain the depth of Ndea’s mom’s statement. By leaving for Paris, instead of New York, Ndea not only upheld familial and moral obligations of attaining a prestigious college diploma from abroad, but also assuaged her mom’s fears and provided her with some degree of comfort regarding her journey and life abroad. In France, Ndea’s relatives could look after her and act as a support system, and, there, she could truly focus on her studies without having the added pressures of learning a new language and adapting to a new culture. On the other hand, Ndea had no family living in New York City and could barely get by with her level of English. These factors, coupled with Ndea’s mom’s stereotypical perception of New York as a “tough city,” led Ndea’s mom to strongly advocate for Paris as a destination point for her daughter’s migratory endeavors. These ideologies of space also pertain to
Ndea’s gender and age. The perception of Ndea as a girl in need of protection, which is influenced by traditional Senegalese gender roles, together with tropes of violence and crime encoded in physical space barred the United States as a viable destination.

Incorporating socio-economic class as an analytical lens, Madame Diallo’s experience with migration echoes similar dynamics with regards to the pre-departure process for female migrants. As Madame Diallo recounted on her family’s response to her leaving for Ivory Coast to visit her sister: “When I left [Senegal], everyone was aware and had consented. Back then, if your parents tell you: ‘you cannot leave’ - you CANNOT leave” [Interview, 2016-11-28]. Even when she was offered a job at a newspaper agency in Ivory Coast, Madame Diallo did not officially take up the job until she had called her parents, informed them about the situation, and received their consent. The extent of the need for approval from her family is such that even though Madame Diallo had multiple relatives living in Abidjan, did not ask or borrow money from her parents, as she was funded by her little sister, and was hosted by her sister and her family, she still felt an obligation to seek the permission from her parents.

While male migrants still opt to head to countries where they have relatives, to minimize the financial and psychological costs of living abroad, asking for permission and obtaining the consent from their families plays a smaller role in their decision-making process (Konaté 2010). After completing 11th grade in Dakar in 2007, Anta decided he wanted to visit his uncle in Belgium and acquired a 20-day visitor visa. When asked about how his family reacted to his decision to travel, he responded: “It was ME who decided because my uncle proposed the idea to me [...]. At first, it was only for vacations, later, once I arrived there, I saw that...I said that I wanted to stay, he told me
that it wasn’t a problem, you can stay’’ [Interview, 2017-05-23]. Unlike Ndea and Madame Diallo, Anta did not so much ask for permission from his parents before his departure, but informed them about his desire to stay in the country once he was abroad. Nevertheless, Anta, at the age of 15, did not make the decision entirely by himself. Instead, it was with his uncle, who paid for his trip from Dakar to Belgium and hosted him, that Anta negotiated his departure from home.

Despite belonging to a lower socioeconomic class, Youssou’s gender gave him a greater degree of freedom from familial ties and obligations when thinking about leaving home. Youssou migrated to Spain, where his older brother currently resides, to carry out his destiny, purchased a ticket, and applied for a visitor visa. Perhaps because neither his mother nor father resided in Dakar and he was economically self-sufficient, Youssou informed me that the decision to travel to Europe was only made by him. His rather individualized reasoning for emigrating from Senegal is tied to gender roles that attribute the characteristic of providers to men. As Youssou shared with me: ‘‘Now, life is very hard. You have to struggle to make a living. Before your mother, she could help you or also your father, he could help you, but now, no one can help anyone’’ [2017-05-24]. Thus, Youssou left Senegal because of the country’s economic condition, individual aspirations of wealth accumulation and status acquisition, and a desire to explore life abroad.

Overall, while the act of departure is a collective, transnational process strategized by migrants and their kinship-based social networks, both at home and abroad, Ndea, Madame Diallo, Anta, and Youssou’s abovementioned stories elucidate the varying
degrees, manifestations, and rationales for familial involvement according to migrants’
gender, age, and socio-economic class.

IV. Conclusion

The narratives laid out on the preceding pages elaborate upon Chapter Two’s
discussion of how Senegalese migrants’ lives and mobilities are intertwined with and
influenced by (1) local and global ties to capitalist economic regimes, educational
institutions, and political structures; (2) responsibilities with kinship-based social
networks within and outside Senegalese society; (3) individual and collective desires,
aspirations, and imaginings of life abroad. Employing this transnational lens, Chapter
Three analyzes three sets of migratory rationales, such as labor, student, and experiential
migration, in an attempt to tease out the texture of what prompts people to migrate.

Furthermore, the migratory journeys of Senegalese men and women described in
Chapter Three nuance and refine functionalist understandings of ‘‘departure,’’ which
conceptualize migrants as rational individual actors who move across and within borders
in order to maximize their income and/or skill sets. While Senegalese migrants’
mobilities are shaped by political, economic, and social systems and structures, migrants
also collectively strategize their departures by mobilizing and relying on all available
kinship social networks, both at home and abroad, all while upholding and regenerating
household expectations. These collective, transnational arrangements, I posit, also vary
according to migrants’ sociodemographic profiles.

Finally, popular tropes of African migration usually portray predominantly male,
working class Africans as forced to migrate due to economic or political hardships. To
combat this one-sided story and paint a portrait of Senegalese migrants and migratory
movements that is far more nuanced, I focus both on the working and upper middle class in Senegalese society. My work also attends to the myriad and complex ways Senegalese migrants navigate geographical spaces by utilizing transnational social networks in their pursuits for better livelihoods for themselves and for their families.
CHAPTER FOUR ---
NAVIGATING ‘HERE’ AND ‘THERE’: MIGRANTS’
CONNECTIONS TO HOME AND LIVED REALITIES WHILE
ABROAD

I. Introduction

On an unusually brisk Wednesday night following the guéwé\(^1\) call to prayer and after having finished my dinner consisting of fried fish, rice, and onion sauce, drank a chilled glass of gazelle ananas,\(^2\) and indulged in a bowl of madd seasoned with sugar and chili, François, my half Senegalese-half Togolese host uncle, and I walked over to the house’s patio to work together on my class assignment: a series of Wolof proverbs to be translated into French.

Earlier that evening, I had asked my host aunt, Maxine, for help, to which she apologetically responded: ‘Ay, Andrea, I have to transmit the light\(^3\) to Meme before she goes to bed, deh. Wait for your uncle François to come back from work. He is very smart, and he will help you.’ Maxine was right. During our conversation, François shared with me the literal translations of the proverbs he had learned at school, his own personal interpretation, and provided me with examples in everyday life. One of them, specifically, depicted Senegalese constructions of personhood and social networks and reflected on the importance of solidarity and reciprocity in communal life. When I asked François what nit nitaay garabam meant, he replied, briefly pausing to formulate his answer:

Andrea, nit nitaay garabam means, well, roughly means, that Man is the remedy for Man. Meaning, no problem is too complex or too large to be resolved as you can always count on your family and friends for help. It is a guiding principle that

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\(^1\) Wolof word for the fifth Muslim prayer of the day. Occurs approximately at 8:30 p.m..
\(^2\) Senegalese pineapple soda.
\(^3\) A ritual of spiritual purification that derives from a Japanese prophetism, Sukyo Mahikari.
instructs people to do what they can when others need it the most. For example, you should not be stressing about completing this assignment, because I am helping you, I am helping you, a *toubab*, understand the social values and ethics in Senegalese society because you have become family [Fieldnotes, 2016-10-29].

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My conversation with François reveals three major characteristics of social networks in Senegalese society. First, Senegalese individuals are inextricably tied to their kin, friends, and communities, and, thus, notions of personhood attend to the myriad social relationships among these actors (Buggenhagen 2012; Comaroff and Comaroff 2001; Fall 1998; Gasparetti 2011; Willems 2014). Second, material exchanges within and across kinship and friendship-based networks also constitute social processes that allow individuals to regenerate and rework their interpersonal relationships and moral obligations (Englund 2002; Fall 1998; Kleinman 2016; Willems 2014). Third, emotions and cultural values, such as *reciprocity, solidarity, and hospitality*, are also entangled with these material and intimate exchanges, specially as Senegal is globally recognized as the land of *teranga*. Renowned culinary expert chef Pierre Thiam describes teranga\(^4\) as:

> Teranga is the word that symbolizes Senegal the best, I think. Teranga is a Wolof word that would translate to hospitality, but it’s not the right way to translate teranga. Teranga is much more than just hospitality. It’s a value. If there’s a set of values in Senegal, teranga would be the most important one. It’s the way you treat the guest. It’s the way you treat the other, the one who is not you. That person becomes the one to whom you have to offer teranga. You have to treat him with so much respect. You have to offer him what you have. You have to invite him to sit around your bowl. [...] When you share your bowl, your bowl will always be plentiful. This is the deep-rooted Senegalese belief; we believe that there’s always more. You will never lack by sharing (Rossetto Kasper 2015).

Thus, individuals’ familial and nonfamilial networks all exist under a larger framework of mutual assistance and reciprocal generosity and hospitality, which, as indicated in Chapter Two, has its roots in Islamic religious practices.

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\(^4\) Despite his unforgivable use of the masculine pronoun.
Building off of Chapter Three’s discussion on how Senegalese migrants strategically draw on familial social networks, within and outside Senegalese society, when thinking about departing their homes, this chapter delves into the ways in which migrants forge, maintain, and negotiate transnational ties with kinship-based social networks at home while abroad (Kleinman 2016). While most Senegalese migrants engage with kin members in their home communities in one way or another, responsibilities towards one’s social network are contested and vary with regards to gender, class, age, and legal status. Further nuancing the role and impact of social networks on migrants’ lives abroad, this chapter also explores how Senegalese migrants deploy human relationships to circumnavigate socio-economic hardships and bureaucratic obstacles while abroad (Kleinman 2016; Shandy 2007). Overall, I argue that Senegalese migrants regenerate and redefine kinship-based social networks, both at home and abroad, through multi-stranded, material and affective exchanges of money, goods, ideas, and emotions. While abroad, Senegalese migrants also build familial and non-familial social networks to navigate the daily realities of more restrictive global immigration policies and the uncertainties of life abroad. Thus, these collective social arrangements have the potential to improve, or worsen, migrants’ experiences with vulnerability, nostalgia, and loneliness. To develop this argument, I will address the following questions: What types of social spaces are produced by transnational migration?; How do migrants sustain material and affective ties with non-migrant populations in their home communities while abroad?; How do migrants navigate the sociocultural, economic, and legal dimensions of life in receiving countries?
II. Blurring the Boundaries between ‘Here’ and ‘There’

Migration scholars have long complicated the traditional linear approach applied to the study of migratory movements, which envisions migrants departing from their home countries, spending sojourns abroad, and returning home in a linear, segmented, and static fashion. Rather, scholars argue that ‘home’ and ‘abroad’ are not distinct spaces of migrants’ lives, but interconnected through a multifarious web of material and affective exchanges between migrants and their home communities (Englund 2002; Fall 1998; Kleinman 2016).

*The Material and Affective Dimensions of Money*

Applying the concept of Senegalese personhood and systems of reciprocity, solidarity, and hospitality to sociological studies of rural-urban and transnational Senegalese migration, Fall (1998), Gasparetti (2011), Riccio (2005), Soda Lo (2015), and Willems (2014) argue that Senegalese migrants abroad forge and maintain transnational social ties with their nuclear and extended families back home, particularly through cash flows and remittances. These transnational social arrangements allow migrants to uphold and fulfill familial responsibilities and demonstrate their loyalty to family members. During the interviews I held with male and female Senegalese migrants, many of my informants who emigrated to find paid work, further their studies, or explore new places and lifestyles, brought up the tacit and explicit obligation to send money back to their families.

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5 Within a transnational framework, I recognize that ‘home’ and ‘abroad’ do not constitute the sole transnational social spaces of migrants’ lives. Rather, migrants forge and maintain multi-directional transnational arrangements and connections via the deterritorialization of people, technology, money, and media (Appadurai 1996; Cole and Groes 2016; Shandy and Das 2016). The focus on the transnational interconnectedness between sending and receiving communities, thus, stems from what was said during interviews with my informants.
After sipping graciously on her first round of attaya, despite the 102 degree weather, Madame Diallo started recounting how she kept in touch with her family in Dakar while in Abidjan, Ivory Coast: ‘‘When I started working, well, then, I would take my earnings and cut them in half and I sent that to my parents’’ [Interview, 2016-11-28]. Madame Diallo’s statement elucidates how transnational material exchanges within solidarity networks play a pivotal economic and social role. In an economic context characterised by high unemployment rates, stay-at-home family members constitute the primary beneficiaries of the money earned by migrants. Yet, Madame Diallo’s comment does not detail purely economic transactions between herself and her family. Rather, the money transferred also elucidates a series of affective social processes, whereby Madame Diallo fulfills her duty of contributing to her family’s financial well being as the eldest daughter, and showcases the appreciation she holds for her unemployed mother, who raised Madame Diallo and her other daughter without the support and financial help of her husband. These monetary transfers are also imbued with values of reciprocity and solidarity given that Madame Diallo wished to help her mother raise her ten children after the death of her second husband.

The societal expectation to keep in touch with kin members while abroad, via money flows, varies according to socioeconomic class and age. Quite on the opposite side of the spectrum to Madame Diallo, Ndea whimsically laughed when prompted with the question if she had ever sent money to her family in Dakar when she was studying in Paris and New York. ‘‘No, but THEY did’’ [Interview, 2016-11-24] she emphatically stated, later revealing that her, and her family’s, top priority while abroad centered around her studies. As the youngest female sibling, belonging to an upper middle class

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6 Wolof for a bittersweet brew of gunpowder green tea, sugar, and mint.
family, Ndea was not obliged to send money back to her family. Nevertheless, as Ndea pointed out: “I always called them, I missed them A LOT. When I was there [in Paris] and I would call them, I would always be crying” [Interview, 2016-11-24]. Thus, through regular phone calls, Ndea fulfilled her duty of keeping in touch with her parents, assuaged her parents’ fears of their daughter living abroad, and soothed her homesickness.

Incorporating legal status as an analytical framework, during his second stay in Brussels in 2009, Anta started working in the catering and event-planning business through one of his uncle’s contacts, earning a decent-enough salary to be able to send sums of money to his family back home:

Yes, from time to time I sent them money so that they could support themselves but well not exactly so they could meet all of their needs. [Money transfers] are a normal thing, even if your family doesn’t ask you for [money], you have a required minimum of obligations towards them. [...] My little brother sometimes asked me: Anta, can you send me money? And I responded: “No, go and look for a job.” Because, if I give him the money, he’s going to suffer [Interview, 2017-05-23].

As an employee in the wage labor economy, Anta voiced his responsibility to send money back home to ensure his family’s livelihood and uphold familial obligations. As Willems (2014, 39) argues in his study of Senegalese migrants’ transnational social networks, “there seems to be a consensus throughout the country [...] that refusing to help out when requested to contribute to social and familial events is just not an option.”

Thus, financial transfers constitute social processes as they determine migrants’ morality, which is largely dependent on their ability to materially sustain kinship-based networks.

Material and affective reciprocity, however, is not passively reproduced. While migrants sustain solidarity networks within what is possible, they also challenge and
Anta’s narrative hints at the societal pressures placed on migrants to satisfy their family’s requests for financial assistance and is indicative of the politico-economic constraints of sending remittances back home as an undocumented worker. Without a work visa, Anta constantly “play[ed] with fire”\(^7\) and worked when there was work available, which ultimately decreased his chances of sending money back home in a regular fashion. Amidst these socioeconomic hardships, however, Anta actively negotiated how much money he was going to send back home so as to decrease any chances of opportunism and dependency, resulting in the completion of his “required minimum of obligations” towards his family.

Altogether, Madame Diallo, Ndea, and Anta’s stories reveal the material and affective nature of transnational circulations of money and the many ways in which migrants maintain and negotiate their ties with particular kinship social networks at home while abroad. The above-mentioned personal narratives also depict the importance of intersectionality in studies of migration as the obligation to send money back home is experienced differently with regards to migrants’ gender, class, age, and legal status.

*On Temporary Returns and Visits Back Home*

Another way migrants materially and affectively regenerate social relationships and uphold familial obligations with stay-behind populations is through temporary returns (Cole and Groes 2016; Enguld 2002; Fall 1998). While the possibility of return is contingent on migrants’ financial and legal status, these short-term returns defy the traditional linear, monodirectional approach often applied to the study of migratory movements.

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7 Translated from French: *jouer avec feu*. Refers to doing undeclared work.
While I now understand that ‘home’ and ‘abroad’ are interconnected social spaces, I still posed questions during my first conversation with Madame Diallo that reflected a static understanding of migratory movements, such as ‘‘When did you leave Senegal?’’ and ‘‘When did you return?’’ Helping me understand the fluidity embedded in migratory movements, Madame Diallo shared with me that in addition to sending money to her mother back home, she also temporarily returned six to seven times between 1977 and 2009. As the eldest daughter, Madame Diallo returned with her three children to visit and care for her frail, sick mother. To fulfill her role as a widowed mother and main household provider and pursue her ambitions of economic well being, Madame Diallo constantly travelled back and forth between Ivory Coast and Senegal to participate in interregional trade. Responding to what items she bought and traded, Madame Diallo’s entrepreneurial spirit sparked up:

There are so many things, particularly in terms of food [...] There is dry fish, the fish with which we prepare ceeb, I would get it here [Senegal] and I would bring it there [Ivory Coast] to sell it. Now, when I got there [Ivory Coast], if I had sold everything, I could pay for attiéké,9 soap, cosmetics, and then, I would bring them back to sell them here [Senegal] [Interview, 2016-11-28].

By identifying the needs and wants of both Senegalese and Ivorians, and meeting these through her small-scale import/export business, Madame Diallo’s was able to establish herself as a businesswoman and provide for her three children, all while blurring the boundaries between Senegal and Ivory Coast.

The tacit and explicit obligation to maintain transnational ties with kin members back home, via temporary returns, also manifested itself amongst migrants of the

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8 It is important to note that Madame Diallo’s ability to constantly travel between Ivory Coast and Senegal is largely dependent on the principle of free circulation of people and goods established between countries belonging to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

9 Similar to the texture of couscous, attiéké is an Ivorian dish prepared from fermented cassava pulp that has been grated or granulated.
opposite sex. At the same time as completing his Master’s degree in Geneva, M. Faye worked at a bakery shop, transportation company, and as a flyer distributor. These jobs provided him with the material base to be able to send money back home to his stay-at-home wife and their three children in Dakar. Despite fulfilling his familial obligations, in the form of regular cash flows, between 1999 and 2014, M. Faye ‘‘came back for vacations’’ [Interview, 2016-11-11] annually to visit his nuclear and extended family in Senegal and thus, be able to emotionally support his wife, soothe his homesickness, and be actively present in raising his children. While it is important to acknowledge that M. Faye had the financial and administrative privilege to return multiple times, his constant ebb and flows away from and towards home sheds light on the dynamics of a transnational family (Coe 2013).

Migrants’ material and affective transnational ties to kin members in their home communities, however, are not monodirectional. Rather, M. Faye’s annual ‘‘vacations’’ back home lessened in 2008 when he managed to get the appropriate documentation for his wife to move to the United States with him while he was teaching at the University of North Carolina. Motivated by a desire to reunify and live with his wife and ‘‘cook and eat meals with her’’ [Interview, 2016-11-11], M. Faye flew his wife all the way from Senegal. As such, Senegalese migrants and their kin are simultaneously and actively involved in the transnational regeneration of social networks.

Overall, Madame Diallo and M. Faye’s temporary returns and visits back home constitute physical transnational movements that work to materially and affectively uphold familial and societal responsibilities and regenerate kinship networks.
III. Navigating Life Abroad

Africanist migration scholars have extensively examined the complex and creative strategies emigrants deploy to navigate the sociocultural, economic, and legal dimensions of life in receiving countries (Bank 1999; Fall 1998; Kleinman 2016; Soda Lo 2015). In conversation with this body of literature, this section focuses on how migrants materially and affectively build familial and non-familial social networks to circumvent the uncertainties of life abroad and the daily realities of ever more restrictive global immigration policies.

*Familial Solidarity Networks*

While Senegalese migrants maintain and negotiate transnational ties with kinship-based social networks at home, they also forge and establish social relationships with neighbors, *compatriotes*, and family members abroad. The significance of these networks is two-fold. First, they can ease migrants’ experiences with vulnerability, uncertainty, and loneliness through material and affective exchanges (Bank 1999; Kleinman 2016). As Fall (1998, 36) argues, these social networks constitute ‘‘a complex web of social relations which is a basis for receiving migrants and/or a means of social, occupational and residential integration, and of human solidarity and preferential relationships.’’ Second, they can also embody ‘‘new forms of political and social control’’ (Cole and Groes 2016, 5), impair migrants’ sociocultural and economic integration, and constrain and limit migrants’ material and affective exchanges with social networks back home.

Before embarking on his migratory journey, M. Sarr contacted a childhood friend from his neighborhood in Dakar, who was residing in Paris with his wife and two children, to request lodging. During his two-month stay in Paris in 2015, M. Sarr slept at
his friend’s home and commuted everyday to the closest *Médecins du Monde*\(^{10}\) office to receive free-of-charge medical treatment for his diabetes as well as discounted meals for 0.50 to 1.00 Euro, all while trying to find paid work. Amidst these socio-economic hardships, M. Sarr’s friend would often take him out to explore the city, try out new restaurants, and shop for clothes to “help [him] take [his] mind off things” [Interview, 2016-11-28]. M. Sarr’s friend’s willingness to host him elucidates the hospitality and solidarity that runs across Senegalese familial and non-familial social networks abroad (Fall 1999; Riccio 2005). In addition, the social outings between M. Sarr and his friend also depict the material and affective support exchanged between migrants to circumvent the uncertainties of life abroad and the daily realities of more restrictive global immigration policies. Sadly, M. Sarr’s friend asked him to move out after living there for two months due to the overcrowdedness in the apartment.

Determined that he could still make it work in Europe, M. Sarr moved to Brussels to live with a “close” family friend, who seemed eager and excited to host him, at first. After a couple of weeks, however, M. Sarr’s host grew confrontational, starting heated debates and fights with him about trivial matters and refusing to stock the fridge with food, rather than demonstrating the renowned Senegalese value of *teranga*. Elevating the tone and speed of his voice during our interview, M. Sarr recounted an infuriating experience with his host. One day, M. Sarr came back from work at six in the morning and went straight to bed. At nine a.m., his host woke up and opened all of the apartment’s blinds and windows, including those in M. Sarr’s room. Puzzled and slightly shaken, M. Sarr inquired about why the windows needed to be opened so early in the morning, to

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\(^{10}\) *Médecins du Monde*, or Doctors without Borders in English, is an INGO that provides emergency and long-term medical care to the world’s most vulnerable people.
which his friend bluntly replied: ‘‘The apartment must be ventilated. It is as simple as that’’ [Interview, 2016-11-08]. While not explicitly kicked out, M. Sarr decided to return to Senegal after a year of living with his ‘‘friend’’ given his discomfort and frustration with his host’s lack of teranga.

Familial and non-familial social networks, thus, can also act as barriers for migrants and their experiences with adapting to life abroad. As M. Sarr stated:

The difficulties of life abroad are that the Noirs (Black) that you knew here [Senegal] and with whom you spent a lot of time together, and that when you are there [abroad], they do not treat you the same way, they do not treat you with teranga. They don’t even look at you, or their phones. They say: ‘‘No, we cannot give, we cannot give.’’ I know that it was also hard for them, maybe that's why they don't demonstrate teranga to people [Interview, 2016-11-08].

While M. Sarr is understanding of the politico-economic and legal constraints that affect Senegalese migrants’ ability to express teranga with familial and non-familial social networks, the above-mentioned narrative and M. Sarr’s migration story highlight the added hardships and difficulties for migrants lacking a supportive system while abroad.

Even if M. Sarr did not possess strong familial or nonfamilial social networks in Belgium, which eventually led to his return to Senegal in 2016, it is important not to undermine his own efforts at attempting to circumvent politico-economic systems that control migrant labor and hinder their full insertion into the job market. Similar to Anta’s experiences of ‘‘playing with fire,’’ M. Sarr did not succumb to idleness and never ceased to locate undeclared work. 11 Rather, he took up jobs here and there as a mason, dishwasher, and bathroom cleaner, making between 15 to 40 euros a day, in order to accrue money to send to his family back home.

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11 While the definition of ‘‘undeclared work’’ is contentiously debated, I define this term as ‘‘any paid activities that are lawful or unlawful as regards their nature but not declared to public authorities’’ (EU 2018).
Similar to M. Sarr, despite finding himself without the required permit and legal status to work, Youssou formed strong familial and nonfamilial relationships, which helped him navigate the difficulties of life abroad. Following his departure in 2008, Youssou stayed in Murcia, Spain for five years ardently working as a street vendor selling sunglasses, purses, and watches on the beach and doing manual labor in the fields, all while taking Spanish lessons at his local town hall. In contrast to Anta’s conflictive relationship with his host in Belgium, Youssou cherished the support and solidarity exchanged between him and his five Senegalese housemates, whom he referred to as “‘brothers.’” Despite the uncertainty of job prospects, Youssou highlighted how the non-familial relationships with his friends served as means of circumventing the hardships of doing undeclared work:

"It was not expensive, living in Spain was not expensive because we were five people [living together]. Every Sunday, one person put in 25 euros or 30 euros and we all prepared dinner. Sometimes, when we stayed at home, someone cooked because all of us know how to cook. After, we eat and then if you have work, you leave the house to do your job. It worked like that [Interview, 2017-05-24]."

Youssou’s relationships with his housemates vividly depict the material and affective role that solidarity networks play in lessening the hardships faced by migrants living abroad. Rather than opting for individual lifestyles, Youssou and his housemates helped each other survive by collectively contributing to daily tasks.

While M. Sarr and Youssou’s migration stories depict how working class migrants’ experiences with life abroad are greatly shaped, in positive and negative ways, by familial and non-familial social networks, it is equally important to attend to the experiences of the middle class. After completing a year and half of studies in Paris, Ndea decided to apply to an American university in upstate New York to complete her
undergraduate degree, via Professor Malik’s exchange program based in Dakar.

Describing the program, Ndea stated:

To my understanding actually, it [the program] gives Senegalese premium or good students the opportunity to open up actually in the world, study seriously and differently, in another environment, and specially acquire actually the English language [Interview, 2017-06-08].

With her family’s approval and financial support, 19-year-old Ndea arrived in New York in 1997 to pursue a major in economics and management and a minor in computer science and kept herself busy by joining extracurricular activities and taking up two on-campus jobs, as a van driver and library worker. Despite her hardworking ethic and determination to succeed, Ndea often felt isolated and lonely given the cultural differences in interpersonal relations between the United States and Senegal. Further developing this point, Ndea commented:

You know here [Senegal] it is like a big village, everybody knows each other, you see over there [United States], no one knows everybody and you’re just there by yourself and just like… If I was here [Senegal], everybody would say: “hi, hi, hi.” Over there [United States], it is not a problem or matter, you just pass by some guy or someone without even saying hi, you don’t care, and this is like, at the beginning it’s a little cultural shock, because you’re like: “why don’t people say hi?” and everyone looks so mean [Interview, 2017-06-08].

Similar to M. Sarr and Youssou’s stories, the above-mentioned narrative highlights the realities for migrants lacking a supportive system while abroad.

In addition to these cultural differences, Ndea had no relatives to rely on who resided in New York. Nevertheless, she found comfort and solace in the cohort of Senegalese students and the coordinator of the exchange program, Professor Medi. Describing them as “a home away from home,” Ndea and her cohort would often go to Professor Medi’s home, located just across the street from the dormitories, to cook and eat nice meals together and have “very intellectual-level and captivating discussions with
Professor Medi and her family.’’ Thus, for Ndea, the shared meals and conversations with her cohort and Professor Medi constituted acts of bonding, sharing, and community-building.

As a 17-year-old young woman, Rose heavily relied on familial and non-familial social networks to navigate life abroad. After disclosing her plans of finishing high school in Atlanta to her mother, and obtaining her and her father’s ‘‘permission’’ and financial support, Rose enrolled in 11th grade at a local school near her brother’s home. A couple of months later, however, the school counselor located a host family for Rose to move in with due to ‘‘incompatible living practices’’ between her and her brother’s family. Elaborating on the aforementioned household dynamics, Rose explained, ‘‘my brother would let my nephew go late to bed, the music was too loud in the house and the TV was on at the same time, too much noise, no reading, no nothing. That’s not how I was raised in Senegal’’ [Interview, 2016-11-05]. Despite these familial tensions, Rose counted on the school counselor’s material and affective support to integrate herself into high-school.

Further reminiscing about her time in high-school, during our conversation, Rose repeatedly gushed about her Black American boyfriend, Luc, whom she started dating at the end of her first year. A ‘‘well-educated, Southern boy,’’ Luc was highly esteemed because he was on the football team, granting Rose the same social status. Voicing students’ attitudes towards Luc, Rose recollected: ‘‘like, EVERYBODY knew him, so everybody was like: ‘‘Oh, if he accepts her, then we should accept her’’ ’’ [Interview, 2016-11-05]. In addition to Luc’s social capital, Rose also built connections with students and expanded her social network, primarily through her role as the tour guide for
recently-arrived international students. Rose’s cherished and warm memories of high school, thus, largely derived from her and her boyfriend’s social capital and ties with the student body.

Despite living far away from her parents, Rose found a loving and caring role model in her host mom, Miranda. Shortly after welcoming Rose to her home, Miranda took her on a tour of the neighborhood and introduced Rose to all of the neighbors to help her get acquainted with this new environment. Miranda also exposed Rose to the world of volunteering and community work - interests she would later pursue in a professional context in France and back in Senegal. As Rose recounted, after school, she and Miranda would “pick up bread from the different boulangeries to bring it back to the women and men’s shelters” [Interview, 2016-11-18]. Her interest for civic engagement only increased, and after graduating from high-school in 2002, Rose decided to take a sabbatical year and stay in Atlanta in pursuit of more “eye-opening experiences.”

Recounting her volunteer position at a women’s shelter via the Presbyterian church, Rose narrated:

When I worked at the women’s shelter, we [Miranda and Rose] were there by three [in the afternoon] and by four, the doors would open. Everything would be perfect. We would have dinner with them, chit chat with them, I helped with the rooms and the bedding, and all that stuff, and then, at six a.m. [the next day], they all had to get out. That was very cruel to me, that was a shock, it was a paradox. It was like contradictory. We showed them all the love in the world for a couple of hours and then at six, they had to leave. That was very cruel to me, and I cried going home [Interview, 2016-11-05].

By hosting Rose, serving as her parental figure, and enriching her high school’s textbook education, Miranda provided her with material and affective support throughout her three-year stay in Atlanta. Ready and eager to fulfill her parents’ expectations of
attending university, Rose parted ways with Miranda and briefly headed back to Senegal in 2003 to obtain a student visa to commence her studies in journalism in Paris, France.

**Institutional Social Networks**

It is impossible to deny the reality that migrants forge and deploy familial and non-familial social ties with neighbors, *compatriotes*, and family members while abroad, in an attempt to circumvent politico-economic constraints and nostalgia. Nevertheless, the work being done by international non-governmental organizations (INGO), such as *Médecins du Monde* and CARITAS, in the field of immigration policy advocacy and social services merits scholarly attention as these institutions have increasingly become part of undocumented, working class migrants’ social networks. Playing such a role, INGO eases migrants’ experiences with vulnerability and uncertainty through the provisioning of basic social services and by introducing migrants to the possibility of assisted return, a topic I will discuss in Chapter Five. In this section, I put forward that migrants are more than passive recipients of INGO medical and socioeconomic assistance. Rather, migrants strategically negotiate, within what is possible, the type of aid they want to receive and when they receive it.

When asked if he had ever approached INGO for any form of aid while in Spain, Youssou defensively responded: ‘‘I did not even go looking for them [INGOs]. Me, I do not need aid. I am still young, I have to go work to make a living. I do not need aid’’ [Interview, 2017-05-24]. Later on in the conversation, Youssou added that while some of his migrant friends frequented these organizations, like CARITAS Espagne or *Médecins du Monde*, to receive discounted meal stamps, free healthcare and clothes, assisted lodging, and other forms of social welfare, he refused to do so. Notions of masculinity
and hardwork are deeply embedded in Youssou’s perceptions of and reactions to INGO assistance. As mentioned in Chapter Three, male and female Senegalese migrants depart their homes with the goal of accumulating the resources necessary to maintain societal responsibilities and obligations with kinship-based social networks back home. Rather than being taken care of through the financial assistance of INGO, Youssou chose the path of hard work and continued to engage in undeclared work.

In 2012, after a 5-year sojourn in Spain, Youssou left for Belgium as a result of what he called an illogical decision. Leaving his supportive network of Senegalese compatriotes, Youssou arrived in Brussels in search of better job prospects with only the contact information of a Senegalese acquaintance at hand. Once there, Youssou’s contact informed him that he could only host him for a maximum of two days, after which Youssou would have to go to a social center. With no one to help him navigate life in Brussels and as a sans-papier, Youssou visited CARITAS Belgique, where he applied for social housing and other social services, like free clothing and discounted food stamps.

Nevertheless, Youssou’s decision to seek social welfare services should not be regarded as a passive action or treated as a loss of resiliency on his behalf. Rather, amidst the politico-economic and legal constraints that he faced, Youssou continued to show the willingness to work and landed jobs here and there, like collecting and throwing away the trash or washing dishes and clothes at the center for 15 to 20 euros per week. Youssou’s work ethic and motivation even got him jobs outside the center:

Yes, because it was in the center that I behaved well with the people, especially with the assistants. One day...the first day of work there [at the centre]...one day a neighbor...he lives...there is a nursing home for the elderly, there was an old man

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12 In English, an immigrant without the proper work permit or identification.
there...he was going to die, his son, he came to look for someone for help to get the material out [move his dad’s personal belongings]. To this, the center’s director, she called me, she told me: “Youssou you can help him out.” After, I went with someone else and after, they [the son] gave each one of us 25 dollars [Interview, 2017-05-24].

Thus, despite receiving social welfare from CARITAS Belgique, Youssou never renounced his work ethic.

IV. Conclusion

Madame Diallo, Ndea, Anta, Youssou, and M. Sarr’s experiences with migration reveal the myriad ways migrants co-create, regenerate, and redefine transnational social spaces with kinship-based social networks in Senegal. Via temporary returns and exchanges of money and goods, migrants materially and affectively uphold and negotiate societal responsibilities and obligations with familial social networks at home while abroad.

Stay-behind populations do not constitute the only actors that shape, in complex and interrelated ways, migrants’ livelihoods in receiving communities. While accounting for differences in experience amongst middle-class and undocumented, working class migrants, life abroad is full of uncertainties and challenges. As such, it is critical to acknowledge how migrants forge, maintain, and rely on familial and non-familial social networks with kin members, compatriotes, peers, which are based on notions of reciprocity and hospitality, to navigate situations of vulnerability, loneliness, and uncertainty. As Rose poignantly stated during one of our interviews, “so when I see all these people who don’t have their papers and immigrants getting into trouble, I just say that maybe they did not have the right person to push them forward” [Interview, 2016-11-05].
CHAPTER FIVE ---
COMING FULL CIRCLE?: RETURN, REINTEGRATION, AND RE-EMIGRATION

I. Introduction

The “Migration, Governance, and Development in West Africa” conference, ironically held at the expensive-looking, *toubab*-oriented King Fahd Palace Hotel in the affluent neighborhood of *Les Almadies* in Dakar, gathered various African intellectuals, heads of state, policy-makers, and members of civil society to discuss West African migration-related discourses and policy.

After all four panelists delivered their remarks on the topic of return migration, the conference organizers opened up the space for questions. Not three seconds had passed before the first set of hands shot up, accompanied by a cacophony of sounds and words calling for the microphone. Addressing a question to Honorable Isata Kabia, the Sierra Leonean Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, a young man asked: “What are the incentives offered to your returnee migrants?” Pausing to formulate her thoughts, Isata Kabia responded by stressing the importance of creating a home country that is “safe and stable to have the security of opportunity to establish a business” and providing the financial resources to salaried returnees for their successful reintegration into the workforce. While mentioning the need to enter in conversation with working class, undocumented migrants, Isata Kabia’s words succinctly reflect the current fetishization of skilled migrants by West African governments and non-governmental organizations (NGO), as well as the economic determinism and degree of permanency usually applied to analyses of return migration.

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The above-mentioned analytical observations of the conference proceedings return to my initial research questions: What actors and factors shape migrants’ decision to return home?; How do state entities, NGO, families of returnees, and home communities account for and discuss this return migration?; To what extent do these actors shape, facilitate, limit, and/or constrain a migrant’s return and reintegration?

My argument is threefold. First, I argue that Senegalese migrants coordinate their returns alongside an array of actors - kin members, government institutions, and NGO - each with particular rhetorics, attitudes, and expectations regarding return migration. Cutting across age groups, gender, and class, the decision to return responds to migrants’ individualistic aspirations and imaginings of home, migrants’ familial responsibilities, as well as the personal and professional opportunities available in Senegal. By attending to family dynamics and feuds, workplace drama, and economic reintegration opportunities, I posit that Senegalese returnees’ experiences with reintegration are shaped, facilitated, and regulated by their families, co-workers, NGO, and government institutions. Finally, Senegalese migrants’ return does not necessary entail a permanent resettlement. Because returnees nurture hopes and aspirations of re-emigration, which are shaped by national and global political, economic, and social systems and structures, ‘home’ becomes one strand in their transnational lives.

II. I’m Coming Home: Rationales for Return

Echoing Sinatti’s (2015, 92) research findings positing that “most Senegalese migrants cultivate the idea of one day returning for good to their country of origin,” many, if not all, of my research collaborators confessed that return was always the end-
This section examines the underlying logic of return by attending to migrants’ individual desires, ambitions, and imaginings of home, migrants’ arrangements and responsibilities with familial and non-familial networks, as well as economic, educational, and professional structures in sending and receiving communities (Cole and Groes 2016; Gmelch 1980; King 2000; Toa-Kwapong 2016).

**Battling Structural Economic and Political Inequality**

Low-income and undocumented migrants often listed politico-economic constraints while abroad as central reasons for returning home. These structural barriers hindered migrants’ abilities of finding a stable job that could sustain both themselves and their families back in Senegal, despite the perseverance and strong work ethic displayed in their narratives and stories.

Despite constant back and forths between Ivory Coast and Senegal for commerce purposes between 1997 and 2009, Madame Diallo started harboring the idea of ‘permanent return’ after the 1999 Ivorian *coup d’etat*, which led to the outbreak of the First Ivorian civil war. Before the 1999 coup, Madame Diallo was the proud owner of a Senegalese-Ivorian restaurant, which she opened in 1989 and which represented her main source of revenue to take care of her children and send money back home. However, in 2004, amidst the First Ivorian Civil War, government forces burned Madame Diallo’s restaurant to the ground during an altercation between the government and rebel

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1 The fact that return migration is a goal amongst most migrants disproves the idea that migration is a ‘one-way process’ as well as popular discourses in the media that frame Global South migrants as wanting to permanently resettle in the Global North (Åkesson and Baaz 2015; Boccagni 2011; Long and Oxfeld 2004; Sinatti 2015; Wong 2014).

2 For Madame Diallo, a crucial factor explaining the outbreak of the rebellion was the concept of Ivorité, coined by president Henri Konan Bédié. According to her, this term implies that there are "true ivorians and then there are ivorians that are not true, true ivorians" [Interview, 2016-11-28]. During the civil war, nationalist and xenophobic actors co-opted the term to pit the Christian population from the South and East of the country with the predominantly Muslim and immigrant population from the North. For a more detailed account of the Ivorian Civil War(s), see Speight (2015).
Lowering the tone of her voice and looking down at her hands during our interview, Madame Diallo recounted how she lost her restaurant:

...because, well, there was a camp, the biggest camp, it was camp of the gendarmerie [the police], which was not far from my restaurant. They were both located in the same municipality and my restaurant was big, ah. It [my restaurant] was located inside a gas station. The [gas] station had leased me a section inside [the gas station] and I built my restaurant. My restaurant was located in a neighborhood where there were many shops, it was more than a neighborhood, it was like Fasse, you can find auto parts there, you can find all the auto parts there, and it was over there that I had my restaurant and it was running well. Now, when the rebels attacked the camp they passed through my restaurant, because at night there were people who slept in my restaurant or outside, there were mechanics who slept there, and the people that attacked the camp, they entered my restaurant and they found the people that were sleeping there and they told them: ‘no, do not worry, we do not have a problem with you’ and they dropped and left their weapons there and left. Now, the people, who were sleeping, called the gendarmes to inform them that the rebels had passed by and had left their weapons there and now, when the gendarmes arrived, they set everything on fire [Interview, 2016-11-28].

Madame Diallo’s life and the livelihoods of her children were, thus, substantially altered by the above-mentioned political altercation, which resulted in the complete destruction of her main source of income and financial backing. Following the incident with her restaurant, Madame Diallo got very ill and contracted goitre, resulting in her receive an emergency surgery by the French military forces. Luckily, Madame Diallo’s sister and brother-in-law hosted her and her children and provided her with some financial and emotional support after the surgery.

The physical act of returning should be examined as a collective decision, rather than simply a decision stemming from the economic and political milieu in Ivory Coast. As Sinatti (2011, 153) argues, “[migrants’] effective return strategies are the outcome of familial compromises made between return and the conflicting benefits offered by

3 Drawing from Carolyn Nordstrom’s (1997) anthropological reading of the Mozambican Civil War in A Different Kind of War Story, I see conflict as an internecine process. Under this framework, government squads and rebel factions are more than ideologically-coherent military units.
4 One of Dakar’s arrondissements.
staying in migration.” Having lost her husband a year prior to the outbreak, the lives, safety, and financial precarity of Madame Diallo and her children were only exacerbated by the conflict. As an unemployed widow, Madame Diallo could barely uphold her obligations as a mother, taking care of her three kids, and as the eldest daughter, sending money back to her frail, sick mother and step-siblings. In addition to these aforementioned factors, her mom’s health was getting worse, leading Madame Diallo to return for “one last moment with her” [Interview, 2016-11-28]. Before her return, Madame Diallo telephoned her family in Dakar informing them about the war, her restaurant, and her medical condition; they encouraged her to return and ensured that she and her three children could stay at the family house upon her arrival. With financial assistance from her sister and the support of her family back home, Madame Diallo returned to Senegal in 2009 with her three children.

Completion of Post-Secondary Degree

For upper middle class Senegalese student migrants, who pursued their postsecondary degrees in Belgium, France and the United States, return was the logical outcome upon the completion of their studies as they saw themselves pursuing their professions, getting married, and having children in Senegal.

Despite multiple, annual trips back to Dakar for vacation, as well as temporary and permanent visits from his children and wife while in Belgium and the United States, Mr. Faye and his wife, Rokhaya, decided to return to Senegal in December 2014 after he obtained his doctoral degree and finished his teaching contract at the University of North Carolina. Recounting Rokhaya’s reaction to the idea of return, M. Faye narrated:

My wife was really happy about the idea of returning because she did not want to stay in the United States. She never ... the idea of returning one day to Senegal
was always in her mind, because the United States is not a country where she wanted to stay indefinitely. She doesn’t hate the United States, but she does not contemplate staying there [Interview 2016-11-11].

M. Faye’s wife always conceptualized return as the end goal to their stay in the United States given her desire to interact with and be closer to her Senegalese familial social networks, like her children, siblings, and parents. A gendered analysis of migratory movements is also worth incorporating to nuance Rokhaya’s view of return. While in the United States, she did not hold a regular job, but braided hair from time to time, specially for her Black, African-American, and African friends. While she spoke and understood English, Rokhaya stayed at home cleaning, cooking, and doing other household chores while M. Faye taught. For Rokhaya, I suggest, return was deeply embedded in this longing to reconnect with her nuclear and extended family.

The framing of return as a coming-full-circle process also surged in M. Faye’s own narratives. Prompted with the question of why he returned, M. Faye added: ‘‘When I left for Geneva, it was to go study and then come back. [...] I returned because I had to return’’ [Interview, 2016-11-11]. Centering his desire to uphold familial obligations and responsibilities at the core of ‘‘coming back,’’ M. Faye stressed the satisfaction of being able to raise his children, as well as live closer to his widowed mother. In addition to discussing return as a process negotiated and mediated by migrants’ kin-based social networks back home, M. Faye’s reasons for returning also possess an individualistic, affective dimension. Furthering his response to the above-mentioned question, M. Faye indicated: ‘‘I went back to Senegal because I also wanted to go back and work here and give back something to a country that had, all the same, done so much for me’’
M. Faye’s statement is imbued with a sense of nationalist pride and a desire to give back to a country that raised and also educated him.

In addition to upholding familial obligations and pursuing individual desires, M. Faye’s decision to return was also fueled by the professional opportunities available back home. During the six years of working as a salaried professor at the University of North Carolina, M. Faye was able to advance his academic and professional interests all while accruing the financial means necessary to care for his wife, children, and family back home. Nevertheless, M. Faye officially seized the opportunity to return to Senegal once, and only once, he secured a teaching job at the African Institute of Basic Research (IFAN) at Dakar’s most prestigious national university, Cheikh Anta Diop University.

Similar to Madame Diallo and M. Faye, Ndea’s return was framed as the end-goal to her migratory journey by Ndea and her family in Dakar. When asked why she had chosen to come back to Dakar in September 1999 after having completed her undergraduate degree in economics, management, and computer science in New York, Ndea replied without hesitation, ‘‘cause I went there for studies so I had to come back when I finished’’ [Interview, 2016-11-24]. As a female student migrant living abroad, Ndea was expected to finish her degree in the United States and come back to Senegal to pursue her profession and live with her parents until she got married and was ready to start a family of her own.

Nevertheless, Ndea’s decision to return was not entirely fixed to gendered familial obligations. As with M. Faye, Ndea also framed her desire of coming back to Senegal as

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5 Founded in Dakar, Senegal in 1938, the African Institute of Basic Research (in french, Institut Fondamental d’Afrique Noire) is a cultural and scientific institute.
a way of contributing to the growth and development of her country. Recounting a conversation she held with her American friends before her departure, Ndea added:

My [American] friends actually in the States, they were like: ‘‘oh my god, are you crazy? Like, what are you doing? How could you go BACK to AFRICA?’’ and things like that. ‘‘Stay here where you have opportunities and things.’’ And I told them that we are here to acquire experience and bring it back. [Interview, 2016-11-24]

While Ndea’s friends’ comments elucidate spatial constructions of Africa and the United States that mimic a Euro-Americo-centric colonial imagery of place and space, whereby the West is seen as the epitome of civilization, cradle of knowledge acquisition, and land of abundant opportunities, Ndea’s comment challenges assumptions that migrants, particularly Global South migrants, embark on one-way journeys to the Global North. By returning home right after completing her studies abroad, Ndea took part of ‘‘an emerging crop of African graduates that seem to be reversing the continent’s long-running brain drain problem’’ (Nwoye 2017).

III. The Faces of Reintegration

Addressing migrants’ reintegration to their home countries, anthropologist George Gmelch was perhaps amongst one of the first migration scholars to review and lay out an array of perspectives for the study of said phenomenon. In his 1980’s annual review of international migration, he asserted:

The first approach examines the actual economic and social conditions of returnees: whether or not they have found jobs, adequate housing, participated in community organizations, and so forth. The second approach focuses upon migrant’s own perceptions of his or her adjustment and the extent to which he feels the homeland has filled self-defined needs and given him a sense of well-being. (Gmelch 1980, 142)

While accounting for macro-level quality-of-life indicators in home countries and returnees’ personal ambitions and goals in analyses of reintegration, Gmelch fails to
expand on how familial and nonfamilial social networks, in both sending and receiving communities, also shape, in complex and interrelated ways, migrants’ reintegration experiences. In this section, I examine how socioeconomic structures, individual aspiration and desires, and migrants’ social ties with kin members, co-workers, government institutions, and NGOs facilitate, regulate, and/or constrain the extent of a migrant’s reintegration, particularly with regards to family dynamics, the work sphere, and economic reintegration.

**Family Dynamics and Feuds**

Despite counting on familial consent and, at times, encouragement to return, working class, undocumented returnees often cited tension with kin members as obstacles to their reintegration. These points of contention were rooted in societal expectations that all migrants are expected to display and share the wealth they have accumulated abroad upon their return. Following Madame Diallo’s return in 2009, frictions started brewing between her and her relatives in Dakar. After the 1999 coup d’état, Madame Diallo’s family had urged her to return worried about her and her children’s safety. However, when she arrived in 2009 to the family home in Dakar, her family’s concern slowly faded as soon as they learned about Madame Diallo’s financial situation. During our first interview, Madame Diallo told me:

The family home where I’m living at right now, the house was for my mom’s [second] husband, it did not belong to my dad, it was [my mom’s] second husband’s [home], the father of the kids that are there. For that reason, when my mom passed away, now, well, the kids that are there, they let you know that they are THERE. [Quoting her step-siblings:] ‘‘The house is not for your dad, but it is for our dad.’’ Thus, they let you know through gestures [Interview, 2016-11-28].

Despite the fact that Madame Diallo sent money and gifts back to her now-deceased mother and step-siblings in Dakar to ‘‘help them out,’’ when she was a paid worker in
Ivory Coast, Madame Diallo’s kin disrupted her authority and undermined her status as the oldest sibling due to her financial status. She later added:

In my house, it is not about the money, but at the very least it is about respect because by being the eldest, respect needs to be there, but this respect was lacking all the same, because, well, maybe, I no longer had the [financial] means. [Interview, 2016-11-28].

The aforementioned narrative also depicts a disjuncture between Madame Diallo’s rootedness in traditional Senegalese values, particularly that of respect for your elders, and her family members’ stigmatization of migrants returning with empty hands.

Workplace Drama

For many upper middle class returnees, who migrated to European and North American countries to obtain higher education degrees and acquire professional experience, the internal dynamics of the Senegalese workforce shaped, facilitated, and regulated the extent of their professional reintegration.

Upon her return to Dakar, 22-year old Ndea was equipped with an American undergraduate degree in economics, management, and computer science as well as professional experience as a data analyst with the New York City Bar Association and a sales assistant at Estée Lauder, through her university’s internship department. Yet, as Ndea recounted, her foreign-acquired academic and professional achievements did not necessarily secure her an instant job in the workforce upon her return to Dakar due to the competitive nature of the labor market. As Ndea informed me:

When I came in September [1999], I started [work] February the year after. I was not, as I told you, in the perspective of stressing because it was kind of vacation and being able to take some time off. So three months, six, it was six months for me to get off, it was fine, and plus, when you live with your parents, you don’t have expenses, no bills to pay, no stress. [Interview, 2017-06-08]
While Ndea waited six months to be employed due to the socio-economic climate in Dakar, it is of utmost importance to stress her family’s financial and social standing in being able to financially support their unemployed daughter. Even after the six months had passed, Ndea was only able to get a job as an unpaid intern at ExxonMobil, an internship that was not really scaled to her professional interests or skills, by networking with her parents’ friends and professional contacts.

After spending three months interning at ExxonMobil, Ndea was hired to work as an associate manager for Citybank’s operations department. Nevertheless, Ndea’s professional development and advancement in the workforce was limited by the tense relationship she held with her male ‘‘crappy boss.’’ As a young professional woman with a foreign university degree, Ndea was not afraid to speak her mind and propose ways of improving the efficiency of her department’s operations to the upper-echelons of the organization. Due to Senegalese cultural norms regarding gender and age, however, Ndea’s actions were constantly policed and regulated by the company’s management.

Providing me with examples of interactions with her boss, Ndea added:

I would be asking questions and challenging processes. Like he said: ‘‘oh yeah, this is how actually we’ve been doing it,’’ and I said: ‘‘okay, but then, I think we could improve it by doing this and that,’’ and he was just like: ‘‘well, don’t say that YOU are the one who can change it what we’ve been doing here for almost 20 years’’ [Interview, 2017-06-08].

Probably because of Ndea’s age and gender, her boss, a 50-year-old male, did not agree with Ndea’s boldness and straightforwardness. Because of traditional Senegalese societal norms that prescribe certain modes of behavior according to individuals’ identities, Ndea had a hard time finding a job where she felt valued for her own merits.
After six months at CityBank, Ndea moved on to work at Pan-African News Agency’s marketing department for a period of three years. There, she was involved in the formulation of a news wire that sought to provide up-to-the-minute news stories from main cities all over the continent. Unlike at CityBank, Ndea’s interpersonal relationships with her co-workers and her boss motivated and encouraged her determination, persistence, and boldness. After four years at Pan African News Agency, Ndea bounced around from job to job, such as British American Tobacco and Philip Morris International. Tired of the banal, repetitive work environment and lack of opportunities for professional advancement in these multinational companies, Ndea decided “not to work anymore for ANYBODY” and started her own consulting company.

**Big Fish Investors vs. Grass-Root Business Owners**

As demonstrated in the introduction to this chapter, heads of state, policy makers, and members of civil society in sending and receiving communities hold economically-deterministic rhetorics, attitudes, and expectations regarding returnees. This section critically analyses a set of economic reintegration programs belonging to a Dakar-based government institution and NGO -- the Support Fund for the Investments of Overseas Senegalese (FAISE) and the Welcoming Point for Refugees and Immigrants (PARI). By assessing these programs, I explore the hierarchization of return migrants by these actors and the ways in which they facilitate and/or constrain migrants’ economic reintegration.

**The Senegalese Government and FAISE**

The Senegalese government has historically positioned predominantly-male, skilled, and entrepreneurial Senegalese nationals living abroad at the center of diasporic outreach policies and programs. In 1975, Senegal and the Central Fund for Economic
Cooperation (CCCE) signed the first protocol agreement promising practical training and project funding for potential returnees (Diatta and Mbow 1999). Furthermore, in 1983 and 1987, the CCCE allocated 150 million and 500 million FCFA respectively in administered funds to Senegal “to start a credit fund for migrant workers striving for reinsertion” (Diatta and Mbow 1999, 247). The early 1990’s, however, brought about a change in the Senegalese government’s relationship with its diasporic communities. In 1993, the state set up the Ministry of External Affairs and Senegalese Residents Abroad (MAESE), a centralized government body to deal with migrants’ repatriation and reinsertion. Under MAESE’s jurisdiction, the government shifted from facilitating migrants’ return and reinsertion to ensuring their active participation in the national economy (Diatta and Mbow 1999). For state officials, job-holding, entrepreneurial migrants constituted “actors of development,” who if persuaded through fiscal incentives, credit funds, and training workshops, could transfer their skills and savings into national development projects.

Since the early 2000s, Senegalese national policy on migration and development has explicitly prioritized the return of salaried and skilled migrants. In 2006, MAESE adopted the National Migration Strategy and Action Plan, which seeks to establish government structures that focus on “maximising the positive effects of migration, specific to the economic and social development of the country” (Le Masson, Fall & Sarr 2015). The government’s efforts to funnel migrant’s skills and savings into the national economy are not inutile given that in 2016, Senegal’s annual inflow of remittances

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6 Around US$ 276,243 and 920,810 respectively.
7 Senegal is one of the first African countries to establish a Ministry dedicated to relations with its diaspora (Sinatti 2015).
amounted to around 2 billion dollars, which accounted for 13.9% of the country’s GDP (The World Bank 2017a).

To combat migrants’ low investment rates in development-related sectors (Diatta and Mbow 1999; Ndye 2016; Sinatti 2015), the Senegalese government has set up structures to assist returnees who wish to invest in their home country. An example of one of these government structures is FAISE, which was established by Presidential Decree n°2008-635 in June 11th, 2008. With a budget of over 3 billion FCFA, FAISE theoretically provides all Senegalese of the diaspora with the financial support, in the form of loans ranging between 5 to 15 million FCFA, to implement an income-generating, development-oriented project in key sectors upon their return (FAISE 2014).

In reality, however, FAISE’s application process is in itself biased towards skilled and salaried migrants. During our first interview, while we were discussing overall criticisms to FAISE, Nicolas adopted a louder tone and faster pace:

Almost all the people that I receive [at PARI], I inform them that there is a government project called FAISE. But there is only one person that has benefited [from FAISE]. Out of all the people that we have sent, there is only one person that has benefitted. Thus, with FAISE, the problem is that the migrants that have returned judge that [FAISE] is politicized. What is happening? [Those that benefit from FAISE] are a group that is abroad and that is close to the regime in power and [FAISE] finances them. Now, for the others [returnees], that do not belong in this group, they can pursue, apply and that is going to cost them time and they are not going to receive anything [from FAISE] [Interview, 2016-11-18].

Nicolas’ comment regarding FAISE as a biased organization towards the interests of well-positioned, skilled and salaried migrants is better depicted in the experiences of

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8 Approximately US$ 5,370,169.
9 Approximately 9 to 27 thousand dollars.
10 FAISE loans apply to the following key sectors: agriculture and agribusiness, information and communication technology, tourism - cultural industry, arts and crafts, textiles and garment manufacturing, and aquaculture (FAISE 2014).
Madame Diallo. Hoping to complement her trading activities, which ended in 2014, Madame Diallo approached FAISE in 2010. With her, she brought an identification card proving her stay abroad and a summary of her project: a small-scale silk-screen printing business, a skill she had acquired in Abidjan while working in her husband’s silk-screen printing company. Giving her project a quick, uninterested glance, government officials referred Madame Diallo to a gentleman who asked her for 150,000 FCFA\textsuperscript{11} to draft a business plan, which included a market, technical, and financial study of the project. Lacking the knowledge about business administration or finance to draft a business plan herself and incapable of coming up with the abovementioned sum of money as a widow with three children, Madame Diallo abandoned her project.

Senegalese national policy concerning the economic reintegration of returnees is divisive. Working class and unsalaried returnees are alienated from national programs, such as FAISE, given that they do not possess the financial and technical skills deemed advantageous for the government. Instead, the Senegalese government fetishizes skilled and salaried migrants based on their perceived ability to generate more profit for the national economy.

\textit{PARI and ERSO West}

The nexus between reintegration efforts and development aid allocations is also present at the level of NGO in sub-Saharan Africa (Åkesson 2011; Black and King 2004). In 2009, PARI, a Dakar-based NGO, started negotiations with the European Reintegration Support Organisations (ERSO) network to assist in the development of a transnational initiative titled ERSO West (2011-2013), alongside seven European partner organisations and four African civil society organisations in Sierra Leone, Morocco,

\textsuperscript{11} Approximately US$ 270.
Cameroon, and Togo. Awarded a budget of 1,155,000 euros\(^\text{12}\) by the European Union, ERSO West aims to “promote the sustainable return of (rejected) asylum seekers and undocumented migrants from Europe” (ERSO N.d). Thus, to collaboratively enhance the social, economic, and professional reintegration of West African migrants upon their return to their home countries, European partner organizations provide the project’s capital while African partner organizations administer the \textit{in situ} logistics.

To best describe PARI’s role within the ERSO West project, I draw on Anta’s migration story. While Anta was regularly booked for catering and event planning jobs during his four years in Belgium, he did not possess a work permit that ensured him a daily wage, job safety and protection against immigration officers, and other social security benefits. The socio-economic hardships of life abroad, such as not being able to make a living to fulfill his familial responsibilities of sending money back to his family in Senegal, coupled with missing home and having his asylum application rejected by the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (FEDASIL\(^\text{13}\)), fueled Anta’s desires to return back home.

Fixed on the idea of return, but lacking the financial means necessary to embark on the journey back home, Anta benefitted from the informational and financial assistance of an array of institutional social networks. Reminiscing on the process of returning, Anta commented:

\begin{quote}
[In 2015] I spoke with my social worker and I told her that, well, I talked with her and I told her that I was tired. I wanted to return. Well, I discussed it with her and she told me about CARITAS, an organization available for people who want to return voluntarily and that assists them financially and logistically so that they can safely return. CARITAS pays for the plane ticket and everything, brings you back
\end{quote}

\(^{12}\) Approximately US$ 1,365,591.

\(^{13}\) FEDASIL is a Belgian institution that is responsible for the reception of asylum seekers.

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home, and assists you with your reintegration. That was a plus. I wanted to return and they were going to pay for my ticket [Interview, 17-05-23].

Following the advice of his social worker, Anta approached CARITAS Belgium, one of the ERSO West European partner organisations, with his identification card, proving his Senegalese citizenship, and informed them about his desire to return. After a thirty minute wait in the office’s reception area, Anta was called in for a short interview where he was asked to explain why he wanted to go back home and what he wanted to pursue professionally once he returned. Offering a response to these questions, Anta said:

I told them that I didn’t even know, I told them that, well, I did not have any specific projects in mind, I told them that I preferred waiting to arrive on the scene to be able to define a project because once you get there [Senegal] you may find out that people have already done something similar or that people are against the idea of what you want to do. So, I explained to them [CARITAS staff] that I wanted to wait until I got there [Senegal], to wait and see how [the city’s] new rhythm worked to decide on a project I wanted to do [Interview, 17-05-23].

Ten to fifteen days after the interview, CARITAS Belgium contacted Anta with potential flight dates for his return. After Anta confirmed these, CARITAS personnel emailed him an electronic copy of his flight details and gave him PARI’s contact information, who would offer professional and technical advice with his project upon his arrival in Dakar and administer the money intended for his reintegration project. While, CARITAS Belgium greatly facilitated Anta’s return, their aid should be contextualized within a larger context of the EU’s goals of curbing South-North immigration.

After returning to Senegal in 2013, Anta decided to start working in the field of chicken breeding and, with his savings from his event planning and catering jobs in Belgium, paid the business’ initial costs. In need of additional financial assistance for his business, Anta paid a visit to Nicolas, three months after he had returned, to collect the money promised to him, which amounted to 1500 euros. Rather than transferring the
money to his bank account, PARI staff accompanied Anta to buy the products, scheduled a field visit to observe how his business was running, and encouraged him to use part of his budget for professional training workshops. These training workshops are essential for a migrant’s successful reintegration as they teach Senegalese migrants the specificities of each particular field in the current labor market.

As one of the partner organizations within the ERSO West initiative, PARI aims to increase the sustainability and success of a migrant’s return and reintegration by encouraging clients to utilize part of their budget for professional training workshops. When prompted with the question of what renders a project successful, Nicolas accentuated the role of experience in the field of choice, either through past experience or through training workshops and internships. In Anta’s case, he used part of CARITAS Belgium’s financial assistance to develop his knowledge and expertise in aviculture. As he recounted:

“[The Aviculture National Center] teaches you how to select your chicks, how to breed them, the things that you must do. They are practical and theoretical workshops and [at the Aviculture National Center] there were people that had been [in the aviculture field] for years and that had a lot of experience and who would come to discuss about their experience as breeders…” [Interview, 2017-05-23].

As such, Anta’s project is still operating thanks to CARITAS Belgium’s funding, PARI’s guidance, as well as his own entrepreneurial drive. With the profits made from his business, Anta was able to buy a piece of land, and has, since, started to grow onions to sell to the public.

PARI also assists returnee associations in their pursuit of community-based forms of economic reintegration. Since her return in 2009, Madame Diallo has been part of the Senegalese Association of Solidarity amongst Returning Migrants (ASSER), an
economic interest grouping encompassing both male and female Senegalese returnees from European and African countries, and in 2010, she took up the role of president for all women in ASEER. In 2011, Madame Diallo approached Nicolas to inform him about the need for start-up capital for the entrepreneurial pursuits of women in ASSER. After weeks and weeks of contacting several different European organisations, Nicolas finally secured funding from CARITAS Italy through an Italian intern at PARI. Before the funding was executed, PARI and CARITAS Italy required the women to establish an economic interest grouping, which would formalize the financial exchanges as well regulate their commercial activities. After the grouping was registered, twenty women, including Madame Diallo, were given 130 000 FCFA\(^{14}\) each to pursue an income-generating project. When asked about how she decided to start up a textile business, Madame Diallo recounted:

Ramadan was approaching and I had female neighbors, there are women that wash, cleaning ladies that are in my house, that wanted wax fabric to make clothes for [Ramadan]. So, I had said that if I had that money, I would order wax fabric from Ivory Coast to sell it to the women [Interview, 2016-11-28].

Similar to Anta’s case, PARI acts as a broker between Senegalese returnees and INGOs, like CARITAS Italy, who are looking to finance grassroots business projects all while ensuring the sustainable economic reintegration of returnees.

Overall, PARI advocates for the project’s sustainability and empowers returnees to become economically self-sufficient. Despite the much needed financial, technical, and logistical assistance PARI offers to low income, undocumented Senegalese returnees, in collaboration with European organizations, I think it is important to question the hidden meanings and intentions embedded in these financial transfers. Specifically, to what

\(^{14}\) Approximately US$ 233.
extent do these European INGO’s truly adhere to a client-centered methodology with regards to the reintegration of Senegalese nationals? And, are these financial transfers between institutions from the Global North and the Global South part of the broader political agendas of European countries aiming to get rid of unsalaried and low-income African migrants?

IV. The Question of Permanent Return

The concept of ‘coming full circle’ disproves the idea that migration is a one-way process, as well as popular discourses in the media that frame Global South migrants wanting to permanently resettie in the Global North (Åkesson and Baaz 2015; Boccagni 2011; Long and Oxfeld 2004; Sinatti 2015; Wong 2014). Nevertheless, the term reveals but a partial truth about Senegalese returnees’ future paths and journeys. While my research collaborators framed return as the end-goal of their migratory experiences, many of them also nursed hopes of re-emigration. This section, thus, questions the finality generally attributed to return migration by examining migrants’ aspirations of re-emigration, and how these are, in turn, shaped and mediated by migrants’ familial social networks and migrants’ previous experiences abroad.

Re-emigration is both a gendered desire and familial affair. When posed with the question if she had ever considered leaving Senegal again to pursue a PhD, Ndea emphatically stated:

Yeah!! I happen to think about that but then it might be so heavy, you know how here [Senegal] you have people that help you with the kids, the housing issues and everything, it might be better to stay here. I thought about it, but then I was like mmm let me back up. Also, my husband would not stay here with the kids because he is extremely busy. He is a CEO of a company, you can imagine he can’t handle the kids and specifically because culturally, our men here are not very ready for that. I would have to go with my kids, which is a nightmare as you can tell. [Interview, 2017-06-08]
The “‘heaviness’” of re-emigration partly speaks to the financial commitment associated with pursuing a higher-education degree. For Ndea, the possibility of re-emigration was also contingent upon gendered household dynamics and marital responsibilities. In 2006, seven years after returning to Dakar, Ndea met her future husband, a Senegalese businessman and CEO of a large multinational company, at a social gathering taking place at her friend’s home. After dating for eight months, Mr. Gueye proposed to Ndea and they got married in 2007. Since then, Ndea’s mobility largely hinges on her social obligations as a mother and wife, exemplified in the above-mentioned interview excerpt when referring to Ndea’s duty of bringing her children with her if she were to pursue a higher-education degree abroad. Because of traditional Senegalese gender roles, Ndea’s husband is absolved from the same familial responsibilities.

On the other side of the spectrum to Ndea, M. Faye’s identity as a head of household granted him greater mobility and facilitated his desire of re-emigration. Since his return in 2014, M. Faye has exercised his foreign-acquired post-secondary degrees by working as a French and African Linguistics professor at UCAD. M. Faye also focuses his personal academic research on religious discourses in Senegal and is currently in the midst of writing two books. Nevertheless, he longs to return to the United States to “‘look for books, participate in meetings, workshops, and conferences’” [Interview, 2016-11-11] and further his overall academic interests. Given that he is not responsible for raising and caring for his children, because of gendered household dynamics in Senegal, M. Faye could easily leave Senegal to pursue his professional and academic interests, as long as he continues to financially support his family.
Amongst working class, undocumented migrants who had returned to Senegal after sojourns in European countries, hopes and aspirations of re-emigration were constructed under the backdrop of their previous migratory experiences. When asked if he had ever considered embarking on another migratory journey, Anta quickly responded with a blunt ‘‘no’’ perhaps because of the socio-economic hardships he encountered while abroad. Nonetheless, later on in the interview, Anta added that he was currently saving up to travel to Belgium and Spain to visit the kinship and friendship-based social networks he had forged and maintained during his time abroad. As Anta stated: ‘‘But only to pay a visit, deh. Inshallah, shortly, in a couple of years I have to go back again. I’ll leave [Senegal] to say hello’’ [Interview 2017-05-23].

Before finishing up our interview, I asked Anta if he had any questions about my project or wanted to share something else with me. Taking a minute to formulate his thoughts, Anta returned to the idea of re-emigration and said: ‘‘I would go maybe to have a lot more experience in the field of agriculture, maybe go to Israel to see how they do agriculture and things like that’’ [Interview 2017-05-23]. As exemplified by Ndea, M. Faye, and Anta, Senegalese migrants’ return does not necessary entail a permanent resettlement. Because returnees nurture hopes and aspirations of re-emigration, ‘home’ becomes one strand in their deeply transnational lives.
CHAPTER SIX ---
CONCLUDING REMARKS AND PATHWAYS FORWARD

Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity.

--- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, The Danger of A Single Story

Highlighting the power dynamics imbued in authorship, narrativization, and storytelling practices, Ngozi Adichie asserts that storytellers can oppress a people by enchaining them to foreign, static, and dehumanizing accounts of their lives. Conversely, they can also liberate a people from the shackles of discursive domination by acknowledging and actively listening to individuals’ own narrations of their multifaceted, diverse lives. This ethnography is an attempt to accomplish the latter.

Whether at home or abroad, Madame Diallo, Anta Sow, Mamadou Faye, Youssou Bâ, Nicolas Ndiaye, Ndea Gueye, Ibrahim Sarr, and Rose inhabit deeply interconnected social, economic, and political spaces that produce and are produced by transnational migratory movements and flows of money, technology, goods, and emotions. These transnational arrangements shape, in complex and interrelated ways, Senegalese migrants’ lives and mobilities at a macro, meso, and micro-level. First, Senegalese migrants’ paths intertwine with and are influenced by national and global ties to capitalistic economic regimes, educational institutions, and political systems and agendas. Second, Senegalese migrants’ mobilities are coordinated and negotiated between migrants and an array of social networks in sending and receiving countries, such as family members, government institutions, and NGOs. Finally, and equally as important,
Senegalese migrants’ journeys are also the product of individualistic desires, motivations, and imaginings of life abroad.

In the preceding pages, each chapter furthered the thesis’ main argument by analyzing a strand within Senegalese migrants’ transnational paths and journeys.

Earlier anthropological work conceptualized space, place, and culture as territorially-bounded entities. Yet, as stated in Chapter Two, Senegal was far from a static society before the expansion of migration in the 20th century. By providing the historical, politico-legal, and sociological groundwork for analyses of contemporary Senegalese transnational migration, I have argued that, although Senegalese regional and transnational migratory practices have sustained through time, the context in which they occur has changed substantially amidst increasing levels of political, economic, and social interconnectedness.

Contemporary tropes of African migration typically index male, low-income Africans as forced to leave their homes in reaction to economic and political hardships. Nuancing and refining these functionalist understandings of “departure,” Chapter Three teased out the etic and emic dimensions of what prompts emigration amongst working and upper middle class Senegalese men and women of varying age groups. Whether participating in labor, student, or experiential migration, Senegalese migrants strategize their departures by mobilizing all available kinship social networks, both at home and abroad. These collective, transnational arrangements respond in equal measure to national and global economic, educational, and political systems, migrants’ familial obligations, and individual aspirations and imaginings of life abroad.
Theories and scholarship of transnationalism have long complicated the traditional frame applied to the study of migratory movements, which envisions migrants departing from their homes, spending sojourns abroad, and returning to their home countries in a linear, segmented, and static fashion. Within a transnational world order, rather, migrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations with a wide array of actors, which link together their societies of origin and settlement. To arrive at a more nuanced portrayal of Senegalese migrants’ lives abroad and the connections they maintain with their home country, Chapter Four examined how Senegalese migrants regenerate and redefine kinship-based social networks, both at home and abroad, through material and affective exchanges of money, goods, ideas, and emotions. Further nuancing the role and impact of social networks on migrants’ lives abroad, Chapter Four explored how Senegalese migrants build familial and non-familial social networks, premised on reciprocity, solidarity, and hospitality, to navigate the daily realities of more restrictive global immigration policies and the uncertainties of life abroad.

In a climate of restrictive European and North American immigration policies, a rise in global economic crises, and an emerging crop of African graduates that seem to be reversing the long running brain drain on the continent, working and upper middle class Senegalese male and female migrants are increasingly returning home, both in contexts of assisted and voluntary return. Their returns are fueled by their aspirations to reunite with their kin and reintegrate economically and socially back into their home country. The fact that most Senegalese migrants harbour an idea of returning for good to their country of origin also disproves the idea that migration is a one-way process, as well as popular discourses in the media that frame Global South migrants as wanting to

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permanently resettle in the Global North. Within this vein of thought, Chapter Five examines how Senegalese returnees’ experiences with return and reintegration are shaped, facilitated, and regulated by their families, co-workers, NGO, and government institutions. Finally, and most importantly, Senegalese migrants’ return does not necessarily entail a permanent resettlement. Because returnees nurture hopes and aspirations of re-emigration, ‘home’ becomes one strand in their transnational lives.

Overall, this ethnography does not seek to represent an ongoing present. Rather, it acknowledges that individuals’ lives as well as human relationships are constantly changing. It has been almost a year since my last stay in Dakar, Senegal, and I do not expect the lives of the people I interviewed to still hold true. Therefore, as immediate as the narratives, actions, and stories laid out in the preceding pages may seem, they are only snapshots of a particular moment in my informants’ lifetime of experiences. In addition, by attending to the myriad and complex ways Senegalese migrants position, and reposition, themselves within our globalizing world, this study contributes to methodological and theoretical debates about the anthropological unit of analysis and central analytical concepts in the field of migration studies, such as ‘‘home’’ and ‘‘abroad.’’

*  *  *

At the 21st edition of the African Development Bank’s ‘‘Eminent Speakers Series,’’ held in Abidjan, Ivory Coast in February 2017, renowned Cameroonian philosopher, political theorist, and public intellectual, Joseph-Achille Mbembe, emphasized: ‘‘History tells us that the first thing you do to incapacitate people is to restrict their ability to move. Mobility allowed the stretching of societies; was
determinant to trade and to building African civilizations’’ (African Development Bank Group 2017). As M. Sarr, Ndea, M. Faye, Rose, Youssou, Anta, and Madame Diallo’s stories have shown, migration is part and parcel of the history, present, and future of Senegal. The migratory paths and journeys of the people who participated in this ethnography also elucidate the resilient, creative, and differing ways working class and upper middle class Senegalese male and female migrants navigate geographical spaces in their pursuits for better livelihoods for themselves and for their families amidst increasing border militarization efforts and more stringent global immigration policies.
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Bredeloup, Sylvie.  

Buggenhagen, Beth.  

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Cassarino, Jean-Pierre.  

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Coe, Cati.


Cole, Jennifer and Christian Groes.


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Englund, Harri.


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EU.


FAISE.


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Gasparetti, Fedora.


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Interviews

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(*) = Interviews were not included in this honors thesis
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<th>Age at Departure</th>
<th>Reason for Migratory Experience</th>
<th>Date of Return</th>
<th>Age at Return</th>
<th>Place of Birth</th>
<th>Place of Marriage</th>
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<td>23</td>
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<td>None</td>
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<td>21</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>2012</td>
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<td>Europe and the United States</td>
<td>Back and forth</td>
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Appendix A: Socio-demographic profile for research participants.
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<td>-2003/Returned in 2 months to get visa for France.</td>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>Dakar, Senegal</td>
<td>Vast traveling experience. Younger brother studied in France and London.</td>
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