Dreams of a Better Life: Senegalese Migrants in Harlem and Denver and a Re-Framing of the Relationship Between Development, Transnational Migration, Integration, and Place

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DREAMS OF A BETTER LIFE: SENEGALESE MIGRANTS IN HARLEM AND DENVER
AND A RE-FRAMING OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEVELOPMENT,
TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION, INTEGRATION, AND PLACE

by

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A thesis submitted to the
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This thesis entitled:
Dreams of a better life: Senegalese migrants in Harlem and Denver and a re-framing of the relationship between development, transnational migration, integration, and place written by Kathryn Emily Kendrick Wright has been approved for the Department of Geography.

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Fernando Riosmena

________________________________________
Joe Bryan

Date____________________

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

IRB protocol # 13-0031
Abstract

Wright, Kathryn Emily Kendrick (Ph.D., Geography)

Dreams of a better life: Senegalese migrants in Harlem and Denver and a re-framing of the relationship between development, transnational migration, integration, and place

Thesis directed by Associate Professor Fernando Riosmena

International migrants have been conceptualized as development actors in their sending countries by virtue of the remittances they send to their families and home communities. Critical scholars have lambasted policies that promote migrant-led development, and the idea of migrant-led development, as supporting uneven, neoliberal development at the cost of migrants and sending communities. However, conceptualizing migrant-led development as a process that can occur across transnational space, as well as investigating how migrants themselves conceive of development, helps us gain new understandings of this process. This case study of Senegalese migrants in Harlem and Denver examines: 1) how migrants understand development as a concept and the particular development activities in which they engage 2) what shapes these understandings and activities 3) where they engage in those activities and 4) the role of the context of reception in shaping migrants’ outcomes. The methods for this 15-month study were qualitative, including semi-structured interviews and participant observation in both field sites. The results of the study indicate that Senegalese migrants have complex, diverse understandings of and engagements with development in both Senegal and the United States. These understandings and activities in some ways align with neoliberalism as described in the literature on migrant-led development, but the rejection of these practices as neoliberal overlooks how migrants’ lived experiences, their desire to negotiate for increased social power across
transnational space, a pre-existing culture of entrepreneurship in Senegal, a value on assisting others, and distrust of others directly shapes how migrants understand and engage in development activities. Furthermore, the study indicates that the context of reception, especially at the local level, materially impacts migrants’ development activities through their integration experiences. These results highlight the theoretical importance of space and place in migrant-led development, contribute to ongoing debates about how to assess neoliberal development practices, and have implications for national immigration and local integration policies and approaches to development.
Dedication

For the Senegalese community members that so generously shared their experiences with me
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They say it takes a village to raise a child. As the mother of a toddler and a Ph.D. student, I can say that it also takes a village to raise a child and complete a dissertation. I have many people to thank for support and guidance across the course of my Ph.D. program, especially over the past two years since Carson was born. First, I have been fortunate to have such a strong and supportive committee. My advisor Fernando’s patience, support, and guidance over the past six and a half years have been instrumental in my completion of the program – and my enjoyment of what is sometimes a rather fraught process. I have learned from Fernando how to creatively think outside of the box when approaching a research problem and how to enjoy life along the way, two lessons that I consider essential for my work in the future. Caroline’s support as a mother and guidance as a fellow Senegalese scholar has been incredibly helpful in thinking out my analytic ideas, working through the inevitable roadblocks that came up during fieldwork, and trying to navigate my personal life along the way. Mara’s support throughout this process as a fellow Africanist was extremely valuable in helping me find my footing, comfortably, as an Africanist and migration scholar. Her support when Carson was a newborn was also an invaluable part of my ability to continue this program as a new mother. Joe’s willingness to discuss the intellectual and fieldwork roadblocks I ran into has always been an aspect of his advising that I especially appreciate – and the insights he provided always gave me the bump up into the next level of work. Tim’s targeted guidance, especially as I neared the completion of my dissertation, was very helpful in helping me orient myself amongst the tangle of details and theories through which I worked during the course of this dissertation.

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Table of Contents

Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1
  Research questions and goals of the dissertation...................................................... 7
  Roots of the project ................................................................................................... 23
  Parts of the dissertation .............................................................................................. 24
  Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 27

Chapter 1 – Re-framing the migration-development nexus: bringing together transnational migration, “development”, and integration ......................................................... 29
  Introduction ............................................................................................................... 29
  Transnational migration ............................................................................................ 30
    Transnational social fields ....................................................................................... 34
    Transnational life ..................................................................................................... 36
  The ‘migration-development nexus’ ........................................................................ 43
    The ‘win-win-win’ of migrant-led development ..................................................... 45
    Migrant-led development as neoliberal development .............................................. 47
    Uneven benefits of neoliberal migrant-led development .......................................... 49
    Remittances assumed as the engine of economic and neoliberal growth ................ 53
    The non-economic meaning of remittances ............................................................ 54
    The current focus on the sending country ............................................................... 57
    Expanding the nexus - the role of the host country .................................................. 58
  Integration .................................................................................................................. 60
    Transnational migration and integration ............................................................... 62
  Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 68

Chapter 2 – Methodology .............................................................................................. 70
  Introduction ............................................................................................................... 70
  Multi-sited case study ................................................................................................. 71
  Actor-centered approach ............................................................................................ 73
  Site selection ............................................................................................................... 74
  Field sites partnership with Senegalese community organizations ......................... 75
  Preparatory Fieldwork ............................................................................................... 76
  Research Schedule .................................................................................................... 77
  Interviews with the Senegalese diaspora ................................................................... 77
    Participant Characteristics ....................................................................................... 81
  Interviews with Senegalese community leaders and officials .................................... 87
  Participant Observation .............................................................................................. 87
  Qualitative analysis ..................................................................................................... 88
  Reflexivity .................................................................................................................... 88
  Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 89

Chapter 3 – The Senegalese communities in Harlem and Denver ................................. 91
  Introduction ............................................................................................................... 91
  Contemporary Senegalese migrants as part of the new African diaspora .................... 92
    African migration to the United States ..................................................................... 94
    Senegalese migration abroad and to the United States .............................................. 96
  The Senegalese community in Harlem ...................................................................... 104
  The Senegalese community in Denver .................................................................... 111
The diverse individual experiences of Senegalese transnational migrants ........................................118
The Senegalese transnational community .................................................................................................122
Conclusion ..................................................................................................................................................123

Chapter 4 – Development according to Senegalese transnational migrants: The promotion of human development .........................................................................................................................125
Introduction ...............................................................................................................................................125
The contested understandings of development in migrant communities ..................................................127
Senegalese migrants’ understanding of development as human development ........................................133
  Development as growth of the individual .................................................................................................134
  Development as quality of life ..................................................................................................................138
  Development as assistance ......................................................................................................................139
  Complex understandings of development ...............................................................................................141
Development doesn’t just happen in Senegal ..........................................................................................144
Remittances to family and friends – cultural maintenance and moral responsibility ..147
Conclusion ..................................................................................................................................................150

Chapter 5 – Transnational orientation, identity, and neoliberalism in Senegalese migrants’ development activities .........................................................................................................................154
Introduction ...............................................................................................................................................154
Senegalese emigrants and development ..................................................................................................156
Senegalese migrants’ development activities .............................................................................................159
  Working with established organizations ...............................................................................................160
  Starting an organization ..........................................................................................................................163
  Starting a business, including social enterprises .................................................................................165
  Other activities .........................................................................................................................................167
  Techniques through time – the future focus on business creation .......................................................168
  Multiple activities across the U.S. and Senegal .......................................................................................171
Development in the US as community membership .................................................................................172
Neoliberal appearances can be deceiving ..................................................................................................177
  A culture of entrepreneurship ..................................................................................................................177
  Distrust and the desire to work alone ......................................................................................................182
Conclusion ..................................................................................................................................................186

Chapter 6 – Integration, migrant-led development, and place ................................................................189
Introduction ...............................................................................................................................................189
Senegalese integration in the U.S. .............................................................................................................191
Integration, the context of reception, and local factors .............................................................................192
The national context of reception and Senegalese migrants’ integration and development processes .................................................................................................................................195
The local factors shaping Senegalese migrants’ integration and development processes ..........................................................197
The 1.5 and 2nd generations, integration, and development ..................................................................203
Conclusion ..................................................................................................................................................212
Conclusion ..................................................................................................................................................214
Policy Implications .....................................................................................................................................218
Theoretical contributions of the study .......................................................................................................221
Exploring individuals’ understandings of development as well as non-economic motivations for development practices ..............................................................221
A spatial re-framing of the migrant-development nexus .................................................223
The explicit connection between integration and development processes ..................224

Areas for future research .....................................................................................224

Final thoughts ......................................................................................................225

Bibliography .........................................................................................................227

Appendix A – Interview Protocol ........................................................................250
Figures

Figure

1. 54th Senegalese Independence Day celebration.................................................3
2. Senegal..............................................................................................................98
3. Little Senegal.....................................................................................................105
4. Denver and Aurora, Colorado...........................................................................112
Introduction

In April 2014, the Senegalese Association of Colorado (SAC) held a celebration for the 54th anniversary of Senegal’s independence from France. The celebration was held at a local Ethiopian restaurant in Denver (there were no Senegalese restaurants at the time) and consisted of an evening of Senegalese food, Senegalese cultural exhibitions, and brief speeches by those friendly with the Senegalese community. Unlike previous celebrations that were solely attended by the local Senegalese (and sometimes Gambian) community, this celebration was intentionally open to the larger African and American communities and was also a fundraiser for SAC. This event was a way for Senegalese migrants in Denver to articulate their sense of membership with their host American community, their sense of membership with each other, and their sense of membership with Senegal as well.

At about 6 pm the evening of the celebration, guests began to arrive at the restaurant. The space was set up so that to the right of the entrance a buffet area was erected and directly following the entrance were long rows of tables, at which people initially sat down when they entered. Behind the rows of tables was a small, low stage, where a PA system and a laptop and screen were set-up. Shortly after guests started to arrive, a musician began playing the kora (a West African stringed instrument) to provide background music. Then the buffet was opened up. Although the celebration was hosted at a restaurant, the women in the association had made a Senegalese feast, with salad, fried chicken, fried beef, ceebu yap (rice and beef or lamb), fataya (a fried pastry like a samosa), fish nuggets, tomato onion sauce, and chakri (a yogurt/couscous dish). Water and bissap juice (from a fruit native to Senegal) were served as well. People
quickly gathered at the buffet, trying not to take too much, but making sure their plates were full too.

After the buffet started, the official program of the evening began, with the Senegalese anthem. While the anthem was played, a Senegalese flag was projected on the screen by the stage. The U.S. national anthem was played directly afterward via a youtube clip. The president of the association then made a speech, given in French (with me providing an English translation), which was cut short due to technical difficulties. After the president finished his address, 10-15 Senegalese children gave a Senegalese fashion show, which was enthusiastically received. The fashion show was followed by a short speech from U.S. Representative Michael Coffman, a performance by a Senegalese-American dance troupe based in Colorado Springs, and a speech by U.S. Representative candidate Andrew Romanoff. The politicians were both there to show their support for the Senegalese and local African communities. The speeches also included a plug for an upcoming Dance Africa Denver performance and for job placement and vocational training services at Goodwill. With regard to the last announcement, as the MC for the evening explained, people left Africa for better opportunities in the U.S.: part of that desire for better opportunities was being able to support their families back home through jobs they could get in the U.S.

At this point in the program, there was a short activity before the speeches resumed. Each table had envelopes on it; each envelope had two index cards in it. The index card had questions such as: When did Senegal get its independence? What is the population of Senegal? Who is the current president? Find a Wolof (one of the ethnic groups in Senegal). The point of the cards was to have people mingle with each other and for non-Senegalese to learn some of the basics about Senegal as a country. After this activity, there was a music and dance interlude, in
which a few people got up to dance, and the buffet was opened again. Then the MC gave a speech, saying that independence was also about economic freedom and mental freedom. He was part of a group of African businessmen who had organized the African Mall, a soon-to-be-opened mall with African businesses and restaurants. It was envisioned that the mall would be a cultural space that all Africans were welcome to use for performances and exhibitions as well as a mall. The program wrapped up with a dance performance and announcements from some representatives of the local Igbo association that were unfortunately drowned out by the crowd. Then, about 11:30 pm, everyone got up to dance into the early hours of the morning, as is typical at many Senegalese parties.

Figure 1. 54th Senegalese Independence Day celebration, April 5, 2014, Africana restaurant in Denver, CO.

The point of this celebration was to show pride in Senegalese identity and culture – but also to indicate Senegalese membership with the local African and American communities. This event was an indication of a desire to help educate others about Senegal and to invite those
others – fellow African migrants, American politicians, and American community members - to build relationships with the Senegalese community. At the same time, the event provided reminders that Senegalese migrants, as well as other African migrants, still had important ties back in their home countries – including families they support there. The event was a display of how Senegalese migrants in Denver are truly transnational in their desires and actions, even if, as we shall see, the expression of these actions and desires are somewhat limited by individual circumstance.

This event was unique in that it was the first event hosted by the Senegalese Association in Denver that was inclusive of the larger community. Although it occurred at the end of my fieldwork (and therefore I don’t have much following data), the event was the culmination of recent interest by local politicians in the African community as well as growth over time of the Senegalese Association. While unique, it is a powerful description, at a communal level, of the types of lives that Senegalese migrants in Denver lead every day. While maintaining a strong sense of Senegalese identity and pride, and emotional connections with family and friends in Senegal, Senegalese migrants and their families have also built stable, meaningful lives in Denver, contributing to and interacting with the larger community in which they live.

Even as Senegalese migrants contemplate how to maintain membership in both the Senegalese community and the U.S. community, there are greater forces acting upon their lives. Senegalese migrants are part of the large flow of transnational migrants, those who maintain social, economic, and political ties across multiple countries, in the contemporary global economy. While international migrants are only 3% of the global population, international migration flows are in some ways more encompassing than in recent memory. As Castles et al. (2014) explain there has been both a globalization and diversification of international migration.
over the last couple of decades. Contemporary migration flows involve more countries and there is a higher diversity of migrant streams than ever before. Additionally, there are multiple types of migrants (permanent migrants, temporary migrants for work or education, refugees, to name a few) within this wider and more diverse flow of people across national boundaries. International migrants, therefore, may seem more prevalent and widespread than their actual numbers would indicate.

There is also a widespread fear of immigrants, especially Muslim immigrants, across the United States, Europe, and other parts of the world that receive immigrants and refugees. In the United States, President-elect Donald Trump ran a campaign that emphasized immigrants, especially Muslim immigrants, Syrian refugees, and undocumented migrants, as a danger to the United States. His campaign tapped into anti-immigrant sentiment across the country (Amos 2016; Siegler 2016). In Europe, there is a strong anti-immigrant sentiment among European populations as well, partially in reaction to the current Syrian refugee crisis (Smale and Castle 2016), and there are also anti-immigrant restrictions in the policies of the Australian government towards would-be asylees (Evans 2015).

The international migrant, then, is a controversial figure in modern society. Migrants can be viewed as a potential economic and physical security threat to host countries. And yet they are also heralded as innovators and potential drivers of economic growth in their countries of origin. The governments of Mexico and the Philippines, to name two, have programs set up to facilitate investments and help facilitate remittances sent by migrants. The Filipino government, in fact, has a state-run emigration program, with services to place workers abroad, among others (Asis 2006; Iskander 2010).
There are thus many hopes and fears pinned on the figure of the migrant, on individuals like the Senegalese migrants in Denver who held the independence celebration in April 2014. The interest in migrants’ role in the economic growth in their home countries has been termed the ‘migration-development nexus’ (Nyberg-Sorensen, Van Hear, and Engberg-Petersen 2002). The conceptual center of the nexus is an understanding that migrants can contribute to economic growth through the money they send home to families and as well as businesses they may start in their home countries. While this idea has been highly lauded in policy circles and by some academics, critical scholars have also lambasted the idea as one used to hide the politics of migration and development processes and to further neoliberal development processes. While a more thorough discussion of the nexus, and its critiques will come later in chapter 1, I want to call out here that while the critiques of the nexus are accurate about the political problems and power dynamics of migrant-led development, the idea of migrant-led development itself is still of great use. In fact, one significant oversight of these critiques is that they do not question the spatial nature of development as envisioned in the nexus. In this vision, as with the mainstream understanding of development, development is understood as something that occurs over there, not in the North.

I argue in this dissertation that by conceptualizing how development might take place in the North as well, in the host countries of South-North migration flows, we can begin to have new understandings of migrant-led development that address some of the political concerns about the nexus. Furthermore, this dissertation will explore how migrants themselves understand and engage in development; a topic often ignored given the usual implicit assumption that the meaning of “development” is straightforward and universal. I argue that by examining the lived experiences of transnational migrants, and that by explicitly examining both how they
conceptualize development and how and why they engage with it, we see opening for discussion what development is, beyond just categorical discussions whether that development is neoliberal or not, and where it takes place. Relatedly, migrants’ transnational experiences – especially who they feel a sense of belonging with, as well as their desire to maintain and strengthen certain social relationships and identities – directly impact how and why they engage with development. This study will explicitly consider how the experience of being a transnational migrant shapes these processes. Finally, because this project examines how development might occur in the North, and evaluates the transnational experiences of migrants, this project also examines the role of the host country in these processes. It is in this focus on place – in terms of localities within the host country as well as the host country itself – that pulls together the implications of thinking about migrant-led development in a different spatial frame and as a transnational practice.

**Research questions and goals of the dissertation**

This dissertation arose out of a desire to explore what migrant-led development looks like from the vantage point of migrants – from the vantage point of messy, lived experience. In particular, I wanted to explore how migrants’ perspectives might address some of the short-comings in the way the nexus is conceptualized and discussed – and see what we could learn about migrant-led development from them. My specific research questions are: *How do Senegalese migrants understand and engage in development, especially spatially? What can we learn about neoliberal development by examining migrants’ understandings and engagements with development? What is the role of place in shaping migrants' engagements in these processes?*
As I explore the answers to these research questions from my case study about Senegalese migrants in Denver and Harlem, I address four major goals for this research project. These goals contribute both empirically and theoretically to development geography, population geography, and African studies. This work is at the intersection of these three disciplines, in its examination of Senegalese migrants in the U.S. and how they are engaged with development. It contributes empirically through its study of African migrants in the U.S. (a little-studied population) and specifically of Senegalese migrants, about whom very little has been published. It contributes theoretically by examining how the conceptualization of development in relation to space as well as place shapes our understandings of migrant-led development. It also contributes theoretically by examining how neoliberalism is an ineffective analytic for exploring how migrants understand development and why they engage with it the way that they do.

*My first goal* is to explore how reconsidering the spatialization of migrant-led development, of considering it as a process that takes place across migrants’ transnational space, helps us investigate the role of the host country in migrant-led development. Currently, the analytic focus of migrant-led development is on sending countries in the Global South. The analytical omission of impacts in and impacts of host countries in the Global North are due to the normative spatial imaginary of development. The omission is also due to the related analysis of migrants’ activities within the host country as a separate sphere of study (generally transnational migration or integration) and thus, rarely under the lens of development. Yet development is not a process that is confined to the Global South.

Development is often conceptualized as a process that occurs outside of the North. Underdevelopment, based on national economic measurements, such as GDP, is generally identified by practitioners and scholars as occurring in the Global South. Such views of
development fail to see that countries across the world are part of one interconnected, albeit very uneven, political economic system. Rather, underdevelopment is blamed upon the lack of knowledge or proper leadership and oversight of underdeveloped countries themselves (Lawson 2007). Development is, therefore, something that is often viewed from a Western perspective as happening “over there”. Furthermore, this view of development ignores how marginalized communities across the globe are linked through processes of neoliberal restructuring and growth (Jones 2000; Katz 2004). Development processes, then, can occur across the Global South and North. In short, the Global North is imbricated in development processes in multiple ways through global political economic processes.

When this spatialized understanding of development is applied to the migrant-development nexus, the importance of analyzing the role of the host country becomes apparent. Almost from the beginning, transnational scholarship has acknowledged the importance of location (Guarnizo and Smith 1998) in influencing transnational migrants via the histories, institutions, and communities of each place. In this work, I shall define place, drawing upon Doreen Massey’s (1994) “global sense of place” as a location that is unique due to the constellation of economic, social, political, historical, and cultural processes that intersect at that location. The processes that shape each place, and are shaped by it, can have regional, national, and international scope and means that places are intimately interwoven into these processes happen around them – but the outcomes of each place will be unique as result of the particular constellations that form in each place. The concept of translocality, although focused on the local level, helps us understand how specific locations within the host country also play a role in these processes.
Translocality is a framework for exploring the relationships and exchanges that occur across localities. Although translocality can be used as a frame to study processes that happen within a single state (Brickell and Datta 2011; Oakes and Schein 2006), it applies to transnational social fields as well (Chacko 2011; Mercer et al. 2008; Stephen 2006; Zavella 2011). As Zavella (2011) explains, we must understand transnational activities as “translocal social and cultural practices that migrants construct in relation to particular options and constraints in local sites” (7). In other words, we need to explore how each locality has its own social resources and network of migrants (Page 2011) as well as how each locality has uneven historical and contemporary connections with larger social, political, and economic processes (Mercer et al. 2008; Oakes and Schein 2006). Each locality within a transnational social field has its own power dynamics, opportunities, and constraints due to these reasons.

Translocal studies explicate how place shapes transnational migration processes and also make it apparent that the local context must be incorporated into any study of transnational migration. With regard to place, translocal studies highlight how the combination of factors that come together in each place (in this case, each locality) shape the opportunities and constraints that migrants face there. This approach also emphasizes that while the processes that shape each place may be multi-scalar, a local scale of analysis must be included (even if among others) to accurately capture the forces shaping transnational migration as well as its outcomes.

The findings of this dissertation indicate that Senegalese migrants’ experiences in the U.S., and in particular their experiences in Denver and Harlem, significantly shape how they engage in development. Their integration experiences - the ways in which they negotiate economic, political, legal, and social membership in the United States - as well as the characteristics of the community in each location, shape how migrants engage with the
Senegalese community in the area, the larger American community, and the ways and location in which they enact development activities. These findings have implications for national efforts that are intended to welcome or discourage migrants as well as local approaches to immigrant integration.

My second goal is to move beyond a discussion of whether or not migrant-led development is neoliberal to focus on what migrants are doing and why. Critiquing migrant-led development as a neoliberal practice does not lead to meaningful inquiry about migrant-led development. Rather, it is important to question what neoliberalism means within the context of migrant-led development. Neoliberalism is not a concrete approach formed solely in the West – what is labeled neoliberal in the literature is actually a diverse set of understandings and policies that are shaped by the places in which they occur. Instead of questioning whether or not migrants’ actions are neoliberal, this study will explore what migrants are doing in relation to development and why. Exploring how some actions that have been categorized as neoliberal are really something quite different from the common understanding of what neoliberalism entails helps us see how a different framing gives us better intellectual purchase on the value (and drawbacks) of migrant-led development.

Before I begin to explore what frames might help us explore migrants’ actions, it is instructive to first examine how neoliberalism has been described and questioned in critical academic work. I will then examine why it is not a constructive analytic for migrant-led development. Rather, I argue per Collier (2011), whom I will come back to shortly, it should be a subject of analysis itself. Investigating what understanding migrants have of development and which development activities they desire and engage in, and why, will help us explore what neoliberal migrant-led development looks like in the case of Senegalese migrants in the United
Neoliberalism is, in essence, an approach to governance based upon classic liberal principles. Most scholars agree that neoliberal thought rose out of economic philosophy in the post-World War II West. Economist Milton Friedman is seen as the father of neoliberal thought with the philosopher Frederick von Hayek and the Mont Pelerin Society also viewed as key actors responsible for the development of neoliberalism. These scholars were responding to the economic and political approach of the social, or dirigiste, state that arose after the catastrophes of the Great Depression and World War II. These intellectuals argued for policies rooted in classic liberal principles, for personal freedoms, and which favored the free market. In the 1970s, neoliberal thinkers began to gain prominence and broad acceptance when both von Hayek and Friedman won a Nobel prize for economics. Concomitantly, in the late 1970s, U.S. investment banks needed a liberalization of international finance and credit policies to be able to loan out petrodollars received from the 1973 oil crisis to nations across the world. These loans, and their associated danger of default, led to structural adjustment programs designed to protect the borrower’s ability to repay loans. The programs involved requirements emphasizing the curtailment of public sectors and liberalization of markets, among others. Such approaches are now associated with neoliberalism. In the 1980s, the administrations of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher continued to fuel these types of policies, through concerted attempts to promote economic deregulation and a shift away from big government (Harvey 2005). In the 1990s, the Washington Consensus, an approach to international development shared by large institutions such as the I.M.F. and World Bank, was associated with similar approaches to internal economic governance and was also labeled neoliberal (Chari and Corbridge 2008).

Through this history, the term neoliberalism has come to signify a certain economic and
political approach. According to Harvey (2005), the originators of neoliberal thought based their work on both liberal principles and neoclassical economic theory. Neoliberalism, in this case, is understood as an ideology to facilitate the growth in power of the upper class through liberalization and the dismantling of the social state, and which results in increasing social inequality. In Harvey’s view, neoliberalism is a coherent approach to economic and political policy that is enacted by the upper economic class on behalf of their own interests. In liberal academic inquiry, it is also often treated as such. Neoliberalism, in the literature, has come to be synonymous with the liberalization of markets, the valorization of individuals and entrepreneurship, privatization of state-run enterprises, economic deregulation and a disregard for the needs of the economic underclass (Collier 2011; Ganti 2014; Ferguson 2009). As such, it has come to be regarded as both a coherent approach to governance and as an approach associated with injustice and inequality.

More recent critical work has shown that academic critiques of neoliberalism usually center on an analysis of three elements, ideology, practice, and subjectivity, although these elements are not always clearly distinguished as such (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000; Ferguson 2009; Ganti 2014). Ferguson (2009) describes the main elements of neoliberal ideology as “a valorization of private enterprise and a suspicion of the state, along with what is sometimes called “free-market fetishism” and the advocacy of tariff elimination, currency deregulation, and the deployment of “enterprise models” that would allow the state itself to “be run like a business” “ (170). Neoliberal practices are those, such as policies, which are designed to enact liberalization and the dismantling of the state (Ferguson 2009). Neoliberal subjectivity has been described as the assumption of an identity as a rational and individual entrepreneur (Ganti 2014). This more recent work has shown that what has been called "neoliberal" is inconsistent. Even
those authors who advocate neoliberalism as a coherent approach, such as Harvey's insistence that neoliberalism is an ideology aimed at reconstituting the power of the upper economic class, acknowledge that there is not always alignment between practices and ideology that are "neoliberal" (Ferguson 2009; Harvey 2005).

Collier goes even further to explicate neoliberalism as a way of thinking rather than ideology or a concrete set of practices and policies. For Collier (2011), neoliberalism as a way of thinking about the biopolitical approach of governance, of governing the biological, economic, and social needs of the populace. Although Collier agrees that this way of thinking is based upon liberal principles, he defined the “neo” portion of neoliberalism differently than Harvey. This is one of the fundamental differences in their conceptualizations of neoliberalism. For Harvey (2005), the “neo” element is due to Friedman’s and von Hayek’s use of neoclassical economic theory and their desire to eliminate the social state (20). For Collier (2011), a more in-depth history of neoliberalism that includes scholars, such as George Stigler and James Buchanan, indicates that there were some theorists for whom neoliberalism was a way of thought about governance rooted in liberal principles and in reaction to the social state (13-14). It is not an ideological project to get rid of the social state, but rather, in Collier's view, it is an attempt to critique the efforts of the social state and apply liberal principles within that larger framework. Collier argues, accordingly, that neoliberalism isn't the same in every place - rather, neoliberal policies are enacted based on how policy makers are thinking about biopolitical governance in specific social, economic, and spatial contexts.

Academic work supports this conclusion through analyses of neoliberal policies and processes and both the outcomes and intents of such policies and processes. In Collier’s 2011 work on the neoliberal policies and practices adopted in Russia after the collapse of the Soviet
Union, he argues that some liberalization and deregulation policies, such as those for home heating services, were applied within the larger framework of maintaining the state’s responsibility for all citizens. Even after the demise of the Soviet state, heating was deemed a basic human right, which should be sustained by the state. And although heating utilities were to some degree liberalized, this was still done within the overarching goal of ensuring heat for all citizens. In a similar vein, Ferguson (2009) examines a proposed cash subsidy program in South Africa, which appeared at first blush to be a project undertaken to be in line with the common understanding of neoliberalism as an anti-poor class project that favors the market. He argues, however, that in this case, pro-poor policies were advocated under the guise of providing individuals with capital in order to provide an incentive for entrepreneurial activity.

Additional studies reveal that not only may neoliberal ways of thinking or policies be undertaken as a way to support the general populace, but neoliberal processes of capitalist growth are also shaped by the particular economic, political, and social circumstances in which they occur. As Hart (2002) describes in her work on the development of capitalist industries in two different towns in South Africa, the process of capitalist growth is not the same in all places (either across countries or across towns in the same country) – and the process and outcomes of neoliberal economic growth are not a foregone conclusion either. As Hart illustrates, the history of the actors involved with capitalist growth, in this case, shape how they engaged with that process. Workers in one town with a history of labor activism built a strong union and were able to advocate for their rights in a way that workers in the other town were not.

A description of the migrant-development nexus as neoliberal, then, does not necessarily have a coherent meaning. Is migrant-led development everywhere neoliberal in the same way? Do all policy makers have the same intent, regardless of the context in which they govern?
Likely no academic would argue that is the case (per Collier 2011). Yet, such is the discourse on neoliberalism in the nexus.

In this dissertation, then, embracing the understanding of neoliberalism as a way of thinking about governance, and as a diverse and incoherent collection of practices and subjectivities, I do not investigate whether or not migrants' participation in the nexus is neoliberal. Instead, I ask - what are Senegalese migrants doing and why are they doing it? These practices and subjectivities that are currently labeled neoliberal - what are they and why are they being enacted? How does that shape neoliberalism within the context of Senegalese-migrant led development? Given that neoliberalism is treated as a "thing", as a concrete whole, in the critical literature, references will be made throughout this dissertation to neoliberal practices, subjectivity, and ideology. However, one of the core contributions of this work is questioning what neoliberalism means in this context and how migrants are shaping that meaning.

To do so, I will draw upon theoretical approaches to economic behavior that emphasize non-economic motivations for economic actions. Doing so helps us understand how practices and understandings of development that valorize individualism and entrepreneurship may be enacted in the service of other goals. Such approaches help us understand what neoliberalism might look like as enacted by Senegalese migrants. The frameworks of moral economy and recent work on economies of affect and affective labor, in particular, provide a useful analytic for studying migrants’ actions and understandings of development. Although these approaches are disparate in the sense that one focuses on morality in relation to economic activities and the other focuses on affect in relation to economic activity, they both emphasize the social, political, and cultural factors that may shape how individuals engage in economic activities. They
emphasize that, in fact, we cannot fully comprehend how individuals engage in and react to economic activities without consideration of these other associations.

Works on moral economy have shown that individuals and communities may make judgments and have expectations about economic activity based upon moral expectations. For example, Thompson’s (1971) famous work on this subject explained the food riots that happened in 18th century England. These riots occurred because the peasantry expected that food should be priced “fairly”, meaning affordably, while the landowner priced food according to market prices. Since Thompson’s work, there have been a variety of approaches that use the concept of moral economy as an analytical frame. Three main approaches include: 1) assessing a conflict engendered by economic conflict or crisis and expectations about the role of social actors 2) exploring the moral aspects of economic activity or the economic outcomes of moral activities and 3) investigating the moral framework for societal interactions. Not all scholars would agree with these different meanings, especially the third meaning (Friberg and Gotz 2015). However, the upshot of using a moral economy framework is to highlight the societal and moral considerations that shape economic behavior and outcomes in a variety of contexts. For the purposes of this dissertation, I will use moral economy in the sense of exploring the moral aspects of economic activity.

There has been some utilization of moral economy in terms of the moral aspects of economic activity in remittance studies, but only to a very limited degree. Two studies that explore the moral economy of transnational migrant communities, one based in Kyrgyzstan and the other in India, emphasized the moral valuations attached to migration and migrant’s economic behaviors towards their families and communities in their sending areas. Such behaviors are deemed as morally appropriate because they allow for families and sending
communities to maintain a certain standard of living, even while the migrant is physically absent (Isabaeva 2011; Velayuthum and Wise 2005). As will be explored further in Chapter 2, there are also affective and social meanings that migrants attach to their remittances. Such findings indicate that migrants are not acting solely as independent, rational actors seeking to maximize their own economic returns, as would be expected according to economic theory (as described by Massey et al. 1993).

In African studies, in particular, moral approaches to economic behavior have been a lens for understanding patronage systems and communal approaches to development. Hyndman’s (1983) theory of affective economies tried to explain patronage systems and how social systems influenced economic and political processes. Although this theory is now disregarded, Ferguson (2006) points out that many communities across the continent do use a moral frame of reference for economic activities. As he argues, socialist movements in the 1960s and 70s were centered on concepts of fairness, and these expectations of fairness in economic processes remain relevant today. In his own work in Zimbabwe, Ferguson notes how mineworkers and citizens were frustrated with what they saw as government attempts to design economic processes that were unfair – setting food prices or other the prices of other necessities in ways that made it difficult for the lower classes to afford them. In short, there is an understanding that in African societies, in general, considerations of the common good should be an element of economic activity and evaluation. What this understanding, and the concept of moral economy, provide for us is an opening to see how individuals may engage in economic activities for non-economic reasons – even as they evaluate economic activities through a moral lens.

More recent anthropological work on economies of affect and affective labor give us further purchase in analyzing migrant-led development practices. Richard and Rudnyckyj’s
(2009) work on economies of affect explores how affective relations are harnessed in the service of neoliberal growth. Rudnyckyj’s work on neoliberal subjectivity in a factory in Indonesia investigates how one of the head managers cultivates Muslim identity and practices, including emotive practices, to facilitate neoliberal subjectivities amongst his workers. He does this to ease the transition from state ownership and patronage systems to private ownership and competition in the larger global market. Richard’s work explores how an NGO in Mexico cultivates affective relationships with NGOs in the North to facilitate funding for their work that fills in the gaps left by the withdrawal of the Mexican state. Work in Italy has also shown how a culture of volunteerism has been fostered to accommodate neoliberal reforms that have entailed the withdrawal of the state from elderly services and how the culture of volunteerism facilitates growing neoliberal subjectivity (Dole 2012). In all of these cases, then, people are enacting neoliberal subjectivities or facilitating neoliberal practices, but not because they believe in neoliberal ideology. The outcomes, of course, are the expansion of neoliberal processes – but to understand why that expansion is happening, we must first ask what motivations drive people’s actions.

However, in contrast to these works on economic of affective and affective labor, the ways that Senegalese migrants engage with development is less directed than in Rudnyckyj’s work or the Italian case described by Dole (2012). While in these works, affective or non-economic motivations are used to facilitate neoliberal practices and subjectivity, I argue that in the case of Senegalese migrants, they may use what are viewed as neoliberal practices in the name of other goals, similar to the proposed South African legislation that Ferguson described. As Diouf (2000) has argued, one of the Muslim brotherhoods in Senegal that has spread out as a worldwide diaspora due to their trading activity appears to engage in cosmopolitan practices –
but rather may use capitalist processes and appear cosmopolitan in order to advance their own goals as a religious brotherhood. I will discuss this point in further detail in chapter 5. The point here being that I contend similar processes are taking place with regard to how Senegalese migrants enact development, particularly with regard to their motivations for engaging in small business development.

This work, then, explores how migrants conceive of and practice development in ways that both align and depart from the expectations of neoliberal economic development. In chapter 1, I will describe in more detail what the expectations of migrant-led neoliberal economic development look like. For now, I simply wish to lay out the argument that in our analyses of this development, we must be attuned to the understanding, motivations, and practices of migrants with regard to development – and move beyond questioning whether or not they are neoliberal. We must ask what factors have shaped these understandings and actions and how that, in turns, shapes what neoliberal development by Senegalese migrants looks like. We must consider how Senegalese migrants themselves are active agents in shaping neoliberalism and the particular practices and outcomes with which they are associated.

The implications of this exploration of neoliberal development are that there is room to expand what neoliberalism means and advocate for practices that are pro-poor and do meet the needs of other entities besides the market and upper class (per Collier 2011; Ferguson 2009). This work is not intended to be an emancipatory work in the sense that any social process is complicated and layered. Although this work attempts to tease apart how we think about and approach neoliberal development, there can still be injustices embedded in how these practices take place and the actual process of migrant-led development. However, this analytical approach
might also lessen the power of neoliberalism as reified construct by furthering the understanding that it is less monolithic than commonly discussed.

My third goal is to highlight the unique insights that can be gained from studying one of the transnational African populations in the U.S. A little studied but fast growing population (Capps et al. 2012), African migrants are often assumed to be economic migrants or refugees. Our U.S. imaginary of Africa as isolated, poor, and uneducated extends to African immigrants (Koser 2003). African migrants are actually very transnational, cosmopolitan populations and highly educated. Africa has been highly interconnected for centuries (Bayart 2000) – and Africans maintain a desire for equal membership with the global economy and cultural citizenship (Ferguson 2006; Piot 2012). African migrants are the most highly educated migrant group in the United States – 38% hold college degrees, compared to 27% of the American population as a whole (Capps et al. 2012).

The transnational sensibilities of voluntary African migrants and their high education levels influence their transnational engagements and integration, although they still struggle with economic incorporation. African migrants have the skills and education to be highly successful economically – but may encounter difficulties with racism, language, and acceptance of foreign credentials. They may also maintain a strong connection to their home communities and commitment to supporting families there. The findings of this study indicate that Senegalese migrants do maintain strong connections to Senegal, but that also some migrants have a very open-minded approach about which communities they feel they belong to. Many migrants also encounter economic difficulties, despite their relatively high education levels. Both of these elements – their ability to engage in development activities as well as where they choose to engage in them - strongly impact their development activities.
Also, the study examines how the nature of the transnational migration experience itself shapes how different individuals engage in these processes. By exploring the nature of transnational migration, we can see how migrants might try to engage in development in ways that aligns with shifting gender roles across space or that their actions may be contradictory in some ways according to their experiences across that space. In this work, for example, I explore how distrust within the community, exacerbated by conditions in the host country, interacts with migrants’ value of supporting others in a way that promotes individual engagement in development activities. Furthermore, the ways in which transnational migrants envision their belonging to different social groups also directly impacts their development practices. Research on migrant-led development must incorporate how the experience of transnational living affects these processes.

Finally, this study also contributes to the literature on the lived outcomes of African migration to the United States. There are some recent works that use census data to explore the outcomes of African migrants, especially in relation to other black migrants (e.g., Kent 2007; Konadu-Agyemang et al. 2006) as well as ethnographic work, such as Stoller’s (2002) work on West African traders in New York City. However, there is still a lack of understanding of the experiences of African migrants –especially about the experiences of the children of African migrants.

*My fourth goal* is to explore the continuing value of the migration-development nexus concept by drawing upon the understandings and lived experiences of migrants rather than solely academic arguments. The nexus is of value to my participants, and I want to explore why it is important to them and what uses we can still have for it, even given the academic critiques. In particular, the results of this work can be used to explore how we can create policies to better
study the ways in which migrants want to engage in development. They can also be used to help localities in the U.S. understand that transnational migrants can provide benefits for them and to understand the factors that may shape beneficial outcomes for both localities and migrants. Additionally, I want to value and highlight the voices of migrants themselves in this work. Although academic works have done this, the critiques of the nexus have not. It is by incorporating how migrants themselves approach this concept that we can see where the openings are for improvement and move beyond the concerns that migrant-led development is a platform for Western-led neoliberal development processes in the Global South.

Roots of the project

My interest in Senegalese migration began when I studied abroad in Senegal in 2003. I studied in Dakar for a semester at the beginning of my master’s program in Intercultural Relations. While I was there, I was struck by how many families had parents living in Europe and the intense popular interest in both migration and life in the United States. As I began to learn about the lives of the children who spent years at a time without seeing their parents, I became interested in the social justice aspects of migration processes. I became concerned about the social and emotional costs born by those who migrate to support their families and the families who remain behind. I have also been very concerned about the issue of clandestine Senegalese migration to Europe, especially of young men in search of economic opportunity, as hundreds of migrants continue to risk their lives every year in ocean crossings (Carretero-Hernandez and Carling 2012; Ifekwinigwe 2015; Melly 2011; Quist-Arcton 2016). When I applied to graduate school, then, I came to further study the factors that influence migration processes in Senegal.
For this project, I initially wanted to explore reasons for emigration from Senegal in relation to environmental change (a common narrative I heard in Senegal). However, I became fascinated by the idea of the nexus as I encountered it in graduate school – the idea that the individuals who undergo the difficulties (and joys) of emigration are expected to develop their sending communities. I spent the first summer of graduate school speaking with Senegalese organizations around the country to verify interest in the project and also gather preliminary data. It was during these conversations that I realized how deeply Senegalese migrants care about development in Senegal and how much they are emotionally and materially invested in it. It is then that I began to wonder about the dissonance between migrants’ desire to engage in development and the academic dismissals of the nexus.

**Parts of the dissertation**

Chapter 1 provides the rest of the theoretical framing and background for this study. It pulls together literature on the migration-development nexus, transnational migration, and integration that are inter-related, but not usually discussed in relation to each other. In particular, the chapter explores how understandings about the nature of transnational life help us understand the diverse and sometimes contradictory ways that migrants understand and engage with development. It also examines in more detail the critiques of the migration-development nexus – but also how incorporating analysis about the role of the host country and the ways that migrants approach remittances and development allow us to see paths forward in using the concept of migrant-led development. The chapter closes by exploring how integration is implicated in migrant-led development as we explore the role of the host country in these processes.

Chapter 2 described the methodology of the project. It discusses my approach to the study of Senegalese migrants, describes my methods, and explores the challenges I encountered
in my fieldwork as well as how I attempted to address them. The chapter closes with a consideration of reflexivity and how that impacted the process of the study.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of Senegalese immigration and the Senegalese communities in Harlem and Denver. This chapter provides the background necessary to understand the main arguments of the dissertation. It situates the experiences of the communities in Harlem and Denver within the larger literature on African and Senegalese migration to the U.S. It also highlights the very diverse migration experiences of the individuals with whom I worked as well as the strong transnational attachments of many Senegalese migrants. It provides a preview of the ways that migrants’ lived experiences shaped their transnational activities as well as their interests with relation to development activities. The descriptions in this chapter focus on the experiences of the first generation (as do the results and analysis in chapters 4 and 5) due to a small sample size of 1.5 and 2nd generation migrants.

Chapter 4 is an exploration of how Senegalese migrants define development. It is situated within the limited literature on how migrants conceptualize development. It highlights how migrants have broad, non-economic understandings of development, shaped by their lived experiences. I argue that some of these understandings of development appear to be in line with the neoliberal discourse in the nexus, but are actually much broader and more complex due to the reasons that migrants might engage in what are viewed as neoliberal practices and also the way that they assign non-economic values to remittances. The results of the chapter also indicate that Senegalese migrants may conceptualize of development as a process that can occur in both the United States and Senegal due to both their non-economic understandings of development as well as their experience living in both places. Migrants’ understandings of development
explored in this chapter then provide a frame of reference for the diverse development activities in which they engage across both Senegal and the United States.

Chapter 5 examines the particular types of development activities in which Senegalese migrants engage, how their broad understanding of development directs those activities, and the particular factors that shape those engagements. Situated in the wider literature about Senegalese emigrants’ involvement in development in Senegal, the chapter examines how migrants are involved in different types of activities across both locations and how their lived experiences define the particular activities in which migrants want to be engaged. It also explores non-economic motivations for engaging in development activities, such as how individual identities, values about helping others, and approaches to transnational life shape people’s reasons for being involved in development activities. I then examine how a strong desire to start small businesses in Senegal appears to be in line with the neoliberal expectations of the nexus, but the desire to engage in this practice is really due to an already existing cultural of entrepreneurship fostered by the particular political, cultural, and economic circumstances of Senegal. Additionally, a strong degree of distrust in the community compels many migrants to work individually in their activities. The main implication of these findings is that these activities are diverse, contradictory and need careful analysis to understand how migrants are actually thinking about development and their motivations for engaging in the ways that they do.

Chapter 6 is an exploration of the relationship between integration and development activities as well as the importance of place in these processes. Situated in the very scanty literature about Senegalese integration in the U.S and the literature about the importance of the social, legal, economic, and political contexts of host communities in shaping integration outcomes, this chapter highlights how the contexts of the U.S., Harlem, and Denver have shaped
Senegalese migrants’ integration processes. I then proceed to analyze how that process, plus the composition of each Senegalese community, affects their development activities. The chapter concludes by examining the experiences of the 1.5 and 2nd generation migrants, especially with regard to their development activities, and reveals that 1.5 and 2nd generation migrants have a strong interest in development activities and a strong desire to remain active across both the U.S. and Senegal. These results highlight need for future research to see if there is widespread interest in prolonged transnational engagement among 2nd generation Senegalese-Americans and what forms that engagement might take.

**Conclusion**

This dissertation project is designed to explore how Senegalese migrants engage with development and explicitly how considerations of space and place shape those engagements. In particular, it explores what migrant-led development looks like when development is envisioned as occurring across migrants’ transnational lives – that is, in Senegal and the U.S. And when it is so envisioned, how the U.S., and particular locations within the U.S, shape these processes. This project also examines how the nature of migrants’ transnational experiences – who they feel a sense of belonging with, how their actions are designed to address social and familial relationships across space – as well as how the non-economic motivations for their behaviors shape their engagements with development.

This project makes theoretical and empirical contributions through its exploration of Senegalese migrants in the U.S., how they engage with development in both the U.S and Senegal, and how the ways in which they engage with development is much more complicated than a solely neoliberal analysis would suggest. Although this project does not address a particular policy, it has implications for migration policies that are linked to development, to
national immigrant policies, and to local integration policies as well. There are also many areas for future research – including how other migrants understand development and what their reasons are for their particular types of engagements, how these understandings vary across generations, and what the experience is across the second generation of Senegalese-Americans, among others. Overall, this project provides a re-framing for our understanding of what migrant-led development entails and where it occurs that lays the groundwork for a richer, deeper exploration of what migrant-led development can embody across different populations and many different places.
Chapter 1 –Re-framing the migration-development nexus: bringing together transnational migration, “development”, and integration

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to flesh out the theoretical framework and background for this case study about Senegalese transnational migrants in Harlem and Denver and how they are involved with development. This project is rooted at the intersection of three main bodies of literature: transnational migration, the ‘migration-development nexus’, and integration. The migration-development nexus is a sub-set of the transnational migration literature, but the insights of the full body of the transnational migration literature about the nature of transnational migration are not always incorporated into research on the nexus. There is, however, a segment of the migration-development nexus literature that includes the insights of critical development studies to evaluate the discourse and outcomes of the nexus. The concerns arising from the critical assessment of the nexus has led many scholars to reject it as inherently problematic and thus incapable of achieving the professed goal of nexus policies of promoting prosperity for all involved in the nexus (Gamlen 2014).

I argue in this chapter that, by incorporating understandings of transnational life and integration and by altering the spatial imaginary of development, we can gain a different view of the process and possible outcomes of migrant-led development. This re-framing in and of itself does not erase the concerns of critical scholars. It does, however, create analytical space to think more broadly about what migrant-led development might mean and how it is played out across transnational space, thus allowing openings to reshape the idea of the migration-development nexus.
To establish this re-framing, I first provide an overview of transnational migration, highlighting some of the main factors of transnational life that can shape migrant-led development. In particular, I argue that the socially complex and diverse lived experiences of transnational migrants can result in multiple, sometimes contradictory, understandings and experiences of development. Second, I discuss the idea of the nexus and in further detail some of the main concerns that critical scholars have raised about it. These concerns focus on the neoliberal emphasis of the nexus as well as the nature of uneven development resulting from nexus polices and practices. Yet, the affective, social, and moral meaning of remittances, as well as the overlooked role of the host country in the nexus, gives us a path forward in re-thinking how and where development is enacted in the nexus. Finally, I summarize the literature investigating the relationship between transnational migration and integration and explore how this relationship can help us understand migrant-led development, as a transnational practice, in a new light.

**Transnational migration**

Theories about international immigration have historically concentrated on the forces that initiate and sustain flows of people moving from one country to another. Although these approaches to international immigration incorporate a complex understanding of how factors at multiple scales and in multiple locations initiate and sustain migration flows, most do not explicitly consider how these factors would continue to influence the immigrant experience in destinations and their continued relations with sending areas (e.g., by influencing their development), except for their effect on additional migration flows (e.g., Massey et al. 1993:448-454). Further, immigrant incorporation theories (summarized in Alba and Nee 2003) had generally assumed that successful “assimilation” in destination countries implied a loss of
contact with the sending country, without explicitly questioning these assumptions or studying migrants’ links with their sending countries.

The concept of transnational migration, first introduced by Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton (1992), addressed these theoretical and empirical oversights by providing a framework to study international migrants’ simultaneous social, economic, political, and cultural engagement with both their sending and destination communities. Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton argued that these ongoing concurrent engagements across national borders were novel and the result of contemporary global capitalist processes. Similar to other theories that focused on globalization and global relationships as a cause of migration (e.g. Sassen 1988 or worlds systems theory), the concept of transnational migration incorporates an understanding of the economic and social dislocation caused by globalization processes as some of the primary reasons that migrants emigrate from their home countries along with the connections migrants have to other countries as a result of those same processes. However, in contrast to these other theories, which are focused on explaining why migration occurs, the conception of transnational migration focuses on the experience of transnational migration. While theories such as world systems theory can explain how transnational migration networks are created, they cannot explain the relationships and identities that migrants maintain in their sending and destination countries and the social and political outcomes of those relationships and identities.

One of the key elements of Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton’s argument was that international migrants have multiple and shifting identities as they move and interact across national boundaries. As a result, they stated, traditional understandings of certain nodes of identification (nationality, ethnicity, and race) should be conceptualized within a global framework. Glick Schiller et al. then contended that transnational migrants could resist global
capitalist processes, and the hegemonic systems at work within both their home and host
countries, through their ability to move across space and inhabit multiple identities as they do so.

Despite the considerable academic controversy at the time the concept was introduced\(^1\),
including concerns that transnational migration was not a new phenomenon, transnational
migration is generally accepted today as an appropriate framework for understanding the
contemporary lives and impacts of international migrant communities who exhibit simultaneous
connections across national borders\(^2\). Although historic international migrant populations did
maintain contact with their home communities (and return more often than is typically discussed – see Wyman 1993, for example), the practices and experiences of today’s transnational migrant
populations are different for a number of reasons. These reasons include the technological
innovations that have made communications and travel easier, the degree of involvement of
home country states with their emigrant and diasporic populations (Levitt and Jaworksy 2007),
more dense connections across social, political, and cultural transnational practices, and more
intensive engagement by transnational communities across state borders (Vertovec 2009). Given
that migrants have been considered development actors at other points in time, as we shall see,
understanding transnational migration as a contemporary phenomenon is central to exploring
migrants’ current role in relation to development.

So what exactly is transnational migration? Levitt and Jaworksy (2007), in their
excellent review of the literature\(^3\), provide a definition which I shall use going forward. They
describe transnational migration as international migration “taking place within fluid social

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\(^1\) See, for example, Kivisto 2001; Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004

\(^2\) Not all international migrants are transnational – some may direct their activities within the space of a single national border.

\(^3\) See also Vertovec 2009 for another excellent overview of the transnational migration literature.
spaces that are constantly reworked through migrants’ simultaneous embeddedness in more than one society.…These arenas are multi-layered and multi-sited (131). The essential elements of this definition are migrants’ simultaneous interactions in more than one society, the fact that their actions and impacts affect more than one place, and that their practices are multi-layered (meaning, taking place in different domains, such as maintaining family relationships and engaging in political activity). However, the practice of exploring transnational migration can still be fuzzy and vague. As Faist et al. (2013) in their description of transnational scholarship as a whole write, “A transnational approach is not a coherent theory, but a lens. It looks at cross-border transactions as a process, namely transnationalization, which refers to sustained ties, events and activities across the borders of several nation-states” (10). While transnational migration is a theory about how migrants engage simultaneously across state borders, Faist et al.’s depiction of transnational scholarship as an exploration of the process of transnationalization is the heart of transnational migration research.

Scholars of transnational migration seek to describe particular transnational migrant communities, their ways of life, the activities in which they engage, and the impacts of those engagements and ways of life on all the actors connected with the communities. There is no set way of defining a transnational migrant community (see Faist et al. 2013 and Vertovec 2009 for concerns about using ethnicity, among other factors, as a defining characteristic) other than the fact that the members are impacted by how migrants simultaneously engage across state borders. Researchers also often look at multiple scales of impacts from transnational migration, ranging from the individual to the household to the village to the state, sometimes in the same study (e.g. Levitt 2001; Goldring 2002; Smith 2006; Stephen 2007). Yet transnational migration remains a
powerful analytical tool because of the way it helps us conceptualize social space and the many political, economic, social, and cultural impacts of relationships that span state borders.

**Transnational social fields**

Transnational migration moves us to a mode of analysis that extends beyond the nation-state. It helps us move beyond methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003) in which the nation-state is assumed to be the natural frame of analysis and in which groups are defined in terms of nationality and/or ethnicity. As mentioned above in Levitt and Jaworsky’s definition, transnational migration takes place within “fluid social spaces”. That is, those individuals associated with transnational migration inhabit a space that extends across the state borders and incorporates multiple places within it. Only by moving our analytical optic across this entire space can we truly understand the nature and impacts of transnational migrant communities.

Peggy Levitt has popularized the idea of transnational social fields as an expression of the social framing of transnational spaces. Social fields, as described by Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004), are “a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed….Social fields are multi-dimensional, encompassing structured interactions of different forms, depths, and breadth that are differentiated in social theory by the terms organization, institution, and social movement” (1009). In other words, social fields are spaces in which individuals are connected to each other through multiple different methods of interaction (such as political participation or

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4 Basch et al. 1994 originally coined the term transnational social field in transnational migration scholarship. Levitt and Glick Schiller use Basch et al.’s work, as well as Bourdieu’s and the Manchester school of anthropologies definitions of social fields.
kinship networks) which, when taken as a whole, create a social framework within which individuals interact. Transnational social fields incorporate a social framework that is influenced by relationships that occur within and across state boundaries. As a result, “….individuals within these fields are, through their everyday activities and relationships, influenced by multiple sets of laws and institutions” (1010). Transnational social fields, then, are a space in which the social framework is fashioned by the structured interactions and relationships pertaining to multiple locations in different states.

For ease of analysis, scholars have tended to divide the particular activities in which members of transnational social fields engage into different organizational spheres. Levitt and Jaworsky (2007), Vertovec (2009), and Faist et al. (2013) have all done excellent reviews of the work examining the political, economic, social, and cultural practices of transnational migrants. According to these reviews, transnational activities may be political by migrants influencing home community elections or running for office there, by migrants organizing for political purposes in their host country (sometimes to influence the host government’s interactions with their home government), and by political organizing which spans across transnational social fields. The economic aspects of transnational migrants are generally understood in terms of the remittances that migrants send to their families and home communities, although there is some work that also examines how migrants contribute to the economies of their host countries as well. Research on social and cultural aspects of transnational communities has focused particularly on family relationships and gender roles, as well as intergenerational social reproduction and the role of religion in either building transnational communities or being used by transnational communities as a center of identification. Other works have focused on music and cultural celebrations as expressions of cultural hybridity and maintenance within
transnational social fields as well as the differential racialization that occurs across those fields. My work will focus on the economic activities of transnational migrants, but also the importance of their identities and identity negotiation in relation to those activities. It contributes to this body of work by explicitly linking the economic activities in which migrants participate in their home countries to the economic activities in which migrants participate in their host countries – by exploring how all of those activities may be called development.

Transnational life

There are many terms that academics have proposed to help capture the essence of everyday lives shaped by a social framework that encompasses multiple places, activities, and institutions. These terms include transnationality (Faist et al. 2013), transnational life (Smith 2006), transnational living (Guarnizo 2003), and mobile livelihoods (Olwig and Sorensen 2002), to name a few. Although each term has a slightly different meaning, what they all seek to explain and capture is the experience of those whose ideas and activities, whose worldview and actions, are shaped by a frame of reference and actors and institutions that span state borders. In this work, I will use the term transnational life, as my focus on migrants’ own understanding of their experiences is most similar to Smith’s work with Mexican migrants in New York City. He states that “transnational life is the product of the processes of migration from the home country and assimilation in the United States and that we can understand it better by examining other factors that profoundly affect it, such as the life course, adolescence, gender, political change, and changes in patterns of migration and assimilation” (278-279). His ethnographic exploration

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5 For example, Faist et al.’s transnationality focuses more on the experiences of cross-border life while Sorenson and Olwig’s mobile livelihoods focuses more on centering migration scholarship around the livelihoods of different types of migrants, rather than the types of movements they make (i.e. international, internal, circular, etc).
of transnational life highlights migrants’ lived experiences, their understandings of those experiences and how they use their agency in the transnational processes in which they are embedded. I will now highlight some of the main aspects of transnational life that help shape the process and outcomes of migrant-led development.

Transnational frame of reference

One of the elements of transnational life scholars have explored is the mindset of those who are living transnationally, who are living both here and there, so to speak. Such work attempts to explain how individuals living within transnational social fields make meaning of their lives by pulling on information from sources across their social fields as well as negotiating the multiple social and institutional structures in which they are embedded. Thai’s (2014) explanation of how migrants’ interpret their own lives and actions with regard to familial remittances is especially helpful in capturing the essence of how migrants use what I call a transnational frame of reference for their actions. In his discussion of why Vietnamese migrants in the U.S. send remittances to family members in Vietnam, he explains

Most migrant interviewees report that they calculate the typical expenditures for local citizens in Vietnam, and based on that amount, send their relatives money on a regular basis. When they do this calculation, they often compare their wages transnationally…..Migrant respondents see their relatively privileged economic situation in the West, no matter how precarious their work conditions, as a compelling reason to provide for the non-migrants” (55-56)

Although this quote may seem to capture a line of thinking that is self-evident for transnational migrants, it conveys how people living within transnational social fields draw on information from the various places within that field to make decisions.

Vertovec (2009), in his review of the everyday experiences of transnational life, describes such a mindset as a transnational habitus. He explores how different scholars have attempted to capture the ways in which migrants (especially) consider their lives and take action within it.
Habitus is a term coined by Bourdieu and “refers to a socially and culturally set of durable dispositions or propensities for certain kinds of social action” (Vertovec 2009, 66). The idea of a transnational habitus and of a transnational frame of reference are complementary, although habitus implies a more structured and ingrained set of social frames of reference and behaviors. Going forward, I will use “transnational frame of reference” to describe how migrants may draw upon information and ideas from across their transnational social fields to inform their actions within those fields.

Diversity of transnational migrants

Due to the many factors that can shape both transnational social fields and transnational life, both communities of migrants and individuals within communities are diverse in their lived experiences. First of all, different communities establish different kinds of transnational networks and social fields unique to the circumstances around their migration and social, political, economic, and cultural context. For example, Portes et al. (1999) in their introductory article to a special issue of Ethnic and Racial Studies on transnational migration, explain the different circumstances and experiences of transnational communities explored in the issue. They describe work on an ethnic group from Ecuador that participates in transnational migration due to their entrepreneurial ethic, the way in which the international drug trade creates distrust within Colombian migrant communities, and the broad impact of Dominican emigrants on their home country’s politics.

Second of all, transnational communities themselves are not monolithic – individuals within these communities have very different experiences, often based upon class, generation, and gender (e.g. Levitt 2001; Levitt 2003; Mahler and Pessar 2001; Smith 2006; Silvey 2004; Stephen 2007; Thai 2014). One example of such internal variability comes from the work of
Smith (2006), who explores both how second generation Mexican-American men in the same transnational social field adopt different ethnic and racial identities in relation to the sending and host communities as well as how first generation women may adopt one of multiple gender roles in relation to their families and communities. Mahler and Pessar’s (2001) concept of “gendered geographies of power” highlights this diversity even more so by its analytical focus on the way intersectionality differentially shapes the experiences of women across diverse transnational social fields. Although their work includes research on some non-migrants (who are also part of transnational social fields), it highlights how female migrants might have differing levels of power across transnational populations based upon their intersectional identities. Such an optic can be applied within a single transnational community as well or use another social identifier as the primary analytical lens. For example, the interaction between nationality, ethnicity, and legal status is also an important site of analysis for immigrants in the United States (Coutin 2007; Zavella 2011).

**Shifting and contested identities**

In addition to the varied lived experiences of transnational communities, the social meaning of different aspects of migrants’ identity can change across social space, creating social adjustments and tensions within and across communities. Migrants’ identities are often contested as individuals move across social fields and encounter differing expectations for their social identities, such as expectations about gender or race. For example, Foner (2005), Grillo and Mazzucato (2008), and Stephen (2007) all discuss the ways in which Caribbean, African, and indigenous Mexican migrants are differentially racialized in their host societies than in their home societies. The racialization process can not only have adverse impacts on migrants’ opportunities in the host context, they can also create tensions between ethnic and immigrant
groups, such as between Caribbean and African immigrants and local African-American populations (Morawska 2003; Halter and Johnson 2004).

Not only can there be tensions between groups, but shifting identities can create tensions among those within the same transnational social field. For example, Wong (2006) and Parrenas (2001) discuss the gendered negotiations and tensions that migrant women have in terms of their roles as mother, including cultural expectations about the emotional care and material assistance they will provide and the difficulties that result when they can not fulfill all such expectations. Smith (2006) also highlights the gender negotiations that occur between both husbands and wives and parents and children in the Mexican community with which he worked, as women and men struggle to situate themselves within variable gender frameworks. Stephen (2007) captures the essence of these continual negotiations and tensions with her concept of “transborder lives” in which migrants must cross more than just legal borders – but also ethnic, racial, political, and cultural borders as well.

Transnational orientation

Furthermore, not all members of transnational communities are equally transnational in their ideas and actions (Riccio 2001; Levitt 2001; Sinatti 2006; Faist et al. 2013). Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) illustrate this variability by differentiating between ways of being (actions that take place within a social field) and ways of belonging (identifying with a group within a social field) in transnational social fields. It is possible to belong to a transnational community and not be transnational. Levitt (2003) also provides a vivid example of how three different individual migrants engage with different places with the same social field, one fully engaged

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6 See also Hondegneu-Sotelo;'s (1992) study of gender negotiations between male and female Mexican migrants and how legal status and length of separation impacted these negotiations
across the transnational social field, one concentrating his/her actions in a particular sphere, and one only somewhat engaged in both places within the field. Migrants’ transnational engagement can also shift over the life course (Levitt 2001; Levitt 2003; Mazzucato 2008; Smith 2006).

Transnational migrants can also vary in their degree of openness to interacting with different communities across their transnational social field and this degree of openness is what I shall focus on this work. Work with Senegalese immigrants in Europe highlights what I call migrants’ transnational orientation. Mostly framed within the literature on cosmopolitanism7, this work highlights that some Senegalese migrants focus their activities and align their identities solely within the Senegalese community in the host country and with their home communities in Senegal. Others, while maintaining a strong sense of being Senegalese, frame their identities and activities in accordance with the larger communities in which they live in the host community (such as Italian or Western identities and activities) as well as their home communities in Senegal (Riccio 2001; Sinatti 2006). Accordingly, individuals within the Senegalese communities have different senses of belonging across the range of communities with which they come into contact. These different senses of belonging occur even as migrants are all being transnational (in the sense of “being” described by Levitt and Glick Schiller). These senses of belonging, migrants’ transnational orientations, as we shall see, will shape where migrants engage with development and why.

Ambiguous and contradictory outcomes

Finally, transnational life can also be viewed with ambiguity and manifest itself in contradictions within transnational communities. Zavella, in her 2011 work on Mexican migrants

7 The idea that highly mobile individuals may identify as global citizens rather than as national citizens or with particular places (Kothari 2008)
in the United States, explores what she calls “peripheral vision” (8) and how marginalized communities may, in fact, feel “neither here nor there”. The Mexican migrants with whom she worked occupy low-status positions in both Mexico and the United States and their peripheral vision enables them to not only understand their lives in the context of both Mexico and the U.S., but also the instability of their lives compared to non-migrants who live either in Mexico or the United States. For her participants, transnational life can be unpredictable and not necessarily have clear benefits and costs. Other transnational migrants may have to navigate between a having hero or provider identity in their home communities and being denigrated as illegal or a low-class worker in their host country (e.g. Smith 2006; Stephen 2007; Silvey 2009; Thai 2014). Also, transnational movements that originally appear to encourage a social repositioning for marginalized groups, such as women, may in fact reinforce existing social hierarchies. Examples of these contradictions include the desire among Bangladeshi men who returned from temporary labor migration to maintain traditional gender roles in Bangladesh that incorporate the immobility of women (Raghuram 2009) and middle-class Senegalese migrants who continue to exert control over lower-class individuals through their political and economic activities in the home village (Fall 2005).

In sum, these understandings of transnational life provide a frame for understanding the complex and diverse lived experiences of transnational migrants. In order to understand how migrants conceptualize and engage with development, this complexity and diversity must be both acknowledged and explored in relation to their development activities. Yet these aspects of transnational life, and their impacts on migrant-led development, are very often overlooked in the nexus discourse and policies.
The ‘migration-development nexus’

Within the broader literature of transnational migration, Nyberg-Sorensen, Van Hear, and Engberg-Petersen (2002) published a paper that broadly summarized the literature on contemporary international migration flows (both forced and voluntary), aid, and development. This paper was published in relation to a study commissioned by the Danish government about the link between development and migration. Within their review, they examine how refugees and voluntary emigrants can potentially contribute to the development of their home countries and refer to this potential as the “migration-development nexus”. As part of their discussion, they argue that migrants’ remittances, cultural exchanges, and political lobbies can be powerful sources of financial and political development in migrants’ home countries and communities. They also examine the contributions that hometown associations (HTAs) can make to local development through collective remittances targeted for specific projects in home communities. While the review does examine some of the negative effects that migrants can have on local development (such as the use of remittances to fuel fighting in conflict areas), the overall recommendation of the paper with regard to the nexus is: “Based on both evidence and political interests, there is a pressing need to reinforce the view of migrants as a development resource” (36). Concurrent with this recommendation (although not necessarily as a result of it), the literature and international policy began to reflect a growing fascination with the potential benefits of the migration-development nexus.

This recent enthusiasm about the development possibilities of migrants, however, is not novel; it is part of a long-standing fascination among scholars and policymakers with the connection between migration and development. Over the past six decades, the trend in academic thinking has swung from a positive to negative to positive view on migration leading to development (de Haas 2012). Originally viewed as a potential boon for economic development
in sending communities in the 1950s and 1960s, emigration eventually became viewed in the 1970s and 1980s as drain on local economic development through the loss of resources (Black and King 2004; Castles 2009; Zoomers et al. 2008). Academics were concerned that permanent outmigration would depopulate sending areas (as discussed by Portes 2009), that the migration of skilled individuals would result in a loss of human capital (and its attendant potential for economic growth) in sending areas (Skeldon 2008), that remittances would be spent unwisely, and that migrants would be exploited in the process (Gamlen 2014). By the 1990s, a few scholarly voices were again considering some potential contributions of migration to local development in sending areas (e.g. Durand et al. 1996, Taylor et al. 1996). About this time, policymakers and academics began to realize that global remittance flows were extremely large and, in fact, have now surpassed official aid from developed countries to underdeveloped countries (de Haas 2012; Skeldon 2008; World Bank 2006). As will be discussed in further detail shortly, this approach to development assumes that development only takes place in migrants’ home countries in the Global South.

The irony of the current view of the migration-development nexus is that certain economic reforms and circumstances, including structural adjustment policies and massive external debt, helped spur emigration from certain countries, especially in Africa. As policies designed to shrink the size of the state and liberalize activities across multiple economic sectors went into force, displaced populations often resorted to emigration as a way to sustain livelihoods (Adepoju 2008a; Okome 2006). Then, as noted above, as policymakers and academics began to understand the size of remittance flows, migration, which had previously

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8 See Gamlen 2014 for an overview of this literature.
been viewed as a negative side effect of economic development, became a tool of economic
development. Migrants were no longer a cost to be controlled – they became an asset to support
and manage. They became individual entrepreneurs that could be courted to serve the larger
interests of economic development.

The ‘win-win-win’ of migrant-led development

With the recognition of how transnational migrants could contribute to their home
countries, international organizations, such as the World Bank, and state governments began to
promote policies encouraging the economic development of sending countries through the
financial, social, and human capital contributions of their emigrants (Castles and Delgado Wise
2008; Kuznetsov 2006; Ratha et al. 2011). These policies celebrate both immigrants and
diasporas9 as the actors who can provide much needed, scarce capital to their communities. This
approach has been hailed as a ‘win-win-win’ for migrants, host countries, and home countries
through the exchange of benefits to all parties concerned (Piper 2009; Vertovec 2007).

According to the prevalent thought in the nexus, migrants win from being able to move to other
countries where they have more opportunities, host countries benefit from migrants’ labor, and
sending countries benefit from the resources that migrants send back to their communities and
countries. The celebratory, uncritical acceptance of the nexus quickly became so widespread in
international policy circles that Kapur (2004) termed it the “development mantra”. It has now
become embedded in both development discourse as well as well as development policies.

Policies that embrace the nexus encourage migrants to provide specific resources to their
sending communities and nations. Remittances to family members are viewed as an important

9 The term diaspora is contentious – see Cohen 2008 for a detailed review of the concept. I use it to
indicate populations that identify with a particular place in which they do not reside.
tool in poverty alleviation (Ratha et al. 2011; Skeldon 2008) as well as a significant source of foreign reserve for sending states and markets for international corporations (Guarnizo 2003; Ratha et al. 2011). In addition to remittances, migrants are encouraged to begin businesses in their home countries and to share their businesses networks with those in their home countries (e.g. Ionescu 2006). Migrants are also encouraged to provide training and other forms of human capital to their home country via short-term volunteer trips, if they are residing abroad permanently (e.g. IOM 2007). Furthermore, migrants have been invited by some states, most famously Mexico, to provide infrastructural improvements in their sending areas in conjunction with the state (Goldring 2002; Fitzgerald 2008; Iskander 2010) as well as invest in state projects, such as those promoted by the Senegalese state (MSL 2011; Melly 2008) and the diaspora bonds of Israel and India (Ketkar and Ratha 2010). The desired outcome of all of these activities is capitalist economic growth in sending communities and countries through the resources that migrants send back to their areas of origin.

Those individuals who are able to engage in migration and participate in the development efforts of their sending communities often do so through their social networks and/or social institutions to which they belong, although they may do so individually as well (Riccio 2011). Migrants may form their own organizations based upon the people they know from their home community (HTAs) or according to fellow members of an ethnic group from their home country (Levitt and Nyberg-Sorensen 2004; Mercer et al. 2008). They may also tap into the networks of institutions, such as previously existing rural-urban migrant associations in their home country (Abbott 2006; Mercer et al. 2008; Reynolds 2002) or through religious organizations (Mohan 2008; Fitzgerald 2008; Perry 1997). Such migrant and diaspora associations will work together to support infrastructure projects in their home countries, often building schools, roads, health
clinics, and other such resources (Caglar 2006; Mercer et al. 2008; Riccio 2011). The work of Mexican HTAs, in particular, (Dannecker 2009) as well as the volume and uses of remittances across different populations have been a significant focus of nexus research (e.g. Canales 2006; Jones 1998).

**Migrant-led development as neoliberal development**

The discourse and policies of the nexus assume that development entails capitalist economic growth and elides the fact that the concept of development itself is actually quite nebulous. There are multiple reasons for this nebulosity: the conflated meanings of development in English – as growth and progress (Wainwright 2008) and as both the process of capitalist expansion and reactions against it (Cowen and Shenton 1996), the use of the term development to mean both the desired end goal of interventions as well as the particular methods used to reach desired end goals (Battacharyya 2004), and different ideas about both what the end goal and methods of development should be. While development orthodoxy used to center around processes of modernization (i.e. Rostow 1960), with the critiques of post-development scholars (e.g. Ferguson 1994; Escobar 1995; Crush 1995), there was a reorientation to focus on broader ideas of the goal/end point of development as human quality of life and environmental sustainability (e.g. Dasgupta 2001; Sen 1999). The focus on human quality of life and freedoms is incorporated into concepts like human development, as used by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP 2015).

The idea of development within the nexus is in line with the neoliberal philosophy that is currently en vogue within mainstream development organizations and discourse (de Haas 2012; Faist 2010). Raghuram (2009), in her searing critique of the nexus discourse, argues that the types of development discussed within the broader discourse of the nexus are uncritically examined and that no one clearly defines what, in fact, they mean when they discuss
development. Both Bakker (2007) and Faist (2008) argue that migrant-led development is predicated upon the conception of transnational migrants as neoliberal agents contributing to economic growth through their remittances. As Bakker states,

This remittances-to-development discourse, consistent with neoliberal premises, situates the potential for migration-led development in the individual migrant entrepreneur and the market. This discourse promotes an ambitious vision of “financial democracy”, in which market-driven, inclusionary changes in the formal banking and money transfer industries offer to make each and every poor migrant and remittance recipient an entrepreneur (p.42)

Bakker’s statement illustrates the different elements of the underlying ideology of development in the nexus that coalesce as neoliberal economic growth. First, the mechanism through which migrants can promote development is the free market. Second is an understanding that development is best implemented by civil society and communities. The role of the state is simply to create conditions that are optimal for the growth of the market (Faist 2008). Third, the focus of economic activity is oriented towards entrepreneurship. Both Faist (2008) and Bakker (2007) argue that the implicit expectation of the discourse is that migrants will promote entrepreneurship through their activities. Even activities that may not be directly initially in the service of entrepreneurship (such as providing infrastructure in home communities) may contribute to the overall goal of creating an environment conducive to entrepreneurship and thus, neoliberal economic growth. The thought is then that migrants, acting as individual, rational actors, will work to maximize individual gain, and thus create an upward spiral of economic growth. As such, the conception of development within the nexus doesn’t reflect the larger debates about what development is (Geiger and Pecoud 2013) or alternate understandings of development (Castles and Delgado Wise 2008).

This neoliberal slant within the nexus is a source of concern for scholars who have critiqued the role of capitalism in development policies and discourse. Although development
can generally be now understood as “a process of social and economic change”, not necessarily related to capitalism (Yanacopulos 2002), such an understanding of development does not necessarily exclude capitalism. Methods to meet the goals of human development may be capitalist oriented even though the goals of human development move beyond an overt focus on developing a capitalist economy. Indeed, concerned Marxist and other critical scholars have highlighted how capitalism and neoliberalism are embedded in contemporary development discourse and activity. Their concern is that development as progress, development as capitalism, is an inherently destructive process and one that will always create inequalities (e.g., Smith 2008; Watts 2002; Wainwright 2008). By extension, although neoliberalism and capitalism are not the same thing (Ganti 2014), similar concerns exist about migrant-led development as neoliberal development because of the inherent capitalist nature of neoliberal development. Critics of the neoliberal assumptions implicit in the nexus (aside from Bakker, as we shall see), however, do not question what forms neoliberalism takes in their assessments of the nexus. Rather, they fear neoliberalism in general. They fear that neoliberal development by migrants displaces the responsibilities of the state onto individual migrants, promotes processes that favor the already rich and powerful, and comes as significant costs to migrants and their families.

**Uneven benefits of neoliberal migrant-led development**

Critical scholars have argued that the ‘win-win-win’ discourse of the nexus has overshadowed the uneven benefits of migrant-led development across global space. The countries in which migrants settle gain more than just labor as part of this process. First, they gain different kinds of labor. Countries in the North need unskilled labor, as well as skilled labor, even if they view unskilled migrants as undesirable and a threat (Silvey 2009) and restrict their legal mobility (Faist 2008; Sorensen 2012). Indeed, different types of migrants and the
heterogeneous nature of diasporas are ignored in migration-development policies (Bailey 2010; Davies 2007; Mohan and Zack Williams 2002; Raghuram 2009). Second, Northern countries gain economic benefits through the ways in which migrant communities spend their incomes and build businesses in host countries (Faist 2008; Goldin et al. 2011; McEwan et al. 2005; Zhou 2004). Third, host countries are able to capitalize on skilled migrants’ human capital without contributing to the social reproduction costs for building that human capital (Silvey 2009).

Although policies within the nexus promote brain circulation (as discussed above), it is unclear what the actual benefits are for sending countries and who exactly benefits from brain circulation in sending countries (Faist 2008). Concerns about brain drain, especially from African countries, are still ongoing (e.g., Adepoju 2008b; Koser 2003; Vaughn 2011).

However, the governments of sending states are not passive observers in the migration-development nexus. The governments of migrants’ home countries have attempted to engage, and control, migrants in line with their own political and economic interests. Although sending states may not have historically viewed their emigrants as resources (Black and King 2004; Fitzgerald 2008; Iskander 2010), now these states make significant efforts to entice migrants to maintain their transnational connections. This has been done through creating policies such as dual citizenship programs, allowing emigrants to participate in sending state elections and politics, and facilitating remittance transfers (Fitzgerald 2008; Ho 2011; Levitt and Nyberg-Sorensen 2004). Although these attempts at directing migrants are complicated by the different motivations and interests of different levels (municipal, regional, and national) and offices of state governments (Goldring 2002), sending states have a vested interest in building on-going relationship with migrant communities. Indeed, the dynamics of state/migrant relationships as migrants gain political and economic leverage through the resources they contribute and the
ways they engage with state governments is one area of considerable interest to scholars of the nexus, especially in Mexico due to the state’s remittance matching program with HTAs (e.g. Bakker 2007; Duquette-Rury 2016; Fitzgerald 2008; Goldring 2002; Iskander 2010).

Additionally, one of the criticisms of migrant-led development is that sending states are able to abdicate responsibility for infrastructure, employment, and educational provisions by discursively shifting the responsibility for local economic and infrastructure growth to migrant communities (Bakker 2007; Castles and Wise 2008; de Haas 2012; Skeldon 2008).

Further scholarly concerns about the uneven benefits of migrant-led development center on inequality within migrant and sending communities (Faist 2008). Migrants’ development efforts, especially remittances, may create negative economic impacts in sending communities, such as the exacerbation of economic inequalities between migrant and non-migrant households (Jones 1998; Massey et al. 1993; Skeldon 2008), or an increase in real estate prices through migrants’ purchase of land and construction of homes (Halter and Johnson 2014). And although migrants may encounter ideas in their host community that challenge traditional nodes of inequality in their home community, they may not have the resources or interest in challenging those inequalities, such as Salvadoran or Dominican migrants who may be too busy in their receiving context or benefit from elite status in sending communities to try to alter unequal political structures in their home countries (Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011). Furthermore, elites of sending communities may maintain their status via the resources they gain from migration or gain power over non-migrant households vis-à-vis development projects and politics (Cohen 2005; Fall 2005; Mercer et al. 2009). Finally, not all potential migrants can migrate as easily as others, depending on social expectations and restrictions, such as those associated with gender
roles and ethnic status (Massey, Axinn, and Ghimire 2010; Radel and Schmook 2010; Toyota, Yeoh, and Nguyen 2007).

Finally, although migrants may gain materially and in status in home communities, they must also incur significant costs, a topic also overlooked in mainstream policy debates (see World Bank 2006 for an exception). Migrants must leave families and engage in sometimes difficult and illegal working conditions and legal statuses (Castles and Wise 2008; Piper 2009). They have little economic and physical security if they are undocumented (Gamlen 2014). Migrants incur the affective costs of family separation (e.g., Parrenas 2001; Pratt 2012) and non-migrants must bear the burden of extra responsibilities (e.g. Aysa and Massey 2004). Additionally, migrants who cross borders illegally bear significant physical costs, as we have seen both in the case of the Mexico-U.S. Border (e.g. Nevins 2007) and the continuing attempts of African migrants to cross the Mediterranean to reach Europe (e.g. Hernandez-Carretero and Carling 2012). And, regardless of their status, the voices of migrants are often not heard, at least in international policy discussions on migrant-led development (Castles and Delgado Wise 2008).

Given these concerns about the uneven impacts and assumed implicit neoliberal bias of the nexus, scholars are increasingly calling for its dismissal as a useful concept and policy framework (Gamlen 2014). Yet, by looking at some of the oversights in the nexus about the lived experiences and spatialization of migrant-led development, there is a path forward to conceptualizing migrant-led development as something other than a reified understanding of neoliberal development enacted by individuals coming from “less developed” countries. By considering how migrants view remittances and why they send them, as well as the role of the host country in these processes, we can see that migrants may have alternative ideas for
development than expected of them in the nexus and that migrant-led development can occur in and be shaped by the host country as well.

Remittances assumed as the engine of economic and neoliberal growth

The remittances that migrants send home to their families and communities are one of the main areas of interest and evaluation in the nexus as it is hoped that those remittances will facilitate economic growth. As Raghuram’s (2009) aforementioned critique declares, migrants’ contribution to development through remittances “is the lodestar around which the migration-development industry is congregating” (105). Controversies within the mainstream discourse center on what exactly to measure in terms of remittances and their outcomes (de Haas 2012) and even how to define and measure remittances themselves (Carling 2008).

There are two main foci of interest in the evaluation of remittances: human capital remittances and financial remittances. Faist (2008) argues that in contemporary discussions of the nexus, the main focus is on human capital remittances, such as the knowledge that highly educated migrants can share with non-migrants in sending communities to assist with training and industry growth (see IOM 2006; Kuznetsov 2006 for examples). In responding to earlier concerns of brain drain from the South to the North, the migration of educated elites is now generally discussed as brain circulation (Raghuram 2009), although there is still concern about the human capital and economic impacts on sending countries of the permanent migration of highly educated migrants (Adepoju 2008b; Silvey 2009).

The most intense focus, however, is on how financial remittances are directed and invested at both the household and community level. Many evaluations of migrant-led development examine the developmental effects of financial remittances (e.g. de Haas 2005; Mezger Kevder and Beauchemin 2015; Orozco 2002; Portes et al. 2007; Taylor et al. 1996). Although the importance of poverty alleviation for migrants’ households in sending communities
is recognized as a legitimate goal of development (Ratha et al. 2011), practitioners and academics also focus on the potential “productive use” of migrants’ financial remittances. Van Doorn (2004), for example, lists the possible productive investments that remittances can fund in sending communities at the household (education, health, providing credit) and community level (infrastructure investments, such as a school or road).

Indeed, a significant portion of the literature exploring migrants’ remittance activities examines community level remittances (e.g. Bakker 2007; Caglar 2006; Iskander 2010; Levitt 2001; Mercer et al. 2007; Smith 2006). Development efforts by HTAs can center on activities that promote environments for small business growth, such as creating infrastructure that the state has failed to provide. Such activities of HTAs are especially in line with expectations for neoliberal economic growth led by migrants (e.g. Bakker 2007). Other household and migrant investments of significant interest include: small enterprise (e.g., Massey and Parrado 1998; Sheehan and Riosmena 2013) and real estate, a very common remittance expenditure among migrants (Adams 2006; de Haas 2006; Klaufus 2010). Scholars and practitioners are also interested in the benefits that remittances can provide at a macroeconomic level, most predominantly the provision of foreign exchange, but also through state projects such as diaspora bonds (Ratha et al. 2011).

The non-economic meaning of remittances

However, these expectations of remittances as vehicles for economic growth misapprehend the social, moral and affective reasons that migrants send them. In line with the works discussed earlier that examine affective and moral reasons for economic activities, migrants may send money to their families and communities with non-economic goals in mind. When these meanings of remittances are incorporated into our understanding of migrant-led development, then the assumed premise of migrants as “rational” actors primarily motivated to...
increase economic self-worth may not be accurate. As a result, such an understanding opens the door for different conceptualizations about remittances and the possibilities for development by migrants.

There are multiple ways in which remittance behavior can have non-economic meaning. Individual remittances to families can be used to uphold moral obligations to families and social expectations of support to families (Akesson 2010; Cohen 2011; Hammand 2010; Omobowale et al. 2010; Riccio 2008). This may be due to a family strategy of migration (Omobowale et al. 2010; Riccio 2008) or it may be that the remittances that migrants send to family members are activities they would have engaged in regardless of where they lived, such as children sending money to parents to show respect, and in the case of international migrants, this activity just happens to be transnational (Carling 2014). Furthermore, remittances can have affective meaning as well. As Thai (2014) argues, the meaning and implications of money circulation within transnational Vietnamese families “is much more than solely a financial matter; it is embedded in complex systems of cultural expectations, self-worth, and emotional economies” (15). He describes how emotional relationships may be measured by remittance giving within transnational families. For example, he tells a story about how the parents of one young woman based in the U.S. interpreted her remittances for appliances and other improvements in their home as an indication of her level of love and affection for them (50).

Remittances may also be a way to develop social capital in sending communities or to enhance the status of migrants. Migrants can help themselves, and their families, gain social capital through the way their remittances are spent in sending communities, such as in gift giving or ceremonies (e.g., Buggenhaggen 2012; Omobowale et al. 2010). Furthermore, migrants who have a low status in their host country may maintain their sense of self-worth (Thai 2014) or try
to maintain or enhance their status in their home communities through remittances (Levitt 2001; Mazzucato 2008; Sana 2005). Remittances can also be a way to maintain connections with their families in home areas, even when they are physically absent (Lacroix 2013). They may even be seen as a community-level social practice assumed to be part of larger transnational practices (Mercer and Page 2012).

Mohan (2006) in his analysis of Ghanaian remittance practices highlights that migrants may, in fact, be engaged with “development” to meet several simultaneous social and moral obligations. The migrants he interviewed often sent home individual remittances to their families due to a moral obligation they felt and also sent collective remittances to their ancestral village (even though they may have lived in more than one location in Ghana) due to communal social obligations. The Ghanaian state was also trying to mobilize their loyalty for state directed development projects. In his article Mohan argues that even as cosmopolitan transnational migrants, individuals can feel multiple obligations to their sending community. Remittances, then, may have multiple meanings for migrants and be simultaneously directed according to those meanings.

Overall many scholars have dismissed the concept of the migration-development nexus due the way in which neoliberalism has been portrayed within the nexus and the often unacknowledged uneven benefits and power plays among the stakeholders involved. However, considering the non-economic meanings of remittances may help us think about migrant-led development more broadly. If we approach remittances as social and affective practices that have economic form, we can then open up the question – what is development for migrants? If remittances are sent, at least partially, for other reasons, are there other understandings of development? The understandings we have from transnational migration studies about shifting
identities and contradictions of transnational life may also, in turn, help us explore the many ways migrants may embrace and act on development. Moving forward, thinking about the role of specific places, especially the overlooked role of the host country, within the transnational spaces of migrant-led development can help us consider other ways to re-conceptualize the nexus as well.

The current focus on the sending country

Although the importance of place in shaping migrant-led development processes and outcomes has been overlooked in the discourse and policies of the nexus (Gamlen 2014), most scholarly work that examines the role of particular places in these processes focus on the role of the sending country. The specific nature of the sending state’s involvement and the history of migration and development in the sending country both significantly shape migrant-led development. Iskander (2010) writes about the “interpretive engagement” of the Mexican and Moroccan states with their emigrant populations and the ways in which these groups dialogued and worked together over time to create functioning migrant-led development programs. She argues that not only is the state a key actor in such processes, but also that there is not a one-size-fits all approach to development by emigrants - effective policies are shaped by the particular conditions of each state and population. Hansen (2012), in his work about the Tanzanian government’s adoption of a migration development program, argues that the Tanzanian programs will be ineffective because government officials are ignoring local migration and development conditions. He goes on to assert that less economically developed countries may not have the capacities necessary to fully understand their emigrant populations, remittance flows, and actual engagement of these emigrant communities, thus rendering them unable to effectively engage in the nexus. Mercer et al. (2008) create a strong case for the importance of local and national context in migrant-led development in their discussion of how Tanzanian and Cameroonian
emigrants have different sites of allegiance in their home countries due to the way their respective states developed concepts of ethnicity in the post-colonial era. In another example, Mexican migrants from the state of Zacatecas may have a direct impact on their sending state because of Mexico’s 3 for 1 program (Goldring 2002), whereas Senegalese migrants also have assistance from the state but not in such a geographically directed manner (Grillo and Riccio 2004).

Expanding the nexus - the role of the host country

As previously argued, spatial conceptualizations of the migration-development nexus should include the host country. This is because, from a theoretical perspective, transnational migrants are acting within a transnational sphere that includes the host country as well as the sending country. Furthermore, development is a process that can occur in host countries, as we know from critical development studies and as we shall see through migrants’ own understandings of development. Although critical scholars have pointed out that host countries benefit from the types of labor and the mobility restrictions they are able to place on migrants in the name of migrant-led development policies, host countries are also imbricated in migrant-led development in three ways that aren’t frequently discussed in the literature on the nexus.

First, recent work on migrant workers has shown that individuals in the host country are implicated in the outcomes of migration in sending countries. Pratt, in her 2012 work on Filipino women who are employed as domestic workers and care givers in Canada, explores how those women and their children in the Philippines experience great emotional distress, even as the mothers contribute to development in their home countries. The women in Pratt’s study contribute to development in the Philippines by supporting their families there. Pratt argues that the Canadian government, through the program it set up, and Canadian families, by their engagement with the program, facilitate this particular type of labor migration and development
process and are implicated in the emotional suffering which the migrants and their families undergo.

Second, migrants can contribute to development in host countries. Even within the nexus’ narrow development of development as economic growth, migrants can be viewed as development actors in their host countries through the financial contributions they make there, as previously mentioned. The businesses they invest in, their taxes, and the ways in which they spend their income all contribute to the economy of the host country (Faist 2008; McEwan et al. 2005; Mazzucato 2008; Zhou 2004) even if the exact ways in which immigrants contribute to host country economies can be difficult to measure (Blau and Mackie 2016). This is part of a wider global economic impact that migrants can have through their spending in transnational activities (Guarnizo 2003). Migrants have a ‘double engagement’ (Grillo and Mazzucato 2008) across their transnational social fields that is often unacknowledged in the nexus; and migrants also desire to contribute to development both here and there (Piper 2009: 98).

Third, the conditions in the host country affect the way that migrants can engage in transnational activities, including development activities. Again, the literature on this connection is very limited in the nexus nor does the transnational literature explore the impacts of host countries on development practices in particular. Such studies, if they exist, usually fall under immigrant integration as a field of study. These studies have shown that legal, institutional, and social dynamics in host countries have all affected both migrants’ integration trajectories and transnational activities. In his analysis of legal status in relation to remitting behavior and other transnational activities of Senegalese migrants in Europe, Vickstrom (2015) highlights that those without legal status are thus “territorially confined” and less able to maintain affective ties through physical visitations. They are also less likely to send remittances over time. Migrants
who have legal status may also have access to benefits, such as public housing, that increase their ability to send remittances as well (Velayuthum and Wise 2005). On the other hand, Mazzucato (2008) showed that the cost of obtaining identification papers in the Netherlands reduced legal and undocumented Ghanaian migrants’ ability to engage financially with their sending communities.

Finally, Marini (2015) found that European host country governments’ stance towards Ghanaian immigrants and integration materially affected both their integration and development strategies. In Italy, in which the Ghanaian population is newer, the state has set up co-development projects that facilitate development projects (rather than just remittances) among Ghanaian migrants and also facilitate their integration through working with local Italian organizations. Ghanaian migrants in Britain however, look to older cohorts of migrants who have already integrated, as the state offers no similar programs. These migrants tend to send collective remittances to support development issues, but not to participate in organizing and running development projects. The host country, then, is a key, if indirect, player in migrant-led development, but generally overlooked because the spatial imaginary of development limits the analytical focus of development to sending countries. When we understand the importance of including the history country in analysis of migrant-led development, then migrants’ integration is also a key element of migrant-led development processes.

**Integration**

Migrants’ integration, also known as adaptation or incorporation, processes in their host countries also affect their engagement in development activities. As referenced earlier, this relationship is often overlooked within the wider literature on the nexus, although there has been some research into the relationship between integration and remittance behaviors. This realm of
study, however, generally falls under the purview of integration studies, a site of vigorous scholarly debate over the past several decades.

Integration is generally understood as a gradual alignment between immigrant and native communities with regard to certain social, civic, and economic indicators. However, the concept is highly contentious, arising from the rejection of the concept of assimilation. Assimilation, in American historical context, meant that immigrant communities would, over time and across generations, become “Americanized”. As such, they would lose their native languages, understand themselves as American (as opposed to other identities), and slowly gain economic parity with native communities. This concept came under scrutiny in the 1960s and 1970s and became anathema in migration studies due to the implicit expectation that migrants lose all sense of alternative identity and due to the understanding that migrants impact the communities in which they settled as well (Alba and Nee 2003). While a different conceptualization of assimilation was produced in the 1990s that focused on the blurring and shifting of boundaries between ethnic groups and the American mainstream over time (Alba and Nee 1994), the term still has too many negative connotations for some scholars. These scholars use terms such as incorporation and integration (Alba and Nee 2003; Erdal and Oeppen 2013). Regardless of the term, what integration scholars seek to measure is whether or not migrant communities will, at some point, achieve economic, social, and civic parity with the host community at large, without necessarily becoming fully cultural immersed in the host community.

Integration is generally conceived of in terms of economic, political, and socio-cultural integration. Economic integration is usually measured by factors that affect individual ability to engage in the host country economy: employment status, occupational status, housing, income, and education (Ager and Strang 2008; Morawska 2003; Marcelli and Lowell 2005). Socio-
cultural integration can be measured through whom individuals identify with and interactions with others outside the immigrant community (Ager and Strang 2008; Morawska 2003). Other factors of integration include residential integration (as communities mix into the wider native population), the adoption of the host country language, attaining citizenship, and voting in elections (Jimenez 2011). Generally integration is conceived of as a multi-generational process, although analyses can be done on just the first generation or over time.

While many studies look at measured outcomes, Erdal and Oeppen (2013) call for a different understanding of integration. They advocate for studying integration as a process and define that process as “one whereby actors negotiate membership in a particular place” (871). Their emphasis on exploring the interactions between migrants and host communities, and how migrants may try to obtain membership of different kinds, such as through the labor market or through social networks, within the host community is germane to this study. As previously discussed, transnational migration involves identity and membership negotiation across migrants’ transnational social fields. I will therefore use this definition of integration going forward to understand how migrants’ development activities in the host country impact processes of membership negotiation. In particular, I will focus my work on how Senegalese migrants negotiate sociocultural belonging through who they identify with and who they interact with as well as through their economic memberships, primarily their educational attainment, income levels, and occupations.

Transnational migration and integration

The relationship between integration and migrant-led development is part of the broader relationship between transnational migration and integration. This relationship has been a central source of contention for academics since the initial conceptualization of transnational migration. One of the early concerns about the idea of transnationalism was what it meant for immigrant
integration in host countries. If migrants continued to have strong relationships and connections with their home communities, the question was whether or not that would prevent them from establishing strong and lasting ties in their new communities (e.g., Kivisto 2001; Joffra and Morawska 2003).

It is now clear that there is not a single, linear relationship that can be drawn between transnational practices of migrants and integration. In fact, the evidence of the relationship between transnationalism and integration is rather mixed. Early evidence tended to be more pessimistic, especially as understandings around integration were still centered, for some, on migrants’ total loss of a separate ethnic identity and native language skills. However, over the past last two decades, there has been increasing evidence that transnationalism and integration processes can happen at the same time – that as migrants gain different types of memberships in host countries, especially economic membership – they still maintain connections with their home communities. These processes can co-exist and even reinforce each other (e.g., Erdal and Oeppen 2013; Smith 2006. Levitt 2001; Riccio 2011).

Transnationalism and integration can reinforce each other through the ways that migrants across multiple generations negotiate social, economic, and political belonging in both the sending context and the host context. For example, Smith (2006) discusses how some second generation Mexican Americans in New York City may join gangs as a way to obtain social membership as they encounter discrimination directed towards Mexican immigrants. Other second generation Mexican Americans may find a strong identity and sense of social membership through their sending community and not feel a need to join gangs. In turn, they are more likely to be socially and economically integrated in New York City. With regard specifically to transnational development activities, Riccio (2011) explains how a welcoming
local institutional context in Italy can facilitate the growth of Senegalese HTAs – and how the existence of such HTAs can facilitate migrants’ social and economic integration through HTA alliance with trade unions and local governments.

Despite the more recent understanding that transnationalism and integration can reinforce each other, there is no consensus that such accord is always the case. In part, this is due to differing definitions and understandings of both transnationalism and integration. For example, Lacroix (2013) argues that transnationalism should be understood as integration in two or more settings. By this, he means we should examine how transnational migrants attempt to negotiate and maintain social and structural membership in multiple locations and how membership in one location can affect membership in another. Meanwhile, Kane (2011) argues that Senegalese migrants’ transnational practices facilitate integration because their associations that foster connections back in Senegal must meet American bureaucratic standards, and thus Senegalese migrants gain some structural integration in the process. Oeppen and Erdal (2013) argue that transnationalism and integration are separate processes, but with key elements in common, such as negotiating social membership (like LaCroix) and therefore present a typology for studying the key elements of each in relation to each other, to come up with theories about those relationships.

The other reason that scholars can’t define a singular relationship between transnational migration and integration is because different population of immigrants and even different individuals within a single transnational community can have very different experiences with both transnational life and integration. There are several studies that explore the particular factors that can influence these differential outcomes for first and second generation individuals. These factors include those that impact individuals’ ability to engage in host communities, such as
occupational status and education levels, as well as factors that facilitate individuals maintaining a strong sense of identity in relation to their sending country, such as racial discrimination experienced in the host country.

Morawska (2003) offers a typology of transnational/assimilation (T/A) experiences of different immigrant populations in the U.S., including those with high transnational engagement and high levels of integration, those with low levels of integration and high levels of transnational engagement, and some groups that are partially integrated and also have high levels of transnational engagement. Although Morawska discusses a host of factors specific to particular sending countries and immigrant communities in this typology, some of the main factors she argues that simultaneously affect migrants’ integration and transnationalism are: migrants’ education levels, occupational status in the U.S., language abilities, racialization in the U.S., the proximity of the sending country, and the degree to which the sending state establishes a relationship with its emigrants. Relatedly, Snel et al. (2006) found that multiple migrant groups in the Netherlands were able to both integrate socio-culturally and maintain a transnational identity, although some groups with lower labor force integration had less socio-cultural integration and higher degree of identification with their home country. Levitt (2003) also demonstrates that individuals within transnational communities can selectively integrate and selectively engage in transnational activities, they can integrate and then become transnationally active at a different life stage, or they may not be able to either integrate or engage well transnationally. In short, there are a host of factors that shape the relationship between integration and transnationalism, including which aspect of integration (e.g. economic, socio-cultural, political) is being measured as well as individual, community, and place-based factors.
Relevant for this study is the indication that racial discrimination, occupational status, and education levels all play an important role in integration and transnational outcomes.

The relationship between remittance behaviors and integration in the first generation is as complex as the relationship between transnationalism and integration. As indicated previously, research has indicated that low levels of economic integration can lead to increased remittance behaviors as a way to gain and maintain status in sending communities (e.g., Levitt 2011, Marcelli and Lowell 2005; Sana 2005). However, length of stay and economic integration have also been associated with increased levels of remittances (Carling and Hoelscher 2013; Castagone et al. 2013; LaCroix 2013; Portes et al. 2007). And Marcelli and Lowell’s (2005) study of Mexican migrants in Los Angeles revealed that some aspects of economic integration, such as higher levels of education, were associated with lower remittances while other aspects, such as home ownership, were associated with higher remittances. Such quantitative studies indicate that there is clearly a relationship between integration and remittance behaviors, although it can be difficult to tease apart the relationship as purely positive or negative given that the processes can be inter-related (Erdal and Oeppen 2013).

With regard to the second generation, in particular, it is still an open question about whether or not second generation individuals in transnational migrant communities continue to maintain a strong interest and active involvement in sending communities as they participate in the integration process. On one hand, there is evidence that the children of transnational immigrants can and do maintain strong connections to sending communities, including remittance behaviors (Cohen 2011). On the other hand, Smith’s (2006) work described above indicates that even within a single immigrant community, second generation individuals may have varying levels of engagement with the sending community.
One factor that may influence second generational individuals’ transnational interactions is something called downward assimilation. Downward assimilation is a concept from Portes and Zhou’s (1993) segmented assimilation theory that not all second generation migrants across a country’s immigrant population will have the same integration process. For those immigrants who encounter discrimination due to their race or ethnicity, second generation individuals may adopt an “oppositional identity” in line with other marginalized groups, such as disenfranchised African-American communities, and encounter downward economic mobility, similar to their parents (Waldinger 2004). This downward mobility is called downward assimilation. The second generation gang members which Smith (2006) describes fit into this categorization. The adoption of oppositional identities, in the case of Smith’s work, did not prevent these second generation individuals from physically returning to their sending community – but it did strongly affect their economic outcomes and their sense of identity in relation to their sending community and host community, in that they did not want to belong to the “mainstream” in either location.

Transnational migrant communities’ integration process and transnational activities, then, form a complex relationship. In order to fully understand migrant-led development processes, it is thus necessary to include an assessment of migrants’ integration processes. It is impossible to fully understand the factors that shape migrants’ transnational development efforts without understanding their integration experiences (Marcelli and Lowell 2005). Relatedly, ignoring their integration experiences ignores the wider spatial impacts of their development activities. For this reason, and for the previously discussed problems of the spatial imaginary of development, a framework analyzing migrant-led development must incorporate migrants’ activities and experiences in the host country.
Conclusion

The purpose of this work is to explore what additional understandings we can gain about the migration-development nexus by exploring how Senegalese migrants understand and enact development, how their transnational experiences shape those understandings and engagements, and the role of the host country in these processes, including migrants’ integration experiences in the host country. The discourse and policies of the nexus are flawed in their skewed spatialization of development and in their focus on development as a certain type of neoliberal economic growth. By reinserting the understandings from transnational migration and inserting our understandings about the host country and about integration, we can better flesh out what migrant-led development truly entails. Understanding that migrants generally have a transnational frame of reference and that their experiences with transnational life are incredibly diverse allows us the freedom to explore how migrants might engage differently with development, in practice and across space. Furthermore, given that transnational life can be contradictory and ambivalent helps us understand how migrants’ engagements with development may be contradictory across a community. Additionally, understanding that migrants assign social and affective meaning to remittance behavior, and that there are other ideas of development besides neoliberal economic growth as defined in the nexus, provides space for investigating what other ideas migrants might have about development. As a result, migrant-led development policies may be able to better facilitate the different goals that migrants have with regard to development. Lastly, understanding that migrants’ activities in the host country are intimately involved with development activities through their integration processes permits us to envision the process and outcomes of migrant-led development more broadly.

This re-framing of the nexus is not intended to be emancipatory. Rather, it is designed to focus our attention on the complexity, the nuances, and the contradictions that can occur within a
group of transnational migrants engaged with development. It is also intended to remove the
discursive and analytical separation of migrants’ full transnational lives and activities from their
development activities. My goal with this re-framing is to argue that migrant-led development is
a place-specific messy, contradictory practice with transnational impacts.
Chapter 2 – Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the methodology used to collect and analyze data for this research project. The purpose of this research project is to explore how members of U.S.-based Senegalese communities understand and engage with development and how a focus on their transnational lives gives us new perspectives on migrant-led development. In line with transnational theory, which highlights the diverse and multiple experiences of the members of transnational communities, and in line with the study’s focus on development as a process, I used mainly qualitative methods to investigate the particular viewpoints and experiences of the Senegalese and Senegalese-American participants with whom I worked. Overall, these methods were designed to capture how members of the Senegalese community think about development, how they engage with development, and what factors shape those engagements.

The empirical findings of this study are based on 15 months of fieldwork in New York City and Denver, CO. The fieldwork consisted of both semi-structured interviews and participant observation with the Senegalese communities in both field sites. I conducted interviews with members of the Senegalese communities to gain perspective on their viewpoints about migrant-led development and their relation to it. I also conducted interviews with local leaders in both sites to facilitate a better understanding of the context and nature of each community as well as their organizations’ role in it. For participant observation, I attended community meetings, religious events, and social gatherings to observe how interactions at the community level reflected and shaped individual engagements with development.
In this chapter, I explain the philosophies behind my data collection and analysis and also the particular ways in which I collected data. I argue that an actor-centered, multi-sited case study is the best approach for understanding how Senegalese migrants understand and engage in migrant-led development. I then explain why I chose Harlem and Denver as the sites for this case study as well as the ways in which I collected interview and participant observation data to best understand Senegalese migrants’ perspectives with regard to development and also the influence of place on that process. I describe the characteristics of the migrants I was able to interview, which were overall reflective of the larger Senegalese migrant population, with the exception that most of the migrants I spoke with are more highly educated than Senegalese migrants in general. I finish the chapter by explaining my approach to data analysis and reflecting on how my identities as a pregnant woman and as a student were some of the most influential in my relationships with my research participants.

**Multi-sited case study**

The overarching purpose of this research study is to understand how Senegalese migrants in the United States understand and engage with development and how a focus on their transnational lives gives us new perspectives on migrant-led development. I argue that a primarily qualitative case study is the best approach for this type of study for two reasons. First, according to Cresswell (2009), case studies are intended to examine a current process in a specific time and location. Utilizing a case study allows me to explore the particular experiences of Senegalese migrants in the U.S. as they participate in development activities. As a result, this type of study addresses the concerns of critical scholars that the discourse in the migration-development nexus is ahistorical and lacks geographical context (Gamlen 2014). This study seeks to add to the body of literature showing the importance of geographic context in shaping
migration-development processes. Second, Smith (2006) argues that qualitative case studies are particularly useful for studying transnational life. According to Smith, qualitative case studies “acquire theoretical importance through three dialogues: between the researchers and informants, between the local dynamics of the subject under study and the larger structures within which it is embedded, and between analysis of the case and theory” (282). While Smith is primarily arguing for using qualitative methods, as opposed to quantitative methods, for understanding a particular aspect of the migration processes, his argument is germane to my selection of a case study as part of my research design. As a case study allows for analytical focus on a particular process within a specific temporal, spatial, and social context, it also allows for an analysis of how that process is situated within larger social, economic, and political processes and the theoretical implications of both sets of analyses. It is thus well-suited for a study that explores transnational migrants’ engagement with development and the individual and larger social processes that shape that engagement. Indeed, several recent works in the migration field use a case study approach to understand similar processes (e.g. Grillo and Riccio 2004; Hernandez-Leon 2008; Stephen 2007; Thai 2014).

This case study is multi-sited to explore how local factors in the host country shape Senegalese migrants’ experiences with development and integration. While there is a strong argument for transnational migration research to be multi-sited across migrants’ transnational social fields (e.g. Levitt 2001), there remains a lack of data about how transnational migrants’ engagement with development is shaped by differing places within the same host country. Some studies have hinted that different local contexts affect outcomes in these processes (e.g., Mercer et al. 2008; Mohan 2006; Portes et al. 2007), but there has not been a particular focus on
exploring this aspect of the migration-development nexus. The focus on place within the host country is one of the most significant contributions of this project to the literature.

To address the potential shortcomings of utilizing a case study, such as overreliance on one type of source that may include limited perspectives on the process under investigation (Schrank 2006; Yin 2003), I collected multiple forms of data. My primary methods of data collection for this case study were semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Since this study is an exploration of development as a process which individuals engage with within the framework of larger social and structural contexts, my methods were focused on collecting data on the perspectives and experiences of individual Senegalese migrants and what factors shaped them. I have also tried to collect interview data from as wide a spectrum of the Senegalese communities in my field sites as possible.

**Actor-centered approach**

One of the primary purposes of this project is to explore migrants’ voices and experiences in relation to migrant-led development. Although this study will not contain the thick description of an ethnography (Geertz, 1973), it will privilege my participants’ understandings and perspectives in analyzing the development processes in which they take part in Harlem, Denver, and Senegal. Feminist and postcolonial theory shape my focus on migrants’ voices. Both theoretical approaches seek to hear and uphold the voices of their research participants. For feminists, this emphasis evolved as scholars attempted to redress the way in which women’s perspectives and views were overlooked in scientific research (Leckenby2007), but which can be naturally extended to other underprivileged and oppressed groups in society. Similarly, postcolonial theorists, in their attempts to highlight the culture, thoughts, and experiences of postcolonial subjects that were previously silenced or ignored under colonial regimes, also focus
on the experiences of their participants (Rankin 2005). To be clear, I draw on these theoretical backgrounds to focus my analysis on the voices of my participants – but do no center my data analysis exclusively on gender or postcolonial subjectivity.

I draw on the actor-centered approach for two reasons. First, to understand why social processes occur the way that they do, we need to understand how individuals are thinking about and acting within and upon those processes (see Bakker 2007)\(^\text{10}\). Second, more specific to the case at hand, migrants’ perspectives are often overlooked in international migration-development policy (Castles and Delgado Wise 2007) and can also be overlooked in research that assesses outcomes of migrants’ development efforts and projects. While ethnographies about transnational migrants who participate in these processes are rich with migrants’ perspectives and experiences, they often do not directly focus on migrants’ perspectives of development processes per se (as discussed by Carling 2014 with respect to remittances).

**Site selection**

I chose Harlem and Denver as the two sites for my dissertation research. I chose Harlem as one site because New York City has the largest and oldest Senegalese community in the United States (Kane 2011). There are, in fact, several Senegalese communities in New York City, but the most well-known community lives in Little Senegal, centered around 116th St in Harlem. New York, however, is not the only location in the United States with a Senegalese community even if it is virtually the only location discussed in the literature. Senegalese communities have spread throughout the U.S. over the last 30 years, establishing themselves in DC, LA, North Carolina, Minnesota, and Michigan. Buggenhagen (2012) also briefly described

\(^{10}\) Similar to Bakker’s (2007) use of agency-oriented analysis
a small Mouride community in Chicago, stating that Mouride traders left New York City in the early 1990s when they felt that the local markets became too crowded (81). The Mouride brotherhood is one of the four main Islamic brotherhoods in Senegal, distinguished from others by its reverence of the modern-day founder, Amadou Bamba and the relationship between disciples and religious leaders. It is also extremely well known for the work ethic and entrepreneurial activities of its followers (Diouf 2000; Kane 2010).

I chose Denver as my second site because it is representative of the other smaller and newer Senegalese communities across the United States and has distinct spatial, political, and social activities from that of the New York City community. As such, it provides ideal conditions for analysis of how place shapes migrant development and integration processes. While there will be obvious differences in these processes due to the different size of the populations in each location and New York City’s status as a global city, comparing populations across cities of similar size and activity might not yield significantly different results from this study. This is because cities are differentially embedded in economic and political processes (Glick Schiller and Caglar 2009), and there would likely be different structural outcomes in both development and integration processes as a result, even for cities of similar size and activity.

**Field sites partnership with Senegalese community organizations**

During my fieldwork, I established partnerships with several Senegalese organizations. These partnerships were designed to be a modified form of participatory action research. Although participatory/collaborative action research involves researchers and communities moving through the research process together, including the creation of research questions (Capobianco 2007), the requirements of the dissertation process, especially attempts to obtain funding, require a more traditional approach to the research project. I thus contacted some of
the predominant Senegalese associations in my field sites in order to gain permission and approval from association leadership and members to conduct my research in those communities and also to be transparent with the community leadership about my research project.

The partnerships I established consisted of several elements. First, I discussed my research agenda with organizations to verify it had meaning in and value for the local Senegalese immigrant communities. Second, I asked the leadership of these organizations to assist with recruiting interview participants. Third, I promised to share research findings with the organizations and finalized findings with the communities at large. My primary partner organizations were the Senegalese Association of America (ASA), in Harlem, and also the Senegalese Association of Colorado, in Denver. I also obtained permission to conduct research through MICA, the Mouride Islamic Community of America. I did attempt to establish partnerships with other Senegalese religious organizations in Harlem, but was not able to successfully build those relationships.

Preparatory Fieldwork

Before starting my dissertation fieldwork, I engaged in pre-dissertation research over the summers of 2011 and 2012 to guide my dissertation research design. During the summer of 2011, I attempted to contact by phone and email community organizations across the United States working with and serving Senegalese communities that had published contact information available online. Although I probably overlooked some communities by this method, it was the only option I had at that time. I conducted interviews with leaders in six different organizations to gain an understanding of the make-up of their local Senegalese communities as well as some of the major issues facing those communities. I also solicited feedback on my interest in researching how Senegalese migrants in the U.S. are involved in development activities. From
these data, and from information in the literature, I determined my field site selection. During the summer of 2012, I visited Harlem for several weeks to establish a relationship with the Senegalese Association of America and also worked to establish a relationship with the Senegalese Association of Colorado in Denver.

**Research Schedule**

My dissertation research commenced in spring 2013, and I conducted it according to the following schedule:

Phase I: April - May 2013: Interviews and participant observation began in Denver.

Phase II: June-August 2013: Interviews and participant observation took place in Harlem.

Phase III: September 2013–June 2014: Interviews and participant observation continued in Denver. Three additional trips to Harlem took place in November 2013, January 2014, and April 2014 to obtain additional interview and participant observation data.

**Interviews with the Senegalese diaspora**

I conducted semi-structured interviews with 37 members of the Senegalese diaspora in total (21 in New York City and 16 in Denver) over a 15 month period, from April 2013 - June 2014. I spoke with a cross-section of the community in terms of age, ethnicity, religious affiliation, gender, generational status, length of time in the U.S., sending location, annual income, and education level. These particular demographic traits can have an effect on mobility, migrant associational life, and involvement in development projects, as discussed in the transnational migration and migration-development nexus literatures (e.g., Bailey 2010; Caglar, 2006; Riccio 2011; Mercer, Page, and Evans, 2008; Portes, Escobar, and Radford, 2007; Riccio 2011).

Participants were engaged primarily through direct recruitment. While I initially intended to use snowball recruitment, the IRB requirement that participants independently contact me for
interviews (instead of organizations or participants giving me contact information for potential interviewees), made snowballing very difficult. As a result, most participants were verbally solicited for interviews via direct recruitment at community events in both field sites and the Senegalese Association office in Harlem. I provided a $20 grocery store gift certificate as compensation for participants’ time during the interview process. These certificates were generally discussed during interviews, rather than during recruitment.

The format of the interviews with migrants was designed with Massey et al.’s (1987) ethnosurvey questionnaire as a guide. The ethnosurvey questionnaire has been used to collect data on Mexican migrants in the United States and their families that have continued to live in Mexico for the Mexican Migration Project. This interview and survey tool is designed to capture the individual and social aspects of migration via both quantitative and qualitative data collection (Axinn, Frick, and Thornton 1991; Massey 1987). Similar to the questionnaire, my interviews began with data collection about individual and household characteristics, social networks, and migration history, to capture both the socio-demographic characteristics of migrants as well as the factors influencing their migration experiences.

After this initial series of questions, the interviews moved into a semi-structured format, with open-ended questions designed to explore participants’ feelings about the area where they lived, motivations for migration, attitudes towards development in Senegal, attitudes towards development in the United States, perceptions about the Senegalese community in the United States, feelings about the Senegalese governments’ involvement in development efforts, and what identities they find most salient. The latter halves of the interviews were more open-ended because semi-structured interviews allowed me to collect data on the migrants’ diverse identities, perspectives, and activities (Dunn 2000). Additionally, they provided a more conversational
approach that allows for participants to contribute information not requested by the interviewer as well as address some of the power imbalances implicit in the interview process (Skelton 2001).

Interviews with members of the Senegalese diaspora were initially designed to last for 2 hours. However, due to extreme difficulty in scheduling interviews, most interviews lasted 20-30 minutes. Given the harried nature of participants’ schedules, especially in New York City, interviews were often conducted while they were working (e.g., conducting a phone interview while one participant was driving his cab) or at community events/the Senegalese Association office. As a result, interviews were often interrupted and brief. In Colorado, interviews were generally in a more relaxed setting (at participants’ homes or coffee shops), but still kept brief so that there would not be an imbalance between data collected in New York and Colorado. In order to make up for the limited data collected during these migrant interviews, I also selected 8 individuals (4 in each location), for more in-depth interviews about their migration experiences, particularly focusing on their experiences in the U.S. Most of these 8 individuals are highly educated, reflecting my overall sample, but they were evenly split according to gender. They were also varied in terms of their length of time in the U.S., religious affiliation, ethnicity, and age.

Many members of the Senegalese community were extremely hesitant to engage with me in interviews. I believe that there are several reasons for this hesitation. First, there are some people in the communities with whom I worked who are undocumented. According to several participants, there is fear of government officials looking for undocumented migrants given current critical attitudes towards undocumented migrants across the country, the recent history of federal government raids to arrest undocumented workers, and general tenor of discussion about
immigration law reform. Given my status as an outsider, especially by nationality and race, I was asked multiple times throughout my fieldwork if I was working for the government. Second, late into my fieldwork, one community member informed me that potential participants were probably off put by signing consent forms because, in Senegal, only corrupt government officials required paperwork to be signed. According to this community member, a person’s word is far more important, and trustworthy, than signing a piece of paper. Third, all interviews were conducted in English due to my limited Wolof proficiency. This, of course, cut me off from a large portion of the community, especially less educated members of the community. However, this paradoxically may have worked in my favor. According to Buggenhagen (2010), community members were, at least for a period of time, suspicious of Americans who could speak Wolof well because they were aware that the government was using Wolof speakers to spy on their conversations (135). Fourth, for members of the community educated in a non-Western system, there is a fear of being taken advantage of by those who are Western educated. As such, participating in an academic research study was likely threatening and of little interest. Fifth, some participants described frustration with previous researchers who had come to work with the community, but not shared their results with the community.

Additionally, development is not necessarily a “safe” topic of discussion for migrants. While development is something that most migrants are passionate about, and have endured considerable personal sacrifice to support (as was revealed during interviews and described in the culture of migration in chapter 3), certain types of activities can be viewed as private. For example, financial transfers to families may be considered a personal matter and not a topic for public discussion. During one of my recruiting activities, a member of the community told me he respected me, but thought it was inappropriate to discuss how migrants support their families.
Additionally, government surveillance of financial transfers in the post-9/11 environment (as detailed in chapter 3) may make some individuals leery of discussing economic activities in Senegal as well.

Given these concerns, I tried to be as attentive as I could to helping participants feel comfortable and to being transparent about my research process. During pre-dissertation interviews, participants were often highly conscious of being recorded, so I made especially sure that participants knew I would record only with their consent. As a result, I only recorded a couple of interviews. During all other interviews, the vast majority of them, I wrote notes as we talked and then wrote detailed field notes after each interview. This is in accordance with standard interview methods (Dunn 2005; Valentine 1997). I offered a copy of interview notes to all participants, as well, which many people did want. I used these methods of data recording and sharing given both the larger community concern about interacting with me and also in accordance with feminist research methodology, which explicitly aims to better equalize power relationships within research (Maynard 2004). For the purposes of confidentiality, I have used pseudonyms throughout this dissertation.

**Participant Characteristics**

The individuals with whom I spoke were diverse in many respects, although there were some trends across my sample. The following sections will briefly summarize the demographic characteristics of the Senegalese migrants who participated in this study.

**Sending location**

Participants came from a variety of locations in Senegal. While most migrants were from the region of Dakar, other migrants came from the regions of Kaolack, Tambacounda, Thies, Kolda, Ziguinchor, Matam, and St. Louis. While some participants have lived in multiple locations in Senegal, this list indicates only the location they said they were from in Senegal.
Also, one participant in Denver was born in Mauritania, but lived most of her life before she came to the U.S. in Dakar and considers herself Senegalese. She has been included in the sample due to her self-designation as Senegalese and because she is representative of a number of community members in Denver who came to the U.S. after a violent border dispute between Senegal and Mauritania in the late 1980s.

*Location lived in study sites*

In both study sites, participants live across the metro area of the site and in a few cases, outside the main metro area. Most Colorado participants reported living in the city of Aurora or the city of Denver. Most New York participants reported living in one of the boroughs in New York City although some simply reported New York City in general. All of the participants in New York City were heavily involved in the Senegalese community based in Harlem. Those who live outside Denver and New York City were included because they interact with the Senegalese communities in Denver and Harlem.

*Gender and age*

As previously indicated, the overall sample of participants for this research study is slightly skewed towards men. However, this imbalance reflects the participant demographics from New York as the gender ratio for the sample from Colorado is even. The gender imbalance is partially due to a gender imbalance in the migrant population, according to survey data collected by the World Bank in 2007 (World Bank 2011). The sample also likely had more male participants (and this is due to the participant breakdown in New York) because women still manage most of the childcare responsibilities in Senegalese families and thus generally had less time than men to participate in interviews. This is especially true in New York where everyone with whom I spoke was frantically busy every day of the week. Additionally, the Senegalese
Association in Harlem is a social center for the community, especially for men in their 40s and older. Therefore, as I recruited through the Senegalese Association office, I had more access to this particular demographic. As a result of this gender imbalance in my data collection, I made sure to pay particular attention to gendered discourses and practices during my analysis process, so that women’s’ voices were not overshadowed by men’s.

In terms of age, the individuals interviewed in Colorado are younger overall than the group interviewed in New York. This is not surprising given that New York City was one of the first locations in which Senegalese migrants settled in the United States and that the first migrants settled in Denver only in the 1990s. An additional trend is that the women who participated in this study are, in general, younger than the men, especially in Colorado.

*Generation and length of time in U.S.*

The participants for this study are primarily first generation migrants. There were only six 1.5 generation migrants (individuals born in Senegal and who came to the U.S. as before the age of 18) and second generation Senegalese-Americans. Again, with the sample in New York, there is some skewing of the sample in terms of gender. Half of the women in New York are 1.5 or 2nd generation whereas all the men are first generation. This trend reflects, again, the portion of the population who I had the most access to through the Senegalese Association, despite my efforts to recruit at a number of different events and settings. In terms of the 1.5 generation, two of the three participants are women. Both women, now in their 20s, were brought over to the U.S. as young children, although one continued to live back and forth between Senegal and the U.S. over the course of her childhood. The male, now in his 40s, lived in the U.S. in his early teens, returned to Senegal, and then moved back to the United States as an adult. All three second generation migrants are women in their 20s. It should be noted that, because of the recent nature
of Senegalese immigrant settlement to the Denver area, the members of the Senegalese second
generation living in Denver are still children at this point in time.

There is also a clear difference between respondents living in Colorado and those living
in New York with regard to length of stay in the United States. The majority of migrants in
Denver have lived in the U.S. for somewhere between 10-20 years. In New York, the majority of
migrants interviewed in New York have been in the U.S. for at least 15 years, though the length
of stay is more evenly distributed across this group. It is therefore not surprising that the
population in New York City is older as well. Interestingly, despite the age difference between
men and women in Colorado, most men and women have been in the U.S. for roughly the same
length of time. In New York, only one woman (out of the five first and 1.5 generation women)
has been in the U.S. for more than 20 years, whereas the majority of the men have.

Educational attainment and occupation

The sample for this study is heavily skewed towards individuals with at least some level of
college experience. This trend is not reflective of the overall Senegalese population in the U.S,
according to survey data collected by the World Bank in 2007 (World Bank 2011). I believe that
those with exposure to higher education were generally more comfortable with the academic
research process. This is partially due to some individuals’ knowledge of qualitative research
processes, but also reflective of a larger schism in the community between those who have
obtained Western education and those who have solely been traditionally educated in Koranic
schools. There is also a gender-based trend among first generation migrants. While most of the
1.5 and 2nd generation women have at least some college experience, only 6 out of 11 first
generation women have college experience (three in each study site). In comparison, 17 out of
20 first generation men have at least some college experience. This may be due to the fact that
female participants are generally younger than male participants or that women’s education has been traditionally valued less than men’s education (as described to me by several participants). Two of the 1.5 generation migrants (one male and one female) have master’s degrees and the third is currently in college. Of the second generation participants, one has her master’s and the other two are currently in college.

Participants work in a variety of professions, ranging from cab drivers to students to blue-collar workers to highly skilled professionals. As with other immigrant groups in the U.S., including African immigrant groups, highly educated Senegalese migrants may not have highly skilled occupations, due to problems with having foreign credentials recognized in the U.S., language barriers, discrimination, or other issues (Capps et al. 2011). In the case of my participants, half of those who work in the service sector (such as cab drivers or vendors) have attended at least some college. However, almost half of my participants do have highly skilled or professional positions, such as academic or administrative work. There are more men than women in these positions, likely due to the fact that more men have degrees than women do. Those who work in production work in processing and manufacturing positions.

Ethnicity and religious affiliation

The participants in this research study identify with a number of ethnicities. Many of them (12), in fact, reported multiple ethnicities. What stands out with my sample is that while about half of the participants in New York identified as Wolof, about half in Denver identified as Pulaar. The heavy concentration of Wolof participants in my New York sample is at least partially reflective of where I was doing my fieldwork. In New York City, the Pulaar have tended to settle in Brooklyn, rather than Harlem (Kane 2011), so I did not encounter as many
Pulaar. In Denver, many people have settled due to family or friends in the area, so it is not surprising that there is a strong concentration of a particular ethnic group in the area.

For many participants, ethnicity is not a strong marker of identity in the United States. However, there is a correlation between ethnicity and religious affiliation for Senegalese, so I am reporting on both characteristics. As we shall see later on, the strong concentration of Mourides in Harlem enhances their organizational abilities as a community. In the Senegalese population as a whole, many followers of the Mouride Islamic brotherhood are Wolof, although individuals of other ethnicities are members as well (Kane 2011). In my sample, Mourides do identify as Wolof, but many Mourides (8 out of 15) report other or mixed ethnicities as well. This may be due to the fact that in New York City, the Mouride community is large and extremely active, especially in Harlem. Many participants with mixed ethnicity also reported Wolof as one of their ethnicities. In Senegal, many Pulaar tend to be members of the Tijani Islamic brotherhood (Kane 2011), which we see somewhat reflected in the religious affiliation of participants in Denver, but not as strongly as might be expected based on ethnicity alone. In both sites, but especially Denver, participants also identified generally as Muslim, without a strong adherence to any of the Senegalese Sufi Muslim brotherhoods.

*Family/household characteristics*

Most of my participants are married and have children, although their children do not always live with them in the United States. Household size in the U.S. varies, although annual household income tends to be low overall, with over half my participants reporting an annual income of less than $30,000. Household income does not always correlate with migrant education levels since married migrants may have more than one household income and those with degrees may not be able to obtain highly skilled jobs. With one exception, those with
master’s degrees do earn at least $60,000 annually, though. There is no clear differentiation in the household income between male and female migrants in either site or by migrant generation.

**Interviews with Senegalese community leaders and officials**

In addition to the interviews with Senegalese community members, I also conducted six interviews with Senegalese community leaders and government officials. These interviews were intended to collect information on what services the Senegalese government and religious organizations provide to their citizens and members in the United States and their goals for involving them in development activities. As such, they provide helpful background information about the goals of the Mouride leadership (the only religious organizations with whom I was able to establish interviews) and Senegalese government for their communities in the United States. These interviews were roughly 30 minutes in length and focused on the activities and goals of the government and organizations, both generally in terms of serving their communities in the U.S., but also in terms of development activities.

**Participant Observation**

In order to obtain data on the social, political, and economic contexts of Harlem and Denver, I also attended many community events to conduct participant observation. I observed community festivals and parties, meetings with government officials, and local events with which the Senegalese community was strongly affiliated (in Harlem). I also spent considerable time at the Senegalese Association of America, while I was recruiting interview participants, and observed quotidian life in Little Senegal on a regular basis. While conducting participant observation, I focused on the dialogue of the events I attended, and also the structure of social interactions, the interactions of those in attendance, the languages used (and how they were used), how people dressed, the physical arrangements of the events, and who attended events.
This observation of everyday social interactions to supplement individual data is a standard element of qualitative research (Kearns 2000).

**Qualitative analysis**

Qualitative analysis was conducted through thematic analysis in Dedoose. Using both my own and participant driven (emic) codes (Crang 1997), I analyzed the data with regard to migrants’ individual characteristics, their understandings of development, the development activities they engaged in and why they engaged in those activities, their migration experiences, their perceptions of the area in which they live, and the attitudes about the Senegalese state in relation to development. I went through several rounds of coding to identify broad patterns and themes within the data and then analyzed the data by site as well. I also analyzed trends across individual migrants to see if I could associate patterns related to a particular constellation of lived experiences, such as reasons for migration and particular development activities. For analytical clarity, I analyzed the experiences of first generation and 1.5 and second generation migrants separately.

**Reflexivity**

Reflexivity is a tool used by feminist scholars to reflect on their identities and how those identities shape their interactions with their research participants (Rice 2009). In the case of this research project, I interacted with a wide variety of individuals, ranging from Senegalese government officials to people who had started their own non-profit organizations to college students to taxi drivers. I was therefore constantly negotiating my relationship with participants. Although I have lived briefly in Senegal, I do not speak Wolof, the predominant local language, which I was often teased about in Harlem. And while living in Senegal did give me some familiarity with Senegalese culture, operating within Senegalese culture in other contexts was
often confusing. For example, in Harlem I often had a hard time judging when to meet for appointments, unsure if I was supposed to be operating on Senegalese time or U.S. time.

While my status as an outsider by virtue of my nationality, race, and religion was clearly threatening in some ways as already discussed, I was not always in a position of power as the researcher. Indeed, many of the people I worked with were community leaders and everyone I worked with has very busy lives. I, therefore, would often run through hoops in order to attend interviews and community events. While I expected that I might find it easier to work with women than men, this was, in fact, not the case, likely because women in the community are generally so busy with multiple family responsibilities. It was often hard to find common identities and experiences to share with participants, regardless of gender, although when I became pregnant during the end of my fieldwork, participants could identify with me much more easily.

In short, my interactions with participants were variable in their power dynamics and personal dynamics. While I am certainly privileged in U.S. society compared to my participants due to my race, participants also had higher status than me with regard to occupation and leadership status. The particular identities that I found most relevant were actually as a pregnant woman and a student. Those were both identities that my participants, across the board, could relate to and understand.

Conclusion

This multi-sited qualitative case study is designed to explore how members of U.S.-based Senegalese communities engage development and how a focus on their transnational lives gives us new perspectives on migrant-led development. The actor-centered framing of this case study facilitates an analysis of the diversity and contradictory experiences of migration and
development as predicted by transnational migration literature. It also corrects for the exclusion of migrants’ understandings of development in the migration-development nexus literature. Additionally, the multi-sited nature of the case study allows for a unique analysis of how local contexts shape both migrants’ development processes as well as their integration processes. In sum, this project is designed to inform the re-framing of the relationship between transnational migration, development, and integration. As the first step in that process, I will next provide an overview of the Senegalese communities in Harlem and Denver and migrants’ individual experiences of transnational life.
Chapter 3 – The Senegalese communities in Harlem and Denver

Introduction

The office of the Senegalese Association of America, in Harlem, consists of a small storefront on 116th St. Upon entering the office, you find yourself in one large room, variously arranged with several tables and chairs, often with men sitting around and chatting, especially in the evenings. Sometimes there is a TV playing, broadcasting Senegalese news or old movies. A bank of five donated computers lines one wall, but they don’t often connect to the Internet. Flyers for local services are posted on the walls. Towards the back of this room are a door and glass-paneled booth, where the administrative manager of the association sits. He answers the phone and fields the walk-in requests of Senegalese and other immigrants needing services or information. In the back are two offices, a bathroom, and a space where a small table sits and shelves are lined with papers and supplies. This space is one of the nerve centers of the Senegalese community in Harlem – community meetings are held here, people often stop by to chat, especially in the evenings. It is the culmination of several decades of hard work to establish an organization that can serve the needs of the Senegalese community, assist with its integration into Harlem, and also help people maintain their desired connections to Senegal.

Meanwhile, in Denver, the meetings of the Senegalese Association of Colorado are held at various members’ homes. A small, core group of members meets monthly to try to maintain the organization, plan events, and support the community in the area. Meetings are casual, held in living rooms, and followed by a meal, with everyone eating ceebu gen or ceebu yap (rice and fish or rice and meat) communally, around the bowl. It is an opportunity for members to socialize and create a shared Senegalese space, in addition to trying to do the work of supporting
the needs of their community. Although meetings are only attended by 10-15 people, annual community gatherings are larger, with 50+ people in attendance.

The Senegalese communities in Harlem and Denver are part of the roughly one-fifth of Senegalese nationals that live outside of Senegal (Fall et al. 2010). Relatively recent arrivals in the U.S., along with other African populations, the members of these communities have worked hard to establish themselves in the United States while maintaining a strong connection with Senegal. The experiences of these communities as transnational communities are shaped by structural factors at the global, national, local, and individual level. The purpose of this chapter is primarily descriptive – to provide an overview of the factors that have shaped the Harlem community as a strong, established presence in the area but also one in transition as well as the factors that have shaped the slower development of the Senegalese community in Denver as a strong transnational community. I will also argue that individuals within both these communities are strongly transnational, but with varying degrees of involvement across the U.S. and Senegal. These portraits – of the communities in both locations and of some of the individuals living in them – are designed to set the stage for understanding how Senegalese migrants engage with development and how that engagement with development relates to their integration in the United States.

**Contemporary Senegalese migrants as part of the new African diaspora**

Over the last several decades, a widespread movement of African nationals out of their home countries has been termed the new African diaspora (Konadu-Agyemang et al. 2006; Koser 2003). The African diaspora is generally used to refer to Africans forcibly moved away from the continent during the Atlantic slave trade and their descendants. The idea of the new African diaspora has developed in response to both changing definitions of diaspora and the
scale of migration across and away from the continent (Zeleza 2009). During the colonial era, labor migration was permitted (or coerced) within colonies, but other forms of mobility were heavily restricted (Bakewell 2008). Since independence in the 1960s and 70s, temporary and permanent migration flows have been established within countries, regions, the continent, and to many other regions of the world, including Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and North America. Voluntary migrants have left countries with economic and political problems resulting from structural adjustment programs, detrimental trade agreements with the West, and deteriorating political conditions that arose after independence (Adepoju 2008b; Arthur 2000; Konadu-Agyemang et al. 2006; Wilson and Habecker 2008; Zeleza 2009). The direction of these migration flows is shaped by historical migration patterns as well as by colonial relationships (Gordon 1998; Halter and Johnson 2014). They are also shaped by national and regional migration policies that often try to restrict mobility (Bakewell 2008). In many cases, migration away from the continent is a step-wise process, with movements through multiple countries before settling in a final destination (Arthur 2000; Konadu-Agyemang et al. 2006). Many voluntary African migrants outside of the continent migrated for educational purposes, but due to the economic and political problems resulting from restructuring, ending up staying abroad (Womack 2010).

By calling contemporary African migrants the ‘new’ African diaspora, scholars highlight the scale of migration away from the continent and the continuing affinity for home that many African migrants feel as transnational migrants. A recent diaspora, their connections with the continent remain strong (Arthur 2000; Halter and Johnson 2014; Koser 2003), even though lines of identification vary strongly according to the sending context of each country. Some African migrants identify strongly with their sending country, while others identify more strongly along
ethnic lines or based upon their hometowns (e.g., Mercer et al. 2008; Mercer et al. 2009; Lampert 2009; Mohan 2006). Regardless of the primary community with which they identify, however, many African migrants remain connected through sending remittances to families, phone calls, and political and religious engagements (e.g., Grillo and Mazzucatto 2008; Halter and Johnson 2014; Orozco 2005; Reynolds 2002).

African migration to the United States

Contemporary African migration to the United States became prevalent after changes to U.S. immigration law in 1965. Before that time, quotas based on region of birth in the Eastern Hemisphere restricted the number of African migrants able to enter the country (although many would have been unable to leave colonial territories anyway). After quotas were equalized across all countries (Bergeron 2013), African migrants, in concert with immigrants from other regions such as Asia and South America, began coming to the U.S. in increasing numbers. African migrants generally came to pursue their education, mainly from English speaking countries, and intending to return home to assist with post-independence efforts when their education was complete. Ultimately, however, as referenced above, many migrants ended up staying abroad as economic and political instability became issues in migrants’ home countries from the 1970s on (Halter and John 2014; Womack 2010; Zeleza 2009).

Later changes in U.S. immigration regulations also increased this new flow of immigrants from Africa. In 1980, the U.S. passed the Refugee Act, which allowed for communities designated as refugees by the U.N. to be permanently resettled in the United States. With this new provision, African refugees fleeing from the post-Cold War conflicts across the continent began to be settled in the United States. Many migrants now come through family reunification visas or through a program called the Diversity Lottery visa program (DV program). The DV program was introduced in 1990 as a way to increase immigration from
underrepresented countries among the U.S. immigrant population and visas are generally awarded to young, educated individuals (Capps et al. 2012; Halter and Johnson 2014). Winners of the lottery must show proof of completing high school or having worked in the last five years in an occupation that requires at least two years of training (Zong and Batalova 2015). They must also come from countries that have had less than 50,000 immigrants admitted to the U.S. in the past five years (Capps et al. 2010). Also, after several decades of immigration, social networks have built up to support these new African immigrant communities in the U.S. and the U.S. is considered a stable and welcoming destination in comparison to the more heavily restricted European countries (Kent 2007; Konadu-Agyemang et al. 2006). Over the last two decades, the African immigrant community in the U.S. has tripled, with more than half of the African migrants arriving since 2000 (Capps et al. 2012).

African immigrants are the most highly educated immigrant group in the U.S (Arthur 2000; Capps et al. 2012; Kent 2007; Reynolds 2002), yet they often encounter both underemployment and low incomes (Capps et al. 2012). These economic outcomes can directly impact their ability to engage in development activities, as we shall see in later chapters. African migrants’ lower economic outcomes may be because refugees and voluntary migrants are both counted in statistics that measure outcomes for African immigrants overall. Refugees are generally lower skilled (Capps et al. 2012) and thus less likely to be able to obtain high paying jobs. However, language barriers, racial discrimination, and problems with degree recognition also impede the economic and occupational outcomes of highly educated African migrants in the U.S. (Arthur 2000; Blyden and Akiwumi 2010; Capps et al. 2012) as well as discrimination based on immigrants’ African identity (Zeleza 2009). While most of these problems are not unique to the African community, African migrants’ underemployment reduces their income.
compared to other highly skilled immigrants (Capps et al. 2012). Perhaps not surprisingly, given these outcomes and the recent arrival of many migrants, most migrants hope to eventually return to their home countries (Arthur 2000; Blyden and Akiwumi 2010; Yeboah 2010). This desire to return home will also influence how Senegalese migrants choose to engage in development activities.

Roughly one-third of African migrants come to the U.S. from West Africa (Halter and Johnson 2014). While the largest groups come from English speaking countries (Nigeria and Ghana), there is evidence that increasing numbers of migrants are coming from French-speaking areas as well (Thomas 2011). West African migrants are generally dispersed across the Northeast and Southern parts of the U.S., and there are few African immigrant enclaves. The exceptions are two Senegalese enclaves in New York City, one Ghanaian area in New York City, and scattered enclaves of Cape Verdeans in the Northeast (Halter and Johnson, 27). The general dispersal across the Northeast and South reflects larger trends within the U.S. African (Kent 2007) and general immigrant population, as immigrants, especially Mexican immigrants, have begun to settle across the U.S. since the 1990s (Massey 2008). Like other migrant groups, this dispersal across the U.S. is due at least in part to the legal status that many undocumented migrants gained after an amnesty provision was passed as part of a 1986 immigration law reform. When those migrants gained legal status, it was easier for them to move to new destinations and employment opportunities across the country (Halter and Johnson 2014).

**Senegalese migration abroad and to the United States**

The roots of the Senegalese migration stream that feeds into this U.S. immigration context are several centuries old. In the pre-colonial era, before the 1880s, migration was generally regional in nature. Most histories focus on the movements of specific ethnic groups. In particular, during the dry seasons, the Soninké of the Senegal River Valley, around the town
of Matam (see Figure 2 on p. 98), would migrate to engage in trade for their agricultural products and also to obtain slaves to work in the fields (Manchuelle 1997). Other ethnic groups may have had some mobility during the dry season as well, to engage in small-scale trade and to visit friends and relatives (Colvin et al. 1981). Some historical sources have focused on the trade networks that were prevalent through the West African region, especially those utilized by Islamic traders for centuries. Indeed, some research emphasizes that contemporary Senegalese (or more generally, West African) migrants in numerous cases come from a generations-old family engagement in trade, extending what was once regional trade internationally (Carter 1997; Cordell, Gregory, and Peche 1996; Stoller 2002).

With the advent of French colonialism in the 1880s, and cash cropping, social and economic changes in the region (which were already in progress before widespread interaction with the French) continued. In Senegal, the cash crop of choice was the peanut, due to local climatic conditions. The widespread growth of peanut production during the colonial era spurred intensive labor migration to the peanut growing regions around Louga and Diourbel (Colvin et al. 1981), and in the Gambia (Manchuelle 1997). Concurrently, the creation and expansion of railroads in the region facilitated this labor mobility, especially for those groups migrating into the Wolof areas, around the region of Diourbel (Colvin et al. 1981). At the same time, Soninké migrants, continuing their historical migration traditions, expanded their routes to include The Gambia, and to engage in seasonal labor migration there in the peanut sector (Mancheulle 1997). Other migrants moved towards the coasts, to engage in fishing and other industries developing in Dakar. Finally, others moved to different parts of French West Africa, especially modern day Ivory Coast and Gabon, responding to the call for skilled labor in those regions (Fall, Carretero, and Sarr 2010).
During this time, Amadou Bamba founded the Mouride brotherhood in the Wolof region of Senegal, around the towns of Touba and Louga on the map above. As a Sufi Islamic teacher, Bamba began to draw a devoted following among the Wolof in the late 1800s, especially given the enormous social and economic changes the Wolof were experiencing at the time of colonization. Although French authorities exiled him twice because of their fear of his popularity, he eventually overtly supported the French authorities and the peanut trade. As the brotherhood expanded, Wolof Mouride migrants began to expand their cultivation into other areas (even if they were already occupied). Beginning with this rural expansion, membership within the brotherhood often entailed mobility (Babou 2007; Cruise O’Brien 1971), and mobility and exile continue to have cultural import for members of the brotherhood (Ebin 1996).

Around the time of the World Wars, until independence in 1960, there began to be a shift in Senegal from predominantly rural to rural migrations to increasing rural to urban and
international migration. After World War I, Soninké laborers, especially sailors, slowly began to migrate to France in search of work. After World War II, this labor migration increased, as French employers recruited labor from the region (Manchuelle 1997). At the same time, Soninké migrants were moving to other African colonies as well as urban areas of Senegal for employment. As these labor migrations grew, strong social networks facilitated them. These networks were often based in migrants’ home villages, although villages could have multiple migration networks, going to Dakar, France, and other regions of Africa (Manchuelle 1997). At the same time, the Pulaar, generally from the same area of Senegal as the Soninké, were also recruited for labor in France and students and the elite of Dakar began to move to France, if only temporarily (Fall, Carretero, and Sarr 2010). The Mourides at this time generally continued their rural livelihoods, although a few Mourides began to move to Dakar, forming local prayer groups that were affiliated with their local village religious leaders. These prayer groups (dahiras) provided social and economic support during the rural to urban migration process (Cruise O’Brien 1971). As with other African nations during this time period, urban migrants often formed associations to assist them during the period of rural to urban migration that have continued to facilitate today’s international migrants (Abbott 2006; Kane 2011; Mercer et al. 2008; Reynolds 2002).

Although Senegal gained its independence in 1960, it retained its economic reliance on the peanut crop, which created significant economic problems in the 1970s. During the 1970s, the Sahel underwent several years of severe drought (Gellar 1995). The negative economic effects of this drought, already devastating because of Senegal’s significant reliance on a single agricultural crop, were exacerbated by environmental degradation and reliance on imported rice for food. The emphasis until this time period on the cash cropping of peanuts resulted in the
clearing of forests and soil erosion and degradation, as peanut cultivation was quickly expanded and the land overworked to obtain large yields (Cruise O’Brien 1971; Dumont and Mottin 1983). Additionally, much of the populace was reliant on rice imports for subsistence, since traditional cereal cultivation, especially millet, was discouraged in favor of peanut cultivation (Dumont and Mottin 1983). Furthermore, the world price for peanuts plummeted at this time (Gellar 1995).

In 1979, due to the combination of the reliance on the peanut crop, the Sahelian drought, the dropping world price of peanuts, the rising price of basic staple imports (such as rice), and the oil shocks of the 1970s, Senegal sought a meeting with the World Bank to discuss a loan. The outcome of that meeting resulted in Senegal’s first structural adjustment loan (SAL). The conditions of this loan included higher agricultural prices, liberalization, and stricter investment policies. Although the requirements of this initial loan proved to be untenable, the state continued to undergo a series of further agreements with the World Bank, resulting in at least three more loans through the early 1990s. The number of requirements associated with each loan increased through time and included high taxation on basic staple imports, crop diversification policies, and liberalization of different sectors throughout the Senegalese economy (Delgado and Jammeh 1991). The upshot of these loans was economic displacement for large portions of the Senegalese population. Rural areas faced growing economic difficulties and food scarcity as the government privatized agricultural markets and ceased to provide a guaranteed price for agricultural staples. Urban areas also struggled as the state sector shrunk, wages were cut, and the informal economy grew (Baizon and Gonzalez-Ferrer 2016). While Delgado and Jammeh (1991) state that life was better in Senegal with SALs in place than it would have been without the structural adjustment loans and reforms, they still caused considerable hardship and dislocation among the populace.
Combined, these factors created intense economic pressures on rural families and many chose to migrate to urban areas, especially Dakar, in search of work (Fall, Carretero, and Sarr 2010). In the 1980s, the pressures of heavy rural to urban migration, in addition to the economic displacement caused by structural adjustment, led to increasing international emigration from Senegal. In rural areas, many individuals and families felt there was little hope for sustaining a livelihood with ongoing environmental pressures, the withdrawal of government support, and the increasing trend in internal migration. In the urban areas, individuals, especially the educated elite, were not able to obtain jobs with the tightly restricted public sector. These economic pressures, combined with the growing and young population, left many Senegalese feeling that there was no other option for livelihood and advancement than emigration (Riccio 2005).

Senegalese emigrants spread across a diverse range of destinations. While the Soninké were able to follow existing migrant social networks to France, other migrants continued along established migration paths to other countries in West Africa, especially Gabon and Ivory Coast, as well as Mauritania. In addition, Senegalese migrants began spreading to other areas of the continent at this time, following calls for labor in countries such as South Africa and Cameroon (Fall, Carretero, and Sarr 2010). How these initial migrations to other parts of Africa were facilitated is unclear. Other migrants followed the established colonial connection with France, moving for labor or to study (Fall, Carretero, and Sarr 2010; Kane 2011). As part of these international movements, the Mourides also began to expand internationally, mainly to Europe, but also to the United States (Carter 1997; Stoller 2002). These movements were facilitated by the centralized structure of the brotherhood, which provided economic and logistical support for its members, who mainly engage in street trading in destination countries (Riccio 2003; Stoller 2002).
During the late 1980s and 1990s, several other events facilitated additional emigration and the diversification of international destinations among migrants. First, France began to reduce the number of migrants allowed into the country for labor and family reunification and also began to promote the return migration of Senegalese migrants living in France. While Senegalese migration into France continued even in this more restrictive environment, Senegalese also started migrating towards Italy and Spain. Additionally, in 1989, Senegal and Mauritania had a border conflict that involved mobs attacking Senegalese migrants in Mauritania and Mauritanian migrants in Senegal. Hundreds of migrants fled across the border and the United States resettled those affected by the conflict as refugees, which many migrants took advantage of (Kane 2011). This movement was part of an expanding Senegalese migration to the U.S., although the reasons for the choice of the U.S. as a new destination are unclear. Finally, the devaluation of the local currency, the CFA, in 1994, created severe economic hardship (Gellar 1995) and contributed to increasing outmigration in search of better opportunities (Kane 2011: Stoller 2002), especially of the urban elite (Riccio 2011).

Contemporary Senegalese emigration flows, then, were forged within a liberalized economic context, although the economic reforms dating from the late 1970s were not the sole factor in shaping these flows. As a result, Senegalese migrants operate in an environment in which certain logics and practices are rewarded. Migrants must adapt to these circumstances to survive and progress as well as support their families. As we shall see, the activities that migrants embrace are shaped by personal experience, cultural and moral expectations, and personal ambition. These activities fit into the expected practices of the current economic regime – but also harness these practices for their own ends. Migrants have adopted what are seen as neoliberal practices to meet other goals, goals that do not fit within the reified understanding of
neoliberal ideology or outcomes. And in this way, Senegalese migrants are shaping the way that neoliberalism is enacted – both in Senegal and the United States.

In Senegal, a culture of migration has arisen, with many young Senegalese, especially men around the region of Dakar, pinning their hopes for the future on international migration should the circumstances arise, regardless of the dangers involved (Fall, Carretero, and Sarr 2010; Hernandez-Carretero and Carling 2012; Kane 2011; Melly 2011). Indeed, more recent male migrants to Europe may be using migration as a form of political protest, indicating with their departure their lack of faith in the state to provide them the opportunities they need to lead a comfortable life (Ifekwunigwe 2015). Senegalese men are especially likely to migrate due to the need for financial resources to be considered an adult in Senegalese society. Only when a man has a house and has established a family will he be considered an adult (Melly forthcoming; Sinatti 2014). These men are valorized as heroes for their willingness to sacrifice their comfort and well-being for their families (e.g., Melly 2011), although migrants may also be viewed with some distrust in sending communities as potential “tricksters” in business arrangements (Riccio 2005).

Very little is known about Senegalese migrants to the United States, aside from limited literature about the Senegalese community in New York City. According to 2007 survey data collected on Senegalese migrants by the World Bank (World Bank 2011), the United States is now one of the top five destinations of Senegalese emigrants. Senegalese migrants to the U.S. are similar to Senegalese emigrants in general in that they are majority male and generally come from Dakar (although Carling et al. 2013 note that U.S.-bound migrants are more likely to come from Dakar than those going to Europe). Senegalese emigrants to the U.S. differ from the larger body of Senegalese emigrants in that they tend to be more highly educated although 25% of
U.S.-based migrants had little to no Western education. There are also more female Senegalese migrants in the U.S. than in other host countries, perhaps due to the more recent flow to the U.S. and recent feminization of the migration flow from Senegal (Fall et al. 2010). According to my own research, this flow to the U.S. has occurred in three waves – the early settlers in the 1980s\(^\text{11}\), the outflow of the urban elite in the 1990s (Riccio 2001), and recent arrivals through the DV program. Many contemporary migrants came through family reunification or the DV program. According to Kane (2015), there were 10,000 Senegalese legal permanent residents in the U.S. in 2000, although he also cites a U.S. journalist who estimated there were at least 30,000 Senegalese in New York City alone in 2001 sending remittances back to Senegal. Senegalese migrants, overall, are somewhat reflective of the larger African immigrant population in the U.S., both through their education levels and the reason for more recent arrivals.

The Senegalese community in Harlem

New York City has the most established and well-known Senegalese community in the United States (Kane 2011; Perry 1997; Stoller 2002), due to both its size and longevity. In the city, there are actually several different Senegalese communities, living in Harlem, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. These communities are aligned partially by ethnicity (Kane 2011) and partially by socioeconomic status given the costs of living in different parts of the city. In Harlem, especially, the Senegalese community has developed into a vibrant immigrant community, including the formation of Little Senegal, just north of Central Park (ibid). Figure 3 below shows both the location of Little Senegal in relation to Manhattan as well as where it is specifically in Harlem.

\(^{11}\) Babou 2002 splits this first wave into two waves, the first wave being businessmen in the 1970s and the second wave being vendors who came in the 1980s
Little Senegal was established in the 1990s by Senegalese migrants who first arrived in the 1980s and who originally lived in midtown Manhattan. Many of these initial Senegalese migrants to both New York City and the United States were male students and vendors. In the late 80s to early 90s, some of these Senegalese migrants began to move into Harlem. At that time, the neighborhood was run-down and dangerous, with rampant drug dealing and little hope of local economic growth. Although a number of Senegalese taxi drivers lost their lives during this time period due to the high crime rate, the community settled in the area due to the low rents and its welcoming environment for black Muslims (Kane 2015). During my field work, many people who lived in Harlem during that time proudly explained to me that their community is now credited with helping turn the area into a safer, more settled neighborhood due to their hard work ethic and desire to live respectfully and peacefully with others in the neighborhood.
Today, the Senegalese community in Harlem is large, highly visible, and active. Centered on 116th St, between 6th and 8th avenue, where the national Senegalese association, the Association des Senegalais d’Amerique (ASA) is located, Little Senegal is a couple of blocks in radius. Senegalese clothing and merchandise shops are prevalent, especially on 116th St. Pedestrians are a mix of Senegalese immigrants (some wearing boubous, the style of clothing often worn in Senegal), African immigrants, and Americans of multiple ethnicities. The ASA office is has a constant stream of visitors, especially in the evenings, of Senegalese and other immigrants coming to receive services, as well as Senegalese migrants stopping by to catch up with friends in the community. Such socializing often occurs on 116th St as well. It’s common to see older Senegalese men, sitting on chairs in a semi-circle, chatting as the afternoon and evening pass. The local Senegalese community also has a strong associational life (Kane 2011), with organizations such as the Senegalese Women’s Association and mosques and offices for the major Senegalese Islamic brotherhoods located there. The Mouride community, in particular, is especially visible and established in Harlem.

Reflecting the general trends of the community in the U.S., the Senegalese community in the area is predominantly male and middle aged, although it is now multi-generational, with a growing number of women (Kane 2011)12 and diverse in many respects. First generation immigrants come from many different locations in Senegal13 and belong to all the major Senegalese Muslim brotherhoods. Senegalese migrants in New York participate in a variety of economic activities and occupations, including cab drivers, hair braiders, small business owners,

12 This information is based on ASA enrollment data.
13 This is according to my interviews and casual conversations during fieldwork, although Kane 2011 states that the majority of first generation migrants in Harlem come from central Senegal.
and street vendors (Kane 2011; Stoller 2002) as well as more skilled professionals and scholars. Even the more skilled professionals, however, may work in low-paying jobs due to language, legal, and certification issues (Kane 2011). The size of the community is unknown, although during my fieldwork, I heard estimates that there are about 10,000 Senegalese in the New York City area. There are no estimates, to my knowledge, of the size of the community specifically in Harlem.

The social, political, and economic contexts in Harlem and New York City have helped the community become established in the area. My understanding of these processes is informed by both the literature and my fieldwork. It should be noted that many of my interview participants in Harlem were community leaders and many were active Mourides, so those factors may color this analysis. The social context was initially challenging due to race relations and difficult interactions with the local African-American population in Harlem. Scholars who wrote about the Senegalese community as it was getting established described New York City as unwelcoming due to racism against black immigrants (Perry 1997; Stoller 2002). In Harlem initially, tensions were often high between the Senegalese community and the local African-American community, due to cultural misunderstandings and stereotypes that both groups held about each other (Babou 2002; Kane 2015).

However, the social context appears to have become more welcoming over the past two decades. The local African-American community and Senegalese community in Harlem now have a much more mutually respectful relationship. Kane (2011) in his description of the Senegalese transnational communities in New York City, also described a welcome reception for the community, both in terms of a region made more open by the post-civil rights context and by the local White community’s perception of Senegalese as “good Blacks” who work hard and do
not represent the difficult history of race relations between African-Americans and White Americans. Of the individuals with whom I spoke, only one reported contemporary issues he encountered due to his race. It is important to note, however, that the people with whom I spoke may not have felt comfortable describing experiences of racism with me since I am White.

The Harlem community has also been supportive of the active involvement of Senegalese Muslim brotherhoods. According to Kane (2011), this acceptance of Senegalese immigrants as Muslim is due to the Senegalese community being labeled as “good Muslims”. Kane argues this is the case because Senegalese aren’t anti-American and most of the stereotypes about Islamic terrorists center on Middle Eastern Muslims, rather than African Muslims (234). Mouride leaders in Harlem also explained to me that they are known for their peaceful values and respect for other communities. The spokesman for MICA (the Mouride Islamic Community of America) explained that, in fact, they were able to conduct their annual parade through Harlem in 2001 because they were viewed as a stable, peaceful group.

The local government and political community have also embraced the Senegalese community. During my fieldwork with ASA and MICA, I saw regular political interaction with these two organizations as well as recognition of their work in the community. This political activity and support is largely due to the appreciation of the Senegalese community’s role in stabilizing conditions in Harlem (Kane 2015). New York Senator Bill Perkins, in particular, is supportive of the Senegalese and Mouride leadership and often attended community events.

However, even while viewed as “good Muslims”, the literature describes a sense of fear and vulnerability in the Senegalese community that began with September 11. Senegalese migrants have felt vulnerable because not only has enforcement of immigration laws become increasingly visible in the decade since 9/11 (Buggenhagen 2010; Coutín 2007), they also feel at
increased risk of surveillance as Muslim migrants and as migrants who have operated in informal spaces in New York City. Buggenhaggen (2010) explores this fear and vulnerability among the community in New York, examining how federal immigration officials, the FBI, and local police in New York cooperated to target Senegalese migrants, even going so far as to hire Wolof interpreters to eavesdrop on migrants’ phone conversations (135). Federal officials monitored the Senegalese community in part because of the informal trade networks in which some participated (such as bootleg music and movie sales), but also because of the ways in which migrants have sent money home to Senegal, either as remittances to their families or for business purposes. Many used to use informal money transfer services, such as the Kara International Exchange, based upon Islamic principles of lending (Buggenhagen 2012). Now, these types of financial networks are scrutinized as possibly aiding terrorist networks. Even Muslim immigrants who don’t participate in these financial activities were monitored, with federal officials watching mosques and asking imams to report any suspicious activities to them (Buggenhagen 2010). As Coutin (2007) explores for the Salvadorian community in the United States, these types of activities make a formerly invisible community more visible and as such, makes them feel more vulnerable. The people with whom I spoke, especially the community leaders, said this sense of vulnerability and fear as a Muslim community has begun to decrease recently, however.

The economic environment in Harlem and the larger New York City area has been both beneficial and challenging for the Senegalese community since the establishment of Little Senegal. New York City’s status as a global city (Sassen 1988) is of special importance to small business owners and street vendors because they are able to build business and trade networks with Korean and other immigrant businesses as well as with businesses outside the United States
(Buggenhaggen 2012; Stoller 2002). Additionally, Harlem had a history of being welcoming to street vendors, although legal restrictions have made it less hospitable to vendors since in the mid-1990s (Kane 2011). Local Pan-African identities can also be important for Senegalese merchants marketing to African-American clientele (Stoller 2002). However, in Harlem, the community is experiencing financial pressures as the area gentrifies. This gentrification has caused considerable economic and emotional stress in the area (as described by Goffe 2014). It is rapidly changing Little Senegal into an extension of the Upper West side (a wealthy, exclusive area of Manhattan) rather than one of the centers of Senegalese social and culture life in the U.S.

This rapid gentrification was visually apparent over the two years in which my fieldwork in Harlem occurred. Throughout the area of Harlem in which Little Senegal is located, more expensive businesses, such as boutique hotels, appeared over the course of my fieldwork and the pedestrian traffic changed from mainly African-American and African crowds to more racially and ethnically mixed crowds with a higher number of Whiter, more affluent looking individuals. These changes have caused many Senegalese people to move outside the area, mainly into the Bronx. Many businesses also closed down during the period of my fieldwork, either due to lack of sales or rents that weren’t renewed. According to the community leaders with whom I spoke, it is one of the most pressing issues they are currently facing.

According to my fieldwork, the problems associated with gentrification are several-fold for a community that now feels more firmly established in terms of its social and political relationships. Most significantly, the spatial dispersion of the community out of Harlem threatens the established interactions of the community. While the planned Maison du Senegal (House of Senegal), a combined ASA/consulate/direct services building, is one attempt to provide a central location for the Senegalese community, people have extremely busy lives in
this area, with long working hours, and adding a commute may threaten the frequent interactions that currently exist. Additionally, the established social and political relationships are subject to change as both the composition of the local community and the location of the overall Senegalese community shift.

At the same time, community leaders are considering how to address issues related to the aging of the first generation. These include health issues, such as diet and blood pressure problems, but also issues related to integration, such as investing in housing and helping the community think about what their needs and challenges are as a long-term community in the U.S., when many individuals still have a dream of returning to Senegal one day. The community in Harlem, then, is in a period of transition, moving from a first generation migrant community that has established positive social and political relationships to one that now must navigate new relationships as the community ages, disperses, and deals with the economic impacts of gentrification.

The Senegalese community in Denver

Like the many other smaller Senegalese communities scattered across the United States, there is no literature available about the Senegalese community in Denver. The information in this section, therefore, comes almost entirely from my fieldwork. Beginning in the 1990s, migrants began to settle in Denver, usually coming directly from Senegal because they knew someone living in the area. The migrants settling Denver come, therefore, from the 2nd and 3rd wave of Senegalese migration to the U.S. in contrast to Harlem, which has many community members from the first wave of migration. Migrants in Denver, then, are likely overall more educated than migrants in Harlem due to the particular reasons that facilitated their migration. In Denver, the community has a young second generation, although some parents choose to have
their children remain in Senegal (as is the case in New York as well). Senegalese migrants in Denver come from many locations in Senegal and belong to different ethnic groups, although many migrants from the northern part of the country all live and work together at ski resorts in the Rockies, along the I-70 corridor to the West of Denver. These migrants were recruited by the resorts in the 1990s (Perry 1997) and occasionally interact with the migrants who live in Denver. Many of the migrants in the mountains are unskilled, with a larger population of skilled professionals in Denver. The majority of the people with which I spoke live in Aurora, a suburb of Denver that has a large immigrant population, although others lived in Denver and two lived outside the area but came in for community events. Figure 4 shows the location of both Denver and Aurora. As is the case in the New York City area, there are no official estimates of the size of the Senegalese population in Colorado or Denver, although one interview participant gave an estimate of several hundred.

Figure 4: Denver and Aurora, Colorado. Map data source: Google maps.
Most of the immigrants I spoke with in Denver are highly educated, like those I spoke to in Harlem, but the community members I spoke to in Denver differed from those in Harlem in several other respects. First, like the community in Harlem, people came to the U.S. for a variety of reasons, but more people in Denver came through the DV program, for family reunification, or as asylees from the 1989 border conflict. Second, the gender ratio of the people with whom I spoke was fairly even, likely due to both individual reasons for migration and the later settlement date of community members (when more women were migrating to the U.S.). Many of the women with whom I spoke came to join their husbands in the U.S. Third, due to the later settlement date, the community in Denver is younger as well, although most people have been in the U.S. for about 15 years. Fourth, more individuals are of the Pulaar ethnicity in Denver than in Harlem and accordingly, fewer individuals identify as Mouride. In fact, more people identify as Muslim rather than as a member of a specific Senegalese Muslim brotherhood. Lastly, although a number of community leaders spoke with me, I was able to speak with more people who attended Senegalese events, but weren’t necessarily active in organizing or leading events.

The picture of the community that began to reveal itself during my fieldwork is of a community whose individual members are focused on establishing their lives in Denver and who care about the Senegalese community, but have not yet coalesced as a transnational community. Although many people attend Mouride events, few people operated within the established structure of the Mouride brotherhood. There is a Mouride house in Denver, which is part of MICA, but it is small, with 10-15 members. The Senegalese Association of Colorado, in which a core group of people participates, has had trouble maintaining itself as an organization, due to some difficult leadership transitions and the problems with spatial location and schedules. Some
of the Senegalese migrants in Denver are part of larger Senegalese organizations, but no one I spoke with belonged to any such organizations.

Although this lack of a strong sense of Senegalese community is likely due, in part, to the small numbers and relatively short duration of stay of migrants in the area, there are also local contextual factors affecting how the Senegalese community organizes and establishes itself. By contrasting the experience of the community in Harlem with that of the community in Denver, these factors come to light. In some ways, this is an apples and oranges comparison because the community in Harlem is so much larger, has a longer stay of duration, and has formed into an enclave. Yet, why is it that enclave formation happened in Harlem and not in Denver? Examining the social, physical and political contexts helps us understand some of the reasons why.

With regard to the social context, both communities have encountered discrimination. As previously discussed, the community in Harlem had many initial difficulties with the local American-American community as well as dealing with racism from the White community. Community members in Denver have recounted stories to me of encountering discrimination as Black individuals, as immigrants, and as Black immigrants. However, all of the individuals who described instances of discrimination to me also indicated that, overall, they find the larger community in Denver welcoming. Some individuals feel that the general populace in Denver is ignorant about interacting with people of different cultures (and therefore become discriminatory) because there is a much smaller immigrant community in Denver. The community in Harlem grew together in a dangerous, unwelcoming environment, and then became an established presence as they helped turn around the neighborhood. There are no such
dynamics in Denver, as people encounter discrimination due to their race or immigrant status on a more individual basis.

Like individuals in Harlem, members of the Senegalese community do feel vulnerable as Muslims and immigrants in a post-9/11 environment. Several participants described discomfort in publicly admitting their religion or were eager to combat stereotypes about Muslims. One participant shared with me widespread fear within the community due to some people’s undocumented status. The community’s fear, though, seems at this point to stem more towards fear of immigrant enforcement than other types of government monitoring and enforcement. Although several people mentioned this fear, only one person discussed it in depth with me, so it is hard to guess how prevalent and deeply felt the fear is throughout the community. Again, most of the people I spoke with find the area welcoming and are quite happy living there.

Individuals in Denver are also forced to interact more with the larger non-Senegalese community in their every day lives. In general, Senegalese migrants in the city have a hard time meeting together because they are spatially spread out across the city and because of their varied work schedules. Although few people described social interactions with local American or other communities, everyone I spoke with is required to interact with the American community through their work and everyday interactions, to a much larger degree than those in Harlem. While people may feel vulnerable, especially undocumented migrants, they are also more integrated on an individual level than people in Harlem.

Harlem’s political environment has fostered the Senegalese community as a transnational community, whereas the community in Denver has not had the same support. New York City, in general, has a large immigrant community. As a result, there are not only many resources for immigrants, but also a political interest in the immigrant community. I attended several events in
Harlem in which politicians were courting the votes of immigrant groups. Furthermore, due to the unique history of the Senegalese community in Harlem in relation to the economic and social changes in the area, the community has support from local politicians. In contrast, as previously mentioned, Denver has a small overall immigrant population. There has been, therefore, less interest from politicians in working with immigrant groups. The overall African population is small as well, even with a sizable Ethiopian population (Bunch 2013). The African community does not interact with each other often, although, at the time of this writing, there is now an African Mall in Aurora, established by the leaders from several African communities. However, in light of larger national conversations about immigrant reform efforts, and the large immigrant population in Aurora, local politicians have begun to try to understand the needs of the African and Senegalese communities and court their votes as well.

The impact of the economic context appears to be somewhat similar across the two sites. Although Denver does not have the same economic opportunities that New York City has, especially the initial opportunities which vendors in Harlem had, it appears the Great Recession has evened the playing field to some degree. Not withstanding the pressures of gentrification in Harlem, many of the individuals I spoke with in both Denver and Harlem discussed difficulties of making ends meet and supporting their families in Senegal. Many people had dreams of starting a business, but even after an average of 15 years in the country, were unable to do so, for a variety of reasons.

Denver, then, has a Senegalese community in which individuals are forced into more interaction with the larger American community and which does not have a strong and active transnational community. This is not to say that individuals are not transnational – as I will describe below, they are strongly transnational in their desires and outlook. But Senegalese
migrants in Denver are not able to interact as a transnational community in a way that we see in Harlem. This is not just due to the smaller size and more recent arrival of the community in Denver – it is also due to social, physical, and political factors in these areas, including the past economic context in Harlem.

In Harlem, these factors have coalesced to support the growth of organizations like the Senegalese Association of America (ASA) and the Mouride Islamic Community of America (MICA). Both these organizations promote strong ties back to Senegal as well in the larger community in Harlem. MICA, by virtue of the fact that it is an affiliate organization of a religious brotherhood based in Senegal, maintains continuous ties with Senegal. Leaders in MICA report back to leaders in Senegal and religious leaders from Senegal come to visit MICA communities throughout the US. Financial contributions are directed through the brotherhood for use in Senegal and visits to Touba in Senegal are an important activity for devout followers.

The Senegalese Association of America promotes continuing ties to Senegal in several ways. First, it facilitates a non-partisan connection with the Senegalese government. For example, when the Senegalese Minister of the Exterior was in New York, a community meeting was held at the ASA office so that community members could have a townhall event with her. ASA also recognized some Senegalese assembly members for their work on behalf of the expatriate community at another meeting. Second, ASA allows members a space in which to maintain their Senegalese identity. For example, Senegalese news may be playing on the TV in the front area of the office, people can speak Wolof or other Senegalese languages there, and community bar-b-ques serve Senegalese food. ASA does serve to meet the needs of their members in Harlem and the U.S. context and does many activities that promote integration, but also serves as a way for community members to maintain a way of life that promotes a strong
sense of connection and identity with Senegal. This is especially true of older men, who may have retired or have fewer working hours, who often gather to chat on 116th St, or to debate politics in the front room of the ASA office. Women and younger people are generally too busy to engage in such activities.

ASA and MICA have provided direct services to the community in Harlem, a way for individuals to connect as a community, and also an organized way for individuals to maintain their connections with Senegal. It is important to note, to understand the context that facilitates Senegalese migrants’ engagement in Harlem, that there is some overlap between MICA and ASA. Although there are some very devoted members of MICA who move within their own social circle, MICA members also come to ASA events. And during the time of my research, there was some overlap between the MICA and ASA leadership. These organizations are by no means the only organizations that foster such connections for the community in Harlem (although they are two of the most predominant). They are, however, illustrative of the opportunities with which individuals in Harlem can engage. To date, these types of resources have not been available at a community level in Denver.

The diverse individual experiences of Senegalese transnational migrants

Now that we have a brief overview of the communities in Harlem and Denver, I will turn to the heart of this project, the stories of the individuals who live their lives across the U.S. and Senegal and seek a better future in doing so. All immigrant communities are diverse in different respects – the Senegalese communities with which I worked seem especially so. Indeed, the common uniting factor for the individuals with whom I spoke (aside from their generally high education levels) was that they were Senegalese. Multiple people impressed upon me the message that not all Senegalese are the same – that to understand migrant-led development by
Senegalese migrants, I had to understand the differing aspirations and experiences of the individuals in the community. While such a non-essentialized view of any community is at the heart of any social research, this is still a message I want to highlight in this work. As we shall see, one of the outcomes of a community with transnational individuals of such diverse experiences is differing lines of identification with Senegal, the Senegalese community in the U.S., and the local American community – an outcome that has a significant impact on migrant-led development. For now, I will introduce some of the people who generously took some time to share a bit about their lives with me and begin to delve into the various possibilities of what it means to live as a Senegalese transnational immigrant in the United States. The following six vignettes illustrate the diversity of the Senegalese communities in Harlem and Denver: the various backgrounds that Senegalese migrants have before coming to the U.S., their reasons for coming, their overall experiences in the country, and the ways in which they engage or dream of engaging with people in Senegal and the U.S. Many Senegalese migrants are strongly engaged with Senegal via social connections and sending money to Senegal – these vignettes describe the other ways they are involved or want to be involved. Overall, they are reflective of the wide array of migration and development experiences that migrants described throughout my interviews.

Malick

According to Malick, he was born in central Western Senegal, not far from Dakar, to lower economic circumstances in a mainly Mouride area. As a child, his mother instilled in him a love for and the importance of a Western education, a value that was not widely shared by those around him. He eventually became a teacher in Senegal, but without the help of family members in the Senegalese elite, he did not have strong career prospects. He was also unhappy with the political establishment. He came to New York in the late 1990s to pursue academic studies. At
the time he already knew English and had family members in the country. He decided to stay to pursue broader professional and personal opportunities here. He also met his wife there. He now works in a white collar position. Although he does not have an official leadership role in the community, he advocates for the needs he sees as most dire in the community, including taking steps to respond to the financial difficulties associated with gentrification. Now in his 40s, he does not socialize much with local community members as he prefers to spend his very limited free time with his family.

Aminda

Aminda described herself as in her 60s and as having lived in the U.S. for 20 years. Born in a town in southeastern Senegal and educated in a French high school, she became a vendor that worked across Europe and the Middle East for several decades, never intending to move to the U.S. After an accident that left her savings depleted, she moved to the U.S. at the suggestion of a family member who was living here at the time and has ended up staying. While she initially worked as a traveling vendor in the U.S., she eventually found the tax burden and moving around too difficult. She has lived in different locations around the country and tried to start a business in Florida, but ran into a number of difficulties, including personal transportation issues. She now works as a vendor in Harlem and is limited in her employment options. She works six to seven days a week and is barely able to make ends meet. She has almost no time for socializing with her friends in the community, although one of her children does live nearby. She was married, but she divorced her husband who stayed in Senegal. She also has other family members in the U.S., but elderly parents in Senegal as well, whom she would like to return to care for. Before doing so, however, she dreams of opening a small business in Harlem for a couple of years. If she leaves the U.S., it is unlikely she’ll be able to return.
Ahmed

Ahmed, in his 20s, is a recent arrival to Harlem. As he explained during our interviews, in Senegal, he studied business and was exposed to principles of international development through a family member who works for a large international aid organization. When he unexpectedly received a visa, he came to pursue his education. His goal is to get a degree in business management in the U.S. When he came to the U.S., it was his first time traveling outside of Senegal, and he did not know anyone in the country. Although he initially struggled upon his arrival to the U.S., adjusting to everything from the weather to the culture, he had just registered for school at the time of our interview, had a job at a chain restaurant, and was feeling much more comfortable. He engages a wide variety of friends, in the Senegalese, African, and American communities and volunteers with a local community organization. His dream is to return to Senegal and work with his sisters to start a business that helps promote African culture across the continent, Europe, and the U.S.

Adja

As Adja, in her 30s, recounted, she came to Denver several years ago to join her husband who lived in Denver. Although she never wanted to emigrate from Senegal, she did not want to be one of the many women left in Senegal with husbands abroad. She came directly to Denver, without any other experience living outside of Senegal. After arriving in the U.S., she and her husband began to encounter martial difficulties. Now divorced, Adja cares for their child and tries to raise him with Senegalese and African values, although she knows he will be Americanized as well. She hopes to return to Senegal, after obtaining a degree relevant to her career, but can not currently manage school while working full-time as a single parent. Given her schedule, she does not have many opportunities to socialize, but would like to do so more.
Alioune

Alioune, in his 20s, is also a recent arrival to Denver. In Senegal, he pursued a professional degree and was a leader all through his schooling. Although he wasn’t necessarily planning to come to the U.S. when he received a visa, he felt like he couldn’t pass up the opportunity to come to the country. When he came to the U.S., he first visited a friend in New York for a week and then moved to Denver, where he knew a family friend. He arrived hoping to continue his studies in the U.S. and build a career here, but was shocked that he had to pay for school (his schooling was paid for by the state in Senegal) and has struggled to go to school while working full-time in a manufacturing position. His ultimate goal is to return to Senegal and promote political reform there, to better serve the people of the country.

Mamadou

Mamadou recounted that he has been in the U.S. for over 15 years and initially lived in New York City. Although he spoke English well, he had a hard time finding work there and moved to another part of the country to get a job. He stayed there, obtaining a college degree in the process, until the Great Recession created too much economic instability in the area. He moved his family to Denver several years ago, joining a friend in the area. He enjoys living in the area, finding it much more welcoming than where he previously lived, which he found discriminatory against immigrants and uncomfortably focused appearances and status. He lives in Denver with his family and rarely interacts with the larger Senegalese community outside large events. He dreams of helping others in Senegal, but expects to remain in the U.S. due to his family.

The Senegalese transnational community

The vignettes I just related highlight several important points about the diversity of the Senegalese community members with whom I spoke in Harlem. First, people have very different
reasons for migrating at all and for coming to the U.S. in particular. That shapes how and why they want to be involved in the Senegal and the U.S. Second, individual immigrants have different sending contexts in Senegal, in terms of home life, education, social context, and sending location. These differences influence how they view and interact with the larger Senegalese and American communities. Third, everyone is transnational in some way, meaning everyone maintains some sort of connection with Senegal. The ways that people maintain those connections are shaped not only by their reason for coming to the U.S. and sending context, but also according to personal ambition, familial relationships and obligations, and their ability to move between countries.

There are, therefore, a variety of ways that the people with whom I spoke engage with transnationalism. People have different kinds of actual and desired engagement with Senegal, such as Aminda’s desire to care for her aging parents and Ahmed’s desire to start a transnational business based in Senegal. Additionally, people have different levels of desired transnational engagement over the course of their lifetimes – some people primarily direct their energies and desires towards Senegal, some primarily in the US, and some more or less equally between the two. Individual migrants also have different transnational orientations, similar to the various orientations described by Riccio (2001) and Sinatti (2006), with some migrants identifying primarily as Senegalese and with the local Senegalese community and others identifying more broadly with local immigrant and American communities.

**Conclusion**

The Senegalese communities in the United States are part of the larger new African diaspora in the United States. As such they belong to a group whose movements have been shaped by the contemporary global political economy, the economic and political legacies of the
colonial era, and by national migration policies that favor educated voluntary migrants. Like many other first generation migrants, they are strongly transnational and dedicated to supporting their home communities. A highly educated immigrant group, they must still contend with discrimination based upon both their immigrant status and race.

The outcomes for Senegalese communities are shaped not only by national immigration policies and discrimination based on race and immigrant status, but by local conditions as well. In the case of the communities in Senegal and Harlem, we can see that the conditions in Harlem, although initially difficult, supported the growth of a strong, established community. However, gentrification, current economic conditions, and the aging of the first generation are raising significant challenges to that establishment. In Denver, the political context is beginning to coalesce in some ways, although the economic, social, and spatial features are not as conducive to building a strong, interactive transnational community.

At the individual level, every person that I spoke with is transnational. They engage their lives between Denver or Harlem and Senegal and often other places as well. But the ways they enact that transnationalism varies – with their reason for coming to the U.S., their personal background in Senegal, and their experiences as an immigrant in the U.S. This diversity of engagement is reflective of the wider transnational migration literature and will have material impacts on their development activities, as we shall see in chapter 5. Before I turn to those activities, however, I will first explore how Senegalese migrants conceptualize development. As we shall see, the diversity of the lived experiences of the Senegalese migrant communities briefly explored in this chapter is reflected in their multiple and complex understandings of development.
Chapter 4 – Development according to Senegalese transnational migrants: The promotion of human development

Development is:

The means or assets that a country or organization puts together to help people achieve a minimum level of life – access to treatment, food, and education – to make their lives comfortable and easier – Abdou, first generation male migrant in Harlem

It starts with moving forward – giving back to your community – participating in your country – it’s a state of mind– what we think from the past prevents us from moving forward. It’s making an investment that is beneficial for most people – Fatima, first generation female migrant in Harlem

That’s a very broad question. It’s important to have a good legal system. There should be consequences if someone does something wrong. Also, make a place that people want to invest in. The government should be watching, but not involved. The government should be like a ref. Prevent cheating. Learning from the US, development is having unemployment under 5%. Back home, I think it’s over 20% – Serigne, first generation male migrant in Denver

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I surveyed the diverse migration experiences of Senegalese migrants and their various experiences with transnational life. Expanding upon these findings, I argue in this chapter that Senegalese migrants have varied and complex understandings of development shaped by their lived experiences that only partially align with the expectations of the nexus. In contrast to the prevalent assumption in migrant-led development policy that development means neoliberal economic growth in the Global South, Senegalese migrants’ understanding of development is the promotion of human development. Migrants have varying ideas of what promoting human development means: ideas shaped by exposure to particular ideas of development and development praxis, their lived experiences, and the socioeconomic and political context of Senegal. These varying ideas can adhere to some aspects of
neoliberalism as discussed in the nexus, but also represent a wider range of understanding about what development entails. Furthermore, again in contrast to the prevalent understanding in the migration-development nexus that development is an activity that takes place “over there”, in countries outside the Global North, migrants’ definitions of development are not limited to Senegal or the Global South. This difference in the understanding of where development happens reflects the way in which the discourse of the nexus has only partially harnessed the spatialization of transnationalism. Senegalese transnational migrants, on the other hand, informed by both their transnational migration experience and their understanding of development as something broader than solely neoliberal economic growth, can view development as something that can be enacted in both Senegal and the United States.

The inconsistency between migrants’ understandings of development and the understanding of development implicit in the migration-development nexus signals that the relationship between migration and development has more breadth and nuance than is currently acknowledged in migrant-led development policy. This exploration of Senegalese migrants’ understandings of development highlights how their understandings align in some ways with the neoliberal discourse in the nexus, but also how the complexity of migrants’ lived experiences gives their understandings more breadth than currently captured in the literature. This study explores how the social, cultural, and moral meaning of economic transactions influence what Senegalese migrants understand as development. As such, it lays the foundation for a broader understanding of the possibilities of migrant-led development, in terms of both outcomes and openings for resistance to ideas about neoliberal development imposed from above.

The reason to examine migrants’ definitions of development, and not solely their actions in this area, is because having definitions helps us understand why particular actions are taken.
Throughout the dissertation, we will see that there is not a one-on-one correspondence between different definitions of development and particular actions which migrants take to promote development. However, having an understanding of the broad general approach to development which migrants have as a group helps us understand the context for their actions – why their actions align in some ways with the discourse of neoliberal development and in not in other ways. While the understandings of the lay people who do development work at the ground level are often overlooked (Sangtin Writers 2006), there is some limited work that explores how individuals and communities understand development and why they engage particular development practices as a result. Bebbington’s (1993) work with indigenous communities in Ecuador showed that indigenous federations adopted some Green Revolution technologies as a way to reject the traditional oppression of the hacienda system and to try to maintain local control of the agricultural development process. They had an understanding of development as community-controlled and driven, but also as equalizing socio-economic relationships within the community. Only by exploring the federations’ reasoning for why they undertook their actions was Bebbington able to understand the nuanced nature and goals of their actions. This chapter lays the same groundwork for Senegalese transnational migrants.

**The contested understandings of development in migrant communities**

Remarkably, very little research has been conducted on how migrants understand the concept of development. Although there have been calls for understanding who and where diasporas identify with (e.g. Davies 2007), as well as previously discussed attempts to understand how migrants view remittances (e.g. Mohan 2006; Page and Mercer 2012; Sana 2005), there has been almost no examination of how migrants themselves conceptualize development. This oversight is in line with the development literature in which people’s understandings of and reactions to
particular development programs and/or approaches are examined (e.g. Ferguson 1994; Gidwani 2002; Li 2007; Mosse 2001), but not their understanding of development per se. There are, however, two studies which provide some foundational insights into the factors that can shape individual definitions of development: Dannecker’s (2009) analysis of Bangladeshi migrants’ visions of development and Trager’s (2001) study on internal migrants and their hometown associations in Nigeria. Additionally, Bakker’s (2007) analysis of how Mexican transnational migrants’ collective remittance behaviors reflect a conflicted relationship with neoliberal development ideals provides a key frame for understanding the contested and sometimes contradictory ways that transnational migrants conceptualize development.

Dannecker (2009) explores how male and female migrants come to different (and contrasting) visions of development through temporary labor migration from Bangladesh to Malaysia and back to Bangladesh. All the migrants she interviewed initially viewed development as a combination of “individual development” (i.e. having new experiences) and economic development, but through the migration process came to view development as “a set of beliefs and imaginations of how life should be” (123). There were stark gender differences, however, in their visions of a desired life, although both approaches were shaped by what migrants experienced in Malaysia. Female migrants conceptualized their desired life as altered gender roles and male migrants conceptualized it as the Islamisation of Bangladesh. For male migrants, Islamisation represented the social and governing changes needed to support economic and social development in Bangladesh. These differing gendered desires are a direct result of the cultural, social, political, and economic contexts of Bangladesh and Malaysia.

Dannecker also explores the power dynamics associated with these varying conceptions of development. She emphasizes that male migrants were able to articulate and begin to enforce
their vision of development much more easily than women because of existing gender roles in Bangladesh, especially the Bangladeshi views of female migrants as “bad” Muslim women. Furthermore, she highlights in her work that not only are there divergent and differently realized views of development among Bangladeshi temporary migrants, but that these visions of development are in stark contrast to the predominant focus on economic development, especially as articulated within the nexus. Dannacker’s work is somewhat limited by her lack of discussion about what role other socio-demographic factors might play in these processes, such as socio-economic class, age, or education. However, her work is notable for two reasons. First, not only does she explore migrants’ development perspectives, she explicates how the differing views of development are shaped strongly by migrants’ status within their home country. All migrants’ understandings of development require significant social transformations. However, women, who have considerably less power, view development as equality between the sexes, while men’s visions of development are more generally targeted at societal changes that do not demonstrably alter the existing gender power structure. Second Dannecker captures how the particular social and cultural contexts of these migrants’ lives, the ways in which religion, economics, and gender relations combined, shape their understandings of development.

In her ethnographic examination of hometown associations in the Ijesa Yoruba region of Nigeria, Trager (2001) also elicits how her participants define development. In the context of her research, she spoke with Nigerian internal migrants who belong to hometown associations as well as residents of those hometowns. In contrast to Dannecker’s findings, her interviews revealed that her participants overwhelmingly defined development as “economic development, with most concentrating on the need for industrialization” (149). Economic development, in this case, meant the growth of local industry and was also used to denote progress. Trager was
surprised that all except one respondent used the English word development rather than similar Yoruba concepts when discussing development (148). She did note that for some respondents, development meant to build things - infrastructure and community buildings. For others, to develop meant to educate. However, for many education was a former meaning of development that had now changed to industrialization. Trager thus also noted, as Dannecker also discussed, the mutability of the concept over time. Additionally, she explored how for some members of the community, the traditional reliance on trade in the region was a natural forbearer to economic growth through industrialization, while others felt that trade (through a focus on individual endeavors) was an impediment to development.

Trager states that local and national circumstances both act upon the ideas of development (and activities of development) which individuals espouse. For example, she explores how the economic crises of the 1980s and 1990s in Nigeria, especially the devaluation of the naira and the government’s inability to address the needs of many Nigerians, resulted in a focus on self-help. She also notes that people tended to disregard the government as a source of assistance, at least for beginning development projects (although she did discuss how some projects, such as schools, were taken over after the initial work was completed). Trager’s analysis, then, highlights the importance of national economic processes in shaping individual’s understanding of development as well as, again, a diversity of understandings within a single population. Most individual’s definitions line up with the dominant understanding of development as economic growth, a process of modernization, and a dismissal of the state. The dismissal of the state is due not necessarily to neoliberal buy-in, however, but due to a recent history of the state being unable or unwilling to address the economic problems of the area due to corruption. Although she does not explore differences along sociodemographic lines, as Dannecker does, she does still note
some differences within the community, especially the differing opinions on the role of trade in
the region.

The work of both Dannecker and Trager indicate that a combination of predominant
development narratives, the economic circumstances of the home country, societal status, life
experience, and social and cultural context can shape individual understandings of development.
Furthermore, Dannecker’s work shows us how transnational migration can also have a role – by
providing migrants with a wider experience and understanding of societal and economic
structures that in turn shape their understanding of development. In the case of the Bangladeshi
migrants, both men and women wanted to replicate aspects of life they experienced in Malaysia
back in Bangladesh.

Building upon this understanding of the national, local, and individual factors that can
influence migrants’ understandings of development, Bakker’s (2007) concept of critical
conformism helps us understand how migrants can both adhere to some aspects of the neoliberal
discourse of the nexus and also have divergent and variable understandings of development. His
work explores the differences between adopting neoliberal practices and adopting a neoliberal
ideology. He states that Mexican migrants active in HTAs may be seen as agents of the neoliberal
project of promoting economic growth through small enterprises and the free market because of
the projects in which they engage with the state and international donor organizations. However,
he argues that they actually have a much more nuanced understanding of the relationship
between development (via collective remittances) and migration than is acknowledged by the
neoliberal migrant-led development policies at work in Mexico. He contends:

Such an interpretation [that migrants are solely neoliberal actors] can only be sustained if we
rely on an absolutist distinction between fully autonomous struggle and total cooptation. The
migrant leaders under study here demonstrate the limitations of such a distinction. These are
no cultural and political dupes blindly obeying the dictates of more powerful forces and
actors. They are driven…by their own hopes, desires, and dreams; in short, “collaborative” arrangements involve complex negotiations between a variety of social actors and interests and entail a great deal more agency than a “cooptation” interpretation would allow.” (44)

Bakker continues to explore how migrant HTA leaders are interested in starting businesses, but do not believe solely in the power of small business creation and the free market to address the economic ills of their sending region. They believe that the state has responsibilities towards the region and should be involved, such as by providing public infrastructure, overseeing and supporting local businesses, or introducing price controls for agricultural products. Moreover, their particular views on these issues are shaped by their social status in the community – such as whether they are aligned with the current political party in power and their social class. Gender roles also favor the establishment of men in leadership positions, highlighting another line of division within the community. Bakker’s focus on the “constellation of accommodation and resistance” (59) in this community exemplifies how diverse transnational communities can appear to accept neoliberal principles but may still harbor a number of divergent views, shaped by social status, about the process of development. His work is similar to Iskander’s (2010) examination of how state/migrant relationships evolved over time in Mexico and Morocco, in which migrants advocate for their own goals and desires with the state, but Bakker’s work specifically addresses how migrants’ views on development may diverge from neoliberal discourse.

In sum, Trager, Dannecker, and Bakker underscore the ways that migrants can critically engage with ideas of development and also how that engagement is shaped by the national and local circumstances of their communities as well as by their position within those communities. We see a constellation of responses to predominant ideas of development across these works – almost wholesale rejection by Dannecker’s respondents and different grades of semi-conformism among Bakker and Trager’s participants. While Bakker doesn’t explicitly discuss migrants’
conceptions of development, his work emphasizes how neoliberal ideas of development may not be completely hegemonic, even if they appear to be on the surface. It is by examining the lived experiences of migrants that we can understand where these points of divergence may be for particular populations and also the key national, local and individual factors that shape them.

**Senegalese migrants’ understanding of development as human development**

As previously mentioned, my interview participants discussed varied understandings of development, which all feed into the more broadly accepted view of human development. These understandings, along with the idea of human development, do not preclude elements of economic or even what is viewed as neoliberal activity being incorporated into definitions of development. However, in contrast to the sole focus in the nexus of building up capitalist markets through the enterprise of individual, rational actors, migrants focused more on what individuals and communities need in order to be stable and economically sufficient. The particular ways in which the individuals with whom I spoke articulated this view of development included providing for: development of the individual, a good quality of life, and people’s needs. In line with Trager and Dannecker’s work, migrants’ definitions are shaped by their exposure to particular ideas of development and development praxis, the economic and political context of Senegal, their migration experience, and gender roles. Unlike Trager and Dannecker, however, the people with whom I spoke often articulated complex definitions of development, incorporating more than one of the understandings of development listed above. Such complex definitions reflect, as exemplified by Bakker, both the complex nature of transnational migrant communities and how individuals within them critically evaluate neoliberal migrant-led development discourse.
One of the primary understandings of development described by the Senegalese migrants whom I spoke with is development of the individual. In contrast to the “individual development” described by Dannecker, the roughly one-third of individuals who espoused this view of development were focusing less on personal experiences and more the formation of an educated, ethical person. These definitions varied in the how much they aligned with the neoliberal discourse described in the nexus, even for individuals who had similar definitions of development. Mamadou, a first generation migrant in Denver, provided one example of this understanding of development. When asked about development, he replied:

I think human development is most important. An example is the development of the mind. The mind is what creates resources. It doesn’t matter how many resources you have if you don’t have a mind with which to use them. There is a lot of corruption in countries like mine. People think they have to take everything before it’s gone. Take Japan as an example. They have had development of the mind. At the end of WWII, would anyone have thought of them becoming the power they are today? You need to have the development of the mind through education. Our development has to come from within, we need to liberate ourselves from overseas dependency. It doesn’t matter if you keep importing the things from other places. We need to create those resources ourselves. We tend to give a few people lots of power, like the cheikhs [Muslim religious leaders]. We need to have the laws upheld for everyone. We have a long way to go.

Mamadou’s description highlights the multiple ways in which Senegalese migrants conceptualize development as development of the individual. First is the development of the mind. In this case, Mamadou is referring to education: that Senegalese should have the skills and abilities to create the resources that they need. Moustapha, a first generation migrant, also in Denver, echoed this sentiment. He has lived the fabled pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps

14 It should be noted that I was only able to speak to 25 participants about their definition of development, due to time constraints.
immigrant story and credits several important mentors in helping him become who he is today. According to Moustapha: “The development of human beings is first – education and then experience is necessary for people to be engaged any other kinds of development. Next is the development of the country. It’s people who need to develop a country – it starts and stops with people.”

For both these individuals, having an educated, skilled workforce is a necessary element for the development of Senegal - but it is not sufficient alone. Moustapha goes on to say, “One of the challenges in Africa is that there are no schools, no jobs – there’s no value to school. There aren’t people to manage things there.” For these participants, individuals are the root of development, the means by which it can occur. Development at the country level may incorporate economic growth for these individuals, but the methods and techniques of development should focus on the creation and maintenance of human capital. Additionally, development of individual human capital must come before all other types of development projects in order for them to be successful. In some ways, of course, this understanding of development is in line with the discursive neoliberal focus on facilitating the creation of individual, rational entrepreneurs. Yet, we can see from Moustapha’s quote the idea of having educated citizens isn’t solely in line with the discourse of neoliberal development. According to Moustapha, educated citizens are needed to manage economic and political affairs, which could confirm to other conceptions of development as well.

The second view of individual development discussed by the migrants with whom I spoke focused on the formation of an ethical subject, rather than the provision of formal education. Many participants described the Senegalese government as corrupt during the course of our conversations (as I will discuss more in chapter 5) and some of their definitions of
development include an explicit discussion of the elimination of corruption as a key aspect of
development. Mamadou refers to it at the end of his quote, above, when he talks about
concentrated power in the hands of cheiks, religious leaders, and the need for the law to apply
equally to everyone. Several other participants explicitly mentioned the creation of a moral,
ethical self, the need for the law to be upheld in Senegal, and how officials embezzle money in
Senegal in their discussions of development.

Third, I heard on multiple occasions “development is a mindset”. When people described
development as a mindset, they were describing the way that individuals approach problems and
approach their attempts to create a better life for themselves and their families. As Moustapha,
the first generation migrant in Denver mentioned above, explained: “Environments set people
apart. You have to create an environment for people to grow. When I came, I was told to work at
DIA [Denver International Airport]. Senegalese people have a notion of survival, it’s what
people have to do there. People don’t have dreams – they are focused on the day-to-day.” For
Moustapha, who did not want to work at the airport and desired to work in an office where he
could wear a suit and tie every day, the ability to dream, to think outside of what people know, is
an indication of development (and can lead to development). Mamadou shared a similar
sentiment in another part of his interview.

For other participants, development as a mindset means individuals taking responsibility
for addressing their own problems. Several participants expressed frustration with people in
Senegal for waiting for assistance from both migrants and the government, but in the meantime
doing little to help themselves and complaining about being victims. One particular complaint
was that people litter in Senegal, which was viewed as an indication that they do not take the
initiative to care for their community. Mamadou’s passing reference to freedom from overseas
dependency is another example of this view of development. Two other respondents noted that they felt Senegalese (Africans in one case) should be the ones promoting and participating in development in Senegal.

Overwhelmingly, this emphasis on the individual as the focus of development was described by participants who are above the age of 40 and generally by those with at least some college education. Although these understandings of development are in some ways aligned with neoliberal thought (the focus on the individual) and on blaming people “over there” for development problems, they are also reflective of the larger transnational context in which these participants operate. To some degree, this view may be shaped by an emphasis on education that was a prominent feature of development discourse in Africa in the 1970s (Trager 2001; Vaughan 2011), but this understanding of development primarily reflects frustration with the political and economic management of Senegal since independence in 1960. In a couple of cases, individuals reported being shut out of professional opportunities because their families were not properly connected within the Senegalese political hierarchy. Many individuals also reported frustration with how resources are managed (and have been managed) by government officials as well as by religious officials (in some cases). For those who have at least some college education, there is an acknowledgement in this age group that having college-level skills and knowledge did not mean that they could participate in leadership or development activities in Senegal. For these individuals, especially those who left Senegal permanently after receiving some education, the corruption in Senegal has limited the benefits of building up of human capital. They, therefore, employ a wider definition of development of the individual – one that could be implicated in neoliberal practices, but is certainly not reflective of a neoliberal ideology or a fully neoliberal subjectivity.
Development as quality of life

Another central understanding of development among Senegalese migrants is that of providing basic necessities or a certain quality of life. An example of this definition comes from Lamine, a first generation migrant living in Denver. Lamine has lived in the US for over 15 years and has his family with him in Denver, although he hopes to ultimately retire in Senegal. He has worked in more than one location in the U.S. and has an advanced degree. When I asked for his definition, he replied:

Not using economical indicators, such as income/head, how much people live off of per day. I talk about social development – about someone being able to live happily with what they have and interact peacefully with their environment. People can eat when they are hungry, see the doctor when they need healthcare, send their kids to school. That’s how I define development, not by economical indicators. There are a lot of countries that are developed, although they are not rich.

His definition incorporated many aspects that others did too - living peacefully, having enough to eat, being healthy, and access to education. In the definitions that included access to education, the focus was on education as a basic necessity rather than a resource for economic development in and of itself, as described above. For most of the participants who focused on quality of life, this was often part of a more complex definition that also incorporated one or both of the other major themes of these definitions. Also, ideas of development as a certain quality of life included access to opportunities/dreams and jobs for several respondents.

It is important to note that Lamine explicitly points out that wealth does not indicate development, in contrast to the economic focus of migrant-led development policy. In fact, none of my respondents included wealth as an indicator of development. As I will discuss below, some people defined economic growth through the creation of jobs as development, but no one defined it as a certain income, other than to say that people could meet their needs and have some extra resources to be comfortable. An example of this type of definition is Abou’s
description at the beginning of the chapter about development being assets put together to make people’s lives more comfortable and easier. This description is the essence of what all participants defining development as a quality of life conveyed during their interviews.

This conception of development reflects the broader general understanding of development as human development. Development indices like the UNDP’s Human Development Index incorporate items such as education and health into their calculations of how developed a country is, even though also include economic measures as well. The participants who provided this definition did not indicate any particular reasons for why this was their definition of development, aside from one man who said he studied this as one of several meanings of development in school. Men with at least some college education tended to offer this definition, while only two women did. Partially that gender discrepancy may due to the fact that more men than women discussed their definition of development with me. It also likely reflects the different migration motivations and expectations for male migrants. Male migrants often migrate in order to care for their families, including parents and siblings – and are expected to do so (Melly forthcoming; Sinatti 2014). Female migrants, on the other hand, are more likely to migrate to join a spouse, although that is not exclusively the case (Fall et al. 2010) and do not have the same expectations placed upon them for supporting an entire family (Babou 2008). Male migrants, therefore, may have a broader and longer-term view of development needs and may feel more of a burden around meeting needs related to maintaining a good quality of life. In such cases, migrants’ gender roles, especially in relation to their transnational migration experience, would be a significant influence on their understanding of development – rather than neoliberal ideology or subjectivity as described in the nexus.

Development as assistance
Lastly, Senegalese migrants’ other main understanding of development involves individuals providing assistance to or giving back to the community in some way. This assistance is directed at the household and community levels. Generally, this assistance is envisioned as sending goods, migrants themselves creating jobs for people in Senegal by opening businesses there, and sending money home to families, as well as through providing general assistance to sending communities as a whole.

For several individuals, their definitions of development incorporated assisting families in Senegal who relied on migrants for financial support. However, it should be noted that supporting families was not the sole definition of development for anyone. For those that described assisting family as an element of development, they also discussed assisting the larger community, through sending goods back to Senegal and/or opening a business to create jobs. For these participants, development involved providing assistance at both the household and community scale. This reasoning, this desire to assist the community, is one that I will explore more fully in chapter 5 when I discuss the particular development activities in which migrants engage and why they do so.

A clear gender trend is apparent for those who described development as assistance due to expectations of how men and women should spend their earnings as well as women’s attempts to gain status in Senegal through opening businesses. While it was predominately men whose definitions at least partially included quality of life as development, it was predominately women who described development as assistance. One participant explained to me that this might partially be due to gendered expectations around migrant earnings. If a woman is migrating to join her husband, the expectation is that her husband will provide for the household in the U.S. Whatever the woman earns may then be set aside to care for family in Senegal – especially to
ensure the well-being and future of the children (Kane 2015; Babou 2008). Additionally, starting a business in Senegal and employing others may be a way of obtaining increased status for women in Senegal. Traditionally this was a purview of male migrants, but more and more women are able to engage in such activities today, according to one of my female participants. Even though it’s becoming more common, it may still be a way for women to gain more social power vis-à-vis men in Senegal. However, Lo’s (2016) study of temporary Senegalese female migrant vendors in New York highlights the sexism that female entrepreneurs face in general. Transnational Senegalese migrant women who define development as creating jobs through starting a business in Senegal fall in line with neoliberal expectations, but are also articulating positions of agency and resistance to patriarchal expectations of their role in society. Their ability to adopt different social and economic stances across their transnational social spheres, meaning their ability to gather the resources in the U.S. to start a business in Senegal, facilitates this attempt to shift social power in relation to their gender roles.

**Complex understandings of development**

The complexity of Senegalese migrants’ definitions of development illustrates a critical engagement with the concept of development itself, even if those definitions in some ways align with the discourse of the nexus. Roughly half of my participants combined multiple understandings of development into a single, complex definition. Some migrants combined different elements of a single understanding of development – such as quality of life including health, peace, and access to an education – into their definitions while others combined more than one of the understandings described above into a single definition. To some degree, the particular elements that people include in these complex definitions are shaped by their life experiences. Significantly for our understanding of how migrants engage with the concept of
development employed in the migration-development nexus, such complexity contains an inherent acknowledgement that there is no single way to define development.

Amina, a first generation female migrant, came to Denver less than five years ago. She and her friends always dreamed of coming to the U.S., based on what they saw portrayed in movies. She came to Denver because she has family in the area. Although she has a college degree, she is currently in school here and working as well. Her goal is to earn an advanced degree in the U.S. and then return to Senegal to open her own business and start a family. When I asked her to explain her understanding of development, she replied:

My dream is to go back home in a couple of years to start a company, employ people there. I want to get my M.A. here. There are lots of immigrants, some with money, some with experience – they can create companies for development.

KW: So it’s about creating opportunities?

Amina: Yes, providing opportunities. We also send money home to our families. Every month I send money to my family to support them.

Amina’s definition of development is one of the few that aligns very much with the expectation of migration-development policy. She discusses both pursuing small enterprise in Senegal after increasing her human capital and providing for her family via remittances. In the next chapter, I will begin to unpack some of the underlying factors behind migrants’ desire to start a business. At the moment, I want to highlight that Amina comes from a family of immigrants – she has multiple family members in Europe and other African countries. She comes not only from a sending region with a highly prevalent culture of migration – but a family as well. She may, therefore, have particular experiences about both what is expected of migrants as well as knowledge about exactly what resources they have to engage in these activities. And even though her definition is thoroughly in line with the expectations of the nexus – she acknowledges that there is no single path to development.
In contrast to Amina, Ali is a male migrant in his 50s who lives in Harlem. He came to the US over 25 years ago, has his family with him in the U.S., and owns his own business in Harlem. He is heavily involved in the Senegalese community in Harlem, his religious community in the area, and is also one of the few participants who works with an HTA. He frequently (every couple of years) returns to visit family and friends in Senegal. When I asked for his definition of development, he replied:

I define development as a way of living, so people can satisfy their needs. Also a mentality. Those who live in the country think that those who live in the big cities can overcome difficulties. Sometimes people migrate from the village to the big cities and then there’s poverty in the big cities. Development is changing the standard of living to a higher one. Maybe this country right now is seen as a very developed country, but maybe 50 years from now, people may not see it as development. I remember when I started school and 50 years later, it is so different. Their vision of development can change. Development is like a stage in the situation where people are.

What stands out in Ali’s definition is not only the view that development is a mentality but the acknowledgement that the concept of development can change through time, as he, himself, has witnessed. Furthermore, Ali recognizes that since people’s conceptions of development can shift through time, so can their understandings of what places are developed. His childhood and adolescent years were likely heavily shaped by the national activities going on at that time to establish an independent government and stable economy. Then, as a young man, he moved to the United States and has lived a significant portion of his life in this country. He, therefore, has witnessed development praxis across a formative span of time in terms of contemporary development theory. Within this time frame, he has lived also within a transnational space that is normally divided into developed/developing. Ali’s complex definition is likely shaped, thus, by the changes he has witnessed over the course of his life to date, as well as by his lived experience in places (in cities, in the U.S.) that many people assume to be developed.
Ali and Amina’s definitions of development exemplify how different migrant’s overall understandings of development can be. These complex definitions are significant because they exemplify one way in which migrants are critically engaging with development as a concept, combining different narratives and, in some cases, critiquing dominant modes or other people’s understandings of development, as both Ali and Lamine [above] did. Although most migrants’ definitions of development fall under the broad category of promoting human development, the sometimes very different definitions reflect not only the conceptually fuzzy nature of development, but also the diversity of the community as a whole. Furthermore, they reflect the ways individuals operating within transnational spaces negotiate changing social boundaries (such as through some women’s desire to start a business in Senegal). The communities’ engagement with development, then, is robust, critical, and in some ways contradictory – thereby creating openings about what other possibilities there are for the relationship between migration and development.

**Development doesn’t just happen in Senegal**

One of the possibilities which arises when looking at how migrants’ conceptualize development is a realization that migrant-led development can happen in the United States as well. While only a few of my interviewees explicitly defined development in relation to the United States, their definitions foreground the many development activities in which Senegalese immigrants participate in the United States, as I will explore in the next chapter. Why are Senegalese migrants’ including the United States in their definitions of development? There are two reasons for this spatialization of development. First, when migrants’ definitions do not center on economic measures, the United States may not necessarily be considered developed, especially if they are used to a different quality of life in Senegal based on their educational and
social status. Second, because Senegalese transnational migrants have a transnational frame of reference, they may incorporate activities or circumstances in the U.S. within their overall view of spaces that need to be developed – they have the lived experience of seeing problems in both Senegal and the United States.

Daouda, a cab driver in his late 50s in Harlem, provided on such definition. Daouda is from central Senegal and left the country in the 1970s. He started to pursue a college education abroad, but wasn’t able to complete his schooling, so he became a vendor abroad for many years. He is vehement about the problems with corruption in Senegal and is passionate about helping his sending area rebuild its agricultural and economic base. When I asked him to define development, he explained that developing the self and the mind is what must come first. He defined Chicago as undeveloped because it’s more dangerous than Iraq and critiqued Europe as undeveloped because their corporations are greedy and care for money, instead of people. He also labeled George Bush as undeveloped because he’s responsible for killing people in Iraq. For Daouda, then, his definition of development and his broader knowledge of the world shapes his spatial framing of development. He considers Senegal undeveloped due to corruption, but also sees a focus on money above people or a disregard for human life as undeveloped as well.

In contrast to Daouda, Mansour, also a middle-aged man in Harlem, defined development solely in relation to the Senegalese community in Harlem. Mansour came to the U.S. over 30 years ago for school. He lived in several different locations in the U.S. while pursuing his education and during his early career. He has been in Harlem since at least the mid-1990s and has been active in the community and currently owns his own business. He loves living in New York – he enjoys the vibrancy of the city – but he is concerned about the future of the Senegalese community in Harlem. When I asked about his definition of development, he said:
My first definition of development - the American dream is nothing but only real estate here. What people spend on rent is unimaginable. The problem is, people always say they don’t live here. When we came here in the early 90s, nobody wanted to be in Harlem. Even the Black people were scared of Harlem. No one thought of buying anything. If you don’t own a home or a business – you can lose your job or home any time. Development is ownership. I’m not talking about cars. That’s not an investment. If you buy a car today and sell and next week, it’s worthless. Need to own businesses and houses – we’re not going anywhere. I say to my community that we aren’t developed at all. On 116th [St] a lot of businesses closed – they were here for 10 years, but rent went up and they were out.

Mansour’s definition is clearly in response to the conditions the community is facing, specifically gentrification, in Harlem. While the connection between integration and development is something that I will discuss in more detail in chapter 6, his definition highlights how people may use their spatial frame of reference outside of Senegal as they think about development. In Mansour’s case, his focus is entirely on the Senegalese community in Harlem. While he alludes to other definitions of development in the excerpt above, he never described any others. While he frequently returns to Senegal to visit family and friends, he has no connection with organizations in Senegal. In the U.S., where he has lived for 30 years, he has his family and his business, in addition to the community in which he’s been active for over 20 years. His spatial focus for development, then, is in Harlem and the areas to which the community is expanding.

While only a few participants described development in relation to the U.S., the discursive opening it presents provides a significant contrast to the assumption in the nexus that development by transnational migrants is something that can only occur in their sending countries. While Daouda’s focus on the promotion of ethics may not be viewed as a feasible development activity and Mansour’s definition is clearly in line with neoliberal principles, the significance of his and Mansour’s definitions is that they can envision development occurring in the U.S. As we shall see in the next chapter, for many Senegalese migrants this discursive
opening translates into participation in development activities in the U.S. and Senegal, due to their definitions of development and transnational frame of reference, in addition to other individualized factors.

**Remittances to family and friends – cultural maintenance and moral responsibility**

Another discursive opening in the relationship between transnational migration and development comes from the understanding that most Senegalese migrants, in line with the literature on the affective and social value of remittances discussed in Chapter 1, do not consider sending remittances to be development. Familial remittances are a consistent, salient aspect of transnational life for many of the Senegalese community members with whom I spoke. Only three people admitted to not sending money. One person can no longer afford to do so (although she supported many family members in the past). One person said he sends his family goods, which they can sell or use, and a third person said that the family member he supported has now passed away. This remittance behavior holds true regardless of any socio-demographic factors, such as length of time in the U.S.

Remittances are important to the Senegalese migrants I spoke with because they are a way of both maintaining their cultural identity and upholding a moral responsibility to their families. My participants send remittances to a variety of people in their home communities. In contrast to the data from the World Bank survey (World Bank 2011), in which participants overwhelming sent remittances for their kids, my participants send money to a number of different family members. While I did not directly ask to whom my participants sent their

15 Similar to Hernandez Carretero’s (2015) study, remittances can be used to maintain status and belonging, even as migrants attempt to physically distance themselves from the financial demands of their family and friends.
remittances, many people volunteered this information. People predominantly mentioned sending money to their parents, their siblings, and their kids (for those who don’t have their kids with them). Others mentioned relatives that would be considered extended family in the U.S. (e.g. aunts, nephews). Indeed, other literature points to how Senegalese migrants’ broad conception of family is reflected in remittance behavior (Beauchemin et al. 2013), fitting in with more global patterns among migrant groups (Carling 2014). Finally, about a fifth of my participants also discussed sending money to friends as it was needed.

One of the reasons my participants gave for sending remittances to family and friends was that it was part of the way they enact Senegalese and African culture. Khady, a professional woman in her 50s in New York, explained this point of view. Khady came to the U.S. for work about eight years ago and has spent a majority of her life in Senegal. When I interviewed Khady, she was planning to soon retire to Senegal and rejoin her husband who lives there. However, she does plan to return to the U.S. frequently because her children live in different locations in the U.S. Her view of development is that it is a mentality – that development means people are willing to work and are not corrupt. When I asked Khady if she sends money to friends and family in Senegal, she responded:

I send lots of money to friends and relatives when I know the situation and they need it. It’s African solidarity, it’s our culture. My sister’s child needs school fees, so I send them to her. While the money is in my account, it will not sit there if she needs something like that. With the solidarity, everyone shares. When it’s lunch time, whoever is there will eat. There’s never a bad time to visit. I really appreciate that, and the respect of elders. I always tell my kids, wherever you go, keep this in mind.

Khady, in her description of communal solidarity, explains how this solidarity can be enacted through financial transactions. By sending money to both her extended family and her friends, Khady is able to maintain a particular aspect of what she sees as her African culture. Relatedly, Mamadou, a first generation male migrant in Denver, mentioned that he will always
send money home to his mom because it is part of what makes him Senegalese. He said that he would lose part of himself should he cease to send remittances. Many of the participants with whom I spoke indicated that sending remittances is a cultural act. For these individuals, sending remittances is an act of cultural maintenance that happens to take economic form.

Some participants also consider sending financial remittances to family members a moral obligation. Sending remittances to family members can be considered a moral obligation in two ways. First, it can be viewed as a religious moral obligation. El Hadji, a devout Mouride man in his 60s in Harlem, explained this view to me in his interview. While discussing his activities caring for his family and his community, I asked him if it was his religious beliefs that impelled him to do so. He replied, “My family, I automatically help them. My mother, she was pregnant for nine months with me. My father – he fed me, clothed me. They both made sure I was cared for and protected as I was growing. So now I take care of them. I do the same with my family. The family is an obligation.”

Although not many participants explicitly described their reasoning for why sending remittances to the family is an obligation, it is likely religious reasons play a role for many Senegalese migrants. As one participant pointed out to me during member checking of this work, according to a 2015 Pew Research Center report, 97% of the Senegalese population surveyed in the Spring 2014 Global Attitudes survey reported that religion is very important in their lives (Theodorou 2015). Senegal is also over 90% Muslim (Focus Migration 2007). It is highly likely, then, that this is a salient understanding for many migrants.

Senegalese migrants’ reasons for migration may also cause them to view sending remittances to family members as a moral obligation. As previously mentioned, men often migrate to care for their families (Sinatti 2014). Frequently their journey abroad is financed, at
least partially, by family members (Baizon and Gonzalez-Ferrer 2016). Male migrants may then feel like they have an obligation to help those who helped them – beyond the other reasons for sending remittances already discussed. Even if a male migrant’s family members did not pay for his voyage abroad, he might still be expected to care for his family, especially if he is successful. One first generation male migrant living in Denver told me that as the most economically successful member of his family, he is expected to support the other members, including his siblings.

Senegalese migrants’ understanding of remittances as an economic activity with cultural and moral value artificially aligns with the view in the nexus that sending remittances is not development – but for radically different reasons. According to the debate over remittances in the literature on migrant-led development, familial remittances are at best a tool for poverty alleviation. At worst, they are an “unproductive” investment. Such views come from a purely economic understanding of financial transactions. They ignore complex and layered meanings of activities that have been lumped together because they are economic in nature. The anthropological and sociological literature on remittances has shown that for many migrants, not just Senegalese migrants, remittances have significant emotional and social value. Such a discrepancy again highlights the complex and contested nature of development as mediated by the lived experiences of those asked to deliver it through transnational migration.

**Conclusion**

Senegalese migrants’ have a complex and sometimes critical engagement with the concept of development. While most of my participants have a broad understanding of development as human development (a process that elevates quality of life and isn’t necessarily defined economically), the particular ways in which they envision human development is shaped
by their transnational experiences in relation to education, politics, and gender, as well as their transnational frame of reference. It is both migrants’ experience of living in different places within their transnational social sphere as well as the desire and ability to negotiate their social status that influences these understandings. Highly educated middle-class migrants were frustrated by the Senegalese political structure in their attempts to gain social and economic mobility through education and consequently define development in relation to education and ethics. The societal expectations placed on men to support their families in Senegal and the perceived need to migrate in order to do so is reflected in their overwhelming characterization of development as quality life. Women, on the other hand, at least those who are married, are not responsible for maintaining the household in either the U.S. or Senegal, and thus can use their resources to support their families and communities in other ways. Not surprisingly, women’s understandings of development reflect a more general conception of development as assistance.

These understandings of development reveal a wider conceptualization of development than that of the nexus and are also part of a rich understanding of development across the community. Not only do migrants conceive of development outside of economic terms, but they also can envision it as a process that takes place in the U.S. as well as Senegal. Migrants’ understandings of development are shaped by the social expectations they must manage as transnational migrants, their negotiated social identities across their transnational social sphere, and their transnational frame of reference. Policies which are designed to work in concert with migrants and their development efforts should facilitate such diverse understandings – yet will also have the difficult job of operating within a context in which migrants may be negotiating social power in their development efforts.
Additionally, what these results indicate is that asking whether or not migrants’ understandings of development are neoliberal and then judging them based upon that criteria, occludes the reality on the ground for the individuals with whom I spoke. In the context of Senegalese development, structural adjustment and migration, a focus on the individual as the building block of development aligns with the expectations of the nexus. And yet, using the lens of critical conformism, we can see that while migrants discuss or even participate in activities that align with neoliberal expectations of migrant entrepreneurs facilitating economic growth in their home communities, they may do so for reasons that are outside of the discursive framework of neoliberal migrant-led development. In the case of some of the women I spoke with, they envision development as starting a business in Senegal. While this would align with the expectations of the nexus, it would also be a way for women to gain status and power in relation to men in Senegal. In other cases, migrants view individuals as the catalytic core for creating a better quality of life and/or providing assistance to their communities. The individual actor, in this case, utilizes what may be viewed as a neoliberal approach to meet ends that are decidedly more in line with the Senegalese context than with academic discourse about neoliberalism, just as Collier (2011) found in the case of post-Soviet neoliberal reforms. Furthermore, migrants’ rejection of remittances to family and friends as a development activity is not because migrants view the activity as economically “unproductive”. Rather, it is socially, culturally, and morally productive and meaningful and thus in a separate cognitive sphere from development activities.

The next chapter will explore how this broad understanding of development within the community shifts the focus of migrant-led development away from simply generating income to providing funds that will support the larger surrounding area - to generating income as a means for addressing individual, social, cultural, and moral goals. It shifts the meaning of neoliberal
migrant-led development in Senegal from that of engineering “neoliberal” economic growth to engineering broader, community-based support that is much more communal in nature that would be expected within the common discourse of neoliberalism in the nexus. Chapter 5 explores the contradictory, complex individual and community level factors that shape Senegalese migrants’ actual and desired attempts to promote human development across their transnational social fields.
Chapter 5 – Transnational orientation, identity, and neoliberalism in Senegalese migrants’ development activities

Introduction

Late one warm New York City evening in July 2013, I took the C train up to meet Aminata at her restaurant in Harlem. I got to the restaurant after 9 to eat dinner after the breaking of the Ramadan fast and to talk with Aminata over dinner. When I arrived, she was sitting at a table in the front of the restaurant, chatting with a couple of other women who were clearly relaxing and having a good time after a long day. After I ordered my food, we started our conversation at the same table. As was commonly the case during my interviews in Harlem, Aminata repeatedly paused to talk with other people, either with the women sitting at the table with us or people who stopped by to say hi and briefly chat. She also received multiple phone calls during this time as well. She was obviously very well known in the community. As we discussed some of the major events in her life, we began to chat about her continuing involvements in Senegal. Although she does have some ongoing ties to Senegal, she said that the focus of her life is in Harlem. Before she and her husband owned the restaurant, she worked in an industry where she was able to provide a lot of help to people trying to return to Senegal, either temporarily or permanently. Now she supports people in Harlem, especially those who are older and have no job, with donations from her restaurant.

In contrast to Aminata, when I chatted with Ndeye over the phone in the spring of 2014, she still had a strong focus on Senegal. She came to the U.S. over ten years ago to join her husband and eventually moved to Denver. She interacts with the local Senegalese community when there are big events, but otherwise keeps to herself. She helps support her family in Senegal and returns for visits frequently. When I asked about sending money to her family and
helping with development in Senegal, she agreed that sending money to family was a cultural act. She also did not trust the government enough to want to engage in any development projects they were promoting. She did, however, want to start an orphanage in Senegal to help widows with young children. She herself was widowed when her children were little and knows how difficult it can be without help in that situation. Although she doesn’t feel she is currently in a position to start such an organization, this is how she sees herself potentially supporting development in Senegal.

Both Aminata and Ndye care about the development of their communities, and are motivated to do so by what they’ve experienced and seen in their own lives, but their approaches and spatial focus are quite different. Aminata is focused on caring for the Senegalese community in Harlem. She actively does so now, through the food that she distributes to those in need. And although she does still have connections to Senegal, the focus of her life in the United States, where she has strong social standing as well as her immediate family. Ndye, on the other hand, has a strong focus on Senegal. Although her children live close to her in the U.S., she still supports relatives in Senegal and returns frequently. She does not have a strong connection with the Senegalese community in Denver, and though she desires to help others, it would be by creating an orphanage in Senegal. The contrast in these women’s experiences and desires with regard to development despite their common desire to assist others, illustrates how diverse Senegalese migrants’ engagement with development can be as well as how those engagements can be shaped by individual identities and transnational orientations.

In the previous chapter, I explored how migrants have multiple, complex understandings of development as human development which are shaped by migrants’ lived experiences, transnational frame of reference, and the identity negotiations inherent to transnational life. In
this chapter, I build on these insights to show that migrant-led development, in practice as well as concept, is messy, contradictory and only in variable alignment with the discourse of the nexus. In particular, I explore the numerous activities in which Senegalese migrants engage based on what they and the literature call development and the ways in which these engagements are influenced by individual identities, lived experiences, transnational orientation, and communal values. I also argue that the desire of many Senegalese migrants to start a small businesses in Senegal is due to a constellation of cultural, political, economic, and social factors across Senegal and both sites in the U.S. Thus Senegalese migrants’ activities and desired activities, while they appear to align with the neoliberal discourse of the nexus, actually distinctively shape how neoliberalism is in enacted across their transnational social spheres. These “neoliberal” activities incorporate the individual entrepreneur as an actor in meeting a constellation of social, cultural, and moral goals. And although migrants’ particular understandings of development do not translate into discrete development activities, their general understanding of development as human development is what shapes these particular actual and desired activities – as methods for achieving a certain quality of life, of promoting the growth of the individual, and of assisting others. As we shall see, their transnational frame of reference, their transnational orientations, and their lived experiences all combine to create a broad and diverse array of development practices that meet these goals.

**Senegalese emigrants and development**

According to the literature on Senegalese migration and development, Senegalese immigrants across the globe are heavily involved in the economic development of Senegal. The focus of this work is on remittances, HTAs, and development activities as commonly discussed in the nexus literature. This brief review Senegalese migrants’ development activities in the
literature is to designed to provide a background for understanding for the breadth of Senegalese migrants engagement with development as well as some of the factors that shape that engagement. As previously mentioned, roughly one-fifth of all Senegalese nationals currently live outside the country (Fall et al. 2010). In Dakar, the sending location for many Senegalese migrants, three-fourths of all households have at least one international migrant (Melly forthcoming, 67). These emigrants contribute 10% of the country’s GDP through remittances (World Bank 2011), although not all remittances are sent through official channels so it is hard to measure their true volume (Cisse 2008; Kane 2011). In terms of both the total volume of remittances and their percentage of GDP, Senegal is one of the top five remittance receivers in Africa (Cisse 2008). Migrants’ remittances to families are primarily spent on consumption, but also on rent, healthcare, and education (Cisse 2008). In addition to sending remittances home to their families in Senegal, migrants also participate in emergency relief during times of environmental stress; infrastructure development, such as building and roads; real estate development; mosque construction; and business development in Senegal (Fall 2005; Grillo and Riccio 2004; Foley and Babou 2010; Kane 2010; Melly forthcoming; Mezger Kveder and Beauchemin 2015).

Not only are Senegalese immigrants heavily involved in development activities in Senegal, these development processes are also directed along multiple networks. Senegalese national associations, as well as ethnic and hometown associations, exist in different countries, including the U.S. (Kane 2011), all of which contribute to development efforts in some way. Senegalese migrants also have created development initiatives on an individual basis and existing migrant groups have joined forces with other migrant groups to work together on development projects, such as regional federations of hometown based migrant associations
In some cases, migrant associations have also worked together with local and state governments as well as NGOs on co-development projects in Europe (Grillo and Riccio 2004; Riccio 2011). These associations, while promoting different development activities, may still foster social inequality, however, through leveraging power over sending communities (Fall 2005) or through exclusionary membership practices, such as male only development associations (Riccio 2011).

The Islamic brotherhoods of Senegal, in particular, have shaped migrant development efforts. The members of the Mouride Islamic brotherhood, which has been extensively studied, send significant financial resources to Senegal. Mouride migrants send contributions to their religious leaders and in some cases, have established development projects in Touba, the sacred Mouride city in Senegal, such as the construction of a hospital (Foley and Babou 2010), as well as invested in real estate in Touba (Kane 2011). Development efforts are also directed within other Islamic brotherhoods, such as the Tijaniyya, and their sacred cities within in Senegal (Kane 2011).

The Senegalese state is also actively trying to engage migrants in development activities for its own purposes (Dahou and Foucher 2009). These activities include building and investing in projects, such as urban infrastructure projects (Fall, Carretero, and Sarr 2010), which are part of a larger state-led development effort oriented towards infrastructure development (Melly forthcoming). The state used to have an office, the Ministry of the Senegalese Overseas, which is designed to support Senegalese migrants (Kane 2011; MSL 2011), but also directed migrants towards specific investment activities (MSL 2011). An earlier version of this office focused on re-integration activities for return migrants from Europe (Diatta and Mbow 1999). It may therefore have had a political function, via its efforts to appease the concerns of European
countries about irregular migrants, as well as a support function for migrants. Currently, the state
tries to attract investment to Senegal through its investment agency (APIX). This office oversees
public investment in sectors such as agriculture, fishing, and healthcare (APIX 2016).

One of the functions of this office is to engage migrants as investors. Indeed, the state
views migrants as the perfect investor, tied by patriotic loyalty to Senegal and also able to build
confidence in Senegal as a site for investment. One such program is the Diaspora Investor
program (Melly 2008; Melly forthcoming). Although this program was not operational during
the period of Melly’s research, one of my participants informed me that this program, as well as
two other investment programs targeted at members of the diaspora, is now active16.

**Senegalese migrants’ development activities**

The development activities I will discuss below include a wide variety of undertakings.
While my interviews focused on activities as described in the literature (HTAs, remittances, real
estate, small enterprise), I also incorporated other activities in this analysis that my participants
discussed in our interviews, including working with community organizations, starting non-
profits, and less organized assistance to others in their community. I purposefully asked my
participants if they participated in any of these activities in the U.S., as well as Senegal, based
pre-dissertation fieldwork that indicated Senegalese migrants engaged in what they viewed as
development across their transnational social spheres.

For the purposes of this analysis, I define development activities as the following:
contributions in both the U.S. and Senegal to human development (i.e. quality of life and growth
of the individual) through activities that promote economic growth, build community resources,

16 Although I looked for information on these programs on the APIX website, I was not able to find
anything. That does not mean they are not operational though.
and provide assistance to those in need. When I discuss community resources, I include human, political, economic, and social resources. I have included economic growth as an element of this definition given that there is a focus on small enterprise within the Senegalese migrant community, although the reasons for this focus are due to larger cultural, political, and social issues, as I will discuss in more detail below.

The factors that strongly shape which activities migrants engage in include the local context in which they live (which I will explore in the next chapter) and their lived experiences. Although one might expect that migrants’ activities would vary according to their development definition, this was not the case. This is likely due, in part, to the complexity of migrants’ development definitions, in which multiple understandings of development were included within single definitions. Rather, as we saw with Aminata and Ndeye at the beginning of the chapter, the hardships which migrants themselves encountered or witnessed often determined the particular nature of their actual or desired development activity, such as Aminata’s desire to feed locally unemployed Senegalese or Ndeye’s desire to someday start an orphanage in Senegal. Their development activities were also somewhat determined by their reason for migration. For example, recent DV lottery recipients generally planned to obtain further education in the U.S. and then return to Senegal to use their human capital there. However, older migrants who came both for economic opportunities and educational opportunities often had similar development activities and desires. Overall, Senegalese migrants tended to engage in three main types of development activity: working with established community organizations, starting an organization, and starting a business.

**Working with established organizations**
Some individuals described working through organizations in both the United States and Senegal to support the communities with which they identify. The most prevalent type of organization that my participants volunteered or worked for is an immigrant assistance group based in the U.S., such as the Senegalese Association of America. These organizations are established by immigrants in their host communities and they help address the needs of their particular community. As Mohan (2002) relates, the work that individuals employed and volunteering in such organizations do for their communities helps maintain individuals and families, as well as the community, in host settings. These organizations allow migrants to be secure in host communities (and thus, also able to contribute to their families, at the least, back in Senegal). Roughly one-third of my participants work for these types of organizations. Other participants work with African and other immigrant groups, through local mosques, and with local city government.

The other development activities that my participants discussed engaging in through established organizations are more transnational in scope. There are two ways in which this type of activity takes place. The first type of transnational activity that my participants engage in is supporting school and youth associations in Senegal, often in their home communities. This type of activity is more typically tracked in the nexus literature. Three participants discussed these activities. A woman in New York, Khady, (who also gave money to a school in the U.S.) collaborates with former elementary school classmates in Senegal to send money to their former school. One woman in Denver, Awa, occasionally contributes to the youth organization in her home community (which she used to belong to). And finally, one man in Denver I call Lamine has a group of friends from his school in Senegal that all support each other as needed. For
example, one of their classmates passed away and they all put together money for his children’s
education.

The second type of transnational activity that my participants described engaging in
through established organizations is participation in HTAs. In contrast to the overwhelming
participation in HTAs referenced in the literature, such as that of Mexican migrants (Bakker
2007; Iskander 2010; Portes et al. 2007), only three of my participants belong to HTAs. Two of
these are men who live in New York and one is a woman in Denver. All three have been in the
US for at least 15 years. Binta, the woman in Denver is part of a group that collects remittances
to send to her home village. The two men in New York are part of associations that are involved
in more complex projects. Ali’s HTA (for an area from which a good number of my participants
come) organizes projects, such as a drive to purchase medical equipment for children. This HTA
receives government assistance with some of their projects, likely because it is large enough for
its activities to be visible and warrant support. Finally, the other man, Moussa, is involved in an
HTA whose goals are to show that the diaspora from this hometown is still part of the
community and also to help build institutions (like a hospital) that will provide jobs to locals in
the area. For all three of these individuals, though, their HTA work was only one part of their
volunteer activities. All three of them are actively engaged with Senegalese community
organizations in their respective cities in the U.S. as well. These three individuals work to serve
their communities, which are spread across both the U.S. and Senegal. I will come back to the
way in which most of my participants actively engage across transnational space at the end of
this section.

The migrants who engage in development through existing community organizations
facilitate human development primarily by building community resources and providing
assistance to others. Although these types of activities are generally in line with the broader definition of development explored in chapter 4, there is some alignment with what are assumed to be neoliberal practices through the work of the HTA that would like to build institutions to create jobs in the sending community. As we shall see shortly, however, this focus on creating jobs does not necessarily entail a belief in the state should be absent from these activities or that a liberalized economy of entrepreneurs is the means to successful development

Starting an organization

In addition to working with already-existing organizations, my study participants also explained how they started their own organizations to participate in development. In contrast to the HTA activities discussed in the literature, these organizations are individual initiatives, meaning that they are individually operated, and generally are not discussed in the literature. Four of the 37 people I spoke with have created non-profits to serve their communities. These organizations serve communities in New York, Denver, Senegal, and West Africa. The individuals who started these organizations did so because they saw a particular need to be addressed, although it was their personal circumstances and experiences that shaped their perceptions of what that need was.

Two of these individuals started organizations to serve their communities in the United States. One of them is a woman in Harlem I call Fatima. She is college educated and has worked in professional positions in the United States. When I spoke to her, she said had recently started an organization to serve women from her home region who are now living in the United States. She explained that women generally have a lower status in the community due to gender roles in Senegal and also in Islam (she identifies as Muslim). Her goal was both to help the women organize so that they could fit in better in the U.S. and also to empower the women and
counter their lower status compared to men. Fatima said that she learned her values about empowerment from several women’s organizations that she has belonged to in the United States, including through her work and school. She hopes to ultimately expand the work of her organization to serve those currently living in her home region.

In contrast to Fatima’s focus on women from her home region, a first generation male migrant in Denver helped start a networking group to serve the local African community and also help them integrate with the local host community. His goals in starting the group were to help people expand their social networks, work together as a community and foster leadership within the community. The organization now actively mentors youth leaders who are members of the group. The group’s membership is also open to local community members to help foster integration between the African immigrant diaspora and the local community, especially the local African-American community.

Two other individuals have started organizations whose work is based in Africa. One man in New York, Abdoulaye, who has an advanced degree and is a leader in the community, described starting a non-profit that facilitates school renovations in Africa. For now this non-profit works in Sierra Leone, helping local residents rebuild schools destroyed by the civil war, but he hopes to expand the work of the non-profit to other African countries as well. Originally Abdoulaye wanted to have members of the local Senegalese community assisting him with this work, but he said they are too busy. Mostly it is his American students (he teaches at a local college) who assist him with the non-profit at the moment. He did not say why he started this organization.

Marieme, on the other hand, described to me her non-profit that serves two areas in Senegal. She is a first generation female migrant who lives in Colorado. She has a young
family, but also works hard to operate this non-profit. She raises funds to provide both to her home region and also to a village in central Senegal that has personal meaning for her family. For both areas, she works with local communities to ascertain their needs (such help with pumping water or growing gardens) and then provides funds for projects there. She runs the organization because her life was difficult when she was young and she saw someone who had extra and didn’t share. She thought she would never want to be that person. Plus she knows how hard life can be in the villages there.

Like the individuals who engage with development through their work in already-existing community organizations, the individuals who started non-profits facilitate human development primarily by building community resources and providing assistance to others. There is a more explicit economic focus in these development activities through activities designed to facilitate local networking and raising funds for particular projects. However, the focus does not appear to be on facilitating neoliberal economic growth, in particular.

**Starting a business, including social enterprises**

As previously stated, the neoliberal slant of the migration-development nexus results in a focus on the growth of small enterprise, among other financial activities. My participants did describe engaging in this type of activity – and many more expressed a desire to do so, which I will come back to shortly. However, one notable way in which my participants engage in this type of activity is through the creation of social enterprises, which are not discussed in the literature on the nexus. Social enterprises are businesses designed to promote social change, with either a non-profit or for-profit business model (Minard 2009). Three of my participants described for-profit social enterprises they are either developing or have developed and which serve particular constituencies in Senegal. One man referenced a social enterprise that he is
currently starting with investors from across the United States. These investors have a number of public service projects they would like to implement in Senegal.

There are also two other men who said they had started social enterprise businesses designed to help people in Senegal learn skills and earn a living. One man, Aboudoulaye, operates a handicraft export business. He employs women in Senegal to make handicrafts and sells them in the U.S. He says he does this to help women earn money and also earn money himself. The other man is a first generation male migrant who works as a cab driver in New York. He has some college education and has lived in Europe in addition to the U.S. He started his organization to assist residents in his home village. He views the work of his organization as combatting the injustices of the neo-colonial system, preventing desperation migration, and restoring an area destroyed by colonialism. His organization is a farm business. He plans to employ women and children and help them learn agricultural skills as well as make a living from selling livestock to Dakar and produce to European countries. When he was a young man in the 1970s, many migrants were leaving the area, as the agricultural sector was no longer productive and young men were leaving for financial and educational opportunities elsewhere. He does not want young people there to have the same experience he’s had as an immigrant.

Several interviewees also participate in traditional small enterprises. Four of the individuals I spoke with (three men and one woman) own their own businesses in New York and make their living with those businesses. All of these migrants have been in the U.S. at least 15 years and at least two of them worked for established companies before starting their own businesses.

The migrants who engage in development by creating businesses facilitate human development through activities that promote economic growth, build community resources and
provide assistance to others. These development activities, of course, are much more aligned with what is viewed as neoliberal practice and subjectivity. However, I argue that these activities are due to cultural, political, and social issues that promote a focus on business and job creation. In this case, the men who started the social enterprises described here did so for a variety of reasons, including future political aspirations, economic self-interest, support of the community, and addressing current and historical social injustices. Once again, these practices and subjectivities are in service of other goals than what would be expected in according to commonly accepted understandings of neoliberalism.

Other activities

Finally, the Senegalese community members with whom I spoke contribute to the development of their communities through several other activities more typically discussed in the literature and through providing general assistance to their community at large outside of the activities I have already discussed. The activities interviewees described participating in that are more typically discussed in the literature include sending goods to Senegal, owning real estate, and promoting democratic political engagement. Most, but not all, of these activities are directed towards Senegal. There are two people in Harlem who send goods to Senegal. One man, Mansour, sends goods to his family to make sure they have what they need and because they mismanaged a business before. He knows they will be able to meet their financial needs through the goods he sends. One woman in Harlem sends goods to small villages in her home region of Senegal because she says knows how hard life is there and wants to help. Her dad worked for the Red Cross and she wants to help like he did. Additionally, about a third of the people with whom I spoke own real estate in Senegal. Six people in Harlem have a house, two are building a house, and one has a house and is building a second one. One person in Denver has a house in
Dakar and some land. Two other people living in Denver have land in Senegal as well. Those participants who own land but not houses have been in the U.S. for a shorter period of time. There are also a few people with political aspirations, either in Senegal or for their community in the US. It is only men who have political aspirations in Senegal. Currently, one man in particular is trying to develop the political clout and knowledge of the African community in Denver. There were also several participants who talked about helping people out in general as they saw the help was needed. We see in these activities, then, a focus on facilitating human development through building up community resources and providing assistance. The individuals who own real estate, however, facilitate human development more through promoting economic growth in the real estate market. As will be discussed below, this is one area where migrants’ actions are more line with the expectations of the nexus and less so with the broader understanding of development as human development.

Techniques through time – the future focus on business creation

Given that ideas of development, and its practices can change over time, it’s also instructive to look at how the individuals with whom I spoke discussed having participated in development activities in the past and anticipating doing so in the future. About a third of my respondents said they engaged in different development activities in the past than they currently do today. Of these, two men in Harlem described businesses that they previously started in Senegal while living in the U.S., but which failed. Neither of them currently has a business in Senegal, although both currently have a business in the United States. One of them had another business, before, in the U.S. but closed it and started another kind of business more in line with his professional skills. Other participants have ceased their former activities because they said they were no longer necessary or their life circumstances have changed. For example, one
woman in New York used to support her children as well as other family members with remittances. Her children are now grown and she lives in more precarious economic circumstances, primarily due to her health and inability to maintain a regular job. Finally, others described contributing to various activities that had a particular meaning at different periods of their lives. One example (in reference to the earlier mention of individuals supporting schools and youth groups in Senegal) comes from a woman in New York who worked as a teacher in the Western U.S. in the 1990s. Working for the particular school in which she was placed was a defining time in her life and she has made financial contributions to the school in the U.S. as a result.

In contrast to the varied activities of the past and present, the people with whom I spoke have a much more singular focus for their future endeavors, although there still remains some variation. There are a couple of people who talked about starting organizations or expanding the operations of their existing organizations. Several other participants discussed their desire to build or obtain a house, including in the US, and one woman discussed her desire to send medical goods back to her home community, but being unsure how to do so. Another man in New York discussed his desire to help reform politics in Senegal, explaining that he had learned a lot about the democratic process through the development of the Senegalese Association in Harlem and he thought he could provide useful input and leadership to the Senegalese political system as a result. Finally, another man in Denver expressed his desire to help people broadly through his future profession as a mental health professional.

Overwhelmingly, however, the individuals with whom I spoke discussed their desire to open a business. These desires are instructive because we can see through them the other ways that migrants envision putting the concept of human development into practice. A couple of
people talked about starting a business in the U.S. About half of the people with whom I spoke (14), however, said they would like to start some kind of business in Senegal, mostly import-export businesses to support themselves. Some of the people I interviewed were vague about their desires, simply saying they would like to start a business. One first generation woman in Harlem wants to start an import-export business and was planning to retire to Senegal in a couple of months. Her children live in the U.S. and she hopes to run the business as she moves back and forth across the countries. There is also a first generation woman in Denver, Astou, who would like to have a bus business or real estate business (to buy and rent houses) to help generate personal income.

Other participants expressed more eclectic interests in both the types of businesses they would like to open and their reasons for desiring that type of business. Aminda in Harlem wants to start a poultry business. Ahmed in Harlem (who wants to return to Senegal after he completes school in the U.S.) wants to start a for-profit social enterprise with his sisters to promote African culture and help those in need. Moussa is another first generation man in Harlem, in his 50s and who works in a white collar job, who would like to open a cyber café (internet café) in his hometown. He explained that he would like to use the cyber café to help people learn English and computer skills. Another example is of a first generation man in Denver who would like to create a solar energy company because he works for one in the U.S. and when he was young, his family was frequently without electricity. He says he wants to help people in a similar situation.

While there are some common interests within the group (such as the import/export business) and a general interest in generating personal incomes through small enterprise, there is also a focus on serving community through small enterprise and engaging in businesses which respond to a specific need individuals understand through their particular lived experiences. In
this way, we can see how migrants envision facilitating human development through neoliberal practices, and to some degree of neoliberal subjectivity as described in the nexus. And although some migrants are interested in development businesses for self-profit, others are interested in developing businesses to address social injustices or serve the needs of the community. Ahmed, for example, wants to promote African culture and help those in need. His reasoning is not that purely of a rational, risk-taking entrepreneur – rather it is more communally focused. The specific factors shaping this particular engagement with neoliberal development will be discussed shortly.

**Multiple activities across the U.S. and Senegal**

Now, having described the types of development activities that my participants engage in, or desire to engage in, across space, I would like to highlight that many of my participants described engaging in multiple development activities and that they do so in more than one location. An example of someone who said he engages in multiple activities is Mansour, a man in his 50s who lives in New York and has lived in the US for over 30 years. He originally came to the US for school and lived in several locations in the US for his education, completing a bachelor’s degree. He loves living in New York, loves the vibrancy of the city, and volunteers for a local community organization. He owns his own business and previously owned a business in the city. He sends goods, such as clothes, to his family in Senegal. In the past, he tried started two different businesses in Senegal to help support his family, but the businesses didn’t succeed. He sends his family members goods now so they can use or sell them as needed. His definition of development is to obtain real estate in the U.S., and he uses his volunteer work in New York to try to help his fellow community members understand how to buy real estate and be secure in the US.
Mansour is somewhat unique in the breadth of his development activities, but his focus across space (and time) is not unique. Roughly one-third of my participants described engaging in activities in both the U.S. and Senegal during their time in the U.S. These activities do not include the financial remittances that participants send to their families. The participants who are involved in the most activities overall generally have an M.A. This perhaps allows them more freedom in terms of time and finances since they tend to have higher incomes as well. 10 of these 13 participants currently live in New York. These migrants have been in the U.S. for at least 15 years, usually for 25-30 years. Their activities in Senegal tend to be through HTAs, sending goods, or owning real estate. In the U.S., their activities are either through organizations they have started or established organizations in their local area. In Denver, two of the participants (one man and one woman) who engage across national boundaries have both been in the U.S. for at least 15 years and both are engaged in community organizations in Denver. The woman contributes to an HTA in Senegal and the man has a social enterprise based in Senegal. The third participant in Denver in this category is a young man who has been in the U.S. less than five years. He owns land in Senegal and provides general assistance to his fellow Senegalese in Denver. Five participants in Denver, however, discussed a desire to engage in future development activities in both Denver and Senegal or the location in which they are currently not involved. I did not overtly ask about people’s plans for the future – many simply offered them during the course of the interview. I, therefore, can’t say definitively what people’s future focus is across the group I spoke with in Denver.

**Development in the US as community membership**

There are multiple reasons why the Senegalese migrants I spoke to said they participate in development activities in the United States. These reasons have to do with individual values
around helping others, leadership identities, and which communities individuals feel they belong to (their transnational orientations). While broader, non-economic definitions of development plus a transnational frame of reference allow migrants to conceive of development as something that can occur in the U.S. it is the intersection of their transnational orientation and individual values that shapes actions in the US.

There are two reasons that participants gave for working to support others in their community. The first was due to an individual desire to care for others or a value around caring for those in your community. Malick is a first generation male migrant in Harlem. He volunteers for two large organizations in Harlem, but outside of his volunteer work and professional work, he tends to spend time with his family. During one of our interviews, I asked if he was involved with any other groups besides the two large organizations he volunteers for, saying I imagined that it would be difficult to find the time to do so. He replied:

My work, my family, that’s it. My community……..I do it because I’ve always acted that way. I’ve always given. I’m not giving my money, I’m giving my heart. I’m giving a piece of my heart. Because, there’s nothing you can give from here [pointing to head], only giving from here [pointing to heart]. That’s how I’ve always acted. I don’t even remember not being helpful to someone that I can help, throughout my whole life. So wherever I be, I am, I always, you know, help those, however I can help, I help.

Another participant, a young woman in Denver, also described helping others as a personal value. A student, she offers help to fellow students in navigating the U.S. school system or finding work. She received help from others in the Senegalese and American communities when she arrived and she wants to give back to the community in return. She would like to volunteer, in fact, in Denver, but she doesn’t know how to go about doing so. Also, while briefly recounting her childhood to me, she explained that her parents inculcated how important it was to respect all people and care for others, especially the elderly, your family, and those who are without. Such values are reflective of the communal solidarity discussed in the last chapter.
Many of the participants who described personal values about helping others are Mouride, although not exclusively. For El Hadji, the devout Mouride in Harlem who explained that caring for the family, for one’s parents, is a moral obligation, went on to explain that in his mind, God calls us to care for all others. Towards the end of our interview, when I asked if he had anything he would like to add about the community supporting people in Harlem and Senegal, he replied:

God created the world for human beings— not for Black people or White people. And he created men and women to be in partnership. There can be no babies without both men and women. For all people, God is the one. He gives you life and the strength to help others. We are here to help each other. To my mind, all women are mothers and all men are fathers. In Africa, that is the mentality. We respect all women as mothers and men as fathers. We call all women mother. Here, women are called maam to show them respect. In Africa, they are called mother to show them respect. It is the same thing. And I call the older generation grandmère and grandpère to show respect as well. Do you understand what I mean? KW: Yes. You are saying that God has placed us all here to help each other. That in thinking about development, we need to understand that we are here for each other, as sent by God.

El Hadji indicates in this explanation that, since all people come from God, we need to care for each other. Like the young woman in Denver, he describes respect for all people. El Hadji said this care for other people, in his life, manifested in being an active member in MICA. Additionally, he explained how the communities which he was a part of, the Mouride community and a group of cab drivers, cared for others in their group, even if they weren’t Senegalese. He said that if one member of the group fell ill, the others would collect money to help care for that person’s family. However, not all Mouride helped others because they saw it as a call from God. One young man in Denver, a devout Mouride, when I asked if he assisted others in the community because his faith guided him and he felt God called him to do so, he wasn’t sure what God called him to do. He wished he did, so he could just do it and be content in knowing he was living as God intended, but he didn’t know.
The reason, in fact, that he gave for caring for others is one that multiple participants provided. Many of the participants I spoke with were leaders in some way in their communities and it was some people’s identity as a leader that encouraged them to help others in their community. The young man in Denver said he had always been a leader – from elementary school through college in Senegal. He has always stood up for others and helped provide a voice when they needed it. Another man, an academic in New York, said that as an educator, he had a responsibility to his community, to help them learn how to operate in the American system.

These inclinations towards community support were reflected in the way that some migrants described the Senegalese communities in Harlem and Denver. Roughly half the participants I spoke with emphasized how much members of the community supported each other, such as through helping fund body repatriation (like other African immigrant groups, Arthur 2000) or just generally helping each other in times of need. This sense of community care was a source of pride for multiple of my participants.

The reason that people said they undertook these actions in the US as well as in Senegal was due to the fact that some people viewed their communities as existing in the U.S. as well as in Senegal. It was people’s transnational orientation in conjunction with their values around helping others that shaped this outcome. As I previously discussed, many people, but not all, described themselves as Senegalese. However, being Senegalese doesn’t mean the same thing to all people (per Sinatti 2006). For some people, this means primarily interacting with the Senegalese community. Their actions were therefore centered on the Senegalese community with whom they lived in the U.S. Others strongly identified as Senegalese, but felt they belonged to wider communities, such as one man with an American wife. A very outgoing individual, Ousmane said he felt welcome in both communities and aided those in both. El Hadji’s
understanding of his community was the neighborhood – those with whom you live and interact. In his case, he included both Harlem and Touba (the capital city of the Mourides in Senegal) as part of his neighborhood. Others took pride in being both African and Senegalese, and directed their activities towards working with African immigrants as well as Senegalese immigrants.

To some degree, migrants’ ability and desire to engage with particular communities are molded by structural factors. Professionals have wider networks and can engage with more diverse populations in their professional lives and development activities. Undocumented migrants are restricted in their ability to physical engage in activities in Senegal. Finally, gender may shape these engagements as well. The two women who had active non-profits primarily served other women. Marieme served her home village (mainly women’s collectives there) and another village with whom her family was connected. Fatima had a non-profit to promote women’s’ empowerment among women in the U.S. who came from her home region in Senegal. This woman said she can fit in anywhere and said she learned organizing principles from various women’s’ associations she joined in the U.S. She says women are disadvantaged in Senegal due to gender roles, including in Islam. She wants to address those disadvantages.

While is it is migrants’ understanding of development as human development and their transnational frame of reference that allows them to envision engaging with development in the U.S.; it is their transnational orientation and values about assisting others in their community that shapes where they direct their development activities. They direct their activities towards the communities with which they feel membership and that membership is framed by their transnational orientation. In this way, we see how migrants’ transnational lives shape how their ideas of development are put into practice.
Neoliberal appearances can be deceiving

A culture of entrepreneurship

Senegalese migrants may have diverse development activities that align with their individual values and transnational orientation, but their strong desire to start a business in Senegal in the future appears at first glance completely in line with the neoliberalism described as the heart of migrant-led development policy and discourse. As explored in chapter 4, however, a desire to start a business does not necessarily signal an agreement with this discourse. In this case, I argue that the Senegalese transnational migrants, in general, are interested in starting small businesses in Senegal due to a homegrown culture of entrepreneurship that predates more recent neoliberal development agendas. There are several reasons for this culture of entrepreneurship, including the history of the Mouride brotherhood, the growth of the informal economy in Senegal, and a distrust of the government (although there is still desire for government involvement).

The Mouride brotherhood, as briefly related before, is a religious community with hard work as one of its principle virtues. When the brotherhood started in the late 1800s, its founder, Amadou Bamba, promoted hard work in the peanut sector as one method for dealing with the social and economic dislocations caused by colonialism. Although some Western scholars have seen this as a collusionary relationship with the French due to their reliance on peanuts as a major export crop (e.g., Cruise O’Brien 1971), Bamba was also seen a threat to French authority and twice exiled to other parts of West Africa. The consequence of this focus on hard work and on group solidarity was the growth of an identity as vendors as Mourides moved into Dakar in the 1950s and 1960s, along with many other rural residents. Without being able to use their traditional skills, Mourides became small vendors and dahiras (prayer groups) developed to
support these internal migrants in the city. Due to a strong organizational network (well studied by Western academics) and a culture of solidarity, Mouride vendors have established a network in many parts of the world, including Europe, South America, and Asia (Babou 2002; Diouf and Rendall 2000).

However, even as Mourides participate as small-scale entrepreneurs in markets across the world, they are not neoliberal adherents. Rather, as Diouf explicates in his article on the identity and activities of the Mouride community in New York City (Diouf and Rendall 2000), the Mourides have taken advantage of the existing capitalist system to continue their own way of life. Mouride entrepreneurs support each other through their dahiras and also contribute tithes to their local leaders, which are directed through the network back to Senegal for spiritual projects. Success for Mourides is measured through the solidarity and brotherhood achieved in the dahiras (Babou 2002). In contrast to Rudnyckyj’s (2010) work on how Malaysian businessmen have co-opted Islamic values in the name of neoliberal economic growth, Mourides have used a capitalist structure to support their religious activities and goals. They may act within a neoliberal system, but not with neoliberal goals in mind. Mouride vendors do not vend in the name of promoting economic growth but rather gaining the finances necessary to support themselves, their communities, and their faith (Babou 2002; Diouf and Rendall 2000).

In addition to the entrepreneurial focus of the Mourides, small enterprise is already widespread in Senegal. Given the dislocations caused by structural adjustment programs and the constantly shifting and tenuous economic environments of post-colonial, neoliberal governance in both Senegal (Simone 2004) and across the continent (Guyer et al. 2002), the informal economy is strong in Senegal. According to Fall et al. (2010), three-fourths of all workers in Senegal work in the informal sector. Due to the difficulty in working in the formal sector, such
as the red tape necessary that must be managed, many individuals also prefer to work in the informal sector (Basse 2015). Additionally, the Wolof ethnic group, the largest in Senegal (CIA 2016), has a history of activity as traders, although many vendors in large Dakar markets claim they learned about entrepreneurship from foreigners (Minard 2009).

Furthermore, many migrants distrust the government and view starting a business as a more feasible project than investing or engaging in a project with the government. One participant explained to me that many migrants forget about the system of patronage in Senegal and are frustrated by the red tape and palms to grease when they try to start a project through official channels, so they start a small business instead. In this way, they don’t have to rely on the state for elements of starting or maintaining their project.

The vast majority of my participants dismiss the government out of hand, saying those in the government only help themselves and that the state can not be relied upon to assist with development projects. As Ndeye in Denver explained when I asked her if she wanted to help with economic development in Senegal: “If it’s for the government, I’m going to help no one. For my family, yes. Not the government - I know the money is going to get eaten. The rich people will be rich for each other”. Ndeye’s comments were echoed by most of the migrants I spoke with.

However, as with Bakker’s participants in Mexico, some of the migrants I spoke with desire government intervention. For example, one man in Harlem, who scoffed at people for coming to hear the Minister of Senegalese Abroad speak at a town hall meeting in hopes of gaining assistance with their development activities also went up to her after the meeting to schedule a time to discuss his ideas for a project in Senegal. Others said they thought the government should support migrants and should be involved in development, but is too corrupt
to do so at the moment. Many people, even as they dismissed the government, said they thought the government, in theory, should actively take part in and take responsibility for development.

For many of the migrants I spoke to, small businesses would provide not only for themselves, but also provide jobs for others. This is the reason that many migrants consider small enterprise to be development. Again, migrants think the government should be creating conditions that promote job growth, but in the current absence of such measures, migrants feel they must take this on themselves. This acceptance of the responsibility is aligned with the communal focus I just discussed. People see starting small businesses as a way to help others in their communities in Senegal (as per Minard 2009). Providing others with jobs is a way to support human development, not necessarily just a way to promote the growth of capital. As Serigne, a middle-aged male migrant in Denver explained to me when I asked if he had any investments in Senegal:

No, it’s something I really wish I could do. With Senegal being a third world country, we have many people overseas – US, Canada, Europe. People say we just send money for our families, why don’t you open a business? I’m hoping I’ll have an opportunity to do that. Giving someone a job is more important than giving them money. If I can have a small business, give a few jobs, that would be better. I’m thinking about that, thinking about a way I can invest. Small businesses are great for the country.

Other migrants expressed sentiments similar to Serigne’s. Small enterprise is often viewed as a way of helping other people in Senegal meeting their needs.

However, such desires are not solely motivated by altruism and a care for others. To some degree, a desire to start a small business reflects personal ambition as well. As stated previously, some women may want to start a small business as a way to enhance their status and power vis-à-vis men in Senegal. Alternatively, they may view a business primarily as a way to care for themselves. Oumar, who lives in Harlem and has a business there, said he wants to start a business in Dakar to support himself in his retirement. He feels very estranged from the
community in Harlem and recounted a lifetime of estrangement, in fact, from his childhood through the time of our interview. In his view, people only looked out for themselves and, in fact, actively supported other groups besides their own. As a result, his desire to start a business in Senegal is solely about supporting himself in the future; he is not concerned about helping others in Senegal.

One of the reasons that migrants’ desire for starting a business is generally directed towards Senegal has to do with perceptions about the resources available in the U.S. Although certain types of development activities are viewed as applicable to the U.S., starting a small business to provide jobs to others is not one of them. People who want to start businesses in the US desire to do so to support themselves or to promote another goal, like promoting Senegalese or African culture in addition to supporting themselves. Indeed, several people said that people in the U.S. (both Senegalese and natives) do not need help – that it’s easy to get work if you want a job and that homeless people in the U.S. are lazy. For these individuals, the need for help in obtaining jobs is greatest in Senegal.

Finally, real estate activities in Senegal seem to be motivated primarily by self-interest. Housing is an investment and status symbol in Senegal. Due to the historical development of Dakar, owning a house is a sign of privilege. Furthermore, while home construction and ownership were traditionally considered a male domain (Babou 2008), more women, especially divorced and single women, are buying houses as a way of gaining status (Melly forthcoming). And while some migrants are building houses in hopes of their eventual return or for their families others plan to, or do, rent out their homes as a source of income. Housing is considered a “safe” investment within the larger economic context in Senegal (ibid).
These desired and actual economic engagements, then, reflect much more than a neoliberal subjectivity and adherence to neoliberal practices as described in the nexus. While there is an element of such a neoliberal subjectivity, through the desire to be entrepreneurs and creating economic growth through individual entrepreneurship, and a focus on neoliberal practices, the rationale for these practices does not generally align with the expectations of the nexus. There is some degree of self-interest motivating the behaviors, especially in relation to real estate ownership. However, there is also a desire for state intervention and a belief in economic actions in the name of community assistance that is not in line with neoliberal discourse of the nexus. In line with the works on affective economy and labor, and the older literature on moral economies, migrants’ reasons for engaging in these neoliberal economic activities are based upon non-economic values. These values guide neoliberal practices to facilitate migrants’ understanding of development as human development.

Distrust and the desire to work alone

Another element of migrants’ development activities that appears to align with neoliberal principles as described in the nexus, and in contradiction to the communal solidarity that many express, is the clear desire to work individually, especially in relation to small businesses. The primary reason for this desire is widespread distrust within the community. This distrust has several sources, stemming from the aforementioned distrust of the government, to distrust based on societal divisions in Senegal, fear of gossip and of others within the Senegalese community, and frustration for people in Senegal who are viewed as being ungrateful of migrants’ sacrifices or wasteful with the contributions migrants send to Senegal.

One of the reasons that people, in general, refuse to work together is a widespread distrust in leaders, a distrust that stems from how many Senegalese migrants view the
government. As one woman told me, people care about each other, but also distrust each other. They are afraid leaders will eat the money provided for projects. Therefore, although they want to help each other, they won’t work together to do so. During my fieldwork, I heard references to past problems in Senegalese associations where leaders were considered to be corrupt and the associations temporarily faded.

Furthermore, there is a rift between those who are traditionally educated in Koranic schools and those who are educated in Western schools. Diouf references this divide within the Mouride brotherhood, between Western educated intellectuals who work in professional occupations and who attempted to reform certain aspects of the brotherhood’s activities and members who educated in Koranic schools and then went to work as vendors. Western educated intellectuals have tried to modernize the message and beliefs of Mouridism and as part of this process have challenged the traditional successional hierarchy of Mouride leaders through the way they distribute their contributions within the brotherhood (Diouf 2000: 700-701).

Furthermore, as one participant explained to me, individuals in the government are Western educated and those who are traditionally educated feel excluded from government and ignored. There is, therefore, a general distrust between traditionally educated individuals and more Western oriented, highly educated individuals (Riccio 2001; Riccio 2008).

This divide is present among the communities in the U.S. as well. The participant in Harlem who explained the division to me said that people on either side of the divide are frustrated with each other. Traditionally educated people think Western educated people may not have their best interests at heart and will trick them. Those who are the intellectuals, the Western educated members of the community, can feel that traditionally educated people are difficult to work with.
Furthermore, there is distrust, in general, about the motives of others in the community. One woman I met in Denver shared with me a scam that she heard about. A friend had told her about a rotating savings and credit association (ROSCA) that a Senegalese woman in another part of the country was operating. ROSCAs are a common way of informally obtaining credit in some African and Caribbean countries and also among immigrant groups from those sending regions. In ROSCAs, members contribute a certain amount each month and then receive a distribution from what is collected on a rotating basis (Ardener 2014). Apparently, the friend contributed to the ROSCA and then the woman running it took the money and disappeared. I also heard from multiple participants that people disliked the gossip and politics in the community and therefore preferred to stay away from the community at large. Such people might attend large community events, but otherwise preferred to work and socialize away from the Senegalese community.

Additionally, several participants mentioned to me frustration with people in Senegal. They felt that people in Senegal did not understand the sacrifices that migrants made nor were they careful with the money that migrants sent back. Two men in Harlem who had started businesses in Senegal said they had not succeeded because family members back home improperly ran them. Others said people may waste money on ceremonies, meaning, for example, baptisms or other social functions.

Such complaints about family members back home are common among transnational migrants (e.g., Akesson 2010; Wong 2006). It is one of the frictions that can arise from transnational living, especially as individuals try to maneuver with respect to traditional social roles based upon the remittances they send back home. In this case, such frustrations and distrust
add to the other levels of distrust in facilitating a reason for people to work alone on their ideas of development and how to achieve it.

Finally, such actions may also be indicative of a growing shift towards individualism in Senegal. One second generation participant told me that returned migrants in Dakar, and other community members in the city, are becoming more individualized in their attitudes about banking and financial engagements. This focus on individualism, even within a more communal society, has been noted in other Senegalese immigrant communities as well (Riccio 2001). Overall, we see a constellation of factors within the U.S. community that result in this trend of individualization in development activities.

Still, this individualized focus does not mean there is no desire among individuals within the community to work together. As Alioune, a male migrant in Denver explained to me:

> It would be a big benefit. We need that, but we don’t have it. You can’t succeed on someone else’s soil if you are not one. In order to be strong, you need to have communication and relationships. People from everywhere in the US need to communicate and do things with one hand. You can be in the same state together and be weak. Communication is everything. Think about if people across the US communicated about what to do help each other and the government of Senegal. We are trying to do that. We do that for religion – but not everyone is Muslim or Mouride. We need to find another way to assemble everyone. We need to find a way to communicate as Senegalese.

Other migrants share Alioune’s views and there have been attempts at unifying organizations and development efforts across the United States, but all these attempts have failed so far. This is due to the distrust described above, but also, according to Alioune and another male migrant in Denver, to the fact that Senegalese migrants come to the U.S. for very different reasons and may not find a common goal around which they want to work.

There are, therefore, many reasons why many Senegalese migrants choose to work alone in their development activities. In contradiction to the communal focus that my participants spoke of, most migrants do not trust other Senegalese migrants enough to engage in development
activities with them. This inconsistency is an example of the sometimes contradictory nature of transnational life. Migrants in the U.S. are living and operating together in ways that they might not have in Senegal. This social mixing may exacerbate existing distrust and thus counter the communalism that migrants also espouse. The desire to work alone, therefore, is not necessarily due to alignment with neoliberalism as expressed in the discourse of the nexus.

**Conclusion**

Senegalese migrants’ conception of development as human development is reflected in their diverse range of development activities in both the U.S. and Senegal. Migrants engaged in activities that promote quality of life and the growth of the individual through undertakings that promoted economic growth, the creation of community resources, and that provided assistance to others. In line with migrants’ understanding of human development, the nature and outcomes of these activities were not necessarily economic. In some cases, migrants did participate in economic activities (i.e. small business creation) to facilitate human development. These practices, however, are generally still in line with migrants’ broader understanding of development. They are shaped by migrants’ own lived experiences, their transnational orientations, an existing culture of entrepreneurship, a value of helping others, and a distrust of working with others. Overall, we can see through migrants’ actual and desired development activities the ways that migrants have worked within the neoliberal structures of contemporary Senegal to achieve their general understanding of human development

It is by attending to the non-economic values that migrants attach to development activities, by drawing upon the concepts of moral economy and economies of affect, that we can understand how migrants are able to engage in a wide range of activities, including those which seem to align with the neoliberal discourse of the nexus. The findings of the last chapter
indicated that Senegalese migrants assign cultural, moral, and affective value to remittances, rather than solely economic value. Due to these diverse valuations, most migrants do not consider sending remittances a development activity. The findings of this chapter illustrate how migrants also draw upon moral, social, and cultural values and frameworks to inform which activities do constitute development activities. Migrants engage in the activities in which they do to meet multiple goals; goals shaped by cultural and moral values in addition to the desire for self-advancement. The way in which development is enacted must adhere to those frameworks. It must proceed in a manner that is communally focused, even if through what are mostly individual actions.

The overall findings of this chapter suggest that migrant-led development practices that appear to align with the neoliberal expectations of the nexus should not be automatically dismissed. Such practices may potentially be used in service of larger neoliberal agendas, such the case previously described in Italy (Dole 2012) – but they can also be used in the service of more communally-oriented goals as well (Ferguson 2009) due to the cultural, political, moral, and social reasons that may drive those practices. It is by exploring these practices that we can understand how migrants are shaping the enactment of neoliberalism across their transnational sphere and where the spaces may be for discursively expanding what neoliberalism is and what its implications are.

Lastly, the activities described in this chapter illustrate how involved Senegalese migrants are in both the U.S. and Senegal through their development activities. These activities in the United States provide an opening for exploring the relationship between migrant-led development and integration. We have seen in this chapter that my participants’ transnational orientations direct which communities they engage with across their transnational social fields.
The next chapter will explore how that transnational orientation interconnects with the places in which people live to shape migrants’ integration experiences in each location as well as their development activities.
Chapter 6 – Integration, migrant-led development, and place

People’s mindsets gotta change. You have to accept the fact that you live here, you belong here. People’s mindset is that they don’t live here, they live in Senegal. If you are here for 30 years, you gotta realize you live here. Start investing and stuff like that. But that’s not what people think, the mindset gotta be changed. – Mansour, first generation male migrant in Harlem

If we are educated, if we have knowledge of two cultures, we are powerful beyond measure. It’s an advantage. We can be a liaison between Senegal and the West. We most go down to the level of people in Senegal to get our point across, but we can help make Senegal more developed. We can use our degrees and our skills there. – Maimouna, second generation female Senegalese American in Harlem

Introduction

I argue in this chapter that, due to the way that Senegalese transnational migrants conceive of development, the types of development activities in which they engage, and their reasons for doing so, there is a relationship between migrant-led development and integration that is entirely unacknowledged in migration-development policy. Although the transnational migration literature does examine how transnational migrants are engaged in integration and development processes, it does not discuss development as occurring outside sending countries. In the previous chapters, I have established that migrant-led development, by definition, can encompass more than just sending countries. This is by virtue of migrants’ transnational frame of reference, their own understandings of development, and insights gained from critical development theory about the spatialization of development. Furthermore, Senegalese migrants engage in development activities in both the U.S. and Senegal. Lastly, some of the factors that shape migrants’ involvement in development activities include their transnational and communal orientations that incorporate communities in the U.S. as well as Senegal.
These findings about migrants’ ideas of development and development activities imply a reinforcing relationship with integration because they facilitate migrants’ economic, political, and social membership negotiation in the U.S. and vice versa. Migrants are engaging in development activities (or desire to) for the communities with which they identify, which include communities in Senegal, Senegalese communities in the U.S., and the wider immigrant and native community in the U.S. Not only are migrants maintaining and negotiating social identity through these activities, they are also engaging in political and economic activities as well.

Conversely, migrants’ successful integration indicated by income levels, U.S. educational attainment, legal status, and a transnational orientation that includes the host country can all facilitate the development activities discussed in the last chapter as well. Although it can be difficult to tease apart the directionality of the relationship, for ease of analysis, I will concentrate in this chapter on how migrants’ integration processes affected their development activities.

In order to fully understand migrants’ integration processes, however, we must also consider how place-based factors shape those processes. Transnational migration and integration research has shown that the political, legal, economic, and social contexts of the host community can have a strong impact on migrants’ integration (e.g. Morawska 2003; Smith 2006; Vickstrom 2015). As we shall see, both national and local level factors affect integration processes and outcomes (which is in line with the literature that shows the importance of local level factors in shaping transnational processes). This chapter will examine the unique combination of national and local level factors that shaped Senegalese migrants’ integration and development activities in Denver and Harlem. In particular, it will focus on how the national and local factors that have shaped the integration and thus, development, processes of the first generation of Senegalese
migrants. It concludes with a summary of 1.5 migrants’ and second generation Senegalese-Americans’ integration and how they think about development and engage with it as well. Although this chapter doesn’t discuss the way that place has impacted the experiences of the 1.5 generation migrants and second generation Senegalese-Americans, due to a very small sample size, it does contribute valuable insights for future research about the relationship between place, integration, and development.

**Senegalese integration in the U.S.**

In line with the general paucity of scholarly literature on Senegalese immigrants in the United States, there very little known about the integration of Senegalese immigrants in the U.S. The existing literature focuses primarily on the experiences of the Mouride community in New York City. Some of the information in this literature was already discussed in chapter 3, in relation to the settlement and history of the Senegalese community in Harlem. This literature suggests a relatively successful integration of the community in many ways, resulting from the community’s participation in the revitalization of Harlem, and evidenced by a relatively dramatic transformation in terms of the treatment received in the area. There are two other elements of the literature on Senegalese integration that are useful background for this chapter as well.

First, the majority of first generation Senegalese immigrants are oriented towards Senegal, meaning that their purported goal is to return to Senegal and there is little wider interaction with other communities in New York other than what is required for business and daily interactions (Kane 2011). This orientation towards Senegal is reflected by my participants’ common desire to start a business in Senegal and by the fact that very few expressed a desire to stay in the United States. This is similar to reports on Senegalese communities in Italy and Spain. Portions of these migrant communities tend to associate with other Senegalese migrants and
inhabit a zone where they can speak Wolof and remain culturally Senegalese unless required to do otherwise, such as speak the host language for business purposes (Kothari 2008; Riccio 2008; Sinatti 2006). In comparative studies of Senegalese immigrants and other national origin groups, there is a striking intent of Senegalese migrants, even those who are more Western oriented, to eventually return to Senegal compared to other immigrant groups (e.g., Kothari 2008; Riccio 2008).

Second, Senegalese migrants often raise their children in Senegal or regularly send them to spend time in Senegal. Senegalese immigrants are concerned about their children learning what they consider to be negative American values and therefore may leave their children in Senegal with relatives or send them back to Senegal over the summers (Kane 2015). This is part of a wider spread tendency for married male migrants to emigrate alone and maintain their family in Senegal (e.g. Mazzacato et al. 2013). Like other West African and African migrants, Senegalese parents engage in this practice to protect their kids from downward assimilation (Halter and Johnson 2014) or just to help them maintain African cultural values (Arthur 2000). Senegalese migrants in the U.S. then, may maintain a strong orientation towards Senegal, even if they are able to successfully integrate in other ways.

Integration, the context of reception, and local factors

The context of reception is the political, social, legal, and economic environment of destination communities (Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Portes and Fernandez-Kelly 2008). As discussed in Chapter 1, the legal, institutional, economic, and social contexts of host countries materially affect transnational migrants’ ability to integrate and to engage in transnational development activities. However, it is not just national level factors in the context of reception, such as legal status, that impact migrants’ integration and transnational experiences. The insights about the importance of locality in transnational migration studies, as well as the local-level
approaches to integration in the U.S., highlight that local contexts of reception also significantly shape these experiences as well.

Fitpatrick (2014) explores the intersection of local contexts of reception, integration, and transnational activity in her study of Gujarati immigrants in South Africa. Her work reveals that two transnational sub-groups originating from Gujarat state in India had their social status in relation to each other reversed within the context of Cape Town, South Africa. As a result, members of these groups had very different transnational engagements. Members of one group gained social status in South Africa due to occupational mobility that was not available to them in India. As a result, members of this group would return to India mainly for vacations and to show off their status through the money they spent. Meanwhile, the other group maintained close social and cultural contact with their sending community, even after more than one generation. Members of this group had similar occupations in South Africa as they did in India and therefore lost social status compared to the other group that fared economically better in South Africa. The members of the group that lost status maintained close connections with their sending community as a way of protecting their status that was threatened in South Africa. Therefore, as a result of the conditions in the local context of reception that socially elevated one group in relation to the other, these two groups had very different engagements with their sending communities across generations.

Additional research shows that the local context of reception particularly impacts migrants’ integration. Ellis and Almgren (2009), in their introduction to a special journal issue on what they term “local contexts of integration”, highlight that local contexts of reception are especially important in the U.S., where there is no national integration program and institutional arrangements related to integration vary at the sub-national level. Research has shown that the
history, geography, political economy, demography, and institutional structure of each locality impacts how different migrant groups are able to integrate within the U.S. context (Cadge et al. 2008). This includes residential settlement patterns, the history of immigration, labor market factors, racial and ethnic structures, the political system, and willingness of residents to embrace migrants (Brettel 1998; Foner 2005; Zuniga and Hernandez-Leon 2005). The impact of the local context of reception is relevant outside of the U.S. as well (e.g. Crul 2016). The local context of reception, then, affects both the ways in which migrants may choose to or be able to engage with their transnational communities as well as their ability and desire to become active economically, politically, and socially within their own and the larger host communities in which they settle.

In addition to the local context of reception, the particular characteristics of the local immigrant community are important as well, in shaping migrants’ experience with integration and transnationalism. While some definitions of the context of reception include the social connections available to migrants through their co-ethnics (e.g., Ellis and Almgren 2009; Portes and Fernandez-Kelly 2008), local demographic make-up and immigration history of each migrant community impact their integration as well. Foner (2005), in her study of West Indians in New York City and London, examines the differential experiences of the two communities, including those shaped by different durations and size of flow over time. Mazzucato (2008) also illustrated that migrants who are mid-way through their life course, those busy with raising families, generally have less time and resources for transnational activities. Additionally, they may be further integrated into the host society through the activities of their children. For both of these reasons, transnational migrants in this life stage may have different transnational orientations or engagements than younger or older migrants. To understand Senegalese migrants’ integration and development processes, then, we need to examine the national context of
reception, the local context of reception, and the characteristics of the local Senegalese community.

**The national context of reception and Senegalese migrants’ integration and development processes**

The national context of reception affects Senegalese migrants’ integration and development processes in several ways. These national factors have to do with U.S. immigration policy, the overall national climate with regard to Muslims after Sept. 11th, processes of racialization, and migrants’ economic position. These factors appear to simultaneously affect first generation migrants’ integration processes and development processes, although it is also possible to see how the impacts on integration processes will drive future development activities (or lack thereof) as well.

First of all, Senegalese migrants may feel vulnerable in the United States for multiple reasons. As discussed in chapter 3, some migrants related experiences of racial discrimination or discrimination based on their status as an immigrant. Other may feel vulnerable as Muslims, especially in Denver where the community is smaller. Additionally, those without legal status may feel also feel vulnerable, especially with the immigration raids and crackdowns that began in the mid-2000s. I was told multiple times during my fieldwork that people might be afraid to talk to me because they thought I worked for the government or were just afraid, in general, because of their status. To be sure, these feelings of vulnerability are shaped by the local context of reception as well. For example, no participants in Harlem described racial discrimination, and one participant told me Harlem gave people a place to blend in, racially, compared to other places in the U.S., which did create more of a feeling of safety in that regard. The international context can play a role as well, as some people compare their experience in the U.S. to that of
Europe. People tend to feel safer here than in Europe, where people feel harassed and extremely vulnerable if they don’t have papers.

The overall national U.S. context with regard to race, Muslim identity, and legal status that creates such feelings of vulnerability can also heighten distrust within a community. Research with Latin American immigrants in the U.S. and with Polish immigrants in the United Kingdom indicates that marginalized populations may not want to support each other or interact with other due to hostile social and economic conditions in the host context (Coutin 2007; McGhee et al. 2005; Mahler 1995). This is especially true if immigrants already have a strong sense of distrust within the community due to the conditions in the sending country (Menjivar 2000; Guarnizo et al. 1999). This vulnerability and distrust may heighten the multiple layers of distrust that already exist within the Senegalese communities in the U.S. and contribute to the individualized nature of development activities. They may also shape the communities that migrants identify with, meaning that migrants may distrust others in their community, but also not have a strong sense of connection or desire to interact with the larger American community either.

Second, given many migrants’ inability to capitalize on their human capital, they often have limits on their time and money. Even though most of my participants have at least some college education, many of them are still making below $30,000 year. Therefore, their economic membership in the U.S. is still not complete. Many work long hours, especially in Harlem, and their time to engage in other activities is limited. Those who pursue educations in the U.S. must pay tuition out of a pocket, which is a financial difficulty. Furthermore, several participants also related the difficulty of having to pay for so many bills in the United States, when such costs may be taken care of by others in a household in Senegal. The overall economic costs and
position, then, of Senegalese migrants can limit both their funds and time available for
development activities.

Third, and finally, U.S. immigration policy currently favors young and educated migrants
from Senegal. The DV lottery, through its requirement that applicants have completed high
school or have worked for five years in an industry requiring at least two years of training,
ensures that newer arrivals are likely to be young and educated. These migrants often must still
obtain a U.S. degree to have their schooling recognized and DV participants in my research have
all been able to pursue their studies, which may facilitate better social and economic integration.
Better integration may facilitate migrants’ ability to engage in development activities. Given the
division within the community, increasing numbers of young, educated migrants may also
branch away from the community in their integration and development efforts. It is also
important to note, with regard to U.S. immigration policy, that those without legal status are, of
course, prevented from full membership in the U.S. That lack of full integration impacts their
ability to engage in development activities as well due to their restricted mobility and economic
prospects.

The local factors shaping Senegalese migrants’ integration and development processes

The local scale of analysis provides the most insights about the relationship between
migrant-led development and integration. It is here especially that we can see how place,
conceived as a location shaped by an intersecting constellation of multi-scalar factors, shapes
migrant’s integration and development processes. By examining how the unique conditions of
each site shaped the outcomes for Senegalese communities in Denver and Harlem, it becomes
possible to see how their integration experiences have differentially affected their development
activities. I will start by quickly summarizing the different integration outcomes between the
Senegalese community in Harlem and the Senegalese community in Denver, then the
community-specific factors that helped shape these outcomes, and finally will concentrate on how local factors shaped migrants’ integration in ways that affected their development activities.

Harlem has active community organizations that do not exist in Denver. These organizations have been able to work with existing political support and resources (e.g., immigrant services, immigrant coalitions in New York) and government connections in New York to: serve the needs of local Senegalese community, provide a space for a sense of Senegalese community, and also facilitate connections back to Senegal. The functioning of the community is threatened by gentrification through economic and spatial displacement. The aging of the first generation and transition to the second generation are also factors affecting the cohesion and ability of the community to work together due to a strong homeward bound orientation of the first generation and a lack of incorporation of the second generation into the Senegalese Association of America. Individual integration varies – most of the people I spoke with can operate well in both communities, but many first generation migrants are much less socially and economically integrated.

In contrast, in Denver, community organizations do not exist to the same degree as in Harlem. They have limited engagement and activities. There is recent political support for African immigrant communities in Aurora, but not specifically for the Senegalese community. The spatial layout of the city, and the relatively dispersed pattern of Senegalese immigrant residence in the metro area, makes congregating difficult. Overall, the Senegalese in Denver are not integrated at a community level through associations. They are, however, more integrated at the individual level because they do not have a strong local national community and are required to do so by the local context to survive – at least in terms of language and profession.
The make-up of the community in each site plays a factor as well in these integration outcomes. Harlem’s community is majority middle-aged men who came to the U.S. for educational or professional opportunities. Denver’s community, on the other hand, is younger with a more even gender ratio and more people have come to join spouses or on a visa that allows permanent settlement if desired. Denver migrants’ integration, then, may also be facilitated by their ability to continuously engage in legal work, family re-unification which may promote less of a single-minded focus on Senegal, and the experiences of their children in the U.S. school system (per Mazzucato 2008).

These integration outcomes have several impacts on migrants’ development activities in both the U.S. and Senegal. Integration and development activities are, of course, iterative (Riccio 2001), as are other transnational activities and integration (Erdal and Oeppen 2013; Smith 2006). However, for ease of analysis, I will list out the differences in development activities across sites and then discuss the relevant local factors that shaped the different integration outcomes and thus development activities.

The first difference in development activities is that people in Harlem tend to engage more in the U.S. with established Senegalese community organizations. At first blush, this appears to be based on common sense. The Senegalese community is larger and has been longer established. There are more community organizations there. So, of course, people are more engaged with community organizations in Harlem. However, just because the community is larger and has been there longer does not mean community organizations would have certainly formed there.

The local context of reception and interests of the community helped forge those community organizations. As previously discussed, when the Senegalese community helped
with the revitalization of Harlem, their efforts were noted by local government officials and politicians. As a result, those organizations have received local institutional support and grown accordingly. Furthermore, when Senegalese migrants first moved into Harlem, it was dangerous and the associations provided much needed stability and support (Kane 2015). Lastly, multiple participants told me in interviews that they liked living in Harlem because it was like living in Senegal in some respects. They liked being close to the Senegalese and larger African community and appreciated the ability to speak Wolof and dress traditionally if they wished. As a result, even though there is distrust within the community, there is still a desire among those present to maintain a Senegalese community and a Senegalese way of life. This particular transnational orientation, I argue, has also contributed to the formation of these organizations that facilitate space to socialize as a community and to maintain connections back in Senegal.

In Denver, by contrast, although people identified strongly as Senegalese, most of them did not articulate a desire to be close to a Senegalese or African community. Several participants, in fact, said that they preferred not to live in Harlem because it was like being back in Senegal, that Harlem was “the village”. Others missed having more of a Senegalese community in Denver, but also explained that they liked living in Denver for various reasons, including being close to the mountains or being in an environment where the pace and style of life felt more suited to their desires. These findings echo the work of Lepree et al. (2012), who found that Mexican migrants in the U.S. settled in different locations due to their differential preferences about what kind of place they desired to live, including rural versus urban preferences. Therefore, there may not be as strong an impetus in Denver to form Senegalese associations to maintain that sense of Senegalese life – nor is there the need to band together in the same way that there was in Harlem.
The second difference in development activities is that a majority of my participants in Harlem contribute to development activities in both the U.S. and Senegal while the majority of participants in Denver only participate in development activities in one location. To some degree, this is due to the fact that some migrants in Harlem have been in the country for over 30 years. They, therefore, have had more time and experience to get established and build up the resources necessary to engage in both the US and Senegal (similar to the findings of Portes et al. 2007). Additionally, the people I spoke to in Harlem were generally in a different life stage than those in Denver. In Denver, the second generation is still in high school or younger. In Harlem, many of the people I spoke with had teenage or adult children. They no longer had the demands of a young family that required most of their time and resources outside of work. Similar to Mazzucato’s (2008) work on Ghanaian migrants in the Netherlands, migrants in Denver wanted to engage in both locations, but simply couldn’t due to the demands of family life.

Additionally, Denver doesn’t have the resources that Harlem does to support the same level of activity in the U.S. and Senegal. The fact that Denver has fewer strong Senegalese organizations with which to engage makes it harder for Senegalese migrants to engage in development activities in the U.S. Again, to some degree, that may be due to lack of desire to do so among the community in Denver. But it also takes time and effort to build up connections and social bridges, outside of immigrant groups, which migrants in Harlem have not been required to do to the same degree on an individual level. Additionally, in New York, by virtue of the fact that it’s a global city and closer to Senegal, it is easier to engage with the resources needed to be active in Senegal.

Lastly, there is a difference in how people approach development activities that take place in Harlem versus Denver. In Harlem, many of the leaders are concerned about
gentrification and the aging of the first generation. Therefore, they engage in activities aimed at addressing those issues. Multiple men discussed the issue of helping first generation migrants understand that they were going to end up staying in the U.S. and therefore must invest in their lives there. They were focusing their efforts on encouraging people to buy real estate (to avoid rent hikes) and also to help them gain access to capital to do so. One man is really focusing his efforts on the second generation. He says that the second generation doesn’t receive support from their parents because their parents don’t realize they need it. Furthermore, he claims that the community refuses to discuss the problems of the second generation, including those who are jailed or become Americanized, and that little effort has been made to develop the leadership abilities of the second generation.

In Denver, the efforts are less about the community overall. There have been some limited attempts to capitalize on the political interest in the African immigrant population. There is some effort put forth to just maintain the Senegalese association. Generally, however, efforts are more individual and sporadic, such as helping others in the community get to job interviews or helping fellow students navigate the U.S. school system. The needs and structure of the community are different in Denver and so, accordingly, are the development activities. Again, this makes intuitive sense by virtue of the fact that the community in Harlem is larger and has been in the U.S. longer than the community in Denver. But the particular needs of each community are strongly shaped by the factors and integration outcomes in each location, as discussed above.

The development activities in Senegal are similar across the two sites. There is limited involvement in HTAs, plus real estate ownership, support of school organizations, and businesses or non-profits in Senegal. The only difference is that two migrants in Harlem
discussed sending goods to their home communities whereas no one in Denver currently does (although one woman did so in the past). There do not appear to be any site-specific reasons for this minor difference in activity.

Overall, the local context of reception and make-up of the local community then, plays a significant role in migrants’ integration process and thus, development activities. Primarily the factors that shape the development of Senegalese organizations, or lack of them, have the largest impact in relation to development activities. The local political and social climate, as well as migrants’ age and transnational orientation, are the factors that most strongly shaped these outcomes. The role of place, then, in migrant-led development is a significant factor in shaping the outcomes of that process. The findings of this chapter indicate that the host country, and the particular locations in which migrants settle in the host country, have a strong impact on migrants’ development activities through their integration processes. Policy makers seeking to promote migrant-led development, then, need to work with host communities as well as migrants and sending communities to develop policies that facilitate migrants’ integration as well as their activities in sending countries. One of the big questions that remains about the relationship between integration and development processes, however, is the role of the children of Senegalese migrants in these processes.

The 1.5 and 2nd generations, integration, and development

The experiences of the 1.5 generation migrants and second generation Senegalese-Americans I spoke with were marked by differing transnational orientations and sociocultural integration, strong educational and language integration, and a strong desire to maintain active ties across the U.S. and Senegal. However, this sample was too small to be able to make any generalizations about the 1.5 and second generations of the Senegalese communities in Harlem.
and Denver. While I was not able to access many second generation Senegalese Americans, I was able to interview a total of six 1.5 and second generation individuals. I spoke with three 1.5 generation Senegalese migrants, two in Denver and one in Harlem. I also spoke with three second generation Senegalese-Americans, all of whom lived in Harlem. Again, the second generation is currently high school age or younger in Denver. The purpose of this section, since I cannot make any definitive claims about the experiences and desires of these generations, is simply to provide an overview of the experiences of the individuals with whom I spoke and highlight areas for future research. Since I only spoke to two individuals in Denver, whose experiences were very divergent, I will not be making site based comparisons in this section. I will instead give a brief overview of these participants’ experiences growing up, their integration outcomes, their development definitions, and their development activities and the factors that shaped them.

Of the 1.5 and second generation individuals with whom I worked, only one did not grow up moving between Senegal and the United States. Fatou explained that she came to the U.S. when she was a baby and was raised on the East Coast. She returned for visits to see her family in Senegal, but is very Americanized. In the context of this study, that means that although she is bi-cultural and bi-lingual, she feels more adept operating within American cultural mores than she does Senegalese ones. The other individuals I spoke with, by contrast, said they retained strong Senegalese identities and generally lived for extensive periods in both Dakar and the U.S. Another 1.5 generation individual, Idrissa, was brought to the Harlem as a teenager by his father, then returned to finish high school in Dakar and stayed there until he met and married his wife in Senegal. He moved to the U.S. with her several years ago. Those 1.5 and 2nd generation individuals currently living in Harlem frequently returned for summers in Senegal, although one
woman lived for multiple year periods in Senegal. The single 1.5 generation woman I spoke with in Harlem, Coumba, came to Harlem when she was 9 and returned to visit every two years.

The women I spoke with Harlem said they found the experience of growing up across both Harlem and Dakar (where everyone lived in Senegal) to be difficult in some ways. When they were children in the 1990s and 2000s, there was still tension between the local African-American and Senegalese communities. When in the U.S., these women were made fun for their cultural differences and their African identity was denigrated, illustrated by such taunts as being called an African booty-scratcher in Harlem. In some cases, these women also found it difficult to maintain fluency in both languages, especially if they lived long periods away from one of the two countries. Furthermore, the contrast between life in the U.S. and Senegal sometimes made the transition difficult, one participant recounting to me that she hated spending summers in Senegal when she was younger because life is more difficult there. In contrast to the experiences of these women, Idrissa, who lived in Harlem as a teenager, did not recount such experiences. He credits this relative ease of experience to this dad, who gave him the freedom to explore Harlem and decide upon his own identity. However, regardless of the difficulties encountered as children, as adults, all of the individuals I spoke with who lived across Dakar and Harlem were grateful to have been raised bi-culturally. They feel more at ease now moving between to the two communities, and all profess a desire to remain active across them for the remainder of their lives.

The six individuals I spoke with have differing levels of integration with their communities in Harlem and Denver. With regard to their identities and transnational orientation, this difference is especially pronounced. As I previously mentioned, Fatou, the 1.5 generation woman who was brought to the U.S. as a baby, is very Americanized. Her parents worked in
government circles on the East Coast and she was exposed to a wide variety of communities through her parents and her childhood education. In fact, even though she visited Senegal several times over the course of her childhood and speaks Wolof, she says she desires a strong sense of Senegalese culture and identity. Obtaining a strong Senegalese identity would mean that she felt like she understood thoroughly understood the lifestyle and experiences of people in Senegal. At the moment, she feels that she would primarily be an outsider if she went to live in Senegal.

Idrissa, who lived in Harlem during his childhood, described a strong Senegalese identity, but is comfortable moving in both communities and cultures. Three of the women I spoke with (two second generation individuals and one 1.5 migrant) are friends. Two of them maintain strong Senegalese identities, but are comfortable in both cultures. The third woman, a second generation Senegalese-American, identified as a free spirit. She says she is open to other cultures because of her experiences growing up across U.S. and Dakar (she lived for years at a time in both locations) and feels comfortable in most environments. The last second generation woman in Harlem, Aissatou, is strongly oriented towards Senegal. She shuns certain American cultural mores, such as co-habitation before marriage, and declares herself to be Senegalese. She is not close with the Senegalese community in Harlem and ultimately wants to retire to Senegal.

These different orientations are reflected in their perceptions of the host community. While the two women who identify as Senegalese, but feel comfortable in both cultures described their local area favorably due to its Senegalese population, the woman who identifies as a free spirit likes it because it has good restaurants. Idrissa said he likes living where he does because of the local physical environment.

Despite their different transnational orientations and identities, these participants generally had high levels of integration via education and language ability. Three of the
The participants I spoke to were completing their undergraduate education at the time of our interviews, two had M.A.s, and only Idrissa (who spent his early adulthood in Senegal) did not have a U.S. degree. Likewise, all these participants were fluent in English, although one of them did have more difficulty than others during our conversations.

Like the first generation population, these individuals’ lived experiences and orientations are reflected in their development definitions and activities. With regard to their development definitions, only two individuals shared their definitions with me. One of these individuals is Maimouna, a second generation woman. She currently works in a white-collar position and runs a non-profit on the side. This non-profit works with second generation children who live in Dakar and the U.S. She also volunteers for a local community organization in the U.S. and a relief organization Dakar. When I asked for her development definition, she explained:

It’s not just about sites, about creating new buildings and sites for tourists. It’s about our culture and nation. It’s about becoming more humble as a culture. We are in denial about some issues, like gay rights, we are too tight knit. Shelter for everyone and welfare – that’s increased development in Senegal.

Maimouna’s definition is clearly colored by both the recent focus on infrastructure development in Dakar as well as her bi-cultural upbringing. Both these factors lead to a critical conception of development that also incorporates a focus on quality of life in Senegal.

Like Maimouna, one of the 1.5 generation migrants has a definition of development shaped by his experiences living in both the U.S. and Dakar. However, his definition is more reflective of the quality of life definition of first generation Senegalese men. He said he owns a taxi business and land in Dakar and hopes to have an import-export business in Senegal and other parts of Africa as well as an African restaurant in the U.S. He explained:

For me, economic development in a country is when people are able to live a decent life. And it means, like, have the basics for everybody. I’m not saying like the communist style. No, not like the communist system. But more like people will be able to find a job and have
a decent salary. I’m not saying like a million dollars, or 10,000 dollars, but just like a normal life. A house, to be feed yourself and your family. And to be able to keep a little bit of money, for retirement. It’s like a country, 75% or 80% or 90% of country are able to do that. It’s development. So, like, struggling with like $1 dollar/day. It’s really like, third world. And still now, I’m still like, surprised, here in America. Because I see so many people struggling here……..Because America has enough resources to really support its education and make it. Of course, it’s not like Africa. You know, like, in Africa, they don’t even sell you food in school. They have a lot, but they can get better, that’s what I’m saying. I don’t think they use their whole resource to support the people. And the people make the money. Oh yeah, my concept of development, it’s a large thing.

In contrast to Maimouna, Idrissa explicitly discusses development in the U.S. as well as Senegal. Despite his childhood experiences in Harlem, he is still surprised by the fact that people in the U.S. struggle financially, including the financial support of local school systems, despite the overall wealth of the country. Given his definition of development as quality of life, he is able to include the U.S. as underdeveloped for this reason.

With regard to their development activities, the 1.5 migrants and second generation Senegalese Americans are diverse in their activities and desires, just like the first generation of Senegalese migrants. Maimouna has two friends who help support her non-profit, yet they are also engaged in other activities across Dakar and Senegal. Coumba volunteers with the same relief organization in Dakar as Maimouna and also volunteers in the same local community organization. However, in contrast to her two friends, she said she would like to contribute to development in Senegal by returning to start a business there and employ people. Mariame, the third friend in the group, in addition to volunteering with Maimouna’s non-profit, also works with a local African community service organization in the U.S.. Aissatou, the second generation woman in Harlem who has a strong Senegalese orientation explained she hopes to start a business in Senegal to employ people there. And finally, Fatou, the other 1.5 generation woman, is not involved in any development activities nor does she currently intend to, at least in Senegal.
The factors that shape these development activities and desires are similar to the factors that shape first generation migrants’ activities and desires. Their particular engagements are shaped by their life experiences, such as Maimouna’s creation of the non-profit to help transnational Senegalese-American kids avoid the difficulties she encountered in her own youth, or Idrissa’s business in Senegal and desire for future business ventures. He had a family member who ran a small business in Senegal and he gained an interest in entrepreneurship from that family member. Additionally, he would like to run the import-export business across Senegal and other parts of Africa because his wife is a member of an African (non-Senegalese) transnational community as well. Finally, he would like to start an African business in U.S. to help promote a sense of African culture, which he feels like lacking in his local area. Additionally, Fatou described a hesitancy to engage in development in Senegal because she felt she didn’t have a proper understanding of the needs there. She doesn’t want to impose ill-informed ideas or agendas on people in Senegal in the name of development.

There are other similarities between the factors shaping the first generation’s activities and the 1.5 and second generations’ activities as well. Although most of the 1.5 and second generation migrants did not discuss distrust with me, Aissatou did. She did not hang out with the local Senegalese community because she said people gossip too much. She also expressed a distrust of the Senegalese state to be able to support development due to its corruption. Aissatou, Coumba, and Idrissa, the individuals who want to start a business in Senegal, all have significant lived experiences in Senegal or a strong orientation towards Senegal. They may, then, have been shaped by the culture of entrepreneurship there. Those with close family members in Senegal currently send remittances or expected to do so in the near future. Although these participants did not explicitly call this activity out as a cultural or morally obligated activity, none of them
discussed it in relation to development in Senegal. Like the first generation respondents, remittances likely do not fall under the category of development because they are considered a social and moral obligation. Finally, in contrast to the first generation migrants I spoke with, it is unclear how much a communal orientation or individual values around helping people are shaping these activities. Both Mariama and Coumba explained that they had been raised with Senegalese values about caring for others in your community, but none of the other individuals discussed this orientation. Like first generation migrants, as well, we see some alignment with neoliberal practices, but again, not necessarily a full neoliberal subjectivity or ideology as discussed in the nexus.

With regard to integration, these individual’s sociocultural integration and transnational orientation and their language abilities and educational outcomes shape how they can and do engage in development activities, although it is hard to generalize across the group. Certainly, Maimouna’s advanced degree and her white-collar profession allow her the time and resources she needs to participate in the activities she does. Like Maimouna, her friends, Coumba and Mariama, are socioculturally integrated in Senegal and the U.S. and feel comfortable interacting with organizations in both locations. They are able to interact with the established Senegalese associations in Harlem as part of their development activities. Aissatou is less integrated, although she was in college at the time of our interview, and her future focus is solely in Senegal. Idrissa is well integrated, aside from a U.S. degree, and has plans across both the U.S. and Senegal as well.

It is likely that the experiences of the individuals with whom I spoke are reflective of only a portion of 1.5 migrants and second generation Senegalese-Americans. While I occasionally saw second generation Senegalese-Americans in Harlem at events, usually
distinctive from the larger Senegalese population by their Western clothing and age, I saw very few around the Senegalese associations with whom I worked, aside from children coming for classes. I had only one person recount to me the problems that second generation Senegalese-Americans face, including problems adjusting across cultures and segmented assimilation, but the second generation women that I spoke with also indicated that they did not have an opportunity to hang out with many other Senegalese-Americans. It does appear that second generation Senegalese-Americans do experience different integration trajectories, rather than there being a “standard” integration experience, similar to what is recounted by Smith (2006).

Overall, the experiences of the 1.5 and second generation migrants I spoke with provide a particular snapshot of intergenerational integration and development efforts within the Denver and Harlem Senegalese communities. The factors that shape their conceptualizations of development and actual and desired development activities are similar to those of the first generation. Also, like the first generation, they exhibit a range of experiences with regard to the transnational orientation. The alluring finding in this overview is that all the individuals I spoke with, regardless of their orientation, expressed a desire to remain active across the U.S. and Dakar throughout their lives, including with their desired development activities. It is unclear how common this desire is across the second generation, but that is certainly an area for future research, along with the influence of local factors on the second generation’s integration and development processes. Particular avenues of inquiry include how the development of Senegalese associations in localities may influence second generations’ involvement in development activities, how the social context of reception influences the second generation’s identity and transnational orientation, how their parents’ experiences with development activities may shape their own approaches to development over time, and how much their approaches
align and diverge with neoliberalism as expressed through the actions and desires of first generation migrants.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has shown that migrant-led development and integration are related and affected by local level factors in the host country. Although transnational life and integration are iterative processes, I have explored in this chapter the way that first generation migrants’ development activities have been shaped by different local integration experiences in the U.S. The local factors that shape these outcomes include elements of the local contexts of reception, including government and political interest and support, as well as the social reception of Senegalese migrants and spatial layout of each city. Local community factors that play a role include the socio-demographic make-up of each community, especially their age range and presence of families, and the overall transnational orientation of each community. It is the particular combination of these factors in each location that shape the integration processes and development activities of Senegalese migrants in Harlem and Denver. These findings show, then, that the host country is a key factor in shaping the outcomes and process of immigrant integration and migrant-led development. Any analysis of migrant-led development, therefore, must include an analysis of integration experiences and development activities in the host country. Policymakers who wish to promote migrant-led development must take integration factors into consideration when designing policies – and also work with stakeholders at a local level to ensure such policies are effectively aligned with local conditions.

With regard to 1.5 and second generation migrants, there is tantalizing evidence of continued transnational involvement within these communities. It is unclear, however, if other second generation Senegalese-Americans are following a segmented assimilation route or if
living across the U.S. and Senegal has the same impact on most second generation individuals. Given the overall diversity of experiences of first generation migrants, I suspect this is unlikely to be the case. However, the results of this chapter indicate there is a strong need for future research in this area – especially given that most Senegalese are now coming to the U.S. through family reunification or the DV lottery. Those coming through the DV lottery are young and if they stay in the U.S. will likely start families here as well. Another significant area for future research is the impact of place on the integration and development processes of second generation Senegalese-Americans. Maimouna, Coumba, and Marieme’s development activities were facilitated, to some degree, by the existence of different community organizations in their local area – it is unknown what other factors facilitate or limit the 1.5 and second generations’ common desire to remain involve across Senegal and the United States.
Conclusion

This study was designed to explore how Senegalese migrants in Harlem and Denver conceptualize and engage in development as well as the role of the host country in this process. The primary goal of the study was to view migrant-led development from migrants’ own perspectives and see what additional understandings of migrant-led development could be added to those already discussed in the academic literature. In particular, this study explored how development occurs across migrants’ transnational space and how the ways in which migrants understand and engage with development reframes our understanding of what neoliberalism in migrant-led development may entail. The results of this case study provide rich understandings of the diverse ways that Senegalese migrants understand and engage with development and the factors that influence those processes. There are five main findings from this study:

1) Exploring how migrants conceptualize development helps us understand what activities migrants will undertake in the name of development. Senegalese migrants have a broad conceptual understanding of development as human development – assisting others to achieve a certain quality of life and also the growth of the individual. While this understanding of development fits in some ways with the neoliberal expectations of the nexus, it also incorporates non-economic understandings of development as well. The concepts of moral economy and economies of affect can guide us here by providing a frame for exploring how non-economic aspects of economic behavior shape migrants’ development desires and activities. Migrants may assign social, cultural, moral, and affective significance to certain economic activities, such as remittances, that render them outside of the concept of development. As a result of these understandings of development and economic activities, we see that migrants consider development
activities to be activities that promote what they consider to be human development. Through working with existing community organizations, starting their own non-profits, starting their own businesses, and other activities, Senegalese migrants seek to elevate the quality of life of their families and communities as well as themselves. Furthermore, this study reveals that the reasons that migrants engage in the particular activities that they do reflect larger cultural and social values as well as political and economic contexts. Finally, the results of this project highlight that the way in which migrants conceptualize development also influences where they imagine development taking place. Therefore, the implication of these findings is that any study of migrant-led development must explore why migrants choose to engage in the particular activities that they do as well as how and where they aim to achieve development.

2) Relatedly, the findings of this study indicate that how migrants understand and engage in development shapes how neoliberalism is enacted in specific contexts. We have seen that a complex mix of individual and societal factors influence why and how migrants engage with neoliberal development. In the case of Senegalese migrants, an existing culture of entrepreneurship fostered by the growth of the Mouride brotherhood, the growth of the informal economy, and a distrust of (despite a desire for) the state combine to foster an aspiration for small business creation. And yet communal values around helping others, a desire to negotiate social identities and power, as well as individual self-interest motivate Senegalese migrants to engage in development in this manner. We see, therefore, that small business creation allows Senegalese migrants to address other goals than simply capital creation.
Neoliberal development, in this case, includes a desire to engage in small business creation to support individuals and stimulate the local economy. Yet it is also tightly interconnected with other conceptions of development that include a focus on the quality of life and non-economic growth of the individual. Practices and subjectivities that are predicated upon the individual actor engaging in market activities in a liberalized economic environment are part of a larger complex social, cultural, economic, and political framework that also emphasizes communal responsibility and the desire for state support. When migrants engage in such practices, they acting within neoliberal expectations of the nexus discourse – and yet, they are greatly expanding what that neoliberalism entails. Senegalese migrants are not just actors within “the market” - they are attempting to shape who the market serves and how it does so. The implications of this finding are that investigations of migrant-led development need to critically engage with understandings and approaches to neoliberal development. An outright dismissal of practices as neoliberal may overlook other processes that lie beneath the surface.

3) The host country is a significant actor in migrant-led development. In particular, the context of reception, at both the national and local levels, influences how migrants integrate into the United States and, relatedly, the outcomes of their development activities. Migrants’ legal status affects their ability to engage in development activities through potential restrictions on their mobility and economic activity. Additionally, the social climate can affect how vulnerable migrants feel and which communities they feel like that they can, or want to, relate to. Furthermore, local processes can materially affect the growth of community organizations, which can facilitate certain types of development, as well as the particular activities migrants see as necessary to promote
development. Furthermore, processes of urban growth and renewal can materially impact migrants’ development activities through the way it impacts their integration. Related to these findings, migrants do contribute to development in the United States as well as Senegal. Although many of their activities are still directed within the Senegalese communities in the United States, some migrants do actively work with larger immigrant and the native American community to build up community resources and promote economic growth as well. These results indicate that not only do policies and studies of migrant-led development need to examine the influence of the host country and impacts of migrant-led development within it; host communities also need to be aware of how their actions impact these processes.

4) The experience of transnational life itself influences these processes. Migrants’ transnational frame of reference and their transnational orientation directly influence where they can envision development efforts taking place as well as where they direct their particular development activities. Migrants’ orientations may mean they direct their activities solely to communities in Senegal, to Senegalese communities in the U.S., to the larger U.S. community – or a combination of those three. Furthermore, migrants may conceptualize development and engage with particular development practices based on their transnational experiences. Some Senegalese migrants conceptualize development in relation to corruption and education because of what they experienced in Senegal and the changes they hope to promote from the United States. Other may be trying to uphold or negotiate gendered expectations about economic activities across transnational space. Furthermore, the contradictions that can arise because transnational migrants inhabit shifting identities and multiple locations across transnational space are reflected in the
contradictory way in which Senegalese migrants want to assist others in their community, but often desire to do so as individuals. Therefore, exploring how transnational life itself impacts how migrants understand development and engage in development activities is a key element to understanding the process and outcomes of migrant-led development.

5) There is a desire, among at least some of the next generation of Senegalese Americans, to continue engaging in transnational development. One of the most interesting findings of this dissertation is that 1.5 migrants and second generation Senegalese Americans may have a strong orientation towards both the U.S. and Senegal due to childhood experiences in both countries. While this unlikely to be exclusively the case among that population as a whole, it does warrant future research to see what the wider sentiment is relation to transnational orientation and how it may be acted upon with regards to development. Furthermore, some of the same factors that shape the development engagements of the first generation shape the activities of other generations as well. Therefore, the cultural, political and economic context of the sending country, cultural values about assisting others, and integration processes may continue to shape the engagements of second generation migrants. Future research is certainly warranted to explore how these findings may play out across time and the wider second generation community.

**Policy Implications**

There are several main policy implications that arise out of the findings of this study. These policy implications center around the way that development is conceptualized within migrant-led development policies, the importance of understanding integration and the context of reception as factors in shaping development outcomes, and that development can occur in host and sending countries. Although this study does not expressly examine specific migrant-led
development policies, or integration policies (because there were none to evaluate in this particular case), it does have implications for such policies in general.

First, policymakers who wish to support migrants in their development efforts need to understand how migrants understand development in order to design effective policies around their actions. If migrants do not conceptualize remittances as a development activity, then trying to direct those remittances in specific ways may not be very effective. Rather, seeing that migrants desire to start small businesses, work with community organizations, and send goods, among other activities, might help policy makers support those particular activities instead. Furthermore, understanding migrants’ rational for engaging in particular activities, such as their desire to support a certain quality of life in their community, can help those policy makers concerned about neoliberal growth and development refine their policies in ways that enhance those other objectives. For example, the promotion of social enterprises, instead of just small business, may represent a blending of those approaches. There would certainly still be problems associated with such an approach, such as the owners’ power to decide which projects were worth advancing, but the main point is that there is room for negotiation and deeper discussion with regard to what migrant-led development might actually mean and entail.

Second, stakeholders in the host communities must be involved in any migrant-led development policies and programs. While host countries have used migrant-led development to manage migration, and have been criticized for doing so, policies truly designed to promote migrant-led development must work with national and local stakeholders across migrants’ transnational social sphere to develop policies that support their efforts. In the case of Senegalese migrants, for example, local politicians in Harlem or Denver, or local city governments, could be engaged to better understand the needs of the Senegalese community,
explore what assets Senegalese migrants offer local communities, and how the circumstances of living in each location impacts their ability to engage in development activities. While it is not feasible that such agreements and policies could be developed at a local level for all migrant communities, policy makers cannot simply ignore how the context of reception will impact migrants’ experiences and development activities. They will have to account for them in any well-designed policy.

Third, national immigration policies and the national context of reception have a direct impact on migrant-led development. National immigrant policies determine who is allowed to immigrate. Individual factors, such as educational attainment, can significantly shape migrants’ ability to engage in economic and development activities as well as their understandings of development. Immigration policies, like the diversity lottery visa program, which explicitly promote highly educated individuals over others thus can promote certain approaches to migrant-led development. However, if the national context of reception is hostile towards immigrants in general, or specific groups of immigrants, individuals from those groups may find it more difficult to engage in development activities. Therefore policy makers who seek to promote migrant-led development must understand the national immigration policies and context of reception in migrant hosting countries and in what circumstances migrants might need additional support in order to engage in development activities.

Fourth, policy evaluations must explore outcomes in both the host and sending communities. Evaluations that examine only the outcomes in the sending community not only misapprehend the full impacts of migrant-led development, but they also contribute to misunderstandings about migrants utilizing resources in host countries and not providing any benefits. Future studies and policy evaluations must expand their analysis across space.
Theoretical contributions of the study

This study, through its examination of the ways that Senegalese transnational migrants understand and enact development activities across transnational space, makes several theoretical contributions to development geography and population geography. These contributions center on the benefits of exploring migrants’ understandings of and reasons for development as well as their particular development activities, how the spatial re-framing of the nexus helps us explore the role of the host country and how transnational life shapes these processes, and the necessity of more deeply engaging with neoliberal development processes. The specific contributions are:

Exploring individuals’ understandings of development as well as non-economic motivations for development practices

In contrast to the primary focus in the literature on evaluating individuals’ development activities, this study has revealed the importance in exploring individuals’ understandings of development as well as their reasons for engaging in particular development activities. This type of study helps us see 1) that practices that appear to be in line with the discourse of neoliberalism are actually part of a broader, richer understanding of development and 2) that non-economic approaches to analyzing economic behavior help us understand why individuals may choose to engage in such practices. Senegalese migrants are in some ways ideal neoliberal subjects according to the discourse – individuals who embrace the idea of entrepreneurship and have little faith in the role of the government to assist them in their development efforts. Yet, by adapting the approaches of moral economy and economies of affect, we see that Senegalese migrants are really coopting resources and practices available to them to address their other desires, such as assisting others, promoting a certain quality of life, and providing for economic self-interest as well.
It is by using these frames – of moral value, of affective value – and in the case of Senegalese migrants also exploring the cultural and social value – that we gain a true understanding of what migrants hope to achieve through development and what development by Senegalese migrants fully entails. It is the growth of small business to address economic self-interest and assist others – but it is also volunteering for community organizations and sending goods back to one’s home community. It may entail starting a non-profit in the United States to promote women’s’ rights. And only by asking how migrants envision development, what it means, and why – and not just in the economic sense – can we understand how migrants are acting within the expectations of the nexus but also expanding the possibilities for what migrant-led development means and can produce.

Such an understanding of migrant-led development not only gives us intellectual purchase for the continuing utility of the nexus, but it also gives us room to expand upon Ferguson’s (2009) and Collier’s (2011) arguments that neoliberalism may not be an evil that should be dismissed out of hand. Rather, a thoughtful engagement with what shapes activities and subjectivities that may appear to align with the discourse on neoliberalism in the nexus may be a path forward to promoting other understandings of development and what neoliberal development, in particular, may entail. Elyachor’s (2002) work about how the cultural practices of the poor in Egypt were coopted by NGOs to promote market-based approaches to development that actually disenfranchised the poor provides a note of caution to this approach. Yet, there still may be value in exploring the nuances of neoliberal engagement and where there may be discursive openings for promoting broader, more complex understandings of development.
A spatial re-framing of the migrant-development nexus

This re-framing of the nexus illustrates a particular way that people across the "developed" and "developing" worlds are linked as well as the fact that development can be imagined and happen in the United States. This study provides a new way of framing these understandings, through the study of transnational migrant understandings of and engagements with development. In particular, this study extends the work of geographers who have argued that communities across space are linked through neoliberal development processes (Katz 2004; Jones 2000) as well as how host communities are intimately implicated in the processes of labor migration (Pratt 2012). This particular study highlights how transnational migrants engage in development across their transnational social spaces, in both their sending countries and their host countries, and how they interact with communities who inhabit different locations within those spaces. In contrast to the previous works that examine how communities in different places are connected across space, this work emphasizes more how a focus on transnational social space helps us see how a single population can enact development across space and different communities. There are two main implications of this approach.

First, this reframing allows us to clearly see and analyze the role of the host country in migrant-led development processes. Geographers, of course, have clearly indicated the importance of place in shaping development processes and outcomes. Yet, one of the places integral to migrant-led development, the host country, has largely been excluded from analyses until now. This work helps correct that oversight. It helps extend the arguments that development is a process that is not solely limited to and shaped by the Global South. In particular, it explores what forms development activities take in the United States, through the actions of migrants. Furthermore, this study indicates that the policies and environment of the
host country materially impact migrant-led development across migrants’ transnational social sphere.

Second, the experience of transnational life itself is an important component to analyze in studies of migrant-led development. Migrants’ spatial and conceptual understandings of development, as well as their development activities, are impacted by their transnational experiences, as described above. Studies of migrant-led development, therefore, need to address how migrants’ particular transnational experiences and transnational lives shape their engagements with development. The focus on the transnational nature of migrant-led development allows us this insight.

The explicit connection between integration and development processes

Population geography does not normally incorporate development into its analysis. Rather, in relation to migration, the focus is more on the demographic factors that shape migration processes and the demographic outcomes of migration, as well as the integration processes and outcomes of immigrants. This study, through its exploration of development that occurs across Senegalese migrants’ transnational social spaces, indicates the need for population geographers to incorporate development as an element of their analyses. This element can be integrated through analyzing development outcomes in the host country – but also through exploring the link, in more detail, that exists between integration and development across transnational space.

Areas for future research

The results of this study indicate several areas for future research. First, this study addressed the oversight in the literature on the nexus about the role of the host country. Yet, it did not fully explore migrants’ development activities across transnational space. While I did
ask about migrants’ activities in Senegal, I was not able to also conduct observations in Senegal and see how local factors in Senegal may shape these processes as well. A translocal analysis of migrant-led development across migrants’ entire transnational social fields, which may involve multiple localities, would provide further insight into the factors that shape migrant-led development processes and outcomes. Second, the results of this study indicate that there is a relationship between integration and migrants’ development activities. For ease of analysis, I explored how Senegalese migrants’ integration experiences influenced their development activities. Yet, the relationship is actually much more iterative. Research that explores the nature of this relationship across different migrant groups and contexts would greatly further our understanding of how these processes operate. Third, this study indicates that local stakeholders in host communities may play a significant role in migrant-led development processes. An exploration of how such actors, such as local American politicians, view and try to influence these processes would give us a deeper understanding of how the local contexts of reception can shape migrant-led development. Fourth, Senegalese migrants offered a diverse range of development understandings and activities and also described very diverse migration experiences. Additional studies with other migrant communities, with the same theoretical approach, could further our understandings of how the experiences of transnational life may shape these processes and their outcomes. Last, this study’s findings about second generation migrants’ engagements with development across transnational space suggest a number of avenues for future research, as discussed in chapter 6.

Final thoughts

As I pull together the final words for this dissertation, Donald Trump has recently been elected president of the United States. Given his strong anti-immigrant stance throughout the
campaign, I am greatly concerned for the refugees and immigrants in our country, the fear many are feeling now, and the uncertainty about the future. This study doesn’t directly address anti-immigrant fears or stances in the United States – but it is certainly relevant to the situation in which we now find ourselves. Migrants can make important and useful contributions to the communities in which they live. While I do not intend to sugarcoat some of the difficulties that can come with immigration, an exploration of how migrants conceptualize where they belong through their transnational orientations, and of the desire they have to assist others and their communities, is of value to the national conversation we should have about immigration. Often, when I mention that I am studying migrant-led development, people respond that migrants are taking “our” resources and sending them away. I hope that the results of this study show that migrant-led development is much, much more complex and that migrants do make valuable contributions to the communities in which they live. Finally, and significantly, that the ways in which we welcome (or don’t) immigrants materials impacts they ways that they can, and choose to, give back to the larger U.S. community.
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228


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Appendix A – Interview Protocol

Questions in bold were the ones designated to be of highest importance in case of limited time for an interview

Intro: Thank you for agreeing to speak with me today. [Obtain written or verbal consent here] During the interview, you can ask me questions any time you would like to.

Questions
Individual and household characteristics
  Gender
    What is your age?
    What is your occupation?
    What level of schooling have you completed? (primary, secondary, college)?
    What part of the city do you live in?
    What is your marital status?
    Do you have children? If so, how many?
    How many people are in your household in the US?
    Do you belong to any religious groups? If so, which one?
    What is your ethnic background?
    What is your household’s average monthly income? 0 – 30K? 31-60K? 60K and above?

Migration history for 1st generation migrants
  Where are you from in Senegal?
    Did you move to different places in Senegal before you first left the country? If so, what different places did you live in Senegal?
    How old were you when you first left Senegal?
  Where did you move to?
  Why did you leave Senegal?
  Why did you come to where you live now?
Did anyone help you make the decision to leave Senegal? If so, who?

[If the participant lived elsewhere besides the United States]: how long did you live there? Why did you decide to leave?

**How long have you lived in the United States?**

**Where have you lived in the United States?**

[If lived in different locations]: Why did you move from one location to another? How long did you live in each location?

**Have you returned to Senegal since you left? If so, for what reasons (to visit, to try to move back temporarily or permanently?)**

[If returned for a visit]: How often do you go to Senegal?

*Questions for 2nd generation individuals*

**Where were you born?**

**How long did you live in the U.S.? In Senegal?**

**Tell me about your experience living both places.**

*Context of reception*

**Do you like where you live in the United States? Why or why not?**

**Do you find this location welcoming to you as an immigrant? Why or why not?**

**Do you find this location welcoming to you as a Black African immigrant? Why or why not?**

What as your experience been with finding work here?

**What are your interactions like with the local population?**

Are you able to access services (i.e. legal services, language services) if you need them?

Are you involved in local politics in any way? If so, how?

**Please describe to me the Senegalese community here: (e.g Is it active? Do people hang out a lot?)**

What do you think of US immigration policies?

*Translocal connections and identities*
What places (cities; countries; parts of cities) do you go to a lot? Why? What types of activities do you engage in and with who?

What kinds of organizations are you involved in in the United States? (examples: religious, community, professional, educational)

What kinds of organizations are you involved in in Senegal? Are you still involved in them?

Are there any other places that you have connections?

What activities help you stay connected with the different locations that are important to you?

Does the Senegalese government influence the connections you have with Senegal in any way? If so, how?

In your interactions in the U.S. and in Senegal, how do you think other people see you?

What identity do most people see? Your race? Your religion? Your status as an immigrant?

Which identities do you find most useful (i.e. African, woman, Senegalese) in your daily interactions? Why?

Development practices

Do you try to assist people in Senegal? How? How do you define development?

Do you send money home to your family in Senegal? How often do you do so? And what family members do you support?

Do you send money to anyone else in Senegal? If so, who?

Do you have any investments in Senegal? If yes, what?

Have you ever tried to start a business in Senegal? If yes, please tell me about your experience.

Have you participated in any projects to help communities in Senegal, such as sending medical or school supplies, helping to build a road, or anything like that? If so, please tell me about your experience.

How long have you been involved in [list each practice above]?

To what locations in Senegal do you direct these efforts?

Do any of the organizations you belong to (in the US or Senegal) affect these
efforts? If so, how?

Is there anything else that impacts how you engage in these efforts? (ask about context of reception if it’s not brought it up)

Do you work with anyone in these efforts? If so, who and why?

Has the Senegalese government provided any support for these efforts? If so, how? Is there anything else you’d like to tell me about the Senegalese government and your development efforts?

In the U.S., do you engage in any of the activities we just discussed? If so, why and where?

Are there any other organizations you work with to promote development in Senegal? If so, what are they? How did you get involved with them? What do you do with them?

Is there anything else you’d like to share with me that I haven’t asked about?

Conclusion: Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me today. Would you like to receive a copy of the notes I took today? [If yes] Would you like to receive this information via e-mail or US mail? What [e-mail/mailing] address should I send the information to? If you have any questions in the meantime, you can reach me at XXX-XXX-XXXX