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## **“We Lost our Culture with Civilization” – A Critical Analysis of the Internalization of the Development Discourse Vis-à-Vis Systems of Knowledge in Senegal**

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***“We lost our culture with civilization” –***  
**A critical analysis of the internalization of the development discourse**  
**vis-à-vis systems of knowledge in Senegal**

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## **Introduction**

Critical analysis of the complex interplay between development ideals and local conceptualizations of knowledge forms and education methods are essential if we are to promote holistic, responsive, and culturally appropriate development efforts. Since the end of World War II, and the independence movements that greatly changed geopolitics in the 1960s and 1970s, development prevails as the dominant paradigm in current relations between countries of the North and South (Escobar, 1995; Rahnema & Bawtree, 1997). Development, intrinsically linked with neo-liberal policies and globalization (Peet, 1999), defines not only how Northerners perceive the South, but also, how Southerners perceive themselves, their ways of knowing, and their possibilities for the future. While development has undergone significant changes since 1945 to promote grassroots participation and encourage the insights and contributions of project beneficiaries, without a full understanding of the complexities of the intersection between indigenous and exogenous knowledge, and the impact of the development discourse on their worldview, we are doomed to reproduce a hegemonic Eurocentric model inappropriate to and irreverent of local realities, ways of knowing, and social arrangements. This paper presents an exploration of these complex realities as they exist in a rural area in southeastern Senegal.

In local communities, and indeed throughout the world, people simultaneously operate in multiple spheres of knowledge in both purposeful and unintentional ways. While the binary positioning of “traditional”/”indigenous”/”African” and “modern”/”exogenous”/”Western” help us to understand these concepts in a pure and intelligible form (Hall, 1997), these binaries are misleading in the concealment of the complex and ambivalent nature of people’s realities. Particularly in a developing context, the history of colonization and contemporary pressures of post-colonialism and globalization lead to interwoven realities and cultures. Cultural

hybridization accurately reflects how people combine elements of both traditional and modern realities in Bhabha's articulation of a "third space" (Kraidy, 2005; Garcia Canclini 1995; Rutherford, 1995). This notion of cultural hybridity functions as a key component of the theoretical framework for this study.

This small-scale research study in a rural zone in Senegal attempts to understand people's conceptions of knowledge within the larger system of existing realities that constitute lived experiences in a post-colonial environment. My findings demonstrate that while people continue to participate in traditional activities and espouse traditional values, they have internalized the development discourse and its Eurocentric ideals. This results in the articulation of a negative view of their own culture in preference for Western culture and values. I shall also attempt to demonstrate that people make choices in relation to the harsh economic and political realities that they confront on a daily basis. Accounts will show how the preference for formal schooling is a survival mechanism in a globalized world where neoliberal forces prevail.

This study takes place under the auspices of a small American NGO in cooperation with a larger international NGO (INGO). Its mission is to recognize and promote grandparents – grandmothers in particular – as a resource and partner in development efforts. The precise project, from which emerged the small-scale study presented here, involves the identification of alternative rites of passage through a gradual process of cultural revitalization that encourages positive practices and the simultaneous abandonment of harmful practices. The most obvious harmful practice that the project hopes to weaken is female genital cutting. The project works primarily through a series of community discussions on intergenerational learning and efforts in local school systems to create a space for discussion of cultural issues. A key component of the project is to integrate possessors of indigenous knowledge into the school curriculum.

The topic of this small-scale research study emerged out of my work to develop a game activity that teachers in village primary schools would implement to facilitate discussion of traditional culture into the classroom. During a period of two weeks, I performed a series of tests in four primary school classrooms, one middle school classroom, and with one group of community members, two groups of teachers, and one group of personnel and collaborators at the INGO. Many of the comments I heard indicated feelings of inferiority and dismissal about Senegalese culture as well as a sense of cultural loss. The work presented here is an analysis that arose from observations of game trials within the schools and community, as well as semi-structured interviews with educators involved in the project. The location of the work was three rural villages and one district school located in the regional town. The majority of communities in the villages were Halpulaar, while the population of the town also included Wolof, Sarakhole, Bambara, Mandingue, Sereer, and Diola students.

The presentation of this paper occurs in four parts. I begin with an overview of forms of education in Senegal. This includes the history of Western-based schooling initiatives during the period of French colonization as well as a discussion of indigenous modes of education. I conclude this section with a critique of current schooling practices and its effects on traditional forms of education. The second section of this paper introduces the post-colonial theory as the framework that will guide the analysis of findings. I invoke Escobar's notion of the development discourse and its internalization. The concept of cultural hybridity, deriving from the work of Bhabha, Kraidy and Garcia-Canclini, also contribute to this paper's analysis. The third section provides a description of the paper's methodology and a presentation of key ethical considerations to this study.

The findings follow in four sub-sections. I begin by providing an overview of how the Senegalese participants in this study conceive of indigenous education as well as a discussion of how schools function as facilitators and gatekeepers of Western knowledge and structures. I then present perceived friction between indigenous and exogenous forms of education. While friction is certainly present in participants' descriptions, it is also clear that people exist within a third space of cultural hybridity. Lastly, I present evidence of the internalization of the development discourse among participants in this study. A conclusion summarizes the key findings and presents questions for future research.

## **Overview of state-run schools and indigenous education**

This section provides an overview of education in Senegal, both the formal state-run system and indigenous forms of education as the backdrop for this small-scale research study. In order to understand the current Senegalese education system, it is important to review the history of colonial schooling under the French, that formally began in 1903. I will also present below general characteristics of indigenous education in Senegal and then a brief critique of colonial/current forms of schooling in Africa. It is also essential to note here that this paper focuses on largely on rural realities in Senegal, which are drastically different from urban ways of life, particularly in relation to educational practices and influences. To a great extent, many of the characteristics identified below may no longer apply even in semi-urban areas where the nuclear family prevails over the extended family influence in daily life and people live within multi-ethnic communities.

### *The development of Western-modeled schools in Senegal: 18<sup>th</sup> century to present*

The French presence began in Senegal as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, during which time the Dutch, British and Portuguese also demonstrated an interest in the region. The French Colonial period officially began in 1855 under the leadership of Governor Louis Faidherbe and continued until Independence in 1960. The French administration created an official educational system in 1903. This structure played an important role in Senegal as a tool for the indoctrination of youth into the language and culture of the French administration and in diminishing resistance to colonial rule (Robinson, 2000). Of all its colonies in French West Africa, the education system of Senegal was the most developed, partly due to the prolonged French presence there, and the

close attention the colony received as the seat of the French colonial government (Blakemore, 1970).

The French policy of assimilative colonization theoretically aimed to fully integrate African subjects into the life of the French republic. The ideological basis of this policy was the belief in the universality of man and paradoxically, the superiority of Europeans. In order for Africans to achieve this superior status, they required French education and in the same form as those in France (Blakemore, 1970; Crowder, 1967). Of the numerous colonies in the French federation, these policies were most remarkable in Senegal (Blakemore, 1970; Crowder, 1967), where people residing in four centers – the Four Communes of Dakar, Saint Louis, Gorée and Rufisque – acquired the status of French citizens, whereas the other Africans retained the status of colonial subject.

Various political developments in France and the acknowledgement that assimilation was impossible on so great a scale issued in a revised policy of association in 1910. This shifted the emphasis from assimilation to the cooperation of those living in French territories with the French government in order to achieve social and economic development (Blakemore, 1970). The educational model that followed from this change in policy was one that aimed to preserve aspects of African culture given that they did not conflict with French notions of morality (Blakemore, 1970). A movement to adapt the French system to a more African perspective followed, although as Blakemore (1970) argues, due to both inadequate expenditures and poor teacher training, the de facto model remained assimilation.

Schools for elite members of African society and European colonists developed several decades before the establishment of the formal school system for the federation in 1903. These included the Ecole mutuelle de Saint Louis (established in 1817), the School of Hostages

(established in 1847), which later became the School for the Sons of Chiefs and Interpreters, and a handful of schools in developing towns of strategic importance beginning mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (Moumouni, 1968; Robinson, 2000). Many of these schools were schools of Christian missionaries. Mission schools existed in a symbiotic relationship of collaboration and dependence with the French colonial administration and were an integral part of colonial rule (Ade Ajayi, 1985). Around 1900, there were approximately 70 schools in operation that catered to a total of 2,500 students (Moumouni, 1968). These schools, the School for the Sons of Chiefs and Interpreters, in particular, worked with the children of elites so as to groom them for their positions in administrative posts within the colonial regime. These children included the sons of influential members of new social classes that arose due to the implantation of colonial structures. Nonetheless, even at the elite level, schooling initiatives lacked resources and were of low quality (Moumouni, 1968; Devisse, 1985), particularly in comparison with French standards.

The formal school system established a tiered organization of village, regional and urban primary schools. Village schools intended to provide education for the population at large. While colonial officials recognized that the few years of schooling was insufficient for the development of even a basic understanding of the French language, the emphasis was on exposure to French values and the promotion of loyalty to the colonial administration (Blakemore, 1970). Regional schools welcomed the best students from the village schools, while urban schools were located in the Four Communes and provided the highest quality of education. These schools most closely followed the French schooling model. Over time, the system became more unified and followed the metropolitan model throughout the French Federation (Blakemore, 1970).

Post-independence schooling continued to closely mimic the French system yet with a greater emphasis on content appropriate to African culture. Senegal's first president, Leopold

Sedar Senghor, a Francophile, and a product of the European model, having completed studies in higher education in France, staunchly defended the European model of education in Senegal (Yoder, nd). French remains the language of instruction, with the exception of a few pilot schools. The Baccalaureate exam system is an important part of secondary schooling and this diploma is recognized by the French government. Senegalese students at the university level continue to receive scholarships to attend French universities today.

Currently, of the country's 12 million inhabitants nearly three-quarters of Senegalese children attend primary school (UNESCO, 2007). Schooling begins officially for children at age seven and entails the completion of six grades: Cours d'initiation, Cours préparatoire, Cours élémentaire 1 and 2, and Cours moyen 1 and 2. In order to accommodate the growing demand for education with limited resources, since 1982 (WDE, 2006), Senegalese schools in urban areas operate on a double flux system, while multigrade organization serves rural areas where there are not enough teachers and low population density. Between 1994-1998, the Senegalese government, with the assistance of the World Bank, the African Development Bank, France, Japan, and Germany, initiated a campaign to construct and outfit classrooms. Over 2000 were constructed during this period. They also aimed to increase teacher recruitment and the reinforcement of the volunteer teacher system, increase girls enrollment, and produce sufficient manuals for all of the schools (WDE, 2006). In addition to public schools, many students attend private schools, the majority of which are Catholic schools. In addition to children of the elite, middle class and even working class parents make great sacrifices so that their children attend these schools (Yoder, nd).

Lastly, while this paper will emphasize the role of French influence in the educational system, it is also important to recall the importance of Koranic schools both pre and post-

colonization (Robinson, 2000; Yoder, nd; Moumouni, 1968; Ross, 2008). Previous to colonization, young people attended Koranic schools in order to recite the Quoran and learn about the tenets and laws of Islam. Students learned to read and write in Arabic and even today some people use the Arabic script in the transcription of local languages. The Koranic school system remains a viable option for many students, particularly in rural areas, who do not attend the public school system. Whereas previously, only the elite had access to Koranic schools (Robinson, 2000), it is now a more popular educational option, particularly for students without means, including young talibé children. Even among children who attend Western-modeled schools, many Muslim students participate in Quoranic schooling on weekends and during school vacation.

#### *Traditional forms of education and indigenous knowledge*

The terms “tradition” and “traditional” continue to carry great meaning within academic study of the African continent and are terms that many communities adopt as a self-descriptors. In recognizing the problematic nature of dichotomies and binary oppositions, such as tradition/modern, the notion of a continuum of human cultural practice along a traditional/modern axis is a compelling alternative that allows for the malleable and adaptive nature of traditional practices (Kanu, 2006; see Piot, 1999 for a more extensive treatment of the interaction between modern and traditional). When referring to tradition, I employ the definition established by Kanu (2006): “an existing set of beliefs, practices, teachings, and modes of thinking that are inherited from the past and that may guide, organize, and regulate ways of living and making sense of the world” (p. 205). The definition of indigenous knowledge follows from this notion of tradition, as it is a system of awareness that is “based on understanding of the

physical, social and spiritual environments...grounded in norms, values, and traditions that were developed over several generations” (Kanu, 2006, p. 207-208). Indigenous knowledge, is thus, grounded and intricately linked to a particular place (Dei & Doyle-Wood, 2006). The following attempts to provide a general description of the transmission of indigenous knowledge within the African context. It is important to recognize that many of these systems currently exist in a diluted form and face challenges to their continuity due to globalization and other factors.

The importance of indigenous education and its key elements remains a common characteristic among many groups in Africa despite great cultural diversity and unique histories (Moumouni, 1968). Some of the tenets of African indigenous education practices include the collective approach, grounding of theory in practice in daily life, and a deep understanding of a group’s history and worldview as conveyed through polysemic media such as the oral traditions of tales, proverbs, and riddles (Kanu, 2006; Moumouni, 1968). Knowledge is practical rather than abstract and indigenous education prepares the young for their futures (Kanu, 2006; Moumouni, 2006), whether their role in the community, a trade (for those in the caste system), and adulthood, within which marriage and parenthood are prominent roles. Observation and imitation are principle strategies for learning (Moumouni, 1968). The daily routine of chores, both within the home, the field, and among herds, are additional fundamental components of indigenous education (Ross, 2008; Moumouni, 1968). Such activities also include the performance of errands for adults and in doing so, children gain greater understanding of social relationships (Moumouni, 1968).

The transmission of knowledge is a community affair and relies on social hierarchies and organization. Education often occurs within age groups (Ross, 2008; Moumouni, 1968), clusters of individuals of approximately the same age. Often elders assume a particularly important role

in the transmission of indigenous knowledge to younger generations. This may take the form of gatherings that not only impart knowledge but also instill the young with a sense of group identity (Kanu, 2006). In this sense, elders within the community compliment and enhance the education that mothers and fathers provide their children. In the early several years of life, both boys and girls spend much time with their mother. In many cultures, gender differentiation occurs between the ages of six and eight, when girls remain with the mothers, and boys spend more time with the fathers (Moumouni, 1968). Griots also play a large role in the transmission of cultural knowledge. They are the oral historians and praise musicians who inherit their trade along caste lines. As Robinson (2000) acknowledges, griots are “disseminators of knowledge par excellence” (p. 15).

Even in the presence of Western-focused schooling, and given the long histories of Islamic, Christian, and French secular systems, indigenous education remains a critical force among Africans. Ade Ajayi (1985) reminds us of the importance of early parenting, when children spend the majority of their time with their mother in particular. It is during this period that they learn the values and language of their communities. The close relationship between families and extended families plays a large role in early-age indoctrination. As my research demonstrates below, traditional notions continue to be important concepts among the Senegalese with whom I performed this current study.

### *Critique of colonial education and current schooling systems*

Colonial forms of education privileged Western concepts over indigenous formulations. Within the classroom, colonial pedagogical techniques and approaches emphasized individual work and success in direct opposition to African indigenous approaches that stress collective

problem solving and solidarity (Kanu, 2006), largely ignoring patterns of indigenous education (Altbach, 1971). Devisse (1985) argues that the positioning of French educational content as “modern,” “new,” and “innovative” greatly discredited African forms (Devisse, 1985). Kanu (2006) provides the provocative metaphor of teachers as postal carriers delivering foreign curriculum. While this metaphor is illustrative, it does not address the teachers’ internalization and identification with Western values of progress and capitalism, essentially, development.

Since independence, educational systems reflect the current state of geo-political relations. Within these systems that espouse a “modernist, economic imperative” (Tikly, 2004, p. 189), Eurocentric knowledge remains dominant and it defines the process of critique as well as who is correctly situated to perform a critique (Dei & Doyle-Wood, 2006). Current academic systems in many developing countries continue to lack relevance to local realities and remain elitist, often in conflict with indigenous knowledge and practices (Crossley & Tikly, 2004; Dei & Doyle-Wood, 2006; Kanu, 2006). While certainly the direct influence of the French and the French school system on Senegalese education is crucial, it is also important to recognize the continued influence that other advanced countries (namely, the United States) can have on school systems through less direct means such as the advice of education advisors, aid projects, sale of publications, and the influence of Western researchers whose work is then read and internalized by local scholars and administrators (Altbach, 1971). The pervasive nature of consumer culture (Crossly & Tikly, 2004) and the influx of Western media even in the most remote of locations further contribute to the exogenous factors that influence educational practices and ways of knowing.

The internalization of Western views of African realities are particularly harmful and find their roots in the educational system. The impact of schooling has widespread effects, even for

those who do not participate in schooling (Moumouni, 1968). Those who succeeded in the French system later became the leaders of an independent Senegal, the first President Leopold Sedar Senghor, being the most notable example. As leaders, these individuals had great influence on those who had not been to school. As Moumouni asserts, their internalization of Western views and African inferiority have had serious repercussions. He also contends that this complex might be even more aggravated for individuals who did not attain high levels of schooling, as they did not fully acquire the tools to analyze the various forces and influences that affect their reality. Moumouni refers to these individuals as “tranquilized” (p. 55). Similarly, referring to colonial influences, Altbach (1971) identifies the existence of the belief in the continued “mystique” of the foreign expert. Today, this complex for the preferred expertise of the white man – *toubab* in many local languages in Senegal – continues to influence the actions of many Senegalese and manifests itself in many realms of society, including educational and professional circles.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### *Post-colonial theory and notions central to development*

The theoretical positioning of this paper lies within the field of post-colonial theory, while recognizing its intersection with the similarly critical bodies of scholarship that comprise post-development, neo-colonial, and new imperialism studies. Post-colonial theory recognizes the “considerable shadow” (Said, 1993, p. 5) that the policies and experiences of 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century imperialism continues to cast on current realities. As such, this body of knowledge places emphasis on colonial influences, its legacy, and contemporary exertions of powerful countries on those that are in lesser positions of influence. In placing this renewed interest on the colonial and post-independence experiences of developing countries, post-colonial theory underlines the significance of European colonization and imperialism as “a defining moment in European history and modernity itself” (Crossley & Tikly, 2004, p. 148).

While post-colonial theory addresses relationships between former colonizers and colonized, it also addresses contemporary imperialism, which Said (1993) argues take the form of political, economic, social and cultural pressures. Shifts in market flows and the rise of transnational corporations also characterize the newer reality of external pressures in contrast to earlier forms of state-driven imperialism (Tikly, 2004). These shifting influences greatly affect the lives of those in developing countries. Cognizant of criticism to post-colonial analysis as an attempt to homogenize diverse and loosely connected realities (Ahmad, 1995), this paper follows the suggestions of Crossley and Tikly (2004) and pays close attention to the economic, political and contextual realities within a particular location, in this case, southeastern Senegal.

A crucial component of post-colonial realities is the prevailing development paradigm that frames not only North-South relations but how people both see each other and see themselves. The concept of development is a vast umbrella under which a number of other theories and concepts have found a supportive base from which to thrive. Inherent to development theory are the symbiotic notions of modernity and neo-liberalism (Peet, 1999). Modernity is the embrace of Enlightenment ideas, and the establishment of “master narratives of the state, the citizen, cultural value, art, science, the novel...” (Homi Bhabha in Rutherford, 1990, p. 219). Modernity emphasizes continual evolution and progress. People espouse a preference for modernity, for example, when they venerate science as truth and turn from ethnic organizations of social dynamics to the conceptualization of national state governments.

Tenets of neo-liberalism include the opening of borders, Post-Fordist economies, multinational corporations, fees for social service, and a desire for advanced technologies and export-oriented economies (Peet, 1999; Tikly, 2004). Development incorporates these neoliberal principles and holds as its key objectives the reduction of poverty and a movement towards material wealth (Escobar, 1995), gender equity (Tikly, 2004), and basic social services, such as education and health care, ie., advancement. A new focus on social and human capital accumulation illustrate a more recent shifts in development’s embrace of neo-liberalism from stringent social adjustment policies that emphasize the decreasing role of the state in social service provision (Tikly, 2004). Social capital theory is a rearticulation of Bourdieu’s theory on the species of capital, and is based on Robert Putnam’s analysis of social capital as imperative to participation in market economies (Jeffrey, 2007; Tikly, 2004). Accordingly, the World Bank, along with other lending institutions and development agencies, has shifted its focus towards the

acquisition of social capital, which is now measurable through a technical appropriation of social dynamics (Tikly, 2004).

The development community's support of education as a key component of development initiatives is evident from international commitments such as Education for All and Millennium Development Goals. The espousal of education in the development discourse portrays it both as a human right and as a way to increase human capital (Tikly, 2004). Through the latter, education promises to increase GNP and in promoting technical expertise, it will render countries more economically competitive (Tikly, 2004). This logic is very enticing and has been adapted by many local communities. Popular support exists in many rural communities for formalized schooling, often among the most poor and marginalized, as the most tangible way out of poverty (Tikly, 2004).

Many post-independence iterations of schooling not only carry forward the deficiencies of colonial forms of education from which they draw their inspiration, but also proscribe to neo-liberal tenets. Rather than an education that strengthens African traits and uniqueness, this current vision of education is limited by economic principles that promote "competitiveness, performance, output and profitability" (Ndoye, 1997, p. 80). Ndoye (1997) warns of the dangers of an educational approach so focused on privatization. He assesses that education of this sort is vulnerable to a cultural hegemony that is the product of a foreign model. Due to structural adjustment policies that limit the resources available for education, Ndoye further argues that education as such will only further entrench African countries, like his own of Senegal, into a deeper mire of underdevelopment. Ndoye's criticisms echo those of many critics of development in general, who see development as the imposition of a Eurocentric model, rather than of local customs and traditions, many of which are more collective in nature and suitable to the historical

context and socio-economic realities (Rahnema, 1997; Tikly, 2004; Escobar, 1995; Illich, 1997; Nandy, 1997).

*Development as a discourse and internalization of said discourse*

The underlying concepts of development, its application, and surrounding documentation comprise the development discourse. As the predominant paradigm in contemporary geopolitical relations between North and South, the development discourse distinguishes the powerful from the powerless, the modern from the traditional, and the achieving from the failing. Below, I will provide a detailed treatment of the Foucauldian notion of discourse as well as its application to the field of development. This concept is central to my argument below about the internalization of the development discourse vis-à-vis conceptions of knowledge in a semi-rural community in Senegal.

Foucault applied discourse analysis, previously a tool for literary criticism, to the study of power and the creation of knowledge (Hall, 1997). He paid particular attention to how discourses determine the rules of what can be said and practiced within a given historical context (Foucault, 1991; Hall, 1997). Foucault (1991) asserted that discourses are “limited practical domains which have their boundaries, their rules of formation, [and] their conditions of existence...” (Foucault, 1991, p. 61). As such, discourse determines what one says, in what way, how to judge other people’s conduct in relation to that discourse, and who can be the judge. Discourse, then, is essential to the consolidation and implementation of power (Foucault, 1980; Surber, 1998).

Discourse also contributes to the development of hierarchies of knowledge and regimes of truth, wherein certain conceptualizations gain credence while others become disqualified and considered inadequate. People who ascribe to so-designated inadequate forms of knowledge are

thus assumed to be themselves inadequate. The embrace of certain ideas by communities establishes “regimes of truth” (Foucault, 1980; Hall, 1997). Foucault (1980) insists on the importance of context of particular societies within temporal space, and describes a “regime of truth” as:

types of discourse which it [society] accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (p. 131).

Hall (1997) provides an example of the inadequacy of single parents as a regime of truth within contemporary society. Even though this may not be true in all cases, because certain single parents have had negative effects on their children and received harsh criticism as substandard parents, the sub-standard ability of single parents becomes a collective belief for all of society.

Development is itself a discourse. Escobar employs a Foucauldian analysis (Rahnama, 1997) to argue in his seminal work, *Encountering Development* (1995), that the discourse of development and its accompanying practices produced within a historically situated context what we know today as the Third World, or the developing world. In a rephrasing of Foucault’s notion of discourse, Escobar defines discourse as a “process through which social reality comes into being...the articulation of knowledge and power, of the visible and expressible...” (Escobar, 1997, p. 85). The development discourse identifies factors and systems of relationships that contribute to development, as well as the experts that establish the rules of play (Escobar, 1997). The United Nations and Bretton Woods mechanisms, for example, are thus institutions of authority, alongside Southern governments, both under the leadership of the North (Escobar, 1997). To illustrate, Tikly (2004) examines how World Bank policies have had an impact on the nature of knowledge, and issues of authority, exclusion, technologies of power and governmentality. What one identifies as reality, has “been colonized by the development

discourse, and those who were dissatisfied with this state of affairs had to struggle for bits and pieces of freedom within it, in the hope that in the process a different reality could be constructed.” (Escobar, 1995, p. 5). Development’s tight control over reality leaves little room for alternative conceptualizations (Escobar, 1995; Rahnema, 1997; Nandy, 1997). It defines reigning hegemony, in which even forms of resistance takes the forms that the development discourse allows (Nandy, 1997).

The power and predominance of the development discourse has led to the unconscious internalization of this discourse by people in both developed and developing countries, as well as their governments (Escobar, 1995). As a discourse, development promotes a new arrangement of knowledge and power in which its constantly adjusting theories, strategies and approaches constitute a “regime of government” (Escobar, 1995), the identification of normal and abnormal, right and wrong. Escobar (1995) writes that the development discourse establishes forms of knowledge, systems of power, and forms of subjectivity. Within this last factor, individuals internalize and appropriate the discourse as they see themselves as underdeveloped, as incomplete.

The development discourse identifies problems and creates solutions. It creates pathologies of abnormalities: the “illiterate,” “underdeveloped,” “malnourished,” “small farmers,” “landless peasants,” to which it offers solutions (Escobar, 1997, p. 88). Like other systems of oppression, development justifies the privileged position of those who are modernized while extending a charitable hand out to those who are underdeveloped. The most damaging effect of the development discourse is what Nandy (1997) refers to as the “colonization of the mind,” and the reconceptualization of indigenous culture and practices as inferior, underdeveloped, to which the response is to alter cultural priorities (Escobar, 1997; Dei

& Doyle-Wood, 2006; Rahnema and Brawtree, 1997). In this system, forms of resistance and counter-hegemonic actions are thus bound by the liminal allowances of dominant society (Nandy, 1997), in this case, Western notions of modernity and development.

Turning to education's role in development in particular, Ivan Illich (1997) provides a scathing essay on development as a promoter of consumption and Western capitalism. He criticizes development (and with it, modernity) for its conflation of schooling with education. He describes schooling as an "opium of the masses" where young people learn that their failure within an inappropriate school system is their personal failure. He writes that what schooling accomplishes is to "teach the schooled the superiority of the better schooled" (p. 96). Illich boldly describes the desire for schooling (as well as highly skilled surgeons, private cars and expensive kitchen equipment) as the reification of a real need into a packaged product. Illich urges that "underdevelopment is also a state of mind, and understanding it as a site of mind, or as a form of consciousness, is the critical problem" (p. 97).

Therefore, the internalization of the development discourse is the appropriation of Western views in relation to non-Western societies. This includes the embrace of individualism and neo-liberal capitalism as well as the distained regard for indigenous non-Western cultures and practices. As I shall demonstrate below, this internalization is particularly problematic when people use the development discourse to justify their sub-altern position in world affairs and the inferiority of African culture in comparison to Western influenced "civilization."

### *Cultural hybridity as a form of resistance*

While the development discourse delimits forms of resistance, the notion of cultural hybridity provides an alternative conceptualization that identifies the production of nuanced

fused cultural forms. Hybridity is as an expression of dissidence, an inherent fissure of the colonial – and by extension, post-colonial – project (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2000; Young, 1995). The findings from my small-scale research study in southeastern Senegal will vividly illustrate the concept of cultural hybridity in a later section.

Hybridity, a key concept to post-colonial arguments (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2000), is a controversial term due to its polysemic nature and broad application (Young, 1995; Kraidy, 2005; Rosaldo, 1995). Some critics argue that hybridity is indeed too elastic and simple a concept for the mixing of cultures, a natural phenomenon that runs the course of history (see Ahmad, 1995). I will argue below that the concept of hybridity allows us to move beyond binary perceptions of culture (Rosaldo, 1999) as traditional or modern and to read the agency of individuals within their cultural manifestations. Other criticisms for Bhabha's concept of hybridity entail its homogenization of difference (Ahmad, 1995; see Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2000). As a counter-point, borrowing from Garcia Canclini (1995), I will seek to identify the "multiple logics" of hybridity that exist within the Senegalese context of the small-scale research study below.

Young (1995) and Kraidy (2005) provide a comprehensive history of the development of the term of hybridization as they follow its usage from agricultural studies where it referred to the cross-fertilization of plants and animals and later to its thankfully outdated application to different human races at the height of slavery, conquest and colonization. This latter usage examined if the product of the mixture of different human races could procreate. The term subsequently described the development of hybrid languages, such as creoles and pidgins, until Bhabha employed the term to cultural hybridity within the context of colonization.

As Kraidy (2005) contends, the notion of hybridity differs from the related term, transculturation, which refers to the mixing of culture, often in literature and music. This is an important assertion as it helps us to understand the accomplished nature of hybridity. Transculturation, according to Kraidy (2005), most often refers to the institutionalization of marginalized cultures within the mainstream. He refers to examples in Latin America where transculturation served as a slow process of “‘bleaching’ all but the most benign practices that gave precolonial natives their identities” (Kraidy, 2005, p. 54). Hybridity, by contrast, is a manifestation of appropriation and resistance (Kraidy, 2005; Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2000). Bhabha (see Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2000) argues that hybridity is related to mimicry, the appropriation of the discourse of colonialism by the colonized, yet necessarily a deformation of the colonizer’s intention. Bhabha argued that mimicry was an inherent fault line within colonization, that the mirrored image would always reflect local interpretations. It is a deliberate co-option of colonial meaning.

Essential to Bhabha’s conceptualization of hybridity is the notion of the third space, a liminal juncture where a new cultural manifestation takes shape. Bhabha posits that this hybrid culture “displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives...” (Rutherford, 1990, p. 211). Within post-colonial theory, however, the creation of a hybrid culture is also a point of contestation. Rosaldo articulates two possible views of hybridity: 1) as two distinct spaces from which a new space emerges between (similar to syncretism as used in anthropology, though limited often to religion (Garcia Canclini, 1995; Kraidy, 2005) or as “the ongoing condition of all human cultures...it is the hybridity all the way down” (Rosaldo, 1995, p. xv). Piot (1999) provides a vivid example of the constant fluidity between modern and traditional influences within African village culture. He describes how even

in what local discourse refers to as their traditional ceremonies, there is the utilization of white plastic dolls imported from the West. While the nature of the third space and the dynamic of hybridity formation remains ambiguous, Bhabha does not see a contradiction. Indeed, he asserts that “all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity” (Rutherford, 1990, p. 211).

As mentioned above, the concept of hybridity is particularly useful in its blurring of binary categories. In relation to modernity, hybridity facilitates the understanding of how communities refine and create their own manifestations of modernity. Garcia Canclini (1995) in his discussion of the changing understanding of modernity and urbanization, the two of which he sees intimately interconnected and essential to hybridization, writes that these notions are a “more complex articulation of traditions and modernities (diverse and unequal), a heterogenous continent consisting of countries in each of which coexist multiple logics of development” (p. 9). This comment echoes Escobar’s (1995) assertion that the hybridization of cultures produces a multiplicity of modernities and traditions, wherein “...the distinction between traditional and modern, rural and urban, high, mass and popular cultures lose much of their sharpness and relevance” (p. 218).

### *Summary of theoretical section*

The post-colonial concepts of cultural hybridity as resistance and development as a discourse resulting in the internalization of inferior subjectivities, are key hypotheses that promote a thick understanding of the dynamics of knowledge production and appropriation in developing countries. Below, we will explore the emic understanding of indigenous and exogenous forms of knowledge, the latter being the knowledge provided through schooling and the active advocacy of school personnel and affiliates. My findings will demonstrate how school-

based knowledge, and its association with science and progress, has gained an elevated status as a regime of truth within the hierarchies of knowledge present in a particular rural Senegalese society.

## **Methodology**

This qualitative inquiry falls within the genre of a phenomenological study. Qualitative methods provide in-depth information, and rich descriptions from variety of perspectives (Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Schram; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005) and are conducive to the examination of perspectives on knowledge and education. Phenomenological studies stress lived experiences and deep meaning through open-ended observation and interviewing techniques within a small sample group (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Schram, 2006). In this instance, the lived experience is people's conceptualization of indigenous and Western forms of knowledge and education, as well as their relationship to the development discourse.

I collected data over a two-week period of on-site and with a period of seven months previously dedicated to the development of the game model. Several months prior to my arrival at the research site, I made a preliminary site visit to investigate the possibilities for the development of the classroom game. That visit proved fruitful and laid the foundation for my work and positive working relationships during data collection. During the interim between the two visits, I redacted and submitted the necessary documents for Internal Review Board approval with my university. Through this process, I developed informed consent forms to promote the process between the researcher and the participant that assures that the latter understands the project's objectives as well as the scope of his/her participation (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). I acquired informed consent orally during the period of fieldwork. I have made efforts to assure confidentiality in order to protect the privacy of research participants (Rossman & Rallis, 2003) through the attentive management of collected data, the attribution of pseudonyms, and general descriptions of participants that protect individuals' identities.

The fieldwork that I performed for this study combined document review, open-ended observations, and semi-structured, and structured interviews. Rossman and Rallis (2003) identify these strategies as fundamental gathering techniques for qualitative research. The opportunities for data collection were 10 game trials, three semi-structured interviews, and two structured interviews. The game trials took place in two rural schools, one town school, among a male group of community members in one of the villages, two sessions with primary school teachers, and an initial testing session with personnel of the INGO. At the primary school level, I worked with three classes in the highest grade (CM2), and one multigrade class that was the equivalent of a 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade class (CM1/CM2). The trial at the middle school level combined students from 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades (6ième, 5ième and 4ième in the Senegalese system). Document review provided a deep understanding of the context for my research. The documents included NGO reports on project activities. Fieldnotes and informal conversations also helped to triangulate data.

In conducting the game trials in the schools, I organized trials first with the teaching staff of two of the three establishments and facilitated these sessions myself. This allowed for those teachers to then lead sessions with their students. Although the game was originally intended for groups of students to coordinate themselves, particularly ideal in a multigrade environment, the level of French required for the game proved too elevated for the students to play alone. I also had the impression that teachers were more comfortable actively facilitating the game than organizing students into small groups. It is important to note that the game prompts consisted of open-ended and multiple choice questions. The game rules ask students to discuss with their teammates before responding to a prompt. Due to the nature of the game, once students provide an answer, play passes to the next group. With the exception of teacher facilitation that asked for

further clarification or information on a particular question, the majority of responses consisted of one-word or one-sentence answers.

Once the players understood the instructions and began to play, I took notes on observations during the session. While at first, I utilized a structured observation roster tool, it proved inappropriate to the emergent nature of my research and I decided to replace it with an open-ended approach. The holistic and exploratory nature of qualitative methods allows for patterns to develop through analysis of field notes (Rossman & Rallis, 2003), which made possible this paper's focus on an unexpected but emergent topic.

Interviews were the most essential component of this research study in that they yielded the most in-depth and relevant data to this present study. I employed both semi-structured and structured interview techniques in the five interviews that I conducted. I chose interviews for their exploratory nature and consistence with the phenomenological approach (Rossman & Rallis, 2002). By design, phenomenological interviews yield information about people's beliefs and points of view (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). I preferred open-ended techniques for discussions with educators because I wanted to see what information would emerge on its own. As Rossman & Rallis (2003) indicate, such unstructured techniques are holistic and exploratory. I chose to perform structured interviews in two cases in order to respond to the NGO director's request for information pertinent to five identified questions. In consequence, these two interviews were shorter in duration. In each case, I administered and recorded the interviews in French and later transcribed them. I then consolidated all of the data from interviews, observations, and field notes and identified categories for subsequent coding. In order to maintain the integrity of the data, I coded the data in its native French and only translated for the purposes of inclusion in this paper.

I identified participants through a combination of purposeful and convenience sampling methods (Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Purposeful sampling methods are common to qualitative research and identify specific participants according to an objective (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). For this study, the criteria for schools that participated in the game trials were those that the NGO director and the local education officer identified. The convenience sampling is relevant due to the timing difficulties we encountered. This was specifically the case with the individuals that I interviewed. I applied convenience sampling for the semi-structured interviews that I conducted independently in order to maximize on my time spent on-site. The three participants were all individuals already associated with the project. Two of them had backgrounds in education. Of these two individuals, one continued to work with the schools directly while the other played a more consultative role, in addition to his work in local politics. The third participant in the semi-structured interviews serves as the President of the Parent Teachers Association within his community. In addition to the semi-structured interviews, I also conducted two structured interviews. I identified these individuals using purposeful sampling methods as the NGO director identified them according to their roles as headmasters within the schools and their collaboration with the project. One of the individuals participated in both a structured and semi-structured interview.

Time proved to be one of the limitations of my research study. Due to the brevity of the research period, as well as the constraints from the broadcast of the Africa Cup soccer tournament, it was difficult to find available times for the game trials outside of the classroom. To illustrate, the trial within the community was postponed twice before we held the actual session. On more than one occasion, an interview had to end so that the participant could watch

the game. In addition, I had originally planned to perform focus groups with small numbers of students and among teachers. There was not enough time to hold these meetings.

### *Reflections on my position as researcher*

My positionality within this research study is of particular importance, as I have multiple identities within this context. My awareness of these identities and my constant attention to the impact that I might have on those that I was working with, demonstrates a high level of reflexivity, an important element in the research process (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). I am very familiar with the country of Senegal, having now acquired ten years of experience and intricate knowledge of its culture, people and politics. I acquired this knowledge as a student in Dakar, and later, as a coordinator in an NGO that focused on education and cultural exchange, a consultant on an education development project with an international donor, and perhaps most consequently, as the partner of a Senegalese man originally from Dakar. My legal last name is a Senegalese name and afforded me immediate recognition with those I met at the research site. Many responded favorably to me upon learning my last name and began to ask me questions about how I acquired it. While being married in Senegal carries respect, I was also aware of my female identity and was often concerned that my access to male members, especially within communities was limited. My age also was a factor. In Senegalese society, age carries respect. It is awkward as a researcher to seek an interview with a much older person. Doing so requires attentiveness to social protocols.

Language capacity is an issue important to my position within this research context in southeastern Senegal, a largely Halpulaar area. While I speak French fluently, and have a good command of Wolof, Senegal's lingua franca, I do not speak Pulaar. My Wolof and French were of great assistance when I was in the town where the NGO was located and where I was staying

with the project coordinator. Once I exited the town and headed to the villages however, Pulaar became the dominant language. Although French is the language of instruction in schools, frequently teachers' explanations to students occurred in Pulaar. With both French and Wolof, I was rarely at a loss for understanding, but I am very cognizant that my lack of Pulaar distanced me from the most authentic comprehension that I could have had throughout this research process, particularly in relation to the data on traditional forms of education.

Throughout the process I negotiated an identity of outsider/insider. With the exception of my Senegalese last name, ability to speak Wolof and French, knowledge of appropriate dress and customs, I was also very much a guest within the communities where I was working. The heavy workload of the INGO personnel with whom I was collaborating meant that the game activity was an auxiliary effort. Upon the director's suggestion, I chose to work with a research assistant from one of the villages where we did our research. He was extremely helpful both in providing transport and in his ability to offer translation for Pulaar conversations. His knowledge of local customs and protocols for negotiating relationships with teachers and elders in the area proved particularly helpful in navigating my outsider identity. This was his first official experience with the project and his work as a translator.

One of the participants that I interviewed also made me keenly aware of my identity as outsider and how in Senegal, with the significant emphasis on hospitality, outsiders occupy a privileged position. He explained how the cultural importance of hospitality and my outsider identity allowed me to assemble a group of male community members from different age groups, whereas a local person would not have had the same facility. When I asked for clarification and wondered if it was due to my white *toubab* identity, he explained that even as a long-time

resident of the area himself, but still of another ethnic group, he would have also been considered an outsider.

Similarly, I was aware that despite my American student status, my white skin and American provenance gave others the impression that I had significant means at my disposal. There were occasions throughout the research when I was asked if I could help develop a project or find funding for people. Unfortunately, I was not able to assist them in this manner. It is also important to note that I had a privileged position as researcher in a rural area, due to my meager means and my connection with the NGO that sponsored my work. As Robinson (2000) indicates, historically, foreign researchers have had more access to remote areas in Senegal than native researchers due to available resources and connections.

Lastly, I was extremely conscious of my affiliation with both the American-based NGO that sponsored the project, and its INGO partner. Within the town where I performed the study, there are few economic opportunities outside of development work. It seems that it is the main industry of the area. People were also very supportive of the work of this NGO and the cultural revitalization project, in particular. In doing fieldwork, it was apparent that people wanted to share with me their positive impressions of the NGO. I was pleased to hear their opinions but also realized that my affiliation with the project might also skew the data as people would tell me either what I wanted to hear or what they thought the project director might appreciate. On a number of occasions, I had the impression that people were repeating the NGO's rhetoric verbatim.

### *Ethical considerations*

My approach to this research was very reflexive due to my multiple identities and the novelty of a development project dedicated to the restoration of indigenous culture. As such, I

paid close attention to ethical considerations throughout the entire research process, from preparation, throughout the period of fieldwork, and subsequently in the transcription and analysis of data. Conscientious ethical practice ensures that peoples' rights are protected (Rossman & Rallis, 2003) and that researchers do no harm (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

Beneficence is a key characteristic of ethics in qualitative research and means doing no harm to research participants, physically, emotionally and socially (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). One concern was the imposition of this project on classroom time and teacher efforts. I noticed that many of the game trials sessions took place during the school day and obviously detracted from students' time on task. While teachers assured me that they were happy to participate, I lamented that the use of so much class time might have negative effects. As such, I implemented discussion questions for the entire class into the observation sessions and eliminated focus groups with students that would have taken up much more of their time.

I also was extremely sensitive to the nature of information about rites of passage. While we discussed rites of passage in relation to indigenous forms of education, I did not dwell too much on this issue. Such sacred information is typically reserved for initiates. In addition, due to the government's ban of female excision rituals and pressures that have arisen in the past from other development groups, I avoided questions on this topic. I doubted that any answers I might obtain would be credible. In accordance with good ethical practice (see Rossman & Rallis, 2003), I did not pursue these issues knowing that I did not have enough time to fully explore them.

A final issue that related to the inclusion of participants in the research study was that of ethnic consideration. Many of the local partners and educators that participated in the study are not originally from the area and did not grow up in Halpulaar majority settings. The first game

trial with development personnel revealed early on that it would be best to position fieldwork inquiries within the larger context of African culture/traditional culture than solely Halpulaar culture. Concentration on Halpulaar identities had been the suggestion of the supporting NGO. The pan-African culture suggestion proved to be very constructive as not only were teachers of diverse ethnic groups but the same was true for students in a few rare cases in surrounding villages.

## Findings

Throughout game trials as well as the interviews, research participants explored concepts of indigenous and exogenous expressions of culture and education. During game play, this took the form of questions that asked players to relate to traditional/African and modern/Western forms of culture. I chose this simple formulation given students' ages (11-16 years old) and using previous reports from discussions on culture, which the NGO has produced from in-depth conversations with community members. In order to remain consistent with these reports, game prompts and interview questions articulated the notion of indigenous education as "traditional" or "African" and exogenous education as "modern" or "Western." Examples of game prompts that address education in oppositional terminology include:

- Identify your three favorite activities. Are they traditional or modern activities?
- Cite three things in your traditional culture that you like a lot; and
- Choose the correct sentence: 'Children know traditional culture best' OR 'Children know Western culture best.'

This exploration with the younger students was very challenging and most often necessitated the teacher's prompting and guided facilitation. Difficulty with these sorts of questions was most likely due to the abstract nature of the concept, complicated by the use of French, the language of the classroom, but not the children's mother tongue. During the one trial that we performed at the middle school, however, students responded to game prompts with more fluidity, and seemingly more familiarity with the binary terms.

In addition to the identification of key concepts in traditional and modern education and knowledge, participant responses indicated both a friction and fluidity between these two concepts. The friction arises from a disparity in power relationships between skills needed to

succeed in a market-based environment and those of a collective community. Data also indicated that traditional and Western forms of knowledge and expression are not mutually exclusive. Similarly, when children responded to a question about the location of education – “at home,” “at school,” or “both,” many responded that education takes place at both places. I shall explore cultural fluidity further below according to the framework of cultural hybridity. In addition, participants expressed feelings of cultural inferiority in relation to Western culture. Their responses corroborate previous analyses of the internalization of the development discourse. Prior to turning the attention to these analytical frameworks, I will provide an overview of how participants view indigenous education and forms of schooling within the context of the rural communities that are the focus of this study.

#### *Conceptions of indigenous education in a rural community in southeastern Senegal*

Before further analysis, it is helpful to summarize participants’ understanding of traditional and Western education. One of the adult interviewers with whom I spoke, indicated that the role of education for him is “to prepare someone for life within society” or translated otherwise, for “community life.” This notion supports Kanu’s (2006) assertions above about the role of traditional education in an African context. Answers about the content of traditional education and culture revealed that content differs for male and female students, as would also be expected. For boys, endurance, self-restraint, wrestling (Senegal’s most prominent traditional sport), and soccer were the most frequent answers. For girls, educational content included singing, dancing, cooking, taking care of a family, sweeping, and fetching water. It is also important to remember that while the game trials included both male and female

students/teachers, the interviews I conducted were only with male adults. Perhaps similar interviews with adult females might have yielded different results.

Values were another area of content identified throughout game play and subsequent open-ended interviews. While several of the game prompts asked players to define a pre-indicated value and provide an example from daily life, my focus here is on the values that participants identified spontaneously both during play and throughout the interviews. One of the key values that participants cited is the notion of *kersa*. (Incidentally *kersa* expresses the same concept in both Pulaar and in Wolof, which might indicate its trans-ethnic importance, cultural crossover, or even domination of Wolof culture.) While *kersa* most easily translates as “shame” in both French and English, its meaning expands to include modesty, shyness, deference, and respect for elders, particularly, as participants indicated, to fathers, mothers, grandparents and grandmothers. Hospitality, *teranga* in both Pulaar and Wolof, was another value that players frequently addressed during the game. Similarly, the importance of shaking hands was also a notion frequently mentioned. While not a value, another topic that arose frequently is that of traditional medicine. It is also important to note that one of the game prompts asked players directly to identify the difference between traditional and Western forms of medicine. While it is difficult to know if this topic would have authentically arisen on its own, due to the discussion the prompt generated, I anticipate that it would have been at least referenced in the absence of the prompt.

The game encouraged students to also identify how traditional and modern practices manifest within their experiences. Participants associated the following with traditional culture/knowledge: music in general, instruments such as drums and the flute, songs and dancing, riddles and tales, stories and community/village history, pastoral activities, agriculture,

male circumcision rituals, fishing, and clothing. While the time factors limited many of the students' answers and may have promoted simple repetitions of game prompts or the teachers' introduction to the game that stressed the role of grandmothers, some answers illustrated a more detailed comprehension. These individuals told me that grandparents tell them information about history and genealogy, the future, what is bad and good, and traditional knowledge.

In addition to the content of traditional knowledge, it is crucial to understand who within this predominantly Pulaar society possesses knowledge and is able to transmit it to others. Most answers identified various elders or griots as the possessors of traditional knowledge. A fairly common refrain during game play were phrases such as "it is good to approach the elders because you can learn a lot of things." While this aligns with research on traditional culture (Kanu, 2006; Moumouni, 1968), the particular focus of this NGO's project on the role of grandparents may have overtly influenced participants' answers. Specifically, participants referred to extended family members and elders as possessing knowledge. In this usage of the term "elders," players referred to anyone who is even slightly older than another person. Participants cited the following individuals as repositories of tradition: grandparents, fathers, aunts, sisters, and brothers. Perhaps an oversight, mothers do not figure on this list. It is also noteworthy that at the end of one of the game trials, we held a discussion where we asked students to identify people within their community who possessed traditional knowledge. In one of the classrooms, students produced the names of two experts from their milieu. The teacher's awareness of these individuals seems to suggest their prominence within the community.

Another reoccurring notion to the transfer of indigenous knowledge was the unique relationship that exists between grandchildren and grandparents. Numerous times, participants expressed the absence of taboos in discussions between grandparents and grandchildren. This

coincides as well with the playful relationship often between these social identities. One example was of a girl who becomes pregnant out of wedlock and approaches her grandmother, who then mediates for her with the girl's parents. While people stated that there are *no taboos* in this relationship, there are still limits to this assertion. While a young girl pregnant out of wedlock is a trying event for a family to deal with, I doubt that less socially acceptable issues, such as homosexuality, would be equally acceptable.

My research has also identified various forms of transmission of indigenous knowledge and values. As one participant interviewed articulated, indigenous education is both a continuous and punctual process. It occurs on a daily basis as part of people's routines, as well as through organized events, with rites of passage demonstrating the highest level of organization. The information in this section originates from semi-structured interviews. Examples of education that participants shared included how to train a child to respond to the arrival of a guest by bringing a glass of water, or not fixing the gaze of an older person. They also explained how in the past, children would go with grandparents into the bush to look for roots or trees. In doing so, children learned to identify plants that would be useful in daily life: cooking, healing, and for protection. They also learned pastoral knowledge by going with grandfathers to look after herds and during the milking chores each evening. Once chores were done, children would receive advice or learn stories from elders. Grandmothers would also often gather children in the evenings to tell tales, and teach dances and songs.

More organized forms of education identified through my study work include the play of games (the counting game known in the West as *mankala* was an example), drum sessions, family meetings, and of course, rites of passage. While the information I gathered emphasized the daily acts of education, the individuals I spoke with – all male educators – as well as

throughout game play in classrooms with male teachers, identified male circumcision rituals as a key component of collective education.

The learning during circumcision rituals often takes places according to age groups, a typical societal structure in many West African societies, and one that the NGO, with whom I was working, identified as key to its own work. There is a certain amount of flexibility within the definition of age groups. One participant identified a range of 10 years as appropriate for the grouping, although he noted that for Diola circumcision rituals, an age gap of up to 30 years may be appropriate due to the infrequency of the circumcision events. He also compared the rigorous approach of rites of passage with military training. Another participant laughed as he described how his daughter often refuses to eat certain foods at home. He said that this was not the case for him and that one value he had learned during the circumcision initiation ritual was to eat what he was given. During the ritual, he said that they were fed a number of different dishes mixed together – something that tends to revolt on a daily basis – for example: a gumbo and palm oil stew over white rice, mixed with a fish and djolof rice dish.

While this present study does not explore in depth the current state of rites of passage within the largely Pulaar communities where I did my research, it is clear that male circumcision practices remain a critical learning experience for young men and space for transmission of cultural knowledge. As I shall discuss further below, although participants frequently identified circumcision as a rite of passage, there is a sense that the practice does not continue as it once did. Certainly the state of female genital cutting as a communal ritual practice is even more difficult to discern, given the political, social, and development pressures to eradicate the practice. Now that I have identified the continual and punctual expressions of indigenous

knowledge and education within the communities where I did my study, I briefly turn our attention to schools as sources of Western knowledge within the community.

*Schools as gatekeepers of Western knowledge forms and structures*

Senegal, like other post-colonial nations, has a national education system based on the model of its former colonizer, France. This is evident in the structure of the school system: its grade demarcations and separation into primary schools, middle, and high schools, as well as adherence to a national exam system follows the French model. The usage of the French language as the official language of schools and as the unique language of instruction – with the exception of a few pilot schools, also demonstrates the continued resemblance to the French education system. While curriculum has embraced vernacular references and local history, educational institutions in Senegal retain a step-child relationship with the French system and influences of other Western and developed countries.

While the classroom certainly serves as the primordial space for the indoctrination of Western culture and influence, the school also serves as a mediator to the West through auxiliary functions that connect often rural, limited, or non-schooled community members with institutions and ideas inherent in the development paradigm. In this manner, the school translates and facilitates contact and access to ideas and institutions important to neo-liberalism and globalization. In accordance with human capital theory, schools provide access to the requisite knowledge, skills, and credentials necessary to enter the market not only to schoolchildren, but also to the community at large. The findings from this small-scale research study indicate that this occurs through two principal means: 1) through the active facilitation of Parent Teacher

Associations (PTAs); and 2) through the provision of direct access to modern social services and institutions.

The President of the PTA plays a key role as cultural broker within one of the communities that I investigated during my fieldwork. He has been a member of the community from birth and has had some schooling himself, although he did not complete the secondary school cycle. One of his main functions as PTA President is to convoke parents and other community members to attend organization meetings. As he explained to me, currently, there is one general PTA and a parallel Mother Teacher Association. In addition to convening meetings, he visits the school and its grounds almost daily while class is in session and maintains close relationships with the headmaster and teachers. He participated actively in one of the game trials we held at the school with the teaching staff and also sat for an extensive semi-structured interview. The PTA President adopts the role as mediator between the school and the community when he helps community members to understand how the school functions and how to best negotiate its structures in order to advocate for their children. For instance, he explained that he often suggests to parents that rather than coming to the classroom and interrupting the teacher it is better to wait until the end of the school day. He also offers to intervene himself and to speak with the teacher or headmaster on the parent's behalf.

The PTA President, school headmaster, and teachers also provide direct access to state and para-state institutions. They keep close watch on who in the community is having children so that they can help them to obtain birth certificates for the children, thereby registering them with the state, and obtaining citizenship. They also know who is soon to be of school-going age and speak with parents about the possibility of enrolling their children in school. Parents often bring

their children to the school in order to access medical care for them and the President of the PTA regularly accompanies children to the hospital.

A second example of cultural brokerage highlights the school's facilitation of community members' successful request for development funds and subsequent market entry. This occurred when the school headmaster noticed that a group of women were always crossing the road across from the village to dig for peanuts in the evenings. He approached the President of the PTA and together, they helped this group of women to apply for and acquire a grant from the US Embassy for a community garden. They now actively cultivate the garden and sell their produce at the market.

The above demonstrates the school's role as mediator between students and community members with institutions and services that follow Western models. It is interesting to note that not only does this occur through the provision of knowledge during class, but through auxiliary services that the school provides directly to the community, both in a formal and informal manner. Thus, while school children are the principle beneficiaries of schooling practices, the school is influential with the community-at-large.

#### *Friction between indigenous and exogenous forms of knowledge*

The data from observations of game play and participant interviews demonstrate that there is a palpable tension between modern and traditional forms of knowledge, particularly in regards to schooling. The following section demonstrates recognition of power dynamics and tension between existing forms of knowledge as articulated by research participants. Individuals also indicated a resulting sense of cultural loss.

Participant responses demonstrate a contradictory and complex relationship between the value of exogenous and indigenous knowledge. While above, I mentioned that children indicated in their responses throughout the game trials that learning takes place at both locations, home and at school, other responses indicate the qualitative belief that education that takes place at school is more rigorous. This is demonstrated by the notion that children who do not attend school play all day. In contrast, adults in their responses often indicate a certain nostalgia for the child who does not go to school. It is important to note that all of the adults interviewed had been to school themselves and are currently connected to schools, either as former teachers, current headmasters, or through involvement in the PTA. As one adult articulated: “the child who does not go to school, in reality, he does not have anyone as a reference other than his relatives...He has a greater chance to respect society’s norms.”

Similarly, during the initial game trial with a group of development workers and educators, there was a consensus that the students who live in towns are more familiar with the modern culture than students who live in the surrounding villages. This supports students’ assertions in subsequent playings, both in rural areas and in the town, that “children today are not familiar with traditional culture.” Such a statement demands further exploration as the majority of these students live in villages and self-identified their participation in agricultural and pastoral activities, exercises that from a Western perspective would very much seem to be traditional practices.

Participants also articulated a clear friction between traditional and modern forms of education and those who possess this knowledge. An older gentleman, during the game trial in a community, expressed the tension that exists between the holders of traditional and modern forms of knowledge. He indicated that, “teachers want the students to respect them, which puts

them in competition with the elders [from the community].” Another participant who I interviewed identified the tension between the two institutions in more general terms:

There’s traditional education and also modern education, schooling. Today, there is a competition between these two and we see that modern education, or modern activities, are overtaking traditional activities because children spend more time at school. Even if they are at home, they spend more time listening to the radio, or watching TV...Even though sometimes, for girls, they are taught to cook, to sweep, to fetch water...Really, there is a terrible competition between modern education and traditional education...This tension is killing our culture.

Not only does this participant illustrate the ambivalent relationship between modern and traditional cultures, but he identifies the radio and TV as factors in cultural loss. It is worthwhile to note that during this interview, the TV in this participant’s living room was on, while his children were on the patio watching the African cup soccer tournament on a second television set. Modern influences permeate peoples’ lives despite their expressions of regret and clear recognition of their contribution to cultural loss.

Participants expressed cultural loss in terms of obstruction to knowledge transfer. They expressed the weakened state of initiation practices – a key institution of indigenous education – due to originally exogenous pressures. Whereas rites of passage experiences previous lasted several months, participants indicated that this is no longer the case today. One participant explained how the Futampafu ritual in Diola culture is restricted by peoples’ work schedules, especially those who return to their villages from overseas. He also explained that growing adherence to Islam and Christianity threatens these practices:

Even if it isn’t everyone, there are those who say that it is against Christian principles. You are going to a sacred forest. The sacred can only be in church. And for Muslims, the sacred can only be found at the mosque...

Government statistics state that approximately 94% of the population is Muslim and 5% Catholic, while another 1% practice solely African religious customs (Ross, 2008). While

statistics show that the vast majority of the Senegalese population officially embrace Judaeo-Christian religions many practice them in syncretism with African belief systems. Nonetheless, this participant's comments suggest a growing tension between Islam and Christianity and traditional beliefs. In addition to religious pressures, this same participant also identified pressures from modernity as additional factors contributing to the decline of initiation rituals. He indicated the lack of purified water and the extended stay in the bush as other reasons for people to reduce the duration of initiation practices.

In addition to obstruction of the more complex transfer of indigenous education through initiation rituals, participants indicated complications in common forms of intergenerational communication that threaten the daily transfer of indigenous knowledge. Responses during game play and semi-structured interviews substantiate this finding. Background documents produced by the NGO further triangulated this data. Participants commented that in contrast to previous times when grandparents and children gathered in the evenings to share stories and other forms of cultural knowledge, children no longer seek out elders, and likewise, elders do not have time for children. Accordingly, children are often in a hurry to finish pastoral chores in order to return to the village to watch television. There also is a sense that children do not value traditional knowledge. One participant expressed that:

In our time, we were often with our grandmothers or grandfathers in the evenings when they would tell us tales... Today, grandmothers cannot even try to reverse or to transmit their knowledge to the kids, because for them, for the children, all of this is nothing.

The complex notion of *kersa* which expresses fear or reverence of the elders seems to further complicate this issue as children often are reluctant to ask or discuss certain things with elders. It is also important to note that the NGO's emphasis on the degradation of intergenerational communication and efforts to improve it may have intensified people's sense of its disruption.

### *Hybridity and mimicry*

Emerging data from this small-scale study demonstrate examples of cultural hybridity in the fluid movement between traditional and modern forms of knowledge and expression that defy simple binary categorization. The notion of hybridity helps us to conceptualize these individuals' view of their culture and the simultaneous expression of both "modern" and "traditional" forms of knowledge. Using Garcia Canclini's (1995) phrase from above, I will explore the "multiple logics of development" that participants provide in reference to the integration of modern influences in their daily lives. By weaving both of these realities together, they construct their current reality. In essence, they expand their toolbox of skills and keys with which to access the multiple influences and realities around them. Participants expressed hybrid notions in reference to the integration of modern practices and materials in typically traditional activities, including ceremonies, sports and cultural expression and healing technologies.

Traditional ceremonies and cultural expression is one space within which the data reveals hybridization. One participant explained how people have incorporated modern materials into traditional practices. Reminiscent of Piot's (1999) findings with the Kabre, a participant told me of his desire to form a theatrical group dedicated to traditional expression. In describing the shoes that the group would wear, he described a shoe as traditional that was made out of rubber from tires. While rubber tires were not a product that existed prior to colonization, in the participant's mind, they are part of a traditional costume. A second example further demonstrates the continual adaptation of traditional practices to include modern luxuries. A young bride who in the past would join her husband's house on foot with a large following of community members, now arrives by car, and with a smaller, more elite, and better dressed entourage.

The participant also identified that a side effect of these adaptations is the marginalization of community members who due to a limited number of spaces in vehicles or the inability to don a traditional outfit of a certain quality, remain behind. The participant I was interviewing very clearly stated that he views these developments as the commoditization of traditional ceremonies or practices. This example demonstrates the infiltration of market influences and expressions of material gain, a theme that overlaps with the internalization of the development discourse that we will explore in greater detail below.

Hybridization is also apparent in participants' difficulty to distinguish between traditional and modern forms of African music. This lack of clarity arose when both teachers and students participated in the game trials and attempted to respond to a prompt to demonstrate a "traditional dance." While the music forms are clearly African, their position along the continuum of modern/traditional is ambiguous. Similarly, when students identified activities that they enjoy, they listed football, wrestling, dancing, and listening to tales, but had difficulties discerning if they were traditional or modern in nature. While this data is inconclusive, it might demonstrate either a lack of familiarity with terms of "modern"/"Western" and "traditional"/"African" in French, or an ambivalence to these terms. Regardless, it was also clear that people felt that African culture and modern influences are compatible with one another. As one community member stated, "Our culture will never be out of date, but we cannot abandon soccer or schooling."

Mimicry, the appropriation and adaptation of an external concept (Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffins, 2000), was also evident in comments pertaining to healing technologies. The game card that solicited the difference between modern and traditional forms of medicine frequently prompted animated discussion. To illustrate, a middle school teacher told students that the elders

know a lot about healing and that it is worth exploring traditional healing practices. He concluded by saying, “you must first go to the hospital and after seek healing through traditional means.” His comment displays a preference for simultaneous use of both technologies. As in Bhabha’s analysis of the appropriation of colonial notions, while this Senegalese teacher demonstrates a belief in modern forms of medicine, it is in addition to traditional healing methods. The signification of forms of healing changes when people adapt it to their local context.

### *Internalization of the development discourse*

The appropriation of the development discourse leads to the alteration of indigenous regimes of truth and the expression of their inadequacy in favor of forms that more closely resemble modernity. The Senegalese students and educators that I observed and interviewed for this study clearly demonstrate the internalization of the development discourse and its inherent preference for neo-liberal and Enlightenment values.

Individuals expressed negative views towards the local culture on a number of occasions. One of the most obvious examples arises in the lack of teachers in rural villages. This is not surprising given that teachers learn through Western influenced education to venerate accommodations resembling modern sensibilities, complete with elevated forms of hygiene, ready access to state institutions, social services, and infrastructure. Participants interviewed cited how detrimental teachers’ refusal of village accommodations is to student learning. Despite the rapid communication that cellphones offer, there are avoidable delays that local lodging would mediate. If he or she does not have a ride, or their ride breaks down, the students lose out on valuable classtime. One of the villages had even addressed the issue with the regional

education officer to the outcry of teachers. As I learned from a research participant living in a village himself, he could understand the teachers' perspective because "they are going to suffer out there in the bush." His tone in explaining their reasoning was indifferent. He seemed to also have internalized modernity's subjugation of life in a rural setting.

Similarly, participants were critical of traditional forms of medicine. Whereas the teacher above hailed its virtues alongside his suggestion to accompany it with modern medicine, another participant criticized its usage according to Western measurements. He told students, "traditional practitioners, it's a risk. There isn't a dosage. Modern medicine uses laboratories so the medicine is properly dosed..." His explanation calls upon quantified measurements and scientific methods to justify quality at the expense of traditional forms. How ironic when in the West, non-Western medicinal practices are growing in credibility and following.

Other examples from my findings indicate evidence of the internalization of the value of civilization and progress, two notions fundamental to the concept of modernity. During a discussion about changes in relationships between children and grandparents, the participant said, "at a certain moment, with this modernization and civilization...there was television..." and again, "...we have lost much of our grandparents' culture with civilization." Whereas there is much documentation about pre-colonial civilizations, replete with complex social organizations and intricate oral histories, this individual identifies television and other modern commodities and practices with civilization. The implication is that prior to the arrival of these imports, people were not civilized. Clearly, this commentary demonstrates the internalization of some of development's most destructive notions.

Similarly, the PTA President shared with me his story of how his tenacious quest for the advancement of his village's school system confronted his own father who was the PTA

president at the time. In doing so, he disrupted traditional power hierarchies. The participant had just returned from studying in another city and spoke of his desire for a more progressive school environment. He said: “I preferred that it *advanced*, but my father...he didn’t try to cultivate contacts, but me, I wanted to school to *develop*...” Here, he utilizes terms heavily laden with development values. His pursuit of development and disruption of social hierarchies was not without cost. Others in the village heavily criticized his actions as impolite, going against the order of things, and even “damned.” Nevertheless, he succeeded in replacing his father. He has since accomplished a number of achievements for the school, including the addition of several more classrooms, and the respect of many in his village and surrounding communities. As a colleague explained, “he is someone who is not lazy, and who wants development...” This description is highly problematic as it describes the PTA president according to the development discourse and in contrast to laziness, a notion frequently attributed to the Other in Orientalist studies (see Said, 1994).

Participant responses also indicate the appropriation of human capital theory and its promise to improve people’s lives through education. It is clear that individuals in these rural communities make great sacrifices to send their children to school. This includes the investment in “school supplies, clothing, everything in order to do well at school.” One participant clearly understood the terms of such engagement and the impact that globalization and modernization have had on people’s desire for certain positions within society:

It’s a problem of survival...because with schooling...with knowledge, diplomas, you can have a job. Because since Independence, people have been trained to work within the administration...now, people have realized that they can go to school not to work in an office but to gain knowledge that will allow you to exercise a trade...And now, [with] this knowledge, because with globalization, the infiltration of Western values is so strong, people are obligated to go to school in order to hold certain positions. Even to be a blacksmith, but a modern blacksmith. A modern woodworker...Now, woodworkers don’t only make stools, but they make dressers. They use centimeter measurements...

Participants also expressed the need for school in terms of desperation and survival, even at the cost of cultural change and loss. While one participant explained that people consent to schooling “because [they] are in difficult situations and they are obligated to bring their children to school, even if they know that schooling will change them.” Similarly, another participant identified one of the costs of education as that person’s future absence from the village. He said that an individual prefers to send a child to school, knowing that in the future he will “earn a lot from what he sends [in remittances]...Even if he becomes lonely, he’ll find a way...”

Similar to the adoption of education as a tool for survival are examples of agency contained within the development paradigm. These examples support Nandy’s (1997) assertion that resistance in today’s geo-political environment that favors development takes place only within the liminal spaces that hegemony allows. One participant illustrates an example of agency in how educators organized French classes for community members. He expressed that:

And we had to, in order to be really *taken into consideration*, we needed to understand that official language...It’s French...It’s the language used in offices, right? You have to go to school in order to understand this language and there was even a time when we would organize evening classes for adults, for the elders, so that they could understand this language...We organized evening classes *so that people would be included*...

This commentary illuminates not only agency but awareness of the factors at play and how in order to avoid marginalization, people needed to establish familiarity with colonial structures.

This is also further evidence of the internalization of the human capital theory.

While internalization of the development discourse seems to be an insidious characteristic in the current world arrangement, the examples illustrated above clearly also exemplify recognition of modernity and development’s influence, no matter how powerless people seem to resist it through truly counter-hegemonic activity. This represents an awareness and an agency in the presence of great power differentials.

## Conclusion

The young Senegalese students and older educators who participated in this small-scale research study shared their conceptualization of both indigenous and exogenous forms of knowledge that corroborates previous research on traditional forms of knowledge and post-colonial schooling. A central feature of indigenous education is that it is both a continuous and punctual process, whereby induction in local forms of knowledge is both a daily event and a highly calculated and organized venture, such as rites of passage like male circumcision rituals demonstrate. Their commentaries identified examples of indigenous educational content to be participation in chores and preparation for adult roles, appropriate behaviors within social hierarchies, and adherence to values such as *kersa* and *teranga*. Elders are the most common possessors and transmitters of indigenous knowledge in addition to griots. While it seems that knowledge of indigenous practices deepens with time, an elder is anyone who is older than someone else, for example, a big brother or sister.

People learn endogenous knowledge, referred to here in participants' terms as modern or Western, largely through media, such as television and radio, but also through school activities. These include the acquisition of values such as structured time, progress, and individualism that students learn within class lessons. In addition, schools educate community members in their culture through auxiliary activities Parent Teacher Associations initiate in addition to the actions of headmasters and teachers. The direct access that schools can provide to state structures, such as hospitals, and development institutions, also serve to connect community members with Western forms of thought and institutions.

Indigenous and exogenous forms of knowledge exist within Senegalese realities but in a tenuous relationship that reflect both fluidity and friction. Participants demonstrated numerous ways in which modern and traditional forms of knowledge contradict one another and compete. Given the unequal hierarchies between these regimes of truth, this competition often results in the obstruction of cultural transfer, hence a loss of indigenous knowledge and practices. As one participant states, “this tension is killing our culture!”

Post-colonial notions of cultural hybridity and the internalization of the development discourse further illuminate the dynamics between modern and traditional forms of education and knowledge that exist in this semi-rural community in southeastern Senegal. Participants have clearly identified a “third space” (Bhabha, see Rutherford, 1990), in which they cull from both indigenous and exogenous forms of knowledge to construct their reality. The utilization of modern materials in traditional expressions of culture, the blurring of modern and traditional identities of musical forms, and the simultaneous recourse to traditional and modern forms of knowledge provide evidence of hybridization.

The internalization of the development discourse is a particularly problematic theme that emerges from these research findings. Development’s advocacy of modern sensibilities and prioritization of education and market entry over cultural preservation favor the growing separation between traditional and modern identities. Examples presented above clearly demonstrate negative attitudes towards indigenous knowledge and practices. People’s articulation of pejorative notions of themselves as uncivilized prior to contact with the West, as well as the association of laziness with tradition, are also worrisome. Conscious decisions and recognition of acquiescence to participate within structures of modernity, offers insight into agency despite hegemony’s tight grasp.

While this research presents evidence of a complex and holistic picture of a community's understanding of the nexus between indigenous and exogenous knowledge, several questions remain for the future. This small-scale study offers a limited understanding of this phenomenon, and does so within the context of a development project that aims to revitalize positive aspects of the culture. A future study should incorporate an ethnographic approach and involve understandings of vernacular terms for the "modern" and "traditional" (see Rosaldo, 1995) as well as notions of "success" and "well-being." The collection of data within both local language and French would contribute to increased reliability of data. Future emphasis on the status of rites of passage will also help to present a more complete image of cultural loss and persistence. Lastly, the exploration of further illustrations of hybridity as protest and other examples of resistance to the prevailing development paradigm will attempt to provide a response to the assertion that the development paradigm dominates to the point of having squashed truly counter-hegemonic activity.

This current study and future studies in this area illuminate a community's understanding of the nexus between indigenous and exogenous knowledge, and the influence of the development discourse on internalized preferences for development outcomes. Increased sensitivity to these notions can only assist development efforts to produce context appropriate and participant originated programming that is holistic and cognizant of local forms of knowledge and education practices.

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