Forced Begging, Aid and Children's Rights in Senegal:

Stories of Suffering and Politics of Compassion in the Promotion of Rights for the *Taalibe* Qur'anic School Children of Senegal and Mali

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To Mom and Dad

Abstract

Due to recently expanded definitions of human and child trafficking among transnational actors, thousands of Qur'anic students throughout Senegal, West Africa, called *taalibes*, who beg to support their schools, have been identified as victims of trafficking. Senegal's generous *supply-driven* alms-giving draws schools of boys from throughout the region to beg. To gain financial and institutional support to promote the *taalibes'* human rights, activists disseminate compassion-generating communications to transnational audiences about their exploitation at the hands of their masters. Locally in Senegal, *taalibe* begging is not seen as trafficking. Rather, within a discourse about Qur'anic schools as *vulnerable schools*, people understand their mass urban migration and begging to be an unfortunate result of severe rural poverty. Malian families that send their children to Senegal defend *taalibe* hardship within a *pedagogy of suffering*– to instill respect and discipline. Where the transnational *trafficking discourse* calls Qur'anic masters who make their pupils beg criminal exploiters, the local *vulnerable schools* discourse views them as legitimate educators. To them, they are victims of past colonial repression and a currently neglected educational system. In this thesis, I document how each of these discourses have taken form and what happens when they converge on the ground. This thesis reports on 10 months of original ethnographic fieldwork in Senegal and Mali in 2010, and 10 weeks of field research in Senegal in 2007. I also draw on several years of experience studying and working in Senegal and Guinea between 2002 and 2006.

I have found that these diverging discourses of *vulnerable schools* and *trafficking* clash on the ground to perpetuate child suffering. Anti-trafficking interventions on the ground have failed to condemn exploiters. As a group, Qur'anic masters defend their right to send *taalibes* out to beg. They claim that the practice is integral to children's and families' rights to choose religious education. Within a politics of compassion, actors surrounding the *taalibes dance between discourses* as they tell varying stories of child suffering to rally support for their activities. This results in the provisioning of hundreds of thousands of dollars in aid to scattered Qur'anic masters and schools, while diverting attention away from the Senegalese state's failure to accommodate these students on a national scale or to prosecute offenders in cases of documented abuse. The *taalibes* of Senegal are at the center of costly rights-promotional campaigns, yet my thesis makes it clear that the boys in question remain devoid of any reclaimable rights as thousands of them continue to endure violence-enforced begging and live in conditions which threaten their healthy development.

Résumé

À cause d'une expansion récente des définitions de la traite humaine et de celle des enfants par les institutions transnationales, des milliers d'élèves coraniques en Afrique de l'ouest, appelés *taalibes*, qui mendient pour soutenir leurs écoles, ont été identifiés comme des victimes de traite. Au Sénégal, les dons généreux d'aumône, qui sont axés sur l'offre, favorisent l'avènement d'écoles coraniques venant de toute la sous-région dans ses centres urbaines pour mendier. Pour obtenir un soutien financier et institutionnel et promouvoir les droits humains des *taalibes*, nombreux sont des activistes qui soutiennent un discours génératrices de compassion devant des audiences transnationales concernant l'exploitation des *taalibes* par leurs maîtres. Au niveau local au Sénégal, par contre, la mendicité des *taalibes* n'est pas vue comme une traite. L'allocution sur les écoles coraniques en tant qu'*écoles vulnérables*, assimile leur migration urbaine en masse et leur mendicité d'être un résultat regrettable de la pauvreté rurale accentuée. Au Mali, des familles qui envoient leurs enfants au Sénégal prônent une *pédagogie de souffrance* pour inculquer le respect et la discipline. Là où le *discours transnational de la traite* décrit les maîtres coraniques comme des criminels qui envoient leurs élèves à mendier, le *discours local d'écoles vulnérables* les voit comme des éducateurs légitimes. Pour ces acteurs, ils sont eux-mêmes victimes de la répression coloniale et d'un system éducatif négligé jusqu'à présent. Dans cette thèse, je documente comment chacun de ces discours a pris forme et ce qui se passe quand ils convergent sur le terrain. Cette thèse est le rapport de 10 mois de recherches ethnographiques originales au Sénégal et au Mali en 2010, 10 semaines de recherches de terrain au Sénégal en 2007, et plusieurs années d'expérience à étudier et travailler au Sénégal et en Guinée entre 2002 et 2006.

J'ai trouvé que ces discours divergents, d'*écoles vulnérables* et de *la traite* se choquent sur le terrain pour perpétuer la souffrance des enfants. Les interventions de lutte contre la traite humaine sur le terrain ont échouées à condamner les exploiteurs. En tant que groupe, les maîtres coraniques défendent leur droit de faire mendier les *taalibes*. Ils reclament que la pratique est un élément intégral à la réalisation des droits des enfants et des familles de choisir une éducation religieuse. Ainsi, dans une politique de compassion, les acteurs qui entourent les *taalibes dansent entre les discours* en racontant des récits discordants de la souffrance des enfants, visant à rallier de soutien pour leurs activités. Ceci aboutit à l'approvisionnement de centaines de milliers de dollars en aide destinés à des écoles coraniques éparpillées, pendant que l'attention soit détournée de la défaillance de l'état d'accommoder ces écoles au niveau national et de poursuivre les offenseurs dans des cas d'abus documentés. Les *taalibes* du Sénégal sont au centre de couteux campagnes promotionnelles de droits, cependant, ma thèse éclaircit que les garçons en question restent dépourvus d'aucun droit exigible. Des milliers d'entre eux continuent à endurer la mendicité forcée et de vivre dans des conditions qui menacent leur développement sain.

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List of Acronyms

CAPE	The Senegalese state's "Support Cell for the Protection of Childhood," (*Cellule d'Appui à la Protection de l'Enfance*)
CNAECS	National Collective of Qur'anic School Associations of Senegal (*Collectif National des Associations des Ecoles Coraniques du Sénégal*)
CPI	*Counterpart International, Senegal*, NGO
CRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
CTS	Technical follow-up committee (*Comité Technique de Suivie*), a supervisory council established by the Senegalese government comprised of state, local and NGO actors to administer and monitor aid packages.
DPDE	*Direction de la Protection des Droits de l'Enfant* (Administration for the Protection of Children's Rights), a government office situated within the Senegalese Minstry of the Family.
ECOWAS/CEDEAO	Economic Community Of West African States (in French CEDEAO, *Communauté économique des États de l'Afrique de l'Ouest*)
EFA	Education for All
ENDA	Or ENDA-TM, *Environment Development Action in the Third World,* a transnational NGO based in Dakar, Senegal.
fCFA	West African francs (currency), (francs, *Communauté Financière Africaine)*
HCI	Mali's *High Islamic Council* (*Haut Conseil Islamique*)
HRW	*Human Rights Watch*
IID	*Islamic Institute of Dakar* (*Institut Islamique de Dakar*)
ILO	*International Labour Organization*

IOM	*International Organization for Migration*
MPFEF	The Malian Ministry for the Promotion of the Woman, the Child and the Family (*Ministère pour la Promotion de la Femme, de l'Enfant et de la Famille*)
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PARRER	A state/non-state Senegalese "Partnership for the Retraction and Reinsertion of Children in the Streets" (*Partenariat pour le Retrait et Reinsertion des Enfants de la Rue*).
RAFY	*Action Network Foudé and Yaguine* (*Reseau d'action Foudé et Yaguine*), a Malian network of non-profits and volunteers focused on aiding victims of child trafficking.
RFI	*Radio France Internationale*
TFP	The Senegalese state's Trilingualism and Professional Training (*Trilingisme et Formation Professionelle*) project for *daaras*.
TIP	*Trafficking in Persons*, as in the United States Department of State Report
UCW	*Understanding Children's Work*, an inter-agency research cooperation initiative involving the ILO, UNICEF and the World Bank.
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights, (UN 1948)
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	*United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*
UNICEF	*United Nations Children's Fund*
USAID-EDB	USAID – *Education de Base*, or a joint initiative between the *United States Agency for International Development* and the Senegalese government's Ministry of Education to promote quality primary school education.
BBC	*British Broadcasting Corporation*
NPR	*National Public Radio* (US)

Glossary of Foreign Terms

Centre Ginddi	*Ginddi* Center, a government-run shelter for children in Dakar, Senegal.
daara	A Qur'anic school in Senegal with the principal objective to memorize the Qur'an.
Dina	The Peul Empire of Maasina (in modern-day Mali), a theocratic Islamic state called the *Dina* (also *Diina*) which endured for approximately 44 years from 1818 to 1862 (see chapter six).
Inspection des Daaras	The Senegalese government office charged with implementing and overseeing interventions targeting the *daara* Qur'anic schools.
marabout	A French term meaning Muslim religious sage. The term is frequently used interchangeably with *seriñ* to mean Qur'anic master or religious guide, however it is not used as a title of address (see *seriñ*).
seriñ	Also spelled *serigne*, a Wolof term meaning religious sage in Senegal. Within this text, the term mostly refers to a Qur'anic master. The term is frequently used before the surname as a title in reference to a Qur'anic master or religious guide, like Mr. or Mrs. (E.g. *Seriñ* Barry).
taalibe	Also spelled *talibé*, a Qur'anic school pupil. The term is often used by activists to refer to mostly to young begging boys in Senegal and some neighboring countries.
titre de voyage	A "travel card" issued to children in Mali to authorize and record international travel.

Chapter 1 – Introduction:

Stories of Suffering and Politics of Compassion

It takes a village to raise a child… but it takes a governing authority to give that child rights.

Story 1:

A seven-year-old boy, Babacar, fled the Dakar Qur'anic school where his father placed him because he said that he got "too tired" there. He reported that his Qur'anic master, who forced him and scores of other children to beg in the city streets for money, would beat him if he did not bring back the 500 West African francs (approximately 1 USD) that was required of him every day. One day he did not manage to gather enough money and he was afraid to return to his daara. He chose to sleep in the street rather than face another brutal beating. That is how social workers found Babacar and brought them into a shelter for children in crisis. Babacar was taken out of his natal farming village in Mali about two years ago under the pretext of studying the Islamic holy text, but since then he has only memorized 3 surats or chapters (out of 114), leaving him far from completing his task of memorizing the entire Qur'an. The Qur'anic master responsible for Babacar does not live with the children, does not pay any utilities for their squalorous shelter, and does not provide them with any food - they eat what they can while begging. The children's youthful and ragged appearances allow them to amass generous sums, which accumulate in the hands of their master. The Qur'anic master, or more accurately, "fake" Qur'anic master, shamelessly feeds himself, his two wives and several children with these children's begging revenues.

Story 2:

Moussa was five years old when his impoverished peasant parents placed him with a Qur'anic master in Dakar, Senegal to learn the Muslim holy text. They did not live near a school, and even if they did, they did not have enough money to take care of Moussa so that he could study full-time. They were much obliged to Seriñ Ba, a Malian Qur'anic master who opened a school in Dakar, to accept Moussa without payment, with the understanding that Moussa would do his part to earn his keep. In Dakar, the only way that Seriñ Ba could make ends meet as a full-time Islamic instructor, was to ask the children to beg to feed themselves, and gather alms to pay for the school's operating costs. The school regularly takes in enough money thanks to Senegal's longstanding tradition of religious almsgiving. Learning the Qur'an is difficult, according to Seriñ Ba, so it is for that reason that he enforces strict discipline in his Qur'anic school, involving corporal punishment if necessary. He claims that this is necessary out of reverence for the holy subject matter, as well as to maintain order in a school with up to 50 pupils. After two years of studying, Moussa still has only learned 3 surats of the Qur'an. Seriñ Ba reports that the slow progress of his pupils is lamentable, as it is directly related to his own lack of means. "If I had something with which to feed the children and pay the schools' bills, I could teach them all day. But, because I do not have any means, I am

forced to send them out regularly." Moussa got "too tired" of this harrowing training, and fled his Qur'anic school. He was picked up by social workers from a Dakar shelter, to whom he expressed a desire to return home to Mali to learn to cultivate crops with his father.

It may shock readers to know that both story one and story two above are based on information about a single boy, whom I will only name here as "a *taalibe* boy". *Taalibe* is a local term in West Africa meaning a Qur'anic school student, or a *disciple* of Islam. The *taalibe* boy who is the subject of the two stories above will remain anonymous in this dissertation to exemplify the ways in which his own voice and face is harnessed in the diverging discourses that tell stories of his suffering. This dissertation explains how I was able to write two apparently conflicting vignettes about a single *taalibe* boy's experiences, as well as why transnational and local interlocutors have created these diverging accounts behind his predicament as a child beggar.

A visitor to Dakar, Senegal today will see a bustling, developing, African port city[1]. They will also see streets filled with begging boys. There are thousands of these children[2]. One can go to a cinema, dine on fine French or African cuisine, or check the weather forecast on a smart phone through the local 3G+ network. One cannot do any of these things, however, without passing crowds of *taalibes* with outstretched palms calling "*Ngir Yalla…ngir Yalla…*" meaning "for God's sake". It struck me as strange, during the course of my fieldwork in Dakar, that the local people seemed indifferent to the presence of the masses of children in the streets. Rather, these children were an integral part of Dakar city life, not "invisible,[3]" yet not shocking. As *taalibe* Qur'anic school pupils, these children are allowed to go on begging because they embody a critical intersection between the poor and the wealthy, between pre-colonial and post-colonial Africa, and between Islam and the West.

Upon looking at these youths, some as young as four or five years old, one can recognize their almost uniform dress: torn, oversized, and blackened second-hand tee-shirts which drape down like dresses upon the boys' bodies –highlighting their frail frames. Their signature begging bowls are large, red tomato paste cans which they use to collect alms, including money and food. The children eat the leftover foods that they gather, and they hand over the money and other items

[1] Dakar's estimated population as of 2011 is approximately 1 million (UN Data 2013). The population of both countries is increasing rates of 2.48% and 3% respectively.

[2] A 2007 report by the inter-agency research group Understanding Children's Work (UCW) of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), UNICEF and the World Bank, reported that there are approximately 6480 *taalibes* who beg everyday in the metropolitan area of Dakar, Senegal.

[3] Some actors have described street children as "invisible" (UNICEF 2005; Hecht 2000:158 (ch..9 146-160, in *Abandoned Children*, Catherine Panter-Brick, Malcolm T. Smith, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.)

to their Qur'anic masters. These figures, called *seriñs* in Wolof, and *marabouts* in French, generally require their pupils to bring back fixed amounts of money from begging every day. In Senegal and Mali, where over 94% of the population is Muslim[4], it is popularly understood that this begging revenue is necessary to allow the poor religious schools, called *daaras* locally, to operate. The high rates of almsgiving in Dakar draw schools to the city from rural areas throughout the region, rendering the *taalibes*' presence in the streets both normal and necessary.

This scene - of thousands of begging children - has raised suspicions of child exploitation and trafficking. Transnational observers, including global non-governmental (NGOs), activist journalists and filmmakers, United Nations (UN) agencies and the US Department of State, make a compelling case that *taalibe* begging is actually a multi-million dollar child trafficking industry operating under the guise of religious education (USTIP 2012; HRW 2010). They report that when the children fail to bring their quota of begging revenues they are brutally beaten. The children are said to spend little to no time studying and they live in squalor, hundreds to thousands of kilometers from their families. Non-profit groups have responded by creating shelters for *taalibe* boys who flee violence in their schools, providing medical and food aid, and creating programs that repatriate *taalibes* and reintegrate them into their home communities. Some groups strive to reduce begging by aiding Qur'anic schools with operating costs and reinforcing their educational capacities. In my own work I have observed increasing numbers of aid projects targeting Qur'anic students in Senegal and Mali from 2007 to 2010. But in that interval there was no apparent reduction in the number of begging boys. Consequently, local and international journalists appear to be merely cutting and pasting news content from years past about the *taalibe* begging problem as they continue to decry its persistence in Senegal's cities.

The question that drives this dissertation is: *With so many groups of actors so utterly concerned about the taalibes, why does the situation remain effectively unchanged year after year?* Prominent NGOs are creating nation-wide "*taalibe* projects" and the state is willingly cooperating with intervention efforts to reform the country's Qur'anic education sector. Qur'anic masters too have forged relationships with the state and NGOs in attempt to improve learning in their schools. In other words, the problem here is not one of local "resistance" to outsider intervention. Indeed, I find much cooperation among actors in the current maintenance of the status quo. Rather, the problem lies in determining the short- and long-term goals of humanitarian assistance and children's rights promotion. What

[4] The US CIA (2014b) website estimates that Senegal's population is 94% Muslim (5% Christian, and 1% "indigenous beliefs". According to the Malian 2009 census Mali's population is nearly 95% Muslim (2.4% Christian).

difference does it make for a *taalibe* to have two years of medical and food aid, if he is still forced to beg, he still lives in conditions of squalor, and his post-school employment prospects remain limited? Or, alternatively, what difference does it make for a *taalibe* to learn "life skills" and "mathematics" two days a week when he is beaten and forced to beg daily until he finally flees and tries to survive in the streets? Finally, what difference does it make to a *taalibe* if his *daara* is being "modernized" by the state if that effectively only means that he can now learn on desks and chairs rather than on mats on the floor?

At the same time, should impoverished parents have the right to choose live-in Qur'anic education for their children over public schools that they see as anti-Muslim colonial impositions, regardless of the fact that they do not have the money to pay for their instruction? In other words, due to their long, complicated religio-political history, these schools occupy a powerful social position in terms of educating West African Muslim youths. Whose place is it to say that they cannot strive to survive as they have for centuries, privately and based on children's labor and begging? My question, in this case, is how does one determine the children's short- and long-term "best interests" in order to promote their rights? Do parents have the right to expect their children to beg? Does a child have the right to refuse?

My objective in writing this thesis is to make evident the ways in which a multitude of *well-meaning* interventions, costing in the billions of dollars, can actually end up maintaining the status quo on the ground. The *taalibe* children are the targets of significant aid, but also they appear to be the only people *not* benefitting from it. Diverse actors, including the Senegalese state, NGOs, and Qur'anic masters come together on the ground in a way that leads to long-term inaction with respect to first, eliminating *taalibe* begging and second, improving their education. Perplexingly, in my project, compassion does not equal relief, and aid does not mean help. In fact, one of the reasons why begging has become such a big business in Dakar is the city's exceptionally generous popular alms-giving. Intervening actors strive to promote the *taalibes*' "best interests", either through rights to freedom from exploitation or rights to a quality education. However, most of these intervening actors are salaried workers – they get paid to promote the *taalibes*' rights (which as of now is no net change) regardless of the outcome.

My goal is not to simply criticize humanitarian aid to the *taalibes* as ineffective. Rather, I strive to demonstrate why asking how to better distribute aid is the wrong question. My analysis does not focus on assessing the success or failure of particular aid projects with respect to specific objectives. Instead, I reflect on how the actions of the ensemble of state and non-state actors,

including donors and recipients, impact the human rights outcomes for the *taalibes* in the short- and long-term. I contextualize intervention strategies within larger socio-cultural processes and belief structures to understand their actual and potential outcomes. I reflect on the historical and contemporary political and religious factors that underlie *taalibe* begging, as well as the economic realities that cause its persistence. In other words, I present the whole picture as I see it – my ethnographic "slice of life.[5]" To my driving question – *why are the taalibes still begging despite much aid?* – my response is simple – because nobody is stopping them, neither the NGOs nor the state. Regardless of the number of aid projects implemented, as long as the Senegalese state continues turn a blind eye to forced *taalibe* begging – there will be forced *taalibe* begging. State and non-state actors alike sanction the state's continued impunity through recourse to conflicting accounts of the underlying impetus for *taalibe* begging.

Intervening actors, including the Senegalese state and NGOs, articulate the *taalibe* problem as it fits into their intervention strategies – usually within one of two discourses that I have identified: *taalibes* as victims of child trafficking, and *taalibes* as students of vulnerable schools. Within these discourses, actors tell *stories of suffering taalibes*. Yet because these stories give opposing explanations for *taalibe* begging, I find that their clash on the ground produces justified inaction rather than enhanced intervention. In the *trafficking discourse*, *taalibes* are victims of a vicious crime – forced into exploitation by unscrupulous, profit-hungry, fake religious instructors. In the *vulnerable schools discourse*, there are no such evil perpetrators. There are merely impoverished regions, which produce poor families. Poor families then give their children to Qur'anic masters for free education, and these poor schools migrate to cities to depend on the charity of a generous population. In theory, actors who adhere to the *trafficking discourse* would never donate to Qur'anic masters as a means of reducing the amount of time *taalibes* spend begging. For them such almsgiving would in effect be rewarding criminal behavior. Instead, they would call for prosecution of Qur'anic masters as perpetrators of a serious international human rights crime. In contrast, those actors who adhere to the *vulnerable schools discourse* see the appropriate response to rampant *taalibe* begging to be providing aid to the boys and their schools. This aid may take the form of adding coins to a *taalibe*'s tomato paste begging can, providing leftovers to a hungry boy, or donating sacks of rice to a Qur'anic master.

When these two discourses come together on the ground in Senegal – inaction ensues. When a Qur'anic master is identified as criminally neglectful, for example, the neglect can

[5] Phrase borrowed from my PhD supervisor, Sandra Hyde.

subsequently be explained away as an unavoidable result of systemically-entrenched, historically-rooted Qur'anic school poverty. Rather than face criminal prosecution, the Qur'anic master may become a candidate for aid. In another example, a 2010 Human Rights Watch report launched a scathing critique at the government of Senegal for failing to condemn the mass child trafficking taking place under the guise of Qur'anic education. Under transnational pressure, the state of Senegal banned street begging in Dakar. President Wade subsequently reversed the ban under pressure from local Qur'anic master organizations. To ban begging, it was called trafficking. Then to reverse the ban, begging was rearticulated as survival.

When the Dakar begging ban was announced, Qur'anic master associations throughout Senegal were up in arms. After having participated in various negotiations with the state on issues of Qur'anic school curriculum and regulation, the leaders of the national collective of Qur'anic master associations felt betrayed by the sudden attempt to deprive countless Qur'anic masters of their only means to sustain their schools. With NGO guidance, Qur'anic masters throughout the region are working to tell their own stories about the history of Qur'anic education and of begging as sustenance and pedagogy to create a new path toward state-Qur'anic school cooperation. This cooperation aims to subsidize and reform the system into a "modern" educational sector. This "modernization" entails incorporating basic primary school elements into the curriculum to meet the needs of Senegal's citizens who refuse French language public schools as a form of continued post-colonial religious resistance to Western influence.

Activists and human rights organizations make sure that abusive exploitation has become increasingly visible, so much so that government officials readily admit there must be traffickers who need to be found and brought to justice. And yet these "traffickers" are never actually found, and justice is never served. This is because when face to face with a Qur'anic master who forces his *taalibes* to beg, officials inevitably recognize him as merely an impoverished teacher, not a trafficker. In other words, at the clash of these two discourses, Qur'anic masters can either be "real" Qur'anic masters, or traffickers and therefore "fake" teachers. Popular interpretations leave no room for the possibility that "real" Qur'anic masters are also trafficking children. The "fakes", however, remain *specters* – openly talked about as "shady" and "dubious" characters, but they are never actually seen – as if they are lurking around out there somewhere and exploiting children from hidden lairs. In the meantime, "real" Qur'anic masters with begging *taalibes* are simply declared as in need of assistance.

Aid organizations support the supposition that the state government of Senegal does not actually have the means necessary to support *taalibe* education on a national scale. They have

therefore taken up the responsibility to help shape and implement the state's plans to "modernize" the Qur'anic sector, meaning to both control and support it. NGO activity to help the *taalibes* throughout the country, in turn, effectively frees the state government from shelling out public support. Short-term and limited-scope aid projects incite aided Qur'anic masters to constantly seek out new and different projects to maintain support. Aid distribution is scattered geographically and is clustered in urban areas, leaving most impoverished rural Qur'anic schools without support. Many of them end up migrating to cities.

Meanwhile, voices from the *trafficking discourse* help to mobilize international donor funds by shocking audiences with graphic stories of horrific abuse. The powerful local *vulnerable schools discourse* then assures that this money will go to aiding impoverished Qur'anic masters - the very people that the *trafficking discourse* describes as human traffickers. In most cases, this aid does nothing to stop begging because it is not enough to cover all of a given Qur'anic school's operating costs, and it does not even touch the majority of Qur'anic schools. Organizations intervening in increasing numbers are actively *doing what they are supposed to be doing* – securing funding and provisioning aid, yet this activity which maintains their own organizations leaves the cycle of begging unabated. In other words, groups mobilize funding to combat child exploitation (within the *trafficking discourse*) and then they turn around and provide limited aid packages to Qur'anic schools (within the *vulnerable schools discourse*) that are inconsequential with respect to the alleged exploitation. Borrowing the words of one of my Qur'anic master informants, "tee-shirts" and "cleaning days" are not the kinds of support that the Qur'anic schools need to stop begging.

While the *taalibes* remain begging, the result of this cycle is not the status quo. Both the intervening NGOs and the Qur'anic master beneficiaries find opportunities to financially reinforce their short-term activities. This fervent aid-based activity, without movement with respect to the initial problem, makes me think of a gerbil running on a wheel – energetically throttling itself forward with no net gain. Yet the provision of aid is not a solitary activity - it brings diverse actors together, often in circumstances of plenty and consumption, such as, and often as, individuals at a gala. Depending on whether one is mingling with donors or recipient partners, one's framing of the problems at hand might shift concurrently. This is why I call this frenetic reframing of the problems facing the *taalibes* a *dance between discourses* – where the adult interlocutors circle to and fro to advance their groups' interests, but where the *taalibes* themselves are denied admission.

These two discourses, the *trafficking discourse* and the *vulnerable schools discourse*, meet on the ground in Senegal at the *taalibe* child. Voices decrying mass *taalibe* trafficking, such as the watchdog

organization Human Rights Watch, tell stories of evil, fraudulent Qur'anic masters who mercilessly beat hoards of enslaved children to profit from their begging. While this emotive story can stir indignation within Western audiences, feeding off of compassion for the *taalibes* as universalized, vulnerable children in need of protection – it does not have the same effect in Senegal. There, Qur'anic masters are not perceived as traffickers. Far from evil, they maintain control over coveted spiritual knowledge and blessings. Likewise, the *taalibes* are not (generally) perceived as intentionally exploited. The *taalibes* – as part of their religious path, are supposed to suffer. In other words, missing from the trafficking story locally in Senegal are clear perpetrators, clear victims, and even clear evidence of the crime of trafficking for exploitation.

Today many people of Senegal recognize that live-in migratory Qur'anic schools may not be an optimal choice for children in terms of education and health. But they would hesitate to accuse Qur'anic masters of being traffickers. Yet, in the face of accusations of trafficking from abroad, voices from the *vulnerable schools discourse* claim to be on a witch hunt for traffickers. But, the figure of the *evil, fake marabout* that they are searching for is only a specter that none of the invoking actors actually intend to find. Exploiters remain elusive and aid continues. Inasmuch, where the transnational *trafficking discourse* meets the *vulnerable schools discourse* in Senegal, their clash will continue to haunt efforts to promote the human rights of the *taalibe* children.

Children's Human Rights as Rights to Humanitarian Aid

Transnational initiatives aiding populations of children deemed vulnerable, such as the *taalibes* of Senegal, take various forms. Some bring food and medical relief to children and communities in need, and others primarily strive to increase child access to quality education to attain the World Health Organization Millennium Development Goal of "Education for All" (EFA). Some groups may have development-oriented goals to aid children by helping their families, communities and nations achieve increased economic development, and some promote "children's right" to have a voice in policies and interventions which affect them. With respect to the *taalibes*, all of these types of interventions are currently being carried out by transnational actors, the Senegalese national government, and local voluntary associations. Observations on the ground allow me to note that much of this "rights promotion" is, however, directed at the short-term relief of suffering. I show in chapter seven that these time-limited, suffering-based projects are not promoting the *taalibes*' human rights over the long term.

That intervening organizations focus on providing relief for the *taalibes* rather than promoting active rights is understandable. *Taalibes* are considered, and frequently are, a particularly vulnerable population of children, as victims of exploitation through forced begging, human trafficking, physical and psychological abuse and neglect within an environment of endemic regional poverty (HRW 2010; UCW 2007; World Bank 2013). Transnational aid and voluntary organizations that encounter needy populations like the *taalibes* direct their efforts at first ensuring their survival before reflecting on their long term active rights. Indeed, this role to protect children in the Global South when state governments fall short was enshrined directly into the 1989 United National Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)[6].

Long before the role of transnational actors was encoded into the CRC to preserve children's rights, the moral imperative to save children or to "return them to childhood" was already formulated (Valentin & Meinert 2009; Stephens 1995; Burman 1994). While religious charities had been operating on the African continent since the 19th Century, the period post-WWII issued in a new area of global humanitarianism. Actors of the Global North normalized the concepts of "humanitarian war" and "just intervention" (Barnett & Weiss 2008; Pandolfi 2008). During that time, a new moral imperative to intervene into the affairs of sovereign states arose in cases of extreme suffering and inhumane violence. Relief agencies created to reconstruct post-war Europe later shifted their attention to suffering in the Global South, specializing in development and poverty alleviation (Barnett & Weiss 2008).

By contrast, "children's rights" as a liberation movement only gained momentum in the 1970s first in the US alongside other civil rights movements (Farson 1974). The encounter between this American concern with children's rights, and child saving initiatives already underway, resulted in a movement that encompasses diverging trajectories – both to protect children and also to empower them. An oft-cited quote of Hillary Rodham (Clinton) at that time refers to children's rights as "a slogan in search of a definition" (Rodham 1973). Still today, twenty-five years after the CRC, rather than a united rights "movement", children's rights might be better seen as a pluralism of rights discourses (Lau 2007).

Violence framed by transnational media as a human rights crime is often that perpetrated by state governments or rogue non-state groups. Acts considered human rights violations, such as those brought to the International Criminal Court, have generally consisted of abuses of state power

[6] It is the responsibility of states to ensure that the basic human rights of its citizens are being upheld, but when such duties extend beyond their "available resources", they are expected to seek necessary help through the "framework of international co-operation" (CRC 1989, Article 4).

and have been of a political nature, such as the silencing, persecution or torture of particular sub-groups of the population to prevent them from gaining certain powers or freedoms. However, children's human rights abuses as they are flagged by intervening groups are highly variable and tend not to take the form of political repression. Rather, these abuses include neglect on the part of citizens and failure on the part of the institutions of the nation-state to provide children with the basic necessities for healthy development, and protections from abuse and exploitation. This then is the major difference between human rights promotion for adults and international children's rights initiatives – the fight for freedoms versus sustenance aid and behavioral change campaigns directed at families.

First as candidates for humanitarian aid, and now as children's rights claimants, there has been a significant transnational assistance for the *taalibe* boys since their emergence on the global scene in the 1990s as victims of poverty and human trafficking. Their faces and stories as suffering children remain powerful images for inspiring humanitarian responses (Manzo 2008; Roth 2004; Sontag 2003; Kleinman & Kleinman 1997; Burman 1994). Moreover, the standard *taalibe story* pulls particularly hard at compassionate onlookers' heart strings - and pocketbooks – since theirs, in addition to being a story of hardship and poverty, is also a Manichean tale of human trafficking and violent abuse (Vance 2011; Fassin 2010; Niezen 2010; Boltanski 1999). In aid circles, the egregious violation of the *taalibes'* human rights and particularly the fact that these abuses are happening to children, helps to confirm their status as innocent victims, making them particularly worthy aid recipients (Bornstein 2010; Friedus 2010; Cheney 2007; Rosen 2007; Wells 2007; Malkki 1996).

It can be assumed that individual donors expect that their aid will provide some degree of relief for these suffering children, but relief from immediate suffering does not always translate into the long-term realization of human rights for individuals or populations. In fact, it may be serving as a psychological relief for donors at least as much as it contributes to the relief from suffering of recipients (see chapter five). If private groups, rather than the state, take up a significant role in ensuring the protection of children's rights, and human rights more broadly in a given setting, what does this mean for children's rights and human rights as *rights*? The modern human rights system was created and has developed within the context of nation-states (Donnelly 2003). Thus the language of "rights" as such means that the children have claims to protections and provisions that can be made, ideally, on their own governments. Can rights claims be rightly or effectively made on these private groups – who are frequently "foreign" and "voluntary" and do not have the same long-

term responsibility for the people in the territory as an elected government? Moreover, can these private groups uphold these rights?

Gready & Ensor (2005:5) have argued that we are in the midst of a "second human rights revolution" that places responsibility to protect human rights beyond the nation-state. They claim that human rights, despite subscribing to the same language of rights and obligations, are no longer based on the social contract that gave way to conceptions of civic rights and entitlements reclaimed from the responsible state government in exchange for lawfulness and support. In a globalizing world, "government has become governance" and responsibility to uphold human rights is shared among actors, from the household level to the transnational level (ibid:6). They point out that, "Most rights are violated and secured in everyday life and relationships, in social and political processes", and so one should avoid the "legal reflex" which can "serve to preclude combination strategies, that may include but go beyond the law" (ibid:9). For them, this is precisely why grass-roots and transnational organizations' roles in human rights-based approaches to development and humanitarianism today are crucial to finding more comprehensive, cooperative solutions to human rights problems. This perspective mirrors assumptions that NGOs are in closer proximity to populations than governments, and are harbingers of community participation and representation – an assumption which has been questioned by many (Schuller 2007; Pfeiffer 2003; Crewe & Harrison 1998).

In the case of children and children's rights, indeed most rights are secured and violated within everyday relationships, as mentioned by Gready & Ensor (2005), and within families and local communities. I contend in this thesis, however, that the micro-scale of abuses is precisely why these violations may better be addressed by civil and legal structures within nation-states and communities, rather than through the direct provision of aid from global actors drawing on the human rights framework. Vanessa Pupavac (2001) notes that global children's rights efforts, which she claims comprise an "the international children's rights regime", may not necessarily serve to curb abuses, all while wresting decision-making power away from parents and communities and placing it with third-party "experts". To perceive the relief-based actions of NGOs as fulfilling human rights claims may simply end up obscuring the legal responsibility of the state to intervene, while leaving populations without a clear entity upon which to make enforceable demands. Despite so much transnational attention to the case of the *taalibes* and their rights, the only right that they can feasibly claim, at least for the moment, is that to humanitarian aid.

The Politics of Compassion

Compassion is central to the alms and aid markets that I witnessed surrounding the *taalibe* children of Senegal. It helps to shore up the resources for immediate assistance, but compassion does not equal long-term planning, as it is primarily a reaction to present suffering rather than derived from the structural inequalities that contribute to this suffering (Adams 2013). Humanitarian actions can range from giving charity in the street or through a website, to physically pulling victims off a battlefield. Rather than speaking of particular types of actions that can be considered humanitarian in essence, Peter Redfield (2005:330) defines the term through the actors' common "humanitarian desire to alleviate the suffering of others." This central focus on relieving immediate human suffering allows actors to strive for impartiality and neutrality, fundamental precepts, although disputed, of global humanitarian work today (Redfield 2010, 2006; Terry 2002).

This "humanitarian impulse" is very often inspired by feelings of compassion or pity upon hearing of or witnessing the suffering of others (Bornstein 2012; Bornstein & Redfield 2010). These feelings are then harnessed and promoted in what French sociologist Luc Boltanski calls a *politics of pity*, or "a politics which takes hold of suffering in order to make of it a political argument" (Boltanski 1999:33-34). This pity for suffering others, which fuels much of the aid industry globally as well as influences all levels of global policy development Boltanski argues, is not solidarity, nor is it the promotion of civil or political rights or justice. A politics of pity can arouse political and charitable sentiments, but it is not in essence remediating, and may produce no or negative consequences for the sufferers. Only when a "politics of pity" for suffering is coupled with responses which shift the status quo away from suffering can pity be related to solidarity, human rights promotion, or social justice. To describe these disjunctures among sentiments, actions and outcomes, Didier Fassin (2010:269) uses the language of needing to couple "humanitarian emotion" with "humanitarian reason".

It is as this point – where pity for suffering boys in Senegal stirs powerful emotions in onlookers – that I find that much aid destined for the *taalibe* children stops at the humanitarian emotion, aimed at appeasing immediate needs, at making children smile, or at a relieving onlookers' malaise. Simply alleviating the visible signs of the suffering of these children leaves responses in the realm of emotions of the onlookers, the donors, and the volunteers – emotions which are often quieted through the humanitarian acts themselves. This is while, when the projects conclude, the *taalibes* as recipients are left to face a future of recurrent suffering.

This trend is not counter to the stated goals of humanitarian aid, indeed, the very *raison d'etre* of humanitarian aid is to provide immediate short-term, non-political assistance in cases of crisis to save lives and reduce suffering. Craig Calhoun (2010:33) explains that "Humanitarian action deals with humanity at large, those to whom we have obligations precisely because they are human, not because we share some more specific civic solidarity to them." Humanitarian aid's fortés in emergency crisis situations – to indiscriminately save lives - are precisely its weaknesses in situations of systemic suffering. When targeted populations, such as the *taalibe* boys of Senegal, are not experiencing suffering as an exception, but rather as the norm of their existence, then temporary relief efforts result in a constant state of searching for relief from suffering (Redfield 2010; Pandolfi 2010).

In his examination of humanitarian intervention by *Médecins Sans Frontières* in Uganda, Peter Redfield (2010:173) refers to this distinction as "classic forms of crisis" versus more "ambiguous" ones only "on the verge of future disaster". In the latter case, humanitarian concerns expand beyond the "clearly dire" which in turn expands their temporal frame (ibid:174). This consideration of potential future crisis within the enterprise suddenly clouds the limits of humanitarian intervention, placing much discretion into the hands of humanitarian actors themselves to assess forms of suffering and their immediate or impending urgency (Ticktin 2011).

Human rights campaigns operate in a realm of pity and media similar to relief approaches. Human rights enforcement has tended to be in the form of reactions, usually to the most egregious and shocking violations (Niezen 2010). In the case of the *taalibes*, documenting and displaying the boys' suffering for the world to see has become a principle strategy for human rights promotion (Roth 2004; i.e. HRW 2010). But in reality, rather than promote rights – such as long-term social or economic justice – this exhibition of suffering tends to spur further humanitarian desire, translated into money, for the relief of immediate suffering.

Forced *taalibe* begging in Senegal is a long-standing complex phenomenon rooted in cultural and religious praxis, historical and contemporary politics, and endemic regional poverty. Yet, activists have framed the problem as new and emerging: media reports on the problem consistently frame *taalibe* children as victims of child trafficking hidden within a newly corrupted system of Qur'anic education. Close examination of the history of Qur'anic education has shown, however, that many of the problems being flagged today existed at least a century ago in similar forms (Marty 1917). The inability of the myriad intervening organizations to curb *taalibe* begging at all over the last two decades indicates that the problem cannot be resolved by a sudden swoop of "mobile

sovereignties" descending into the territory and aiding for a period of years to pull the boys out of the crisis (Pandolfi 2010).

Where does the moral imperative for humanitarian intervention factor into endemic crisis situations such as this one? The *taalibes* make up an entire sub-population of children that is systematically excluded from state support as well as child protection laws – their suffering is the rule, not the exception. The imperative to intervene to ease this habitual suffering renders those children simultaneously permanent objects of suffering and perpetual targets of aid. Caught in this reactionary aid cycle, they are not able to reclaim rights as citizens or act as social agents, rather they are stripped down to their bare existence, or *homo sacer*, an ancient Roman legal category that Giorgio Agamben relates to modern politico-juridical systems' temporary and haphazard preservation of mere "bare life" without social or political rights (Agamben 2005).

Beyond not actually relieving most *taalibe* boys' suffering, providing time-limited humanitarian aid to *taalibes* may actually thwart efforts to promote their rights as social actors over the long term. This aid does not reserve *taalibes* the right to protection from exploitation, to the freedom of conscience or religion, or to meaningful participation in policy-making that affects them. Under the guise of "rights-promotion", humanitarian aid may merely be assuaging actors' desire to promote their human rights. A comprehensive rights-based approach, by contrast, would necessarily consider the longer-term impacts of the ensemble of transnational actors on individuals' abilities to make claims on governing bodies. To restore the element of "right" to children's rights promotion would be a vision more aligned with preserving the dignity of children as rights claimants, finding solutions that are systemic, not reactionary.

Children's Voices and *Taalibes*' Best Interests

Anthropological studies involving children have moved from an adult-centered perspective toward a child-centered approach. Current scholars have noted that classic research mostly treated children as physical bodies (Schwartzman 2001), or "becomings" on a path toward adulthood (James & Prout 1997). In 1973 Charlotte Hardman (504) pointed out how the American "culture and personality" school of anthropological research saw children as "passive objects," rather than active subjects. She contended that this developmental psychology approach painted children "as helpless spectators in a pressing environment which affects and produces their every behavior." In 2002 Lawrence Hirschfeld similarly challenged anthropologists to study children as active social agents. "Why don't anthropologists like children?" he provocatively asked (Hirschfeld 2002). For him and

numerous other advocates for child-centered anthropology (e.g. James 2007; Gottlieb 2004; Nieuwenhuys 1996; Stephens 1995; Benthall 1992), anthropologists should be studying children as research subjects "in their own right" and not with the applied intention to learn how to shape their learning or development.

Scholars of children's rights echo these concerns, remarking on how children's voices have been muted in society much like they have been in scholarship (Freeman 1998:436). As the CRC's underlying premise of best interests is "value-laden and often indeterminate" (Freeman 2010:216), Michael Freeman (1998) advocates that scholars embrace the CRC to empower children themselves to speak out and participate in decisions and scholarly work that concern them. James and James (2004) agree that children's voices are a critical component to first assessing children's viewpoints and then allowing them to participate in determining their own best interests. At the same time, Alison James (2007) and others (e.g. Roberts 2008; Reynolds, et al. 2006) point out how scholarly and activist uses of children's voices must be critically examined to avoid claiming undue authority to interpret their words. Reynolds, et al. (2006), for example, caution that "the very invitation to express views (hear others' views) may underscore the presences of a listener, a higher power, who will decide." Here, "participation" is patronage hidden by a public show of shared decision-making.

While I was conducting research on the state and non-state interventions targeting the *taalibes* in Senegal, I observed that the *taalibes* themselves were silent, even when their words were quoted. Debates surrounding child begging in Senegal were fueled by adult actors' varying claims of how to best speak for the *taalibes* and their "best interests." Parents handing their children over to Qur'anic masters articulate hopes for education through suffering and spiritual blessings. This is while they praise children who "don't say anything" (*ne disent rien*) (see chapter four). Qur'anic masters proclaim children's rights to an Islamic education, even if this necessitates their begging. The Senegalese state maintains that *taalibes* need "modern" schools coupled with the sector's regulation, although it has not yet carried through with these plans. NGOs regroup local and transnational childhood ideals to create a laundry list of goods and services in the *taalibes*' "best interests," from medical and food aid to enhanced learning and reduced begging. Watchdog rights organizations, like Human Rights Watch, claim that *taalibe* begging in Senegal is exploitative and can never be in their best interests. But what about the *taalibes*? The children are muted in this cacophony of voices trumpeting their concerns.

As a scholarly observer, I chose not to join the choir. Inasmuch, I avoided quoting *taalibes* to support my points. While I did interview 13 *taalibe* children – nine residing in shelters and four

residing in their Qur'anic schools – these interviews were limited in length and took place in structured environments (i.e. with a social worker or a Qur'anic master). I used the information I gathered to complement my thinking on my thesis, but the perspectives I obtained were limited enough to preclude me from including child interview quotes in this dissertation for two reasons. First, my objectives are academic, to examine the ways in which the best interests of the *taalibes* are determined and conveyed by surrounding adult actors who in fact have the power to do things to and for the *taalibes*. I felt like including quotes of children, which frequently referenced begging and suffering, could unduly incite emotional reactions in readers that might impact their perceptions of the situation, in ways similar to the Human Rights Watch (2010) report discussed in chapter eight. By contrast, including quotes that do not reference suffering could have the effect of minimizing suffering and falsely positivizing the *taalibe* experience.

Second, my limited exposure to the daily experiences of each of my child informants prevents me from constructing a composite profile of *taalibe* experiences. Indeed, I analyze how the adult interlocutors surrounding the *taalibes* have each done this in ways that accommodate their goals. I do not pretend to know the *taalibes*' best interests any better than any other actors involved, nor is this my objective. Rather, I put these various actors in dialogue with each other to study how stories of the *taalibes* are created, how they function, and what are their relative power and impacts.

After much reflection, I have decided, at the risk of producing another adult-centered ethnography about children, to leave the *taalibe* voices as I observed them in the middle of this aid frenzy – muted. Portraying the *taalibes* as social agents acting and speaking on their own behalf with respect to the debates surrounding them about child begging would have been more idealistic than ethnographic. Worse, such a (wishful) portrait might direct attention away from their current lack of voice on the ground. I realize that in order to do justice to describing the *taalibes* as social actors, I must devote an entire research project solely to observing the day-to-day lived experiences of *taalibe* children in various contexts and over time. This is a project for another day. The ethnography I have written here, however, is an ethnography of aid to children, and I see the children's relative silence as a telling result of my research, pointing to their lack of real power to participate in the decisions made on their behalf.

Taalibe Begging: Exploitation or Survival?

The prime target of the transnational aid and activist groups intervening to assist the *taalibes* of Senegal is child begging. The issue unites them all – but their explanations of current urban

begging divide them. Those calling the act purely exploitative say that the main function of *taalibe* begging is to enrich Qur'anic masters, or more precisely, criminals posing as Qur'anic masters. But groups actually taking steps to aid Qur'anic schools, reform them, or lobby for their formalization, support the argument that *taalibe* begging in Senegal can have, or at least once did have a purpose beyond the violence that it has been associated with. The following two passages illustrate this different framing of *taalibe* begging historically and today. The first is from the *Understanding Children's Work* (UCW 2007) inter-agency research group report commissioned by UNICEF, the ILO and the World Bank called *Enfants mendiants dans la région de Dakar* (*Children Begging in the Region of Dakar*), and the second from the Human Rights Watch (HRW 2010) report *"Off the Backs of the Children" Forced Begging and Other Abuses against Talibés in Senegal*.

> ***Urban Daaras of Rural Origin***
> *This deals with Qur'anic schools opened by marabouts who came from rural zones, who installed themselves in the city with their talibés. These talibés were most often confided* (from the verb *confier*, the same word translated into English as "to foster") *to the marabout by their parents, who themselves stayed in their areas of origin. These daaras escape in this way from all control, whether religious, state or family-based. That explains in part the possible deviations, one of them being the abusive recourse to begging. This question remains however relatively complex. We accuse these Qur'anic schools of pushing the children into begging. It is true that the demand for alms was not excluded from religious teaching. However, it only constituted one level of learning, the objective of which was not to support the marabout and his family, but to teach the talibé to remain humble and to live in precarious conditions. Besides, most often, talibés who lived this situation in terms of learning asked for food and not money… The growth of poverty, the absence of control and the possible recourse to begging combine and favor the generalization of this deviation, in disaccord with the foundations of religious education* (my translation from French, UCW 2007:19).

This framing acknowledges that there may be well-meaning Qur'anic instructors who send their pupils out to beg as a necessity – to survive while still being able to continue their Qur'anic education. In fact, even those who do resort to abuse are portrayed as doing so without malice, as desperate conditions are described as motivating factors, not greed. The passage concludes with a moralistic statement that such behavior is not to be viewed as in accordance with religious education. In other words, this sort of begging has lost its pedagogical value. Financially supporting Qur'anic education would be an appropriate reaction to the deviations described.

In contrast to the above report's ambiguous presentation of Qur'anic student begging today – not necessarily a crime, but not conducive to the values of religious education – the HRW report makes a complete separation between historical forms of the begging and contemporary exploitative practices.

Human Rights Watch Report:

> *In these traditional daaras that predominated through independence, most marabouts were also cultivators of the land—though their primary concern generally remained education. During Senegal's long dry season, emphasis was generally placed on Quranic studies. Then, during the harvest, the marabout and older talibés would work together in the fields to provide food for the daara for much of the year—aided by contributions from families whose talibés did not reside at the daara and from community members through almsgiving. While older talibés assisted in the fields, younger talibés would remain in the daara and continue learning, either from the marabout or an assistant.*
>
> *During this period, the practice of begging existed where children lived at a residential daara and the harvest could not sustain the daara's food needs. Mamadou Ndiaye, a professor at the Islamic Institute in Dakar who has studied the daara system for three decades, described how the practice of free boarding in Senegal's Quranic schools led to the begging phenomenon (HRW 2010:17-18).*

Both of the accounts presented here, as well as nearly all state or NGO-commissioned reports that I have come across, distinguish between historical forms of child begging, generally before the 1970s when droughts were reported to have initiated mass urban migration, and current forms of begging which impose specific sums of money to be turned over to *marabouts* daily. The HRW report draws a definite, even terminological, line between "traditional" *taalibe* begging for food to support learning and "current practice", which "bears little resemblance". It incorporates a distinction made by Mamadou Ndiaye between "la quête," literally translated as "quest," and "la mendicité," or "begging." The former has religious and purposeful undertones to signify a goal-oriented search for any number of things material and spiritual, while the latter points simply to the act of asking others to turn over material goods[7]. With this, HRW nods to the historical religious significance and perhaps pedagogical function of food collection in Qur'anic education "traditionally", and opts to refer to the actions performed by *taalibes* today with the term "begging". The report takes this term and its current occurrence in Senegal as devoid of any religious significance, setting up the rest of the report to condemn all forced child begging of *taalibe* children as exploitation.

The HRW report is exceptional in its treatment of *taalibe* begging as purely exploitative, compared to accounts produced by other groups (e.g. Senegal 2010; UCW 2007; ENDA 2005, 2003). HRW is a watchdog organization and provides no material aid to the *taalibes*. It focuses on revealing human rights abuses to widespread publics and mobilizing actors to pressure governments to take steps to curb the abuses. In this sense, the HRW report has more in common with

[7] Some texts produced by intervening groups make this historical connection between the *taalibe* student and the "quest", translating the term from Wolof with reference to its Arabic root "tâlib", signifying "one who searches, who seeks", in this case for spiritual knowledge (ENDA 2003:5).

investigative journalism and documentary filmmaking for their similar goals of exposing abuses, than the "baseline"-type reports produced by UN agencies (e.g. UCW 2007), development agencies e.g. the USAID-EDB baseline report, Senegal 2010) and NGOs who are planning aid interventions (ENDA 2005; 2003).

Groups intervening on the ground, by contrast, tend to acknowledge the "complexity" of the *taalibe* begging question in Senegal. They begin their programs with the premise: *Of course the status quo is not working, for a number of structural, economic and political reasons - that is why we need to intervene. There is no use blaming anyone now, we just need to act to fix the problem as it is*. And while no group is condoning the begging – there is a general belief that the best way to eliminate it is by treating it as an unfortunate "social phenomenon" without clearly blamable human perpetrators. Those culprits always receiving the blame without hesitation are the faceless entities of the World Bank's structural adjustment policies, global capitalism, climate change, and poverty. This lack of coherency among principal intervening groups about how to define the problem of *taalibe* begging has led these discourses to clash. The result is the simultaneous production of moral outrage among transnational donors about abuses against children, and the local justification of inaction to outlaw child begging. In the end, multitudes of organizations and institutions are operating at full force to "aid" the *taalibes*, but the situation of the *taalibes* as forced to beg in the streets remains virtually unchanged.

The Ethnographic Method

Anthropology's defining method is ethnography, or the description of peoples; the ethnographer learns a culture, or the collective beliefs and practices, of the people in question. At its inception, ethnographic fieldwork took the form of travelling to some distant land, and immersing oneself in an exotic cultural environment. Bronislaw Malinowski, often referred to as the "father" of ethnographic fieldwork, wrote of this immersion method: "Imagine yourself suddenly set down surrounded by all your gear, alone on a tropical beach close to a native village, while the launch or dinghy which has brought you sails away out of sight" (2013[1922]:4). The goal of the ethnographer, from that point forward, is to follow along with the host people through the "kaleidoscope of tribal life," until she/he can make some sense of it (ibid:4). Today, ethnography is no longer reserved for distant or remote peoples; an anthropologist's "tropical beach" can be a North American hospital (Lock 2002), the World Bank headquarters (Sarfaty 2012) or academia itself (Brenneis 2009). Rather than glimpses of entire "cultures" of relatively isolated peoples

ethnographic studies can be highly focused on a specific aspect of a society, and incorporate mixed qualitative and quantitative methods (Weisner 2005).

My study on the interventions targeting the *taalibes* of Senegal is a mix of old and new. My fieldwork resembled modern studies in that it was multi-sited (Marcus 1995) – I worked in two cities in Mali and numerous rural and urban sites in Senegal, West Africa. I also incorporated various formal and informal survey instruments, including interviews[8], a questionnaire, and a periodical survey. I used various technologies as tools, including video-recording, audio-recording, archival photography, a written survey, an internet survey, and a Google News alert. Yet, I see my project methodology as resembling a classic ethnography such as Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* in numerous ways. This is not simply because I travelled to some distant land, but because I chose not to situate myself within one organization, or focus in on one type of intervention targeting the *taalibes*. Rather, I set myself down in Dakar and tried to make sense of the whole picture of *taalibe* aid. I observed a cross-section of the ensemble of actors coming together around the *taalibes* – how they communicate, what they do, what they say about what they do, and their relations of power and sociability with other actors. With no particular investigative tools in mind to start other than a desire to initiate communication, I simply started to talk to state and non-state actors, Qur'anic masters, families and community members about the question of *taalibe* begging.

I saw nothing as irrelevant in my treatment of the topic. After my 2007 fieldwork on humanitarian interventions targeting the *taalibes* of Senegal for my MA in Medical Anthropology, I noted that the element of international migration toward Senegal was central to understanding the begging phenomenon. For that reason, I started my PhD research in Mali – to trace the *taalibes*' movements from Mali toward Senegal, despite increasing efforts to stop the flow. To understand this movement, I looked into the history of Qur'anic education, traditional practices of child circulation, and the local pedagogical value of struggle in Mali. I surveyed colonial archives, gathered ethnographic accounts of similar practices throughout the region, and spoke to families about their current economic and value-based decision-making. To contextualize Qur'anic master resistance to state initiatives in Senegal, I investigated historical power-sharing schemes between state and religious authorities and surveyed how these relations played out in the current daily press. To understand the fervent almsgiving in Dakar, I immersed myself in popular culture from classic literature to contemporary supernatural fears and desires as they are linked to alms, and then I

[8] I have used pseudonyms throughout this thesis to refer nearly all of my interview participants. The only people that I cited by name include certain government officials as well as particular individuals who expressed a desire to be named.

designed a questionnaire to investigate what factors pushed people to give to *taalibes* in the streets. Topic by topic, I tried to take apart the dizzying kaleidoscope of daily activities and make sense of them in terms of aid to the *taalibes*.

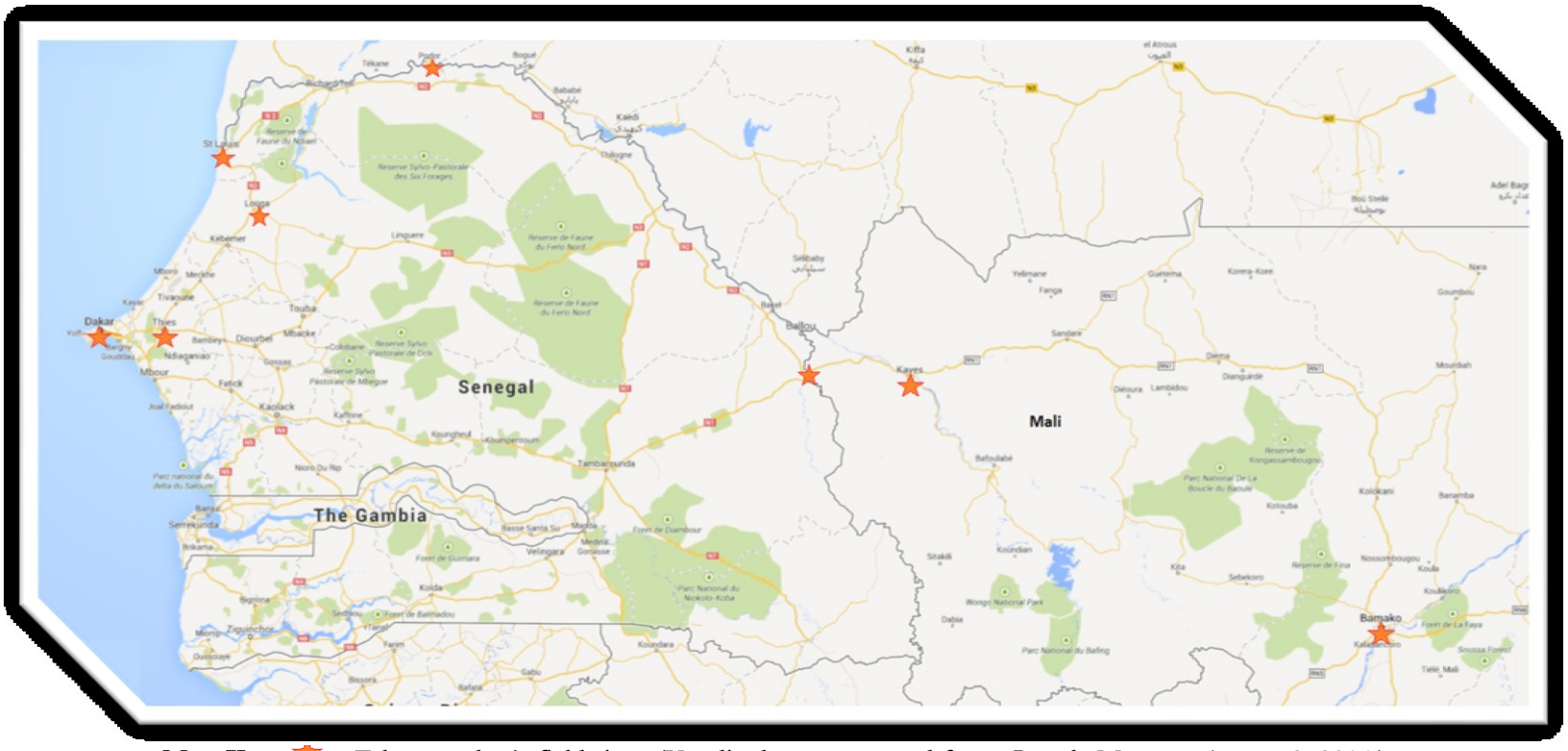
The ethnographic fieldwork that gave rise to this dissertation took place over a period of ten months in Senegal and Mali in 2010, and ten weeks in various sites in Senegal in 2007. I conducted 135 semi-structured interviews[9]. These interviews included 23 with government officials of both countries, 23 with Qur'anic masters including one with a Qur'anic master association with 15 active participants, 56 with NGO, Inter-Governmental Organizations and non-profit personnel or volunteers, 13 with *taalibe* children, 2 with former *taalibes*, and 20 with families of *taalibes*, academics, Islamic authorities, and other community members. Interviews were mostly semi-formal, meaning that I had a list of questions prepared and asked them to the informants, but I added questions and followed leads as the conversation proceeded. Topics covered a broad range, including aid projects, children's rights and best interests, religious beliefs and practices, and political outlooks. I conducted interviews in French and English myself, and in Wolof with partial assistance from a research assistant. The interviews that took place in Bamana and Pulaar were done with the aid of an interpreter between these languages and French. Where permitted, interviews were video-recorded, with the intention of creating an ethnographic film[10]. Most other interviews were audio-recorded, and for a few I took only hand-written notes. I transcribed all of the interviews in French, Wolof or English, and coded them according to salient topics. I then translated selections of interviews to include as quotes in the body of my dissertation.

I conducted a survey of NGO or association interventions targeting *taalibes*, beginning in 2007, with an expansion and several follow-ups in 2010. This survey covered multiple sites in Senegal and Mali (see map below), including Dakar and Dakar suburbs, Rufisque, Thiès, Saint-Louis, and various villages in the department of Podor in northern Senegal. In Mali, I studied projects in the capital city Bamako, and the border region of Kayes. This survey included gathering information on the types of projects aiding *taalibes* and the extent of cooperation between aid organizations, state authorities, and Qur'anic masters. As many of the anti-child trafficking strategies that I was told about in Mali included reinforcing border security to prevent children

[9] All recruitment, consent and interview procedures were pre-approved by the McGill University Research Ethics Board. See the project approval letter in Appendix A.

[10] While this was not the primary purpose, I find that interviews that were video-recorded greatly facilitated their transcription and analysis after I returned from the field. I believe that being able to look back at the interview encounter through video - to see the respondents' facial expressions and body language, and relive tense or otherwise emotional moments - enabled me to pick up on details that I might otherwise have overlooked.

entering or exiting the country without proper authorization, I briefly observed and filmed the Mali-Senegal border (between the towns of Kidira, Senegal, and Diboli, Mali) to witness border control in action. I conducted archival research in the National Archives of both Senegal and Mali (in Dakar and Bamako) on the topics of Qur'anic education, child circulation and fosterage, and colonial policy toward Islam, education and child circulation.



Map Key: ★ = Ethnographer's field sites. (Unedited map extracted from Google Maps on August 3, 2014.)

To investigate almsgiving practices in Dakar, I surveyed 114 Dakar residents. I did this with one written questionnaire on almsgiving that I used with individuals in Dakar streets (n=98, see Appendix B), and with one internet-based questionnaire on almsgiving and primary education that was sent out to Dakar-based university students (n=16). Due to the low response rate on the internet-based questionnaire, I have drawn primarily on the written questionnaire for analysis. I have included a more detailed discussion of the questionnaire and survey recruitment process in chapter five on almsgiving.

I carried out a five-month media survey of two prominent daily newspapers (each with print and online editions) in Senegal on issues surrounding *taalibe* begging and the government's brief ban on begging during this period in the streets of Dakar. One newspaper, *Le Soleil*, is the government of Senegal's official newspaper, and it covers a variety of social, economic and political topics, with a

state-centered focus. The other is called *Walf Fadjri*, a private newspaper published by the Walf Group, a media company with a large television, radio, print and online presence in Senegal. This paper primarily represented the opposition to President Wade's government and candidacy for re-election. Observing these two periodicals side-by-side provided a clear view of opposing political perspectives on the begging ban and its repeal. To stay current on the topic of *taalibe* begging during my research and particularly after leaving Senegal, I subscribed to Google News alerts[11].

In addition, I attended two public forums in Dakar, one on the proposed Qur'anic school curriculum and one on *taalibe* begging, both of which were organized by a collective of state and NGO actors. Throughout my fieldwork I consumed public media, such as television and radio broadcasts, taking particular note of debates surrounding *taalibe* begging, and I observed and spoke informally with community members regarding their perceptions of the issue. Finally, to produce this dissertation, I have also drawn on diverse experiences from living, working and volunteering in the region for five years since 2002.

Thesis Contents

I have divided the body of this dissertation into four parts, each containing two chapters. The first part, chapters two and three, introduces the *trafficking discourse* – a *taalibe* story of suffering which paints the children as vulnerable victims and the *marabouts* as evil traffickers. My argument begins in chapter two with a portrait of how the *taalibes* of Senegal suddenly became known among transnational audiences as a mass population of trafficked children. Since 2000, after global news agencies alleged to have discovered a child "slave trade" in West Africa, aid agencies such as UNICEF and the US Department of State began shifting their terminology to articulate Qur'anic school urban migration and *taalibe* begging as a form of child trafficking. While the *taalibes* had been begging in Senegal's cities for decades prior, I trace the ways in which the US Department of State's annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Reports from 2000 to 2012 gradually shaped the *taalibes* into victims of child trafficking. I argue that this shift is mostly discursive and based primarily on expanding definitions of the crime of human trafficking.

As a result of their nomination as trafficking victims, counter-child trafficking initiatives have targeted the *taalibes* of Senegal and neighboring countries of West Africa. In chapter three, I examine trafficking prevention strategies on the ground in Mali and Senegal, namely the

[11] With this service I chose to receive e-mail links to online periodicals containing the words, "*taalibe*" (with various spellings), and "begging Senegal" (in French and English).

reinforcement of transnational borders and the repatriation and reintegration of victims. These strategies have largely failed to prevent child movement in the region, which I contend is due to the continued widespread support of culturally-entrenched practices of child circulation and youth labor migration. I document a clear lack of concordance between transnational perspectives of criminal activity and practices deemed acceptable on the ground. Where border guards are trained to identify a man travelling over a border with 15 children as a trafficker, local authorities responsible for his prosecution will deem him a legitimate Qur'anic master travelling with pupils and release him.

To further contextualize failed efforts to limit *taalibe* movement, Part II of the dissertation focuses on listening to Malian and Senegalese community voices speaking about *taalibe* urban migration and begging. In chapter four, I show that what the *trafficking discourse* frames as abuse - including forced begging, harsh conditions and migrating away from one's family - many Malian parents see as necessary pedagogical suffering. With an ethic of making their children "pass though" the trials that they have suffered, parents cultivate their children's endurance and dedication to their family's collective goals. Chapter five shows that in Dakar, what some see as outright exploitation through forced begging, many others see as a strategy for impoverished religious schools to function. I examine how popular perceptions of the religious importance of Qur'anic education coupled with a fervent belief in the spiritual power of almsgiving results in *taalibes* attaining exceptionally high begging revenues in Senegal. Begging in Senegal is in a large part supply-driven. The normalization of these push and pull factors of Qur'anic school migration and *taalibe* begging for alms results in a continued flow of *taalibe* children toward urban centers like Dakar to amass charity.

Part III, which includes chapters six and seven, describes the *vulnerable schools* discourse surrounding the *taalibes* of Senegal. Chapter six presents a detailed examination of historical and current efforts to "modernize" Qur'anic education in the area – a "century of stories" told about *taalibe* suffering. These begin with the activities of the French colonial administration, with the relay passing to the Senegalese state and partner NGOs. Current efforts to "modernize" Qur'anic schools are rooted in transnational "Education for All" campaigns which target poor countries with inadequate rates of childhood schooling. I document how the NGOs taking a leading role in these initiatives scrutinize Qur'anic schools for their outdated pedagogical methods, limited utility, and poor learning environments. In the *vulnerable schools discourse*, as opposed to the *trafficking discourse*, Qur'anic schools are deemed insufficient educational institutions, yet they are nevertheless

considered schools. Modernization initiatives, therefore, aim to control and reform the sector to make it conform to national and international standards of primary education.

The Qur'anic masters, however, are divided on questions of if and how their schools should modernize, as I reveal in chapter seven. To dispel media portrayals of Qur'anic masters as homogeneous, I present six Qur'anic master profiles which reveal varying practices and a broad array of perspectives on modernization. Many of the Qur'anic masters find themselves in an uncomfortable position of seeking out non-profit and state aid, while remaining skeptical of those actors' financial or ideological goals. With NGO assistance, they are increasingly organizing themselves to make sure that their voices are heard in national conversations about their rights as educators. Yet their most prominent argument has centered around their right to send *taalibes* out to beg. Their unity on this issue added pressure on the President of Senegal to cave on his effort to ban street begging in 2010. However, despite movement on that issue, current power structures frequently limit Qur'anic master influence to mere *symbolic confrontations* with the state and NGOs with respect to real decision-making power on issues of child education.

Part IV of this dissertation, in chapters eight and nine, outlines the politics of compassion surrounding the *taalibes*. In chapter eight, I bring the conversation to philosophical and ethical questions of children's rights and best interests. What is best for the *taalibes* and who decides? I examine how transnational children's rights advocates, such as Human Rights Watch, *shock by exception*, or communicate the most egregious side of the *taalibe* story to donor countries in order to maximize audience shock. This shock is meant to draw audiences to increase pressure on the government of Senegal to make reforms. Through reference to historical and contemporary thinkers on human rights and compassion, I analyze the techniques by which the authors of a 2010 HRW report on the *taalibes* of Senegal strive to cultivate compassion among audiences, namely by conveying *illusions of aloneness* of suffering children. Through the use of adult-free images and personalized testimonies, the HRW report focuses on the children as vulnerable and alone in their suffering – calling out to be saved. Despite using *taalibes*' words, I question the ability of HRW's direct quotations, as rhetorically powerful advocacy tools, to unilaterally speak for the *taalibes* and their best interests.

I conclude my dissertation with chapter nine, which scrutinizes the point at which these diverging stories of suffering *taalibes*, either as trafficking victims or as struggling students, come together on the ground. I argue that they in fact clash and that this clash actively hinders efforts at promoting the children's human rights. Whether in terms of rights to freedom from exploitation

and abuse, or rights to a quality education, both of these perspectives claim to advocate for the *taalibes*' best interests. Yet state and NGO actors working with Qur'anic masters on the ground tend to overlook forced begging and physical abuse in Qur'anic schools in exchange for Qur'anic master cooperation with their initiatives. When powerful accusations of exploitation and abuse arise, however, like in the 2010 HRW Report, these actors find themselves in an awkward dance between transnational observers and local partners. This "dance between discourses" is accompanied by significant success among aid groups to secure funding. Millions of dollars destined for *taalibes* are being injected into the begging problem in Senegal, yet the children are still begging, and the number of children in the streets is not decreasing. I find that by attributing domestic criminality to foreign intruders, and accommodating alleged international traffickers as religious authorities after their arrival in Senegal, results in a full-circle dance among adult interlocutors – consistently directing blame toward unreachable outsiders – and twirling around the *taalibes* and their so-called human rights.

These powerful groups of adult actors, including the Senegalese state, multinational NGOs, and collaborating Qur'anic masters are shuffling around the *taalibe* children, advocating for their best interests and speaking on their behalf. Stressing the urgency of their proposed interventions, these actors enthusiastically agree that the group whose interests still remain entirely unsatisfied in this cyclical gambol - and I add theoretically still unknown - are those of the *taalibes* themselves. Indeed as a follow-up to the research presented in this dissertation, I plan to undertake future child-centered research in West Africa to explore children's rights from their perspectives. But that perspective will not answer the questions that I have investigated in this ethnography – namely how adults use stories of suffering and politics of compassion in the name of children's rights promotion.

Part I

Trafficking and Counter-Trafficking: The Transnational Discourse of Child Trafficking of *Taalibes*

Recent communications from transnational observers, including the US Department of State, UNICEF, Human Rights Watch, and international news agencies such as the BBC have recognized the *taalibe* Qur'anic school children of Senegal as victims of child trafficking because of their urban street begging. The *taalibes* have been begging in cities for decades, but recent shifts in global definitions of trafficking, as well as growing global activism to stop child trafficking, have led to what appears on paper as a sudden explosion in child trafficking in Senegal. Chapter two traces this sudden rise of the "*taalibe* child trafficking victim" through a decade of transnational reporting.

In response to their child trafficking problems, the states of Senegal and Mali have taken numerous steps, in coordination with global governing agencies and non-governmental organizations in their respective countries, to combat the practice within the region. Examples of counter-trafficking interventions include new travel document requirements, enhanced border security, and repatriation and reintegration programs. Chapter three is an in-depth ethnographic exploration of the socio-politics of child movement in West Africa, which gets to heart of why these efforts have failed to prevent or remediate *taalibe* movement.

Chapter 2 – Decrying Child Trafficking:

The Rise of the *Taalibe* Trafficking Victim

You may choose to look the other way but you can never say again that you did not know.

- William Wilberforce

Introduction – Documenting a Rise in Human Trafficking

This chapter traces the current transnational movement targeting the *taalibes* of Senegal as victims of exploitation, abuse and child trafficking. A major finding in my research on the question of *taalibe* movement and exploitation is that these children have only relatively recently been observed and reported on as victims of child trafficking (as opposed to vulnerable students, child laborers or abused children) by transnational actors. This new nomination has brought on typical counter-trafficking interventions to target the *taalibes*, namely border guard training and repatriation and reintegration initiatives, which I address in the following chapter and briefly in chapter seven. Here however I will focus on how the *taalibes* of Senegal became known as trafficked children, and the role that this new nomination has played in claims that child trafficking is on the rise there. I argue that the apparent sudden rise of child trafficking in West Africa is due to several converging factors, some socio-economic, indeed leading to increased exploitation, and some conceptual - referring to the shifting global definitions of the crime of child trafficking.

A recent estimate by the International Labour Organization (ILO 2012) states that over 5.5 million children globally are exploited at any given time through forced labour or sex work as a result of trafficking. This estimate increased five-fold from the ILO's 2005 estimate of between 980,000 and 1,225,000 child victims (ibid). Today, UN estimates of child trafficking in Africa alone account for 2.5 million victims, with most cases in West Africa (UNODC 2012; ILO 2012). These increasing estimates of child trafficking correspond with an explosion in overall human trafficking numbers globally, as the UNESCO Trafficking Statistics Project reveals. The Project's cross-organization comparison of human trafficking statistics shows that global estimates of human trafficking in 1997 were between 250,000 and four million people per year. But estimates today of victims of forced labor have reached 21 million (ILO 2012).

Human Rights Watch declared in 2010 that there are up to 50,000 *taalibe* child victims of trafficking into or within Senegal alone, and that number is said to be increasing. Yet that estimate is only half of an oft-cited UNICEF figure of exploited *taalibes* in Senegal (UNICEF 2014). The US

Department of State cites similar numbers of *taalibe* trafficking victims today; but as late as 2004, that agency did not report on any trafficking involving *taalibes* in its annual Trafficking in Persons Report. How could this have sprung up so quickly? Or if it is not new, how could a modern-day African slave trade in children have gone on undetected until now? Indeed, there are clear reasons for one to be a bit skeptical about such a scenario involving a sudden rise in child trafficking and slavery.

A prime reason, I argue here, why *taalibes* were only recently identified as trafficked children is that child trafficking as a regional crisis in West Africa, and as an emerging global phenomenon, has only relatively recently begun to make headlines. First of all, the estimated number of human trafficking victims has risen concurrently with the number of studies on human trafficking published during the same period (Laczko 2005:7). From 1993-1995, the authors of an IOM report on human trafficking research only found two publications on the topic. There were four in 1996, eight in 1998, 36 in both 2000 and 2001, rising to a peak of 73 publications on human trafficking in 2002. Second, the recent explosion in child trafficking documented in West Africa can be located in a new found terminology for previously existing practices like child fosterage and youth labor migration (Howard 2011; Alber 2011; de Lange 2007; Manzo 2005; Castle & Diarra 2003).

The statistics referenced demonstrate what all interlocutors agree on – it is clear that there are masses of children suffering in West Africa, either from child trafficking and forced labor, hazardous labor, or simply from working to escape abject poverty without many educational or economic opportunities. What is unclear, however, is when the suffering that children endure should be considered a human rights crime, such as child trafficking[12], and when it should be considered an adverse consequence of regional poverty. For example in the case of Abdou[13], his Malian parents sent him to study with a Qur'anic master in Senegal. He begged for the Qur'anic master for 10 years before he gave up on learning the Qur'an and returned home to his widowed mother with no employable skills. This may appear to be a relatively clear cut example of child trafficking, perpetrated by the Qur'anic master and perhaps facilitated by Abdou's parents. But looking into the conditions surrounding his transfer and begging, the story becomes more complicated.

[12] Child trafficking is defined briefly by the United Nations[12] as, "process by which people are recruited in their community and exploited by traffickers using deception and/or some form of coercion to lure and control them" (UNODC 2012:16) See the official UN definition from the 2000 Trafficking in Persons Protocol on page 37.
[13] From a personal interview with Abdou's mother (video recorded, Aissata Diabaté, July 22, 2010, Kayes, Mali).

With hopes that their son could still attain an education despite their poverty, Abdou's parents opted for a Qur'anic school, as it was free. Qur'anic masters such as the one who received Abdou claim that their lack of funds forces them to migrate to urban centers to depend on alms. Instruction drastically slows in these conditions because of the need to send the children out to beg for every meal and for money to sustain basic accommodations. This raises the question, is this child trafficking, or is it child work to pursue education?

The question of terminological ambiguity is central to most scholarly treatment of child trafficking in West Africa (IOM 2005). Scholars note the disconnect between local perspectives and those of intervening actors regarding what constitutes an abuse (e.g. Alber 2010; Castle & Diarra 2003). Some have credited the failure of anti-trafficking interventions in the region to a lack of understanding of what constitutes a crime locally (Manzo 2005; Castle & Diarra 2003). Only by distinguishing practices deemed legitimate (yet which may include child movement and labor) from exploitative crimes can researchers hope to identify those who are victimized and plan to effectively intervene. These works conclude that effective intervention can only follow from a clear understanding of the abuses taking place.

Transnational actors like the United Nations and the US Department of State promote inclusive definitions of child trafficking which encompass a wide array of exploitative acts toward children. The resultant shockingly large number of cases considered trafficking help to increase national and international attention to the problem, ideally increasing pressure on responsible governments to combat abuses, as well as attracting funds for prevention and relief efforts.

At the same time, these sweeping definitions are problematic in that vastly different processes that sometimes result in the exploitation or abuse of children, are grouped into a single category of child trafficking. This renders aspects of intervention difficult, including the identification of victims and perpetrators, as well as the development of prevention strategies. This is because the conditions which give rise to the so-called trafficking, and the forms it takes, will vary considerably. Particular types of exploitation classically considered trafficking involved trans-border movement and sexual exploitation (Godziak & Bump 2008; Manzo 2005). With the new, broad definitions, child trafficking may not involve movement at all, and it could refer to domestic and labor-oriented exploitation such as unfair terms of wage employment.

These different abuses demand divergent intervention strategies, yet anti-child trafficking strategies on the ground in West Africa have still focused on trans-border movements. While my case involves considerable trans-border movement, *taalibes* in movement are not necessarily regarded

as trafficked on the ground until they have been physically abused for exploitation at their destinations. This renders the reinforcement of borders ineffectual as a strategy to prevent the trafficking of *taalibe* children, as I address in the following chapter.

To trace the rise of the *taalibe* child trafficking victim, I examine how a media hype in the year 2000 about child slavery in West Africa started a new conversation about child trafficking in the region. I then reference a French colonial document about the "trade in women and children" to historically contextualize current debates about how to define human trafficking as opposed to culturally acceptable practices. I follow with a critical examination of current definitions of child trafficking in use, reflecting on how transnational organizations have declared the elements of movement and consent to be irrelevant to determinations of the crime. Finally, I trace the US Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Report "Country Narratives" for Senegal from 2001 to 2012 to document how the *taalibes* suddenly became recognized as trafficking victims.

Telling Tales of Trafficking

Activists declare that the mere possibility that today, in the 21st Century, there could be so many children being traded, enslaved, exploited, and violated - is simply horrific (USTIP 2012). Journalistic sources have played a key role in publicizing trafficking in West Africa. An oft-cited example of media hype bordering sensationalism is the 2001 "Etireno Affair." In this case, a Nigerian ship was reported to have left Benin carrying around 200 child slaves. Prominent global news agencies, such as The Guardian, The BBC, ABC News, and CNN reported on the Etireño's "enigmatic" movements (Sam 2001). It was reported that though destined for Gabon, the ship did not dock there. Allegedly trying to avoid criminal charges, it sailed around in West African waters only to redock in Benin two weeks later, but with only 23 children and 20 adolescents. Questions were abound – where were the child slaves? Articles with headlines like, "The terrible truth about the ship of slaves" (Astill 2001), "Mysterious Return of Benin 'Slave Ship' " (Chang 2001), and "Slave traders hunted in Africa" (CNN 2001), sought to spark feelings of outrage and fear among audiences with news that there may be a renewed African slave trade going on under their noses.

Perplexing impatient reporters, local officials reported that the ship was not carrying any "slaves" at all (Chang 2001). The 43 children and adolescents on board, according to Lawrence Onome, the ship's Nigerian captain, were merely "unaccompanied minors," not slaves. This denial did not dissuade the international press, however. Six months later, the BBC aired a video story about the "slave children" of the Etireno. In it they directly linked the "old slave trade" to this

modern form of slavery on the coast of Benin, and referred to intermediaries on the ships as "slave traders." A map of West Africa is displayed with this narration:

> *This is Africa's old slave coast. From here millions of people over the centuries were shipped overseas in chains. They came from all over West Africa but most from the kingdom of Dahomey – now Benin. Officially that trade ended two centuries ago but today the ports of Benin have once again become the hub of a modern slave trade*[14].

The video reports children being purchased from parents by traffickers, to be sold into various African labor markets. One former child "slave" featured in the film, Justine, recounts how she was brutally beaten into forced labor for years before she escaped. Another child, Adakoun, speaks to audiences of being sold off by her family against her will. By using powerful stories and shocking rhetoric, reporting on this newfound slavery caused outrage among Western audiences. The "Etireno affair" is generally credited as effectively issuing in a new era of anti-trafficking activism and intervention in West Africa (Howard 2011; Manzo 2005; HRW 2003; Dotteridge 2002).

Sparking outrage at exposed abuses, especially those of children, was only one step in efforts to combat human trafficking. The anti-trafficking efforts that resulted in West Africa met with considerable complications, as donor agency definitions of trafficking clashed with working understandings of the appropriate activities for children and youths in West Africa. Since 2001, emotive reporting on child trafficking and slavery in Africa has remained prominent and powerful[15]. Yet some scholars have criticized the reporting on alleged crises as near-sighted media hype (Vance 2011; Howard 2011; Manzo 2005). Kate Manzo (2005) calls the conveyed urgency a strategy to grow funds for actors to intervene. These scholars note that these myopic journalistic perspectives frequently conflate contributing variables and overlook long-term needs of the populations in question (Cree, et al, 2012; Howard 2011; Manzo 2005; Castle & Diarra 2003; Dotteridge 2002; UNICEF 2002).

Defining the 'Trade in Women and Children' in Colonial French West Africa

Defining the limits of what should be considered trafficking as opposed to slavery, labor migration, or child fosterage or placement, has concerned academics and frustrated intervening

[14] Transcribed excerpt from *The Slave Children*, which aired on BBC 2 on October 7, 2001.
[15] e.g. The "KONY 2012" campaign launched by the NGO Invisible Children became a media craze when their 30 minute documentary became the "most viral video in history" on the internet, as reported by Mashable (Grossman 2012). "KONY 2012" got 100,000 clicks in less than a week, providing the NGO with much exposure. The video documented the human rights abuses of Joseph Kony, the leader of the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army, notorious in transnational circles for its regular use of child soldiers attained through kidnapping, force and coercion (Cheney 2007).

actors for nearly a century. In a French colonial document from 1933[16], colonial officers grapple with this very same question – are practices like child fosterage, migration for labor, and settling debts with family members' services to be considered trafficking in persons (which would warrant intervention) or are they culture-based activities which should be tolerated? This *Report on the trade of women and children*[17] contains four briefs on the occurrence of such practices in four different circles (administrative divisions) of the region (now Mali). Each was written by the respective *Commandant de Cercle* (Commander of the Circle) and all concluded that there was nothing occurring which could be "properly called" "trafficking" or "trading" in women or children.

Despite disavowing the existence of a human "trade" – a term associated with the criminal sale of slaves – the *Commandants* go on to describe alternate activities which involve the movement of women and children to settle adult males' debts. I draw from these briefs that, according to the Circle commanders, at least one of the following is required for human exchanges to be called a "trade": 1) a permanent transfer of a person to settle a debt; 2) an intention to exploit or profit from these exchanges; and 3) the maltreatment of the women and children being exchanged. Actions involving the transfer of women and children that are witnessed on the ground are specifically distinguished from these specified acts, and they are referred to in alternate, non-criminal terms. The brief from the Circle of Bandiagara states:

> *There does not exist, truly speaking, a traffic of women and children in the Circle, in the sense that we have never had knowledge of a sale or purchase of women or children, what would constitute acts of trade.*
>
> *By contrast, in certain regions, notably in the regions occupied by the Peulh groups, there exists a traffic which consists of giving in pledge (donner en gage) for more or less large sums, and often minimal, the services of women and children.*

Similarly, for the Circle of Tougan, the entire brief is as follows:

> *No act of trade was brought to the knowledge of the Commandant de Cercle during the year 1933.*
>
> *Over the course of the last two years of deficient harvests, however, some young girls were sold by their parents, pushed by necessity, but these sales were sanctioned by marriage, the price agreed upon constituting a dowry and I do not think that it would be possible to see therein acts of trade.*

[16] Recovered from the national archives in Bamako, Mali.
[17] Fonds anciens 1D 210, Archives Nationales du Mali, Bamako. Photocopied on July 5, 2010.

It is worth noting that the brief from the Circle of Tougan has pencil marks on it apparently editing the draft[18]. The entire second paragraph is bracketed and given an underlined marginal note, "*non*" (no). There are dark boxes drawn around the words "sold" and "sales" (*vendues* and *ventes*), and an arrow is drawn to connect the boxed-in "sold" to a note in the margin which reads, "*mises en gage serait plus exact*" [19], which suggests that the terminology of debt bondage or pledging, would provide a "more exact" description of the acts rather than sales. Finally, the phrases, "these sales were sanctioned by marriage", and "do not think that it would be possible to see therein acts of trade" are underlined with pencil in the brief, the contents of which appear to support this suggested change in terminology.

These edits, illustrate the importance of terminology, already in the colonial period, when speaking of transferring human beings in exchange for money or debt relief. The *Commandant de Cercle* of Tougou, as well as whoever edited his brief, calculated how to speak of the acts they were viewing on the ground, and knew the importance to the colonial mission of calling it "debt bondage", for example, rather than a "trade".[20]

The three and a half page brief of Bandiagara, quoted above, details situations that led to the "*mise en gage*" of women and children in the area. The language of the *Commandant de Cercle* makes it very clear that this "traffic" –the movement of women and children to settle debts – does not in fact constitute acts of "trade" (fr. *traite*):

> *As we said above, this traffic does not behave in any way like a trade: women and especially children, are simply given over to financiers, to whom they owe their labor until the loaned sum has been reimbursed. The native thereby becoming boss must assure the maintenance and food of the people who have been given to him in this way and he is formally held to let them go as soon as the loaned sum has been reimbursed.*
> *In no case can he subtract himself from this obligation and we have not, in any case, had knowledge of a case of refusal."*

Following his logic, the *Commandant de Cercle* refers to "trade" solely as use of women and children to make a profit for the men offering or receiving them. He uses vivid ethnographic descriptions of

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[18] The document is slightly discolored and ripped on the edges, appearing to be an original type-written telegram to be sent to the governor of the colony.

[19] "*Gage*" refers to a guarantee, pledge or pawn, so "*mises en gage*" means that the "young women" referred to were put up for guarantee or pawn.

[20] Markings throughout the *Report on the trade of women and children* highlight terminology in this way. For example, the brief from the *Commandant de Cercle* of the Circle of Sikasso uses the construction, "*mise en garantie*", or "put up as guarantee" to refer to handing over one's wife or children in exchange for a financial loan, as a sort of "deposit" (fr. *caution*) to be returned when the debt is repaid. While the Commandants of the Circles of Satadougou and Bandiagara similarly use the term "*en gage*", to specify that such an agreement includes the understanding that the exchanged woman or child must work for the lender or debt-collector.

the tolerable and perhaps even improved conditions of the women and children in their host households, their favorable perceptions of their own situations, and the historical persistence of these practices to support his argument against calling it a "trade."

> *A number of women and children of whom the services were rented were convened by us at the same time as their respective heads of families. They were interrogated at length.*
> *We have received absolutely no complaints; all, by contrast, declare themselves very satisfied of their situation which permits them to eat enough, while at their own homes, there was not enough of anything.*

So, instead of "trade", the *Commandant de Cercle* of Bandiagara chooses the terminology of "renting services" (*louage de services*), which at once cleverly removes the question of permanence in "trade" and "sale" and frames the exchange as employment.

The claim that there is a sudden, modern day, emergence of child slavery in West Africa can thus be contextualized. Clearly there were already relationships of exchange in place in the 1930s that looked a lot like the "trafficking" of today. Indeed, even the *Commandant de Cercle* of Bandiagara normalized the exchanges he witnessed in 1933 by citing their historical permanence. He describes them as a necessary response to regular environmental pressures*:*

> *This state of things is not new: it has always more or less existed. One must recognize that the misery due to the deficiency of the harvests of the last three years has significantly developed it.*

In other words, these colonial briefs describe debt bondage and bonded labor for women and children in Mali as a normal, culturally-sanctioned local response to economic hardship. The Commander of the Circle of Satadougou eloquently touches on the differences of perception between Europeans and locals as to whether or not such exchanges should to be considered legitimate and legal:

> *But therein lies the difficulty: do we find ourselves in presence of acts of trade or renting of persons? The native assessors naturally incline towards this second decision; the European judge toward the first. Which is right?*

A close reading of the report as a whole, however, suggests that this terminological battle runs deeper than any suspected human trade. The officers are simultaneously considering the efficacy of intervention. As a whole the report reflects a "don't rock the boat" approach. The report from Bandiagara reads:

> *The question is extremely delicate: Certainly, we could not envision completely eliminating this service renting. What would need to be eliminated would be the initial loan and proceed to written conventions regularly done in front of the Administrative Authority. But, would this change much of anything in the situation.[sic] Would we not risk, in acting like this, bringing, purely and simply, the native to conceal this loan?*

These administrators saw that it would be near impossible to stop the traditional practices of debt bondage witnessed on the ground in French West Africa. They therefore had no practical reason to declare that criminal human trading was occurring throughout their colony. Instead, the administrators chose to distinguish local cultural and poverty-related practices from the for-profit trade in humans for labor or sexual exploitation that was being flagged as a problem at that time (League of Nations 1921). To further down-play the need for intervention, two of the briefs conclude with claims that such practices, might soon cease to be a concern:

> *I would add, in closing, that there does not exist a single question of this nature in all of the cliff of Bandiagara and that, according to the information that I received, this type of traffic barely exists except in the cantons of the South of the Circle, especially with the Markas (Commandant de Cercle de Bandiagara).*

> *The use of this practice has, under the influence of the Administration, considerably decreased. However, and despite all precautions taken, it is certain that, clandestinely, this "mise en garantie" still exists (Commandant de Cercle de Sikasso).*

The questions raised by the colonial authorities quoted above about legal distinctions between trafficking and loaning persons, or selling and renting someone's labor, are not merely quibbles over legal terminology. The colonial document shows how conceptions about what can be rationalized as legitimate versus illegitimate exchanges and sales of others' labor can shift over relatively short periods of time, and can vary according to social setting as well as the political interests of the observer. Therefore, the fight over trafficking terminology runs deeper than mere words - it hinges upon differing socio-political and economic interests and it has a profound impact on the global application of human rights laws. How local practices are articulated for global audiences directly impacts their perceived legality under human rights statutes, which in turn affects audiences' perceptions of the need for global actors to intervene. The following sections look closely at the West African practices of child circulation in question, and why finding a practicable definition of trafficking in West Africa is still a pressing problem today.

Defining Child Trafficking in West Africa Today

Transnational actors such as UN agencies, the ILO, the US Department of State, and IOM, have developed large-scale multi-lateral campaigns to fight human trafficking. But what exactly are these actors talking about when they speak of "human trafficking"? Not at all straightforward, the definition of human trafficking has shifted dramatically in less than two decades[21], which continues to have profound repercussions on intervention strategies. A widely-accepted global definition was spelled out in 2000 when the *United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children* was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in Palermo, Italy. The Palermo Protocol states that:

> *"Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs" (Palermo Protocol 2000, Article 3).*

This definition shifts for cases involving children. For children (meaning any person under 18 years of age) none of the means of force or deception listed above are considered relevant, effectively simplifying the definition to, "The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation" (Palermo Protocol 2000, Article 3).

Reports addressing issues of child trafficking often use numerous words alongside "trafficking" to describe the types of abuses that children endure. Some examples include "worst forms of child labor"[22], slavery, involuntary servitude, and forced labor. What, then, differentiates these activities? Are all cases of *worst forms of child labor* considered cases of trafficking? In what cases would the word "slavery" be appropriate versus "trafficking" or "exploitation"? And do such semantic quibbles really matter?

According to The United States Department of State, all of these activities can be considered trafficking. In the 2012 US Trafficking in Persons Reports (USTIP 2012), *trafficking* is treated as an umbrella term to refer to any number of forms of exploitation. The key element of trafficking, therefore, for them, is exploitation:

> *Human trafficking appears in many guises. It might take the form of compelled commercial sexual exploitation, the prostitution of minors, debt bondage, or forced labor. The United States*

[21] In 1994, the IOM definition of human trafficking more resembled voluntary human smuggling than coercive or deceptive exploitation of individuals (Laczko 2005).

[22] A phrase introduced by the International Labour Organization (ILO 1999) to refer to particularly harmful or hazardous work performed by children (Convention 182).

> *government, and increasingly, the international community, view "trafficking in persons" as the term through which all forms of modern slavery are criminalized (USTIP 2012:9).*

The report then reflexively asks:

> *Why, then, are so many different actions considered the same crime? Why are so many terms used to describe one human rights abuse? Exploitation lies at the core of modern slavery. Whether held on a worksite or trapped in prostitution, a victim of this crime has suffered an infringement of the right to be free from enslavement (USTIP 2012:9).*

The US State Department supports a broad definition of trafficking, in that "Narrow definitions of trafficking could potentially exclude some victims from receiving the justice, protection, or benefits they deserve"(USTIP 2012:14). This approach is also mirrored in other global anti-trafficking policies[23].

If the definition of trafficking includes all forms of exploitation by forceful or deceptive means, or the exploitation of a child even without force or deception, then anti-trafficking interventions would need to address labor laws and their enforcement at all levels in order to root out exploitation. While this is a noble goal, a number of scholars believe that broadening definitions of trafficking on the ground may have negative impacts in terms of prevention and resolution, rather than the ideal of rooting out more cases of exploitation. Applying the term to cases for which many people disagree with the designation, can lead to ineffective interventions, or social resistance to anti-trafficking efforts. This could potentially lead to increased exploitation, either by rendering anti-trafficking laws unenforceable, or by pushing child movement and labor under the table. These enforcement-related issues will be examined in detail in Part II.

Trafficking versus Slavery: Questions of Movement and Consent

Despite new, broad definitions which render both movement and consent irrelevant to identifying the crime of trafficking, real life occurrences of human trafficking, and consequent strategies for prevention and prosecution, are closely associated with both of these elements. Transnational actors define trafficking broadly with the intention of including maximal numbers of potential victims of exploitation. However, an understanding of how the crime of trafficking plays out on the ground, often through the movement of children with their or their parents' consent, can allow for insight into developing more nuanced and targeted intervention strategies.

[23] I refer to recent issues of the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* of the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC 2012:81) and the definitions in use by the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT 2009).

The element of movement is one way in which human trafficking can frequently be distinguished from other sorts of exploitation. If we look at the word itself, the first two definitions of the term *traffic* on Dictionary.com (2013) refer solely to movement, such as, "the movement of vehicles, ships, persons, etc…" Definitions three through five refer to commerce or trade between different places or distinct communities - the movement of goods. Still other definitions focus on trade in illicit or illegal goods. The Oxford English Dictionary (2013) allows for historical contextualization, here trafficking is linked explicitly to "improper" dealings, and trade of an "illicit or secret character" from 1567 to the present. In common parlance the term "traffic" is often used in reference to illicit activities with international scope (e.g. drug trafficking) which by default incorporate the notion of movement.

Despite this link between the term trafficking and the element of movement, current UN anti-trafficking instruments stress that trafficking can occur without the victim being moved across international boundaries, and even without any physical movement of the victim at all: "A victim need not be physically transported from one location to another in order for the crime to fall within these definitions" (USTIP 2012:8). Rather the definition of a trafficked person relies upon their exploitation. Trafficking, then, drawing on current broad global definitions, while linked to the trade and transport of persons, is not always explicitly distinguished by the factor of movement.

Nevertheless, much anti-trafficking intervention focuses not only on movement, but specifically movement over international borders with activities such as border security, transportation control, repatriation of victims, ensuring victims' rights to legal integration within destination countries, and the use of informational campaigns to dispel perceptions of greener pastures on distant horizons often harnessed by traffickers. In places like Senegal and Mali, the international community trains border guards and advises state governments to require enhanced travel documentation to prevent the cross-border transport of children for exploitation. Likewise, many countries have put legal statutes in place to help repatriate trafficking victims and occasionally also grant them the right to remain in countries into which they are trafficked.

The factor of movement, therefore, while not necessary for the "trafficking in persons" to be legally considered a crime, is nonetheless both a commonsensical understanding of human trafficking and a key element in the exploitative practices gathered under the term. It is through movement that traffickers remove victims from social networks of protection, often taking those recruited to places far away and unknown to them. A status as foreigner - legally, culturally and

socially - can facilitate a victim's exploitation, while leaving them few opportunities to seek help or recourse.

Are the terms slavery and trafficking synonymous? I note that while transnational organizations today use the terms interchangeably, their conflation does not result in improved strategies for actual intervention because they regroup varying forms of exploitation which take place in differing ways. The practice of "human trafficking" has its roots in slavery, while being more explicitly linked to sexual exploitation. The first international legal instruments against what was briefly called, "white slavery" or the trade in humans for sexual exploitation referred to the crime as "trafficking in women and children" (League of Nations 1921). The term trafficking was used specifically as a means of distinguishing this sort of trade in persons for sex from the African slave trade. So, although slavery and trafficking were semantically linked—both being forms of trading in persons – forced prostitution in the 20th Century became known as trafficking in part as a way to distance it from "slavery", a term that has retained its principal reference to the African Slave Trade.

Similar to the way in which the emotive reporting of the 2001 "Etireno Affair" encouraged a revival of the term "slavery" to refer to human trafficking today, the 2012 US *Trafficking in Persons* report utilizes an evocative slavery motif, referencing among other things the 150th anniversary of Lincoln's announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation. In one photo feature, side-by-side classified ad clippings offering rewards for "runaway slaves" are exhibited - one from the 19th Century, and one from the 21st. While the historical ad uses the words 'runaway slave'; the contemporary ad speaks of breached terms of an immigrant work visa - a modern language of legal control over human movement. Both ads offer rewards for capture. These images illustrate as well as reinforce the semantic association between trafficking today and the disgraceful history of the African slave trade in the West. They dare readers to compare what hindsight has revealed to be a sinister chapter in the history of humanity, with contemporary practices of legal and illegal bondage and exploitation. In so doing it is suggests graphically as well as contextually that both are appalling, while also socially entrenched and hence normalized within their socio-historical contexts.

Commenting on the use of slavery terminology in reference to trafficked persons, Kate Manzo (2005) argues that the terms are not in fact synonymous. According to her, slavery is an institution based on force, whereas human trafficking does not need to happen through force, and even "thrives better on willingness" (Manzo 2005:398). She focuses on the image of the trafficker as Pied Piper, whose intimate knowledge of the source community's culture and values allows him or

her to effectively walk away with children and their families' blessings, rather than stealing them, as the term suggests.

The question of consent, both the child's consent as well as his or her parents', is central to debates about trafficking, whether definitional or practical. In terms of official United Nations definitions of trafficking, a child's consent is considered inconsequential[24]. In the case of sexual exploitation specifically, a child under 18 years of age can never consent[25].

The Palermo Protocol states:

"The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation …shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used (i.e. "the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person").

In other words, through the use of one or more of the means listed above, consent is more often than not obtained at some point, perhaps for the initial recruitment, or perhaps even repeatedly throughout the exploitation. Therefore, although activist groups make frequent analogies with historical forms of slavery - modern day forms do not provide such easy indicators as cages or shackles as evidence.

In light of this, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act flags the dangers of interpreting initial consent as an indication that the action is not a form of trafficking, as the intentions of the contracting party may be to subsequently exploit their labor through force, coercion, fraud or threat:

> *A focus solely on initial recruitment of migrant workers and prostituted individuals – whether or not they consented to their situation – can impede the proper identification of subsequent trafficking. Authorities often fail to look beneath the surface for possible indicators of forced labor, debt bondage or sex trafficking (USTIP 2012:25).*

Considering the vulnerability of children, deception alone is often considered sufficient to keep some in a perpetual state of servitude; the use of direct force or even threats of force may be entirely absent in these cases. For example young labor migrants might be promised pay in full only at the end of a long contract of employment or other laborers may be told that they are free to leave at any time, but that they will receive no remuneration due to a breach of contract (Manzo 2005). Therefore, a lack of knowledge of rights in employment, or a general powerlessness to reclaim those

[24] Palermo Protocol 2000: Art. 3.c.

[25] Palermo Protocol 2000: Art. 3.d. Also, in the US Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), first passed in 2000, severe trafficking for sexual exploitation is defined as "sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age" (USTIP 2012:8). In other words, because children are considered to be under the age of consent for sexual activity in the US there is no requirement for "force, fraud, or coercion" when underage sex is involved.

rights (often because they are far from home) can amount to the enslavement of children without the types of imprisonment often associated with slavery. The UN Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT 2014) web site, for example, clearly states that "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking in persons", even if this does not involve any improper means such as deception, coercion etc." This is because "a child ... cannot anyway give a valid consent."

One might ask why it is necessary to even debate terminology in this case, call it slavery or call it trafficking, in a victim-centered approach, the exploitation of the victim is the key factor. With or without consent, when people are made to work against their will for another's profit, it is exploitation. Given this, why not use the harshest words available to stir responsible parties into action? While both discourses indeed touch on a common central element of victim exploitation, understanding trafficking as particular from the institution of slavery is important to understanding how to combat it.

If researchers and policy-makers come to understand that trafficking does not necessarily function through force, they can better see why the numerous anti-trafficking initiatives launched in West Africa have failed to make any substantial impact. Invoking images of cruel slave drivers stealing children from their families and shackling them in boats them will not necessarily lead communities to recognize the child movements they see everyday as trafficking. It is important to understand the mechanisms that alleged traffickers use to convince children and families to participate willingly in transactions that international actors deem criminal. This understanding may permit observers to better grasp the size of the problem and well as develop more appropriate reactions with respect to prevention and prosecution.

In my experience in Senegal, parents and children frequently willingly engage in activities that outsiders may call trafficking, like child circulation for household help, or migration for agricultural labor. In their views, they are responding as necessary to economic pressures, not engaging in criminal activity. This disconnect between outsider and local perceptions of these long-standing practices can then push communities to resist legislation that criminalizes these movements. Declaring that this child movement constitutes a reincarnated African slave trade may stir foreign indignation, but it will not likely facilitate a shift in behaviors locally.

The US State Department's Attack on Trafficking of *Taalibes* in Senegal

In this section I discuss the evolution of the portrayal of *taalibes* as victims of trafficking by the United States Department of State *Trafficking in Persons* (TIP) reports from 2002 to the present. I analyze the report's annual "country narratives" for Senegal about local occurrences of trafficking in an effort to trace how *taalibe* begging became incorporated into a transnational discourse of child slavery and trafficking. This is key to my discussion of the phenomenon of *taalibe* child begging in Senegal because it represents one of two competing *taalibe stories* which claim to speak for the children's best interests. Each story explaining *taalibe* suffering – that of trafficking or vulnerable schools – particularly when told by a powerful global actor like the US Department of State, has widespread repercussions with respect to the intervention strategies which follow from it.

A close reading of TIP reports produced over the last decade on the situation of human trafficking in Senegal reveals an increasing US knowledge base concerning the situation of the Qur'anic students of West Africa and Senegal as victims of trafficking[26]. The annual reports reveal an evolution in terms of reference with respect to the nature of abuse that the *taalibes* endure, the related actors, and causes of their plight. Furthermore, by tracing the annual country "Tier" ratings for Senegal, it becomes clear how the United States uses its rating system as a diplomatic tool to apply pressure to state governments to comply with global minimum standards with respect to combating and preventing human trafficking.

Senegal was not included in the inaugural TIP Report of 2001 – which listed the African countries of Gabon and the Democratic Republic of Congo as among the 23 countries of the world with the worst trafficking records[27]. It is likely that the short period between the TVPA, which called for the publication of annual TIP reports, and the date when the first report was released played into Senegal's exclusion. Indeed, the "country narratives" in this first report were quite brief compared to those in more recent editions, suggesting a lack of time to gather a base of information. The report acknowledges omissions, and says that countries for which evidence exists of human trafficking were passed over if "the evidence does not indicate a significant number of victims" (USTIP 2001). The report added that the crime of human trafficking is often "under-reported and

[26] In the TIP Reports, "trafficking" is the term used to express "severe forms of trafficking in persons", as defined in the TVPA as: (a) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or (b) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.

[27] These countries received a "Tier 3" rating, signifying that they do not comply with the minimum standards to combat human trafficking, and that they are not making sufficient efforts to comply. There were 47 countries (including 14 African countries) that were given a Tier 2 rating, also considered to be insufficiently compliant with minimum anti-trafficking standards (US TIP 2001).

obscured from public view", or that sometimes there is simply "a paucity of available information" (ibid).

In 2001 the world knew that large numbers of *taalibes* were begging on the streets of Senegal. In addition to Embassy officials in Dakar who quite likely came across tens to hundreds of boys begging on their daily commutes, UNICEF had come out with a report in 2000 that claimed that up to 100,000 *taalibes* had been forced into begging in Senegal alone. An academic essay published the same year and circulated internationally also reported that thousands of Qur'anic students in Senegal were being forced to beg by their instructors (Mbaye & Fall 2000). This is in addition to regular local media coverage in Dakar of *taalibes* facing abuse or hazardous living conditions. UNESCO reported the problem of begging *taalibes* in urban Senegal in 1994, and in 1995 the government of Senegal laid out a cooperative 5-year plan (1997-2001) with Unicef which dedicated 5.65 million USD to the begging pupils called, "Rehabilitation of the Rights of Talibés" (fr. *Rehabilitation des Droits des Talibés*) (Senegal 1995). This document described the children as being in situations of "extreme precariousness", and aimed to assist 30,000 *taalibes* "submitted to the obligation to beg, not only to meet their own needs (food, clothing, etc...), but above all to bring back daily to their marabout a certain sum of money" (Senegal 1995:144).

It is unlikely, thus, that the omission of the *taalibes* from the 2001 TIP report was due to a lack of information or to judgment about the relative low numbers of victims. More likely Embassy officials did not perceive *taalibe* begging as child trafficking, but rather considered it a problem of a different sort—poverty or the abuse of religious power. But the *taalibes* swarming the cities in groups with their large tomato paste cans to collect money and food to bring back to their *daaras* do not necessarily strike observers, even foreign observers, as incidences of trafficking on a grand scale. For example, the Senegal-UNICEF project presented in 1995 did not use accusatory language when describing the rural to urban migration of Qur'anic schools due to impoverished conditions. It mirrored Senegal's high rates of urban migration in general at the time:

> *The difficulties of survival in rural areas of Senegal push marabouts more and more to resort to migration during the dry season to search in urban agglomerations for necessities and above all a monetary revenue. In their migrations, they take with them all or part of the total of children that the populations have confided to them to assure their religious education in Qur'anic schools called daaras in wolof.*

It was not until 2002 that Senegalese children "held in conditions of involuntary servitude" by "religious instructors", made their debut in the US TIP report. But in this case, only "sometimes" and by "some religious instructors" in Senegal's larger cities. It is unclear in 2002 what the US

Embassy's take was on the estimated 100,000 begging children in Senegal. Senegal was rated "Tier 2" for not yet fully complying with the minimum standards to eliminate trafficking, most of which at that time were reported to involve women and girls trafficked to Europe and the Middle East for sexual exploitation.

In the 2003 TIP country narrative for Senegal, it is noted prominently that "Large numbers of Senegalese children are forced to beg in streets for food and money by religious leaders" (USTIP 2003, Country Narrative Senegal). The word "trafficking" was not used in reference to these children, however, as it was used for the women and girls trafficked overseas. Later, the report does add movement as a concern in relation to *taalibes*: "Some religious instructors in Koranic schools bring children from rural Senegal to Dakar and hold them under conditions of involuntary servitude" (ibid). It is still unclear whether or not the US government is ready to call the begging *taalibe* children "trafficked" in 2003, but "involuntary servitude" and now rural to urban transport for this servitude are heading toward conventional understandings of trafficking.

In 2004, there is no mention at all of the *taalibes* by name or through description, in the TIP Report. The discussion of child trafficking in Senegal was once again centered on girls being sold for sex abroad. This report placed Senegal on the "Tier 2 Watch List" (risking demotion to Tier 3 status) for "failing to provide evidence of increasing efforts to combat trafficking" (USTIP 2004, Country Narrative Senegal). This "Watch List" rating comes with the understanding that if left unaddressed, countries would shift to a Tier 3 rating and could face sanctions including the withholding of all non-humanitarian, non-trade-related assistance from the United States.

The continued focus on the transport and sale of girls for sex reflects the historical definition of human trafficking as essentially a cross border trade of women and children for prostitution (TIP 2012:13). Anthropologist Carole Vance (2011) claims that this bias has perdured. Efforts to stop trafficking in persons are, she argues, actually moralistic crusades against prostitution. The forced prostitution of women and children is a topic that makes for easy headlines and thus increases political and economic support for morally grounded interventions. Recognizing this continuing bias, in 2005, the text of US anti-trafficking legislation was revised with a new emphasis on child trafficking for forced labor or for combat, as well as for sex work. The revised text also highlighted domestic trafficking in persons as opposed to exclusively cases crossing international borders (US 2005).

It is reasonable to assume that this 2005 policy shift accounts for the *taalibes* reappearance in the Senegal country narrative in 2005, this time explicitly as "trafficked" persons. It reads:

"Senegalese boys are occasionally *trafficked* from rural villages to urban centers for exploitative begging at some Koranic schools; young boys are *trafficked* to Senegal from the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, and Guinea for the same purpose" (USTIP 2005, Country Narrative Senegal, my emphasis added).

In 2005, therefore, there are three key developments: 1) "exploitative begging" replaces the more ambiguous terminology of "involuntary servitude", with its religious and educational undertones; 2) movement leading to exploitation is described to take place both domestically and now internationally from various countries toward Senegal; and 3) the word "trafficked" is specifically used with reference to the *taalibes*, in both domestic and international cases. It should be noted however, that in the domestic case, softening words such as "occasionally" and "some" ("Koranic schools") are still being used to describe the exploitative begging. But in the case of children brought to Senegal from other countries, there is no direct reference to the institution of Qur'anic education, nor are "some" of the migration cases designated trafficking while others remain potentially legitimate. In other words, international migration for exploitative begging is considered trafficking in all cases and is not described in terms of Qur'anic education.

Senegal had again risen to a flat Tier 2 rating (no longer on a "Watch List") in this 2005 report, due to "far greater political will and concrete efforts to combat trafficking" (USTIP 2005, Country Narrative Senegal). This is in reference to both a comprehensive anti-trafficking bill, which passed through the Senegalese National Assembly in April 2005 and a bilateral accord signed with Mali in 2004.

In 2006 the TIP Report's language regarding the domestic trafficking of *taalibes* becomes far more concrete. It states, "Boys are trafficked within Senegal for forced labor, particularly for begging by Koranic teachers called marabouts" (USTIP 2006). Rather than focusing on Qur'anic students and Qur'anic teachers, "some" of whom are victims or perpetrators of trafficking, this report focuses on the abuse, *trafficked for forced labor, particularly begging*, and then states who has been found to be committing the crime, *Koranic teachers called marabouts*. In reframing of the situation in terms of the committed abuses the report can declare the presence of both crimes and perpetrators without semantically implicating *all* Qur'anic teachers, or *all taalibes*.

It is worth noting that the term "marabout" narrowly defined in the report is in fact widely-used in West Africa to refer to religious figures, most of whom by virtue of being *marabouts* command deference and religious obedience. As will be shown in Chapters 7 and 9, the integration of local terminology in the TIP Report, while seeming to demonstrate a level of precision, can

hinder anti-trafficking efforts—most especially by stirring up local resistance to anti-trafficking efforts.

The term "*taalibe*" makes its debut in the 2007 TIP Report:

> *Trafficking within the country is more prevalent than trans-border trafficking. Boys who are students (talibe) at Koranic schools are trafficked within the country for forced begging by their religious teachers (marabouts)…Transnationally, boys are trafficked to Senegal from The Gambia, Mali, Guinea-Bissau, and Guinea for forced begging by religious teachers" (USTIP 2007, Country Narrative Senegal).*

This report further develops the story of domestic and international trafficking of children by religious teachers.

In 2008 there is significant development in the framing of the *taalibe* problem. Here, the *taalibe* Qur'anic school students are defined as victims of trafficking not solely because they suffer "exploitative begging" or "involuntary servitude" but because they are also explicitly victims of coercion that leads to exploitation. The report states:

> *Within Senegal, religious teachers traffic boys, called talibe, by promising to educate them, but subjecting them instead to forced begging and physical abuse.*

Here the trafficking discourse's *taalibe as a victim of human trafficking story* firmly takes root. The promise of an education, this story goes, lures children and families to trust the teachers, who then take the boys away, and in defiance of families' expectations turn the boys into beggars under constant threat of physical abuse. This version of events demonstrates clear deception and coercion with intent to exploit. It also effectively renders child and parental consent irrelevant.

The 2008 TIP Report was also the first to put a number (6,480 in Dakar) on the previously figured "large number" of begging *taalibes*. The report drew its statistics from a study by UNICEF, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Bank through the research group, *Understanding Children's Work* (UCW 2007)[28]. Though the writers of TIP Report used the UCW statistics to quantify the "trafficking" victims they had been long reporting on, the UCW report framed the *taalibe* begging problem differently. It describes migrant Qur'anic masters as exiled in search of alternate sources of income to sustain their instruction – not as traffickers. However, by 2008, the US Department of State had already solidified its language on begging *taalibes* in urban Senegal, making it a case of large scale trafficking worthy of international note. But it did so by

[28] The report counted 7,600 children begging in the region of Dakar, which includes the Department of Dakar, Rufisque and Guediawaye, approximately 90% of whom were found to be *taalibes*.

ignoring the dominant local discourse explaining the movements of *taalibe* children and their instructors.

Indeed this story of families deceived by a religious teacher, who takes their children away and then violently exploits them, became a near to perfect example of child trafficking. Add to this emotive story the fact that post-9/11 politics likely facilitate the cultivation of outrage against perpetrators justifying human rights abuses through Islamic doctrine. Lastly, this story of child maltreatment incorporates specific elements of the Palermo Protocol, namely: recruitment, deception, transportation, and exploitation by force. In other words, when the US TIP report *taalibe story* finally took shape it was as a classic tale of mass scale child trafficking, with fraud, deception, displacement, force, exploitation – the whole package. However, in the meantime, the term "trafficking" became so broad among transnational organizations that it could arguably already include all *taalibes* (without fraud, deception, displacement, or force) and, indeed, a significant portion of the population of West African children.

Conclusion: Trafficking in *Taalibes*

The TIP Reports show that the perception of the *taalibes* by the US Department of State has shifted over time, largely in concert with its policies on trafficking in persons more broadly. This definitional shift culminated in an unequivocal declaration of thousands of *taalibes* "victims" of trafficking. Today there are numerous North American and European reports about trafficking of *taalibes* to urban Senegal for forced begging[29]:

> *…children from the south (Kolda, Guinea-Bissau) who move to Dakar, particularly working as talibe (beggars), often within networks that are organised to manage child beggars. This is therefore a sort of traffic of children through a network of beggars for Koranic schools, particularly near the Guinea-Bissau border. There has been little progress on reducing the number of children living outside parental care, with an estimated 500,000 children separated from their parents living on the street working and/or begging. (MacAuslen & Fall 2010:51,UNICEF report)*

[29] Thorsen 2012; BID 2011; USAID 2010; HRW 2010; Caritas International 2010; Touré 2009; Einarsdottir 2010; Basse 2004; ENDA 2003. A study was published by UNICEF in 2009 in cooperation with the University of Iceland on the phenomenon of child trafficking out of Guinea-Bissau, the origin of the majority of the begging *taalibes* in Dakar (Einarsdottir 2010). With funding and assistance from the US and French Embassies in Dakar, IOM and Unicef, the documentary film *Stolen Innocence*, was produced in 2009 by filmmaker Adams Sie. It describes the religious students as trafficked, following them from their home villages all the way to the stop lights in Dakar. Various other journalistic, non-governmental and documentary accounts have been made about the *taalibes* in Senegal, and while most of these accounts do not focus specifically on trafficking, they focus on various aspects of children's rights abuses such as exploitation through violence-enforced begging, corporal punishment, poor living conditions, sanitation, hygiene and healthcare, and providing the children with little to no education.

These reports describe the difficult conditions that the boys are forced to endure, including extended begging, severe beatings, overcrowded sleeping quarters, and poor nutrition and hygiene. Most of these focus on the health outcomes of the children, the low utility of the education obtained in Qur'anic schools, the varied competencies of the instructors, and the outdated pedagogical methods and learning materials utilized. In other words, transnational observers do not see these migratory Qur'anic schools as schools at all for these children – they are certainly not worth all of the suffering.

The most biting, and perhaps the most influential of this most recent wave of reports was from Human Rights Watch (HRW) in 2010. Here, as elsewhere, *taalibe* suffering was framed in terms of trafficking:

> *At least 50,000 children attending hundreds of residential Quranic schools, or daaras, in Senegal are subjected to conditions akin to slavery and forced to endure often extreme forms of abuse, neglect, and exploitation by the teachers, or marabouts, who serve as their de facto guardians…In thousands of cases where the marabout transports or receives talibés for the purpose of exploitation, the child is also a victim of trafficking (HRW Report 2010).*

For HRW, it is the factors of *transportation* or *receiving* that would make the situation of a begging *taalibe* one of trafficking in persons.

The 2007 UCW report called "Children Begging in the Region of Dakar," illustrates just how many of the begging children could thereby be considered victims of trafficking – nearly all of them. Using *capture-recapture* and *respondent-driven sampling* methods to gather data on children begging in the city of Dakar and the outlying areas within the region of Dakar, the UCW study estimated a total population of 7600 children, mostly boys, aged 2-17 begging. It reported that 95% of the children found to be begging in the region of Dakar were not originally from the region, but from other areas of Senegal, mostly rural, and from outside of Senegal. In fact, almost half of the children begging in the region of Dakar come from neighboring countries, especially Guinea-Bissau, Guinea (Conakry), Mali and The Gambia. Sixty-six percent of the children begging are of Peulh ethnicity (also referred to as Fula, Fulbe, Pulaar), which corresponds to the prevalence of Qur'anic school migrations among Peulh populations in West Africa compared to other groups.

Ninety percent of the estimated 7200 begging children, most around 10-11 years old, had slept in a Qur'anic school the previous night and claimed to have received religious instruction, thereby categorizing them as "talibés" for purposes of analysis (UCW 2007:2). Ninety-eight percent of the children deemed *taalibes* said that it was their masters who had sent them to beg. Half of the remaining 10% of children, or 5% of the total, claimed they were begging to get food and money for

their families, accompanying adults with disabilities, or begging for their own survival. While the remaining 5% of the "non-talibé" begging children were simply not able to be categorized as *taalibe right now*. Most were migrating to meet up with their *marabouts*, or they had been sent away by their families to live with a *marabout*, but then fled, either temporarily or permanently. The various children's shelters I visited during my fieldwork confirmed that most of the *fakhman* – children who live in the streets – in Senegal have fled their Qur'anic schools due to harsh conditions and abusive treatment and had nowhere else to go[30]. In other words, the phenomenon of child begging in Dakar is almost entirely the result of Qur'anic education-related activity.

These accounts clearly show that many *taalibes* begging in Senegal are being economically exploited and have been displaced for that very purpose. Likewise they are beaten and otherwise placed in dangerous situations. And though this is done under the guise of education, these accounts claim that the children are not even given the opportunity to pursue a quality education. With all of this attention to the issue, with so many different actors naming it as a "problem" why is this still going on? Or, more to the point, why is there still an on-going public "debate" about the issue? What possible argument could there be for the legitimacy of this practice of live-in, migratory Qur'anic education, the very existence of which depends almost exclusively on child begging?

In later chapters, I discuss the vulnerable schools discourse as an alternate perspective to that of child trafficking. In those chapters I document that traditional Qur'anic schools endure for multiple socio-cultural and religious reasons, migrating if necessary. First, the schools provide free religious training for children of poor families, where the choice is Qur'anic school or no school. Second, rather than solely a deterrent, many African families believe that suffering is an integral part of childhood education in general and religious training in particular. Finally, many families in West Africa are reluctant to send their children to French-language public schools as a result of enduring resistance to colonial tactics of cultural and economic domination. Because these migratory schools endure, despite accusations of trafficking, the interventions on the ground targeting this "traffic" are encountering unforeseen hurdles to prevention, protection and prosecution, to which I now turn.

[30] I draw on personal interviews with and documents provided to me by representatives of Empire des Enfants of Dakar, Samu-Social of Dakar and Bamako, See Dramé 2010 for a description of this phenomenon encountered by the NGO SAMU Social, which maintains shelters which receive many former *taalibes* in both Dakar and Bamako.

Chapter 3 – Fighting *Taalibe* Trafficking:

Anti-Trafficking Initiatives in a Context of Child Circulation

> *During the return home of these ["trafficked" taalibe] children, there were a significant number of parents who were not in agreement. Because for them, these children were not exploited… Because… they think that a seven-year-old child can start working, begging, and doing little jobs for the master – that this is normal.*
>
> - Younousse Talla, Founder of the Malian human trafficking response network RAFY[31]

Beyond merely defining child trafficking, the Palermo Protocol[32] set up three basic principles that counter-trafficking measures must seek to achieve – "the three P's," prevention, protection and prosecution. In this chapter, I look at state and non-state efforts at upholding the Palermo Protocol's three P's in the fight against child trafficking of *taalibe* Qur'anic students in Mali. I find, however, that the efforts are ineffective in terms of preventing child exploitation, protecting children identified as probable victims of trafficking as well as prosecuting perpetrators. Despite the Malian state's early commitment to fight child trafficking relative to the region, the country's interventions, mostly focused on border monitoring and repatriation, are inadequate. Mali's vast, porous borders and widespread cultural traditions allow for extensive mobility of children and youths, rendering border posts with "trained" guards mere decorum. Moreover, the third P – prosecution – is effectively missing from the Malian state's efforts. This is due to incongruence between local perceptions of child movement compared to transnational views such as those represented in the Palermo Protocol. While moving groups of children from rural Mali toward urban Senegal to beg for money is a clear case of trafficking according to most transnational observers, this chapter shows that local populations, even government officials in charge of child protection programs, do not necessarily see the actions of the Qur'anic masters in question as criminal. These movements, then, even when deemed harmful to children, go unpunished.

Taalibe begging in Senegal is frequently chalked up to an influx of children from neighboring countries, spoken of as if they are physically spilling over the border into Senegal. I heard it so often that I wanted to see for myself what one of those allegedly liquid-like border crossings actually looked like. During my stay in Kayes, I organized a trip to the border between Diboli, Mali, and

[31] Personal interview, audio-recorded, June 16, 2010, Bamako, Mali.
[32] *United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children (*Palermo Protocol 2000)

Kidira, Senegal. I travelled with my family – my husband and two young children – in a chauffeured 4x4 vehicle that we rented for the mission. We packed up our passports and headed out early in the morning toward the border 100 km away. As we approached the international line we saw big rigs lined up and parked off of both sides of the road for miles. I filmed this approach and, replaying it I can count a 140 vehicle line-up of tractor-trailers and oil-tanker trucks parked head to tail. Bouba, our chauffeur, responded to our confusion about the hold-up explaining that they were waiting for customs inspections in order to cross into Senegal. "Sometimes they wait up to a week or more," explained Bouba. This news came as no surprise, since from my window I could plainly see that people were camped-out all over. I watched as women hung out laundry and groups of men sat together eating or sipping at cups of steaming tea. Others took naps on mats spread out on the ground in the midst of all the commotion. As I replay the video I can hear my five-year-old son in the background with a concerned tone, "Mommy… there was someone sleeping under a truck."

While West African borders are frequently described as "fluid", at that border post between Senegal and Mali, traffic "flow" was significantly blocked. But the hold-up was on goods – not people. We came to understand this as we drove unfettered between the walls of big rigs toward the immigration post. We encountered a traffic stop, which consisted of a large steel bar lowered over the road completely blocking all Senegal-bound vehicles. Yet a man without a uniform lifted the steel bar to allow our passage almost as soon as he saw us. When we arrived at the actual immigration post our driver handed over the toll payment and we were waved through without any negotiations, explanations or inspections. We were not even asked to show any documentation. From there we followed the road onto a large bridge over the Falémé River and entered Senegalese territory.

"That was it?" I asked incredulously? That was the "monitoring" of outbound vehicles? We did not even explain the reason for our passage, let alone show our identification or travel paperwork…! Of course, I thought, as visible foreigners, perhaps they assume we have the necessary travel documents. But the speedy passage of our vehicle did not appear to be an exception; all of the other private vehicles that I observed passed through with the same ease. I did notice, however, a stopped bus surrounded by a crowd of about 50. Bouba explained that while private vehicles are allowed to pass by without monitoring, the communal transportation vehicles are routinely stopped and all of the occupants are made to exit with their identification cards in hand. "Then why do they just let private vehicles go by like that? It doesn't make any sense," I plead with Bouba for clarification. He chuckles a bit. "Well," he responds, "I guess it is because

there are so many vehicles that pass by here, many from right in town here, and they might go back and forth four or five times in a day. So they just let the private vehicles, and pedestrians, pass through."

Perhaps it is upon entry into Senegal that we will be questioned for paperwork, I thought. So I looked around as we continued on the bridge toward Senegal. I filmed the women, men and children as they calmly walked in both directions. I saw many Qur'anic school students making their way across with their signature tomato paste cans in hand in search of alms. When we descended from the bridge, I decided to get out of the car, with my two kids, and walk through the Senegalese immigration post, to see what sort of control they would do if I was not in a private SUV. We approached a white and crimson wooden sign placed in the center of the road which read, "HALTE! POLICE", with an arrow pointing to the right. But I saw car after SUV after moped exiting the bridge, passing by the sign and continuing into Kidira without even slowing. In fact, it was not until we were right in front of the immigration post that we noticed it was there, set back off the right side of the road. I saw two uniformed officers sitting at a table inside of the structure which resembled an over-sized, 3-sided cement bus stop. They looked out toward the traffic, but they did not move, nor did they react to me and my family walking into Senegal – or, for that matter, my staring at them waiting for a jump to order. I thought about questioning them about monitoring children crossing over the border, but clearly this was not necessary. Children can be moved without any care for bureaucratic or paperwork formalities.

This illustration demonstrates that people pass freely between Mali and Senegal, even at designated immigration posts. This border fluidity makes child trafficking prevention efforts difficult, particularly as these efforts tend to focus on controlling border crossings. Coupled with border openness, children customarily move around at high rates within and between countries in the region. They move, or "circulate" either on their own as migrant laborers or when their parents confide them to other adults for education or work. This means that it is challenging for border guards to detect cases of criminal child trafficking in the midst of incessant, culturally-legitimated, child movement. Moreover, the very situations that border guards are taught to identify as probable cases of child trafficking are alternatively described by parents and local populations as examples "child circulation" traditions. In fact, because the child movements are usually done with child and parental willingness, their outright prohibition raises questions about children's right to migrate for work, and parents' rights to send their children away for education.

There is long-standing cultural and historical precedence for a Qur'anic master to travel over West African borders with his pupils in tow. As of 2010 when I conducted my field research, the social legitimacy of transporting children for Qur'anic education insulated Qur'anic masters from prosecution under human trafficking laws despite their lack of proper travel permits. As a result, rather than stop possible child traffickers, the clash between local and global perspectives on the legality or illegality of child movement on the ground leads to cultural accommodation of illegal movement with children over borders. This renders border-based anti-trafficking measures practically and legally ineffective in terms of protecting children, and they may even be infringing on their rights. Regardless of efforts of transnational NGOs like the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the state governments of Senegal and Mali to target borders in order to stop the transport of child beggars - child trafficking prevention efforts focused on Senegal and Mali's fluid border are like reinforcing a dam in the middle of an open sea.

The Physics of Where the Global Meets the Local

It is one thing to develop an all-encompassing definition of human trafficking in Geneva or New York, and it is something entirely different to attempt to apply this to the complexity of life in situ. This section focuses on the intersections between global ideals, legal instruments, local realities and actual outcomes. Ana Tsing calls these points "friction" – sites of production, however "awkward, unequal, unstable and creative" (Tsing 2005:4). She focuses on the *exchanges* among actors, eschewing unidirectional models which portray the fight for global human and environmental rights as one of disseminating knowledge and technology from the Global North to the Global South. Friction, for Tsing, is productive, not transmissive, meaning that the point where these differing elements come together create something new; information does not simply pass from one point to another. The physicality of the metaphor highlights what is productive in these interactions: "Rubbing two sticks together produces heat and light; one stick alone is just a stick" (Tsing 2005:5).

Like Tsing, my approach criticizes analyses of development and rights promotion that focus narrowly on quantitatively measurable project outcomes for target populations. Too often project evaluation merely counts how much is adopted by local populations and what is lost as a result. As I unpack campaigns fighting the apparent West African child trafficking epidemic that I described in chapter two – I, like Tsing, look where the rhetoric meets the masses. But it is at that very point of intersection where my findings diverge from those of Tsing. I do not perceive what happens at that

point as *friction*, a rough yet productive rubbing. It could be better described as the gap between two repelling magnets.

This space is not a void in the sense that that there would be no reaction at all, but as the global instruments are brought into the West African setting, the local actors acknowledge and verbally support them, all while actively pushing them away. It is a politics of rejection. And as global anti-trafficking instruments are pushed in with increasing force by transnational aid agencies, local forces of resistance to these increase in equal measure. This metaphor suggests an active stance of avoidance as West Africans negotiate their own definitions and strategies to address the problem of child begging in Senegal's cities, not considered a problem of child trafficking in itself locally.

A repellant shifting, but lack of substantive interaction between local and global actors on the issue of child trafficking, was the norm in Senegal in 2010 during the period of my field research. But it was not the only relationship in play between local political actors and the global community working to "fight child trafficking". There was, on at least one occasion, a sudden destabilization of Senegal's politics of resistance, resulting in a 180 degree flip of official policy regarding human trafficking. Similar to a magnet that repels the like pole of another but is overcome by the latter's relative power, the Senegalese state, under pressure from transnational actors, suddenly flipped its approach to child begging, binding to outsiders' declarations that it was a manifestation of human trafficking. In August of 2010, Senegal's Prime Minister, Soulaymane Ndéné Ndiaye, banned begging in Dakar without any forewarning. This isolated act was a nod in the direction of the country's global financiers[33]. For this reason, as well as due to the hardship this caused for those dependent on begging, the measure did not take hold on the ground locally.

Within six weeks of the announcement, Senegal's President, Abdoulaye Wade, repealed the Dakar begging ban, taking up the country's usual stance of avoidance of global counter-trafficking pressures. There was no downward translation of this brief "anti-trafficking" stance into long-term changes at popular, legal or institutional levels. In fact, children continue to cross over borders into Senegal, thousands of boys continue to beg unfettered by police, and acts appearing to be outright exploitation continue to go unpunished. In the following sections I draw on my research in Mali focusing on migrating *taalibes* to examine which acts local actors consider criminal and which they remain unwilling to condemn.

[33] As I addressed in chapter two, this was particularly the case with the US Department of State, which was threatening Senegal's upcoming Millennium Challenge Fund grant disbursement if it did not show increased efforts to combat its child trafficking problem.

Section I: Attempts at Preventing Child Trafficking in Mali

In 2000, Mali was at the forefront of anti-trafficking efforts in the region with its "National Emergency Plan to Fight against Child Trafficking", developed in partnership with various non-governmental and transnational actors. As a result, the government of Mali has put in place a number of specific measures to prevent child trafficking, to be able to assist and protect victims. But, as I illustrate here, what actually happens on the ground is another story.

In terms of prevention, Mali has implemented travel document requirements. Children ages 18 and under must procure and carry what is called a *titre de voyage*, or a "child passport". All out-bound children without this official travel card are to be stopped from crossing the border while border guards have been trained to identify and to intervene into any possible case of child trafficking. In addition to these state border patrols, Mali's trafficking prevention efforts include the formation of community surveillance committees, or community vigilance committees (fr. c*omités de surveillance communautaires; comités de vigilance communautaires*), which monitor the presence of travelers in border communities who may fit the profile of either a child trafficker or of trafficked children. These committees were established in cooperation with NGOs and other actors on the ground in these areas. Finally, there are awareness campaigns underway throughout Mali. These decry the dangers of child trafficking through interactive public events in communities and in schools, announcements on the radio and on TV, and through illustrations and storytelling on posters and in comic books. These messages focus on educating Malian families about the forms that child trafficking can take, and the dangers that children can face if they fall into the wrong hands.

The "protection" measures in place in Mali include coordinating with networks consisting of various NGO partners to take care of youths identified as trafficked, and with foreign embassies to facilitate repatriation. If the displaced youths are Malian, these partners help them get in contact with their families and facilitate a return and social reintegration. In 2000 Mali was the first West African nation to adopt a "National Plan of Action" to fight child trafficking (UNICEF 2002). Four years later it passed a cooperative agreement with Senegal to combat over-border child trafficking between the two countries (ENDA 2004). And, in 2012, the provisional government passed a new law (2012-023) "Relating to the Fight against Trafficking in Persons and Similar Practices" which is reported to significantly strengthen its provisions against human trafficking and other types of traditional slavery still occurring in the country (US TIP 2013:254-255).

Because it is effectively impossible to control trafficking by randomly investigating all the seemingly suspicious people in a given setting, borders have become a primary site for controlling trafficking. This is largely because they provide the policed infrastructure necessary for systematic investigations of persons suspected of trafficking or being trafficked. It is clear from the list of anti-trafficking measures put in place in Mali, that managing border security is central to their trafficking prevention policy. The *titre de voyage,* for example is mandated only for cross-border travel, the community surveillance committees are set up in border communities, and protection and prosecution efforts focus on international legal cooperation regarding entry and exit requirements.

Yet these attempts at preventing trafficking by controlling borders presume an infrastructure of control is already at least partially in place. The international political boundary between Mali and Senegal, for example is more like the line between Manitoba and Saskatchewan - a legal division for administrative purposes, but which does not necessarily reflect physical boundaries or divisions of peoples. West African borders, like this one, are often described as *porous*, creating an image of a dashed line on a map with numerous holes and discontinuities through which people pass at will. When I say *fluid*, I think that if Mali's international borders were drawn over water, they would be demarcated with a periodic buoy bobbing around to mark territory, but whereby the flow of the water would not be changed. I say this because landlocked Mali shares 7,243 km of borders with seven other countries, the largest with Algeria at 1,376 km, and the smallest with Senegal at 419 km[34], and it simply does not have the resources to monitor them[35].

Similar to a great many post-colonial "international" borders, those in West Africa rarely reflect geographic, cultural, or ethnic divisions (Alvarez 1995). This makes good sense, because various peoples of Mali, like others throughout West Africa, are constantly on the move, or have historically or recently migrated, and therefore are spread throughout the entire region. Moreover, the lines in West Africa were mostly made by the French or the British, in regard for their economic profits and control, not the interests or physical distribution of the peoples living in the colonies themselves. The "Scramble for Africa" in the inter-war period led to a veritable "scribbling on Africa" in terms of meting out territories and inscribing legal bounds of colonies before others could snatch them away from under their fountain pens. Therefore, the fact that border crossings in the region are not strictly controlled and people cross over at will is actually a better representation of a

[34] Mali's shared borderlines: Algeria 1,376 km, Burkina Faso 1,000 km, Guinea 858 km, Cote d'Ivoire 532 km, Mauritania 2,237 km, Niger 821 km, Senegal 419 km (CIA 2014a).

[35] To grasp this size, I think of the fact that Mali has more land borders to patrol than the "Great Lakes State" of Michigan has shoreline (5030.81 km). I grew up in Michigan, and that is a lot of shoreline!

West African border than a solid line on a map. This matters to efforts to prevent child trafficking because, contrary to conventional perspectives on how to best limit the activity worldwide, borders may not be ideal places to identify and prosecute the crime in West Africa.

The populations occupying Mali's vastly varied terrains are equally diverse linguistically and culturally[36]. Mali has been a center for political, religious and commercial activities and migrations for many centuries. Much of the violence occurring today in Mali is directly related to its historical and colonial mapping, which resulted in the forced political union of populations that history has divided according to economics, society or religion. Similarly, Mali's borders politically divide historically united populations. The border which divides Mali from Mauritania to the northwest, for example, legally separates Malian Moors from the Mauritanian Moors. The border dividing Mali from Senegal to the west, moreover, runs through a relatively homogeneous population of Peulhs. Many of the migratory Qur'anic instructors in West Africa are of Pulaar ethnicity, so it is significant to note that there are populations of Peulhs and Pulaar-speaking peoples spanning a vast territory from Mauritania to Guinea to Cameroon.

While West Africa's borders are porous and often inappropriate, this does not mean that all people cross over with the same relative ease. Despite the pervasiveness of metaphors of fluidity in discussions of the current global order, Hilary Cunningham and Josiah Heyman (2004) point out that borders act as gatekeepers among nations, opening up for select passers-by. "Perhaps one of the central fallacies of the turn to a porous world and an emphasis on cultural flows," Cunningham reflects, "has been the assumption that flow connotes mobility and, consequently, fluid, unpredictable interconnection. Flows, of course, can equally connote boundedness, exclusion and the systematic regulation of movement." My annoyingly easy passage from Mali to Senegal was one such example. The private passenger vehicles crossing the border passed fluidly, but the border control system filtered out commercial goods and groups of (generally poorer) people using communal transportation. This suggests that in West Africa, while migration is "legal" for all, circulation is much more "free" for some than others.

The 2014 outbreak of Ebola in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, which already claimed over 3000 lives by September 2014 (Fox 2014), incited Senegal, in a controversial move, to close off its

[36] In the Malian national census, a demographic chart reporting the number of residents according to maternal languages and primary languages spoken includes a list of 19 language codes, 3 of which are "other" categories (Mali 2011). While the largest group of inhabitants identify their mother tongue as Bambara (46.5%), there is a significant representation for all of the other 15 languages listed (Mali 2011:428).

borders to affected countries in to prevent the disease from spreading into its territory. After having described just how porous Senegal's borders are, one might question the country's ability to seal them. But official immigration posts were reported to be heavily patrolled (Jallow 2014), and news accounts revealed that "vigilante" villagers, in the name of protecting their nation's health, were threatening at gunpoint those attempting to evade immigration posts (AFP 2014). This phenomenon demonstrates that Senegal's borders are not actually all that porous – if the populations in question are in fact committed to stopping cross-border traffic. In this case, the hysteria accompanying the threat of contracting Ebola (a contagious infectious disease that the WHO estimated had a mortality rate of 70% in that outbreak) sparked such community commitment (Fox 2014). The risk became tangible.

But, as I discuss below, the community surveillance committees are not nearly as effective at stopping undocumented child and youth migrants from crossing into Senegal. Despite the risks that proponents of the *titre de voyage* travel card declare are facing undocumented migrant youths leaving Mali, the populations in question on both sides of the border do not view those movements as particularly risky or as criminal acts (in non-Ebola times), and are not drawn to take enforcement so fervently into their own hands. I now look at what happens when proposed trafficking prevention efforts encounter this border fluidity on the ground.

Increasing Documentary Rigor: The *Titre de Voyage* Travel Card

The fan is buzzing on a humid rainy-season morning in the regional administration office of the Ministry for the Protection of the Woman, the Child and the Family (*Ministere pour la Protection de la Femme, de l'Enfant, et de la Famille*, MPFEF) in Kayes, and I strain to hear and see Mr. Sylla as he tells me border security stories over the racket and the mountain of booklets stacked on the desk that separates us.

"Do you find that most children wishing to travel out of the country pass through here to request a *titre de voyage*?" I ask him.

"No…no." He shakes his head and smiles slightly as he admits, "And the *titre de voyage* is even ignored."[37]

Everyone under 18 wishing to leave Malian territory, whether or not they are Malian citizens, must detain a *titre de voyage* in order to make a legal exit. All hopeful youth migrants and parents wishing to travel with children must apply for this document in advance of travel. For those

[37] Personal interview, video-recorded, Yakhouba Sylla, July 20, Kayes, Mali.

residing in the region of Kayes, as an example, this process is complicated. First they must go to the city of Kayes to collect the necessary signatures and documents to apply for card. And one, or in some cases both, of the migrating youth's parents must present themselves in person at the regional administrative office of the MPFEF to pursue the "*accord parentale*," a document that formalizes their parental permission for the child to travel. (As an aside this "*accord parentale*," is the document that Mr. Sylla is personally charged with issuing from his office in Kayes. He admitted that it was a rare event for him to receive a request for this document.) The document is then brought to the mayor's office for legalization, after which it can be taken to the "*Police Spéciale*" in Kayes, with a birth certificate, two photos and 200 fCFA (about $0.40 US) to apply for the *titre de voyage*, which has a validity of three months – or the supposed duration of a single trip.

While the processing fee for this document is quite low, the time and travel it requires are far from free. Many villages are located several hours travel in a car from Kayes, and parents maintain economic and familial responsibilities that cannot easily be put off. Moreover, if families are favoring their child's migration out of their own economic need, it would seem an unnecessary burden to invest in obtaining this document, viewed by most as a mere formality.

"We started out only requiring birth certificates for children to cross the border," Moktar Ndiaye explains to me from his wooden desk at the *Police Spéciale* of Kayes, "but who says that it's *that* child's birth certificate? So the *titre de voyage* has a photo, the parents' addresses and occupations, the destination address. And the parental permission is obligatory"[38]. For Mr. Ndiaye, the rigor involved in the process of obtaining a *titre de voyage* is a positive thing – it shows that if done correctly, the children will be better protected from danger (due to its non-transferability and up-to-date parental contact information). He explained that Qur'anic instructors who travel with children need one, as do children going on vacation to visit family, even when accompanied by their parents. This makes them safe by ensuring that there is a record of children's movements and their estimated return dates. He referred to my own situation to illustrate that it is not just for Malians either. I was in Mali with my two children, so he noted that I would not be able to leave the country with them without producing a *titre de voyage* for each.[39]

"Are there any kids who get through the system?" I asked Mr. Ndiaye.

"If there are," he assures me, "they are not a large number."

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[38] Yakhouba Sylla, July 20, 2010, Kayes, Mali.

[39] According to a notice printed on the front of the yellow *titre de voyage* card, an international passport can replace the requirement to detain that document.

As Mr. Ndiaye pages through his register containing all of the *titre de voyage* travel documents issued for the region of Kayes since 2001, he asserts that every single child needs one, absolutely: "If he does not have it, he will be turned back." I was allowed to take a look at the register, and I was surprised to see only 15 issued in the first 6 months of 2010 and only 24 issued in 2009. In 2008, 36 *titres* were issued, nine of which were for Qur'anic students, girls and boys ages eight to 13, set to travel to the Gambia with their Qur'anic master. In this case international movement of several children with a Qur'anic master was deemed legitimate - in the eyes of the parents of the students (who had filed the applications) and now also the legal authorities issuing travel documents. But in all, the numbers of *titre de voyage* travel documents issued for Kayes was low, especially considering that this region has a population of nearly two million, 47% of which are under the age of 24 (Mali 2011; CIA 2014a).

The burden of time, money and effort to maneuver government bureaucracies to obtain a *titre de voyage* may very well be why it is not often applied for. A government social worker based in Kayes, Mr. Sylla, explained to me that those families who describe themselves as "having no money" are very often the same who choose to send their children off on seasonal labor expeditions. Also, he points out, if a child is planning a journey without parental permission – he or she will most certainly forego obtaining the document[40]. Clearly the paperwork requirement is not preventing children from crossing borders for labor migration.

Sarah Castle and Aisse Diarra's (2003) survey of child labor migration reveals how hundreds of children, aged 10-18, got over the Malian-Côte d'Ivoire border without carrying a *titre de voyage*; it was quite simply accomplished as either the form was not requested or the border officers were bribed to allow the children to pass. Some children sought out drivers who brought them over the border in private vehicles in exchange for payment from the children's future employers. This *arriver-payer* (pay on arrival) system sets up youths in a sort of debt bondage, from which they must liberate themselves through periods of wageless work (Castle & Diarra 2003). There were also cases cited by Castle and Diarra which indicated that border police might allow children without correct paperwork to leave the country, but upon their return, when they are carrying earned cash, this is extorted for bribes. Finally, in anticipation of trouble at border posts, youth more often traveled alone (as compared to early accounts of cross-border youth migration). One result of this is that they forego assistance and protections during travel as well as someone to negotiate terms of their employment on their behalf at foreign work sites. Castle & Diarra found that the participation of

[40] Yakhouba Sylla, July 20, 2010, Kayes, Mali.

trusted advocates has a strong positive impact on employment outcomes for youth migrants. Therefore, for the children in Castle and Diarra's study, the anti-trafficking paperwork requirements initially implemented to protect children likely rendered them even more vulnerable to exploitation.

Attempts to Strategically Filter Out Traffickers and Victims of Trafficking

Mr. Sylla, who works out of the regional administration of the MPFEF, told me about one particular case that helped him to understand what was propelling child migration out of Kayes and why it was happening outside of state control:

> *In December of 2007, the police of Diboli intercepted 11 minors. The 11 minors were going to Senegal to work as domestic help. And of the 11 minors there was only one person of majority, who had to accompany his younger sister to Senegal, to complete the team at 12. Well, they were intercepted and when they were brought to the territorial brigade, what do the parents say? 'Aah, our children have been arrested! They arrested our children!' Without even attempting to understand. All of the village was up in arms. (Yakhouba Sylla, July 20, Kayes, Mali).*

Mr. Sylla continues on, explaining how he was called in to handle the situation, which he explains as kind of a learning experience for him as he was relatively new on the job. In coordination with the NGO ENDA-Mali, they organized the "official return" of the children to their families.

> *Well, certain parents said, 'It is because we don't have enough to eat, we wanted our children to work a little in Senegal to get a little money'. We said that we were not against the departure of these children, but that they could become victim to all sorts of treatments over there. There is prostitution, there is exploitation, there is a little bit of everything. So, we explained to them all of that –the consequences of this child migration. But, despite everything, they say, 'we don't have any money, we want to send our children.'*
>
> *So, some children stayed [at home] after we gave the children back to their parents, some stayed here in Kayes to work. They did not leave [Mali]. But others crossed the border, we don't know how. Maybe on foot. Because there are border villages…So, [laughs] if they pass by the control posts, it is difficult to control. Child migration, it is a reality. Because we are in a region of migrations (Yakhouba Sylla, July 20, Kayes, Mali).*

This incident recounted by Mr. Sylla brings up a host of issues – namely that parents are permitting, indeed encouraging their children to migrate for work and that they are not necessarily willing to cooperate with the state authorities to make sure that this happens legally. Second, children determined to cross an international border will be able to because of the porosity of the borders. And third, leading from the other two points – the celebration surrounding the *titre de voyage* as a mode to prevent trafficking appears to be mere talk of what it is supposed to do, not a result of it actually helping to protect Malian youths.

Youth Migrants and Identifying Trafficking Threats: The Group Factor versus the Personal Mission

Over the course of my interviews in Mali, I noticed that one pragmatic approach that has been taken to prevent trafficking is to train border patrols to better identify child trafficking "threats" from among less problematic child and youth migrations. At the IOM regional office in Dakar, I listened to Ibra Sonkaré, program assistant at the counter trafficking unit, explain the various axes on which they attempt to combat child trafficking, among them "training border guards". A bit skeptical of any border-based plan after what I had witnessed at the crossing between Mali and Senegal, I told him about my trip. I described how there were literally no border guards in sight, and how I saw children walking back and forth between Mali and Senegal as if they were walking from the market to the bus station. "What does this border training consist of?" I asked him, "Because I think that perhaps much more is needed to reinforce West African borders than what has been done so far."

My story did not appear to surprise Mr. Sonkare: "There are some trainings IOM is doing, for border management, of course", he responded. "Trying to equip them with the tools to be able to control effectively the going and coming. But also in terms of raising awareness of trafficking issues, and mixed migration flows. Because if we just train them in counter-trafficking, they will be arresting all of the children and sending them back home. While this is not the objective." He explains that not only is it quite difficult to effectively secure West African borders, but that this is in fact not IOM's goal in training border guards. They are in effect working to make border control *smarter* – to identify potential cases of trafficking, while not militarizing borders, which Mr. Sonkare recognizes as an infringement on the right to *libre circulation* or "free circulation" throughout West Africa, even in cases of youths under 18 years of age:

> *The objective is to make them [the border guards] aware that, of course, this group coming from one country to another, they might be some traffickers with some kids. So you need to open your eyes. But not all of them are victims of trafficking, so you need to be aware of that, because there is the Protocol of Libre Circulation in West Africa, which should enable one migrant to come to Senegal without any problems. So, to see that all of this is respected, people need to be trained and be informed. Because sometimes they are not informed at all.*

Mr. Sonkare stressed that while the danger of child trafficking is real, one must not forget that the circulation of peoples has long been traditionally and legally supported, such as through The Economic Community Of West African States' (ECOWAS) Protocol on Free Movement of

Persons, Right of Residence and Establishment[41] of 1979. So interventions must get smarter – to protect the rights of young migrants to cross borders while also weeding out traffickers.

In short, when I crossed over the Mali-Senegal border with my kids, I clearly did not look like a trafficking threat to the border guards. A bit more surprisingly, neither did the *taalibe* children with their begging cans crossing back and forth over the bridge alone or in small groups. I tried talking to a couple of these *taalibes* on that overcast day as I walked along the route from Mali to Senegal; one boy I approached was Malian, his Qur'anic master was over in Diboli. Some others were Senegalese, based in Kidira. None of them spoke French or Wolof, only Pulaar. On the Senegal side, the boys were just hanging out and climbing in trees; none were preoccupied by sneaking away anywhere. For them, a border is nothing special—a place to play, a place to beg. At the end of the day, these boys will likely sift themselves out to their respective Qur'anic schools, on either side of the border. There is little doubt, given the way that border works, that if the master in Diboli decided to pick up and travel to Dakar with all his boys in tow, that he would be able to bypass the immigration controls and steer clear of trouble. It happens all the time (see chapter five on begging and almsgiving in Dakar).

Given this, what *does* constitute a "trafficking threat" for these border guards, if private vehicles and the children walking by are not a problem? Certain factors in flows of people over borders do seem to designate a significant risk of child trafficking, according to local level government officials and national policy-makers, specifically: whether the children are travelling in a group or alone and whether or not they are accompanied by one or more adults. Groups of minors, rather than individuals, should raise red flags (Ibra Sonkaré, IOM), especially so if accompanied by an adult (Younousse Talla, RAFY), while individuals, particularly unaccompanied adolescents, are less likely cases of trafficking.

As a West African man himself having moved around significantly in his youth, Soulaymane Kanté of ENDA-Mali spoke to me about traditions of migration in West Africa, and universal youthful tendencies toward adventure-seeking. But as the president of the NGO, he advocates to limit child and youth movement. He clarified this apparent contradiction by claiming that while child movement without parents in itself is not inherently a problem, the new, modern risks they face are. "*Now*," he explained, "I realize, there are risks of abuse and exploitation, and so we have to

[41] In French : *La Communauté Economique des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest* (CEDEAO) *Protocole sur la Libre Circulation des Personnes, le Droit de Résidence et d'Établissement*.

look into minimizing such movements[42]." In other words, despite authorities seeing youths migrating alone as less of a "trafficking" threat, they are still seen as facing similar if not increased dangers as they move and work on their own. Such is the call to action in his NGO and in Mali to bring awareness to populations about trafficking and migration risks, and cultivate popular support to prevent harm to children. Anthropologists have detected a similar public discourse among NGOs dealing with child trafficking throughout West Africa – they respectfully recognize that traditions of child movement and youthful adventurousness are propelling migrations, but they subsequently affirm that it is the environment awaiting the children that has changed (Howard 2011; De Lange 2007; Dotteridge 2002). NGOs paint pictures of vulnerable children in the midst of rapid globalization and social change; a sufficiently-corrupted world in which traffickers are seeking out culturally-savvy ways to exploit and abuse them (Manzo 2005).

And while this logic is not as straightforward as Mr. Kanté's tone of voice might suggest (that striving to minimize youth movements will necessarily help to reduce risks of abuse and exploitation), most intervening actors I came in contact with verbally express agreement with this strategy, and therefore the underlying rationale is not often scrutinized. This is clear in the lamenting sigh that Idrissa Traoré, a social action administrator for the MPFEF in Bamako, let out:

> *We do the maximum at the borders to control them, but I admit that there are still some who manage to pass… I must say, in all honesty, there are children who escape [border control] through diverted routes, which we do not control*[43].

"But," Mr. Traoré continues, his composure brightening up a bit as he explains one final strategy that they have put into action that is meant to counteract the inadequacies of their standard border controls to stop children from crossing borders so easily: "community vigilance committees" or "community surveillance committees". "There are some children, they know that the police are there, so they are going to do a detour of 10 km to enter into Senegal from over there," Mr. Traoré explains as he gestures to visualize a path that clandestine migrants to take to completely avoid border posts. This is why community vigilance committees are organized in these border villages to act as an extended arm of the law, according to Mr. Traoré: "There are patrols at the borders. There are gendarmerie patrols, there are police patrols, there are army patrols. And there are equally the patrols of the vigilance committees that I told you. All of that is to survey the diverted paths that do

[42] Personal interview, Soulayemane Kanté, June 16, 2010, Bamako, Mali.
[43] Personal interview, audio-recorded, Idrissa Traoré, June 30, 2010, Bamako, Mali.

not follow the normal path." But again, the focus appears to be on *groups* of children being transported by adult intermediaries.

> *For example, if they see children in a truck, or in a bus that passes by, they interrogate the chauffeur, the children –'Where are you taking them? Where are they from? Where are they going?' …If they are not satisfied, they alert the police. Or else they give themselves the right to block the bus while they wait to see the situation of the children more clearly (Idrissa Traoré, June 30, 2010, Bamako, Mali).*

Despite Mr. Traoré framing the committees as if they amounted to a sort of militarization of borders in Mali, I was intrigued and a bit optimistic about this non-traditional type of surveillance strategy, getting communities involved to detect and attempt to protect children at risk. Who better to discern between "real" trafficking cases, as alluded to by Mr. Sonkare of IOM, and legitimate cases of youth migration, than community members who can approach and speak informally with those concerned?

I brought the question to Mr. Sylla who was practically *screaming with indignation* at how easy it is to cross the border between Mali and Senegal at Diboli-Kidira. He sloughed off the committees as no different from standard border security measures, as those who want to cross will find a way:

> *The [community] patrols, well, even the the [community] patrols, that's just (hesitates, looks to side) the children can escape that. Yes, everything. And there are also complicities. Well, I am not saying complicities on the part of the authorities, but the parents can be complicit on the part of their children, and find ways to send them over the border. Because, for them it is a necessity that the children work to earn a bit of change for the families"* (Yakhouba Sylla, July 20, Kayes, Mali).

Castle & Diarra's (2003) large-scale investigation of youth migration from rural Mali to Cote d'Ivoire suggests that community surveillance committees are not just ineffectual; they may actually have deleterious effects for child migrants. They report that fears of encountering troubles at the border, and now fears of being stopped in neighboring border villages are pushing youths deeper into the realm of the clandestine. While stopping in villages and taking advantage of their hospitality en route has been a time-honored part of surviving long migrations with limited means, many youths reported to these researchers that they chose to forego this help due to fears the local committees would interfere with their travel plans. Finally, Castle & Diarra assess that community surveillance committees' actions are not well-standardized, and their activities can range from inaction and an inability to prevent dangerous crossings, to over-zealous stopping of migrants who are not victims of trafficking. This difficulty in overseeing the actions of such committees is

inherent in the model – as they are generally established through short-term targeted funding through transnational agencies or NGOs, and the state has limited means to follow-up.

The difficulty in identifying cases of illegal trafficking compared to historically, culturally and economically-sanctioned youth movements has contributed to a failure of trafficking prevention strategies on the ground to curb practices like migration for urban begging. Efforts to deal with child trafficking are still wanting, at least by the standards of all those engaged in the fight. Organizations have worked with state actors to develop smarter, more "informed" strategies to identify trafficking threats such as by increasing scrutiny on groups of children and youths, and youths accompanied by an adult intermediary. And while more cases of trafficking may have taken these forms, may continue to take these forms, or may be more likely lead to the interception of a perpetrator, there is nothing to say that traffickers wishing to get children over Mali's borders for nefarious purposes will not seek to cross individual youths over borders, even precisely for having had the experience of being stopped already in a group, and released.

I return then to Mr. Sylla's exemplary case presented above, where a group of 11 children from a single village in the region of Kayes, Mali, attempted to travel to Senegal to seek work were actually stopped and officially returned to their families. As a result of this case, various parties were educated about the problem of child trafficking, and implored to seek the *titre de voyage* to legalize child movement. What I gathered from Mr. Sylla's retelling, however, was that the main thing that these children's families chose to *learn* from their experience was how to send their child out to look for work without running into trouble at the border. Some found work in Kayes, not crossing any borders, while others crossed over the border alone or in small groups. In summary – even with enhanced trafficking-prevention strategies in place to stop children from crossing borders into dangerous situations, youths or families intent on pursuing the migration will seek out ways to evade detection.

Section II: Regulating Trafficking in the Context of 'Circulating' Children

Reports on child trafficking in West Africa almost universally bring up the question of "child circulation" in the region. West African child circulation, or the movement of children away from their biological parents, has drawn significant scholarly attention as a regional cultural phenomenon. Up to 25% of the children in communities throughout the region, from Sierra Leone to Ghana to Cameroon, are said to be "circulating" at any given time (Vandermeersch 2006; Isiugo-Abanihe 1985; Isaac & Conrad 1982; Goody 1982). This circulation generally consists of children leaving

their natal households to live for weeks, months or years elsewhere – perhaps for their entire childhood. Circulation can be youth-initiated, to escape situations of crisis at home or to pursue work or education elsewhere, or they can be adult-initiated, where children of any age are given to kin or non-kin adults for a wide-variety of social and economic reasons. This adult-initiated movement is often referred to as "fosterage." Understanding how this child and youth movement is being written about by both scholars and intervening organizations is key to understanding current definitions of child trafficking and the interventions aiming to combat it.

Many of the scholars who critique anti-trafficking policies in West Africa cite the extent of youth labor migration in the region, noting that movement of this sort has been the norm for as long as people can remember. Locally then, there is much more to child circulation than what anti-trafficking activists acknowledge, and though many campaigns to "end child trafficking" focus on keeping children at home (in their natal families and villages) these fail to recognize that this youth movement is frequently integral to a family's economic and social survival.

In this section I discuss these scholars' perspectives to examine how parent and youth-initiated movement has been described on the ground and how it has been distinguished from child trafficking in Mali. This will inform my later discussion of when cases of *taalibes* migrating in West Africa are identified as trafficking or not.

Trafficking or Child Work? Youth-Initiated Labor Migration

A key area of disagreement with respect to the prevention and prosecution of cases of child trafficking in West Africa hinges on whether an action of child movement for work should be viewed as the crime of child trafficking, or whether it is voluntary labor migration (Huijsmans & Baker 2012; Alber 2011; Hoffman 2010; Whitehead & Hashim 2005; de Lange 2007; Busza, et al. 2004; Castle & Diarra 2003). Child consent is considered irrelevant for an action to be considered trafficking in global anti-trafficking statutes. Yet nearly all of the movement of children in West Africa is done with their or their parents' willingness, and the movements, even the suffering, are generally considered acceptable. In fact, the failure of the international child trafficking initiatives on the ground to prevent and prosecute crimes of child trafficking can be pinned on this disjuncture in perspectives. This is because the movement of children to engage in work might well be considered voluntary "labor migration" by some and equally be considered an act of trafficking by others. Who responds and how depends upon the category choice they make. I find that that selecting to fight 'child trafficking' rather than regulate child work leads to less effective measure on the ground.

Child "work" is not a crime in itself according to global governing bodies such as the ILO. Indeed, numerous children's rights supporters stress that among a child's principal human rights is the right to work, and so it should be protected like all other rights (Nieuwenhuys 2007; Montgomery 2001)[44]. These scholars claim that the exercise of a child's individual agency should not be discounted or disallowed. If children feel that working will provide much-needed means to feed their families, then not only is it the children's right, but it is the duty of society to provide them with the social protections owed to any legitimate worker. These scholars argue that the alternative - the criminalization of child workers - can push cash-strapped youths to pursue employment illegally, leaving them more exposed to exploitation and other health and developmental risks (Huijsmans & Baker 2012; de Lange 2005; Castle & Diarra 2003; Busza, et al. 2004).

Child "labor", by contrast, is criminalized internationally and it is deemed harmful to a child's mental and physical development. The term c*hild labor* refers to all children under twelve in the developing world[45] working in economic activities (including informal and unpaid work), children aged 12-14 engaged in "harmful work" and any child of any age engaged in one or more of the "worst forms of child labor" as designated by the ILO[46], meaning those "enslaved, forcibly

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[44] Olga Nieuwenhuys' (1994) believes that it would benefit young people to be recognized for the work that they do within households, and be able to reclaim fair treatment and equal wage in employment that they seek outside of the home. She recognizes that despite worldwide movements to curb and eliminate child labor, child workers of the developing world are major producers within their families, countries and in global markets. She draws on the ways in which the children she observed in South India work their way through school, while also contributing to their families' household economies.
Nieuwenhuys concludes that the promotion of a child's "right" to education by coming down harder on child labor, may be having counterproductive and deleterious effects. Not only are children deprived of financial means with which to attend school, they are barred from acting on their own initiative to better their own and their families' life situations. In this way, the criminalization of child labor pushes children's work under the table, inviting increased exploitation and deficient working conditions.
Heather Montgomery's (2001) work on child prostitution in Thailand confronts similar issues. While these children are engaging in what the ILO (Convention 182, 1999) has deemed one of the "worst forms of child labor", many of the girls with whom Montgomery conversed felt empowered by their ability to provide solid income for their families. Montgomery, not advocating for the official recognition and standardized remuneration of child prostitution, does, however, bring to the fore questions of agency and individual initiative on the part of children to participate in the maintenance of their families.
The child prostitutes that Montgomery spoke with, as well as the student workers that Nieuwenhuys studied, teach us that not only do young people often want to play a significant role in determining the futures of their families and themselves, they are capable of and willing to act on those aspirations. Rather than contribute to child-saving campaigns depicting children as vulnerable and unable to act on their own behalf, these scholars urge anthropologists to add complexity to the ways in which the rights of children are considered and promoted.
[45] The ILO Convention 138 states that "a Member whose economy and educational facilities are insufficiently developed", may slightly reduce the recommended legal age of work from that for developed countries (ILO 1973).
[46] The ILO Convention 182 "Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour" of 1999 describes the "worst forms of child labor", and the ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) spells out the types of work deemed harmful to children's mental and/or physical development (ILO 2004; ILO 1999).

recruited, forced into prostitution, trafficked, forced into illegal activities and exposed to hazardous work" (ILO 1999).

Similar to the distinction between legal child work, and illegal child labor, there is a distinction to be made between legal child migration for work and illegal child trafficking for work. The common elements in both of the criminal categories of "trafficking" and "child labor," other than the minimum age limits as specified by the ILO, are exploitation and the risk of harm for the children involved. Child work performed far from home is therefore a complicated category of activity, as the mere distance from home may increase the possibility that the child is exploited or harmed. Rather than deal with the complexity of distinguishing between the right to work and crimes of exploitation, the official reaction of transnational agencies like the UN, is through their broad definitions of trafficking, to declare virtually all labor migration among youths as illegal (Huijsmans & Baker 2012, also see chapter two). These "likely cases of trafficking" are considered close enough to criminal exploitation because of the ways in which children's vulnerabilities as workers increase radically when they are isolated from their families and home communities. Despite holding this hard line, there is no state, NGO, or transnational agency to date that has had the means to realistically put an end to the child exploitation of this sort through their counter-trafficking measures.

Though national and international entities of various sorts tend to pull child movement for work into the criminal category of trafficking, anthropologists working on child migration in Africa suggest that the criminalization of youth movement in West Africa increases, rather than decreases, risks to youths. Sarah Castle and Aisse Diarra (2003) produced a detailed report on labor migration between Mali and Cote d'Ivoire based on interviews with 108 returned migrants and migrant hopefuls aged 10 to 18 which revealed that the youths overwhelmingly undertake these expeditions on their own-irregardless of parental permission.

Castle and Diarra describe these youths' desires to obtain material goods through work, which in turn provides them a route for social advancement. The girls they interviewed were mostly looking to collect items for marriage and thus to avoid the ostracism associated with marrying empty-handed. While the boys wanted to purchase motorcycles, bicycles or radios, citing the pride of other boys who had returned from migration with such items. Despite intimate knowledge of the risks such voyages entailed (all cited having spoken to other returned migrants, and many repeated hearing of troubles) hopeful migrants overwhelmingly stated that they were willing to take on these risks because of the perceived potential benefits.

When I asked Mr. Kanté, the head of ENDA-Mali in Bamako, about the problem of child trafficking in Mali and the region, his initial reaction was that his organization recognizes the "rich African tradition" of child and adult movement, "the ability to move around" (Bamako, Mali, June 16, 2010[47]). He explained that many youths go out and look for a better situation for themselves or their families, and it is indeed this tradition which permits a certain "uniting of peoples in West Africa". Mr. Kanté follows his brief foray into West African traditional movements with a further explanation of child movement as a universal part of growing up. Pressing his fist to his abdominal area, and then raising it into the air while spreading his fingers, he expresses how sometimes young people have a sort of visceral need to go out and *connaitre* (see, learn about) new places; to explore. Many years my senior (and I look barely older than a teen myself), he suggested in not so many words, that my coming all the way from North America to Mali was no different. Moreover, Mr. Kanté's appeal to a universal youthful urge for discovery appeared to target what might be assumed to be my own cultural and intellectual perspective as a Western-trained researcher focusing on children's rights.[48]

Significant hardships are, in fact, endured by young labor migrants (De Lange 2007; Jacquemin 2006; Busza, et al. 2004; Castle & Diarra 2003). They often work long days in manual labor, do not eat until full, and live and sleep in unsanitary conditions. At the same time, their status as foreigner and "underage" prompts many youths to forego health care and support services at their work sites for fear of being repatriated (Busza, et al. 2004). Moreover, Castle and Diarra's study showed that returning youths are often targeted for bribes during travel, as they are known to be carrying their earnings.

Parents and children alike in many of these source communities view the prospects of accumulating wealth or education in destination areas as much better than those available at home. That is not to say that parents agree with their children's decisions to migrate – many parents in Albertine de Lange's (2007) study of youth labor migration in Burkina Faso were in point of fact strongly opposed and equally often defied. Yet the perception of greener pastures in far off lands is not pure fiction in the West African case. In situations of uneven development common throughout West Africa, areas with increased economic development draw labor migrants from poorer areas. However, migration to wealthier lands does not mean that one will gain access to that wealth (Adepoju 2005; Manzo 2005; Fitzgibbon 2003; de Lange 2007).

[47] Personal interview, written notes, Bamako, Mali, June 16, 2010.
[48] This was not my only encounter, in fact, with this technique of reciprocity in cultural argumentation during my research, as I will demonstrate in further detail in chapter four, "Suffering and Migration."

Of the children and youths interviewed, Castle and Diarra (2003) determined that four were victims of trafficking—by which they meant cases where there was deception on the part of an intermediary whose intent was to exploit the child's labor. In other words, the authors (who are working within NGO structures) determined that that for most of the cases (out of 108): 1) a "willingness" on the part of the child to travel for work, and 2) the absence of a figure aiming to exploit the youths, excluded them from the category of "trafficked." According to this working definition, even if all of the young people of a particular village send themselves into risky and exploitative work situations, the fact that they leave at their own initiative and without being deceived by an individual would separate them from those considered "trafficked" children. At the global-level, however, these same choices are interpreted quite differently, where trafficking is treated as an umbrella term for exploitation writ large (see US TIP 2012:9). If assessed with that categorical breadth, all of Castle and Diarra's (2003) cases might well be considered trafficking, if not at the stage of recruitment or transportation, then at the stage of labor exploitation.

The recent anthropological volume, "Children and Migration" (Ensor & Gozdziak 2010) is dedicated to the tension between victimhood and agency with respect to children in migration. The contributors consider in varying contexts the question of youths' rights to self-determination while weighing strategies to minimize any risks that they may encounter in movement. Diane Hoffman (2010:45), for example, reveals that despite diverse literature portraying *restavek* domestic laborers in Haiti as passive victims of abuse and exploitation, many can more accurately be described as "independently mobile" social agents. She writes, "It is important to recognize this agency because it counters a trend in the international media and in social activist accounts of the *restavek* experience that paints a one-sided picture of the *restavek* child as a helpless victim" (Hoffman 2010:47). For her, it is because of, not despite, the abuse and unequal treatment that these children endure, that interlocutors should recognize their agency:

> *Recognizing their agency is not denying that they suffer… rather, it is to point the way to a reconceptualization of the restavek child in a more positive light, to portray the child as a person who has real capacities, skills, intelligence, and personal fortitude that can make him or her an asset to society, rather than a victim or a drain on a society that is itself already in chaos (ibid:48).*

Independent migration is often described as a rite of passage for youths, for its importance in proving one's courage and cunning, inciting respect and awe among peers (Ensor & Gozdziak 2010; Dramé 2010; de Lange 2007; Castle & Diarra 2003). Going out alone on labor migration proves one's courage and strength in many rural communities, in the same way that a journey through jail or to an international city can endow youths with honor and respect in communities of

street children. Pierre Kindi of the Bamako branch of the NGO Samu Social described this social dynamic in the frequent movements of children living in or passing through Bamako's streets. In a "sort of initiation" into street child groups, children would "exchange" themselves between major regional cities like Dakar, Bamako, Ouagadougou and Abidjan. "You had to be able to go with the train to Dakar and come back without being stopped by the police," Mr. Kindi explained. "At that point, you could confirm yourself into the group."

Idrissa Traoré, of the MPFEF in Bamako, provided me with a vivid example of just this type of youth-initiated migration between Senegal and Mali. He witnessed it while working for the Ministry's regional office in Kayes, and for him the incident seemed to exemplify the sheer hopelessness of completely controlling youth movement. He recounts:

> *For example, in Bamako, there are street children. The train comes, the Bamako-Dakar train - they hide in the train, they go to Dakar. They don't have a titre de voyage, they don't have anything. They go to Dakar, they will spend one month, two months, they beg in the streets, they do what they want, they work, and they come back.*
>
> *On the Senegal side too, it's the same thing. The children leave Dakar, they come to Mali, they spend…So, those are the movements, we are conscious of that. It is difficult to control them. It's very difficult (Idrissa Traoré, June 30, 2010, Bamako, Mali).*

The emotion in his expressions conveyed a sense of incredulity with the liberty that these children take upon themselves to move and stay where they want at will.

Similar child-intitiated movements were noted in a book of first-hand street child accounts called *Nàndité,* which was published by the NGO *Samu-Social* in Senegal. The name of the book, refers to the element of initiation described above, when children pass texts to enter into groups in the streets (Dramé 2010). Indicative of their frequent travels, the book notes how *Samu-Social's* "night marauder" teams repeatedly encounter children who have been injured by falling off of buses or trains as stowaways. One boy's words reflect how passing through prison is part of gaining respect in the streets. The author asked the leader of a child street group for news of one particular child, and he answered her "proudly": 'He is in jail, he's good now'. He followed this up with the wolof phrase, *mëtal na*, which the author translates as "he has arrived at the end, he has completed the journey".

And this group respect or initiation often results more from the effects of the migrants' absences and returns on their respective communities, than from changes in the migrants themselves. This is illustrated in *Nandité*, when the author revealed that the boy "completing his journey" in prison did not actually go to jail; he had simulated a stint in jail by migrating out of the

area for a while. He confided to a *Samu-Social* worker in Dakar that his plan was to be forgotten and reap the glory of being fully initiated upon his return.

The use of travel, or even extended absence, to gain status and prestige is not limited to street children, nor to young people or to West Africa for that matter. Upon their return from seasonal labor migration, many of the young people interviewed by Albertine de Lange (2007) in eastern Burkina Faso reap benefits from having gone out alone. Some are able to obtain their coveted bicycles or radios with their earnings, inspiring even younger youths to migrate toward the Beninese border in search of similar goods. Jacquemin (2006) describes a similarly desired effect for girls who run away from their families in Cote d'Ivoire to work as domestic maids in the city. Throngs of West African men are attempting to migrate to Europe at all costs, even if it means spending weeks on a small, rickety wooden *pirogue* boat crossing dangerous waters, only to potentially be sent home again, or live in dismal conditions abroad. This is related to their dreams of coming home with cash and gifts in hand, thereby rising to a different social position. In fact there is a substantial amount of new social science research being done on this phenomenon alone (de Haas 2008; Carling 2007). And let us not forget the longstanding importance of travel for anthropologists, to conduct fieldwork as "a sort of initiation" into their discipline. I explore the topic of movement and learning in more depth in the next chapter on displacement in Qur'anic education. But it is sufficient to say here that there are plenty of socially-driven, emotionally-laden reasons why youths may insist on migrating away from their home areas without proper permissions despite government regulations, or in some cases, in spite of them.

The following section looks at adult-initiated child movements, where youth initiative is less a factor, but consent, of both parents and children, is considered central to assessing the legitimacy of the practices.

Adult-Initiated Child Circulation:
A Reflection on Anthropological Studies of West African Child Fosterage

British social anthropologist Esther Goody (1982) was perplexed by how many West African children grew up with parents other than their own. She took up the study of child fosterage in West Africa and integrated it into the elaborate studies of kinship which defined her field. She typified, calculated, and projected fostering patterns based on norms, lineage systems, family structure, political ideology, ethnicity, economics, and environment, and she attempted to understand the impacts of fosterage on child health and development, fertility, household budgets,

education, psychology, and social solidarity. Her work facilitated a view of "fosterage" as a practice, which can be isolated and studied to learn how it is related to a series of other variables.

Despite the remarkable breadth of Goody's work, the term "fosterage" as imported into the region, encompassed a variety of different practices by which children lived away from one or both of their birth parents. In the Western context, "fosterage" is seen as a last resort for children whose parents are unfit or unable to care for their children (Guggenheim 2005); it is legally enforced, often against the will of the children, the parents, or both. Furthermore, state run fosterage in North America and Europe is grounded in the assumption that children naturally belong with their biological parents, a foster child's experience is by default deemed abnormal[49].

Ester Goody's (1982:23) early studies documenting child circulation in West Africa cemented the use of this single word "fosterage" to refer to all sorts of child displacement accompanied by a "delegation" of parental roles and duties. She sub-categorizes these situations according for the reasons for the displacement, such as "kinship fostering", "crisis fostering", "nurturant fosterage", and "educational fosterage" (ibid:23). She recognized the term's complications due to its negative connotations in the West, while nevertheless using it herself to stress the diversity of values and practices surrounding parenthood roles in differing cultural settings (ibid:37). Goody demonstrated that fosterage need not only be in response to crisis situations, but is also often a voluntary social practice with no inherent risks to the children involved. Her work on the issue has become one of those ethnographic examples celebrating diversity and encouraging cultural tolerance and cross-cultural learning, much along the lines of Margaret Mead's (e.g. 1928; 1931) vivid monographs describing the differing lives of children cross-culturally. And as a result of it, however, the term "fosterage" has become engrained in the literature on child movement in West Africa, and from there has spread not only to English-language literature on child circulation, but has also been imported into French language discussions of those movements (see Dupire 1988).

The frequency with which child movement away from biological parents has been observed throughout West Africa challenges the idea that such movement is in any way "abnormal". Up to 25% of children in communities throughout the region are reportedly engaged in fosterage situations

[49] Donna Ginther and Robert Pollack note that advocates and policy-makers often use "stylized facts", or "simple empirical regularities looking for explanations" to support such common suppositions about family structure and outcomes for children (Ginther & Pollack 2004:3). Their particular study puts into question studies presenting "simple correlations" on educational outcomes for children living with two biological parents versus children living with single parents or step-parents (ibid:2). When controlling for variables such as parental educational attainment and family income, and by looking through a family-based lens, rather than through individual child-based comparisons, they find that educational attainment is not as highly correlated to family structure as simplistic models attest to.

at any given time, nor is this a "steady state" as children flow from household to household, often within kinship networks, in order to create demographic balance, gain training, perform domestic service, pursue schooling, or engage in employment (e.g. see Alber, et al. 2013; Archambault & de Laat 2010; Hoffman 2010; Akresh 2009; Vandermeersch 2006, 2002; Verhoef 2005; Alber 2003; Jonckers 1997; Bledsoe 1990; Isiugo-Abanihe 1985; Goody 1982; Isaac & Conrad 1982; Etienne 1979). Some studies find that up to 50% of adults of a given community at some point in their childhood lived away from their biological parents as "foster" children or in places of instruction or work (Zimmerman 2003; Bledsoe 1990; Isiugo-Abaihe 1985; Goody 1982).

My research with families in Mali corroborated these statistics – as only three households out of the 22 that I visited did not send children out to live with others or take children into their own homes. Most of the families that I interviewed did both, and they did so for a wide variety of reasons; to help with farm work, to provide care after the death of a mother or a divorce, or to pursue schooling were the prime reasons. My own experiences in West Africa, where I lived for several years between 2002-2010 in Senegal, Guinea, and Mali, and where I was a regular visitor of homes on the extremes of the socio-economic spectrum, have led me to the conclusion that West African children rarely grow up exclusively with their biological parents. In fact, staying with and growing up solely with one's biological parents is often seen as detrimental to the development of the child, which leads to what Erdmute Alber describes as the "denial" of biological parenthood. Alber's (2003) article about child fostering among the Baatombu in northern Benin stresses the importance of "social parenthood" in childrearing, dispensing with biological ties in favor of social ones.

While anthropologists have had little problem contextualizing the practice of "fosterage" within local settings as not harmful to, or indeed beneficial, to the survival and functioning of various social units or institutions, this contextualization of the charged concept of "fosterage" appears to have led anthropology's interlocutors to divide into two-camps. First there are those who see fostering as historically-validated, socially-relevant, and at times necessary and normal. These scholars, who espouse a cultural relativist approach, focus on ethnographic description and historical contextualization, and often critique approaches that conflate West African fosterage with child trafficking or modern-day slavery (e.g. Alber 2011; Howard 2011; Piot 2011; Einarsdottir, et al. 2010). Second, there are those who see fosterage as an unfortunate result of harsh economic situations – a forced mode of coping with environmental stresses (e.g. Akresh 2005). This latter perspective tends to focus on the social and developmental outcomes for fostered children and on

how to improve these while ideally reducing the movement of children in the process. This perspective incorporates mostly applied anthropological approaches.

The problem with both of these approaches, however, is the assumption that grouping diverse practices of child movement under a single term (namely fosterage), actually helps scholars or intervening actors to understand child residence patterns in West Africa, including their causes, their impetus and their impacts. There are a few exceptions to this tendency as some have come to see the inherent difficulties with adopting a word like "fosterage", with its highly particular meaning in the West, to refer to any situation in which a child resides away from one or both parents in West Africa. Céline Vandermeersch (2002), for example, in her study on child fosterage patterns in Senegal, separates children under six from those six and over, recognizing that the reasons behind shifted residency for the younger group (often to accommodate the needs of mothers) tend to be diametrically opposed to those for the displacement of older children (who are usually moved for education or work).

The diversity of motivations for child movement is corroborated by a more nuanced local terminology. Specifically, I have come across different words for differing cases of child displacement in Wolof. The term *maayee,* for example, refers to permanently offering a child to someone else, usually a close family member, to raise. This transfer generally takes into consideration the needs or desires of the receiving adult(s), rather than the giving parent(s), as it is not generally considered need-based. This type of child-giving generally draws on and reinforces social bonds between giving and receiving parties.

The term *joxee*, by contrast, applies to any cases of social crisis where the transferring adult perceives the transfer to allow a child to experience better living conditions than they can offer. The root of the term *joxee* can be translated into English as "to give" or "to hand over". It is perhaps a temporary fix to a difficult situation, after which the parents or transferring adult can reclaim the child. The amount of time of a *joxee* transfer is generally left undetermined and may last throughout childhood, due to the uncertain circumstances that gave rise to the transfer in the first place. This sort of child displacement most resembles what we generally refer to as child fostering in North America.

The Wolof term *ndenkaan*, however, refers to a more short-term, pragmatic displacement. It is most often translated into French as *confiage* (verb *confier*, meaning "to confide" in English, but which, as noted above, is usually referred to simply as "fosterage" in English). The root of the term *ndenkaan* means literally "to lend", and can refer to the displacement of a child to another household

for any number of reasons, both child- and adult-related. The child may be sent away to be closer to a middle school or training program. The child may be placed with another family for a period of time while his or her parents travel. These "lending" arrangements are in most cases for a limited, or often pre-arranged, period of time. This practice is less related to family need than *joxee*, and could more precisely be described as part of a family strategy for the advancement or training of the child[50].

It is clear from these nuances of vocabulary that it would be a mistake to consider the causes and outcomes of each of these three patterns of child displacement as the same. It is not uncommon, however, for even practiced scholars to make precisely this mistake. For example, despite separating older children from younger children for study, Vandermeersch (2006, cited above) still treats the movements she describes in Senegal as a single phenomenon which she attempts to understand with respect to a number of key variables, including migration patterns, socio-economic status, kinship relations within families, and economic or social goals for the children. In the case of child movement, local categories of distinction offer more nuanced accounts of behavior and can give troubled outsiders a clearer understanding of how and why some children end up moving – including those begging on the streets of Dakar.

Distinctions in motivations for child movement can change the meaning of measured outcomes. Children living away from their natal homes with kin members to attend school, for example, might be more appropriately termed "boarders" in English. Therefore, while individual cases of fosterage may appear to be comparable by demographic indicators - such as age, relationship, schooling, geographical movement, etc. – the outcomes of these "fosterage" arrangements may be completely different, both in terms of objective measures as well as subjectively for the children themselves.

In fact Heidi Verhoef and Gilda Morelli's (2007) work on child fosterage in northwest Cameroon suggests just that. They used a child-centered approach to look at health and educational outcomes of fosterage situations and found that the variable of "fostered" versus "non-fostered" was not significant. What they found instead was that there was significant variation in outcomes among fostered children. A prime factor influencing health and emotional outcomes was the children's relative "wantedness" in the foster homes and with foster parents. Catrien Notermans' (2008) child-centered research on fosterage outcomes in eastern Cameroon makes the point that

[50] I acknowledge that there are no hard and fast boundaries between the practices of and motivations behind child displacement referred to by these terms, but in order to illustrate their diversity I have drawn on general Wolof language usage connotations.

socio-economic variables such as the economic status of giving or receiving parents, financial assistance during fosterage, or the educational levels of adults involved proved to be secondary to more subjective and harder to measure variables such as kinship and other social claims made by the adults or children involved in the negotiation of the initial transfer.

It is apparent, and will be elaborated below, that the use of the single term fosterage to describe the movements of children among households in West Africa, is problematic in both practical and theoretical terms. One result of the continued widespread use of "fosterage" to refer to various types of child displacement endemic in West Africa– is that scholars are consistently drawn to make transnational, generalizable conclusions regarding the movement of children in the region. Fosterage research often strives to produce ethnologic insight into West African societies more generally[51], or contributes to the development of strategies to assist the children and their families to avoid negative outcomes[52].

What is more, there has been a recent resurging interest in child fosterage and child circulation in West Africa among scholars and activists alike that appears to be linked to the "rise" in child trafficking. In these newer texts, "traditional" practices are generally described in brief after which the point is made that these have been "corrupted" or "hijacked" by unscrupulous, culturally-savvy individuals who use cultural channels to extract children from their families and then to exploit these children for labor or sex (Dotteridge 2002; Fitzgibbon 2003; Manzo 2005; Adepoju 2005). It is clear, however, that in order to grasp the true scale of child trafficking in West Africa, one must first strive to gain a clearer understanding about the extent and nature of child displacements in the region.

Anthropologists have clearly documented that individual cases of fostering differ, and when looking across cases, one can see that enough differences in cause, function and outcome exist to suggest one should resist the temptation to tackle fosterage as a single issue. Still, a survey of this anthropological work helps to clarify that what can be gleaned from scholarship on "fosterage" likely has less to do with the particular fostered child and the parents who "foster-out", or the others

[51] Specifically, I have come across studies which analyze fosterage in terms of: a) an economic strategy and as a source of child labor (in alphabetical order: Ainsworth 1988; Akresh 2009; 2005; Bahri & Gendreau 2006; Younoussi 2007); b) a source of education in itself and an educational strategy (Hashim 2005; Pilon 2003); c) the nutritional status of fostered children (Bledsoe, Ewbank & Isiugo-Abanihe 1988; Castle 1996; 1995); d) the interrelationship between child fosterage, education and labor (Serra 2009; Verhoef & Morelli 2007; Gage 2005; Busza, Castle, & Diarra 2004a, 2004b; Guillaume et al. 1997); and e) population studies, demographics, migration, and household strategy (Bledsoe & Isiugo-Abanihe 1989; Brockerhoff 1990; Etienne 1979; Fall & Seck 2003; Goody 1982; Isaac & Conrad 1982; Isiugo-Abanihe 1985; McDaniel & Zulu 1996; Renne 2003; Sy 1991; Vandermeersch 2002, 2006).

[52] Bledsoe & Isiugo-Abanihe (1989); Brockerhoff (1990); Etienne (1979); Fall & Seck (2003); Goody (1982); Isaac & Conrad (1982); Isiugo-Abanihe (1985); McDaniel & Zulu (1996); Renne 2003; Sy (1991); Vandermeersch (2002, 2006).

who "foster-in", and more generally to do with the nature of childrearing, ideas surrounding responsibility and entitlement, and the place (meaning, essence, boundaries) of the child within the family, kin networks, and the community[53]. I now proceed to look in-depth at one type of "fosterage" arrangement – sending one's child, usually a boy, to live and study with a Qur'anic master.

Consigning Children to Qur'anic Masters: Training or Trafficking? Three exploratory cases.

One frequent way in which parents entrust their children to the care of others for long periods of time – up to 10 years - is to Qur'anic masters. Once the parent hands a child, usually a son, over to his instructor, the latter becomes literally the boy's master. It is a complete power transfer. The parents' symbolic and effective renunciation of their rights over the child conveys their gratitude for the education the child will receive, their respect for the Qur'anic master's religious authority, and their trust in his decisions with respect to the education of their son. If their son needs to be disciplined, they also trust the Qur'anic master to correctly administer this discipline. If the Qur'anic master needs the son to work, the parents expect the son to do what is asked of him without hesitation. And if the Qur'anic master migrates it is expected that he will take the son with him.

The question, in the contemporary environment is when does this relationship of Qur'anic master to confided boys become trafficking? Does it ever deserve this label? Does it always deserve it? Younousse Talla, of a network of non-profits and volunteers called RAFY, *Reseau d'action Foudé et Yaguine* (Action Network Foudé and Yaguine), has been working since 2003 to address difficulties related to youth migration, trafficking in persons, and repatriations in and from Mali. "Foudé and Yaguine" of this acronym refer to two youths who died in an attempt to migrate to Brussels from Guinea in 1998 secreted in the landing gear of a plane.[54] According to his own account of the origins of RAFY the incident deeply affected Mr. Talla, moving him to get a group of concerned actors together in Mali to tackle the dangers of child and youth migration. "We have immortalized the names of those two children through a network that we put in place"[55].

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[53] This will be discussed in more detail in chapter four where I discuss children's place within the West African family.
[54] James Ferguson in his book *Global Shadows* (2006:154-158, Ch.6) quotes the letter found on the bodies of Foudé and Yaguine in its entirety, which describes the difficulties that the youths have dealt with in Africa, and pleads to Europeans for help to gain opportunities in Africa to "become like you". Ferguson remarks how this letter sparks a sense of "embarrassment, as well as stark horror" for readers of the global North.
[55] Younousse Talla, June 16, 2010, Bamako, Mali.

Now RAFY works through ENDA-Mali and numerous other prominent NGOs and non-profits to respond to all of the state-initiated repatriation cases in the country, as well as others brought to their attention from actors on the ground. When children of other countries are found in Mali, RAFY is alerted and they proceed to make contact with their partners throughout the region to begin searches for families and to initiate repatriation procedures. This involves both a long process of mediation between the parents and the youth to negotiate his or her return and work with youths, local communities, non-profits and families to design and implement a reintegration project for her or him. These "reintegration projects" are meant to provide returned migrants with the means to gain an education or to earn a living, and they are meant to increase the likelihood that errant children and youth will stay home. The "reintegration project" sometimes also includes financial assistance for school supplies for the younger recipients, or fees for a training program or a loan to invest in agriculture, petit commerce or livestock for older children.

All of the cases that come to RAFY pass Mr. Talla's desk, and he is the one who determines if they should be considered cases of child trafficking or not. This is because the funding source changes depending on this determination. The network's funding comes from various sources, one of which is the International Organization for Migration (IOM) which has offered assistance to those children designated as victims of trafficking. Therefore, for RAFY, there are IOM cases and non-IOM cases, which effectively means trafficking cases versus non-trafficking cases.[56]

As Mr. Talla explained RAFY's funding structure to me in his Bamako office, he mentioned without prompting, that "the most shocking cases that I personally came across while performing this job, they are above all the *taalibe* children." Mr. Talla flags the fact that movement for Qur'anic education is adult-initiated, not child- or youth-initiated, which appears to factor into his assessment as to whether or not he considers cases trafficking:

> *For them [taalibes], it is the parents who consign them. Therefore there is an intermediary who is a marabout, who comes, makes a contact with the family, and takes…who negotiates with the father or the parents, and then takes the child. So, there, it is the adults who intervene. But, the children who go in the setting of domestic labor…very few adults intervene (Younousse Talla, June 16, 2010, Bamako, Mali).*

[56] IOM is a transnational non-governmental organization which focuses on understanding migration and aiding migrants in difficult situations. The program to help trafficked children that I reference, called "Program of Assistance for the return and the reintegration of child victims of trafficking in West Africa," was in effect from 2006-2010. Funding for this program came from the US Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM). And while it has since expired, the IOM's child trafficking victim repatriation activities in West Africa are currently being funded by the US Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (G/TIP).

Later on in the interview, I asked Mr. Talla how he categorized the *taalibe* cases: "The cases involving *taalibe* children, are they viewed by your network, mostly, as cases of trafficking or do they not fall into the IOM category?" Again, he stressed the factor of recruitment, and adult-controlled child movement:

> *It's precisely that … it's even more than trafficking. That is what trafficking is! Because in the Palermo Protocol, all of the elements are there. Because it is someone who will recruit these children, with the parents, in order to teach them the Qur'an. But as soon as they go back - that they come into another country, that they cross the border - they are put out to beg. Which is quite different from learning the Qur'an. Therefore, that is pure trafficking at that level. So, to be a little more precise, all of the taalibe children who have run away from Qur'anic centers and who find themselves in the street, we categorize them as trafficking, and we put them into the IOM basket (Younousse Talla, June 16, 2010, Bamako, Mali).*

Here I explore three cases that I came across in Mali involving *taalibe* children. I look at these to investigate when and why incidents are deemed cases of trafficking versus occurrences of legal migration.

<u>CASE 1</u>: Trafficking, repatriation and cultural accommodation.

Younousse Talla told me about a case in The Gambia, where authorities who raided a so-called Qur'anic school in 2007, containing 59 children of various nationalities, judged that the actions taking place there were in fact illegal. The authorities took the children into custody and alerted concerned state and non-state actors to commence the process of their repatriation and return to their families. Yet upon return to Mali, the implicated *marabout* was not charged with criminal trafficking, nor any crime. Instead local authorities accommodated his actions as those of an impoverished religious instructor merely trying to survive on very little. Here is a report forwarded to RAFY in Mali from an assisting organization in The Gambia:

> *A special intelligent [sic] agency in the Gambia discovered that there is a Quranic School that is mainly composed of Malian children. It was noted that the living condition of these children are very bad which is affecting their health condition. They are subjected to work for their teacher in the farm and other hard job which at the end of the day generate income for the enrichment of the teacher.*
>
> *Presently the authorities have ordered for the closure of the school due to that bad condition of the building and the place where these children sleep in the night which is in a remote village. The building does not have windows etc. In total their number is 59, 38 out of them are Malian children, but only 8 of them are in our position [sic] at present, others are kept were the police keeps eyes on them. However, we have confirmed that the parents of these children are aware that their children are in the Gambia at the Quranic School but they do not know the living condition of their children.*

> *They were rescued by the police and later handled [sic] over to the Department of Social Welfare in which Social welfare place them at the shelter for children a project that CEDAG is subheading.*
>
> *In order to avoid them turning to street children and facing the dangers on the street, our further step is to contact the parents of these children as to return them to their different families in Malian [sic]. This we hope to do with the assistance of PAO/Mali. (RAFY Brief)*

This brief was followed by a list of names of the children ready to be repatriated to Mali, their ages (between seven and 15 years old, most ages eight and nine), places of birth, and names of their parents. After receiving this information, RAFY proceeded to search for the children's parents to begin a process of negotiation to organize their return home. But this return home in cases of child trafficking is not always straightforward. For some, it is a slight on their honor to acknowledge that they willingly gave their child over for what is being called a "trade" (fr. *traite*). Mr. Talla explains what happened when he contacted the families of these *taalibes* found in The Gambia:

> *But during the return home of these children, there were a significant number of parents who were not in agreement. Because for them,* ***these children were not exploited****. Because there is a little problem, people, most parents, especially in rural areas, in villages, think that work for children is normal… Because parents in villages, because their level of school enrollment is not high, they think that a 7-year-old child can start working, begging, and doing little jobs for the master – that this is normal. You see? While this is a violation, it is exploitation. So, suddenly, when we wanted to organize the return of these children, the parents said right away that they did not agree (Younousse Talla, June 16, 2010, Bamako, Mali).*

Mr. Talla went on to explain that this initial rejection of the idea of the official "return" home was not abnormal. In fact, in all types of cases, parent-initiated and child- or youth-initiated migration, he estimates that about 60-70% of parents immediately take their children back when approached by RAFY. "That leaves 30% who oppose it." But he clarifies that they do not remain opposed to the idea definitively. Over the course of mediation, the parents nearly always come back on their decision. "It is very frequent, that before mediation, as soon as they hear that there child is there, right away they say, 'no, we do not agree, we want him to stay.'" (Younousse Talla, Personal Interview, June 16, 2010, Bamako, Mali). Sometimes Mr. Talla and other officials at RAFY will work with young people and families for long periods of time, up to a year or longer, before an accord is found. But in nearly all cases, Mr. Talla reports, parents will ultimately welcome their children home again.

Mr. Talla pointed out that in this particular case, it was relatively easy to get the parents to accept the return of their children, because, "as they knew that the authorities of the state were implicated," there were very few problems getting them to cooperate. "But" he explained, "if there

were no authorities implicated, they would have said 'no, we do not agree"' (June 16, 2010, Bamako, Mali[57]). These children were legally repatriated by Gambian state actors, using IOM funds destined specifically for victims of trafficking. But in cases where no foreign authorities intervene, it is much harder to claim that a crime was committed, from the level of parents all the way up through the government and justice system.

In fact, as an example of how rare an accusation of trafficking is, the Malian *marabout* implicated in this case was not charged with trafficking despite the fact that it had already been declared by many international actors as clear cut case. This exoneration was not simply a question of judicial impunity, even the actors responsible for child protection in Mali framed the problem in such a way that the *marabout* appeared innocent of all criminal culpability. What these officials explained fit directly into the well-known discourse of Qur'anic masters who are too short of funds to adequately address the needs of their charges. Amina Tounkara of the Kayes regional management office of the MPFEF put it in these terms:

> *They were with a marabout who could no longer manage to feed them, who no longer took care of them. So, they were children who were sleeping in the street. So, that NGO instructed the marabout master to bring back, to send each child, with their help, to their countries of origin (Amina Tounkara, July 23, 2010, Kayes, Mali).*

For Mrs. Tounkara, this is not a case of trafficking – simply a *marabout* who was in over his head. He could not make ends meet in the city and sloughed off his responsibility to the children, resulting in the NGO "instructing" him to therefore send the children back, "with their help". And in fact, contrary to the criteria for categorization referenced by Mr. Talla and Mr. Sonkare (presence of an intermediary and travel by group), it appears that for her, it is the very fact that *taalibe* children are together and accompanied by a *marabout*, that makes their movement somewhat less problematic. I picked up on this when, over the course of discussion about child trafficking and child migrations, Mrs. Tounkara explained to me that there are significant numbers of children who migrate alone, and who almost never have a *titre de voyage*. She described the types of hardships that these young migrants face when they arrive in her district, such as labor exploitation in traditional mining (panning) sites, or often in getting lost or "disoriented" and living without basic necessities. I asked her about Qur'anic school children migrating out of Mali specifically: "When they plan to migrate, will they come and talk to you?"

[57] Personal interview, audio-recorded, June 16, 2010, Bamako, Mali.

"Not at all! But, with respect to this question of Qur'anic education… when children in Qur'anic schools migrate they do not come and request [a *titre de voyage*], but they are nevertheless accompanied by a *marabout*"[58]. Her tone of voice and the way that she set apart this accompanied migration from youth migration without adults suggested that, for her, the Qur'anic students did not face the same types of dangers as the young migrant laborers merely because of this adult accompaniment. Her assessment sheds light on the fact that this case as well as the following one were locally determined to not be instances of child trafficking.

Case 2: NGO-assisted repatriation of migratory Qur'anic school, not trafficking.

A case that stuck out from RAFY's long list of repatriations is from April of 2010 when eight "talibé" boys, aged six to 13 were repatriated to Mali from Niger along with their 40-year-old "Qur'anic master". This case was not designated by RAFY as an IOM case, signifying that it was not deemed by Mr. Talla to be trafficking. This makes a certain sense as money destined to assist victims of trafficking cannot also be spent to assist their trafficker. What appears to have happened in this case was that an NGO in Niger and the RAFY network facilitated the repatriation of the entire school, in cooperation with the Qur'anic master. Similar to the case described by Mrs. Tounkara above, this Niger-based NGO also "instructed" the *marabout* to bring the children home and assisted him both in transit and upon arrival. While both of these cases (that from Niger and the previous one from The Gambia) seem like what Mr. Talla described as "what trafficking *is*", neither was treated as a trafficking case by Malian government authorities.

Case 3: Migratory Qur'anic master with 15 children arrested at the border, released.

To complicate this picture further, I would like to bring in one more case where a Qur'anic master migrated with 15 young boys, but this time he was stopped at the Mali-Senegal border as a suspected case of trafficking. This case, from 2008, was cited to me several times by mid-level state bureaucrats as proof that Malian border security is occasionally effective at preventing trafficking, even as they acknowledged that generally speaking it is not. In this case authorities "intercepted" a trafficker traveling "in the guise of" a religious teacher. Yakhouba Sylla of the regional administration of the MPFEF, commented on this particular case and others concerning *taalibes*, clearly describing the children as exploited and mistreated:

[58] Personal interview, audio-recorded, Madame Tounkara, July 23, 2010, Kayes, Mali.

> *In reality, child trafficking is a reality in the region. Because with the Qur'anic masters, when a Qur'anic master moves with more than a dozen children, we know that he cannot feed them. And, in the end the children are thrown out into the street, to beg... Even in [a residential neighborhood of Kayes], there are taalibe children there who spend the morning from 8:00 until 6:00 pm in the city, begging, only! They do not have time to learn the Qur'an! So, it has become a bread-earner for certain Qur'anic masters… it is a phenomenon which has grown in size, it is very difficult to fight against it (Yakhouba Sylla, July 20, 2014, Kayes, Mali[59]).*

Malian authorities' framings of *taalibe* children as "trafficked", and of *marabouts* "intercepted" at the border, were usually in response to my direct questions on the topic, like, "Have the measures put in place to stop child trafficking made a difference?" But when the case mentioned above, between Senegal and Mali, came up in the course of a discussion of a slightly different topic, I got the sense that it was not the clear-cut case of "trafficking" usually intimated. It was rather a mere "misunderstanding".

Prior to taking up his position in the national office in Bamako, Mr. Traoré, of the MPFEF in Bamako worked in the regional office of the Ministry in Kayes. While he was explaining the kinds of activities that the Qur'anic Instructor Association of Kayes was doing to reform the sector, he too began to tell me about this same case of the *marabout* who was stopped by border police as he tried to enter Mali from Senegal with his students. Mr. Traoré described how the head of the Kayes Qur'anic Instructor Association had assisted him and his office in handling the case:

> *The children were at the police station, and the [head of the marabouts] went to the police station to take the children in until the police could clearly see the situation. He took the 15 children, he brought them to his house [for] more than 10 days, the time to handle the problem and to know that they were Senegalese and Gambian children. So the guy [the accused trafficker] went to The Gambia, and people gave him their children to come and teach them in Mali. Well, him not knowing that it's [pause] that there is the problem of trafficking and all that, he came automatically with the children to Mali. So at the border he was arrested by the Malian police, who deferred him to the police in Kayes. It took some time to have all of the information. And when we had all of the information, he was released. And he is in Kayes with the children. So there is a process which is there, but it's slow (Idrissa Traoré, June 30, 2010, Bamako, Mali[60]).*

When I asked if there was any follow-up with the case of the Qur'anic master stopped at the border Mr. Traoré animatedly replied, "Yes, yes, it was followed-up on." Their office made contact with all of the *taalibes'* parents in Dakar and The Gambia, and Mr. Sylla checked in on them every week.

> *And we finally came to understand that the marabout was not even a Malian, he was a Gambian who came to Kayes, he studied the Qur'an in Kayes, and he stayed there. So he goes once in a while to the Gambia, and they pass by Dakar. So due to his knowledge, being a marabout, people give*

[59] Personal interview, video-recorded, Yakhouba Sylla, July 20, 2014, Kayes, Mali.
[60] Personal interview, audio-recorded, Idrissa Traoré, June 30, 2010, Bamako, Mali.

> *him children, evidently, to come and teach them, as we normally do. So he came to Mali with those children, without knowing that [chuckles] you need to have permission to come with children. So arriving at that border with 15 children, the police arrested him right away (Idrissa Traoré, June 30, 2010, Bamako, Mali).*

Thus, though Mr. Traoré started out by calling the issue one of "child trafficking" which was handled (fr. *regler*) with the help of the Qur'anic instructor association, he concludes that the authorities came to understand that it was not a case of trafficking after all but rather legitimate movement of a *marabout* with a group of children given over to his charge. As the story unfolds Mr. Traoré's terms of reference for the accused trafficker shift from as "*le gars*" or "the guy" to "*le monsieur*", or "the sir", opting for a more respectful term after the head of the Qur'anic Instructor Association brought him to understand that the accused man was a fellow *marabout*.

Idrissa Traoré is far from ignorant to the poor conditions that children traveling with migrating Qur'anic masters are forced to endure; he is in charge of child protection programs for all of Mali. Mr. Traoré knew I had recently come to Mali by way of Dakar and he used the information to attest to *taalibes'* poor conditions:

> *You saw in Dakar! They are almost on the ground, they don't have mats -they sleep without mats. So we said that it's an outdated system. It must be improved, even if it is not on benches, like the French school, you must at least get some mats! (Idrissa Traoré, June 30, 2010, Bamako, Mali).*

But while Mr. Traoré was well-acquainted with the difficult situations of the Qur'anic students, he saw these difficulties as systemic problems rather than explicitly about child exploitation or mistreatment. In his response to the border incident he also admits that because they are dealing with religious education the problem is delicate. Traoré repeatedly ceded his own expertise to that of the Qur'anic Instructor Association and other religious authorities, making it clear between the lines he did not feel he had the authority, nor the political will, to accuse legitimate Qur'anic instructors of child trafficking – that would have been to attack the entire system, and Islam. He shared his difficulty with this balance:

> *When you say, 'No, with Qur'anic education, it is not like that that we should…" right away they point their finger at you, they will say, 'Him, no, he's a pawn! He's not a true Muslim, he's telling us to not do Qur'anic education!' While in fact it is not that. It is just that we ask to improve the conditions of the children. So, in improving the conditions of the children, Qur'anic education improves too (Idrissa Traoré, June 30, 2010, Bamako, Mali).*

It is for that reason that he exclaimed how it is "good that Qur'anic instructors are becoming organized," so that they themselves can begin to "reform the sector."

So for Idrissa Traoré and other Malian authorities, the otherwise exemplary case of quality border security (where a *marabout* with 15 *taalibes* was apprehended at their local border) was not to be considered child trafficking at all. For them it was merely a simple, even comical, lack of knowledge of border control on the part of the Qur'anic master, and a misunderstanding on the part of authorities who assumed his was a nefarious activity. Furthermore, because the man was Gambian, Mr. Traoré found it understandable that he return home occasionally and, given his status, it is "evidently" "normal" that people hand their children over to him.

This story brings up numerous keys points to illustrate the limits of working definitions of child trafficking on the ground for Malian state actors. The Malian state and IOM's joint border security efforts were clearly effective at training border guards to identify and arrest a suspected perpetrator of child trafficking. Yet despite this apparent success, the traveler's activities were not deemed criminal after they were examined in depth. This was in large part due to Qur'anic masters' high social profile, leading government workers to defer to their religious authority. In other words, even when trafficking prevention efforts are technically successful, the reality on the ground – that such movements are not seen as criminal locally – primes over any efforts to stop them.

All three of these cases presented above concern Qur'anic masters travelling with groups of children over international borders into or out of Mali, this is precisely the sort of movement that Younousse Talla (of RAFY) and Ibra Sonkaré (of IOM) both described as a perfect example of child trafficking. For them, this type of adult-initiated movement with groups of children who are deceived by the lure of an education and made to perform activities which serve or enrich the adult, fulfills all of the criteria set out in the Palermo Protocol for what would be considered an illegal trafficking in persons. Even the Malian authorities who dismissed these cases expressed an intimate knowledge of the harsh conditions endured by pupils travelling with Qur'anic masters, and readily admitted that the education these students receive is minimal at best.

Yet, as the cases illustrate, on each occasion that a Qur'an master was found migrating with groups of children over borders and detained, negotiations between state authorities, NGO officials and religious authorities effectively "fixed" the situation clearing the *marabouts* of any criminal wrongdoing. Accommodations were made by non-profit and governmental actors to exonerate the Qur'anic masters, justifying the legitimacy of their actions through economic, religious, cultural and logistical terms. So although the state of Mali has adopted legislation to criminalize child trafficking, what is clear in these three cases is that what the legislation deems criminal is not treated as criminal on the ground. This is not unlike the discord that Sally Engle Merry (2006) notes between

Hawai'ian laws related to violence against women and their shifting legal enforcement over time. In fact, Sally Falk Moore (2005), in her chapter, "Certainties Undone: Fifty Turbulent Years of Legal Anthropology, 1949-1999," reminds us that legal anthropologists have long conceptualized law in various contexts globally as not only a manifestation of *culture* and a form of social *domination*, but also a form of *problem-solving*. In much of West Africa, high rates of child and youth movement are not necessarily viewed as a problem. Actors looking at that movement from a global perspective, however, recognize a whole host of problems, including human trafficking and child exploitation, and strive to insert legal restrictions.

Brian Larkin's essay, "The Poetics and Politics of Infrastructure" offers an insightful way of thinking through this disjuncture between function and functionality of laws in Africa. He notes that like the rearranging of significance between sign and referent in Jacobin's theories of poetic language, African leaders have been known to create infrastructure for its political or symbolic effects, leaving its on-the-ground function different from its declared *raison d'etre*. The laws that these transnational observers attempt to implement, therefore, address the declared problem of child trafficking, but unfortunately, they have no such corresponding base locally.

Consent and Movement: Child and Parental Willingness

As seen above, a major factor playing into the effective decriminalization of child movement is the presence of parental or child consent, either as a reason in itself not to prosecute, or as a justification for impunity. When parents accept the basic cultural, religious and economic premises of Qur'anic school movement and child begging and still send their children with Qur'anic masters, this helps authorities to avoid leveling criminal charges against these same masters. In other words, there is a self-perpetuating circle in place, one that is consistently reinforcing itself each time parents, Qur'anic masters, state authorities, non-state actors and even children come together and reach a decision to "fix" the problem through negotiation, rather than by applying the law.

These cases illustrate how various types of child and youth movements were described by social authorities in Mali, with a particular focus on how these did, or did not come to be considered cases of child trafficking. Contrary to what global anti-trafficking statutes declare should happen, all of the key actors I encountered in Mali whose job was to deal with child trafficking consider a child's or parent's consent as significant when determining if a case is trafficking or not. Idrissa Traoré, Madame Tounkara, and Yakhouba Sylla, all employed in the MPFEF of the government of Mali, explained to me the cultural and religious subtleties at play in determining the status of migratory

Qur'anic school cases. Our discussions nearly always returned to the question of the *willingness* of parents to send their children to live with these masters, where they expect their children to be put to work in exchange for instruction. So the question of the legality of handing children over to migratory Qur'anic masters in Mali becomes a question of parental rights and freedom of choice in education rather than one of children's universal rights to protections from certain kinds of work, treatment, or displacement, or a child's right to a particular type of socially-relevant education as modeled in public schools. And to make matters even more complicated, because these are religious schools, the ability to send one's child to study with a Qur'anic master also becomes a question of freedom of religious choice.

My investigations have shown that demonstrating child and adult consent to the cross-border movement of children is in fact a prime way for Qur'anic masters to dispel suspicions of trafficking. Therefore, despite activists from Washington to Geneva declaring the irrelevance of parental or child consent in determining cases of child trafficking, on the ground in Mali, it has turned out to be the single most valuable piece of information in determining whether these cases are trafficking or not.

Conclusion

In chapter two I examined how transnational organizations have documented a sudden explosion of *taalibe* victims of child trafficking in Senegal. Over half of these children are reported to enter into Senegal from neighboring countries, and a prime strategy to address the problem, then, has been to try to stop the influx of children into the country. When I travelled to Mali, however, to observe child trafficking prevention strategies on the ground, the clear picture painted by transnational organizations about the situation of child trafficking appeared much murkier. First of all, despite much talk of reinforcing borders, I found no actual controls on child border crossings, on either the Senegalese or Malian sides of the international line. Second, I learned that the movement of groups of *taalibes* toward Senegal for Qur'anic education for indeterminate amounts of time is socially sanctioned in Mali despite its illegality on paper. These observations allow me to understand the fight against child trafficking in West Africa as follows: 1) in Mali, as in many West African nations, there are significant numbers of parents who want their children to migrate for labor, schooling or other reasons, and who have no interest in cooperating with authorities to legalize border crossings; 2) many children in West Africa feel a strong urge to leave home in search of better conditions or simply on an adventure; 3) West African border police posts are lightly-

guarded, and there are vast spans of unpatrolled borders; 4) there is a growing trans-national movement aiming to minimize youth movements in the region; and 5) research suggests that the anti-trafficking measures aimed at restricting child and youth movement today are both ineffectual and perhaps rendering them more vulnerable to exploitation.

These points bring me to conclude that the counter trafficking measures in place in both Senegal and Mali to deal with *taalibe* exploitation in Senegal are far from actually addressing the problem. There continue to be thousands of children begging in Senegal's cities each day, over half of whom are brought in from abroad. However, intervening actors cannot effectively prevent child trafficking, protect trafficking victims, or prosecute perpetrators (the Palermo Protocol's three P's), if the regulating authorities and families concerned do not recognize the actions they witness as a crime of trafficking. The Malian state's *prevention* strategies target borders to control child movement, but the authorities responsible for enforcing this control accommodate the movements as non-criminal migration. Non-state actors in Mali cannot in all practicality *protect* child victims of trafficking if their parents and they themselves do not accept the status of victims as such. Finally, a person whose actions are not recognized as criminal by responsible authorities or by the victims themselves, cannot be *prosecuted*.

My next question, then, is: *why* is child migration for Qur'anic education socially sanctioned in West Africa, and even when it is clear that the child will endure significant suffering? I venture to answer that question in Part II of this dissertation, Suffering and Relief.

Part II

Suffering and Relief:
Community Voices on *Taalibe* Migration and Charity

Transnational and local actors alike have documented a massive in-flux of Qur'anic schools into urban Senegal from neighboring countries such as Guinea-Bissau and Mali[61] (HRW 2010; Einarsdottir, et al. 2010; UCW 2007). These foreign migratory schools are said supply up to 45% of the nearly 8000 *taalibes* begging in Dakar today (UCW 2007). This movement of *taalibe* children brings up two key questions. Why are parents sending their children to live with *seriñs* to travel and work so far away? Also, what is attracting so many Qur'anic schools to Senegal in particular?

In Part II of this dissertation, I reflect on each of these questions, weighing the various push and pull factors of Qur'anic school migration toward Senegal[62]. The first question – *why are parents sending their children away?* – I examine first in chapter four. Indeed, even with awareness-raising efforts underway throughout the region warning of the dangers of child trafficking, many parents are still turning their sons over to Qur'anic masters. To understand this, I reflect on their decision-making processes. The second question – *what is pulling them toward Senegal?* – I examine in chapter five on almsgiving practices in Dakar. High potential begging yields there make travel to the city lucrative for Qur'anic masters struggling to survive in rural areas.

[61] According to statistics that I obtained from the *Centre Ginddi* state-sponsored shelter in Dakar, 50% of the 1044 children (mostly *taalibes*) they assisted in 2009 were from neighboring countries (Ginddi Center, November 23, 2010).
[62] It has become standard for analyses of migration and trafficking to frame discussions around a series of "push" and "pull" factors, or underlying reasons for leaving one place and going toward another (I.e., see Lee 1966, "plus" and "minus" factors related to the places of migration origin and destination).

Chapter 4 – The Pedagogy of Suffering:

Poverty, Migration, and the Cultivation of *Taalibe* Discipline

> *I give my child to you, whether living or dead, I give him to you. For the will of God, give him knowledge. His destiny is in your hands – take him.* [63]

Introduction

Interlocutors debating the *taalibe* begging problem in Senegal often accuse parents of shirking their responsibilities, abandoning their children, or at best not informing themselves enough about the conditions in which their children will be made to live as migrant *taalibes*. I go on to show, however, that the response is almost never as simple as that. While decisions are no doubt heavily impacted by economics, l have found that a socio-religious discourse supporting the spiritual and pedagogical value of suffering allows parents to frame their decisions as both religiously-inspired and pedagogically-grounded. It is for this reason that much of this chapter, which asks why families continue to send their children to travel with Qur'anic masters, focuses on the disciplinary role of Qur'anic schools, as they train young West African Muslims to obey religious and community authorities, and to endure physical and psychological hardship.

I think about what this *pedagogy of suffering* means for the promotion of children's rights for the *taalibes*. As Malian and Senegalese Qur'anic masters negotiate their rights as educators, their defense of education through suffering, including defending the right to use corporal punishment, has come to symbolize a divide between Islam and the West, between tradition and imposed empire, and between social order and chaos. In other words, some parents insist that in order to raise their children as obedient, faithful Muslims, they must retain the right to send them away to suffer with Qur'anic masters. In these terms, *taalibe* out-migration from communities throughout West Africa will not be reduced through mere awareness campaigns about the suffering *taalibe* children endure.

Inadequate State Services and Out-Migration

[63] *Yakhouba Sylla,* Child and Family Technical Services Chief of the Regional Administration in Kayes of the Ministry of the Promotion of the Woman, Child, and the Family (MPFEF, *Direction Régionale de la Ministère de la Promotion de la Femme, de l'Enfant, et de la Famille*) (Personal interview, July 20, 2010, Kayes, Mali). Here he is quoting what a hypothetical parent says to a hypothetical Qur'anic master while handing over a child to pursue Qur'anic education. I have come across similar phrases referring to surrendering children to Islamic teachers in Africa (e.g. Boyle 2004:13).

Poverty is a key underlying factor leading *taalibe* migration to cities for forced begging. This is true whether one sees the phenomenon as child trafficking or simply an impoverished educational system pushing increasing numbers of children out in the streets to collect alms. Pervasive poverty is plaguing millions of families throughout the region of West Africa, rendering them, and particularly children, vulnerable to human trafficking as well as poor learning conditions. West African states have so far been grossly unable to provide "education for all", and will not likely reach it by the next global target year of 2015. Scarce resources and corruption have left many states unable to do much more than maintain the air of a functioning bureaucracy, let alone invest in these basic services. In countries where clean drinking water and urban waste management services have yet to be attained to keep people healthy, and where food is a scarcity for overwhelming numbers of families and children - building and maintaining a school in every village to prevent child movement for education is an objective that not many West African heads of state seriously consider pursuing. As a result, families' limited economic and financial opportunities at home push them to send their children away to study or work (Archambault 2010; Akresh 2009). This may take the form of parents handing sons over to Qur'anic masters passing through town in hopes that the child will benefit from religious training.

Recent statistics show that about half of the population of West Africa is living on less than the equivalent of $1.25 US per day (World Bank 2013). Basic development indicators demonstrate the effects of this poverty, with the regions of West and Central Africa suffering the world's highest under-five child mortality rate, 143 per 1000 live births. That number is only six for industrialized countries (UNICEF 2012). Correspondingly, the region has the lowest life expectancy at birth, 53 years, and the highest rate of working children in the world, with 34% of children ages five to 14 engaged in economic activity (UNICEF 2012).

Uneven development among countries and regions within West Africa has been linked to child migrations and child trafficking (Manzo 2005). Visions of wealth on the horizon can perpetuate beliefs within impoverished settings that those places will provide improved opportunities for oneself or one's children. Such visions, whether true or false in a given case, prove to be a powerful attraction for youths and families to seek out opportunities despite awareness of potentially high risks. Senegal and Mali are neighbors geographically, they were historically linked through kingdoms and migrating peoples, they were part of the same colony and briefly comprised a

post-colonial federation together in 1960 - the Mali Federation[64]. But today the two countries are faring differently in terms of economic and human development indicators. While Senegal is the country dealing with a larger child begging and urban "street child" problem – these children are being brought to urban Senegal from other areas to reap the benefits of what is often perceived as Senegalese wealth.

Indeed, the World Bank reports that in 2010, 50.4% of the population of Mali lived on less than $1.25 a day, while for Senegal only 29.6% in 2011 lived at that level of poverty (World Bank 2013). The fact that nearly a third of the Senegalese population is living on such a meager income is not necessarily something to celebrate, but it indicates a significantly higher average income level when compared to Mali and other neighboring countries known to be zones of origin of *taalibe* children (Guinea-Bissau 48.9% in 2002; Guinea 43.34% in 2007; The Gambia 33.6%). Under-five child mortality in Senegal is 65 deaths per 1000 live births, less than half that of Mali and Guinea-Bissau (176 and 161 respectively. Related figures are 126 for Guinea and 101 for The Gambia).

There are open drainage ditches which line the city streets in the Bamako neighborhood where I was lodged that serve as dumping grounds for human sewage. This open sewage contributes to a generalized foul smell in the center of the city and serves as breeding grounds for the area's healthy population of flies. On more than one occasion I saw a child fall into one of these sewage ditches. There are men who walk around the city with hand-drawn chariots into which they shovel the solid waste, a strategy which was praised in an independent urban management study as an exemplary form of state-civil society cooperation to tackle the city's problems through "micro-enterprises" (Kéita 2001). That is, instead of the state investing in an underground public waste management system. I find it ironic that while the Malian government cannot shore up the finances to dig under its cities to install an underground sanitation system, this very soil is known for its vast gold stores, which continue to be exploited by foreign companies (HRW 2011).

I encountered similar public waste disposal problems in Kayes, where I conducted my family interviews. The picturesque Senegal River, which brought the French over from the Atlantic coast to establish the prominent colonial trading town, separates Kayes in half – into "big Kayes" and "little Kayes". The river, however, functions simultaneously as a fishing source, a wash basin, and a human waste receptacle. Until Mali and other West African nations have the resources to tackle their most basic problems of public sanitation and population health and nutrition, it is a good bet

[64] The Mali Federation, made up of what is now Senegal and Mali, became independent from France in 1960 and dissolved two month later due to a tense political standoff between the two territories (Kurtz 1970).

that the educational sector will continue to suffer, and families in villages will need to continue to seek out their own strategies for economic and social survival.

Sending children away to Qur'anic schools, meaning that they live with the Qur'anic masters full time, has long been part of West African Muslim families' options when it comes to raising their children. It is at once a family survival strategy, among the various modes of out-fostering enacted by families, and simultaneously a form of education for the child. One less mouth to feed can be a significant relief for some families struggling to make ends meet. Parents who choose to out-foster can free themselves to travel for work, as one of my informants did, not having to worry about maintaining a household for a period of time.

As seen in the previous chapter, decades of academic debates have circulated countless hypotheses regarding motivations for and functions of child fosterage in West Africa, including to cultivate social solidarity within kin and other social networks, to create demographic balance, to instill discipline in children, to benefit from or lend out child labor, to provide the child with the means to gain an education, or in response to social crises such as a parental death, divorce or sudden drop in income[65]. Despite accounts stressing the "culture" of child circulation, social economist Richard Akresh (2009), noted the primacy of economics in family decision-making concerning child movement. Through a large-scale survey of sending and receiving parents, mostly subsistence farmers in central Burkina Faso, Akresh found that sudden economic stresses were prime factors in parents' decisions to foster out children, increasing the likelihood by 22.6%. In addition, the economic quality of the sending parents' social network, the proximity to a school, and a sex imbalance in a sending or receiving household, which he relates to the household use of child labor, were significant factors in decisions to foster out children.[66]

For Akresh, "flexible household structures" in West Africa are an adaptive behavior at the level of the family to socio-economic surroundings, enabling them to overcome sudden crises, better benefit from household child work, or improve the social situation of their children through their displacement, often in pursuit of schooling. Indeed, numerous other researchers have shown that if families had opportunities to provide their children with a quality education in their villages, they

[65] E.g. see Archambault & de Laat 2010; Hoffman 2010); Akresh 2009; Vandermeersch 2006, 2002; Verhoef 2005; Alber 2003; Jonckers 1997; Bledsoe 1990; Isiugo-Abanihe 1985; Goody 1982; Isaac & Conrad 1982; Etienne 1979.

[66] Akresh's study reports that a family which recently underwent an economic shock was 22.6% more likely to foster out a child. Parents with an economically high-quality social network were also more likely to foster out to one of them than people whose social networks were no improvement on their own socio-economic situation. A strong correlation was found between the distance to the nearest primary school and the likelihood to foster out children. Families closer to schools were slightly more likely to foster in than those farther away.

would be less likely to send their children off as foster children to attend a school, to study with a migratory Qur'anic instructor, or to work on plantations or in markets (Archambault & de Laat 2010; Einarsdottir, et al. 2010; Akresh 2009; Serra 2009; Castle & Diarra 2003).

NGO reports about *taalibes* often begin by citing the various challenges faced by families that can function as push factors to send their children to live with migratory Qur'anic masters. Even the Qur'anic masters accused of exploiting the boys are described as victims themselves, of rural poverty due to seasonal agricultural shocks and shifting economic conditions. My own observations about child education, labor and poverty in West Africa allow me to understand that if the families in question had viable options for education and employment nearer to home, they may be less likely to search for opportunities elsewhere. However, parents sending their children to live with Qur'anic masters may or may not choose to articulate the many levels on which economics play into their decision-making processes, nor do they necessarily see the outcome of the choices as deleterious or exploitative toward their children. In fact, drawing on 17 interviews with parents in Kayes, Mali, and 30 with local government officials, non-governmental social action workers, and religious authorities in Kayes and Bamako, I was a bit surprised to hear that that poverty was not the primary reason cited for *taalibe* out-migration. Rather, parents and onlookers found ways to explain choices to send children away in terms of the journey's religious and social merits within a *pedagogy of suffering*.

The Value of Learning the Qur'an: Practical and Religious Merits of Live-in Qur'anic Education

The prime reason that parents cite for sending their children to study with Qur'anic masters in general, is to learn the Qur'an. This in itself is valuable among West African Muslims. There are nevertheless widespread part-time options to study the holy text with Qur'anic masters in home neighborhoods throughout West Africa. Yet, many families still opt to send their children to live with Qur'anic masters, and travel with them if necessary. Here I reflect on some of the reasons - economic, pedagogical, and religious - why some parents voluntarily choose live-in Qur'anic education for their children, despite that meaning that their children may suffer more as a result.

All young Muslims in Mali and Senegal are expected to learn the Qur'an, at least in part, to correctly participate as adult members in the religious community. The Qur'anic school is the go-to place to learn the basic Islamic tenets, prayers, Arabic characters and key verses of the holy text. The neighborhood Qur'anic teacher is never short of pupils, because even if children attend public

schools, parents can send them there after classes or during summer vacation. Of the 98 passers-by that I surveyed in the streets of Dakar, Senegal (see chapter five), 80% of those who indicated being Muslim also indicated having attended a Qur'anic school at least part time. One could compare this part-time level of engagement with religious learning to Catholic catechism classes, meant to initiate the young people into the basics of the religion. Throughout Senegal and Mali, these neighborhood schools socialize children into the beliefs and practices of Islam from a relatively early age.

In fact, the Malian parents I interviewed who only sent their children part-time to study the Qur'an, all expressed the main reason for their attendance at the religious schools to be "to learn how to pray". These parents tended to pay the Qur'anic instructors small fees in exchange for their services, either regularly as cash payments or as periodic donations in cash or in kind[67]. These sorts of arrangements are referred to as "external" study situations - where children learn the Qur'an for portions of the day, either full-time or part-time, and then return home. These external study situations are not seen as a major area of concern in terms of human rights or child protection because the children eat and sleep in a family home, removing most concerns related to begging and unsanitary collective housing situations that live-in *taalibes* face. Furthermore, those attending only part-time may also be simultaneously attending French-language public schools, and so children's rights to education are not always at issue. A question remains - if locally-based Qur'anic schools are widely available, relatively affordable, and they effectively eliminate the health and safety risks associated with migratory live-in schools, why do some parents choose to send their children to live full-time with Qur'anic masters?

One reason why parents send their children to live at Qur'anic schools is that they are free. While this is not the case everywhere, there is a strong social claim among many people I spoke with in Mali that parents should not pay Qu'ranic instructors for their services. With this comes the understanding that the Qur'anic master must somehow make ends meet, and therefore the children must live with and work for the master in exchange for instruction. In essence it is a system in which children pay for their own education through services performed for the Qur'anic master and his wife, and by begging to feed themselves. But not all of the students sent to Qur'anic schools will gain an education which will serve their families and their futures, in large part because of the work they are made to perform. Aïssata Diabaté, an 80 year old Malinké widow, confided to me that she and her husband, both farmers in the region of Kayes, Mali, had sent their son to live with a

[67] I was rarely quoted specific amounts of money as fees, either by instructors or parents, likely because they tend to vary and payments are often sporadic. But it is my impression, after speaking with parents who have utilized such services, that the cost of these daily sessions is not high.

Qur'anic master to get an education because they were short on money. She noted that they made that choice because they "did not have to pay for the Qur'anic school.[68]" She mentioned that it was also to avoid sending him to the *ecole francaise* (French school), a loathsome option for her and her husband, representing a widespread sentiment of resistance to the former colonial power. In the end, her son, Abdou, spent ten years begging to support that migratory Qur'anic school - only to come home without finishing the Qur'an.

> *After so many years, he could not even get a job. After ten years of experience studying, he came home and started a training program to become a mechanic. He lost too much time with the Qur'an, and to earn money he had to take up studying again (Aïssata Diabaté, Kayes, Mali).*

Aïssata expressed disappointment, even indignation at times with the futility of her son's Qur'anic education - that the instructor had stolen years of her child's life and productivity. Apparently Aïssata had hoped that through this extended education her son would have gained employable skills, perhaps by becoming a Qur'anic instructor himself, to support his family.

It is clear that a live-in Qur'anic school option may be more convenient for some parents for practical or economic reasons. But beyond such mundane concerns, parents who hand over a child to live with a Qur'anic master are believed to receive special blessings and benedictions both now and in the afterlife as a result of their demonstrated spiritual commitment. This is no small matter for West African Muslims. Individuals are taught to operate with a sort of checks and balances approach to paving their path to heaven, with blessings and good deeds counting as credits, and sins counting as debits (see a discussion in the following chapter). Since there is rarely a shortage of sins among religious followers, a secure source of divine blessings is imperative. And it is not only the parents who vie for blessings at their more advanced ages - *taalibes* from a young age are made conscious of the importance of obeying their masters' commands to beg or perform tasks in order to earn the coveted benedictions.

Live-in Qu'ranic education is also a path to becoming a Qu'ranic master oneself. This choice is frequent among the Pulaar (Fulani) peoples, where the profession of Qur'anic instructor is highly-valued and respected. The Qur'anic master is largely viewed as a dedicated and gifted intellectual who has searched long and far for knowledge, both profane and spiritual. In other words, some pupils are not sent to the Qur'anic schools simply to learn how to pray and understand religious obligations, but to master the text as the initial step in a lifelong pursuit of studies, religious and secular, setting them on a path toward spiritual and social power. Historically, this choice often

[68] Personal interview, Aïssata Diabaté, July 22, 2010, video recorded, Kayes, Mali.

depended on one's family history, where hereditary "Muslim lineages" have dominated the profession of Qur'anic education and have restricted esoteric Qur'anic knowledge (Ware 2010:24, quoting Brenner 2000). This functioned as a "gatekeeping mechanism" for the Muslim erudites to preserve the profession within their ranks (Ware 2010:24; Bledsoe 1988). Today, West African parents may follow a division of labor approach and designate perhaps one or two children to study the Qur'an full-time to become the family's Muslim intellectuals. The others may be put to work at a family trade or sent to a public or trade school.

Finally, according to Djibril Dior, the acting president of the National Collective of Qur'anic School Associations of Senegal (*Collectif National des Associations des Ecoles Coraniques du Sénégal*, CNAECS), and father of children memorizing the Qur'an, live-in Qur'anic education in today's modernizing world is mostly pragmatic. Taking as a given the importance of completely memorizing the Qur'an, Mr. Dior explained to me that a live-in situation is the most efficacious way to go about it. When they live with their master, children have more time to study, from five o'clock in the morning and into the night, while children who simply attend lessons during the day and return home will not likely be supervised and may not even study the material. He stressed the intensity of memorizing the Qur'an, and that such a task must be completed with minimal distractions, which may include family life, working or begging. In these ideal conditions, Mr. Dior says that a child can learn the entire holy text in three years or less, and clear the path for other types of learning, religious and secular. While a child who returns home every day or who works on Qur'anic masters' farms in villages will take up to "10 years, or even 15 years before he can memorize the text."[69]

Mr. Dior obviously takes one element for granted – that this accelerated learning situation can only happen if the schools are properly funded. Indeed he pays for his daughters to attend a full-time residential Qur'anic school that sets them on this fast track to memorization. However, many families choose the route to live-in Qur'anic education in part or entirely because they lack the means to pay.

Drawing on these accounts, it appears that if parents would pay Qur'anic instructors for their services, nearly all of the benefits sought of Qur'anic education could be attained while removing the consequences of child begging or working. If this is so simple, why is it not mandatory that parents pay? Perhaps payments could be fixed on a sliding scale depending on financial possibilities - with those unable to pay, such as Aïssata, being made up for by those with

[69] Personal Interview, Djibril Dior, December 29, 2010, video-recorded, Dakar, Senegal.

more means. Indeed, this is how many Qur'anic schools function. Nearly all of the Qur'anic instructors that I interviewed in Dakar who take fees mentioned that at least some of their pupils, if not most, are considered *cas sociaux* ("social cases"). This means that their learning is sustained by other parents, or other community members through charitable giving. But, according to many of my informants in Mali, finding ways to be able to make payments for Qur'anic education is not the real problem (or the only problem). It is that enough people actually *want* their children to go off on their own - to suffer.

'I passed by there': A *Pedagogy of Suffering* in the Perpetuation of *Taalibe* Migration

> *Well, to say that all of the parents [who send their children to live with Qur'anic masters] do not have enough means, no. There are some who are very rich merchants! It is because they have* ***passed by there****; it is cultural! 'We have passed by there. We have suffered before becoming rich. You too, you must suffer.' You can see those children; they walk around with no shoes all day, under the sun, with all of the dangers of the street* (Yakhouba Sylla, July 20, 2010, Kayes, Mali[70]).

The above quote from *Yakhouba Sylla*, the head of Child and Family Technical Services of the regional administration of the Ministry of the Promotion of the Woman, Child, and the Family (MPFEF) (*Direction Régionale de la Ministère de la Promotion de la Femme, de l'Enfant, et de la Famille*), stresses that a lack of financial means is not the sole factor at the heart of live-in Qur'anic education in Kayes. In a different interview, the director of that regional office, Amina Tounkara, corroborated Mr. Sylla's point, indicating that this credo of "pass by there" (*passer par la*) is not limited to Qur'anic education, but to whatever domain passed through by the parents, or that the parents deem a sufficient training experience for the child. Here she speaks of local efforts to limit child labor, such as in local artisanal mines:

> *When we look at the work performed by children, they are hard jobs for children, that overwhelm the physical force of the child… But the parents do not understand it like that. They tell themselves, 'I did it, my child must do it"* (Amina Tounkara, July 20, 2010, Kayes, Mali[71]).

In this interview, Mrs. Tounkara was accompanied by a technical officer, Mr. Cissé, and I was accompanied by a research assistant. The four of us had a series of lively exchanges over the course of approximately an hour about the situation of the Qur'anic school students in the region of Kayes, and child trafficking and rights in the region. Mrs. Tounkara linked this "I passed by there"

[70] Personal interview, video recorded.
[71] Personal interview, audio recorded.

credo to suffering in Qur'anic education. I asked if the parents send their children with Qur'anic masters even if they know it will be difficult for them.

"Even if they know! They know!" Mrs. Tounkara retorted. "Because they send the child, but they do not send the Qur'anic master anything to feed the child. They do not inquire about how the child is housed. In certain centers, you will find 40 children who sleep in the same small space. That is hard sleeping on the floor, whether in periods of cold or heat!"

"Or sometimes simply in a hallway," adds Mr. Cissé about their sleeping arrangements.

"Or sometimes in a hallway," echoes Mrs. Tounkara. "And they are children who often study by the light of the moon – often there is no electricity. There is nothing. But the parents know."

"But their parents live with electricity?" questions my research assistant.

"Often! There are some who have electricity. But they say that they themselves have passed by there, so the children must pass by there," explains Mrs. Tounkara, admitting that some, but certainly not all of these families benefit from electricity.

"They are people who are well off," comments Mr. Cissé, "but who send their children."

"So it is not necessarily a socio-economic question?" I ask.

"It is not socio-economic. It is purely cultural," responds Mrs. Tounkara.

"Purely cultural," repeats Mr. Cissé in agreement.

"Religious and cultural, yes," continues Mrs. Tounkara.

"So there is not a higher proportion of children [attending live-in Qur'anic schools] who come from families with few means?" I asked, somewhat flabbergasted, as these officials were telling me something quite different from everything I had heard in Senegal about the causal factors behind *taalibe* migration.

"There are some!" affirms Mrs. Tounkara.

"Yes, yes, there are some," echoes Mr. Cissé.

"There are all categories of children," explains Mrs. Tounkara. "But even those who have means, according to tradition, the family does not give him anything, they send the child to the Qur'anic master. And they, these are the children who are obligated at very early hours to study, and around nine o'clock they are going to go out and beg to find food for noontime. Again in the afternoon they will beg to find something to eat that night."

What struck me as particularly interesting at the regional administration of the MPFEF was both Mrs. Tounkara and Mr. Sylla's insistence that well-to-do parents purposely send their children

into difficult situations in Qur'anic schools. This was not merely an echo of the discourse of poverty explaining the squalid living conditions of the Qur'anic school pupils. They were describing a *pedagogy of suffering*. Anthropologist Caroline Bledsoe (1990), who studied child fosterage situations among the Mende of Sierra Leone, witnessed something similar - what she called a "hardship ideology", or a cultural imperative that children struggle and suffer as a part of social training. Bledsoe found that many parents who sent their children away for the purpose of "training" indeed expected and desired that their children struggle to build character and advance their knowledge and experiences.

Bledsoe remarked that parents who sent their children far away for schooling, rather than keeping them in village schools, did not do so out of abandonment or neglect. Quite the contrary – these were the favored, chosen youths. Esther Goody (1982) also noted that West African parents engaging in child fostering tended to highly-esteem the educational value of far-away child placement, even if it was only to perform domestic labor. Bledsoe (1990:76) explained that Mende children who are sent away get the opportunity to gain distant and esoteric knowledge and "develop" as people by learning new, modern ways[72]. Among those fostered-out for education and training, as observed by Bledsoe, were Qur'anic school students who left villages to live with and travel with Qur'anic masters.

In addition to the knowledge and experiences that can be gained by leaving home, Bledsoe notes that it is understood that these children will suffer. But this struggle is viewed as "rightful hardship" (*mohne*) among the Mende, rather than mere work (*ngenge*) for the benefit of others – as it will forge the strength of the youth in question and prepare him for the hardships of adult life (ibid:77). The value of struggle is such that the children's grandmothers are viewed as among the worst candidates to receive foster children – as they are almost certain to spoil the child. And well-fed, satisfied children will "lack motivation to rise beyond their present conditions" (ibid).

At the heart of *passer par la* in Mali, in terms of justifying children's suffering in Qur'anic schools, is a crucial element of social reproduction that I found to be pervasive throughout my interviews with Malian parents, whether or not they send their children away to study the Qur'an. I have found there to be two key roles that this *pedagogy of suffering* fills in terms of Malian social reproduction - one to cultivate discipline to create dependable workers, and the other to cultivate respect and loyalty so that parents can count on their children's support as they age. In other words,

[72] She translated this process of "development" and personal transformation from the Mende term *tee-gulohma* as "to pass in front of", implying "an evolution into something more advanced than the original form (ibid).

the mantra of "pass by there" claims that not only is suffering needed, in general, to make sure that one's child passes through the same type of experiences as oneself and becomes properly socialized into adult roles, but it is necessary for the child to learn discipline and respect for his/her parents - values which will make the investment in child education valuable for the family unit.

Suffering to Cultivate Obedience

Aïssata, the widow I introduced above who was angered at the lack of employable skills obtained by her son after 10 years with a Qur'anic master, managed to find a silver lining in the experience - her son's present diligence with work. I asked her, "Did your son receive any sort of education as a result of his experience with the Qur'anic master (if not employable skills)?" She responded:

> *My son, what he received in terms of moral education was respect. Next, he is someone who does not talk very much. He can live for years with someone without having a problem. Because he is someone who is a bit timid. For him, that is the education that he gained in terms of himself as a person* (Aïssata Diabaté, July 22, 2010, Kayes, Mali).

After asking about the living conditions that Abdou endured as a Qur'anic student, I inquired about the types of discipline used in the school. She replied, "The discipline was good because when Abdou came back he respected everyone." Furthermore, Abdou works a lot. "He works practically every day. I often ask him to take a rest, because he does not have a fixed schedule. He does not have certain days designated as rest days. But every day he leaves the house to go to work, and he comes home a bit late." Aïssata now depends solely on her children for survival, mostly her son Abdou's income as an apprentice mechanic. With respect to her current situation, she expresses gratitude: "For now what I want to say is thanks to the good God. My son, who is here, what he does is study, but he still brings home to the family. Because my husband is not living anymore, and it is him who brings everything. I thank the good God for that boy."

Aïssata views the Qur'anic school as having had a positive influence on her son, in that he came back more "timid", and more "respectful". Now he takes care of her and she can trust him to continue, and that is what is essential. Her regrets about her son's "lost time" were expressed in terms of education and job training, not him having suffered away from home, or her having missed out on spending more time with him. In fact she claims that he was treated well enough, and that he even benefited morally from his time away. A key element absent from this story, obviously, is Abdou's own account of his experience. Did he see or feel this "lost time" differently?

Unfortunately I cannot report on Abdou's perspective in this particular case, but this is a good point of entry into questions of children's rights - with respect to who gets to make decisions for children, such as childhood education, and with what objectives and consequences.

Albertine de Lange's (2007) research on youth labour migration in and from Burkina Faso similarly reveals that arduous work away from home can be seen by parents as a be a disciplining experience. This is particularly the case for rebellious children who defy their parents to seek out distant employment in the first place. The following passage from de Lange (2007:159) contains quotes from parents who saw rebellious youths break away from home in search of cash, but welcomed home more disciplined, humble workers. These parents felt that the returned migrants were more grateful for what they had in their families:

> *They have learned how to cultivate cotton over there; here we do not have cotton. And also, they have worked from daybreak until night. Since their return, they work more than before. Often I take a rest, but they continue working! As far as the change in behaviour is concerned I am happy. It is just that it is not good to leave your parents without informing them. That is not good– Mother of two migrated sons (14).*
>
> *When they leave they are away from their parents. They want to eat but instead they are forced to work all day. When they come back, they know what it is like over there. It is a lesson for them. So when they come back, they accept to work– Father of a child migrant (15).*
>
> *The experience has improved him. He has seen that life is more difficult over there. He will stay here now for a while– Pierre's (11) father.*
>
> *It is not good. Everyone wants to have his children close to him. It's because the children cannot satisfy their demands here that we can not stop them from going. It is better to make them aware of the dangers and advise them not to go. But if they refuse to listen, they will find out themselves– Father of two child migrants (14, 15).*

These quotes from de Lange suggest that parents are pleased that their defiant youths have *learned their lesson*, so to speak. De Lange describes this attitude among parents as "ambivalent", because despite acknowledging the risks to their children:

> *"…they [the parents) admitted that they saw positive sides to the migration as well: children would bring home some goods and after coming back, they would work hard on the family farm and be more obedient since they by then would acknowledge that their parents had been right. So in a particular way, child labour migration was perceived by parents as a form of education, as one that brutally teaches that it is better to stay in one's village"* (de Lange 2007:159).

While Qur'anic education is generally initiated on the parents' initiative, the children's experiences of hardship away from home are widely believed to render the children more respectful and humble upon their return.

"Pass by there" as Socialization into Adult Roles

When I asked Malian parents about how they perceived their children's experiences with education and home life, a response I received frequently was that he/she *ne dit rien* ("doesn't say anything"), the tone of which struck me as perplexingly positive. Judging from the frequency with which I heard this phrase, I knew that the parents could not simply be saying that the child was literally quiet, or that the parent was unaware of the child's perspective. The parents used the phrase to describe their children as well-behaved and obedient - which was a key theme in all of my parent interviews. No matter what their expressed opinions were on "children's rights" in the interviews, all parents mentioned at least once that it is the duty of the child to strictly obey their parents' directions. In addition to raising a capable, productive member of adult society, it started to become clear to me that the ideal outcome of childrearing was passive compliance.

To elucidate the ways in which obedience and children are often considered as synonymous, I share the story of Mohamed Kouyaté, a father of three who took in his deceased brother's eight children in a situation of crisis fosterage. According to him, his brother's children became "his own"[73]. He was proud to say that his hard work and God's help allowed him to keep everyone fed and clothed. But what struck me about his explanation was what constituted for him "becoming his own children", and being "well-educated". He explains: "There really weren't any difficulties. They were very well-educated. If I told them to do that, they did it. If I told them not to do that, they didn't do it."

"And now," I prompted, "do they still have a good relationship with you?"

"Yes, they do not do anything without my consent. Even if they have their own children, they cannot even give them names without asking me first. If they do something they have to ask me. If I give my consent, they do it. If I say, 'you shouldn't do that', they don't do it. Up to now, we are like that." For Mr. Diarra, the proof that he effectively became the father of these fostered children was their deference to his authority on all matters of importance in their lives. This deference, according to him, is not a sign of weakness to make decisions on their own, but rather a sign of respect and trust in his better judgment. It is also a demonstration of gratitude and loyalty to

[73] Personal interview, Mohamed Kouyaté, audio-recorded, August 4, 2010, Kayes, Mali.

him as he ages. So when he uses the words "they cannot" do something without first asking him, he is not expressing an inability, rather that their loyalty would prevent them from committing an act of such utter disrespect.

To understand why it is so important for West African parents to maintain control over the wills and actions of their children, to the point of wanting them to suffer in order to secure it, one must try to conceive of economic and social survival through these parents' eyes. Seventy-year-old Yaya Kané, of Moor and Pulaar mixed ethnicity, summed this up quite nicely. When questioned what having children meant to him, he smiled and said simply, "*le repos*" ("rest")[74]. The translator explained, "when he has had a child, he will rest. The child will relieve him." Mr. Kané has worked his whole life and still works to this day as a farmer in Kayes. He now has fourteen children with three wives. Nearly all of his children are still living with him, and they have all learned how to work the fields with him. In addition to his own family, he has fostered-in five children over the years to help out as field hands. He is confident that when he is no longer able to go out and take care of his crops with his children, they will take over, and he will rest.

There are no official social support networks upon which one can fall in Mali - no social security checks, no food stamps. If a member of a community is in trouble, of course he can seek emergency assistance with neighbors, family members or religious institutions. But planning for one's retirement, a proper funeral, and the future of one's family and lineage includes securing the productive labor of one's progeny. Some have called this ethnographically widespread obligation to take care of one's parents in old age a sort of "milk debt", referring to a child's obligations toward the mother's physical sacrifice of nourishment (Lancy 2008:260)[75].

Traditionally in Mali, preparing one's children to take over often consisted of training them in what the parents knew[76]. You teach them your trade, you advise them according to what you have learned. Eighty-seven year old Samba Ba, a well-spoken *Chef du Quartier* (neighborhood chief) in Kayes, responded candidly to my question of what he wishes for his children's futures: "I hope that

[74] Personal interview, Yaya Kané, video recorded, August 6, 2010, Kayes, Mali.
[75] David Lancy (ibid:259) quotes Millard and Graham (1985:72) on this practice: "In accord with the belief that lactation uses up maternally irreplaceable body substances, it is seen [in rural Mexico] as incurring debts on the part of children, who thus are obligated to attend to their mother's wants in old age."
[76] Mbaye & Fall 1996 include a discussion of this social reproduction in Senegal. They include the Wolof proverb: "It's how your father jumps that can break your back," which they contextualize as follows: "One cannot escape one's father's professional and material life path. Destiny is mapped out; if undermined, one's whole future life will become uncertain and hazardous" (Mbaye & Fall 1996:293).

what I live in the world, that they can simply live that.[77]" In Mr. Ba's case, this meant studying hard in the French school system, something which he sees as having served him particularly well.

Occupation-specific training within families traditionally happens from a very early age in Mali, increasing in intensity and job-specific responsibility as children mature. Farmers teach their children to farm, blacksmiths teach their children to work with metal, and women teach their daughters to complete their family-specific tasks. Mr. Sylla, a social program administrator at the Kayes MPFEF office articulated this phenomenon in terms of his own personal experience:

> *Me, my father is a peasant. Since the age of seven years I learned to farm. And I continue. Even now, I have a farm somewhere and I farm it… because it is like that. If your father is a peasant, you must farm. If your father is a merchant, you do commerce on the side. If he is a tailor, and so on. That is the work of socialization* (Yakhouba Sylla, July 20, 2010, Kayes, Mali[78]).

Pierre Kindi, founding member of the Malian branch of the now transnational NGO Samu Social also addressed the centrality of child socialization into a family trade:

> *In our society here, we learn over a long duration. That is to say that the young boy, he will follow his father. If his father is for example an artisan, a type of carpenter, or a black-smith or something else, he will learn on the job from the time when he is very small. Starting from four or five years old, he already begins to learn the fundamentals with his father. The young girl is similar. Here, it is like that… we are in the process of teaching the child what he will become* (Pierre Kindi, July 9, 2010, Bamako, Mali[79]).

To complete this traditional socialization training, adults generally have the children shadow them[80]. Anthropologist Barbara Polak (2003) documents that from as early as four years old, the peasant families started to socialize their children into the various farming tasks, according to their ability levels. While the families would depend on the eventual productive labor of all of their children to survive, Polak found that families only allocated tasks to their children that they felt could performed reliably, reducing potential economic loss due to error as well as potential injury to the child due to incompetence or over-exertion. Children were observed as eager to take on increasing responsibility as their skills and physical strength increased. Parents' economic

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[77] Personal interview, Samba Ba, video-recorded, August 6, 2010, Kayes, Mali.
[78] Personal interview, video-recorded.
[79] Personal interview, audio-recorded.
[80] Drawing on a vast compilation of ethnographic research, David Lancy (2008:169-172) points out that in most of the world's societies, most early life learning takes place when children observe and imitate adults and older children rather than through direct or even purposeful teaching. Leslie Moore (2006) studied learning processes among Fulbe (Pulaar) children in Qur'anic and public schools in Cameroon, which she noted were heavily based on observation and imitation – a method she called "guided participation". Guided participation was the primary teaching and learning strategy employed to train children in household tasks, to master a trade, and also for language acquisition through repetition and rote memorization of Arabic verses in Qur'anic schools and French language dialogues in public schools.

calculations for their families on the farm were long-term, and took into consideration the durability of their strategy as one of long-term survival.

Therefore, in the *passer par la* mentality, it is not always about making children suffer. It is simply about making them live through the same training as oneself. If a man sees himself as a disciplined farmer or an accomplished tradesman, who suffered to get where he is, he will want his own children to suffer equally in training to ensure their future aptitude to succeed. Not all jobs necessarily require the same amount of suffering. I refer back to Bledsoe's (1990:78) observation of a widespread "hardship ideology" among the Mende. Not all among the Mende believe that knowledge and character must be gained through hardship in all cases. In fact there is a concept of "civilised" education which is said to happen in schools, in contrast to "struggle" which is considered by some as "rural and uneducated." School children are said to be on their way to being "civilised", and so they need gentle encouragement and patient advice rather than harsh socialization. Bledsoe included the following quote from an Arabic master who explained why he supported such "gentle" methods for school children, but maintained harsher treatment for his own pupils:

> *School children can learn ('civilised') business in school if they are eating well, but (children) can't learn a trade or Arabic if they are treated well because our native people believe that school-going children are just practising to live the same way the white people live"* (Bledsoe 1990:78).

This distinction sheds light on my observations in Mali, where suffering and strictly-enforced discipline is frequently articulated as essential to Qur'anic education in particular.

One 50-year-old Qur'anic instructor of the Pulaar ethnic group based in "little Kayes", Ahmed Baro, expressed to me the essence of the *passer par la* mentality in terms of a motivation to endure suffering while a *taalibe* in order to become a respected Qur'anic master. When I asked him how the students in his school felt about their experiences there, he responded instead with a justification for their current, difficult predicament:

> *"The students? Well, if they have been here a long time, if they have stayed with me, it's, they turn out… like me. Their futures are… they will be like me. Because I, myself, I was like that. I was like that, but one day I became a marabout (smiles slightly).*[81]*"*

In other words, Mr. Baro was a young *taalibe* himself, who like them had to sit for countless hours a day to write and recite Qur'anic verses, like them he had to beg for his food, and like them he slept in difficult conditions - but it paid off in the end. He believes that it will pay off for them as well - if

[81] Personal interview, Ahmed Baro, video-recorded, August 6, 2010.

they continue to endure. Mr. Baro introduced me to a former student who is now teaching the Qur'an to his own group of young pupils in Kayes. The teacher's eyes gleamed with pride - for him, this young professional was living proof of the merits of his instruction, and the utility of the drawn-out training that the children endure.

Salif Konté, the *Taalibe Project* manager at ENDA-Mali in Bamako had mentioned how the Qur'anic masters think that it is "normal" for a child to be sent out during the rest periods to fetch water for the master, and that the child will gain blessings in exchange for this type of diligent work. "[The Qur'anic master] feels that the children under his control need to learn in the same ways that he did, which include working and begging"[82]. Although the NGO worker acknowledged that this type of work is considered socially normal and expected, he went on to specify ENDA Mali's progressive stance with respect to the limited utility and validity of child suffering today: "But the realities have changed… some things just don't work anymore."

Manoela Borgas of the Political Section of the US Embassy in Bamako made a similar statement on the social normalcy of *taalibe* begging in Mali. At the time of our interview, she was the official responsible for writing the 2010 "Trafficking in Persons Report" country narrative for Mali. After acknowledging the inherent problems and dangers that begging children face, she said, "But still, begging *is* part of the tradition here", and she began to cite how the Malian employees at the Embassy "have all gone through it" (literally - these are the exact words she used)[83]. In other words, the "pass by there" mantra, word for word, made its way all the way to this US diplomat's office in Mali concerning the question of begging - demonstrating the prevalent social ambiguity surrounding child suffering. Borgas concluded her thought, however, by articulating the US government's less ambiguous stance toward the issue: "The practice may not have changed, but the vulnerability of the children concerned has shifted."

Alioune Bali is one of the US Embassy employees mentioned by Borgas who indeed "passed by" begging as a child, and I interviewed him about his experiences and present perspective on the issue. He reported that his Tuareg mother effectively rescued him from treatment akin to torture in a Qur'anic school in the north of Mali approximately 45-50 years ago. This puts into question Borgas' explanation of "shifting vulnerabilities" with respect to traditional begging practices, which Mr. Bali expressed to be standard behavior in Qur'anic schools at that time. What has shifted may simply be the perception of the appropriateness of child begging and corporal punishment by mostly

[82] Personal interview, audio recorded, June 17, 2010, Bamako, Mali.
[83] Personal interview, June 30, 2010.

outside onlookers. On the day that young Mr. Bali was beaten so badly that he fled home, his mother was outraged at the exploitative and harsh treatment. She reportedly scolded the instructor and sent her son to a French-language school. But his case is likely an exception with respect to parental response. I have heard and read countless reports of parents who have interpreted their child's escape as an act of defiance and disobedience, and have sent the runaways back to the Qur'anic schools - to an especially violent welcome for their acts of defiance.

Qur'anic Schools, Discipline and Suffering

> *If economic exploitation separates the force and the product of labour, let us say that disciplinary coercion establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination.*
>
> -Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (1995[1977]:138).

I have come to understand that the *pedagogy of suffering* that I have discerned in Mali and Senegal is particularly crucial for *taalibes* in Qur'anic schools. I ask – why should children need to suffer more in Qur'anic schools than in public schools or while learning a trade? The appellation "*taalibe*" in Senegal is directly related to the element of discipline. In fact, although the word itself has been shown to derive from the Arabic term *tâlib* signifying student (ENDA 2003:5), many translate the word directly into French as "disciple" in Senegal. The Wolof construction *am taalibe*, literally means "to have discipline" or "to be disciplined". I will never forget this use of the term, in that one friend I came to know well by the end of my initial year of study abroad in Senegal used to tease me for my ceaseless productive activity - *Sara, am na taalibe de!*" ("Sara, she's got *taalibe*, eh!") At first this construction confused me - what? *Taalibe*? Aren't they the beggar boys in the streets? Is he saying that I look ragged? I did not ask for an immediate explanation, though. And when I prepared my return to Senegal to conduct research on children's rights for the *taalibe* students, the full meaning of what my friend was chanting came through to me, and it was not referring to my own status as a "student". I was working hard! That I had *taalibe* in Senegal meant that I was disciplined. But my friend also meant, and here is the teasing part, that I do everything that I am supposed to. This is the other side to the ethic of "pass by there" I heard so much about in Mali - to train disciplined children, who will do what you tell them to do in the end.

These two sides to discipline are key - not only are trying situations seen as ways to cultivate discipline in young people, in the sense of instilling attention, patience, and precision to gain a level of mastery and expertise; but they are also believed to assist in reigning in unruly spirits. Not all

children are sent to the Qur'anic school with their parents' hopes that they will become renowned Qur'anic masters spouting Arabic verses and imparting blessings. Some children are sent there to be disciplined - in the punishment sense. When I asked one Malian mother, Ami Kouyaté, the wife of Mohammed Kouyaté quoted above, how she disciplined her children, she said that sometimes, if she needed to, she would call the Qur'anic master over to beat them (*frapper*). Indeed, Qur'anic masters are often seen as highly effective disciplinarians. I am not sure if they were just joking or if it was indicative of actual practice, but I have often heard of Senegalese people threatening impolite (*reen*) children that they will send them to the *daara* if they do not shape up. In any case, all children see the *taalibes* in the streets in rags – so the threat can be powerful.

Why is discipline so integral to the *taalibe*'s training, that it has become synonymous with his/her title? I have come up with an explanation comprised of three main distinctive qualities of the Qur'anic school and the act of learning the Qur'an, in practical and religious terms, that warrant particularly strict discipline according to all participants concerned. These three points, which I go on to describe in detail, include: 1) the significance of memorizing a religious text; 2) the act of memorizing such a long text in a foreign language, for precision rather than understanding; and 3) the particular relationship of authority and deference between Qur'anic masters and *taalibes* based on sacred knowledge of the Qur'an.

First, the primary stated objective of Qur'anic schools is to memorize the Qur'an, exactly, and be able to recite it by memory. This demands perfection. In public school pedagogy in Senegal and Mali, rote learning of texts in a foreign language is heavily depended upon, but unlike learning the Qur'an, the focus in public schools is learning to use and manipulate the words. Such is not even imaginable in Qur'anic schools, where the Qur'anic verses being studied are believed to be the direct words of God and therefore immutable. Any deviations or transformations due to undisciplined learning are seen as an abomination and are grounds for punishment (Moore 2006).

The question about the pedagogical value of memorizing the Qur'an has been examined and questioned by myriad Western scholars who have argued that the "purely mechanical, monotonous form of study " (Zerdoumi 1970:196, cited in Eickelman 1978:490) "deadened the student's sense of inquiry"(see Eickelman 1978:196). Paul Marty's (1917) critical colonial text has stirred much debate about the method in Senegal and has invoked responses and refutations into the 21st century (Ware 2004; Ndiaye 1985; Wagner & Lofti 1983). In fact, some have argued the opposite – that memorization of the Qur'an at an early age can improve literacy capacities later (see Wagner & Lofti

1983)[84]. My interviews with school administrators in Senegal suggested similarly positive scholarly outcomes for former *taalibes*[85].

Helen Boyle (2004:84), in her monograph *Qur'anic Schools: Agents of Preservation and Change,* stresses the centrality of memorization to traditional Islamic learning: "In [traditional] Islamic education, memorization is generally considered the first step in understanding (not a substitute for it) as it ensures that sacred knowledge is passed on in proper form so that it can be understood later." While the children do not yet understand the memorized texts at such a young age, she cites argumentation that this is a pedagogical strategy to get them to memorize critical texts while they are still "submissive" enough to do it. They will study to understand them later. This comment suggests that the act of memorizing the Qur'an is a disciplining act in itself.

Djibril Dior, the acting president of the CNAECS, subtly explained to me how suffering and memorizing the Qur'anic went hand in hand, due to the sacred nature of the words contained therein:

> *The Qur'an, it is not just the text. There is a myth [about learning it], that is to say there something that we cannot easily understand. You see, the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, when the Angel Gabriel descended to [reveal the Qur'an to him], he completely lost all previous knowledge. So that is to say that the Qur'an is very heavy (lourd)! So, he who learns it, he must, in any case, meet with difficulties.*

Self-sacrifice through self-inflicted pain, deprivation or martyrdom has been standard practice in religious and cult practices throughout the world (Asad 1997:124-128). In fact, according to Talal Asad (1997:126), it is only with the cultivation of modern sensibilities and conceptions of what it means to be human, that we "[recoil] from a willing, positive engagement with suffering." Christian believers hail the torture and crucifixion that Jesus endured as the utmost spiritual sacrifice.

[84] While this traditional model of Islamic education is no longer dominant throughout many Muslim countries, schools stressing memorization of the Qur'an have not disappeared and have managed to find niches within more diversified educational systems, such as in preparation for public schools (Boyle 2004).

[85] In 2007, I questioned Modou Fall, the Ministry of Education's departmental education inspector (IDEN, *Inspecteur Departemental de l'Education Nationale*) stationed in the north of Senegal, about this. He cited a pedagogical value in memorizing the Qur'an that may facilitate future success in public schools, creating "predispositions" that are "even more profound" than those that result from preschool education. "Those kids, they are in the *daaras*. After they memorize the Qur'an, when you put them into a program that teaches French and mathematics, well, it's extraordinary…They succeed with very little assistance." Atoumane Fall of the Foundation Paul Gerin LaJoie, who has had extensive experience working with students from the region of Louga, made similar claims, which were purportedly supported by statistics that he had access to. However, neither administrator provided me with supporting evidence. He made reference to their remarkably disciplined study habits.

Fasting rituals during Muslim Ramadan, Jewish Passover and Christian lent are all symbolic and yet real manifestations of self-deprivation in search of spiritual exaltation and earthly purity[86].

Michel Foucault, in his monograph *Discipline and Punish* (1995[1977]), traces a history of the infliction of pain in pursuit of disciplined, "docile bodies". He describes how applying disciplinary power to a body, "breaks it down and rearranges it" (ibid:138). A disciplined body is trained to become stronger in terms of utility, such as in schools to learn productive activities or to become effective soldiers in military camps. Yet it is paradoxically trained to become weaker in will – in the sense that the source of power training the body seeks obedience in order to harness the increased utility. For Foucault, the strict attention to detail at the heart of training docile, disciplined bodies for particular tasks is rooted in "theology and asceticism." He explains:

> *…every detail is important since, in the sight of God, no immensity is greater than a detail, nor is anything so small that it was not willed by one of his individual wishes. In this great tradition of the eminence of detail, all the minutiae of Christian education, of scholastic or military pedagogy, all forms of 'training' found their place easily enough. For the disciplined man, as for the true believer, no detail is unimportant, but not so much for the meaning that it conceals within it as for the hold it provides for the power that wishes to seize it (Foucault 1995[1977]:140).*

Foucault's observations about the methods and ends of disciplining both shed light on the present discussions regarding the religious imperative for perfection among Qur'anic pupils, as well as the need to cultivate their utmost obedience. In these terms, the schools are sites where sacred, esoteric knowledge is imparted to the children, which they will suffer to acquire in order to gain authority and divine blessings. They are also places in which discipline itself is the goal – forming individuals obedient to the will of God, and to the dictates of those in positions of authority in society.

My second observation linking Qur'anic education with particularly strict discipline is that the Qur'an is very long and its memorization is a physically and mentally arduous task. As mentioned above, much teaching in Senegal and Mali depends to a degree on repetition and rote memorization. Through the Wolof classes that I attended upon my first arrival in Senegal, I was able to gain a keen understanding of this process – of trying to learning a completely foreign language by rote memorization[87]. Simiarly, *taalibes* in Qur'anic schools are taught to repeat and learn

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[86] Another example is the voluntary practice of "hookswinging" in pre-colonial and colonial India as described by Nicolas Dirks in his critical history, *Castes of Mind* (2001:151-172). Despite being portrayed as a "barbarous" self-infliction of senseless torture by the occupying British, the practice was held to retain vital individual, ritual and religious significance among local populations and authorities.

[87] Within my first week of classes at the *Centre Baobab*, a cultural training center in Dakar, I was assigned to memorize and be able to recite dialogues in Wolof that I did not even understand. They were dialogues between an American,

verses in Arabic by heart – but are not taught the meaning of the words nor the verses in general. Despite their lack of understanding, they must learn to correctly transcribe the Arabic characters, read them, verbalize them, and recite them by memory. But the similarities between my experience learning Wolof and the teaching of Qur'anic verses to *taalibes* end there. My Wolof classes were often less than serious, and only aimed to make us use and recognize basic words and expressions. But, as mentioned above, learning the Qur'an demands perfection – for its sacred nature.

Mokhtar Ba, a Qur'anic master based in Kayes, Mali, claims that bodily suffering actually enhances the concentration needed to master the Qur'an. He explained to me in an interview how he sent his own son to Senegal to study the Qu'ran under the instruction of a well-known colleague. He reported that his son begs about two to three hours per day in Senegal, not because he is "forced", per se, but because the students are not given enough food in the Qur'anic school. He acknowledged that his child is suffering, and briefly expressed a sort of uneasiness with this, but then elaborated that his son needed to pass through this suffering:

> *The child needs to suffer, to better learn the Qur'an. It is hard, but it's normal. To learn the Qur'an better, one must suffer. One must suffer. So, when we see the kids begging, it is hard for them, so when they are going to study the Qur'an, that will help them. After having made these efforts.*[88]

In other words, this logic conveys the idea that the task of learning the Qur'an is known to be painful, and in order to muster up the strength to get through it, one must encounter at least as much pain, if not more pain, in one's other daily activities to withstand the process. Or at least to find spiritual or practical significance in it.

In conjunction with this point, praises and incentives are not generally used to motivate students to concentrate. One Qur'anic master informant in Senegal told me that he does not offer praises for good performance because he did not see it as appropriate to incite competition among students. Rather than praise *taalibes* directly– he tells their parents about exceptional performance. "Then the parents can praise the child themselves" (Personal interview, El Hadj Barry, November 9, 2010, Dakar, Senegal). But within the Qur'anic school environment, students are believed to be

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Mel, and a Senegalese, Tapha: *Mel ak Tapha, ñungi toog ci ker ga*… (Mel and Tapha are sitting in the house.) We followed Mel and Tapha for a walk down the road, into the *car rapide* (public transport), to the market, and so on. It suffices to say that despite my skepticism (mostly based on embarrassment of having to repeat sounds and phrases that I did not understand), this method served me well as I gradually learned the contained words. The dialogues stuck in my head and served me far longer than any blackboard definitions or demonstrations of Wolof grammar. Moreover, they initiated me into actually *speaking* Wolof, and a Wolof that sounded more or less accurate, because I learned entire dialogues, with their animated intonations and expressions, directly from the mouths of native speakers.

[88] Mokhtar Ba, personal interview, video-recorded, July 17, 2010, Kayes, Mali.

learning the Qur'an by the will of God and to please God – not to please themselves, their master or their peers. This pedagogical preference has led many Qur'anic instructors to reject modern public school models based on incentives and rewards, as well as to rely more heavily on punishment or threat of punishment to maintain performance.

The goal of traditional Qur'anic schools, therefore, is memorization of the holy text, which demands discipline. But the process of learning the Qur'an is viewed simultaneously as disciplining for the individual – with respect to enhancing his/her aptitude to concentrate, retain information, and endure discomfort in various other aspects of social life. According to my Qur'anic instructor informants, it takes most students at least seven years before they can recite the entire text in one sitting. Many never get there. But those who suffer through long enough, and who are evidently "gifted" enough[89], are rewarded with the title of Qur'anic master.

Finally, the relationship of strict authority and deference between Qur'anic masters and their "disciples" is emblematic of the powerful and sacred nature of the knowledge that the former impart on the latter. Mamadou Ndiaye (1985:31) of the Islamic Institute of Dakar notes that when a child is handed over to a Qur'anic master in Senegal, he transfers him ultimate authority over his life and spirit in telling him, "I do not ask of you but the Qur'an or his corpse." Knowledge of the Qur'an is the master's claim to religious and social authority, and the *taalibe*'s acquisition of that knowledge comes with increasing authority over those with less sacred knowledge than themselves, particularly neophyte students. This power hierarchy reveals who can teach and inflict punishment upon whom – a relationship based on progression through the disciplined process of learning the sacred text. In this sense, even the youngest, newest pupils understand that their own disciplined advancement will lead to increasing social authority over others. Perhaps some find it tolerable, or at least normal, to accept their current positions of reduced power – understanding that as they acquire more of the text, others will be made to respect their own authority (Moore 2006).

Corporal Punishment as Pedagogy and Social Control

> *The African child is brought up in a culture that uses canes as a form of punishment for children to learn and follow instruction. If we do not enforce the same practices, our schools will experience reduced academic standards ('Ghanaian teacher', Quoted in Antonowicz 2010b:18).*

[89] This point came up throughout my readings and interviews. There appears to be a tendency, among some, to view some pupils as "having enough intelligence" to study and master the Qur'an, while others are deemed as lacking in the necessary intelligence. This discrepancy in *taalibe* performance is therefore attributed to the intelligence and efforts of the child, and not to other factors, such as the Qur'anic master's teaching. There is not much tolerance for the idea of differing learning styles, as has become commonplace in Western pedagogy, in that traditional Qur'anic education is so heavily based on the continuity of methods.

While I was teaching in Dakar, I learned first-hand how corporal punishment can be institutionalized into school settings – even private international ones – because it is so widely sanctioned as a means to punish as well as deter misbehavior. One Friday afternoon while I was doing preparatory work in the school's library, I heard outright screaming coming from the director's office. I got up and rushed in, to see one of my seventh grade students on the floor screaming hysterically as his father, whom I had previously met, stood over him with his belt in hand swinging it at the boy. The school's director stood firmly opposite the father with a stern look on her face as she watched the father deal with his son. I intervened. I did not really think about it at all – it just happened. But there I was, pulling the father back yelling, "Stop!"

The flabbergasted father looked at me and said, "Get her out of here!" and I was quickly pulled out of the scene by the assistant director. I was told to "let it go", and even scolded for being so naïve about how things were *really* handled in Africa. *I mean look at him – the way he is screaming hysterically and his father is barely even touching him! Clearly this boy needs to learn his place!* In the heat of the moment, my protestations caused the assistant director to threaten my employment at the school, if I could not understand *my place*. This threat was of course followed up by profuse apologies on the part of the director. For me, the encounter, particularly the administration's reaction to it, and to me, brought out the irony of the school's slogan about shaping *modern, global citizens*.

Controlled discipline, obedience, and respect for elders are viewed as essential parts of African childhood among my diverse research participants – including Qur'anic masters, community members, government officials, and NGO personnel. My informants maintain that the goal of corporal punishment, or its threat, is to instill fear of misbehaving rather than to incite suffering in itself. Of course one must contemplate here the potential gap between action and reported action.

Members of the Qur'anic master association in Kayes, Mali, framed corporal punishment of disobedient children as "necessary for African societies", but that it is used strictly as a "last resort.[90]" This same claim of last resort surfaced with all defenders of corporal punishment that I interviewed. But I have come to understand that seeing corporal punishment as a "last resort" does not mean that my informants would prefer to eradicate the practice in favor of some alternative disciplinary measure. Rather, they reserve it to remedy situations that they do not see corrigible in any other manner. The Qur'anic masters of the Kayes association expressed how, "Generally, with respect to education in Africa, we arrive at hitting children" but "not to make [them] suffer – that

[90] Qur'anic master association, group interview, video-recorded, August 12, 2010, Kayes, Mali.

you are angry with the children, no. It is just to educate" them[91]. This difference, for these Qur'anic masters, lies in the fact that the children are made aware of the punishment process, and so can avoid corporal punishment if they choose to:

> *We do not hit the child before we show him the steps that we have for punishment. We have, in our punishment, many steps. … you threaten, you make him work. But if we arrive at hitting a child, that was obligatory. Otherwise the child will become spoiled.*

After that comment, the Qur'anic master spokesperson took further comments from his colleagues and continued by clarifying, "Therefore, we do not hit to leave him for dead (makes a hitting gesture), or to injure him, no. It is only to educate him." A Dakar-based Qur'anic master, Amadou Ly[92] concurred with these indications on the proper use of corporal punishment: "Islam says that you can hit a child, but that it can't injure him, such as breaking the skin or breaking a bone (*bul gañ*). And you are only to hit the child if you know that it is to better education him, to bring him in a better direction." Mr. Dior, acting president of the CNAECS, as well as various Dakar-based Qur'anic masters, echoed this prescription, explaining that corporal punishment should be carried out methodically and dispassionately.

When I asked how she disciplined her children before they grew up, Aïssata Diabaté informed me that, from a very young age, she would talk to the child first. But, "when the child does not listen to that, I would come, take a whip, and correct (*corriger*) him a bit" (Aïssata Diabaté, July 22, 2010, Kayes, Mali). This corporal punishment, according to Aïssata, is only used for young children. When they reach the ages of 16-18, "you cannot hit them. You advise them. You give them advice." Parents often saw children below the age of seven as "without reason", in the sense that "advising" them would be a waste of time. In such cases, Aïssata saw threatening the smaller children with a whip as the optimal route to gaining compliance.

This age-based logic appears to be the reverse of what has been described in much of the literature about corporal punishment cross-culturally – where it has often been described as reserved for those above age seven or eight who have gained "reason", "comprehension" or "sense" (Ember and Ember 2005:610; Korbin 1981:7, 208). But I can make contextual sense of Aïssata's comment about merely "advising" the older children, in that as children age, parents have significant leverage over their children's decisions merely through the threat of removing or limiting their social entitlements. In discussions with informants about "children's rights", I repeatedly heard that it is

[91] Group interview, video-recorded, August 12, 2010, Kayes, Mali.
[92] Personal interview, December 23, 2010, Dakar, Senegal.

the responsibility of parents to educate their children, to help them find a gainful occupation, and to help them get married. These tasks, in a traditional African setting, would be nearly impossible for most children coming of age to secure on their own – if only because these realms are heavily controlled by adults. With this point, I am not suggesting that social or economic threats from parents deter children from rebelling, as such rebellion occurs and has even been seen as a "rite of passage" in itself (Soulayemane Kanté, ENDA-Mali[93]; de Lange 2007; Castle and Diarra 2003). I am merely stating that children are made aware that disobedient behavior may leave them facing total alienation from their family and extended social networks – something not all children are willing to risk.

When children are living away from their parents– such as in some fosterage situations or when migrating with a Qur'anic master – the adults in authority are not likely to have recourse to these society-based threats or incentives to incite compliance from the child. This may be another reason why physical suffering and corporal punishment have become so attached to understandings of out-fosterage and live-in Qur'anic education (Bledsoe 1990). The suffering body is one of the only sites from which non-kin adults can secure power and authority over those in their custody. In the case of Qur'anic masters, however, they also have recourse to "the will of God" with respect to the granting of His divine blessings.[94]

I retain vivid personal memories about the ways that non-family practitioners in positions of authority over children, such as school teachers or Qur'anic masters, are expected to play the role of disciplinarian in West Africa. On numerous occasions while working as a teacher in Dakar and Guinea, I have had parents approach me to make sure I was "pushing" their children enough to ensure their success in my classes. One memorable example was with respect to a Senegalese colleague's nephew. The boy was in my middle school English class, and he struggled a bit to master the material. In fact, his uncle signed him up for my supplementary after-school tutoring sessions in attempt to boost the boy's English skills. But when the boy's grades were not improving beyond a mere passing level, his uncle repeatedly pestered me to "give him a little encouragement",

[93] Personal interview, Soulaymane Kanté, June 16, 2010, Bamako, Mali.

[94] Here I am referring specifically to corporal punishment with the objective of securing discipline and obedience in children. However, other factors, particularly the original reasons for the fostering out and fostering in of that particular child, have been shown to play into the overall treatment of foster or apprentice children, impacting the amounts of food they are given, how much labor they are made to perform, and whether or not they are made to feel welcomed into host homes. With respect to understanding the propensity of child maltreatment, LeVine and LeVine (1981:49) note that non-kin, step-children or illegitimate children may fare worse than biological children in a household, but Korbin (1981:8,208) also points out that in cases of unwanted children being transferred to places where they are economically or emotionally wanted, they may be spared discriminatory or abusive treatment.

or "wake him up a little" in class. "He is a bit of a troublemaker," the Uncle would say. We joked about this.

It was on the occasion when he actually described to me that I should simply pull his ears, "like this", or give him "a little slap" that I realized that he was serious. I told him that I was uncomfortable with that, and the uncle and I took our distance with respect to discussing the boy's performance. At the end of the year, the boy did indeed get held back – his grades were just high enough to pass my class, but it was in other French-language subjects where he did not obtain a passing grade. I believe that his repeating the grade was necessary, as another year will help this boy – whom I saw as struggling with the material, but not with a classroom disciplinary problem. But the uncle, as with many parents throughout the region, was an ardent believer that pain or fear of pain or humiliation could correct the problem. This claimed pedagogical significance of the whip or the switch is in fact inscribed into the Wolof language in Senegal, where the word *yar*, directly referring to a stick, can also be translated as the act of "child-rearing". For example, if a person speaks of her mother or nanny, she may use the construction, *moo ma yar*, meaning "she who raised me".

NGOs, human rights groups, and journalists have documented that corporal punishment is particularly widespread in Qur'anic schools throughout the region. They have produced countless stories of excessive beating leading to death or serious injury of *taalibes* (i.e. Jeune Afrique 2010; HRW 2010; Dramé 2010). My own observations are that beating *taalibes* is an entirely normalized event in Qur'anic schools. On one occasion in 2007 I had visited the renowned, "modern" *daara* of Koki, in the region of Louga, Senegal, to interview one of the senior Qur'anic masters who presided over the approximately 3000 *taalibes* living there. As I waited in a hallway of the immense structure, I heard whips and cries of pain echoing across the bare walls and floors. I saw people walking by, as if nothing was happening. For them, indeed nothing abnormal was happening.

Djibril Dior, acting president of the CNAECS, explained that corporal punishment, including the threat of corporal punishment, is especially necessary in *daaras*, as the Qur'an is very "heavy" (*lourd*), and memorizing it demands much concentration. In consequence, he explains, "If you say that the child, you cannot touch him/her, it would be very difficult in the *daaras*... There need to be minimal corrections to be able to redress the child and be able to put him/her into good conditions."

Corporal punishment has been documented as integral to Qur'anic school education in other Muslim settings globally, as reported by Helen Boyle. Similar to the oft-cited phrase that I heard in

Mali, with which I opened the chapter, Boyle cites a Moroccan proverb that says that when fathers bring their children to a Qur'anic master they tell him, "if you kill him I will bury him" (Boyle 2004:13). Turning over a child and granting "free rein" to the master points to the level of respect attributed to the master and the great prestige attached to Qur'anic education: "It was considered so important and sacred that learning it was worth almost any punishment" (ibid). Boyle cites another popular saying found in various Islamic settings - "any part of the body struck while memorizing the Qur'an will not burn in hell," which more specifically points to the intimate relationship between studying the Qur'an and corporal punishment (Boyle 2004:13, citation in original: Wagner & Lofti, 1983, p. 184).

Leslie Moore (2006), who investigated learning processes in Qur'anic schools and public schools among Fulbe (Pulaar) children in Cameroon, noted that corporal punishment was used to discipline children in both settings with equal frequency – but that teachers and parents openly praised the practice for the Qur'anic school setting, while they questioned its appropriateness in public schools. Among the reasons for this, according to Moore, was how the Fulbe people viewed the overall function of each educational institution for their society. The public school was meant to form Cameroonian citizens with the skills to operate in the modern world, while the Qur'anic school was believed to train children in crucial social and religious values – most importantly deference and discipline: "Qur'anic schooling was meant to socialize children into reproductive competence in Arabic and traditional Fulbe and Muslim values of self-control, respect for religious authority and hierarchy, and submission to the word of God" (ibid:122).

One Qur'anic master informant based in Dakar, Senegal, Seriñ Barry, went so far as to describe to me why he feels justified to use corporal punishment to enforce daily begging quotas– a practice defined by transnational groups and even the government of Senegal as exploitation and child trafficking. He frames the use of corporal punishment to enforce begging as a form of instilling obedience for his authority: "[Hitting the children to enforce begging], that is not positive. But a child who refuses, in our society, a child who refuses, he is hit. If he refuses, you will scare him a bit, if he still refuses, you will hit him.[95]" He explained how obtaining the daily begging quota should not be difficult, as the people in Senegal readily give alms: "I am not talking about the whole world, but in Senegal it does not exist that you could go to one, two, three houses and not recover any alms." For this reason, there is no good reason why a child should come home without the full

[95] Personal interview, video-recorded, November 9, 2010, Dakar, Senegal.

sum requested. Seriñ Barry presented the following scenario to me and asked me how I might react to what he saw as an example of blatant disobedience:

> *But with a lot of beating, do you know what happens? Do you know "baby" [a street soccer game played among youths for money]? [A child] goes out begging and gets 500 fCFA [about USD 1.00] and comes back to study. Then you find him in the afternoon playing baby. Yes, he is playing. The person running the games would like to see all of his 500 fCFA stay there, right? But then [the taalibe] comes back, he doesn't come back by eleven o'clock, he comes back by one o'clock. He comes, but he doesn't bring anything. How would you deal with this?*

His reaction is to beat him. *Seriñ* Barry's candor on this subject is quite rare, yet I suspect that his perspective on the appropriateness of corporal punishment to enforce begging quotas, with the justification of obliging obedience, is more widespread among Qur'anic masters throughout the region than many readily admit.

Corporal Punishment – Cultural or Criminal?

> *There are cases where certain instructors, taken away by rage, express a brutality of the worst kind. Light slaps or hits transform into violent punches to the face and neck of the child. Light caning becomes a thrashing of uninterrupted strikes with a stick and lashes on the entire surface of the body. Some even go, in excessive rage, as far as kicking the child who is screaming for mercy, to tie him up and leave him there, for several hours, and even brand his arms and legs with burning iron. These terrible treatments are fortunately very rare, and they happen much more while working in the fields than while pursuing studies*
> *- Paul Marty (1917:81) French colonial researcher*
>
> ***
>
> *Every time I could not complete the quota by 10 a.m., one of the grand talibés would take me into a room and chain me around my ankles. Then he would beat me with electric cable or a tire strip—the strikes were too numerous to count. After he finished, the grand talibé would leave me there, chained, until seven at night, sometimes beating me again.... The punishment was the same for arriving late. If I came back after 10 a.m., even with the quota, I was chained until nighttime and beaten—the marabout was very strict about it.*
> *- 'Human Rights Watch interview with 13-year-old former talibé in Rufisque, Rufisque, January 26, 2010' (HRW 2010:39-40).*

Corporal punishment, for the Qur'anic masters of the Kayes association, is not a question of children's rights in itself, in terms of debating whether or not it is a form of physical abuse. For them, it is a crucial means to getting children to accept certain realities, including the decisions made on their behalf by their parents and masters. In other words, it is an integral part of their strategies for raising properly-educated, socially-competent young adults. They claim that criminalizing the act removes this powerful pedagogical and social tool, and so they defend its legitimacy despite its legal

prohibition in schools in the face of mostly outside pressures to eradicate it. Part of their strategy of resistance to attempts to rid the schools of the practice, at least in speaking with me, a Western researcher, is to distinguish the African educational context from that of the West. At one point the group suggested that the prohibition of corporal punishment in much of the West has led to generalized disobedience and a lack of respect among youths for their elders. In other words – they claim that the ethical use or prohibition of corporal punishment is culturally relative. To do this, the religious authorities use socio-cultural argumentation to claim that they have nothing to learn about raising children from the West.

To exemplify this technique, Moustapha Sy, the Secretary General of the *Haut Conseil Islamique* in Mali, the highly-influential centralized Islamic authority in the country, framed the use of corporal punishment in these relativistic terms. He pitted African customs against practices in the United States – in direct reference to my assumed perspective as an American researcher:

> *With respect to reducing corporal punishment – which in a general manner is inscribed in Malian culture - we are not like the United States, eh! In the United States, when you touch a child, the next day they bring you to the police! In Mali it is not like that. Each country has its cultures. One must also respect others' cultures* (Moustapha Sy, Bamako, Mali[96]).

Mr. Sy described how parents are held criminally culpable for physical punishments in both the United States and Europe – but that Mali's culture is simply different, as corporal punishment is viewed as a key pedagogical strategy for raising and teaching children.

In her investigations of corporal punishment among Maasai families and in public schools in rural Kenya, Caroline Archambault (2009) found a similar reaction. Teachers animatedly defended corporal punishment in terms that they "are African!" Their associating African childhood with strict discipline and respect for elders – central social values – in turn led to associating Western childhood with a lack of discipline and lack of respect. This distinction played out among the Maasai in much the same way that I saw it playing out in Qur'anic schools in Mali and Senegal – with the harnessing of corporal punishment as emblematic of Africans' and Muslims' cultural and religious rights to raise children as they see fit: "Corporal punishment had become a symbol of identity and a boundary against the encroachment of Western influence on how to raise children properly" (ibid:298).

Corporal punishment is not rare among societies worldwide (Montgomery 2009:156-180). There are reports that more than 90% of American parents admit to spanking their children at least occasionally and that more than 75% of the world's societies resort to corporal punishment,

[96] Personal interview, audio-recorded, July 7, 2010.

although with varying frequency (Ripoll-Ñúñez and Rohner 2006:221). Anthropologists Ember and Ember (2005) produced a cross-cultural profile of corporal punishment of children. They found that 40% of the sample of largely preindustrial societies (mostly drawing on the Human Relations Area Files database) used corporal punishment "frequently" (ibid:609).

In Senegal, the use of corporal punishment is legally permitted in a family setting but prohibited in all (public and Qur'anic) schools with children between six and 14 years of age[97]. Still, recent statistics of corporal punishment in schools in Senegal reveal that 55% of students report having been physically punished at school (Antonowicz 2010b:19). This rate jumps to approximately 64% in Qur'anic schools, based on a 2005 case study produced by ENDA in partnership with *Save the Children Sweden*[98], however this statistic is still estimated to be low due to limited research on the topic and potentially low reporting rates (Antonowicz 2010b:19). In Mali, corporal punishment is similarly permitted in homes but officially banned in all schools[99] (Antonowicz 2010a:19,29-30[Mali]). Regardless, the rate of corporal punishment in Malian schools is approximately 83% according to a report commissioned by *Plan International* and *Save the Children Sweden* (Antonowicz 2010a:29). Despite legislation in these two countries, the practice of corporal punishment is enduring, raising the question of whether or not it is truly considered abusive in context.

Anthropologist Jill Korbin delineated a research plan for the cross-cultural identification and research of child abuse and neglect, signaling that three considerations come into play when investigating such phenomena cross-culturally: 1) that there may be practices that are viewed as acceptable in one cultural setting, but abusive in another; 2) that there may be practices that are viewed as abusive or neglectful toward children idiosyncratically within the cultural setting in question; and 3) that there are some forms of child abuse and neglect that can be attributed to social or institutional-level factors. These points describe how researchers must look from both an emic as well as an etic perspective at the practices in question to understand and be able to properly

[97] Corporal punishment for children aged six to 14 is prohibited in Senegalese schools by the Decree n° 79-11.65 (1979). There are no specifications for children outside of this age range (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, et al. 2012 [w/*Save the children*, *Plan International*])

[98] Education et développement de l'enfant (2005). *Recherche Action sur les Violences faites aux Enfants en Milieu Scolaire et Extra Scolaire au Sénégal*. Etude des Cas des départements de Pikine, Rufisque et Guediawaye. Avec l'appui de *Save the children Sweden* (cited in Antonowicz 2010b).

[99] Corporal punishments have been prohibited by law in schools in Mali since 1994 (in primary and secondary schools: No. 94-4856/MEB-CAB, April 8, 1994; in specialized institutions: No. 94-4999/MEB/CAB, April 15, 1994; and in preschools and nurseries, No. 94-5000 April 15, 1994), cited in Antonowicz (2010a:19).

contextualize them. That is to say, anthropologists should be ready to think relatively – if only to better understand how to improve the outcome for the world's children.

Ideas regarding inherent cultural integrity and the need to respect others' foreign practices simply because they serve social purposes or make sense in context, have been argued and established in anthropological debates surrounding children's rights and human rights globally. Early accusations of the Western-centric nature of children's rights and human rights (Herkovitz 1949), have given way to a growing body of literature documenting the relativity and varying contextual definitions of human rights and children's rights in context (e.g. Wells 2009; Stevens 1995; Scheper-Hughes & Sargent 1998).

While anthropologists' relativist arguments were originally formulated with the objective to respect diversity of thought and action, and to avoid the imposition of ethnocentric and imperialistic measures from Global North onto the Global South, the widely-accepted notion of cultural relativism has also been harnessed by interlocutors to avoid scrutiny for suspect behaviors and actions (Merry 2003; Wilson 1997). In this sense, anthropology's prized concept has in effect become a human rights battle ground, resulting in both the essentializing and the "demonization of culture" (Merry 2003).

I have found in my own research that interlocutors have integrated the use of corporal punishment into discourses on cultural relativism and local pedagogy in order to advocate for its continued non-criminalized use. But to what end? Are Qur'anic masters who defend this position contributing to the concealment of widespread abuse and exploitation or are they merely defending alternate and long-standing pedagogical methods? I believe the answer to be both. While hitting children is no doubt frequently done with the intention to better educate them, my investigations reveal that the general impunity indeed granted to the Qur'anic school sector with respect to questions of severe child abuse is being reinforced by such claims of cultural rights to use corporal punishment. As the practice is widely-used in West Africa, and highly controversial worldwide, relativistic arguments give corporal punishment credence in the face of rights promoters.

Mr. Sy of the High Islamic Council of Mali (*Haut Conseil Islamique*, HCI) proposed that despite corporal punishment's cultural importance in Mali, a reduction in its use could, "however," be sought by trying to "raise awareness, to introduce into the pedagogical method, a reduction in the weight given to recourse to corporal punishment in the education of children". He admitted that it may not be "the best solution", but it would allow educators to be briefed on the issue, "all while retaining a sort of small threat". For him, the outright banning of corporal punishment would not

be a solution, because it would virtually eliminate this "threat", and weaken educators' positions as disciplinarians. "Because it is also psychological," Mr. Sy explains. "The child who is threatened, who knows that if he does something…" He describes that this child reacts differently from child who is not threatened. In other words, there is perhaps no *actual* physical punishment meted out in either case, but for Mr. Sy, the mere threat of physical punishment functions as a deterrent for disobedience. He elaborates:

> *It should not be posed in terms of 'you should not hit'. Because [the Qur'anic master], when he does it, he is educating. That makes up part of his educational methods. It is not a punishment, to cause pain. It is not meanness, but rigor in the education. That is how it is perceived.*

Djibril Dior, the acting president of the CNAECS in Senegal, also decries the criminalization of corporal punishment, if only its threat, to maintain authority over a class. He references the sheer lack of control that he perceives taking over the public school sector in Senegal, due to decreases in corporal punishment:

> *I can tell you that in the classic schools (public French-speaking schools), where it is prohibited by rights to hit the children, now we see the consequences. One, the students now do not learn their lessons as they should. They don't have any discipline or anything. Because they know that the master does not have the right to touch them. So, I do not agree with that. It is necessary, the child needs to be corrected. Whether that be a child in the daara, or a child in the public school* (Djibril Dior, Dakar, Senegal[100]).

Amadou Diouf, a Qur'anic Master based in Pikine, a suburb of Dakar, relates the legal attempts to ban corporal punishment in the name of children's rights to what he perceives as increased levels of lawlessness and "banditry" in the city among fearless youths (December 1, 2010, Pikine, Senegal[101]). For him, hitting a child serves as a prophylaxis to banditry; the immediate pain caused is minimal compared to the future consequences of inaction for the child and for Senegalese society at large. "The child," he went on, "he is a person. If you take a stick and hit him, he knows why."

The public spectacle of painful punishment has long been used as a ruling method to assert authority over a population, arguably to deter crimes for fear of succumbing to the same fate (Foucault 1995[1977]). Public torturing or torturous executions were widely practiced as a part of the criminal justice system throughout Europe until the late 18th Century, and capital punishment is still a reality in much of the developed world. Beyond punishing the body of the condemned for

[100] Personal interview, video-recorded, December 28, 2010, Dakar, Senegal.
[101] Personal interview, audio-recorded, December 1, 2010, Pikine, Senegal

crimes committed or accused, the spectacle of suffering has been viewed as essential for the fear it strikes into onlookers.

I interpret my experience of openly witnessing a student's wails of pain from the library of a high-end private school in Dakar as one such spectacle. The student was being hit by his own father – therefore the act could have legally been carried out at home, if its sole purpose was to punish the child for misbehavior. But I interpret the school administration's sanctioning of the whipping within the school setting, within clear earshot of crowds of peers, as serving a wider purpose. Indeed, this likely made the punishment more severe for the boy, for the humiliation that it may have caused him. But, before storming into the director's office, I keenly remember glancing up from my papers to see the library full of students looking around at each other with wide eyes. They were not confused, like I was, wondering if there was some sort of accident or emergency. They were immobilized with fear. Overwhelming numbers of Qur'anic masters in Mali and Senegal fervently defend their rights to retain this ability to strike fear into children in order to secure their obedience and assure what they argue is a proper education.

Teetering Between "Culture" and "Abuse"

Advocates of continued corporal punishment in Qur'anic schools in Mali and Senegal are working with a concept of culture that has been essentialized and concretized in order to hold up against outside attempts to intervene. This outright defense of the use of hitting in Qur'anic schools, however, may end up serving more as a shield for abusive practices than the discourse or even its interlocutors intended[102]. In fact, I ask how the social defense of corporal punishment impacts processes of identifying and preventing cases of abuse in Qur'anic schools in Mali and

[102] In 1998, Jill Korbin wrote about how women incarcerated in the United States for killing their own children have struggled over time with seeing themselves as "good mothers" despite abusive behaviors toward their children, which eventually ended in their death. While acknowledging the role of individual psychopathy, Korbin documents how the ways in which these women's social networks accommodated their actions as isolated incidents of violence, contributing to the tragic outcomes. Social isolation in child care duties is one factor that Korbin identified that plays into the exacerbation of abuse. Abusive behaviors are thereby frequently hidden from outside eyes. However, social networks considered abusive can actually reinforce abusive parental behavior when they see their behaviors as "like everyone else" and therefore not "bad." In such networks, there may also be a generalized fear of reporting what one suspects as the abusive behavior of another, for fear of being found out for one's own equally abusive tendencies. Korbin documents, however, that even supportive social networks played a key role in rationalizing abusive behavior, when behavior that could have raised flags is explained away as a "rare lapse" in the generally good parenting of the perpetrator. This act of overlooking abusive behavior can take place within families, social networks and even within the very institutions put in place to seek out and recognize signs of abuse. Key here are the ways in which those perpetrating abuse are making their actions appear to onlookers, and how those onlookers are perceiving and understanding those actions. It should be noted that Korbin interviews women who are already incarcerated for killing their children – an act that is unequivocally deemed abusive. Hindsight allows practitioners and family members to understand the signs that they had been blind to or ignored.

Senegal, where hitting children is already well-known and socially-condoned. Migrant Qur'anic masters are generally far removed from community scrutiny as well as virtually free from state surveillance. The children in their charge have been removed from their communities and families, and therefore have drastically reduced recourse to these resources if they experience abuse. This social isolation does not mean that the Qur'anic masters in question will perpetuate or plan to perpetuate abuse. But if abusive behavior toward children does occur in such circumstances, there is virtually no social check on it. This is while it is well documented that large numbers of *taalibes* have already fled their Qur'anic schools due to severe beatings.

The localized social justification and acceptance of certain behaviors, does not necessarily mean that those behaviors are not to be considered abusive from outside perspectives, and perhaps rightly. In fact anthropologists have been quick to caution that cultural relativistic stances too often slide into a dangerous form of moral relativism (Merry 2003; Scheper-Hughes 1995). One way scholars have found to move beyond relativism-universalism dichotomies around the concept of culture has been to break down the static nature that the concept has been attributed (An-Na'im 2009; Merry 2006). Sally Engle Merry proposes to substitute the quasi-sacred qualities of the concept of "culture" in anthropology for a more dynamic and situated version enmeshed in relations of power and politics. Through observing what she refers to as a "process of vernacularization" of human rights into various contexts globally, anthropologists can get a clearer look at how culture is created and is changed. At this key locus of cultural shifts, she sees populations translating human rights into locally meaningful terms, while still strategically challenging the "traditional".

Even when Qur'anic masters are well-integrated into community and professional networks, the widespread social rationalization of suffering and corporal punishment in the name of spiritual and disciplinary education in Qur'anic schools, can shield them psychologically, socially and criminally from criticism of actions that might be considered abusive. The above-cited report on violence in Malian schools reveals that 50.6% of respondents, mostly adults, confirm that they would not inform authorities that they or their children had been physically punished at school (Antonowicz 2010a:9). The author of the report, Laetitia Antonowicz, relates this lack of legal or public denunciation to parents and children accepting the normalcy of corporal punishment for indiscipline and poor performance, and to children's fear of retaliatory punishment by the instructor (ibid:31).

Indeed, Merry (2006) points out that the condemnation of criminal acts does not necessarily precipitously follow their official criminalization. Only when populations perceive that authorities

react seriously and justly to denunciation can one hope to see victims or their families legally denounce instructors for the excessive use of corporal punishment. People in Senegal or Mali may react against what they view as excessive corporal punishment, but the problems tend to be dealt with through customary social channels – which are likely to rationalize the violent behavior and overlook the instances as one-time occurrences (Korbin 1998). Indeed, Antonowicz's (2010a:31) report notes that legal and school-level complaints about corporal punishment rarely result in recourse against the instructor, discouraging parents from coming forward. This results in what she refers to as a "vicious circle" of silence and impunity.

On a larger scale, human rights groups are publicizing abuses against *taalibes* in Senegal, but to little avail, as the egregious acts are pegged as exceptions perpetuated by "fake *marabouts*". Despite the frequency of abuse reported in the Qur'anic education sector, there is widespread social consensus that it is not inherent in the system. There are simply isolated "malintentioned individuals" who hijack the system to perpetuate abuse (CNAECS brochure). But as I discuss in chapter nine, despite everyone hearing of these *evil, fake marabouts*, interlocutors never report actually seeing one. Although the morals of some Qur'anic masters are at times questioned – whether or not they are "real" *marabouts* is not questioned. The problem of abuse is therefore neatly tucked away while authorities wait for these evil figures to surface.

The quote with which I opened the previous section, by Frenchman Paul Marty, writing in the early 20th Century, is meant to open a dialogue, not to prove a point. His portrait of corporal punishment by Senegalese Qur'anic masters presents what he saw as the emotionally-unstable nature of an African Islamic leader, for him somewhat of a misnomer, and so his observations should be taken with a grain of salt (see chapter six for more on Paul Marty and his quest to discredit Senegal's Qur'anic schools and African Islam). The flagging of the particularly excessive nature of the beatings is Marty's way of criticizing how the method is employed rather than the method itself, indeed used in French schools at the time. Where "Light slaps or hits" might be acceptable, "violent punches to the face and neck of the child" is going too far. Whether or not Marty's is an accurate account of the actions of Qur'anic masters in Senegal at the time, the social defense of the right to use corporal punishment can be a slippery slope in terms of controlling its actual infliction.

Qur'anic Masters Defend their *Pedagogy of Suffering* in the Face of Donors' Attempts at Mitigation

In the face of donor pressures on Qur'anic masters to refrain from using corporal punishment and to stop sending their *taalibes* out to beg, I have documented how members of a Qur'anic master association in the Dakar suburb of Pikine defended their practices as legitimate and continued them without consequence. Here I describe this scenario – that despite having technically signed an agreement that would preclude beneficiaries from engaging in these activities, their negotiations with the NGO officials on the ground effectively allowed them to maintain the status quo. Becai Gueye, the president of the Qur'anic master association that unites approximately 350 members, shared with me his association's "protocol agreement" with *Plan International* (hereafter *Plan*) under a five-year, USAID-funded project (see chapter seven for more on this project). *Plan* would be providing the group with 29,349,926 fCFA (about USD 48,000) of cash aid over a one-year period (2009-2010) to enhance the quality of education and health in the schools of member Qur'anic masters. The money was earmarked for the purchase of tables and chairs, study materials, teaching materials, the rehabilitation of school structures, the installation of sanitation systems in schools, and Qur'anic master association meetings and pedagogical training sessions.

There was a "protection clause" near the end of the agreement which required the association's adherence to *Plan*'s policy called "Halt the abuse of children!" This clause requires the association to inform all members of *Plan*'s anti-abuse policy, and make moves to stop and report any cases of suspected abuse of children. It also requires that no member of the association be implicated in the abuse of a child, and the association is prohibited from the use of any child in the "execution of activities." This clause can reasonably be interpreted, drawing on *Plan*'s related publications, as prohibiting the use of corporal punishment in recipient schools, and restricting forced child begging.

In 2010, *Plan* carried out a campaign against corporal punishment in schools in Mali and Senegal, for which it touted the slogan, "Learn without fear" (*Apprendre sans peur*) (Kéita 2010). A March 2010 report produced jointly by *Plan* and its partners, described corporal punishment as "invariably degrading" treatment, and it cited the *taalibes* ("Koranic scholars") throughout the region as "particularly at risk" for violence by forced begging and corporal punishment inflicted by their teachers (Antonowicz 2010b:18). Drawing on the World Health Organization's definition of "violence", the *Plan* report defines the word as "the intentional use of physical force, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation." It

subdivides inter-personal violence into four categories: physical, sexual, psychological and deprivation or neglect (Antonowicz 2010b:14)

Qur'anic instructors have elaborately described to me how their use of corporal punishment does not correspond to this definition of violence, as it explicitly does not intend to or end in the injury (wolof: *gañ*) of the child. Indeed, Becai Gueye's interpretation of *Plan*'s clause was as follows: "How we understand it, it means that you can hit the child a little bit, if it gets him to learn better, to be humble or to respect elders. But it is not okay to hit children if it is not with this objective"[103]. Qur'anic instructors of varying social positions – including individual instructors and the leadership of large Islamic political organizations in Senegal and Mali – agree that corporal punishment, if performed correctly, is a form of education, not violence, and children's rights promotion should not target Qur'anic masters who have recourse to it.

Becai Gueye was not under the impression that *Plan*'s protection clause meant that aid was contingent upon Qur'anic masters in his association refraining from corporal punishment. Indeed, it is likely that most members, like member Amadou Diouf, whom I referenced above as a staunch defender of corporal punishment, continued to use the disciplinary method as usual. These acts are not viewed as violations against the child by Mr. Gueye or his association's members. By contrast, it is *refraining* from properly disciplining (hitting or threatening to hit) the child that they articulated as irresponsible, both in terms of educating the child, as well as preserving social values and stability.

I asked Ousmane Sow, *Plan*'s Dakar Regional Director for the USAID project, what the protocol agreement was meant to accomplish. Mr. Sow reported that he personally met with Becai Gueye's Qur'anic master association regularly to discuss the needs and concerns of the Qur'anic schools and to hash out the details of said protocol for signing. According to Mr. Sow, the document was a way to "formalize the contract that we had with them," including *Plan*'s engagement to bring aid to the Qur'anic schools, while "equally rendering formal the engagement of the Qur'anic masters with respect to us… We bring them material aid, pay for a supplementary teacher, and provide medical and sanitary support. In return (he actually used the word *revanche*, which is usually translated as "revenge" or "retaliation"), we ask them to assure the education of the children during certain hours.[104]" The contract was also a "safety" precaution – as *Plan* was contributing money, the agreement would enable them to stop disbursement if they found that the Qur'anic masters were not fulfilling their obligations – which, "to this day has not happened."

[103] Personal interview, audio-recorded, November 5, 2010, Pikine, Senegal.
[104] Personal interview, video-recorded, January 26, 2011, Dakar, Senegal.

I pressed him on the "protection clause", with respect to corporal punishment and begging, and Mr. Sow's somewhat ambiguous response revealed his role as mediator between *Plan International*, a transnational NGO, and the Qur'anic master association in Pikine receiving their aid. He told me that *Plan Sénégal's* goal was to reduce the amount of time that the *taalibes* attending these *daaras* spent in the streets begging – replacing that time with subsidized learning time. That is to say, they pay the instructors to keep the children inside during a specific time-frame to teach them. Beyond those subsidized hours, children may still be sent out to beg. As far as corporal punishment was concerned, *Plan* had organized a workshop on children's rights during which the topic was broached. Mr. Sow expressed optimism about the productive nature of the dialogues that arose over the course of the workshop, but he nevertheless had no illusions that the Qur'anic masters he worked with all agreed with the children's rights premises that were addressed. In fact, just minutes prior, Mr. Sow was animatedly telling me stories about Qur'anic schools he had visited in the Pikine neighborhood where Qur'anic masters lived lavish lifestyles and had numerous wives, all supported by begging revenue from the children.

In other words, Qur'anic master Becai Gueye had a correct interpretation of what *Plan*'s "protection clause" meant for his association. This is because he had hashed it out himself with Mr. Sow to come to an aid agreement. He maintained that his members' use of corporal punishment and *taalibe* begging did not fall under *Plan*'s definitions of "abuse" or "violence" and the practices were therefore unproblematic. Alongside Mr. Gueye's signature on the protocol agreement was that of *Plan* Senegal's national director, not Mr. Sow, which is perhaps what left the latter some room to negotiate with the Qur'anic masters to set expectations that all were willing to agree to.

Conclusion: Economic and Social Opportunity, the *Pedagogy of Suffering* and *Taalibe* Migration

In this chapter I introduced the strong socio-economic factors contributing to *taalibe* out-migration in the region of Kayes, Mali. Then I examined the popular support for a "pedagogy of suffering" among parents who send their children away, particularly to Qur'anic masters, as well as the prime importance of discipline in Qur'anic schools. Finally, I focused in on the use of corporal punishment in Qur'anic schools to inculcate discipline into *taalibes*, and Qur'anic masters' reactions to children's rights-based attempts to ban it. When thinking through aid projects aiming to stop the flow of children migrating to cities to beg as *taalibes*, it is crucial to take into consideration the many levels of socio-cultural and religious importance that have been attached to *taalibes*' travels. I find

that narrow representations of *taalibe* migration as instances of child trafficking neglect to consider these points, contributing to the continued failed efforts to limit *taalibe* movement.

While socio-cultural factors are frequently cited as reasons for *taalibe* movement for begging, I have been careful not to suggest a relationship of causality between the *pedagogy of suffering* and *taalibe* out-migration as it is unclear whether that discourse which exalts suffering is indeed independent from communities' financial hardships. Indeed, my discussions bring up key questions about the continued out-migration of children from Mali as *taalibes*: Is the *pedagogy of suffering* related to or contingent upon widespread poverty in a region, even of the parents who uphold it are themselves not 'poor' according to community standards? Does the *pedagogy of suffering* and the imperative for child discipline decline when economic and social opportunities increase? My limited investigations do not allow me to systematically answer these questions, but a couple of comments from informants can open up reflection on this topic for further investigation. First, a Qur'anic master from the association that I met with in Kayes attempted to explain to me one reason why "African children" needed corporal discipline while it is perhaps not necessary for Western children. For him, it is a question of financial means:

> *Your education and our education, it is a bit different. Because here, we do not have the means to satisfy a child to a certain point… So if we have someone take care of a child, so that he can have something, like memorization of the Qur'an or learning the laws of Islam, [the child], he does not want to do it. [We] do not have many means. Often, [we] have to threaten him so that he can do that* (Qur'anic master association of Kayes, Mali[105]).

This statement suggests that if parents had the financial means to offer children incentives for proper behavior and learning, then perhaps they would not need to use force or threat of force to assure their compliance.[106] But it also begs the question with respect to the objectives of effective pedagogy. If parents had more means and more educational and economic opportunities, would they feel as much pressure to force their children into adult-chosen career paths against their will?

My research with families in Mali suggests that part of the importance of training one's children through suffering is to ensure obedience and social reproduction – both necessary to maintain a tight social net for families living in situations of economic precariousness. Despite

[105] Group interview, video recorded, August 12, 2010.

[106] I noticed that the credo of *passer par la* was a bit more subdued among community members and Qur'anic instructors in Senegal than in Mali, where economic indicators are significantly improved. But I cannot say if this was due to a difference in beliefs and behavior, or a mere adjusted manner of speaking about child-rearing and Qur'anic education, to a foreigner nonetheless, in a context of widespread discussion of children's rights norms. There is concurrently a lower rate, albeit still over 50%, of corporal punishment reported in public schools in Senegal than in Mali. Yet the ethic of suffering is still strongly tied to the domain of Qur'anic education in both countries.

criticism from transnational organizations that Qur'anic education no longer serves the needs of the population– my investigations show that the profession is still esteemed and perceived as viable Mali. In Qur'anic education in Senegal and Mali, it is believed that in order to achieve spiritual learning and discipline, children and adults alike must be able to withstand extreme hardship, discomfort and privations of pleasure. This belief in the value and valor of suffering for Qur'anic education bolsters arguments that forcing children to study in difficult conditions, undergo corporal punishment, and seek their own food can be pedagogical elements in the long-term training of devout Muslims. This process results in visions of the Qur'anic master as semi-divine – able to grant spiritual blessings to undisciplined souls willing to donate alms to their cause. This charitable giving is the focus of the next chapter, as a pull factor for Qur'anic school migrations and forced child begging.

Chapter 5 – Almsgiving and Relief:

The Religious and Socio-Cultural Politics behind *Taalibe* Begging

> *If people are thirsty somewhere else and it rains here, that water risks bringing those people here, to tap that water source.*
>
> - Mbagnick Ndiaye of the NGO ENDA in Guediawaye, Senegal, Personal interview, October 6, 2010.

Introduction: Alms-Driven Begging in Senegal

After having considered some of the "push factors" leading to *taalibe* out-migration from Mali in chapter four, I now ask the question: Why do so many of these boys end up in Senegal's cities? Malian children, including *taalibes* and laborers, indeed migrate to Bamako or to countries throughout the region including Senegal, Mauritania, Cote d'Ivoire, Niger, Burkina Faso, and others, depending on their reasons for migration and their geographic location. Migrant *taalibe* children from eastern Malian villages, for example, are more likely to end up in Niamey, Niger than in Senegal. Those in the south of the country might go to Cote d'Ivoire to work on plantations. But Senegal, particularly the capital city Dakar, is the largest receiving area for migrant *taalibe* beggars from throughout the region, primarily from Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, The Gambia, and Mali (HRW 2010; UCW 2007). Looking at the phenomenon today, it is simple to identify one key pull factor – the comparatively high begging yields in Dakar – they are at least double those for neighboring countries per begging child, and there are thousands more beggars. But why is the rate of almsgiving so high there, and how did it come to be?

When I first arrived in Senegal in 2002, I was immediately and persistently confronted with the question of whether or not to offer charity to *taalibes* in streets. A group of *taalibes* seemed to constantly follow me and the other American students as we walked to and from our Wolof classes at a cultural center in a relatively affluent residential neighborhood in Dakar. This was especially true as we emerged from the nearby Western-style convenience shop with a variety of homesickness-breaking snacks. These boys introduced me quite early to what would henceforth be my racial label throughout Senegal, among children and adults alike: *Tubaab* - in this case referring to anyone white. Chasing after us, relentlessly yelling "Tubaab, Tubaab!" with outstretched hands, they asked us for *cent francs* (100 CFA francs, approximately 20 cents US), or anything that they saw on our persons as we passed.

It was when I was slurping my ice-cold yogurt drinks in the sweltering afternoon heat that it was most difficult to look at these boys, dressed in dirty, tattered, over-sized tee-shirts and shorts, no shoes, and exhibiting skin lesions and infections. I was unaccustomed to seeing children with such immediate needs exposed right before my eyes in North America. In the face of such need, I felt guilty seeking to satisfy my own hunger and thirst. I made a silent pact with myself (mostly for my own solace), that I would offer half of all of the snacks that I would consume to a *taalibe*. If I could afford and enjoy a treat, then surely these hungry boys had equal right… right? I also rationalized this as better than giving money, as after a couple of weeks I had heard that the boys had to bring all the money they got begging back to a master – they could not keep it for themselves. I wanted them to be able to eat what I gave them (especially because I was eating and they could see me!). So for every little tube of vanilla yogurt I enjoyed myself, I purchased another for a *taalibe*, and handed it out to the saddest and hungriest boys I saw as I sheepishly emerged from the shop. This did help, but only fleetingly. At least long enough to enjoy my cold snack in the afternoon heat with no children swarming me. But I knew that this fix did not help me to understand why these boys were in the streets, throughout the whole city every day, or if this would ever stop. In short, I still felt guilty – in so many ways.

When it came to dealing with the crowds of *taalibes*, day after day, I started to resent my glaringly noticeable white skin, which throughout West Africa suggests wealth. Dakar is a cosmopolitan city, with many foreigners, and therefore it made sense to me to that these *taalibes* would congregate there to beg – coming even from other countries. However, it took me years to understand that the *taalibes* did not target white people specifically, and that it is in fact the Senegalese people who give far more to these boys in the streets than do expatriates. Indeed, the high rate of popular almsgiving in Senegal is what has allowed the *taalibe* begging phenomenon to reach the gigantic proportions that is has today. Ninety-seven percent of the 1073 Senegalese people surveyed in a 2010 UNICEF poll say that they give to children begging in the streets, and 78.5 percent report doing it at least once a week (UNICEF 2010). Qur'anic masters set correspondingly high daily begging quotas for *taalibes* in Senegal – between $1 and $2.40 – while it is usually not half that much per day in Mali or other neighboring countries (Einarsdottir, et al. 2010). Some Qur'anic instructors claim responsibility for dozens to over a hundred children at a time, which can amount to sizeable begging revenues. It would be difficult for Qur'anic masters to match these sums elsewhere or through other economic endeavors. This simple math reveals that

Senegal's plentiful alms are a major force propelling the massive in-flux of Qur'anic schools into its cities from neighboring countries (UCW 2007).

Instead of concluding that the Senegalese people are simply more generous than peoples elsewhere, I have investigated the motivations behind Senegalese almsgiving. Socio-economic differences in the region indeed likely play a significant role in the comparative ability of the population of Senegal to support wide-spread begging, as Senegal has fared better than many neighboring countries economically. But this does not explain the cultural phenomenon of generous almsgiving in Senegal, which even applies to the less fortunate themselves. Why did Senegal produce a world-renowned book on the virtue and social rights of beggars, *La Greve des Battus* (*The Beggars' Strike*) by Aminata Sow Fall (2006[1979])? Why did famed filmmaker and author Ousmane Sembene include a social critique of the phenomenon of professional begging in Senegal as early as 1968, in his film *Mandabi*, as if trying to open the eyes of a public blinded by overzealous generosity to the downtrodden in the streets? To get at the heart of Senegalese almsgiving, I conducted a questionnaire-based survey among 98 Dakar-dwellers on their almsgiving practices. Much of my discussion throughout the chapter draws directly on these survey responses, in conjunction with analysis of diverse ethnographic observations and artifacts.

I found various religious, socio-cultural and emotional factors that contribute to the abundance of giving to *taalibes* in the streets today. First are the religious politics that have played out in the territory since the outset of French colonial activities there. Giving alms to support *taalibes* has become a mode of resistance to colonial and post-colonial attacks on Islamic education in Senegal. Then there are the elaborate customary practices of social giving at life events and in times of crisis, and indeed the high value that the people of Senegal place on the child, whom the Wolof often call "buur", or king, and for whom they will inevitably feel pity when gazing upon his suffering. But at the heart of this giving is the lifelong quest of Senegalese Muslims for coveted "blessings" or *baraka*, believed to have extremely diverse potential utilities in this life and the next, and which are doled out by particularly blessed *seriñs*. In sum, there are social and religious concerns weighing on the decisions of the Senegalese individual to share with others, and many find a sense of "relief" from these pressures through the act of giving alms.

A Survey of Motivations for Giving in the Streets of Dakar

My observations of widespread *taalibe* begging in Senegal pushed me to think about who is offering money and goods in such high supply to sustain so many beggars daily. Why do people

give to these children – do they not fear that their offerings are perpetuating a lucrative child begging industry? To shed light on these questions, I conducted a questionnaire-based survey among people in the streets of urban Dakar regarding their almsgiving practices, their motivations to give, their opinions regarding the current situation of *taalibe* children in the streets of Dakar, and what, if anything, might be done to resolve the issue.

I conducted my survey[107] among 98 Dakar residents who were recruited directly by approaching them in public areas and asking if they would be willing to participate. Each questionnaire took respondents between 10-15 minutes to complete, and the questions were formulated to be open-ended so as to encourage elaboration where possible[108]. The sample was not scientifically randomized, and sometimes groups of people were approached, such as students, to maximize the number of potential respondents.

My survey revealed that prime motivations for giving alms included: 1) out of religious obligation or recommendation; and 2) to provide social assistance to those in need, as there was a widespread recognition among respondents that unavoidable poverty is the principle underlying cause for begging. Feelings experienced by donors included "pride", "happiness" and "satisfaction" upon giving alms, but a surprisingly high number of respondents (20 of 98) specifically articulated feeling "relief" - either from the religious imperative to give alms or from social pressures to share one's means with others in need. The following sections provide a detailed report of the results of the survey, and discuss them in juxtaposition to various written and culturally-established accounts of motivations for almsgiving in Senegal, particularly to *taalibe* children.

Who Gives and to Whom? The Demographics of Charitable Giving

Of the 98 respondents, 59 were men and 39 were women. The mean age was 32 years, ranging from 21 to 78 years old. The occupations of the respondents were diverse, including students, vendors, farmers, homemakers, tailors, artists, mechanics, construction workers, carpenters, telephone operators, and some who reported being unemployed, among other occupations and professions. The levels of education were equally diverse, with most students and certain professionals having completed at least some university studies, and others having completed no or limited amounts of formal schooling. Most respondents were of Serère (n=31), Wolof

[107] The survey took place during the months of December 2010 and January 2011.
[108] Questionnaires were handed over to be completed by respondents who indicated that they could read and write in French, while others who wished to participate orally had their responses recorded onto paper (and simultaneously translated into French when applicable) by a research assistant.

(n=27), Peulh (n=12), and Diola (n=8) ethnicities, with a few respondents who were Bambara, Toucouleur, Socé, Lebou and others. Ninety-one respondents were Senegalese, while six reported originating from other countries, including Mali (n=4), Guinea (n=1) and Cote d'Ivoire (n=1) (with one non-response). Ninety-one survey respondents reported being Muslims, often with brotherhood affiliations, four people described themselves as either Catholic or Protestant Christians, and three people declined to respond to the question of religion. This proportion of Muslims respondents mirrors what is believed to be the national average in Senegal of around 90-95% Muslims.

Every single respondent to my survey indicated giving alms regularly. The most frequent recipients were *taalibes* in streets, with only three people indicating not giving to them. And of these three, one reported regularly giving to *taalibes* from his home.[109] Other high-frequency recipients of alms, in order, were handicapped or blind beggars in streets, mothers begging with a child, *taalibes* soliciting alms door-to-door, and pairs of begging twin children – whom I was told have special cultural and religious rights to seek alms, even if they are not destitute[110]. It is interesting to note that the only potential recipients of charity to whom a significant number of people (over 20%) expressed *never* giving included social assistance or activism groups. Specifically "religious" organizations, however, did not follow suit, with only 7% of respondents indicating that they *never* contribute.

In his early 20th Century religious teachings, which are still being photocopied and circulated throughout Senegal today, the renowned Senegalese Sufi saint Cheikh Amadou Bamba stressed the importance of generosity. He preached the merits of both reciprocal giving within social networks as well as charitable giving to others in need. While generosity must begin at home, with one's dependents, and then one's neighbors, Bamba declared that discriminating among potential other recipients of charity was in effect "prohibited" and constituted "commit[ting] a sin"[111] (Bamba &

[109] It should be noted that only seven of my survey respondents reported attending a residential Qur'anic school themselves, and only three of those people were asked to regularly or occasionally go out and beg. This reveals that the widespread giving to begging *taalibes* is not simply a response rooted in one's own personal experiences begging.
[110] The majority of alms reportedly given out by the respondents of my survey go to individuals, usually in streets, all of whom can be presumed to be either unknown or unrelated to the donors. While respondents did indicate giving to family members and neighbors in need, the number of donors and the frequency with which they report giving charity to these closer recipients are considerably less than to beggars in streets.
[111] The text continues: "According to a prophetic tradition: God does not accept alms from he who practices it with discrimination," a statement which suggests that selective almsgiving would outright negate the coveted blessings and benefits that devout Muslims are taught to seek through such charitable gestures (ibid). Bamba taught people to take care of their families and neighbors (which he did not specifically reference as "alms"), and "after that" if they had the remaining means, to distribute alms to others. These alms, by definition and divine order, cannot be strategized, and must not pass over a needy person nearby to aid someone else of choice.

M'Baye 1984:86, translation of the oeuvre *Massalik-al-Jinan*, by Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba). Since there is no shortage of disabled, blind, homeless, or hungry people soliciting aid in the streets of Dakar at all hours of the day, any Senegalese Muslims who adhere to recommendations to give alms generously and indiscriminately will have a hard time getting around without feeling a pressure to give. In fact, I now embark on a brief foray into the socio-political and religious history of charitable giving in Senegal to reflect on how Bamba and others have contributed to the country's enthusiastic almsgiving practices today.

The Historical Politics of Religious Alms to *Taalibes* in Senegal

Charitable giving has taken on particular importance in Senegal in part due to its late 19th and early 20th Century encounters with French colonial rule. Despite the arrival of Islam in Senegal in the early 11th century (Quinn & Quinn 2003), the fact that Islam is now practiced by at least 94% of the population can be considered to be a post-colonial phenomenon, in part attributed to resistance to French political control (O'Brien 2003; Gellar 1982). As the Senegalese kingdoms of Jollof and Kayor were falling in the face of French advance, kings and their armies of *ceddos*[112] shifted their alliances to Muslim *marabouts*, whose power and popularity grew almost overnight (Copans 1980). This resulted in the founding of powerful, Africanized Sufi Islamic brotherhoods in the early 20th century, with literally armies of disciples, or *taalibes*[113], which were to contend, ideologically and politically, with the French menace.

Formerly, Senegalese subjects paid regular duty to their kings in exchange for protection, which took the form of gifts such as livestock, jewels, or currency. When the kings fell, the *marabouts* became prime protectors of the masses, and the prime beneficiaries of popular support, in cash and in kind. These contributions were considered religious alms rather than duties to a sovereign, yet they still came with a number of expectations of immediate and long-term protections. These powerful religious leaders, heading up worship groups called "brotherhoods", increased their economic and political power enormously over time. Today the annual festivals held by the brotherhoods attract the faithful from the entire region and world, and they never arrive empty-handed. Testament to this giving are the extravagant mosques that can be found at the heart of the brotherhoods' directorships, supported by gifts from its members despite conditions of squalor in most members' own villages or urban neighborhoods. Here I briefly examine the colonial history

[112] Often translated as "slaves", the *ceddos* were the soldiers who comprised the king's troops.
[113] These "disciples" as translated by O'Brien (2003), are referred to as *taalibes* in Wolof. These *taalibes* who work on Mouride farms do not necessarily study the Qur'an, however, and are often adult followers of the religious leader.

surrounding the intensification of this popular giving to Islamic leaders in order to contextualize the continued importance of giving to *seriñs* and their *taalibes* today.

French Colonial Policies Toward Islam

French colonial authorities are described by various scholars of Islam in Africa as having had a "fear" of Islam (Triaud 2000; Ware 2004). These authors claim that the general concern with how Islam could affect colonial endeavors led the colonial regime to constantly pursue policies to control, disintegrate, or discredit the religion in Senegal. Among the strategies implemented, in addition to attempts at gaining control over the thousands of Qur'anic schools through which virtually all Senegalese would pass in childhood (examined in chapter six), were the propagation of racist notions about the inevitable deviation of African Islam from that of the Arabs, and the economic and political favoring of what was seen as the more docile, Africanized, Senegalese Sufi brotherhood over others considered to be more orthodox. These "brotherhood" and "Black Islam" campaigns have had transformative effects on the development of Islam in Senegal, and they have had lasting impacts on the state-religious politics surrounding the *daaras* today.

The campaign commonly referred to as *Black Islam* aimed to promote the continuation of indigenous religious practices within African Muslim populations. This was done in an effort to subvert the influence of Islam as a transnational religion in the colony. These hybridized practices were considered harmless and were even esteemed as having a "civilizing force" over a population that would otherwise be savage and fetishistic (Triaud 2000; Ware 2004).[114] The objectives of the policy of *Black Islam* are summarized poignantly by Jean-Louis Triaud: "Enclosed within communities infused with 'fetishism,' 'Black Islam' would lose by this all its power of causing harm. It would be ethnicized and tribalized. It would cease to be a historic agent while waiting for its final assimilation to civilization" (Triaud 2000:174).

At the onset of French colonization of the territory, two Sufi brotherhoods, or spiritual sects, were particularly prominent - *Tijaniyya* and *Qadiriyya*. The French developed a "brotherhood policy" to attempt to gain control over them, which involved the economic and political favoring of one brotherhood over the other. In this case, the *Qadiriyya* was given preferential treatment over the

[114] *Black Islam* was propagated primarily through the writings of French Muslim Affairs officer Paul Marty (1917) who wrote extensively on the topic, and whose 1913 report on Islam in Senegal remained highly influential for the remainder of the colonial occupation.[114] Officials hoped that "African Islam", as distinct from Mediterranean Islam, would evolve independently without influence from the Islamic revolutionary movements in Egypt, Turkey and Persia which posed threats to French imperialism (Triaud 2000).

Tijaniyya, which was seen to be the more orthodox and violent of the two brotherhoods for its bloody jihadi past[115]. It was at that time when a young, influential Sufi saint formed a new offshoot brotherhood from the *Qadiriyya*, which would be the colonial power's new favored sect and which would radically transform religious politics in Senegal to this day.

Cheikh Amadou Bamba and Charity for Eternal Salvation

Cheikh Amadou Bamba (1853-1927) was an iconic religious figure who emerged from amidst these colonial policies on Islam in the early twentieth century to create a new Sufi brotherhood called the *Mouridiyya* (or the Mouride Brotherhood). Bamba took on mythical and mystical qualities, both during his life and after death, and attracted so many followers so quickly that the French feared his increasing power. They attempted to quell his influence through exile, but this only confirmed his super-human powers for the people of Senegal and increased his popular appeal as stories circulated about his miraculous escapes.[116]

Through their tactics of *Black Islam* and brotherhood-based politics, the French colonial administration attempted to harness Bamba's power. The Africanized Islamic group was embraced by the French and accommodated into the colonial economy[117]. In fact, some scholars claim that the *Mouridiyya* eventually functioned as an apparatus of indirect rule for the French administration, especially through the cheap production of peanuts for export, which depended on the free labor of Mouride disciples[118] (O'Brien 2003; Copans 1980). Bamba oversaw agricultural work performed by his *taalibes* for no wage, who readily submitted themselves to his power in exchange for means to survive, spiritual blessings, and a possibility to own a small plot of land after ten years of cultivation (O'Brien 2003). This solidified the glorified patron-client relationship of domination and submission which is articulated in discourses about *marabouts* and their faithful *taalibes* today. In his

[115] These renowned religious conquests were instigated by Umar Foutiou Tall and spanned from the Tekrour region of Senegal east through most of Mali (Levtzion & Pouwels 2000; Triaud 2000; see Robinson 2000).
[116] Amadou Bamaba was exiled from Senegalese territory twice, first to Gabon for seven years (1895-1902) and then, to Mauritania (1903-1907) as the French were concerned about his growing numbers of followers (Quinn & Quinn 2003; Ware 2003).
[117] Another major brotherhood in Senegal at the time, the reformed Senegalese branch of the *Tijaniyya*, under al-Hajj Malik Sy (d.1922), first underwent political and economic repression but eventually also began to collaborate with the colonial authorities (O'Brien 2003). With the cooperation of the *Mouridiyya* and the reformed *Tijaniyya* brotherhoods, together claiming loyalty from the majority of the population[117], the Sufi brotherhood system appeared to accommodate the political and economic aspirations of the French. Therefore, despite both groups' initial resistance to colonial rule, scholars claim that they collaborated with the French authorities to facilitate governance of the people, an act that, according to Donal Cruise O'Brien (2003), both assisted the colonial enterprise and helped the Sufi brotherhoods to gain strength and to solidify the their influence within the population (Triaud 2000).
[118] These "disciples" as translated by O'Brien (2003), are referred to as *taalibes* in Wolof. These *taalibes* who work on Mouride farms do not necessarily study the Qur'an, however, and are often adult followers of the religious leader.

inspirational writings in Arabic and recorded teachings in *Wolofal*, or the Wolof language written in Arabic script[119], the Mouride leader stressed the need for followers to support their lives in the hereafter through donations in cash or in labor in this life.

In a recent analysis of some historic Wolofal accounts of the life and teachings of Cheikh Amadou Bamba, Senegalese scholar Fallou Ngom (2009) has suggested that the religious leader was an innovative pedagogue, designing different types of "schools" to accommodate the diverse disciples who took refuge with Bamba after the fall of kingdom-based power in Senegal. An excerpt of a Wolofal poem about Bamba, written by Muusaa Ka[120] (circa 1930s), reveals that religious learning and physical labor were at the root of his operations and the divine path toward spiritual security:

> *(Bamba said): I instruct all disciples (1) to cultivate knowledge, courtesy, and discipline. I order every disciple who relies on me (2) to keep studying al-Qurʾān, the best of the books. If your brain could not hold these two things, he would send you to the working school where you would be educated and taught all types of work. If you were beyond the working age or could not do it, he would find something useful that brought divine reward and ask you to do it. But no one ever stayed with Boroom Tuubaa without doing anything. He said in Masāliku'l Jinānthat what those who passed away want the most is to have the opportunity to come back to this world for any short duration so that they may perform some additional work that would benefit them when they return* (Muusaa Ka, Quoted in Ngom 2009:106. This English translation taken directly from Ngom 2009).

During the mid-20th century, the majority of Mouride *taalibes* contributed to "work schools" as they were past the age of schooling, and their work was done without any remuneration. They depended entirely on *Seriñ* Bamba and his community followers for their daily needs. *Taalibes*' labor and studies were seen as selfless acts performed for the benefit of Cheikh Amadou Bamba's religious community in the mundane world, and a source for powerful individual blessings for good fare in the spiritual one. Therefore, for Mouride community members, taking care of fellow *taalibes* through alms or hospitality, particularly those studying or working directly with the *seriñ*, has long been a social duty as well as a religious obligation.

The flourishing of Mouride *daaras*, founded on a doctrine of sacrificial labor and spiritual submission, did more than ensure the brotherhood's economic production of groundnuts to meet the colonial administration's needs. The communal success of the Mouride brotherhood under Cheikh Amadou Bamba to feed and protect its followers during the politically, economically and

[119] *Wolofal* is the Wolof language version of a writing style referred to as '*ajamī*, an Arabic term describing the use of Arabic characters to transcribe languages other than Arabic (Ngom 2009:122).
[120] Muusaa Ka was born in 1889 and died at 74 in 1963 (Camara & Mitsch 1997). Ngom refers to Ka as "the most famous Murīd ʿajamī poet".

ideologically unstable colonial times instilled in Mouride *taalibes* social solidarity, as well as faith and loyalty for their founder and his successors that has only increased in intensity over time. Now the *Muridiyya* comprises an economically-powerful transnational network of faithful, all followers of Bamba's teachings, including his admonitions to give charity freely and abundantly.

Taalibes *as Prime Charity Recipients*

Today, as in times past, *taalibe* beggars in Senegal's streets are prime recipients of alms. They appear very needy. They are also ubiquitous; there are more *taalibes* seeking alms than any other begging individuals. But it must be noted that the *taalibes* are not merely economically-needy recipients – they are simultaneously religious pupils and children. For these overlapping reasons, the *taalibes* are particularly popular targets for almsgiving. As will be examined in detail in chapter eight, suffering children, often perceived as innocent and helpless, can stir compassionate responses in onlookers that may translate into charity more frequently than for suffering adults, who are not necessarily viewed as equally worthy recipients. At the same time, the *taalibes* are religious specialists-in-training– a prime class of charity recipients throughout the world's religions (e.g. Christian or Buddist monks, Bornstein 2012:28). Discourses on giving to *taalibes* were historically upheld with assertions about the importance of the spiritual and physical labors that they are furnishing, such as was the case for assistance to Mouride *taalibes* who had submitted themselves to the direction of Cheikh Amadou Bamba. The religious imperative to give to *taalibes* still endures today through the significance of their studies, and with their consequently heightened ability to incur blessings for benefactors.

In the absence of other public or private subsidies to Qur'anic schools, as has been the case from colonial times to today, almsgiving assures the continuation of the struggling institution. Due to Senegal's particular political history, in addition to being a source for blessings and a means for social solidarity in an environment of poverty, almsgiving to *taalibes* can therefore also be seen as an active form of resistance for those who retain bitter memories of colonial repression, or who prescribe to contemporary discourses detailing "clash of civilization"-type ideologies (e.g. Huntington 1993). For these multiple religious and social factors, *taalibes* are ideal and worthy alms recipients in Senegal. This offers an explanation as to why my survey respondents reported giving to them most frequently. But now I turn to an underlying question – why is almsgiving so important to Senegalese people in the first place, either to *taalibes* or to others?

Giving in Senegal – A Religious, Cultural and Social Imperative

> *And when they benevolently invite us to bowls of fuming and perfumed calabashes of laax [a porridge of millet eaten with cultured milk], do you think that it is because they contemplated that we are hungry? No, my friends, they don't care. Our hunger does not bother them. They need to give to survive and, if we do not exist, who would they give to? How would they assure their tranquility of spirit? It is not for us that they give, it is for them! They need us to live in peace!*
>
> - Nguirane Sarr, a striking beggar in *La Greve des Battùs* by Aminata Sow Fall (2006[1979]:72).

There is a praxis of almsgiving in Senegal that is as important for donating individuals as for their counterparts seeking alms. In her classic novel *La Greve des Battùs*, Aminata Sow Fall (2006[1979]) describes a scenario where chaos ensued authorities' attempts to regulate begging in Senegal –the beggars went on strike and left the population of Senegal without anyone to give alms to. The beggars felt that they were not receiving the respect that they were due for the crucial service that they provided to the population of Senegal. In receiving alms they allowed donors to acquire highly-coveted blessings. In the story, the beggar's strike forced desperate donors to travel far outside the city to find people upon whom they could spill their prepared offerings. They did this with the eye to fulfill their own financial or romantic desires.

Fall's novel traces a series of misfortunes which plague the protagonist Mour Ndiaye, a wealthy politician whose policies included sweeping the city of beggars, "human trash", to bolster the tourism industry and demonstrate his capacities for higher office (Fall 2006[1979]:11). He sought the help of *marabouts* to secure his ascendance to vice president, and was instructed to give out a series of offerings, which were eventually given to the striking beggars gathered together in a residence outside of the city. But Mour's luck ran out when a greatly powerful *marabout* instructed him to slaughter a bull and offer it as alms to 77 seven beggars in the streets, in all different parts of the city. He was told that if he performed this as instructed, he would certainly gain the position of vice president. If he did not, "all risk[ed] to be spoiled" (ibid:104) When he saw no beggars, in any part of the city, let alone *all* parts, and his fresh meat risked to turn foul before he could offer it up correctly, he pleaded with the beggars to regain their places in the streets for only one day to receive his gifts. They refused to give in, in the name of dignity and respect for their profession, and Mour lost his chance to become vice president, only after discrediting himself as a politician for wavering on his policies against begging.

Aminata Sow Fall's fictional account of begging in Senegal's streets brings up the donor-driven aspects of the phenomenon in the country. Alms, in the form of a gift, not only serve the recipient in need of the cash or food offerings, but serve the gift-giver in varying ways. This invokes

Marcel Mauss' seminal text, *The Gift*, which upturned conventional thinking about gift-giving as solely inspired by a desire to help or please the recipient, despite popular discourses claiming disinterestedness. Mauss claimed that the apparent generosity that onlookers may witness in societies with widespread reciprocal giving is far from voluntary, but rather "strictly compulsory, on pain of private or public warfare" (Mauss 1990[1950]:5). This giving is not only of goods and services, but the offering of shared banquets and celebrations, such as the Polynesian Potlach, or the handing over of people, particularly women and children. In fact, Mauss argues that these goods and services are part of a *system of total services*, in which economic exchange is only one element. Clans, families and individuals enter into contractual relationships of mutual gift-giving and "mutual interests", not only for their own satisfaction, but for their own protection (ibid:82).

At the heart of Mauss' thesis is the imperative to reciprocate a received gift, which perpetuates relationships of "mutual satisfaction" (ibid). This reciprocity is based upon a desire to maintain pride, demonstrate power, and assert equal if not exceeding authority over the giver. In reference to Melanesian customs of exchange, this pride and power is encompassed in the mystical force of *mana*, which is either preserved or lost in such encounters of giving, comparable to saving or losing "face" (ibid: 8, 88). Reciprocal giving within and among social networks in Senegal indeed follows this logic, as described in detail in Beth Buggenhagen's (2012) ethnography *Muslim Families in Global Senegal: Money Takes Care of Shame.* This constant flow of giving and receiving is central of the functioning of Senegalese society, from exchanges of cloth, donations of cash at baptisms or funerals, or the exchanging of children through widespread fosterage practices. Giving in Senegal is also closely tied to traditional relations of patronage and clientage. Generosity is an indication and source of popular power, often securing loyalty and admiration from recipients.

But the giving of alms in Senegal follows a different logic. By definition and in practice – this gift is not to be reciprocated. Therefore the fact that the respondents to my survey indicated giving charity or alms primarily to unrelated, unknown individuals does not necessarily signify that people give more to needy, unknown people, and less to organizations, friends or family. This result is likely due to the ways in which people define "charitable" giving versus other types of social and familial support. The age old proverb, "charity begins at home" plays on this terminological ambiguity – reminding individuals that familial claims on one's wealth take precedence over desires to dole it out to others in the public eye (OED 2013).

Erica Bornstein (2012) notes that the word *charity*[121] generally refers to voluntary giving to others not within one's family. While as an adjective, *charitable* simply means generous or humane – what has come to be known as *charity* is primarily giving to others with no direct link to oneself and one's own interests. In her ethnography, *Disquieting Gifts: Humanitarianism in New Delhi*, Bornstein looks at the widespread practice of giving of Hindu *dan* in India, a religious donation which by definition must be disinterested and cannot be made to family members. Donors of *dan* must not expect reciprocity from recipients, and should give discreetly or even anonymously. The only benefit one may anticipate with the giving of *dan* is the potential to gain "merit (*punya*)", but according to Bornstein, it is not a reciprocal relationship.

In Senegal, people speak of "giving alms" (*donner de l'aumone*) in ways that mirror this concept of charity as giving to unknown or non-kin recipients. Alms in Wolof are generally referred to as *sarax*, which is a transformation of the Arabic word *sadaqa*, refering broadly to voluntary charitable giving (Singer 2008). No reciprocal gifts may be expected when giving to *taalibes* and others one encounters in the street. By contrast, the highly popular Senegalese gift exchange and money-pooling practices which take place within social and kin networks operate on concepts of social and economic risk-sharing and reciprocity, and are not generally considered forms of charity, although they are still highly-valued and tied to crucial social values of solidarity and selflessness.

Despite the fact that beggars are not expected to reciprocate gifts, the Senegalese donor indeed expects returns from such donations of alms, just not from the beggars themselves. These returns may be religious, mystical or social. For example, the donor may seek to assert social power or authority by demonstrating ample means and beneficence through charitable giving - a non-negligible motivation for charitable acts anywhere. Throughout my investigations, I have discerned three principal reasons why people give alms in Senegal, which often overlap depending on the donors and their circumstances. I find these motivations for giving press on the individual psyche in such a way as to perpetuate abundant giving to *taalibe* beggars despite widespread acknowledgement and critique that they are being exploited through forced begging. These reasons are: 1) to comply with religious obligation and to secure religious blessings; 2) to comply with social norms of sharing

[121] The term *charity* can be traced to the Latin *Caritas*, generally translated into English as "love", or "Christian love", due to its appearance in English through Biblical translation (Dictionary.com 2013). English translations of *Caritas* have been documented to have taken on two diverging definitions, the one synonymous with love for God and one's neighbors, and the other "dear", as in high value, or expensive, such as in the derived term *cherished*. In modern French, these two forms appear in everyday usage, including *charité* in reference to love and generous giving to others; and *cher*, meaning both "dear", as well as high in price.

with those in need in a context of endemic poverty; and 3) for mystically-inspired reasons in search of protection from misfortune. In the end, decisions to give alms to *taalibes* are at least as frequently motivated by one's own spiritual, social or emotional concerns to comply with multiple obligations, as by the concerns of the recipients. I divide my discussions of these personal motivations for offering alms into three general categories: 1) religiously-motivated giving; 2) culturally and mystically-inspired giving; and 3) gestures of social solidarity and compassion-based giving.

Religious Giving: The Importance of Charity in Senegalese Islam

> *A single sadaqa closes 70 gates of evil.*
>
> (quoted in Singer 2008:67, phrase also present in the oeuvre by Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba Massalik-al-Jinan, Bamba & M'Baye 1984:84).

Charitable giving is a central teaching in all of the world's major religions. The giving imperative ideally reinforces social cohesiveness within communities (Moore 2010), redistributes some wealth from the well-off to the poor, and provides recourse to those in sudden or on-going financial crisis (Singer 2008). As for the individual claiming to give for religious purposes, parting with one's belongings in the form of charity can function as a form of self-sacrifice or renunciation from worldly desires, such as in the case of Hindu *dan* (Bornstein 2012). Religious giving can also be in search of spiritual ascendance, exaltation, or as penitence for sins. The motivations for and effects of religious giving are not discreet and often overlap. They can also be articulated or obscured in a multitude of ways, depending on audience and circumstance (Wuthnow 1991). I take into consideration this complexity of motivations and their reporting as I examine patterns of giving to the *taalibe* children of Senegal – most of which are articulated as religiously-motivated.

Voluntary versus Obligatory Islamic Charity

As a response to the open-ended question of "What inspires or pushes you to give alms?" 46 people (out of 98) specifically referenced their religious beliefs as being the sole or a primary reason for giving. This does not mean that the other respondents do not give according to religious faith, but that nearly half felt compelled to explicitly articulate their decisions to give as religiously-motivated. I learned from these responses that many Senegalese people see their almsgiving in streets as a way to fulfill their religious obligation to pay *zakat*, the regulated, obligatory form of giving imposed on members of the Muslim community. *Zakat* is one of the five pillars of Islam and it is often translated into English as a form of "charity"; however, it functions more like a tax.

Specifically, it is a tithe on income and assets which is redistributed for the benefit of the Muslim community.

The religion of Islam puts particular importance on the act of giving to others, yet not solely through *zakat*. The type of charity I discuss in this chapter, in terms of spontaneous almsgiving to beggars, is perhaps better described by the term *sadaqa*, often called voluntary charity. Historian Amy Singer (2008) in her text *Charity in Islamic Societies*, traces the historical development of each of these types of Islamic giving, as well as how Muslims in various settings have come to understand and practice them. Singer notes that early Islamic jurists left some confusion between the two terms and how they might be distinguished in practice (Singer 2008:68). The term *sadaqa* is formed from the Arabic root meaning "to be sincere", and the giving of *sadaqa* puts emphasis on the sincerity of the intentions of the donor. *Zakat*, literally signifies "to purify" and "to increase", in reference to the effects of the giving on the financial and spiritual wealth of the payer. But it, likewise, must be carried out with sincere religious intentions. For the purposes of this discussion, I refer to *zakat* as obligatory and institutionalized giving of specified amounts of money or assets to Islamic institutions for redistribution. I then refer to *sadaqa* as voluntary giving taking a wide variety of forms such as meals or services, or even a kind word, and it is often offered straight to the beneficiary in need (Singer 2008).

Of the 46 respondents to my survey who cited religion as a motivator for giving, 20 people described it as a religious "obligation", with four of those specifically referencing their almsgiving as complying with the Islamic pillar of *zakat*. Most others who appealed to religion described almsgiving as "recommended" by Islam and an expression of religious faith. Here the act appears to be considered *religious*, yet *voluntary*. This would correspond more to the practice of *sadaqa*. This voluntary religious giving can be compared to Hindu *dan*, according to Erica Bornstein (2012). The offering is not given in direct response to a religious commandment, but it is nevertheless a central religious tenet.

These results suggest that despite theological or legal distinctions between *zakat* and *sadaqa*, in the everyday lived experiences of Senegalese Muslims, the lines are blurred. Some give alms out of obligation (*zakat*) while others see their acts as pious yet voluntary (*sadaqa*). The Senegalese people see giving to the poor and needy in the streets as a straightforward and easily accessible way to comply with divine commandment. As a result, in the absence of a centralized Islamic authority and *zakat* collectors in the country, the Islamic obligation of *zakat*, coupled with the religious recommendation to give *sadaqa*, have become major factors fuelling the country's ample supply of

street alms. Individuals in Senegal take it upon themselves to make what they refer to as regular *zakat* payments to the institutions or recipients of their choice, or those recommended by their brotherhoods or *dahiras* (religious associations), in order to fulfill their obligations. Singer (2008:ch.2) notes that in various settings where Muslims live, but where Islam is not a state religion or centrally organized, the faithful take it upon themselves to make regular *zakat* payments on their own to recipients they see fit according to the Qur'an[122].

It must be noted that the popular association of giving alms with religious obligation among donors in Senegal is often propelled by local religious authorities, such as *seriñs* who instruct believers to give specific gifts to specific donors as acts of faith and penitence. This link between alms and religion was also drawn by the former president of Senegal, Abdoulaye Wade, a prominent Mouride Muslim. When he lifted the brief 2010 ban on begging in public spaces in the city of Dakar, President Wade cited how "almsgiving is a practice recommended by religion," and had therefore "expressed his disagreement with respect to its prohibition" (APS 2010). What he left unclear, of course, was why he necessarily linked the piety of *giving* alms with the legality of begging in the streets, including forced child begging, which he effectively permitted to resume at full strength.

Giving Alms, Seeking Blessings: Alms-Driven Begging in Senegal

> *What is important is that the Qur'an is something that Muslims - they believe in. If you are a person of the Qur'an, the people will help you. They might bring 5000 or 10,000 [fCFA]. For the Qur'anic blessings that are in you, they are helping you, to get those blessings through you… It is not like you go to people to say, 'I want you to help me by giving me 5000 so that I can make ends meet,' or anything like that. It is their own choice. The seriñ prays for Allah to increase their abilities.*
>
> - Mame Diop, Qur'anic master and President of a Qur'anic master association in Guediawaye[123]

Divine blessings (*baraka*) are very real and very powerful for Senegalese Muslims. They can facilitate a believer's passage into heaven – the more one has, the easier the passage becomes. Blessings are believed to erase sins, and so their accumulation is crucial within what can be thought

[122] Eligible recipients include the rather flexible categories of, "the poor and needy, those who work to collect [the offerings], those whose hearts are brought together, the ransoming of slaves, debtors, in God's way, and the traveler" (Qur'an 9:60, cited in Singer 2008:44). *Zakat* explicitly cannot be given to wealthy people, non-Muslims, slaves, relatives including husbands or wives (who already have rights to other forms of regular familial support), or descendents of the Prophet Mohammad (ibid).

[123] Personal interview, audio-recorded, November 4, Guediawaye, Senegal.

of as a personal system of spiritual checks and balances, of wrongs and rights. But in addition to securing one's future in the after-life, blessings in Senegal are believed to provide protection from misfortune and suffering in this life as well. Voluntary almsgiving to the needy or to religious educators is considered a selfless act which rewards individuals with these coveted commodities.

Survey responses pointing to blessings as among the motivations for almsgiving include the following, among others: "I experience a satisfaction and a contentment to do a gesture that permits me to be rewarded in the future"; "I give alms to protect myself"; "I give alms to help the needy and to solicit the protection and blessing of Allah"; and quite simply, "the blessings!" Two respondents said that they give alms to prevent themselves from getting struck by "curses" (*mauvais sorts*), one of whom specifically stated that she gave alms to "fulfill at least one of the pillars of Islam".

Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba's poetic text *Maasalik al-Jinan* dedicates 67 verses to the topic of "Almsgiving and Fraternal Goodness". The text powerfully sings the virtues of almsgiving as a mechanism of self-protection in the mundane world as well as on Judgment Day. I have included an excerpt:

> *When a human being gives alms, God the Clement preserves him/her from all evil*
> *He preserves him from a bad death, and even from distraction and injustice from others*
> *He preserves him from hopelessness, from the disgrace of his parents, of from early death and an evil end*
> *A single offering of alms can protect him from 70 gates to horrible death.*
> *It appeases the wrath of God, it possesses the virtue to erase the errors of man like that of water to extinguish fire*
> *He who practices it, sits in Its shade (that of the alms), on the Day of Judgment while awaiting the judgment of the creatures. That his advantage is great!*
> *Sicknesses are healed by the act of alms and God forgives sins due to it*
> *One purifies fortune, pushes away misfortune as well as all sicknesses; one notes also*
> *That it evokes joy and pleasure in the heart of believers*
> *It procures abundance, assures the benediction of belongings and guarantees against all peril*
> *It renders easy the settlement of accounts on the day of anguish*
> *It increases the value of good actions and in consequence, rewards, on the day of final Judgment*
> *It facilitates the crossing of the bridge "Sirat" and raises man to the highest degree of happiness*
> *It includes the approval of God and the anguish of Satan the estranged evil one*
> *It is worth to the courageous patient ones who practice it, the prayers of the poor and those of the needy*
> *It leads to the growth in number of rewards in the other world for those who give it exclusively for God.*
>
> - Cheikh Amadou Bamba, Maasalik al-Jinan, verses 478-493, translated from Arabic into French by Serigne Same M'Baye (1984) (my translation from French into English)

Senegalese Muslims regularly consult *seriñs* and other diviners and healers for spiritual guidance, to seek blessings, and to make requests for assistance in their lives. These practitioners receive contributions in cash or in kind from those who seek their services, functioning as one of the ways in which the former make ends meet, with popular and well-endowed *seriñs* able to secure comfortable incomes with their erudite knowledge and mysterious powers. A *seriñ*'s popularly-perceived ability to successfully bestow followers with blessings or facilitate the attainment of certain mundane requests can depend on a number of factors, such as his/her lineage, educational history, social power, noted religious works, number of *taalibe* followers, and proximity with especially blessed religious connections. As migrant Qur'anic masters become more well-established in their neighborhoods as pious spiritual leaders and powerful guides, they are more frequently sought out for their religious and mystical services.

Today, as a sort of penitence or requisite act to gain requested benefits, *seriñs* will often command their followers to give particular amounts of money or foodstuffs to specified or unspecified recipients. Requests are wide-ranging. Perhaps a student has to take a major exam; a man seeks a favorable answer in his marriage proposal; a woman wishes to protect her child from sickness; or a spouse wishes to prevent a counterpart from straying. In my survey, I asked respondents whether or not their *seriñs* instructed them to give alms. Fifty of the 91 Muslim respondents indicated that their *seriñs* indeed prescribed almsgiving, some specifying that it was to protect the donors, such as "from calamity", and others for "spiritual" or social assistance purposes. Many of the specified gifts were uncooked foodstuffs, cloths, cola nuts, and particularly items white in color, such as sugar cubes, rice, milk, soap, candles, "white clothes", or "a white chicken", due to the color's symbolic significance of purity.

Anthropologist Gretchen Pfeil (2012) recently wrote about this phenomenon of widespread spiritual guide-indicated giving in Dakar, which her informants viewed as increasing in magnitude. In her article, "Sarax and the City: Almsgiving and Anonymous Objects in Dakar, Senegal," Pfeil documents how Dakar-dwellers speak about the intensity of almsgiving in Dakar as indicative of the city's increasing levels of corruption at the level of public administration. Pfeil notes that the increase in size and frequency of anonymous gifts to beggars reveals the increasing need for penitence on the level of corrupt officials. The veil of secrecy which surrounds these transactions at every step, from traveling to consult a *seriñ* or diviner, storing, purchasing and preparing the offerings, and distributing them through intermediaries, allows donors to cast off the objects without trace. But their re-appearance in the growing numbers of beggars lining the streets to

receive offerings, coupled with the perceived perpetual disappearance of public services and commercial goods, leave traces that allow bystanders to speculate on the nature of the psychological and mystical peril that must be plaguing these high level donors.[124]

Almsgiving in the sense raised by Pfeil is viewed by the population to function as part of a feedback loop, where funds are illegally appropriated leaving greater numbers of people destitute. But then guilt or greed brings money back to those most destitute in the form of offerings believed to have mystical and religious powers. My own research allows me to discern another feedback loop in almsgiving, this one to *taalibes*. This occurs because it is the *seriñs*, the *taalibes*' instructors, who counsel their clients to give alms in order to attain their objectives. *Taalibes* bring donated items back to their *daaras* (i.e. to their *seriñs*) where they are consumed or sold in the market for cash. Seeing this dual role as both prescriber and recipient of alms, one can begin to understand the prominent part that *seriñs* play in the perpetuation of *taalibe* begging in Senegal. I see the situation of alms-driven begging in Senegal as follows: *Seriñs* are believed to have the power to bestow divine blessings, and blessings are precious to countless believers. These believers trust in the recommendations of their *seriñs* to obtain blessings, which often include specific and generalized indications to give alms. Believers give alms, frequently. Because of this, *taalibes* can be expected to bring in high begging quotas, because there is a constant flow of offerings originating from donors needing recipients, not simply recipients soliciting donors.

Mbagnick Ndiaye of ENDA shared with me his observations of supply-driven begging in Senegal:

> *We never say it, but there are a lot of people… when they leave home, every day, they have twenty-some cubes of sugar! It's automatic! Others have candles, and others coins. And they give it out. People, they come and take it! It is as simple as that. Before it was adults, now it is the taalibes* (Mbagnick Ndiaye, Dakar, Senegal[125]).

Indeed, one morning, as I negotiated a taxi fare with a driver through his passenger-side window, I noticed a large, clear plastic bag full of sugar cubes sitting on the passenger seat. At that point, it did not register to me that this was a prepared offering of alms. However, en route to my destination,

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[124] One example included by Pfeil of the observable traces of corruption in alms was in gifts of cash hidden in packets handed out through the tinted windows of a shiny SUV. The high-denomination bank notes were observed by the recipient as crisp and sequential, nothing like the crumpled bills of small denominations used in daily affairs. Furthermore, the sheer amount of money speculated to be given out that day assured onlookers that the money was not rightfully obtained. This transaction occurred while Dakar's city garbage collectors were on strike, and the mounting piles of trash, with their accompanying stench, suggested that key services were not being paid. These observable traces – the expensive car, the large cash gift, the crisp bank notes, and the garbage in the streets – all pointed to obvious corruption on the part of high-level government or financial institution officials for the interlocutors quoted by Pfeil.
[125] Personal interview, October 6, 2010,

he stopped the cab, called out the window, "*Taalibe! Kaay!*" ("*Taalibe*! Come here!). The young boy approached the car, with his red tomato paste begging can in hand, and the driver handed over the bag of sugar. The boy responded by praying to Allah to bless this man for his offering.

Giving to Seek Protection: Social and Mystical Concerns

If a person is rich and does not give alms, he will end up begging

- Anonymous survey respondent

Children passing much or all of their time in city streets have been observed to strike fear into city-dwellers globally (Nieuwenhuys 2001; Scheper-Hughes & Hoffman 1998; Hecht 1998; Stephens 1995). Therefore, while street children are often pitied, they are also seen as a threat to social stability. Street children's street-savvy ways combined with their reported widespread drug abuse, emotional immaturity, and physical and social suffering are viewed by some as a perfect recipe for chaos and lawlessness. Governing authorities have frequently reacted by attempting to rid cities of their street youths out of fear of their delinquency and to simply clean the premises of their associated poverty and filth (ibid). Individual reactions to potentially dangerous children in the street may alternatively be to contribute charity – either by acquiescing to requests for alms, perhaps out of discomfort with the roving bands, or to contribute to charities aiding street children – effectively striving to "get them out of the streets".

I remember a 2003 speech made by prominent Senegalese psychologist and researcher Serigne Mor Mbaye[126] about the social dangers that Senegal would face if it did not address its *taalibe* problem. He suggested that *taalibe* begging posed risks for the future stability of the otherwise peaceful country. He drew heavily on social science research linking large populations of street-trained children with low potential for future social integration and productivity. And while this analysis may prove true with respect to limited future economic possibilities of former *taalibes*, my ethnographic experience has continued to confirm that the general population of Senegal has refused to demonize the *taalibes*, or to envision them turning violent or dangerous. This is indeed one reason why the masses of children roaming Senegal's city streets have been allowed to continue about their begging without major public uproar. People feel it is a problem – a big social and economic problem – but they do not feel personally threatened.

[126] He has written on the childhood in Senegal and the situation of the *taalibes* since the 1990s (see Mbaye & Fall 1996).

Fear does, however, play a central role in maintaining Senegal's inflated alms circuit. These anxieties do not refer to fears for personal safety or social stability with respect to the children themselves– they are spiritually-inspired. The Senegalese people maintain strong values of social solidarity, which correspond to beliefs that there are mystical, in addition to social, repercussions for selfishness. For example, meal-sharing is one of the basic tenets of social life. People share food around a common bowl, the mistress of the house will usually set some food aside for unexpected guests, and the leftovers are often kept and offered to a neighborhood *taalibe*. Those who do not respect the intricate meal-sharing etiquette, such as by eating alone or by not inviting visitors to join a meal, will be socially shunned for being selfish (*siis*). And while that may be consequence enough, the hungry onlooker is said to "eat the food with her eyes", *ñamu bett*, cursing the stingy eater(s) meal and causing, at the very least, indigestion.

The same logic of sharing applies to money in Senegal. If one has money, yet refuses to share it with someone in need, there is widespread belief that the person will end up losing it, as poignantly articulated by one survey respondent: "If a person is rich and does not give alms, he will end up begging." Another respondent reaffirmed the ethic of social solidarity and reciprocal dependency, in that, "it is certain that he [the donor] is not sheltered from need". This would explain why many survey respondents specifically cited their "means" as the sole reason, or a prime reason for giving. The mere fact of *having* creates a need to give to those who have not.

Finally, while alms are believed to protect individuals from harm or misfortune, through God or mystically, offering hospitality to wayfaring strangers is believed to protect one's own children. In the Wolof tradition of *teranga*, of reciprocal hospitality, a mother is said to take in and aid a 'child'[127] who is far from his mother, in hopes that someone will do the same for her own child someday. *Teranga* can be credited with inciting many families to take care of *taalibes* who seek aid at their doorsteps. Already, according to Wolof proverb, the child is highly valued – he/she is "king", *xale buur la*. And by virtue of his occupation, the urban *taalibe* beggar is almost always far away from home. Hence this culturally-mandated generosity toward the wayfaring child adds one more level to the high rates of giving to *taalibes* demonstrated by the Senegalese public.

Widespread beliefs in the mystical and religious power of almsgiving to protect people from any number of misfortunes, including sickness, curses, and unhappiness reinforce practices of mutual social support. Fifty-one of 90 respondents said that giving alms can potentially cure or heal

[127] The frequent use of the term "child" when speaking of teranga is somewhat metaphorical. It refers not only to young people, but any family members who may need to seek assistance. In essence they are "children" of a particular family.

a sickness, while the other 39 seemed to think that this was ridiculous, often claiming that it is only the medical profession or God who have the power to intervene in these cases. With respect to preventing misfortune, 64 of 91 respondents said that giving alms can indeed protect one from misfortune or unhappiness, while 27 people claimed that such was either unrelated or solely under God's purview.

In other words, if for some, almsgiving cannot directly cure an illness or prevent misfortune, then pleasing God through almsgiving may in turn have an impact on the outcomes of such cases. The poem by Cheikh Amadou Bamba quoted above indeed makes direct reference to the relationship between following God's will to give alms and his aptitude to protect donors from sickness and misfortune. Understanding this, I do not wish to attempt to trace any clear lines between "religious" or "Muslim" beliefs and practices in Senegal, and those deemed "mystical" or "cultural". These elements are often considered within the same realm by the population in question. This becomes clear in the following survey response: "Almsgiving can take away misfortune because God said in the Qur'an that when one helps someone, he will spare you from misfortune and pain." In either case, most believe that generous almsgiving is directly or indirectly tied to one's own happiness, health, and success.

Specific survey responses referring to the mystical and protective powers of almsgiving included, "I give alms to protect myself", "to avoid a misfortune", "My reasons differ: It could be mystical or emotional!", "to prevent curses", "to stave off curses", and "sometimes we have nightmares in which we see ourselves giving alms to someone", which will then incite this person to seek out that recipient. The Wolof phrase, *Yalla na Yalla yobb sama ay*, is frequently heard muttered as people hand over a charitable offering. It can be translated as, "Allah, take away my troubles". In this sense, a person's bad luck is viewed as leaving her alongside the hard earned money or food that she sacrifices.

Compassion-Based Giving?

Although spiritual counsel, fear of cursing regards, and hopes of reciprocity, intensify charitable giving to *taalibes* in Senegal, compassion is still a central factor in the generous outpouring of gifts. With reference to the ethnographic example I presented above about the taxi driver who kept a bag of sugar cubes on his passenger seat to give to a beggar, I might jump to the conclusion that the pre-meditated nature of the gift totally negates the possibility that it be motivated by compassion or pity. Generally, pity-inspired giving would, by definition, have to arise upon actually

seeing or being approached by a potential recipient, and feeling pity. But in this case, the donor did not appear to even know to whom he would give the gift when he prepared it. Perhaps he was meaning for it to go to *a taalibe* in general, not necessarily *this taalibe*. Or maybe even just a beggar in the street.

But this makes me recall the actions of my mother on her first day visiting me in Senegal. She was shocked and moved upon seeing so many children soliciting money in the streets, in rags, barefoot and looking so hungry. Although she did not give out charity to these children on that first day, that evening in her hotel room she asked me to go and exchange some bills for coins, so that the next day she could have money ready to offer to the many needy children she would likely encounter. The *taalibe* children are so ubiquitous in Senegal's city streets, and their presence so reliable, that lingering feelings of compassion and pity for their predicament could logically inspire preparation for a charitable contribution on a future encounter with a needy recipient, which will surely not be a long time to wait.

This preparation may furthermore function to quell the intensity of feelings of compassion and pity in donors as they encounter suffering. Rather than facing a moral decision of whether or not to help each time drastic need is encountered at the street corner, the onlooker can fall back on the pre-arranged decision to give alms. In fact, many people have specific recipients to whom they regularly give alms. This may have an effect of normalizing the presence of beggars in the streets, psychologically allowing passers-by to feel that they are doing their part to help, without becoming overwhelmed by need, or rejecting it in a form of compassion fatigue. My predetermined decision to give an equal share of my snacks to *taalibe* recipients functioned in this way. Simply making the advanced decision – having a plan for my next inevitable encounter with *taalibe* beggars soliciting charity – took pressure off of me from having to emotionally or rationally address the situation when it actually arose.

While a bit of compassion fatigue no doubt strikes urban inhabitants as they continue to stride by droves of begging children daily, the disheveled, barefoot and bone-thin appearance of the boys still draws sympathy. My survey respondents confirmed this – with only 17 out of 98 people not specifically stating the neediness of recipients as a reason for giving alms. Respondents gave, "out of pity", "compassion" and "humanism", "to help those in need", "because it is an act of beneficence", "to relieve their pain", and "because the difficult circumstances of a person affect me". *Taalibes* are not only publically known to depend on alms for study and subsistence, they look the part of the needy beggar. It is not clear if well-fed and well-dressed *taalibes* would elicit as many,

or any, alms in the streets from passers-by, as donors tend to associate the offering of alms with the assumed needs of the recipients. It is in this way that critics claim that Qur'anic masters exploit pity to increase begging revenues (HRW 2010). While some instructors I came into contact with genuinely strove to keep their begging pupils shod and clean, this is not the rule. It is common to hear of an instructor who will confiscate the clothing and shoes that the *taalibes* receive as gifts, keeping them in rags. The day after I gave my own Reef sandals to a barefoot *taalibe* with comparably-sized feet, he returned barefoot again, claiming that his instructor took them for his own son[128].

While these questions of compassion for suffering and the impacts it has on onlookers will be addressed in more detail in chapter seven, I have included this discussion here to conclude that, despite clear evidence indicating that almsgiving often serves the interests and desires of the donors, this does not preclude spontaneous or compassionate giving. In addition to securing divine blessings and mystical protections, giving in Senegal is frequently articulated by donors to be simultaneously motivated by feelings of compassion or pity for recipients, or with the hope that the offering can be of real assistance to those in need.

Donor-Recipient Interactions and the Ubiquity of Begging in Senegal

The ways in which almsgiving is habitual and ritualized in Senegal are not only observable in the giving of gifts, but also, and perhaps more so, in the ways that people do not give – with courtesy. A couple of the first Wolof phrases I was taught in Senegal, for survival, were *baal ma* (pardon me/forgive me), and *ba beneen yoon* (until next time). I was instructed to use these phrases when approached by begging *taalibes*, to excuse my lack of giving. And miraculously, it worked! Suddenly, the children who looked at me with sad, needy eyes – who shamelessly followed me for blocks requesting coins – immediately desisted upon hearing one of these simple, magical phrases. I find that these rapports of mutual respect and courtesy between donors and recipients contribute to the peaceful and widespread continuance of begging throughout the streets of urban Senegal.

I have already established above that the rate of almsgiving in Senegal is quite high. My survey, and numerous other reports and investigations (e.g. UNICEF 2010; HRW 2010), reveal that most people give alms to street beggars regularly, usually at least once a week, and perhaps once a day. But at that, this is still once per day, not tens of times per day, or hundreds – and that is how

[128] I cannot verify this. It is entirely possible that he kept them at the daara, gave them to someone else, traded them or sold them at the market.

many beggars one is likely to cross on an average day in the city. It is understood that individuals should not have to give more alms in a day or in a week simply because a beggar asks them to – they have already fulfilled their particular duty as fellow Muslims and citizens. In such cases, the passers-by will politely excuse themselves, and report that they have already given (*sarax ba yeg na*). The beggar will generally accept the response and leave the passer-by in peace.

Interactions between beggars and Senegalese passers-by generally reveal relations of mutual respect. This is likely a result of both religious commandment, as well as the general recognition that poverty is widespread and real. Nobody is too far from the place of the beggar. As a result, beggars are not alienated or vilified, and they often exchange eye contact, words, and prayers with passers-by and donors. This is particularly true in the case of begging *taalibes*, viewed as young pupils, not as career beggars. As with any children in African society, their behavior is often redressed by community members, just as parents or other elders might comment on or correct the behavior of youths for whom they are responsible. On a few occasions I witnessed *taalibes* who, perhaps to press donors or because they were daydreaming, did not react to a potential donor's presented excuses for not giving. The boys continued to hold out hands toward the targeted donors chanting, *sarax ngir Yalla, sarax ngir Yalla* (alms for the sake of God). Without hesitation the latter lashed out verbally against the *taalibes*, informing them that correct behavior would warrant them moving along. I have similarly seen other *taalibes* publically redressed for mischievous behavior or bad manners.

It is not common in Senegal to outright scorn a beggar – in fact I have never personally witnessed it. I draw, however, from a well-known classic Senegalese novel and film to inform my thinking on the subject. In the oeuvre *Xala*, by Ousmane Sembene (1975), the protagonist, El Hadj insults and eventually arranges for the arrest of a beggar who has stationed himself outside of his office at the chamber of commerce. Soon after, El Hadj becomes impotent (*japp xala*), apparently the result of a curse launched at him by the beggar. Through a series of ensuing misfortunes, El Hadj falls from grandeur to ridicule, as he uses all of his riches to treat his condition. In the end it was only the beggar who could lift the curse – reminding all to offer proper respect to beggars, as riches are fleeting. I must note, however, that while I have never seen a person scorn a beggar simply for begging in Senegal, I have been scorned myself by beggars for not offering alms, and I

have seen less than courteous reactions towards others as well[129]. In other words, not all interactions between beggars and passers-by are punctuated by good wishes and prayers.

The Ethics of Career Begging

Career begging, perhaps tied to a deception of poverty, in Senegal's cities has been noted and criticized since the country's independence. The 1968 Ousmane Sembene oeuvre, *Mandabi*, or *Le Mandat* (*The Money-Order*), critically marks the rise of career begging to feed on the traditional Wolof society's ethic of giving to those in need. The protagonist in the story, Ibrahima Dieng embodies traditional Wolof culture, and he meets with deception and corruption at every turn as he navigates series of modern government offices in attempt to withdraw an international money transfer. The office workers, the strangers who step in to assist him in offices, and even the beggars in the streets are complicit in profiting from his ignorance.

Emblematic of these post-colonial attempts at taking advantage of traditional generosity and mutual assistance is a woman in the film who physically intercepts Ibrahima as he walks through central Dakar to the post office. She pleads with him, "for God's sake" to spare some change to help her travel home. "I am a stranger in the city, and my family is waiting for me." Ibrahima hands over the requested amount, and the young woman replies, *Jere jëf* (thanks), "I wish that God helps you and lifts you."

When the woman walks away, Ibrahima follows her with compassionate eyes and says to himself: "*Ndeysaan"*. ("Oh, what a shame.") "God is great that she found me with change on me. I didn't even ask her her name, because it would seem that I should know her." Later, as he headed home, frustrated with his continued clashes with office clerks over document requirements, the same woman, now with a baby strapped to her back, deliberately walks into Ibrahima's path. "I am a stranger in the city," she starts. "Since I got up and came here I have not had a thing to eat or drink." When Ibrahima realizes it is the same woman, he grabs and shakes her crying, "You! I just

[129] This has happened to me with *taalibe* children, but it has most frequently happened with adult Baay Fall *taalibes*, or groups of young adult males claiming affiliation with the Sufi sect founded under the inspiration of Cheikh Ibra Fall, a close advisor to Cheikh Amadou Bamba. Baay Fall *taalibes* have their rightful place within Senegalese society and religious traditions, as devout disciplines of Cheikh Amadou Bamba, but whom are increasingly popularly viewed as not needing to follow the standard rules and recommendations of Islam. Loose interpretations of creed mixed with distinctive dress and behaviors have given way to the melding of the image of the Baay Fall *taalibe* with that of non-conformist youth in modern urban settings. In any case, the beggars that I have come across in Dakar who claimed to be Baay Fall *taalibes*, have often has quite aggressive tactics. They will actively engage passers-by, particularly young ones, in speeches about Cheikh Amadou Bamba, and the importance of giving, sharing, and so on. My research assistant, a young male, accompanying a foreigner, for example, was particularly heavily targeted by this begging sub-population. Somehow he was supposed to be a prime supporter of the Baay Fall's. On one occasion, when he repeatedly declined to give, he was cursed – which led to a rather heated exchange of ill will before our taxi drove away.

gave you four francs!" She responds by telling him to go about his way, and to stop falsely accusing her of things, as she is a "virtuous woman". She walked off and Ibrahima was left exasperated:

"If begging is becoming a profession (*métier*)," he asks in resignation, "where is this country going?"

Amidst much debate surrounding the brief 2010 begging ban, *Le Soleil*, Senegal's state newspaper, published some journalistic critiques of career begging and begging opportunism. The timing of these accounts suggests that they were an attempt to gain popular support for the government's measure banning begging. One article describes a scene almost identical to the one portrayed in Sembene's *Mandabi*:

> *One could take them without doubt to be businessmen or salespeople who are on their way to meetings, as well-dressed as they are, their bodies letting off a sweet perfume that tickles one's nostrils. Nothing but surprise when, addressing you, they present their grievances to you in a barely audible voice… 'Excuse me, could you to help me, I do not have a ticket and I have to get home to Pikine.' If they have Baraka [spiritual power/strength], some passers-by will not hesitate to give them a couple of coins, while others continue on their paths… These beggars from another dimension are very discreet in their activities… They roam the streets of the capital, watching their prey, and often succeed in their plots with arguments that touch a sensitive cord… According to some witnesses …They move in smalls groups of three or four people, covering the entire neighborhood panhandling. The funniest, recounts a witness, is that within a five minute period they [the panhandlers] can come across the same person and give him/her the same speech… Generally, they are not so lucky, because people have difficulty admitting that people] will hold out their hands while they are doing well* (Ndoye 2010a).

The above accounts, journalistic and fictional, describe deception and dishonesty in begging. But the very real question of so-called career begging in Senegal remains - and the ethics surrounding it are unclear. The following newspaper article describes one man, Ma Gningue, who suffers from deformity due to leprosy, and for a lack of government or family support, he sees begging as his sole possible occupation. The article reads:

> *Since the decision to ban begging in the streets of Dakar, the habitual beggars have their eyes alert. They suspect all people with strange behavior…as an undercover police officer who has come to arrest them. 'The situation has become untenable,' fulminates Ma Gningue, a poor old man well into his sixties. He says that he can no longer tolerate this humiliation that he is living in his own country. 'I am going to return and die in the village,' he snaps. Showing his amputated arm and fingers from the leprosy that has eaten away at him, he says that he is not apt for any activity except begging. With income from his sole lucrative activity, he has been able, 'to finish [his] house in the village and maintain a small orchard where [he has] planted some mango trees'* (Ndoye 2010b).

Ma Gninge sees no shame in accumulating begging revenues to invest in building a home and an orchard. If he has no other feasible means to gain employment, does this mean that he should resign himself to abject poverty, loneliness or homelessness? For him, and so many others, begging is seen as an income, with which he can rightly do what he wishes, allowing him the same dignity as any other who performs labor for money, to fully participate in society. Or should begging be reserved as a last resort, for those on the brink of death seeking their next meal? Aminata Sow Fall's *The Beggar's Strike*, discussed above, addresses this issue – of begging as a valid profession. The beggars in the novel were tired of being pushed around and threatened by the police, and they went on strike to reclaim that they have the right to perform their occupations in all fairness and with dignity and respect.

The following newspaper account describes how career beggar Fatou Diokhe felt frustration and injustice when the government suddenly cracked down on her profession: "Out of respect for the people, they should have at least forewarned us so that we could prepare to depart in good conditions… They could have at least waited until the school year started to make such a decision that discriminates against us, because where are we going to find money for our sons and daughters who have to go to school?" The article reveals that Fatou Diokhe has 11 children, seven of which she left in her village in the peanut basin of rural Senegal, and four who are living with her in Dakar. She is resentful of the government's will that she and her begging colleagues simply pick up and return to their villages, for she said that in such a case, "there would need to be accompanying measures" such as financing for a small commerce business, "so that we can return home with dignity."

Beyond reclaiming rights to beg, or to social assistance, from the state government, the beggars of Senegal see collecting alms as their Muslim right. As shown in my survey data presented above, many people see their almsgiving as fulfilling the Muslim obligation of *zakat*. And as such, rightful recipients of *zakat*, in this case, the beggars, see themselves as religiously permitted to reclaim their assistance as their own (Singer 2008). And while they are commanded to be humble and grateful before God for the assistance, receiving *zakat* should be done without shame. And its purpose is not merely to stave off death, but to redistribute wealth. This goes far in understanding the generally cordial interactions between donors and recipients in Senegal – as not only should *zakat* and *sadaqa* be done discreetly, to protect the honor of the recipients, but they should be done sincerely (Singer 2008:26). Singer (2008:32) presents a quote borrowed from anthropologist Donna Lee Bowen (1993) which illustrates how Muslim *zakat* is seen by the Moroccan interlocutor as a

passionless and shameless exchange based on shared obligation and right between donor and recipient. In the quote, Illya speaks of his neighbor, Lalla Fatiha, to whom he makes regular *zakat* payments:

> *"But what about Lalla Fatiha?" I [Bowen] asked. "Doesn't she resent all the charity? Always taking from others?" Illya was astonished at the question. "This isn't charity," he retorted. "This is zakat. Our honor is to proffer zakat, her honor is to use the zakat. All is provided by God, not by us… If we have enough, then we share with our neighbor. If we lack, our neighbor is to share with us. Lalla Fatiha helps us be better Muslims, and in turn is a good Muslim herself."*

The people of Senegal today are well aware of the reality of urban migration for career begging due to limited economic opportunities in the impoverished region. And they are aware of the existence of deception and opportunism in begging - they do not support it. But people still give alms. This is not unlike charitable giving practices in North America, where news has recently broken about multimillion dollar scandals within large-scale non-profit organizations. Groups were found to be using most or all of their charitable revenues for marketing and administration, with virtually none going to the designated recipients (CNN 2012). But the people of North America still give to charities. Although news of corruption in the charity sector can create a situation in which one's moral expectations of behavior are categorically overturned, people tend to see such cases as isolated examples, and merely pursue a course of diligence when choosing worthy charity recipients.

Similarly, drawing on my survey, people do not tend to believe that those with viable alternatives would voluntarily resort to begging. That is to say, they are, for the most part, not *choosing* begging as a career. This is particularly true in the case of the *taalibes*. Popular understanding dictates that they have to beg to survive, or they will starve and be beaten. This results in the apparent paradox of condemning the phenomenon of forced child begging, like career begging, while still regularly offering alms to *taalibes* and career beggars in the streets, effectively fuelling their activities.

The Paradox of Giving Alms to *Taalibe* Beggars despite Awareness of their Exploitation

The continued abundant almsgiving to *taalibes* in Senegal indeed presents a paradox. My survey reveals that respondents overwhelmingly (90 of 97) view urban *taalibe* begging as a serious social problem to be stopped to ensure the healthy development of the children and protect them from abuse and exploitation. Yet in equally overwhelming numbers (86 of 89), respondents reported giving alms to *taalibe* children in the streets – from everyday to at least once per month. The UNICEF (2010) poll cited in the introduction presents similar data: 97% of the 1073 people

surveyed in Dakar reported giving alms to children begging in the streets, with 78.5% giving at least once a week. This is while 80% of the respondents condemned the practice of child begging, 83% saw it as a growing problem, and 66.6% reported not considering begging as integral to religious learning. Do people not realize that it is this widespread availability of alms that is allowing *taalibe* begging to continue?

Above I have examined various reasons why Senegalese people are inclined to give alms at high rates – including according to religious prescription, to protect oneself or one's family from sickness or misfortune, to assert one's power and benevolence, and to help others in need. With respect to the *taalibes*, their status as Islamic pupils and children make them especially prime recipients for alms. But why should this profuse giving continue even when the act of begging has been shown, and acknowledged, to be harmful for these children? Taking into consideration the economic and social factors leading to forced *taalibe* begging, shouldn't one feel indignation upon seeing *taalibes* begging? If it were socially unacceptable to give money to *taalibe* children in the streets, effectively cutting off the supply of alms – wouldn't this by default bring forced begging to a brisk halt?

The answer is most likely yes. In fact, an ambitious awareness campaign carried out by a state/non-state partnership in Senegal working to "get the children out of the streets" (*Partenariat Pour le Retrait et Reinsertion des Enfants de la Rue*, Partnership for the Withdrawal and Reinsertion of Street Children) took this route in attempt to curb begging in the country. The campaign, costing over 30,000 USD[130], bombarded Dakar-dwellers with billboards and TV and radio ads that appealed to the compassion and sensibility of the people with the catch phrase, "The place of children is not in the street" (*La place des enfants n'est pas dans la rue.*)[131] TV spots broadcast throughout the country showed working and begging children in the streets suddenly stop their productive activities and walk together toward schools and *daaras*. The feeble voice of a young boy pleas, "Dear parents. Make us leave the streets. Leave us in our families, bring us to the *daara*, or to the school, but not to the street, our place is not in the street." Each of these spots is followed up with an affirmation of

[130] Total budgeted costs were: 17,686,000 francs CFA (Sy 2010).

[131] I observed the wide dissemination of the message throughout various media through ethnographic observation, and, through reference to the PARRER "Activity Report" on the "Informational Campaign on the Problematic of Begging Children and the Dispositions of the Law" (*Campagne d'Information sur la Problematique des Enfants Mendiants et Disponsitions de la Loi*) (Sy 2010). This document reported that information was disseminated by written press release and newspaper inserts, as well as for 17 days through 100 large billboards strategically placed throughout urban Dakar and major suburbs, an audio and visual campaign on four national radio and television stations consisting of a total of 120 passages of 45 second clips.

the slogan by a prominent Senegalese figure, including rappers and heads of important religious families.

This catch-phrase made it verbatim into many of my survey responses. When I asked the question of whether or not child begging was a problem in Senegal, and left room for elaboration, numerous people directly quoted PARRER's campaign phrase to make the point that children should be in schools, not in the streets. In fact, one of the TV ads included Abdoul Aziz Sy, a prominent figure in the Tidiane Muslim brotherhood, who was cited by name by one of my survey respondents. In other words, the message got out. The campaign made a point, and many people openly agreed with it. But there is no evidence to suggest that it advanced its goal of reducing child begging or reducing popular almsgiving to children in streets. The campaign made a laudable effort to sway the population of Senegal to see the presence of children in the streets with indignation instead of compassion – to inspire political change rather than spare change.

Yet, such a popularly-instigated halt on *taalibe* begging is not likely going to happen – not right now anyway. This is because the phenomenon of almsgiving is maintained at the level of the individual, while the questions of the causes and potential solutions of *taalibe* begging are seen to be entirely social and political. People may acknowledge that abundant almsgiving perpetuates cycles of forced child begging and that the forced begging can have significant negative developmental effects on the children. However, in the end, I point out that individuals first consider their own social and spiritual well-being, as well as the immediate needs of the beggars, before refusing alms out of social consciousness. I develop this argument below.

Feeling a Sense of Relief from Giving Alms

Although the respondents to my survey recognized the real, daily struggles that recipient beggars face, they revealed to me that a primary concern they had in giving alms was with respect to satisfying their own daily struggles to do what is expected of them, by God and by the society. Twenty out of 98 respondents to my survey reported feeling a sense of "relief" after giving alms. That is nearly 20% of respondents who used that exact word to respond to an open-ended question about their feelings. If I incorporate responses indicating other related positive feelings like "satisfied"(N=13), "happy" or "joyous"(N=9), "good" (N=11), "I feel at ease" or "calm" (N=7), and "I feel like I renew my life!", then the proportion jumps to over half. In other words, giving alms explicitly relieves, satisfies and calms a large proportion of givers. But what does it relieve them from?

One survey respondent explained this sense of relief as follows: "[I feel] doubly relieved because: To help is good. Accomplish a recommendation from God." Another person responded similarly, "I feel relieved, and I feel useful at the same time. I tell myself that the needy can count on me." One other person described feeling, "Many things, relief and the fact of making someone happy and help him/her out of difficulty, not to mention divine compensation." These responses suggest that there are at least two aspects to the sense of relief which results in a calming effect on donors: a relief from pressures to comply with divine commandment, and a relief from social and emotional pressures to help those in need. Comments suggesting religious or spiritual relief include, "I experience a satisfaction and contentment to do a gesture that will permit me to be compensated in the future," and "I feel confidence for my future in this world and in the after-life". More socially-grounded comments include, "After giving alms I feel a relief and a satisfaction because I know that I fixed a problem for him", "I feel relieved to have helped a human being," and "Calm, in helping others one feels good."

In English, the word *relief* is often used synonymously with charity and humanitarian aid, in reference to the relief of the suffering of those being helped. But the words *soulage* and *soulagé* (relief and relieved) were used by my survey respondents solely with reference to their own feelings. When speaking of the recipients, respondents almost exclusively referred to "helping" them, in a productive way, but not relieving them of anything. In fact, this makes sense. The act of sharing with others causes internal, personal relief from divine and social pressures on the donors - pressures which can only be relieved by the person's own acts. It would not make sense to be able to "relieve" recipients, as they have their own social and divine concerns, which are their own affairs. One can "help" people rise out of poverty by giving money, but one cannot "relieve" them from pressures to do right by God or others.

Supporting this interpretation, I found 12 survey responses that spoke of feelings of "pride" and "honor", and having completed a "noble" act through offering alms. These feelings were often tied with having dutifully performed an act recommended by God and/or social ideals. For example, one respondent phrased her feelings as follows: "[I feel] pride, because as a Muslim I have accomplished at least one of the pillars of Islam." Another said, "I feel very proud of having accomplished a humane act." The act of almsgiving can, therefore, provide relief to donors from pressures to comply with religious and social prescription, in turn cultivating a sense of pride or righteousness within the donors who can see themselves as devout and conscientious members of these larger communities.

Although most survey respondents spoke of the numerous personal benefits to be gained through almsgiving, not all agreed that almsgiving could or should create positive feelings for donors. Six survey respondents claimed that they felt nothing from almsgiving, one of which included the following explanation:

> *Sincerely, for the most part, I do not feel anything. I tell myself that it is normal to share the minimum that we have with the destitute, the beggars.*

This comment raises a key issue: giving by habit. One person explained that "nothing special" incites her to give alms, she does it "naturally". Another person described his giving as "accidental", and that he feels "nothing" when he does it. Some give out of religiously-based habit. One man gives "to seek what is good" and "because it is recommended by the prophet of Islam." But he claims that he simply "gives" and then "forgets", ergo he feels nothing. And one other person who claimed to feel "nothing at all" when or after he gives alms stated matter-of-factly that, "A good Muslim must give alms often."

With respect to giving alms in search of relief for one's own spiritual anxieties, one pensive survey comment suggests that such relief is not founded:

> *I think that the act of offering alms should not create within the donor a sentiment of relief with respect to the recipient, from whom one feels to be let off the hook, because it is certain that he/she is not sheltered from need.*

In other words, this respondent notes that an important part of giving alms is the recognition of the sustained need for mutual assistance underlying religious and social prescriptions on giving, not merely escaping misfortune oneself. Perhaps for him, then, there is no relief as long as there is suffering – which will likely necessitate thought and action beyond the level of the individual.

Charity versus Social Justice: The Logic of Giving Alms to Help Others

The most significant criticism that has been launched against the act of giving charity to those in need, historically and today, is that it does not necessarily lead to improved social justice for the recipients[132] (Calhoun 2010; Barnett and Weiss 2008; Terry 2002; Rieff 2002; Boltanski 1999;

[132] On the level of the individual, charity can also result in resentment when such generosity is perceived to result from unjust financial inequality. In such cases, the word *charity* has taken on a pejorative meaning in North America, where individualism and independence are highly valued. Just consider the phrase, "I don't need your charity!" People who feel resentment in the face of would-be donors would likely prefer a situation in which they could have the ability take care of themselves. The act of receiving good-will charity is almost always accompanied with an expectation of gratitude from the recipient – which is part of the "satisfaction" and "joy" of giving. Social theorist Adam Smith (2004[1759]:98) noted: "We talk of the debt of gratitude, not of charity, or generosity…" But when one sees one's situation as a result of injustice, gratitude to certain donors is one emotion that may be too costly to part with.

Wuthnow 1991). Critiques of humanitarianism note the short-term, relief-based nature of interventions; they often leave populations struggling with severe poverty and injustice to fend for themselves after a crisis has passed (Adams 2013; Pandolfi 2010). However, regardless of the long-term futility (or negative outcomes) of purportedly well-meaning interventions, charity's moral claim to "untouchability" continues to hinder widespread scrutiny of its very foundation (Fassin 2010; Fisher 1997). In general, dropping change into a beggar's cup only maintains the beggar in his activity – it does not bring him any closer to gaining economic independence. Logically, one might say, if people *really* want to help they should petition their legislators, pick up a picket sign, or contribute to some other form of social activism (Boltanski 1999). This may be a more direct path toward long-term social change. Yet, paradoxically, one's compassion for beggars' immediate difficulties often draws charity, not political action or economic solidarity. For this reason, one might deem impulsive charitable giving in streets "irrational" (Bornstein 2012). I contend, however, that charitable giving with the intention of helping recipients in Senegal is an entirely rational endeavor, even when donors are perfectly aware of the widespread occurrence of child exploitation through begging. It is for this reason that the giving perdures.

Didier Fassin (2010:269) acknowledges the potential gap between the impulse to help others and the potential results from action, which he theorizes as stemming from the divide between "humanitarian emotion" and "humanitarian reason." Fassin describes humanitarian reason as, "the principle according to which humans share a condition that inspires solidarity with one another." By contrast, humanitarian emotion is, "the affect by virtue of which human beings feel personally concerned by the situation of others." For him, one must combine both of these elements in political and social action. This means acknowledging people's sentimental reactions to suffering in the practice of political reasoning, as well as reigning in the humanitarian emotion with reason to attain positive and sustainable political outcomes for the suffering persons concerned.

Erica Bornstein (2012:23) contrasts the "fleeting impulse to give to immediate others in distress", which is a visceral and emotional reaction to perceived suffering, with the "sinking feeling" that one "must do more" to understand and counteract social suffering, a reaction that is "filtered through moral judgments and political frames." The impulse to give "is tempered by its regulation," such as through the organized giving schemes of charities and specialized NGOs. To illustrate this point, she contrasts her son's emotional reactions to beggars in New Delhi with her own, which are contextualized within her understandings of the socio-political factors surrounding the poverty and begging. I can refer back to my mother's desire to carry coins with her to give to begging children

during her visit to Dakar, compared to my own resistance at that time to give money to *taalibes* due to knowing that it would end up in the hands of an exploitative master. Seeing the raw needs of the children shocked her – and, due to her having just arrived in the country, her impulse to give to them was deterred by a prior understanding of the socio-political context of the *taalibe* begging.

Bornstein (2012:24) notes that in the world of organized charity, "impulsive philanthropy is condemned as being outside of reason." By contrast, a shift toward organized giving, such as to religious or charitable organizations, with calculated, studied outcomes for recipients, is portrayed as sufficiently rationalized. To think through the categorization of these types of giving, she refers to Max Weber's four ideal types of social behavior: 1) instrumentally rational – "using expectations of results as the conditions and means for attaining calculated ends"; 2) value rational – "valuing action for its own sake regardless of the possibility of successful outcomes"; 3) affectual – "determined by feeling states or emotions"; and 4) traditional – "determined by habit". According to Weber, solely "instrumentally rational" action follows reason, in that the decision to act is based on the expected, desired outcome. Giving to beggars in the streets, although it may satisfy an immediate urge to diminish suffering, is not generally considered "rational" according to this logic – as it tends to follow action types two through four. It is not necessarily based on the calculated outcome of that giving, which may in effect perpetuate the recipient's suffering rather than quell it.

Indeed, popular almsgiving to beggars in the streets of Senegal can generally be described in Weber's terms as affectual, value rational or traditional – but not necessarily instrumentally rational. People give because they are moved to give. People give because they believe it is a noble or divine act. People also give out of habit and generalized social prescription. But this overwhelmingly abundant giving, often described as meaning to "help" the recipients in difficulty, has not led to a decrease in begging. In fact it has fuelled an alms market in which increasing numbers of people have invested themselves as beggars, or have enlisted tens of thousands of children to beg for them. Rationally, without the giving, there would be no forced *taalibe* begging, and there would be no trafficking for forced *taalibe* begging. So rationally, it would be better to stop giving in the streets.

Then, does Weber's typology mean that virtually the entire population of Senegal should be seen as acting irrationally by continuing to give alms in the streets despite knowing of its ill effects? I would like to complicate that picture a bit. My discussions about the motivations behind almsgiving above reveal a number of key points that might redeem the act of giving alms, rendering it rational. First, the most obvious way in which I have shown that Senegalese almsgiving is an instrumentally rational act is that the Senegalese people believe that their own charitable actions to

those in immediate need, under divine scrutiny, will have direct repercussions for their own lives, including their passage to heaven in the afterlife.

But beyond personal motivations, in the continued absence of state support, the Senegalese people know that *taalibes* need popular contributions of alms to survive. Given this need to beg to survive or support one's studies, it is instrumentally rational to believe that all people in Senegal must contribute, even if only a little bit, to ensure that all who depend on begging will be able to collect enough alms. This is surely not an ideal solution for the *taalibes*, as it forces them to roam streets for long hours in dangerous conditions simply to gather up the pittances. Yet, Dakar residents, when given the choice to contribute charity now to ease the child's pain today, or to help later with social activism, most will at least contribute now. This does not preclude them from believing that a state-mandated, society-wide intervention is necessary to achieve a long-term solution. They are simply reacting to the immediate needs, today, and their calculated results are to help individuals avoid that immediate suffering.

Many people in Senegal would like to see child begging prohibited throughout the country, but they are also well aware that such a prohibition would cause considerable suffering for the *taalibe* children already dependent on begging. It was indeed in these terms – of claiming to consider the immediate suffering of the beggars themselves – that the state reversed its ban on begging in Dakar. And it is in these terms that the state continues to frame its laxity with respect to enforcing its laws against forced begging. President Maky Sall claims to be working to stop begging, but he has made it clear that he will not prohibit the practice until adequate "accompanying measures" (i.e. educational support, reintegration projects, etc.) are taken (Thiam 2013). It is to wonder, however, how long it might take to bring these proposed "measures" to actuality.

Finally, another element that makes almsgiving in the streets of Senegal a rational endeavor is that there are currently no, or few, organized charity options to which the Senegalese people could confidently shift all of their contributions, for fear of corruption or a lack of efficacy. This came through in my survey when over 20% of respondents said that they never contribute to social assistance groups. When President Wade gave the okay to beggars to keep begging, because almsgiving was a "practice recommended by the religion", he mentioned plans to implement a nationally-organized giving scheme, which he called, the *mutualisation de l'aumône*, or the mutualization

of alms[133]. The announcement of the plan was strategically-timed to shift debate away from begging to the possibility of organized charity in Senegal. All interlocutors admitted that such organized giving, if it was done right, was favorable to obligating children to roam the streets to gather these funds. *Rationally*, this was a good idea – it could allow *taalibes* to study, and the poor to eat and sleep, without begging. Religiously, the idea had merit, as was designed to follow a well-established model of the redistribution of wealth in Islam. It appeared to be a perfect example of blending charitable "emotion" with charitable "reason", both religious and political.

But, unsurprising to my NGO and Qur'anic master interview participants, the *mutualisation de l'aumone* plans never got off the ground. My informants were too aware of the complicated nature of social giving in Senegal, as well as the probability that the management of such funds would be the subject to constant quarrels and corruption. People do not necessarily want to anonymously pool their money, and they do not necessarily trust that it would be rightly distributed. Moreover, this would likely be religious alms managed by a secular state[134]. In chapter seven on Qur'anic masters and aid I make clear why the religious authorities concerned would not readily agree with such a proposal. Since the founding of the state of Senegal itself, tense political struggles over power and authority have ruled over its relations with Islamic authorities (O'Brien 2003). The latter are not about to give the state rights to the management of their charitable gifts – currently a great source of political and economic power – despite its rational logic.

Social evolution theorist Herbert Spencer wrote on this topic in 1851. He was a staunch opponent of government-regulated social assistance programs, then called "poor laws". In addition to creating dependency and social stagnation, he claimed they removed the humanity from giving alms - rendering giving involuntary through tax, and negating the need for interpersonal charitable sentiments. Drawing on social evolutionary, survival-of-the-fittest thinking, for him, the happiest people are those who are forced to, and able to adapt to their surroundings[135]. But in cases where people cannot adapt, and they live in misery, they can draw on others' natural compassion and pity, by seeking assistance face-to-face. This giving of alms, in turn, provides the donor with an opportunity to develop his/her moral character toward "perfection" (ibid:319). If there were "poor

[133] This scheme was thereafter popularly referred to as a sort of centralization of *zakat* in the 94% Muslim country, but its secular nomination was meant to avoid religious affiliation, in order to include the country's Christians as donors and recipients.

[134] One newspaper article presented an argument against the plan to "mutualize" alms, in which a public figure claimed that "Iran is not Senegal" and, because of "fundamental" "customary and cultural" reasons, "we cannot simply put boxes in the street so that passers-by can put in contributions" (Senghor 2010).

[135] He wrote: "The complete man is the self-sufficing man – the man who is in every point fitted to his circumstances" (ibid:280).

laws" in force, Spencer predicted that the latter would close the door on the beggars: "Thus does the consciousness that there exists a legal provision for the indigent, act as an opiate to the yearnings of sympathy," ponders Spencer. "Had there been no ready-made excuse, the behavior would probably have been different" (ibid:320). This state-regulated aid, "Being kind by proxy!" is characterized by Spencer (ibid) as an "efficient device for estranging men from each other, and decreasing their fellow feeling."

Contemporary examples show that Spencer's assumption is unfounded – the mere existence of legal recourse to aid does not necessarily cause people to lack compassion for the needs of others. Moreover, in the Senegal case of rampant almsgiving, it becomes clear that Spencer's argument in favor of almsgiving as a more humane solution to social inequality does not hold out. In Senegal, high levels of benevolence exhibited through almsgiving function to perpetuate the exploitation of hoards of child beggars rather than remove their misery. In this case – that is, with the understanding that the alms market already in place is perpetuating suffering - a sincere sentiment of sympathy in the sense evoked by Spencer for the suffering of mendicants would warrant state social intervention, not decry it. However, Spencer does make an important point about the individual faced with a request for alms in a social environment lacking in state support: That charitable giving may be particularly propelled where people know that there is no such legal recourse to aid. The buck stops with them, so to speak.

The Senegalese people see poverty and suffering around them. They are keenly aware of the regional endemic poverty that surrounds them, bringing beggars from afar to their city streets. Moreover, their understanding of the reality of this poverty is such that they do not see themselves as too far removed from its risks and ravages. This is understood as a social and a political problem. It needs social and political solutions. The government needs to intervene, according to nearly all of my survey respondents. But not by simply banning begging, which, according to them is only a symptom of the real problem, not the cause. Given those circumstances, I believe that one could not have a more rational or humane way of approaching the problem than through giving alms when one can, while pushing for a more socially just solution for the *taalibes*.

Conclusion

Senegal's cities attract high numbers of migrating Qur'anic schools from rural Senegal as well as neighboring countries with their exceptionally high almsgiving rates. The people of Senegal are not blind to the suffering that the young *taalibes* face as they beg, but they still choose to give them

alms, fuelling the cycles of migration for begging. Giving allows individuals to feel like they are doing something to help those in need, and it relieves many from the multiple social and religious pressures commanding their solidarity and selflessness.

Begging in Senegal is viewed by the population as a socio-economic problem at its core. It is not a question of a "culture of begging", or a "culture of almsgiving". While religious and socio-cultural factors complicate current attempts to curb begging, particularly *taalibe* child begging, they are not viewed as the causes. The people of Senegal believe that the real problems are regional economic stagnation as well as historical and present-day discrimination against Qur'anic schools with respect to state funding for education. In fact, although rights campaigns have capitalized on the transnational nature of Qur'anic school migration as proof of the schools' illegitimacy as sites of child trafficking, this increased "awareness" has not led the people of Senegal to change their practices. Until political and social solutions can be pursued at a national and regional level to address these underlying causes of *taalibe* begging, including poverty and state discrimination, individuals faced by begging *taalibes* will likely continue to give them alms, despite any heightened social awareness of the cyclical ill effects of their contributions. I now go on to examine some of the historical and present political attempts to regulate Qur'anic education Mali and Senegal.

Part III

Rights to Qur'anic Education Then and Now: The State, NGOs, Qur'anic Masters and the 'Vulnerable Schools' Discourse

Parallel to the development of the child trafficking discourse surrounding the *taalibe* child of Senegal described in chapters two and three, was the development of the discourse about West Africa's Qur'anic schools as "vulnerable schools." This refers to the framing of the *daaras* as educational institutions comparable to Western schools, and portraying the current problem of mass *taalibe* begging as rooted in endemic poverty, not criminal exploitation. Just as explaining *taalibe* begging by framing them as victims of child trafficking was born of a long history of moral and political battles, and has rapidly taken root in the current climate of children's rights promotion, the vulnerable schools discourse, as it pertains to the situation of the *taalibes* and current intervention strategies, has its own long, complicated and morally- and politically-charged history dating back to the French colonization of West Africa and before.

The chapters in Part III reveal how numerous actors on the ground harness the vulnerable schools discourse to either work to combat *taalibe* begging as a harmful effect of poverty, or defend it as integral to impoverished families' rights to choose Qur'anic education for their children. In chapter six, I describe how activists draw on historical accounts of Qur'anic education to negotiate with state actors in attempt to secure funding for reforms in Qur'anic education in Senegal and Mali. These reforms are geared toward rendering *taalibe* begging obsolete in the long-term. In chapter seven, I show how Qur'anic masters frame their economic needs in terms of the immediate suffering of their individual students – who are hungry and in need of help *now* - thereby justifying begging in the present until some feasible alternate funding plan becomes available. This pressure of immediate need politically overpowers any logical or moral arguments to simply stop *taalibe* begging because it is "bad", curtailing efforts at intervention.

Chapter 6 – A Century of Stories:

The Role of "Studies" and Stories of History in the Promotion of Policies to "Modernize" the *Daaras*

> *Since the colonial epoch there has always been a problem, a barrier between the State and the Qur'anic schools. Because the colonists had combated the Qur'anic schools. They even burned down the oldest Qur'anic school which was located in Piir. So, there is still a distrust between the Qur'anic masters and the government, and especially with the NGOs and other foreign partners. But in time perhaps we will play a role in bringing the two currents closer together.*
>
> - Djibril Dior, Acting President of the National Collective of Qur'anic School Associations of Senegal, CNAECS (Personal Interview, December 28, 2010, Dakar, Senegal)

Introduction

As I continue to document how groups of adults tell *stories of suffering taalibes* to support their corresponding intervention projects, I focus attention on the "vulnerable schools discourse" surrounding Qur'anic schools in Mali and Senegal, West Africa. Within discussions framing Qur'anic schools as faultlessly impoverished and consequently vulnerable, portrayals of the key actors diametrically contrast with those in the trafficking discourse, examined in chapters two and three. Those who were exploitative traffickers in the trafficking discourse are here migrant victims of larger social and economic forces, and those who were abused trafficking victims are seen as diligent yet disfavored pupils. In this chapter I highlight how, for over a century, state and non-state actors have gained credence for their arguments about these vulnerable schools by presenting their perspectives within "studies."

The story of *daaras* as "vulnerable schools" as told by the state, NGOs, transnational actors, Qur'anic masters, and local populations highlights the difficult situations facing Qur'anic schools in Senegal and Mali. It starts in and endures from colonial times, but it is important to note the key role that NGOs in the region have recently played to lend it importance within the cadre of assessing the human impacts of neoliberal economic policies on rural Africa. Inasmuch, both state and non-state actors telling stories about *daaras* and *taalibes* have depended on the commissioning and dissemination of "studies" to lend credibility to their subsequent policy recommendations and intervention plans.

Colonial officers of French West Africa viewed the *daaras* as particularly troublesome in their late 19th and early 20th Century attempts to get the native populations to frequent colonial schools to further administrative interests. They saw these Islamic places of learning as both instigative of popular rebellion and menacing for the success of their own schools to attract students. Studies were conducted in colonial French West Africa which portrayed the *daaras* as inadequate educational institutions, and various policies were enacted to force the youth of the colony to attend French-speaking schools. Due to their repeated failures to control the *daaras*, policies swung from regulation and reform to their privatization as "purely religious" schools, left to fend for themselves and slowly disappear[136].

Although neglected, the *daaras* never did disappear, and their continued religious, disciplinary and symbolic significance in Senegal and throughout region has led to the proliferation of Qur'anic school migrations for child begging. The age-old educational institution has struggled to survive independent of state support within developing nation-states. Yet, the *daaras* have again become the focus of policymakers; child begging and unregulated education has drawn much attention locally and transnationally. Current state-sponsored policies of *daara* "modernization" are underway to transform the long neglected *daaras* to meet public school quality standards. These government modernization policies treat the *daaras* as "schools" in desperate need of aid (and not trafficking houses, for instance), but the policies still retain colonial designations that the schools are *informal* and *private*, to be regulated and partially-subsidized, but not entirely funded like public schools.

Powerful NGOs and organizations of Qur'anic masters gaining in size and strength are pushing beyond state-sponsored "modernization" plans. They are striving to strip *daaras* of their status as solely religious and declare them to be essentially places of childhood primary education. This discursive and conceptual separation of education and religion at the site of the *daara*, realized through the production of new studies, reports and public forums, has been central to negotiations in Senegal and Mali to formalize *daaras* and advocate for *taalibes* to receive quality education as equal citizens under the law.

My objectives here are to trace the history of the vulnerable Qur'anic schools discourse, particularly by elucidating how governing bodies and NGOs have produced studies and reports about the *daaras* and the *taalibes* for over a century to create support for policies to govern their operations. I begin with a textual analysis of an account published by French colonial researcher Paul Marty in 1913 of the Qur'anic schools of Senegal, in juxtaposition with two recent texts on the

[136] Archives Nationales du Sénégal, Fonds Anciens, 1G42, June 6, 1911, p.2.

same topic produced by the NGO *ENDA Tiers-Monde* (*Environment Development Action in the Third World,* hereafter ENDA). Critical examination of Paul Marty's document, written at a time when Qur'anic schools were the norm in Senegal and very few Senegalese attended French or Franco-Arabic schools, allows me to extend my analysis beyond what would have been possible in only referencing contemporary texts or "mining" historical documents for data (Stoller 2002:87). I observe how he imposed the specific scholarly expectations of French schools on *daaras*, which I argue has given way to current government projects pushing for their scholarly "modernization."

In the name of reform, the French colonial administration took action against Qur'anic schools of the region, effectively privatizing and isolating them, in attempt to limit the importance of Islam. This led to the *daaras*' long-term privation from state support, and the creation of an enduring animosity between religious authorities and state powers. The Senegalese state's current plans to deal with Qur'anic school vulnerability through their "modernization," now include curricular reform and quality regulation to meet global standards of Education for All. However, reticence remains and the states of Mali and Senegal with partner NGOs have been forced to develop strategies to win over the confidence of Qur'anic masters and parents skeptical of state interference in Qur'anic education. To conclude, I illustrate how ENDA-Mali is striving to "bring Qur'anic masters to a new understanding" of the role of Qur'anic education in Mali. In this case they have harnessed "studies" which reference the celebrated popular history of the pre-colonial theocratic Islamic state of Maasina to secure Qur'anic master cooperation for their current efforts to push for state support and regulation of Qur'anic schools.

The Power of Writing about *Daaras* - Formation Through Translation

For over one hundred years, the *taalibes* of Senegal have been called *students* by Western scholars, and the *daara* has become known as a *Qur'anic school.* These students and their conditions have been studied by French colonial authorities, missionaries, orientalists, historians, anthropologists, political scientists, journalists, and health and human rights workers - and the cases they have made about the *taalibes* over time have varied substantially[137]. Arguments range from those claiming that *daaras* of certain regions are merely labor camps or exploitive begging centers to others that have maintained that regardless of their harsh conditions, the schools are teaching children valuable life lessons of use in Senegalese society. Based on an analysis of key examples of

[137] E.g.: Einarsdottir, et al. (2010); Berriane & Gunther (2010); HRW (2010); UCW (2007); ENDA (2005;2003); Balonze, et al. (2005); Bass (2004); Perry (2004); Ware (2003); Ndiaye (1985); Copans (1988); O'Brien (1971); Marty (1917).

such texts, I argue that regardless of their differing viewpoints, all of these texts on the *taalibes* are united by a common discourse: that of Western schooling, despite the non-Western context of the *daara*.

The panoply of speakers who discuss and have written about the *taalibes*, *daaras* and Qur'anic masters of Senegal have contributed to the formation and development of the Senegalese Qur'anic school as a distinct discursive object. Through the differing depictions of the functions of these actors and their roles by the various authors over time, discussions of *daaras* have become firmly integrated into the Western discourse on formal schooling through use of specialized scholastic vocabulary, the deployment of specific tools of educational evaluation, and the use of Western morals and standards as criteria for achievement.

Objects, according to Foucault, are not simply "words or things," but are actually formed by the relations between groups of statements within a given discursive formation (Foucault 2002:54). In that vein, I am not looking at the *daara* or the *Qur'anic school* and all that is referred to by those names, nor the archetypal physical structures, locations, or people these terms refer to, but I examine the process by which what is known as the Senegalese Qur'anic school came to be known as such subsequent to French colonial contact with the area, and how it came to be discussed and debated about in specific ways within a discourse on education.

Was a *daara* always considered a "school" as we define it today? Were there other widespread educational strategies in practice among the peoples of West Africa at the advent of colonialism that served educational goals more similar to Western standards of primary or secondary curricula than the *daaras*? Is the *daara* primarily a worship-based or educational institution? These questions may seem obvious or irrelevant; that the *daara* is or was a form of school is not what is being debated today – the questions are about child exploitation and healthy child development. But *daaras'* colonial recognition as schools rather than, say, solely religious centers, underlies their entire political history, attempts at interventions and control, and subsequent resistance. They were set up as rivals with French schools. Their poor quality as educational institutions according to French standards warranted control and intervention, to either improve them or close them so that more adequate places of learning could replace them. Today, their continued status as "schools" underlies state and NGO intervention policies. Here I draw attention to the importance of terminology and translation in the portrayal of non-Western practices and institutions in the histories written about Senegalese and Malian Qur'anic schools which have led to their denomination and critique as such.

Translation and Anthropological Inquiry

Much of the critical academic work done on translation has focused on literary translatability and the difficulties of (in)commensurability that confront textual translators working inter-linguistically and inter-culturally (see Benjamin 1999; Derrida 1988; Venuti 1995; Jakobson in Liu 1999; Rubel & Rosman 2003). Walter Benjamin (1999), in his article "The Task of the Translator", speaks against translating a text for the better understanding of the reader, as the original was not written for that intention and hence such a translation would be unfaithful to the original. This domestication of foreign texts (Schleiermacher in Venuti 1995:20), which favors transparency and fluidity has been condemned by Venuti as an inherently violent process that involves "the reconstitution of the foreign text in accordance with values, beliefs and representations that preexist it in the target language, always configured in hierarchies of dominance and marginality, always determining the production, circulation, and reception of texts."

Beyond such textual translation and addressing ethnographic interpretation, Talal Asad (1986) supports the less ethnocentric *foreignizing* methods of translation available in ethnography. For him, etic perspectives in anthropological description can help to avoid inadvertently contributing to processes which pressure societies of the Third World to adapt their cultural and linguistic particularities to accommodate Western language and meaning and not vice versa. He distinguishes linguistic translation from cultural translation in that the latter, through the interpretation of implicit meaning in context, allows the translator to become "the real author" of what is written, as opposed to the translator of texts whose work is only regarded as a translation of the original. Nevertheless, this empowers ethnographers to determine meaning where the speakers themselves do not necessarily express having meant what is interpreted; where they may not necessarily agree with the interpretation (Asad 1986:162).

Various authors have commented on the capacity of Western discourse to limit the representations and conceptualizations of, as well as knowledge created and circulated about disempowered populations worldwide who lack the institutional and economic means to control or refute such statements (see Foucault 2002; Mbembe 2001; Escobar 1995; Comaroff & Comaroff 1991; Trouillot 1995,1991; Mudimbe 1983). V.Y. Mudimbe's monograph, *The Invention of Africa* presents a searing critique of the development of discourses on "savages" in Africa, to which anthropology has made a considerable contribution, that inherently favor Western scientific knowledge to that which is native to the continent. The image of the African as "not quite human", according to Mudimbe, was the result of the "application of Western standards within [the] non-

Western context", manifested in colonial and religious civilizing missions and the installation of Western forms of government, social organization and educational systems (Mudimbe 1988:68).

Anthropologist James Clifford has turned the critique inward to see the anthropological enterprise of "writing" cultures as an unjust act of translation in itself. He calls the anthropologist translator a traitor, as in the Italian adage and pun *traduttore, traditore*, meaning "translator, traitor". Clifford notes that intercultural comparison is based on "imperfect equivalences" among societies or languages and that there is "no politically innocent methodology for intercultural interpretation" (Clifford 1997:11,19,39). Lydia Liu (1999:37) similarly claims that anthropologists could benefit from a closer examination of how the translation of cultures and languages is part of a process of "unequal exchanges" in situations of "hypothetical equivalence". She focuses on how consideration of historical and colonial contexts can shed light on negotiations of meaning-value that take place in cross-cultural interactions and influence and determine grounds for translation and comparison.

In light of the perspectives presented above, I examine the act of "articulating the terms of reciprocity" (Lui 1999) between Senegalese social customs and institutions and those of the various Western countries that have taken up such dialogue by telling stories about *taalibes* and *daaras*. The mere act of replacing local terms with highly specific and charged words in French or English, such as *école* (school) and *élève* (student) for *daara* and *taalibe,* has numerous consequences for the interpretation, analysis and treatment of the original structures by the readers. Next I examine how methods of terminological translation concerning Senegalese *daaras* into French and English texts both serve to form a representation of them that fits within the analytical framework employed by the authors as well as imposes a certain discursive trajectory onto how the *daaras* will subsequently be discussed, and intervened upon.

Translating 'Daaras' and 'Taalibes'

Daara is a term in the Wolof language most often translated into English as *Qur'anic school* (in French, *école coranique*) (ENDA 2005, 2003; Klein 1968; Marty 1917). Some authors attempt to approach the meaning of the term etymologically, tracing it to Arabic roots such as *dar al Qur'an* meaning "the house of the Qur'an" (Ware 2004:2) or *dahroune*, meaning "the house where one studies the Qur'an (ENDA 2005:18). The term has also been translated as a sort of *work camp* based on one author's observations of the activities conducted in the *daaras* of certain rural agricultural areas (O'Brien 1971:165). Presented in a similarly polysemous way is the term *taalibe*, which has also gained its several meanings as a result of the varying positionalities of the interlocutors, including:

"Muslim child-disciple" (Perry 2004:47); student of the Qur'an (Marty 1917; Ware 2004; ENDA 2003); "one who searches, who asks" (ENDA 2005:5); a beggar (Bass 2004); and a street child (Balonze, et al. 2005)[138].

Each of these translations is connected to the project that the particular authors have undertaken either academically, professionally or as activists. For example, Donal Cruise O'Brien, who describes the *daaras* as work camps, does so within a book on the powerful Muride Muslim Brotherhood, which he depicts as a politically savvy economic powerhouse which depends on quasi-slave labor to achieve massive gains. He does acknowledge that other scholars have translated *daara* into *Qur'anic school*, but subsequently distinguishes the *daaras* that he had come in contact with as "working *daaras*" (O'Brien 1971:165).

Despite differing translations of the Wolof terminology by interlocutors with varying academic, economic and policy motivations, the *daaras*, *taalibes* and *marabouts* have been firmly integrated within Western discourse on schooling as *Qur'anic schools*, *students* and *teachers* since the mid-19th Century French colonization of West Africa. The following sections will analyze the content and conditions of production of selected texts from two distinct time periods which discuss the *daaras* of Senegal. I trace the ways in which the Qur'anic school has been developed as a discursive object representing the traditional Senegalese counterpart to European schools, and therefore in need of transformation through outside intervention. I begin by examining the authors of the texts that I analyze and their positionalities in terms of observing and writing about the Qur'anic schools: colonial researcher Paul Marty, and the Dakar-based NGO ENDA (with several contributors for each text). I then turn to an examination of their texts.

Paul Marty

The first text is called, *Etudes sur l'Islam au Sénégal* (1917) (Studies on Islam in Senegal), written by the French colonial officer Paul Marty. His was not the first colonial account of Senegalese Qur'anic schools. Marty draws heavily on descriptions and critiques of the schools that were developed prior to his mandate for the *Service des Affaires Musulmanes* (Service of Muslim Affairs) in Senegal beginning in 1912. This was a practice that enabled him to maintain his prolific pace of publishing over 300 pages of reports on Islam in West Africa within the next fourteen months despite having had no prior experience in the country and not being able to speak any local

[138] Mamadou Ndiaye (1985:30) clarifies that the term "*taalibe njangaan*" is frequently used to distinguish Qur'anic "students" (*njangaan*, from Wolof *jang*, to learn, to study) from *taalibe* adherents of a religious brotherhood. The term "ndongo *daara*" (as in a boy of the *daara*) also used to refer to Qur'anic students (ibid).

languages (Ware 2004)[139]. In fact the 75-page text on the Senegalese Qur'anic schools was already submitted to the administration in 1913 – a document which remained the authoritative account of the schools for French officials for over 25 years and has been cited by scholars for its historical descriptions since its publication (ibid).

Rudolph Ware (2004), in his history dissertation on the Qur'anic schools of Senegal, refutes claims that it was a high level of scholarly quality that lent authority to Marty's report on the Qur'anic schools. Instead he cites Marty's "patron-protégé" relationship with the French governor-general of Senegal, William Ponty, as a major factor of his literary success (Ware 2004:246). According to Ware, Marty served Ponty to propagate his racist and ethnocentric policy of *Islam Noir,* which is said to have encouraged the portrayal of sub-Saharan African Islam as inherently different from and inferior to the more orthodox forms practiced in the Maghreb and Middle Eastern countries. Ponty then facilitated the publication of several of Marty's reports in the periodical, *Revue du Monde Musulman*, which is said to have initially resisted publishing the reports in light of Marty's poor credentials as a literary scholar and inadequate level of education.

Ware sets Marty's works apart from those of his predecessors for their explicitly racist commentary used to attack the quality and integrity of the Qur'anic schools and Senegalese Islam. He aligns these critiques with Marty's personal racist tendencies. Although I do not doubt that such character accusations about Marty have merit, an overemphasis on the impacts of these personal characteristics as a writer on the texts' content and effect, can actually cloud observations of the discursive forces at play that led to the consensus the Qur'anic school system of Senegal is an inadequate educational institution.

In discursive analysis, Foucault (2002:61) cautions against the analysis of a document by linking the contents of the text to the personality traits of its author, or to examine other elements in an author's oeuvre to shed light on a document in question. He claims that a statement is not a creation independent from the discourse in which it operates, and therefore not solely the result of individual creativity. I point out that the very fact that Marty is criticizing the *daaras* within a discourse on schooling automatically discredits the schools and, moreover, imports a clear system for comparison and evaluation of the schools that is unbalanced in their original Senegalese context. The removal of racially prejudiced arguments from the evaluation process does not necessarily result in fairer assessments of the *daaras* within the inherently ethnocentric Western framework of

[139] Ware's (2004) close textual reading of reports written prior to Marty's report of 1913 reveals that his publication drew directly on earlier sources.

standards on schooling. Marty's report served to concretize the unattainable standard to which *daaras* are still held today: a foreign model into which they are expected to "modernize".

ENDA-Tiers-Monde

The second set of texts I look at were produced by the NGO ENDA. It was founded in 1972 in Dakar as a program and since 1978 it has become an international non-profit organization. ENDA's scope has expanded to include a number of development initiatives, one of which is to reform the *Qur'anic school* system of Senegal and neighboring countries including Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. The organization works closely with governments of West Africa at various levels, with local associations, and with international funding and governing bodies to promote programs within African communities and to change legislation to further their humanitarian and development goals[140].

ENDA has conducted research projects to better understand how the *taalibes* and Qur'anic masters understand their situations, and what sort of assistance they feel that they need given their circumstances (ENDA 2005; 2003). Their major activities to improve Qur'anic schools include creating teacher training programs for the Qur'anic masters, school hygiene awareness and French literacy training in *daaras*, as well as community programs to encourage support for *taalibes* from the larger community. The personnel at ENDA vocally lament the general lack of cooperation among NGOs and associations to deal with the problems they see facing the *taalibe* children (ENDA 2003; ENDA 2005).

I reference two texts about the *taalibes* that ENDA produced in collaboration with Save the Children, Sweden: *Soutien aux taalibes/garibous* (ENDA 2003) (*Support for the taalibes/garibous (the Malian counterpart of the taalibe)*), and *Situation des enfants dans les écoles coraniques au Sénégal* (ENDA 2005) (*Situation of the children in Qur'anic schools of Senegal*). These texts provide a mixture of clarifications of terminology and popular conceptions about *taalibes* and *daaras*, interview transcripts, and detailed reports on the research and interventions conducted by ENDA in various locations throughout Senegal and Mali.

Considering ENDA's approach - to work with the Qur'anic masters and the *taalibes* to reform the Qur'anic educational system - it is not surprising that the language used in their texts is noticeably less accusatory than, say, Marty's (1917) or that of HRW (2010) today. They avoid

[140] Along with various affiliated NGOs and associations, ENDA participates in a federated group called MAEJT (African Movement of Child and Young Workers) with a main objective to lobby for changes in legislation with respect to child workers in Africa. In this way ENDA categorizes some *taalibes* as "child workers" for their economic contributions through work and begging.

blaming any one party, and they frame the current *taalibe* problem as an unfortunate result of socio-economic factors including the falling price of cash crops, the privatization of government services through structural adjustment programs, and a series of devastating droughts (ENDA 2005:6-7). ENDA works within the Western schooling discourse not only to gain access to debates on the *taalibe* children but also to help the *daaras* gain more respect in the eyes of the readers as legitimate academic institutions worthy of state educational funding.

These authors, Paul Marty and ENDA, differ greatly in terms of their motivations to discuss the *taalibes* – one employing racially prejudiced critiques in attempt to control them, the other wanting to assist and empower the actors in the *daara* system. Similarities amongst them, however, are enlightening in terms of understanding the parallels among their texts. First, they both have affiliations with institutions that grant them the power and credibility to discuss and give recommendations for the *taalibes* within Western or global discourses that can directly impact their situations. This is a power that the *taalibes* and the Qur'anic masters have been unable to secure themselves. Second, each of these authors operates within the long-established discourse on schooling to discuss the situations of the *taalibes*, regardless of their individualized motivations for making their statements. Understanding such unities among the subjects and their positions, despite large discrepancies in the time and purpose of their publications, simplifies questions about the following resemblances among their statements.

Critiquing Qur'anic Schools

Although these documents were produced in differing situations with differing goals and visions, a similarity is discernible among them in their critique of the schools in terms of 1) the credibility of *marabouts* as instructors; 2) the efficacy or inefficacy of the pedagogy employed within the schools; 3) the quality of the physical structures and locations of *daaras* as schools which are to facilitate learning; and 4) the appropriateness of methods of disciplining the children for failing to conform to standards. These are all criteria with which to evaluate schools within Western educational systems.[141] There are other ways in which the conversations about the *daaras* are structured around methods of evaluating schools. One is how Marty condemns the lack of general examinations to test proficiency, the low enrollment of girls despite their high levels of success in

[141] For the purposes of this analysis, I draw on elements within Marty's text that indicate some of the basic standards of the educational system of France at that time.

the schools, and the scarcity of books found in the schools' "libraries". Here I limit my discussion to the four elements listed previously as they are all common to the mentioned texts.

1 - Marabouts as Unqualified and Unprofessional

> *As soon as an indigenous person (*indigène*) is where he feels susceptible to teach the Qur'an, he does not look to place himself under the tutelage of another marabout to acquire the experience that he needs by default, the necessary maraboutic reputation, or the embryo of a future scholastic clientele. He simply opens a school in his domicile, takes his own children for his first students and waits until the impressed neighbors bring theirs* (Marty 1917:47-48).
>
> *The result is an anarchic proliferation of Qur'anic schools where any individual can improvise the role of the instructor, and open his structure without offering any guarantees in terms of the quality of his teaching* (ENDA 2005:21).

These passages make nearly identical arguments about the lack of formal training of *marabouts* to be instructors in schools. Similar arguments are made about their unprofessional qualities in that they make the children work or beg, or because they engage in economic activities outside of the *schools* to complement a lack of household earnings. Marty sets the Qur'anic master in direct opposition to the European educator: "The black *marabout* does not consecrate himself to his students like the European teacher who is completely, body and soul, at the service of his," (Marty 1917:54). Marty accuses most *marabouts* of opening up schools primarily to recruit children to perform agricultural work as opposed to serving the children for "professed" pious motivations.

He criticizes the intellectual capacity of the *marabouts* as Qur'anic instructors in that after many years of schooling and teaching, the vast majority of them have "extraordinarily weak" skills in Arabic writing and literature. He goes on to claim that their inferiority as a race, compared to the Moors who are their "spiritual directors," limits their theological capacities to embrace Islam fully as a religion, further discrediting them as teachers of Islam and the Qur'an (ibid:58):

> *Practically, Senegalese school instructors have an intellectual training almost useless (*une formation intellectuelle á peu près nulle*) and they just barely suffice for the task that the parents ask of them: to teach the children to read, write and recite prayers and a few verses of the Qur'an by heart* (Marty 1917:59).

Although ENDA makes a concerted effort to represent the views of the Qur'anic masters in their publications, its observations and recommendations concerning them portrays them as unqualified and inadequately trained as educators - grounds for recommending their further training and direction. Similar to Marty's text, the ENDA (2003:73-79) dedicates several pages to discussing the economics of begging, associating the *daaras* with questions of child labor. However, the authors

avoid directly accusing the Qur'anic masters of intentional exploitation, and instead focus on the lack of regulation of the practices of Qur'anic masters who are placed in difficult positions with very limited economic means (ENDA 2003:77-79).

2 - Ineffective Pedagogy

Related to the *marabouts'* inadequacies cited in the texts above is the critique of the pedagogy employed in the *Qur'anic schools* of Senegal. Marty wrote several pages on the subject, critiquing everything from the materials used to teach the *taalibes*, and the position in which the children are made to sit, to the outright mental destruction caused by the instructional method of rote memorization of Qur'anic verses. Marty flags various faults in the pedagogy of the Qur'anic schools of Senegal in the following quotation:

> *If the child's reading capacities are weak, they are even weaker in writing, as the instructor's lessons on this topic are useless (*nulles*). It's always he who assigns the text to learn, and the child is never invited to recopy or write freely. The majority leave the school after 7 or 8 years without knowing how to write at all, or having learned only what they wanted to, randomly depending on the circumstances or their zeal* (Marty 1917:78).

To make his assessment, Marty draws on educational value conventions which incorporate the ability to read and write, the concern for a standardized curriculum, and the encouragement of students to think freely and independently from a young age. Although these seem like they should be obvious criteria for a good school system coming from a European perspective, such values are not necessarily important in Senegalese *daaras;* in fact they are frequently unwanted. The evaluation of the *daaras* in these terms has committed them to a foreign standard, a standard which continues to be referenced in discourses on the *daaras* today to transform their objectives and operations.

"The training of instructors and their pedagogy" is the first in a list of three major problems with the Qur'anic schools that ENDA cites in its 2005 publication (14). ENDA does not discuss what specific problems it refers to in terms of "pedagogy" except for the lack of teaching French and English. ENDA's other critiques are mild and less direct, which might be explained by ENDA's position as a local partner striving to secure support for Qur'anic schools. The publication mentions that the schools employ two primary pedagogical models, for example, "the system of memorization and the syllabic method," (ENDA 2005:21). This statement is directly followed by a description stating that the instructors themselves have expressed a desire to expand their teaching capacities and find ways to gain better control over students through improved pedagogical methods. ENDA therefore frames the statement of the problem in terms of an auto-critique and

desire to change among the *marabouts* themselves. The claim that there is a desire for self-reform is reinforced in the interviews with *marabouts* included in the appendix of the 2005 ENDA publication, but these views likely represent a small, predisposed minority as they are activists specifically working to reform the Qur'anic schools. This framing suggests that most *marabouts* wish to reform their pedagogy according to Western standards. But my own research shows that not all Qur'anic masters indeed desire to adopt new methods.

3 - Inadequate School Structures

> *The material installation of the Senegalese Qur'anic school is, as one would think, rudimentary. There is no location designated specifically for this goal. The children gather in open air in front of the instructor's house, under a tree. In the city, they group together in the courtyard, under trees, and, when there are no trees, under the little verandah of the house…Animals chirp and bleat (Marty 1917:67).*
>
> *In Dakar, the precariousness of the buildings where the Qur'anic schools are housed is flagrant. The majority of the daaras of Dakar are situated in buildings loaned to marabouts [many are] in ruins or under construction (ENDA 2003:64).*
>
> *The didactic material and equipment is as rough as possible. To study, the children squeeze into a semi-circle around the Qur'anic school instructor in closed spaces or in open air, even sitting on the ground or on mostly frayed, dilapidated mats (ENDA 2005:20).*

These descriptions suggest that perhaps not much has changed in one hundred years. *Daaras* continue to function outside under trees, or inside small, undeveloped structures. Instruction still happens with children sitting on mats on the ground and not in chairs. Perhaps this would not be so alarming if the *daaras* were not being compared to what French schools look like, or looked like a century ago. Marty's description continues with a detailed description of how the pupils make their own ink from the burnt residue left underneath cooking pots and how the boys write on the same wooden boards every day. They are reported to wash them infrequently, leaving their work crowded and messy.The above descriptions by Marty and ENDA are made to signal to the readers the obvious lack of infrastructure of the *Qur'anic school* system – the need for change.

4 - Too Cruel Punishment?

> *There are cases where certain instructors, taken away by rage, express a brutality of the worst kind. Light slaps or hits transform into violent punches to the face and neck of the child. Light caning becomes a thrashing of uninterrupted strikes with a stick and lashes on the entire surface of the body. Some even go, in excessive rage, as far as kicking the child who is screaming for mercy, to tie him up and leave him there, for several hours, and even brand his arms and legs with burning iron.*

> *These terrible treatments are fortunately very rare, and they happen much more while working in the fields than while pursuing studies (Marty 1917:81).*

A hotly debated topic surrounding the *taalibes* today is the issue of corporal punishment and abuse resulting in the incitement of passionate arguments about children's rights within Senegal and internationally. All of the media accounts, novels and films that critique the *daaras* and the *marabouts* spotlight harsh physical violence inflicted on the children regularly, as seen throughout this dissertation. While today, that is frequently what shifts discussion towards child trafficking, Marty's critique is still situated within a discussion of pedagogy. He addresses the topic in a way that suggests that a light punishment could be seen as acceptable and even pedagogically necessary in a school environment. Where a light punishment could be seen as normal or even "necessary for the training of a young black," the African Qur'anic master is shown to go too far. Marty recommends that the *marabouts* be made to exercise "prudence and just measures." In any case, he does not stray from his scholastic frame in his discussions of proper courses of correction. ENDA, by contrast, despite working with Qur'anic masters to get them to reduce corporal punishment in schools, does not mention the practice as problematic in either publication about the *taalibes*.

The incorporation of historical and contemporary discourse analysis into my ethnographic work has allowed me to observe that the ways *daaras* have been portrayed by intervening actors have maintained parallels for at least a century. The ways people speak about *taalibes* today are consciously or unconsciously strengthening discursive boundaries that limit how *taalibes*, *marabouts* and *daaras* of Senegal are looked at, talked about, thought about, and are consequently dealt with (Escobar 1995). In fact, as examined above, the framing of *daaras* as schools in colonial times, and holding them to the specific standards that accompany the term, has set the *daaras* up for ultimate failure as an autonomous institution. For the French colonial administration, the Qur'anic schools represented hubs for the cultivation of resistance against their power. They therefore enacted series of policies to control and cripple the Qur'anic schools.

Marty's text, with its vividly familiar pictures of the *taalibes*' harsh conditions of study and life, has provided a unique window with which to observe contemporary documents depicting the *daaras*, which often make historical claims to a harmonious past system that has been in rapid decline only recently due to neoliberal economic policies and urban migration (HRW 2010; UCW 2007; Balonze, et al. 2005:10 ; ENDA 2005:6-7). Senegal's pre-colonial Qur'anic school system likely included many of the difficult conditions and scholarly deficiencies observed and denounced today. It was not likely ever the utopian ideal portrayed by some current interlocuters, even prior to the

climatic, economic and organizational shifts that have impoverished rural Senegal since its independence.

Qur'anic Educational Reform in Colonial Times:
French Colonial Policies to Limit Islam and Spread French[142]

It is common knowledge in Senegal that the French colonial administration did all in its power to repress Islam in West Africa. Part of this popular awareness of the repressive tactics is the result of their lingering effects. Details of strategies have endured through the generations by word of mouth as communities continue to recount the strategies that were used to coerce children into secular French schools. Furthermore, adversarial politics endure between the state and religious authorities which have shaped through independence and thrive today (O'Brien 2003). But in addition to these real life outcomes, the Senegalese public has also become keenly aware of the hidden colonial strategies to minimize the importance of Islam in French West Africa since the colonial archives were made public after independence. The machinations of the French colonial administration have since been documented in detail by Senegalese and international observers (Ware 2004; Ndiaye 1985; Copans 1980; O'Brien 1971).

Among the objectives of their actions were to limit Islamic learning in Qur'anic schools in order to both limit the influence of the religion on young minds, as well as better spread the French language and culture. Yet the colonial authorities publically justified their policies as reformative, standardizing, and in the public interest:

> *We, governor of Senegal and dependencies, considering that one of the most important roles of authority, in well administered countries, is to surround the education of children with all desirable guarantees, considering that the French government, which is equally interested in all classes of the Senegalese population, cannot remain indifferent before the question of the education of children of Muslim families, and that if, until today, no guarantee of knowledge and morality has been required of marabout instructors to do as they wish, it is time to put an end to this abuse, in the interest of the families as well as that of the children.*[143]

The above text written in 1857, opens the first decree focusing on Qur'anic schools issued by the French colonial regime. As indicated in the introduction, the articles of the decree particularly target Qur'anic masters by establishing stringent requirements for opening and operating *daaras*. Under penalty of fines and imprisonment, Qur'anic masters who wished to operate *daaras*

[142] Some passages in this section were taken from Thiam 2008 and edited.
[143] Text from the Bulletin Administratif du Senegal, no 82 Octobre 1857, p.445-446, cited in Mamadou Ndiaye (1985:76), original text in French, my translation is presented here.

were required to possess a government authorization which could only be obtained after passing a competency test and receiving a "Certificate of Good and Moral Life" from the city mayor. Furthermore, Qur'anic masters were ordered to send all of their *taalibes* aged twelve and older to French language schools daily, "either to the secular school or to mission schools"[144].

One might imagine that for myriad reasons, the Qur'anic masters did not, and most could not, comply with any of the decree stipulations listed above, and the decree of 1857 proved to be ineffective at controlling the neighborhood Qur'anic masters. In 1896, a second, more demanding decree was issued adding several official requirements to receive authorization to operate a Qur'anic school. In addition to requiring more documents, the Qur'anic masters were to undergo more rigorous examinations of teaching capacities and *daaras* would be inspected for cleanliness. If found to be unhygienic, they would be shut down: "This inspection deals with morality, hygiene, health and the observance of obligations imposed in this decree on directors."[145] The decree also ordered *seriñs* to keep lists of *taalibes*, the names of their parents and their home addresses in French which they would have to submit to colonial authorities regularly. Article eight mandates that parents pay for the education of their children and it therefore prohibits students from "searching in the streets or in houses" for food. Finally, the decree specifies that no Qur'anic schools may operate during times that the public French school is in session. In order to legally continue their studies of the Qur'an, all *taalibes* would have to furnish certificates stating that they were simultaneously enrolled in a French school.

With the French colonial decree of 1896, *daaras* became "private" and "informal" [146] schools and by default the French language schools became "public" and "formal."[147] The *daara* system was left to flounder with no financial support from the declaredly secular colonial regime or the subsequent secular state. Catholic mission schools, however, were eligible for public funds at that time, in that their use of French language instruction allowed them to meet governmental standards (Ndiaye 1985).

While the authorities followed up in some cases, and some *daaras* were forced to close for not meeting requirements, even the most generous statistical estimates suggest that the second decree did not succeed in regularizing *daaras* any better than the first. Understanding that a major

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[144] French colonial decree No. 96 of 1857, article 5 (cited in Ndiaye 1985:76-77).
[145] Ibid, article 4 (Ndiaye 1985:79)
[146] Text taken from the French colonial decree of June 22, 1896, printed in Ndiaye 1985.
[147] The *daara* system, which is argued by some to have been an "official" institution of West African education prior to French colonial occupation, that continued to provide much of the education offered in Senegal, was legally relegated to the "private", "informal" sector.

goal was to boost French school attendance, the decrees were proving to be utter failures as *daara* enrollment dwarfed that of colonial schools in the early twentieth century by at least six to one (Marty 1917). This is when the French colonial regime took a new approach - referred to by Ndiaye (1985) as that of the "carrot" in addition to the "stick". While penal retribution remained in place for non-compliance, the decree of 1906 specified that completely compliant *daaras* whose *taalibes* attended French schools would receive funding, and French-speaking students would have chances to win prizes in colony-wide scholastic competitions. Colonial school inspectors would oversee compliance in these *daaras*.

Such incentives still did not produce the levels of Qur'anic school authorizations or French school enrollment that the French wanted. Their next attempt to increase the spread of French education proved to be more successful. This was with the creation of Franco-Arabic educational institutions, called *medersas*[148]. These schools united study of the Qur'an with French language and culture and colonial administration. The first *medersa* in colonial Senegal was created in 1908. Its purpose was to attract more students to study French as they would simultaneously be able to study Arabic and Islam. Critics have claimed that this "parallel program" was put in place to gain more control over the teaching of the Qur'an and limit Arabic language study (Ndiaye 1985; Ware 2004; Triaud 2000; Loimeier 2000). The following excerpt from a letter between colonial officials during this critical time indicates their objective to control Islamic education in response to the, "inauspicious situation that has been created for French schools by the *marabouts* of Senegal…" It reads:

> *You have thought correctly that to advantageously combat the proselytism of these* marabouts *and take over the teaching of Arabic it would be in order for us to train a corps of official* marabouts *in our schools"* (Ndiaye 1985:109).

Mamadou Ndiaye of the Islamic Institute in Dakar claims that the colonial *medersas* were built in attempt to minimize and "secularize Muslim education" (Ndiaye 1985:111). Documents show that the time allocated to the French language curriculum in the *Medersa de Saint-Louis* (Medersa of Saint-Louis), for example, increased at the expense of the Arabic curriculum. Furthermore, the study program stressed the study of Arabic as a live language simultaneously with study of the Qur'an, potentially removing the purely mystical quality of the language of the holy text. Finally, the courses in the *Medersa de Saint-Louis* evolved to teach more literature and less religion. Colonial

[148] The word "medersa" is described by Ware (2003:219) as a "corruption" of the Arabic word "madrasa", meaning school. He describes the French-implemented institution as similarly distorted from its referent in that its primary goal in Senegal was to serve French colonial ends.

professors were brought in from Algeria to execute the Islamo-Arabic curriculum. Study of the Qur'an was altered from the traditional *daara* method – over time the objective to memorize the entire text was removed. The academic year system associated the study of the various parts of the Qur'an to particular study years, and thus students might progress to subsequent lessons of the Qur'an before totally mastering the previous ones, as was required for advancement in traditional *daaras*. A principal theme of the curriculum was the juxtaposition of Christian and Islamic teachings to promote religious tolerance (Ndiaye 1985).

These Franco-Arabic schools were indeed more successful than their French predecessors at attracting Senegalese students and spreading the French language in the colony, although they were only located in the more urbanized areas. To attract more students from rural areas, the colony offered bursaries to travel to the urban centers to attend. At the same time, the French pushed to make Qur'anic education similarly hybridized. In the Dakar National Archives, I came across a curriculum developed for the Qur'anic schools, specifying "the minimum of knowledge that the *marabouts* will be held to teach."[149] It included four texts stressing basics in Arabic grammar, literature, and commentary on the contents of the Qur'an.

By the 1920s, the number of Senegalese receiving French education soared and colonial policies were adjusted accordingly. No longer needing to depend on Catholic catechism schools or traditional Qur'anic schools to assist with their educational goals, the French declared in a 1922 decree that these structures were no longer considered schools at all, and would therefore no longer receive any government subsidies. Furthermore, *daaras* were no longer legally considered schools, and inasmuch Qur'anic masters would be held to a single stipulation – that they only teach the Qur'an and religious education. They were forbidden to teach reading and writing of spoken languages, as such was reserved for the public school system. After this time, traditional, full-time *daaras* lost increasing numbers of children to the public schools (Ndiaye 1985).

Modernizing *Daaras* – in Pursuit of "Education for All"

> *These are projects that have been in the drawer for a long time, but that we did not have enough means to enact them. If we talk about integrating the informal into the formal today, we are only reheating ideas that we already had (Modou Fall, Public Education Inspector, Podor, Senegal)*[150].

[149] National Archives, Dakar, Senegal, Fonds Anciens, 1G42, June 6, 1911, p.6.
[150] Personal Interview, IDEN Podor, November 2007.

The French handed over administrative power to the Senegalese in 1960, along with its problems controlling the *daaras*. The post-independence Senegalese state was not preoccupied with the spread of Islam, per se, like the colonial government was, as most of the population of Senegal and state authorities were already Muslims. But it was problematic that the new government's inherited "public" school system was still rejected by a significant portion of the population – what one might call a postcolonial *dis*order following from persistant attempts at colonial and post-independence *order* (DelVecchio Good, et al. 2008). The continued lack of public funding for the deemed informal, religious teaching going on in *daaras* left Qur'anic students to seasonally migrate with their masters to urban centers. They were farming in rural areas during a portion of the year and begging in cities during the dry seasons. In 1985, the *Institut Islamique de Dakar* (IID) found that 65% of Dakar survey respondents felt the *taalibes* begging in the streets bothersome and 41% claimed that it was the responsibility of the national government to deal with the situation (Ndiaye 1985:164,165).[151]

Tactics employed by the independent state to deal with the *daaras* over time have been remarkably, even ironically, similar to those put in place by their colonial predecessors. A standardized curriculum had been developed by the IID and the *Union Nationale des Ecoles Coraniques* (National Union of Qur'anic Schools, UNEC) in the 1980s, recognizing a need to regulate and enhance Qur'anic school learning, but it was never implemented. Millenium Development Goals of the 21st Century have brought on a renewed push to lure *taalibes* into the "formal" school sector to fill the gaps in enrollment and literacy rates mostly attributed to the frequentation of *daaras*. Beginning in the late 1990s, the government has pursued a policy of "modernizing" the *daaras*, which has involved a mix of proposed legislation, subsidies, and controls to formalize the Qur'anic school sector. "Modernization" has led to the creation of a new government office dedicated to *daaras*, the development of yet another standardized curriculum, and the drafting of regulations for opening and operating Qur'anic schools and qualifying professional criteria for Qur'anic teaching.

The multifarious and somewhat nebulous initiative referred to by the government of Senegal as "the modernization of *daaras*" was born out of a push to increase school enrollment and literacy in the country to meet Millenium Development Goals set in place in 1990 during the UNESCO World Conference on *Education for All* (EFA) in Jomtien, Thailand. The follow-up UNESCO forum was held in Dakar, Senegal in 2000. There, participants from around the globe delineated ambitious

[151] Twenty-five percent cited that it was the religious authorities who needed to act, and 15% said that it was the responsibility of both the national government and the religious authorities to resolve the issue (Ndiaye 1985:165).

plans to strive for EFA by the year 2015. But in the backdrop of this transnational meeting to promote universal childhood education were the thousands of begging Qur'anic school pupils, the vast majority of whom were not considered educated by official assessments. The *taalibes* are a readily visible gap in Senegalese formal school enrollment, roaming the streets rather than sitting at desks.

At the time of the 2000 Dakar EFA meeting, the rate of formal primary school enrollment in Senegal was at 71%. Aggressive state and non-state partnership initiatives directed at expanding access to education in the country allowed for a sixteen point boost on that figure a decade later to 87%[152]. Part of this increase was due to the continuing expansion of the capacities of the formal school system. The state built primary schools and trained teachers through partnerships with NGOs such as Plan International and with indirect aid from bilateral agencies such as USAID. But part of this increase in Senegal's education rates was due to a change in methods of calculation. The challenge facing the Senegalese state was how to advance toward e*ducation for all* when a significant portion of the population refused "formal" education in favor of Qur'anic education. The answer that it came up with was to find a way to count those *taalibes* as educated.

State officials and non-state partners were aware that the rates of primary educational attainment in Senegal would not approach *education for all* until more of the children passing through "informal" Qur'anic education could be counted. French sociologist, Emile Charlier pointed out in a 2002 article that the state's strategy to increase primary school enrollment by targeting Qur'anic schools was likely rooted in the assumption that a rate of any less than 100% could be attributed to Qur'anic school attendance. Charlier (2002:97) documented that the formal public primary school system accommodated 990,396 primary school-aged students in 1999-2000. The formal private primary schools (registered with the state and in conformity with curricular and organizational regulations) registered 117,316 students the same year. Charlier included a frequently-cited estimate of those attending exclusively Qur'anic schools of 800,000, calculated from the difference between enrollment in formal schools and the total number of children of the primary school age group. This figure was seen as particularly menacing to formal school numbers.

Three key transformations emerged in Senegal soon after the UNESCO meeting in Dakar. One was a legal determination that students receiving a religious education in officially-recognized non-formal schools such as *daaras* would thereafter be considered "*scolarisés*" or "school-educated"

[152] Gross primary school enrollment rates, 2000 and 2010 respectively. Source: The World Bank, World DataBank World Development Indicators, www.databank.worldbank.org, Accessed August 19, 2013. Statistics of primary school enrollment in Senegal citied in a USAID (2010) publication differ slightly: 69.8% in 2000 and 92.5% in 2009.

(ROCARE 2009:16; Charlier 2002). This terminological adjustment, despite perhaps recognizing an alternative form of education preferred by some citizens of the country, did not translate into any change on the ground in terms of the quality or quantity of education received by Senegalese children. It merely served to make much of the informal educational sector "countable" in official statistics. This likely played into the positive shift in schooling rates observed in the country during that decade.

Furthermore, two more developments came out of the rush toward EFA in Senegal, both taking into consideration the "sensitive" question of religious education, and its continuing high demand in certain areas of the country. One was the idea to bring a religious education option into public primary schools to attract families who might otherwise opt out of public schools in favor of religious training. The other was to bring part of the primary school curriculum to Qur'anic schools, specifically basic literacy, mathematics and life skills, and professional training as delineated in the definition of a quality education to be ensured in EFA initiatives. This plan for curricular expansion in Qur'anic schools was the beginning of what has become known in Senegalese government circles as the "modernization of *daaras*."

The Senegalese state partnered with UNICEF to improve access to quality education in the Qur'anic school sector and by 2001 set up a trilingualism and professional training curriculum which was to be "experimented" in 80 *daaras* in the regions of Dakar, Thiès, Diourbel and Kaolack (see map on p.22), impacting the education of 15,735 *taalibes* (Touré 2009: 59; Personal interview Bassirou Dieng[153])[154]. The trilingualism component consisted of providing instruction in French, Arabic, and a national language of the school's choice such as Wolof or Pulaar, depending on the availability of instructors. In conjunction with mathematics, life skills and sometimes a rudimentary introduction to other subjects such as geography and history, this expanded curriculum was meant to provide a pathway to younger *taalibes* to pursue further studies in the formal educational system. *Taalibes* could continue their education in French or Arabic language schools, or in the Franco-Arabic hybrid models. Older *taalibes*, considered too advanced in age at the time of intervention to continue into the formal educational system, were trained in a trade to enhance their employment opportunities after completion of their Qur'anic studies (Touré 2009).

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[153] Personal interview, Bassirou Dieng, December 31, 2010, Dakar, Senegal.

[154] This project, called the "Program to Introduce Trilingualism and Professional Training into *Daaras*," was carried out by the *Direction de l'Alphabetisation et des Langues Nationales* (DALN) (Direction of Literacy and National Languages), a division of "informal" education within the *Ministère de l'enseignement préscolaire, de l'élémentaire, du moyen secondaire et des langues nationales* (Ministry of Preschool, Elementary, Middle Secondary and National Languages Teaching).

In 2007, and again in 2010, I interviewed Bassirou Dieng[155], a director for the Trilingualism and Professional Training (*Trilingisme et Formation Professionelle*, TFP) project. I asked him about the motivations of the government of Senegal to put this TFP project in place in *daaras*:

> *There are multiple motivations – first there is that children have the right to an education. All of these taalibes have the right to a good education. While the government realized that up to now they are children who are left stranded from the formal educational system. So, a solution should be found. Those children, being entirely Senegalese, should be supported in the domain of education… The second reason is that we should attain education for all. For these taalibes, who constitute at least 800,000, cannot be left stranded or else we will never attain education for all. While that is the objective of education in Senegal* (Bassirou Dieng[156], Dakar, Senegal).

An "Inspector of the *Daaras*" was appointed to the Ministry of Education in 2008, and the accompanying government office, the *Inspection des Daaras* was created and staffed in 2009 with an explicit mission to "modernize and integrate the *daaras* into the educational system" (Senegal 2009, Arrêté 06374). In other words, despite its name suggesting a monitoring or regulatory role - perhaps to weed out the exploiters and poor educators flagged as dangerous in the anti-trafficking literature - the *Inspection des Daara's* primary role is "administrative", as it was clarified to me by Kadir Mbacké of the *Inspection des Daaras*:

> *Voilà, inspection, in fact that is the name. But us, we play the role of an administration… When we speak of inspection, the idea that comes is the aspect of inspection, of control, of sanctions, etcetera. But in fact in the mission of the* Inspection des Daaras*, it is not simply that. In fact it is a role of coordination (Kadir Mbacké, Dakar, Senegal[157]).*

As their accomplishments have been exhibited as discrete, limited-scope "projects" promoting the "modernization of *daaras*,[158]" I immediately assumed that the mission of this new

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[155] Mr. Dieng is employed within the *Direction de l'Alphabetisation et des Langues Nationales* (DALN) (Direction of Literacy and National Languages) of the Ministry of Education, and has been affiliated with the project since its start.
[156] Personal interview, video-recorded, December 31, 2010.
[157] Personal Interview, Kadir Mbacké, October 14, 2010, Dakar, Senegal.
[158] In addition to pursuing the Trilingualism and Professional Training (Trilingisme et Formation Professionelle, TFP) model, the Senegalese State had already put in place in 1998 a pilot project called Education à la vie familiale/Education en matiere de population (EVF/EMP, Population and Family Life Education program), which was attempted in some *daaras*. The program is now being described as having contributed to the modernization initiatives, but at the outset its goals were less about spreading quality education to Qur'anic schools than controlling high birth rates and sexually transmitted diseases in public schools as well as *daaras*. Funded by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), *EVF/EMP Daara* was meant to provide an introduction to basic hygiene, nutrition and family planning in Qur'anic schools – it was a sex education program, pushed forward with demographic concerns of population and development, and at the height of AIDS epidemic scares (Diop & Mbodj 1999).
Another project cited by the Senegalese state as contributing to the modernization of *daaras* is the *Projet de Lutte Contre les Pires Formes de Travail des Enfants* (Project to Fight Against the Worst Forms of Child Labor), created in 2001, in partnership with *La Coopération Italienne au Développement* (The Italian Cooperation for Development). The project was carried out through a partnership between La Coopération Italienne and *le Ministère de la Famille, de l'Entreprenariat Féminin, de la Solidarité Nationale et de la Micro Finance* of the government of Senegal. It focused a significant portion of its budget on the problem of forced child begging, both through awareness campaigns in areas from which many Qur'anic

government office was simply to undertake more targeted interventions. I asked Mr. Mbacké, "How does it work - how many *daaras* do you work with, and are there plans to broaden the scope in the future?

> *No, we work with all of the daaras of Senegal. In fact, it is not a project or a thing. But it concerns all of the daaras of Senegal. Whether they are traditional daaras or modern daaras… We work with all of the daaras. In fact we have helped the Qur'anic masters to set up a collective that regroups them a bit. So, effectively…we are in a state of collaboration with them.*

The *Inspection des Daaras* recently issued a document called "The Concept of the Modern *Daara*" which describes the justification and vision for the "modern *daara*", stressing three basic areas of concern: 1) the need for a "pertinent and harmonized curriculum" which favors a "holistic approach" to the improvement of the living and learning conditions of the *taalibes*; 2) the need to invest in the "construction, rehabilitation and equipping of *daaras*" with the aim to assure the "physical and pedagogical" quality of *daara* structures; and 3) the need for a "regulatory framework" codifying the "management and control of the *daaras*". The *Inspection des Daaras*, therefore strives to support Qur'anic schools financially and pedagogically, as well as oversee their operations throughout Senegal.

The actions of this new government office in pursuit of these objectives have included working with the Islamic Development Bank (*Banque Islamique du Développement*, BID) to conduct a census of Qur'anic schools throughout the country, as well as developing a "harmonized" curriculum to be implemented in all schools recognized by the state, which was in trial phase as of 2010. The *Inspection des Daaras* has delineated criteria that must be met by Qur'anic instructors to be recognized by the state. This "Framework Agreement" (*Accord-Cadre*) was developed in consultation with the National Collective of Qur'anic School Associations of Senegal (*Collectif National des Associations des Ecoles Coraniques du Senegal*, CNAECS).

The Senegalese state has been actively *en route* to "modernizing" its *daaras* for over a decade, progressing through the implementation of special projects targeting the quality of teaching and potential for learning, to the creation of a government office specifically charged with managing the process. Summarizing its overall progress, the *Inspection des Daaras* reported in 2012 that the key realizations on the part of the Senegalese state in terms of modernizing *daaras* include, "among others" the following:

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schools migrate, as well as through micro-financing of projects which seek to make Qur'anic schools financially self-sustaining.

- *the construction of 18 modern daaras [Touba, Tivaouane, Bambey, Ndioum, Pire, …);*
- *the employment of teachers in the daaras;*
- *supplying the daaras with school materials;*
- *the improvement of the environment and learning in 20 daaras*[159] *through the Project to Introduce Trilingualism and Professional Training;*
- *the elaboration and validation of the "Concept of the Modern Daara"*
- *the elaboration of projects and regulatory texts governing daaras (at present in the circuit of visas);*
- *the signing of a Framework Agreement (Accord-cadre) between the Ministry of Education and the Associations of Qur'anic Schools of Senegal pending the enactment of the regulatory texts;*
- *the elaboration and validation of the Standard Norms of Quality in daaras;*
- *the testing of the Harmonized Curriculum of daaras integrating religious education and basic life skills referred to in the fundamental cycle (in the regions of Saint-Louis, Thiès, Dakar, Fatick and Kaffrine);*
- *the training of 60 teachers for the Testing of the Harmonized Curriculum of daaras;*
- *the mutualization of tools with the administrators of the system;*
- *awareness-raising in large religious families.*

While its role as a government office is to represent and address the concerns of all Qur'anic schools in the country, the *Inspection des Daaras'* most significant on-the-ground realizations have included only a micro sub-sample of the schools concerned. By contrast its cooperation with partners to produce administrative texts, a regulatory framework, and information about the *daaras* envisages a national scope.

Drawing on the long history of failed colonial efforts to regulate the Qur'anic schools, and the implications of calling *daaras* "schools" or "Qur'anic schools," as I discussed above, I believe that it was quite purposeful that the new government office employs the term *daaras*, as opposed to "Qur'anic schools." A *Qur'anic school*, by definition would not include a basic primary school curriculum, but a *daara* – a unique, local, traditional institution – can be "modernized" as the public sees fit. Furthermore, as will be discussed in the following chapter, despite creating this new government office dedicated to the *daaras*, their recognition by the Ministry of Education does not mean that they will become a public charge like the public schools. This plan rests on the premise that the bulk of *daaras* remain "informal" private institutions, a distinction established and enduring since colonial times. For *taalibes* to be counted as "educated" for the purposes of EFA stats, their

[159] The TFP project actually started with a target of 80 *daaras*, in twenty of which was formed a "special cohort" of children aged 6 to 12 who would be prepared to continue directly into formal middle school education. A significant number of Qur'anic schools dropped out of TFP over the course of the program, primarily due to financial constraints prohibiting the recruitment of teachers for the additional subjects (Touré 2009)

daaras must be legally "recognized" by the state government, but they do not have to be state-operated schools. Regional non-governmental actors and interested Qur'anic masters, however, are reclaiming Qur'anic schools' rights to public education funds.

Separating Education from Religion in Qur'anic Schools:
NGOs and the Power of "Studies" and Stories

The post-colonial presidents of Senegal since 1960 have recognized the dismal state of the *daaras* as unacceptable, but have failed to implement effective policy to improve their lot. "Modernization" efforts have been piecemeal and have not touched the majority of *daaras*. They have failed to officially recognize the *daaras* as "formal" institutions of education, however *daaras* have gained the opportunity to become officially-recognized informal institutions, potentially eligible for limited subsidies.

The NGO ENDA, which operates a widespread *taalibe*/Qur'anic student project in several countries of West Africa, is pushing for more. It has been helping to create and work with Qur'anic master associations to advocate for Qur'anic schooling to be recognized as a legitimate, potentially official and formal mode of education for West African pupils. I have observed that one of its strategies is to strive to propagate in people's minds a "*separation nette*" ("total separation") between the religious aspects of the schools and the primary education that they are providing to children. One way that ENDA-Mali has promoted this idea has been to harness stories about the history of Qur'anic education in Mali. They trace its roots as the official form of education preceding colonial occupation (beginning circa 1890), hence advocating for its rightful recognition and support by the post-colonial Malian state.

In Mali, the conversations regarding "modernization" and standardization are not quite as far along as those in Senegal, where government oversight of Qur'anic schools has already been shifted from the Ministry of the Interior[160], in charge of religious affairs, to the Ministry of Education. Furthermore, actors in Mali appear to be pushing for a full "formalization" of Qur'anic education in Mali, to function alongside the French language public schools. In contrast, in Senegal, the plans appear to stop at "official recognition" of the "informal" schools through authorizations and regulations. This push was explained to me by ENDA-Mali personnel because of the country's high percentage of students who attend only Qur'anic schools. Mali's persistently low public school

[160] The Malian counterpart is the *Ministere de l'Administration Territoriale et des Collectivités Locales*, but it is often referred to as the Ministry of the Interior for short.

enrollment and completion statistics corroborate this, with a net primary school enrollment rate of 62.9% in 2011, over thirteen points lower than the rate for Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole[161] (World Bank 2013).

ENDA-Mali is heading up promotional campaigns in the country to seek consensus among actors on the issue of the "attachment" of Qur'anic schools to the Ministry of Education and their "formalization". But what I found remarkable was the importance and power of published "studies" (*études*) and stories of history within this advocacy and my interviews with the Qur'anic masters of Kayes and the secretary general of the *Haut Conseil Islamique* (High Islamic Council, HCI), a centralized Muslim authority in Mali. These studies play a key role in negotiating the terms of the proposed ontological shift of Malian Qur'anic schools from Qur'anic "centers" – as they are generally called in popular discourse and among Qur'anic masters in Mali – to nominally and essentially educational institutions or "schools." My observations suggest that the dissemination of these versions of events has proved influential in getting actors on board with their campaign.

ENDA-Mali produced two studies in collaboration with European NGOs as conceptual and financial partners[162] on the situation and history of child begging in Mali as it relates to the institution of Qur'anic education. To provide legitimacy for proposed policies, the studies were mobilized as knowledge gathered scientifically, to be disseminated and "understood" rather than merely considered or weighed, as becomes clear in this description of events by Salif Konté, the head of the *Taalibe* Project at ENDA-Mali in Bamako:

> *We have a certain number of recommendations that were proposed by those studies, which tell us, 'if you want to work with the taalibes, here are the indications and the data collected from the Qur'anic masters and the children, and from certain local authorities where the studies were realized. Here are some indications that will permit you to better attain…the results.' And so, now, we in Mali, we have taken those documents and we have made a policy at our level, and we will attempt to take it to the state, the government* (Salif Konté, Bamako, Mali[163]).

Mr. Konté notes how he had to "explain" the meaning of these results to concerned actors. He described the question of Qur'anic school reform as "so complex" that the process "could not easily be understood by everyone," namely the Qur'anic masters. ENDA wanted to make clear the

[161] Primary school completion rates in Mali are even lower – with only 61.0% of boys and 49.5% of girls enrolling in the final year of primary school studies (World Bank 2013). This suggests that Malian primary schooling in general, not just Qur'anic schooling, needs significant support.

[162] Six studies were carried out from 2006-2007 on the situation of the *taalibes* in West Africa, two of which were in Mali, by ENDA Tiers Monde with partners Caritas Allemagne, SKN (kinder postzigels), Save the Children Sweden, and Caritas Niger. The other countries where studies were carried out include Senegal, Burkina Faso and Niger. The studies were done in two phases, the situation of *taalibes* in urban settings versus those in rural settings. A summary of the results of all six of these studies is presented in Caritas 2010.

[163] Personal interview, audio-recorded, June 17, 2010, Bamako, Mali.

separation between questions of religion and questions of childhood education, to avoid popular backlash against plans that he admitted could be interpreted as religious interference rather than educational reform:

> *Because the question is so sensitive, people are going to make the confusion between the religion and the educational system that we envision…of the child with respect to the rights of the child…We cannot spill ourselves into religious questions – that needs to be clear – and we make the clear separation. So we, we told ourselves that we needed to go toward people to clarify that first, so that people do not think that we are trying to struggle against the religion or anything like that (*Salif Konté, Bamako, Mali).

Once they got the state, technical partners and associations on board, the ENDA-Mali team brought their ideas and their studies to "explain them" to the *Haut Conseil Islamique* (HCI). "Because," according to Mr. Konté, "[the HCI] is a structure in Mali that is charged with piloting and giving a vision to everything that concerns religious questions and these questions of Qur'anic education."[164] The ideas were received favorably at the HCI and among Qur'anic master associations. Having brought all actors "into the dynamic", they organized a series of meetings and a large national forum on Qur'anic education. This forum addressed the ideas of "attachment" to state structures, the integration of reading, writing, mathematics and basic life skills into the curriculum, and improving the health of pupils and sanitation within schools.

I asked Mr. Konté how he got the diverse actors on board in such an apparently streamlined way while the topic was so purportedly "sensitive". "Were there any points of disaccord at the beginning, with the HCI or the Qur'anic masters?" I questioned.

"No!" replied Diarra animatedly. He reassured me that, "With this plan there is no problem!" He explained how the Qur'anic master associations of Bamako were already working with ENDA to put in place various recommendations from the "plan of action" that was produced at the national forum. With respect to the HCI, the government had already prepared their leadership for ENDA's arrival, and when they met, they only received "positive reactions".

But when I pushed further, I learned that the process was not as simple as that. It involved much "debate," but Mr. Konté assured me that such was in fact their "objective":

> *We, we have our vision, as I already explained.* ***There are results that we shared from the studies.*** *And in these studies, as I said, is this question of attachment, this question of vision that we do not see Qur'anic schools in terms of religious aspects. No, we see them in terms of education…And there was a debate! That is for sure! No, don't even make the mistake [to think otherwise]!* (Salif Konté, Bamako, Mali).

[164] Personal interview, Salif Konté, June 17, 2010, Bamako, Mali.

Debate was welcomed – that was the purpose of the "dynamic" that Diarra had mentioned. It was a strategy that ENDA purposely undertook, knowing that public debate concerning all actors was the only route to avoiding total annihilation of the plans, as occurred with the "family code" reforms just a year prior. Mr. Konté projected that non-collaborative advancement toward regulating Qur'anic education would have succumb to the same fate.

In the case of the family code, the national assembly voted to make significant changes in the *Code de la Famille*, according more rights to women and children with respect to inheritance and property. However, it was not signed by the president Amadou Toumani Touré, as he was under serious pressure when the HCI called on the population to react. Over 50,000 Malians occupied the national stadium in Bamako to peacefully protest the changes (AFP 2009). Regarding that incident, the secretary general of the HCI, Moustapha Sy, explained to me how the council was completely left out of the conversations. He articulated the HCI's opposition to the proposed legislation in terms of children's rights as well as Malian religion and culture. One example he used was the question of children's rights to their original names. The proposed legislation allowed filial adoption, but the HCI declared this would be an infringement on a child's rights. Mr. Sy explains, "A child is not a tree that has simply sprung up. He comes from an environment and he should have the etiquette of that environment." This example hints at the power of the HCI to support or crush proposed reforms in the Qur'anic education sector, where Islamic education is frequently referred to in terms of both children's and parents' "rights" to choose a religious educational option.

Mr. Konté and his team at ENDA-Mali were intent not to make the same error as the National Assembly with the family code. They encouraged open debate from the beginning, but not without a plan. Mr. Konté explained how many of the disagreements with the Qur'anic masters were resolved by establishing a common understanding among interlocutors of the history of Qur'anic education in Mali. This story starts with the Peulh Emperor of Maasina, Cheikhou Amadou (1776-c.1845). Konté explains:

> *I believe that in the end the people agree with us that for a long time that was the first educational system that came to Africa…The masters who were there, Cheikhou Amadou and others, they were visionaries! And with colonization, because these people were educated, they knew what they wanted with respect to other populations! And that is what made it that they never got along with the colonist* (Salif Konté, Bamako, Mali).

This story, as revealed in the studies' "results" acknowledges the scholarly importance of Qur'anic education in Mali's history, distinguishing mere religious training from intellectual advancement. One must, "not confuse someone who comes to study at night to learn to pray with

someone who comes to extract knowledge to be able to transfer that knowledge," Mr. Konté insisted. "Truly, one cannot make that confusion."

In the chapter, "Complex Engagements: Responding to Violence in Postconflict Aceh," Mary Jo Delvecchio Good, Byron Good and Jesse Grayman's (2010) account of the production and dissemination of a psychosocial needs assessment, demonstrates the power and functionality of commissioned studies and reports in local politics of intervention. In this case, their own activities contributing the the production of a report of human rights abuses in postconflict villages in the region - would have profound consequences on the actual and potential outcomes for peace and health of the various actors concerned, including survivors of abuses, healthcare workers, and local police forces awkwardly caught between the (possibly temporary) cessation of violence and postconflict justice or care. They expressed their desire to avoid blaming rhetoric in order to pursue a "productive" outcome, including gaining broad support for establishing a mental healthcare infrastructure in the region, as well as protecting their informants and research teams, whose very knowledge of abuses could be used against them if peace wavered (ibid:259). Even at that, their institutional partner, IOM, hesitated before publishing the findings, demonstrating the power of such reports to both foster agreements on the ground or shatter them.

Grayman notes that when he presented the findings of their needs assessment to an audience of both victims and perpetrators, he chose to frame information in terms that were palatable to all present. Rather than antagonize police perpetrators, he took advantage of the moment of collective attention to bring all actors (victims and perpetrators) onto "the same page", from which they could hopefully progress toward a future of peace and cooperation. For Grayman (2010) this "same page" understanding was allowing the police to occupy positions of partial victimhood with respect to the human rights abuses committed against the Aceh populations. This strategy of non-blame to foster collaboration was similarly articulated to me by ENDA-Mali workers regarding their reports' dissemination. They expressed needing to "bring [the Qur'anic masters, i.e. perpetrators of abuses in a human rights frame]… to their understanding of things," to move discussion toward collaboration for change. This collective "understanding" was a framing of history that allowed Qur'anic masters to appear as pious, noble victims of history, rather than ruthless exploiters or, at best, neglectful, inept teachers. I go on to examine how ENDA is using this particular framing of the history of their current predicament to foster Qur'anic master collaboration in the plans to "attach" their schools to the state's Ministry of Education.

Telling History to Promote Policy:
Documents, Authority and Cheikhou Amadou's Pre-Colonial Theocratic State

When I arrived in the border region of Kayes to investigate motivations for Qur'anic school migration toward Senegal as well as efforts to stop it, I spoke to Diouldé Ka, the head of the ENDA-Mali *Taalibe* Project in Kayes. Similarly to Mr. Konté, Mr. Ka stressed the importance of having an historical perspective to understand the situation of Qur'anic education in Mali today. "People, they do not seek to inform themselves much, to understand things. But it's true that it is not good – one becomes opposed to everything, to rights." But he explains how ENDA's approach, "research, action, perspective", works to correct that: "Logic wants you to search first for the cause of the problem. Because we understand, this is the difference between ENDA and others, we have understood that people much more frequently attack manifestations, that is to say the phenomena or the symptoms, rather than the cause itself of the problem."

The cause of the problem – that is to say the cause of the dismal state of Qur'anic schools in Mali and the high rates of Qur'anic student begging – can be found in history, according to Diouldé Ka. Mr. Ka dove into an explanation of the Peul Empire of Maasina founded by Cheikou Amadou[165], a theocratic Islamic state called the *Dina* (also *Diina*) which endured for approximately 44 years from 1818 to 1862 (Robinson 2000:139,142; Johnson 1975:482; Brown 1968). Mr. Ka told me that looking back at the functioning and fall of this Islamic state was key to understanding Qur'anic education's poverty today, and what to do about it:

> *When you look at the history of Qur'anic education, you see how the phenomenon came about. It was controlled by the kingdom – it was the king who controlled Qur'anic teaching. Because it was the mode of teaching* par excellence *for children. There was no other type of education if it wasn't Qur'anic education* (Diouldé Ka, Kayes, Mali[166]).

Mr. Ka explained that it was with Qur'anic teaching that young people learned to read and write, learned about Islam, and it was in these Qur'anic schools that students were socialized, through activities such as domestic work, agriculture, raising livestock and fishing. "At the time it was sufficient to complete the education of a person." The role of the Qur'anic master sages was to dispense of social services such as performing baptisms, presiding over funerals and weddings, and serving as mediators in conflicts. "Even the authorities, they always refer to the Qur'anic masters to resolve problems. If there are conflicts between villages, the Qur'anic masters are the first to

[165] Written Seku Amadu Bari (Cisse) in Robinson (2000:139); and Shaykh 'Ahmad in Brown (1968).
[166] Personal interview, Diouldé Ka, July 16, 2010, Kayes, Mali.

intervene… and their role continues." But, in the time of Cheikhou Amadou, the state supported their activities, through tax-based income.

> *Each family contributed - it was an obligation… There was a social organization that was there, everyone had his/her rights and obligations. The obligation of the families was to support education, throughout the kingdom. That is to say that each family contributed with support… in kind, with livestock or with the different forms of money that existed. Every family contributed. But generally it was in kind, if they cultivated the fields for the Qur'anic master… Others brought cereals to the mosque. The mosque distributed them among the needy. And among these needy, first there was the part for the Qur'anic centers that was taken out. After that they gave to the families in need in the city* (Diouldé Ka, Kayes, Mali).

Mr. Ka explains that after the *Dina* disappeared, the social role of the Qur'anic master has continued, "but the obligation of the society has disappeared." It is interesting to note that he describes the fall of the Peulh Massina Empire as correspondent with "colonial penetration," neglecting to note that the state fell under attack by El Hadj Umar Tall[167], during his widespread mid-19th Century jihad conquest through various kingdoms making up Senegalese and Malian territories today.

This system of taxation which fully funded Qur'anic education during the reign of Cheikhou Amadou (1818 to 1862) was framed by Diouldé Ka as a "social obligation" to support the education of one's children and the youth of the society. Mr. Ka elaborated that Arabic teaching came to the region with the religion, but it was Cheikhou Amadou who devised a system "to better accommodate, and make it so that all children study, have the right to an education." He followed up by saying that this "right" to education was actually a legal obligation that one's child attend, and that parents contribute in cash or in kind:

> *You were obligated to educate your child. And the education took the form of Qur'anic teaching. You were obligated to contribute for his education, in one way or another.*

Mr. Ka's framing of a child's "right" to education in the *Dina* suggests parallels in compulsory child education enforced by modern laws, where public education is supported by systems of taxation. But in the latter case, in democratic, secular states, children and parents are given the liberty to choose the type of education they will acquire, such as religious, secular or home-schooling, while this was not the case in the *Dina*.

Written historical accounts of the Peul Empire of Maasina acknowledge the remarkable fiscal efficacy of the state system of taxation over highly diverse peoples, but do not frame the

[167] El Hadj Umar Tall was of Toukouleur origin from the Tekrur region, the area of northern Senegal bordering Mauritania.

participation of the populations in such idyllic terms. Marian Johnson (1976) suggests that the economy of the *Dina*, primarily situated on a war-footing, was dependent on draconian methods of taxation to fund the army to maintain stability. This taxation policy, while physically enforced by the army in cases of dissent, in turn depended on the cultivation of a moral obligation to contribute, done through the circulation of religious texts and widespread religious teaching. Austerity was elevated "to a principle" as the multiple taxes impressed on the people were spent, "not to raise the standard of living of the people, but to raise the Standard of Islam in the Holy War against the infidel" (Johnson 1976:493).

Still considered the most complete account of the neglected topic of the *Dina* is the 1962 text by Amadou Hampaté Ba and Jacques Daget, *L'Empire Peul du Macina, 1818-1853* (T*he Peulh Empire of Masina, 1818-1853*)[168]. Malian Amadou Hampaté Ba is heralded as one of the most important scholars in the history of Mali and Africa, and has written numerous books about Malian history and culture, particularly of the Peulh people. Before his death in 1991, Ba literally created a library of African stories on paper, perhaps in a struggle against his own now-famed words, *En Afrique, quand un vieillard meurt, c'est une bibliothèque qui brûle* ("In Africa, when an elder dies, it is a library that burns"). Diouldé Ka's account of the *Dina* more concurs with that of Ba and Daget than with those of other historians for its emphasis on the *Dina*'s rigid social organization being based on religious piety. The 1964 text on the Peulh Empire of Maasina, based primarily on enduring popular storytelling accounts (Ba & Daget 1984[1962]:13), stresses the social and scholarly value of the educational system in which Emperor Cheikhou Amadou, a learned Muslim scholar and teacher himself, was heavily invested.

Mr. Ka's account of the history of Malian Qur'anic education continues through the fall of the *Dina* and into French colonial times to explore the institution's plunge into poverty and dependence on charity:

> *Well, now, as time evolves, colonization brought the classic school. The Qur'anic school was brushed aside and the French school was privileged. Well now, the role of the education that was anchored in morality persisted. The population still needed the social function of the Qur'anic master, in terms of religious officers. But despite that, the contribution of the authorities no longer followed. The families took over* (Diouldé Ka, Kayes, Mali).

He goes on to explain in detail, in a sort of origins story of Qur'anic student begging, how it became customary for families to set aside portions of meals for students who would come and collect them

[168] Other texts examining the *Dina* and the reign of Cheikou Amadou which have informed my commentary include: Sanankoua (1990); Levtzion (1971); and Brown (1969, 1968).

in bowls and eat them in the Qur'anic schools. This practice is not unlike other historical cases of religious scholars begging for sustenance such as Buddist Monks in India (Mather 1981) or elsewhere. The dissolution of the *Dina* led families to voluntarily set aside rations that had previously been obligated by Cheikhou Amadou. These families would offer food directly to the students as portions of cooked meals. But with time, with increasing economic pressure on families and no state mandate to provide support for Qur'anic students, this practice also waned. Qur'anic students approaching households to collect their rations were often given only leftovers:

> *So the society is showing less and less solidarity. That is to say, there is no more solidarity for Qur'anic teaching, yet they are still in need. Social functions remain the same, yet the authorities have not attacked the problem, which has endured over centuries. It still lingers on as a mode of teaching next to the classic school. Well, it is time to review that. It is time to review it* (Diouldé Ka, Kayes, Mali).

The Qur'anic master association of Kayes volunteered a conspicuously similar version of events in the history of Qur'anic student begging. This is unsurprising as the group has been working with ENDA since its creation in 2005. During my group interview with the Qur'anic masters, comments surfaced about how Qur'anic education was financially supported by authorities in times past, as opposed to today. Their account began by explaining that the Qur'anic students beg in Mali, "because [they] do not have any means": "In the past, the Qur'anic schools, there were funds for Muslims. This fund, the beggar lived on this fund. But this fund is perturbed.[169]" Hassim Baldé, who functioned as the group's spokesperson during the interview, claimed that because the Qur'anic masters "did not want to abandon [their] Qur'an," they had to look for an alternate means to survive. He explained: "So, this begging has entered our society like that. Because it is a burden for the entire society, but people have unburdened themselves and they have abandoned the children." Mr. Baldé noted that the Qur'anic masters "take care of the children" – they are the ones who "do everything for [them]." Yet, he laments, "We have no means, we have no partners, the government does not help us."

I questioned this Qu'ranic master for more details on how the situation had changed over time. He responded by saying that it changed in two ways – first with the fall of Islamic political power, and then when the heads of families stopped supporting Qur'anic education. "Before, it was Islam that had - [pause] the force was with Islam. So our leader, it was him who financed our schools." There was a brief discussion as to who that leader was, but, the speaker continued, after

[169] Group interview with the Qur'anic Master Association of Kayes, Mali. Quote taken from the group's acting spokesperson.

Islam lost power and the heads of family picked up the slack, then even they "let their arms down [as in the body part [*bras*], in resignation], and that is how begging started" (Association of Qur'anic Masters of Kayes, Kayes, Mali)[170].

This story of vulnerable Qur'anic schools is important for its advocacy role at the level of African governments, to lend legitimacy to an educational system which has at times been compared to a massive, loosely organized child trafficking ring. The story incorporating Cheikhou Amadou's *Dina* as a the ideal state for Qur'anic education supports three key points which are central to the continued push for policy change concerning Qur'anic education in Mali: One, it declares that Qur'anic education was the official state-sponsored form of education in Mali prior to colonial occupation. Two, the story claims that state-funding for Qur'anic education disappeared due to colonial occupation by the French, which favored the school that it brought with it. Finally, the stories that I was told about Cheikhou Amadou's *Dina* assert that French colonization of Mali was the prime cause of contemporary Qur'anic student begging today. This happened with the replacement of Qur'anic education with the "classic" school, and the "pauperization" of the Malian people under colonial rule, making it so that they could no longer even support Qur'anic education out of their own pockets[171].

Qur'anic Schools and History

According to Mr. Konté of ENDA-Mali, this common historical understanding of the Peulh Empire of Masina, among the predominantly Peulh population of Qur'anic masters, was enough to "bring most people into their understanding of things." But some remained convinced that the Qur'anic school reforms were a strategy to impair their schools. Mr. Konté described this resistance as simply "not understanding" what they are trying to do, which is to improve Qur'anic education, not take it away from them:

> *But at the forum, it was clear. The majority present proposed that [Qur'anic schools] should be attached [to the Ministry of Education]. If truthfully the idea was to ameliorate Qur'anic teaching, they agree with that. But those who want to stay in the religious framework, they are the ones who still insist that it stays at the level of the Department of the Interior.*

But they "put the problem on the table," and now, according to Mr. Konté, "that debate, it is finished." Mr. Konté went on to explain how relations with the Qur'anic masters were, however,

[170] Group interview, Hassim Baldé, acting spokesperson for the Association of Qur'anic Masters of Kayes, August 12, 2010, Kayes, Mali.
[171] Quotes from Dioudé Ka interview.

not always so open and cooperative. At the time of my research in 2010, they had already been in negotiations with the Qur'anic masters for almost 15 years. "At the beginning they did not even want to speak with us. They were insisting that doing anything other than Qur'anic instruction would divert the children. But now we try to tell them that the realities have changed – you have to go with them! That has cost us years of negotiation!" He explains that if today the Qur'anic masters are ready to accompany ENDA in the process, "then we can only continue in that direction, from negotiation to negotiation to negotiation to bring them to understand." And the day that the Qur'anic masters will be in total agreement, "Well, we will have done our jobs! Then it is up to the state to take over!"

The above story was apparently embraced by organized Qur'anic masters of Mali, whom ENDA-Mali personnel describe as having adopted their "comprehension of things". The story removes culpability from Qur'anic masters for supporting their institution on the backs of begging and shifts blame to colonial occupation and a lack of solidarity among an increasingly impoverished Malian population. Historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995:13), in *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, notes that "The reasons why a specific story matters to a specific population are themselves historical." Trouillot (1995:25) searches within the blurred areas between conceptions of history as "truth" and history as "just another fiction"[172] to look at "the way history works". He acknowledges socio-historical events as having actual real-time impacts on populations, but he also notes how histories are constructed and reconstructed in future generations impacting those populations. Stories of Qur'anic education in Mali have been told for at least a century to describe inadequate, antiquated schools, with inept and often dishonest teachers. The story of Qur'anic education as told to me by Diouldé Ka and the Qur'anic master association of Kayes, is an alternate account, familiar to the peoples of Mali and eloquently retold by a revered Malian Muslim and Peulh poet and scholar. It celebrates and values the role of Qur'anic education in society, shifting blame for the current state of Qur'anic education to the West itself and providing an honorable foundation upon which government support can be demanded by Qur'anic masters.

The example of the *Dina* as publically-supporting Qur'anic education provides advocates with a model to present to the Malian government, presiding over an almost entirely Muslim population, to acknowledge its neglect of Qur'anic education in favor of French-language

[172] Here Trouillot (1995) places his understanding of "history" between positivists (historians separated from their quest for "real" history to be uncovered in truths) and constructivists (for whom "history" is merely another fiction among fictions). For Trouillot, the story that remains is entrenched in the power of the victors, in the "traces" that lend credence to some accounts, and in the people concerned, as agents, actors and subjects of history and histories.

instruction as was established by the occupying colonial authorities. Malian Qur'anic masters were not willing to reform when it meant admitting the ineptitude of their longstanding methods of education. But they have shown a willingness to cooperate with the Malian state to meet the educational needs of Malian students today since it has been made clear that such was their role prior to their colonial displacement.

But what I find ironic about this whole argument is that the actors are referencing the history of an Islamic state to argue the importance of viewing the education furnished in Qur'anic schools as essentially secular. Or at least that is how they are framing the situation to outsiders like me. The logic is that prior to colonial occupation by non-Muslims, the official state education was dispensed in Qur'anic schools, where instruction united together study of the holy text, the Muslim religion, and practical social and economic affairs. This is what ENDA is claiming to want to do in the Qur'anic schools of Mali today, only the practical social and economic affairs will include learning French, the official language of Mali's government today, and other basic subjects deemed relevant by the Ministry of Education and global educational mandates. The Qur'anic school would be treated as an acceptable venue to publically dispense of this education.

The Secretary General of the HCI, Moustapha Sy, however, did not tell me the same story. He did not support the rhetoric that there is a complete separation between religion and education in Qur'anic schools. For him, "the fundamental mission" of the Qur'anic school is learning the Qur'an. So the integration of many other subjects into Qur'anic schools can be a "serious problem": "We do not want to divert them from the Qur'an. We do not want to progressively lessen the weight given to teaching the Qur'an. Because imagine if we started to put in many other subjects – that will always be to the detriment of Qur'anic teaching. That is clear." But Mr. Sy and the HCI's approach is not to reject the idea, but to "search for a formula" that will allow students to study and memorize the Qur'an much more quickly, such as in two to three years rather than the standard seven or eight, and facilitate their transition to some other form of schooling, such as Franco-Arabic.

Therefore, in the end, Mr. Sy supports a publically-funded model which indeed separates religion and education – by funding accelerated Qur'anic learning, the religious part, the state can facilitate the child's further secular education to pursue other subjects and languages. But without funding to improve and accelerate the religious teaching component, this model would fail – as the families wishing to send their children to pursue a religious education in a Qur'anic school – and

there are many – will not see their children finish their religious obligations in time to pursue further education elsewhere. This model more-closely resembles efforts at "modernization" in Senegal.

Mr. Sy's perspective as open to various forms of education post-Qur'anic schooling can perhaps be expected, as he himself has pursued studies at many levels, including French-language studies in France. He expressed himself to me more easily in French than most of my Malian informants, and his own eldest daughter, who is fluent in French and Arabic, memorized the Qur'an before completing secondary studies at a public institution in Mali. Mr. Sy thought that all Malian Qur'anic students ought to be able to pursue a similar path:

> *That is what we should do for the Qur'anic schools. The children who are there have rights. It is not normal that the government takes all of the money and that it should go to the public school. We are all Malians. We all work for this country. The children that God has confided in us, we are responsible for these children, whether they are in a medersa, in a public school, or in a Qur'anic school.*

Similar to Mr. Sy, Mr. Konté of ENDA-Mali in Bamako articulated this goal of the publically-funded Qur'anic school model as allowing for an education of the "person", meaning transmitting him/her basic socially-relevant skills, as well as a religious education:

> *It is the global training of the person. That is what we are looking for, the global training of the person. As soon as this global training of the person is done, he is free to make choices after!*

For Mr. Konté, this general acceptance that it is a child's "right" to pursue both Qur'anic education and public primary schools means that their advocacy has been successful. He exclaimed: "Thank God that today, truly, in Mali, there is no problem at that level."

Conclusion

The production and mobilization of studies and stories has been central to a century of strategies to promote policy dealing with Qur'anic education in West Africa. Through his published study of Qur'anic schools in Senegal, Paul Marty (1917) contributed to repressive colonial policies against the schools for a half a century. The NGO ENDA, through its studies and publications about Qur'anic schooling throughout West Africa, has contributed to the solidification of a discourse surrounding the institution in the region as vulnerable schools in need of support. They have had numerous direct and indirect impacts on policy concerning the schools, both through dissemination of the works as well as through policy advocacy on the ground. ENDA-Mali's specific use of the story of the Peul Emperor Cheikhou Amadou's reign over the *Dina* Islamic state in the 19th Century has brought diverse actors together to share a common conception of the history

and scholarly importance of Qur'anic education, the cause of its diminished condition today, and the imperative that action should be taken by the state to remedy this.

A critical look at this history may reveal that even during the reign of Cheikou Amadou himself, documents and the power to tell or re-tell history played a primary role in the popular support of the policies he implemented. Nehemia Levtzion (1971:588) argues that Cheikhou Amadou, once he gained control of the stores of texts in Timbuktu, likely falsified a 17th Century document about the history of the Songay and Malian kingdoms in order to inscribe himself into a prophesy that he should become the 12th and final "rightly-guided caliph" mentioned by the Islamic Prophet Mohammed.[173] In fact, that is how Ba & Daget's (1962) classic text on the leader begins – with his predestined, divine status as the region's holy leader.

Although Cheikhou Amadou was already Emperor by military conquest, his alleged falsification of an historical document suggests the importance of controlling information to gain mystical support and maintain popular control. Historical accounts report that Cheikhou Amadou was viewed to possess supernatural powers, which no doubt fertilized the cultivation of his policies of universal religious education and jihad, economic austerity, and the moral obligation to pay taxes to the Islamic state.

Today, the intervention strategies of ENDA and various NGOs, in contrast to repressive colonial policies, aim to "begin at the conception of the actors in front of them" at the negotiating table – the Qur'anic masters. They strive to "bring them" to a different understanding of the situation and what to do about it. This strategy starts at points of cultural and religious common ground, and then slowly works to bring the actors on the opposite side of the table to a slightly new conception of acceptable and unacceptable behavior, and fair and unfair treatment. Mr. Konté notes the power of the "studies" that ENDA and others are producing to accomplish this goal, but also cautions interveners from using them to force change:

> *We have to be careful with our whole armament of texts behind us, not to impose a whole new set of rules different from those already in place, but to go to their current reality, their conception of things, and from there try to explain to them why some things have to change and see what can be changed. That way, the Qur'anic masters themselves, who already know the faults of their own way of operating, can find an opportunity to recognize these things and address them in a way that they can participate in how changes will be made.*

[173] Through close textual analysis of the dates and personages mentioned in three recovered manuscripts of the historical document called the *Tarikh al-Fattash*, Levtzion claims that the only version that makes prophetic reference to Cheikhou Amadou contains a skillful rewrite of the first chapter, leaving several internal and historical inconsistencies. The corresponding beginning portions of the other two manuscripts are believed to have been destroyed.

The next chapter follows this path of Qur'anic master-led change in Senegal. I look at ENDA's transnational efforts to organize Qur'anic masters in Senegal and Mali. I guide discussion with six Qur'anic master profiles representing a diverse cross-section of perspectives, some mirroring Mr. Konté's accounts of open collaboration with reform initiatives and others indicating disaccord and resistance. At both extremes, however, Qur'anic masters are articulating their objectives in terms of children's and adults rights in education.

Chapter 7 – Qur'anic Masters Tell their Side:

NGOs, The State, and Reclaiming Rights for "Vulnerable" Qur'anic Schools

"Education is the ability to meet life's situations"

- Dr. John G. Hibben[174]

Introduction

Up to this point in this dissertation, I have talked much about the proclaimed flourishing of child trafficking within the Qur'anic school system of West Africa, as well as the ways in which the government of Senegal and transnational actors are looking to aid *daaras* and get a handle on Qur'anic masters and the tens of thousands of children concerned. This chapter takes a bit of a turn from those "outsider" perspectives to look at what the Qur'anic masters are saying about the situation themselves – about child begging and about "modernizing" *daaras* in Senegal. Despite so much chatter about the situation of the *taalibes*, I find that the voices of the Qur'anic masters are either absent from accounts, or not wholly representative of the diversity of Qur'anic master perspectives. This is because the groups actually writing the accounts about *taalibe* begging are either accusing Qur'anic masters of being child traffickers or portraying them as helpless victims of poverty, thereby rendering consideration of their perspectives inappropriate or extraneous. Only now are Qur'anic masters becoming organized to create a unified voice for the public sphere, but they are still not producing texts about Qur'anic education from their point of view. In fact, I find that they are having trouble simply making their voices heard in supposedly public forums addressing policies for their own schools. What is it that the Qur'anic masters have to say that the NGOs and the state do not want to be heard?

In attempt to grasp their perspectives, I conducted personal interviews with 16 individual Qur'anic masters in Senegal, as well as six individual Qur'anic masters and one group of Qur'anic masters in Kayes, Mali[175]. Throughout this chapter I put these voices in dialogue with state and NGO actors in Senegal in attempt to present their sides of the stories of suffering *taalibes*. The personal accounts represent diverse perspectives. They demonstrate the prevalence of poverty as a

[174] Quote displayed on the wall in the meeting room during the public workshop to present the Qur'anic school curriculum.

[175] These particular Qur'anic masters were recruited in a number of ways, including through NGO contacts, as members of the national collective of Qur'anic masters, as conference attendants, and as personal references from colleagues and community members.

common impediment to effective instruction, Qur'anic masters' perspectives on child begging, and their experiences with aid destined to help with the "modernization" of their schools and methods. This adds a human and lived component to accounts of the difficulties facing Qur'anic schools in Senegal and what to do about them. These show that one Qur'anic master does not speak for all. Lastly, I complicate portrayals of Qur'anic masters' concerns with *daara* "modernization" as either Muslim "resistance" to Western aid for *taalibes*, or simply the defense of unscrupulous child trafficking. Rather than adhering to fixed ideological stances, these Qur'anic instructors' accounts demonstrate pragmatic economic, religious and political calculations in their daily activities and long-term decision-making.

Issue 1 - Hurdles to "modernization": A Lack of Resources for *Daaras*

The following two profiles and subsequent discussions address the pressing needs facing Qur'anic schools, as well as the inability of the state to adequately accommodate them. As new migrants to Dakar, both of the instructors profiled depend almost entirely on their *taalibes*' begging revenues to make ends meet. They have no problem with – they even embrace – "modernizing" initiatives which would incorporate French language instruction into their Qur'anic schools. In fact their reported actions demonstrate that they would gladly offer their students alternative educational opportunities when they become available. The problem is, of course, that despite the state's optimistic plans to "modernize" the country's *daaras*, it is facing very real problems in terms of on-the-ground implementation – namely a gaping lack of resources to accomplish the goals that it set out for itself. Although each of these Qur'anic masters has had some NGO contact to assist with curricular reform, it has been minimal and non-sustainable.

Profile 1: Latif Diallo's[176] *Daara*

Latif Diallo is a young Qur'anic master who operates a *daara* in the Dakar suburb of Guediawaye. When I interviewed him, he was only 38 years old but had already been teaching the Qur'an for 23 years, first in a village in the region of Matam in Eastern Senegal, and now in Guediawaye for two years. *Seriñ* Diallo is of the ethnicity Toukouleur, a branch of the Pulaar-speaking groups originating in the border regions between northern Senegal and Mauritania and along the Senegalese river eastward, called the Fouta Tooro. He has one wife who is living with him in Dakar, and three children, all living with relatives in his home village in eastern Senegal.

[176] Information gathered in a personal interview, Latif Diallo, November 10, 2010, video recorded, Guediawaye, Senegal.

Latif Diallo's training includes having memorized the Qur'an in a *daara*. When asked why he chose to become a Qur'anic master as a career, he responded that it was simply his lot in life, what he was meant to do. His relatives were all Qur'anic masters – that is what his family knows, so that is what he knows – he grew up around it. He chose to come to Dakar to teach because a Qur'anic master colleague from his area, who is a "*grand marabout*" (an important, influential religious guide) in Dakar brought him there to teach. He has become a member of a Qur'anic master association in Guediawaye, and he plans to stay in Dakar for the rest of his career. He asserts, "This is where Allah put me. I'm not going back, *de*[177]!"

But this enthusiasm to make it work in Dakar is still accompanied by considerable financial concerns in his *daara*, which houses 29 live-in *taalibe* boys from rural areas of Senegal, aged seven to 15. The parents do not pay *Seriñ* Diallo for their instruction, and so they all depend entirely on begging for food and other daily costs in the *daara*. He acknowledged that the limited economic means of the parents likely played into their decisions to turn their children over to him for full-time Qur'anic education. At the time of the interview, none of the children had returned home or seen their parents since coming to Dakar two years prior, but Latif Diallo claims that he maintains contact with them by telephone.

One of *Seriñ* Diallo's *taalibes*, Modou, candidly expressed to me that living so far from home is difficult for him. As I toured the *daara* and filmed the premises, Modou, who looked about nine years old, followed me and kept jumping into my camera's view to get filmed. "*Photo-moi* (take my photo)," he requested, making poses. So I started the camera and asked him to show me where his bag was. He showed me a carry-on sized blue suitcase within which all of his belonging were stored. He said he was from the region of Tambacounda, a travel and trading hub joining the southern Casamance region of Senegal to the rest of the country. Tambacounda is situated on a crossroads connecting Kayes to Dakar, and Guinea and Guinea-Bissau to Senegal. This region is known to be a major "source area" within Senegal for *taalibes* begging in Dakar.

"Do you like it here?" I asked (literally in Wolof, "Is it nice here?"). While that question may seem a bit naïve, I have often heard from NGOs in Dakar that not all children necessarily want to leave. They report that once they have gotten a taste of city life, some prefer it to village life. Modou's response was sobering:

Modou: It's not nice, de!

Sara: It's not nice, why?

[177] "*De*" is a verbal exclamation present throughout much of the region, like "eh" in English.

Modou: Ah! (smiling a bit, and looking away) It's tough. [literally – "It hurts."]

Sara: How is it tough?

Modou: Ah, the daara, it's tough.

Sara: But do you like Dakar?

Modou: If your mother is not here, you cannot like it here.

Sara: That's right. Your mother, she is in Tambacounda?

Modou: Yes.

Sara: How long ago did you see her?

Modou: Two years.

The space that houses Latif Diallo's *daara* is a modest urban corner lot, enclosed by an unfinished cement fence. The children sleep under a three-walled open cement structure with zinc roof panels, and they hear their lesson there or outside in the shade of this structure on a large straw mat. The lot does not have any toilet or shower facilities, running water or electricity. Children drink water during the day from a single yellow cup used to draw water from a large blue plastic oil drum converted into a cistern. Meals are not cooked on the premises. The children eat leftovers at neighborhood homes and they wash themselves occasionally when they get a chance accessing neighborhood faucets. There was a livestock pen on the side of the sandy lot opposite the cement structure that held about twelve sheep and one cow, which Latif Diallo said he tended to himself.

Seriñ Diallo said that he takes sick children to the hospital. Sometimes they will be offered free services, but sometimes he would pay out of pocket. As his association of Qur'anic masters is in partnership with the NGO ENDA, their personnel take the children to the health center periodically for health screenings and vaccinations.

The students in *Seriñ* Diallo's *daara* study French and mathematics in addition to the Qur'an through the assistance of ENDA. Teachers of these subjects come to the *daaras* two or three times a week to work with the children, an initiative that *Seriñ* Diallo enthusiastically supports. However, he regretfully remarked that the teachers often failed to come, which is likely related to their work in *daaras* being mostly voluntary. He wished that ENDA would try to send a replacement on those days. Latif Diallo is a staunch supporter of *taalibes* learning other subjects, and being integrated into the public system after finishing the *daara*, such as in the state's plans for "modernization." The more education the better. When asked whether or not he supported the state's plans, he responded, "That's great, because sometimes there are children who speed through the Qur'anic

school." He specified that students may finish the Qur'an at age 10 or 13. "When that program comes, if we could put those students in that [the primary school program], that would be great."

Latif Diallo told me that he supports himself and his family primarily on the begging revenues taken in by his *taalibes*. He claims not to set them a specific begging quota and, and when I asked him about instructors who beat children to force begging, he claimed to be against hitting children. It appears, however, according to my research assistant, that when I got up from the interview and went to tour the inside of the cement structure, he hit a boy for having misbehaved in some way. In fact I have learned to take self-reports about corporal punishment with a grain of salt throughout my research in West Africa, as it is still a widely practiced form of discipline in a wide range of settings - within homes, in primary schools, and notoriously in *daaras* - where the students are generally held to strict standards of study and discipline (see chapter four).

Profile 2: Amadou Diouf's[178] *Daara*

Amadou Diouf is a Qur'anic master currently teaching approximately 29 *taalibes* in his *daara* located in the Dakar suburb of Pikine, where he is one of over 350 members of a Qur'anic master association (the one aided by *Plan International* and presided over by Becai Gueye whom we met in chapter four). At the time of our interview he was 51 years old, and had been teaching the Qur'an for 17 years, mostly in his home village in the region of Kaolack, where he taught until two years prior. In 2008 he migrated to the Dakar area with some of his students, and he plans to continue to teach in Pikine for the remainder of his career. Similar to *Seriñ* Diallo, Qur'anic teaching is a family affair for *Seriñ* Diouf, who said he was simply "born into" his vocation. His training to become a Qur'anic master consisted of memorizing the Qur'an in a *daara* and studying some Islamic law. He is of Wolof ethnicity, has two wives and 14 children.

Apart from memorizing the Qur'an, which takes about six or seven years, some of the *taalibes* in Amadou Diouf's *daara* have taken the option to study the French language and other French language courses such as mathematics. They do this through a partnership that *Seriñ* Diouf has forged with a Qur'anic master colleague from the neighborhood who offers a full French curriculum. Through an agreement with his Qur'anic master association, *Plan International* has provided Amadou Diouf's *daara* with some basic supplies including some wash basins, mosquito nets, a first aid kit, and some study supplies including notebooks and pens. They receive free

[178] Information gathered in a personal interview, Amadou Diouf, December 1, 2010, audio recorded, Pikine, Dakar, Senegal.

consultations at local clinics and *Plan* reimburses for medications for minor ailments. *Seriñ* Diouf is not receiving any other direct aid from public or private sources, except, of course, spontaneous local religious-based donations (which can be substantial, especially for well-established *seriñs*, as explored in chapter five).

Of the 29 children who study with him, 15 of them are from his home village and the rest are neighborhood children who return home for meals and at night. He asks all parents, both local and those in the village, to make a small contribution to the functioning of the *daara* each month – but only one local family actually pays this sum (which is 1,000 fCFA, approximately 2 USD[179]). The children beg every morning from about 8:00-10:00, which covers their breakfast and provides cash for *daara* operating costs. Amadou Diouf said that he prepares millet porridge in the *daara* in the mornings, but the kids usually prefer to find their own breakfast outside. Their lunch and dinner meals are secured through a local *ndeyi-daara* (mothers of the *daara*) initiative in his neighborhood. This pairs each *taalibe* with a host "mother" who sets aside his portion of food (*tibbal*) during each meal. The *taalibes* go out during meal times to collect their rations and return to the *daara* to eat.

I asked Amadou Diouf why he decided to migrate to Dakar to teach the Qur'an after so many years in his village, and he responded without hesitation, "the times, that's all [laughing a bit]. Modern times. Difficulties and modern times, that is it." He used the word *jamono* in Wolof, which I translated here as "the times", to refer to a host of cultural, social and economic shifts that are taking place and which have led to urban migration. The shifts that he referred to specifically include periodic reduced harvests due to drought and the inexistence of irrigation technologies, as well as the difficulty of surviving by raising crops in a monetized economy. He explains his difficulties:

> *I had told you that before I left there [the village], my daara had 40 people. I stayed there until the point when I would farm and nothing would be left of the harvests. I would go to work in the morning, I have to stand up and teach, I have to pay the expenses. But I haven't got a penny - I stand there and I don't know how I am going to do it.*

Seriñ Diouf goes on to explain when he knew enough was enough:

> *For two years I had problems left and right. I went to the government and got fertilizer, and I put it on the crops. When the rainy season arrived, I could not pay for it. It became a debt. And I say by the word of Allah that I do not want to owe anyone anything. That, that is why I told myself, I am going to look for a different solution that works for me. That is what brought me here.*

[179] We can recall that nearly 30% of people in Senegal survive on less than 1.25 USD per day [World Bank 2013], and that most begging *taalibes* are expected to bring in more than 500 fCFA per day in begging revenues, or over 1 USD per day.

Knowing that Amadou Diouf came to Dakar due to severe economic problems in the village, I asked him if he would be interested in participating in a *retours des daaras,* or "*daara* return" program if he were approached by the government or an NGO. Such a plan would normally include an "accompaniment project" which would allow the Qur'anic master to pursue an income-generating project while instructing students in the village. His response revealed some ambivalence. He said in a tone tinged in sarcasm: "Yes, sure, I don't refuse such an idea," but he explained that it would depend on the accompaniment project. "If the *projet d'accompaniment* is good, and I can make ends meet like here, then yes. But, if it is too small, I am not going to pick up and leave."

Despite struggle in Dakar, *Seriñ* Diouf is surviving, his *daara* is functioning, and he even has big plans for curricular expansion in the future – all things he was not able to make happen in his village. But the state and NGOs do not necessarily want *Seriñs* Diallo and Diouf in Dakar. Still, those actors are short of finding a feasible plan to either reintegrate them into their villages or aid the *daaras* in Dakar to end the urban begging.

Massive Drop-out of the State's Trilingualism Project Due to a Lack of Resources

Despite its rhetorical assertions that the Qur'anic schools of Senegal will be "modernized", the government of Senegal simply has not allocated the resources necessary to carry out the plans. Financial constraints created obstacles for the successful completion of the Trilingualism and Professional Training (*Trilinguisme et Formation Professionelle*, TFP) project in the *daaras* - the policy's principal on-the-ground realization and a representation of what "modernization" might look like. Upon its completion, there were only twenty TFP *daaras* fully participating out of the initial 80. To account for this massive drop-out rate, the Ministry of Education's 2009 evaluative report of TFP repetitively detailed how the *daaras*' endemic financial woes had a serious impact on every aspect of the quality reforms attempted, and the increased teaching load proved to be too much for most participants. The report reads:

> *The quasi-totality of the TFPs encounter problems of financing, which has repercussions on the establishment and quality of the infrastructure and equipment, as well as in the recruitment and motivation of personnel. That poses a problem for the sustainability of the actions and the quality of the … program* (Touré 2009: Section IV.2.3.).

The TFP, the hallmark project within Senegal's plan to modernize its *daaras*, was therefore largely underfunded. According to Bassirou Dieng, a director of the TFP program from the Ministry of Education, many of these volunteer *daaras* were "highly-motivated" to participate. Yet

they were unsuccessful even with direct aid and pedagogical guidance from the state (Basse 2010[180]). One can only imagine the difficulties that such a program would have on a national level, where interest levels are highly variable. The *Inspection des Daaras* was unable to confirm to me whether any funding had actually been budgeted for the implementation of a large-scale plan. Senegal is already struggling with paying the salaries of the educators within the formal system, leading to teacher strikes that take place for months at a time (e.g. AFP 2012). It appears, then, that on its current trajectory, the state of Senegal will not secure the funds needed to feasibly integrate most *daaras* into the national educational system. It is even questionable to expect that well-meaning Qur'anic instructors would be able to comply with curricular reforms, with or without subsidies.

Funds Needed to Speed Up Qur'anic Learning on the Ground

Within the vision of *daara* "modernization", an official Qur'anic school curriculum has been developed with the objectives to regularize and improve the quality of Qur'anic teaching. One goal is to allow students an easy transition into the public educational system upon completion of the Qur'an. The initiative to revamp the curriculum was supported by a state/non-state partnership called PARRER (*Partenariat pour le Retrait et Reinsertion des Enfants de la Rue*, Partnership for the Retraction and Reinsertion of Children in the Streets). The curriculum was developed by the government's *Inspection des Daaras*[181] and PARRER in consultation with chosen experts in Islamic and primary education, including the leadership of the National Collective of Qur'anic School Associations of Senegal (*Collectif National des Associations des Ecoles Coraniques du Sénégal*, CNAECS).

This newly adopted "harmonized curriculum" for Qur'anic schools in Senegal significantly reduces the amount of time that students would spend studying solely the Qur'an to three years, with a maximum of four years. The rationale is simple – many parents and Qur'anic masters want the children to begin their studies with memorization of the Qur'an in isolation, as the insertion of other subjects would be considered to be co-opting authentic Qur'anic education. So starting students at an early age and accelerating the process of learning the Qur'an can in theory allow them ample time to learn other primary school subjects afterwards within the standard time frame of primary education. Students would then complete primary education and take the middle school entrance examination around the same time as their public school peers.

[180] I also draw on a personal interview with Bassirou Dieng, December 31, 2010, video recorded, Dakar, Senegal.
[181] Situated within the (*Ministère de l'enseignement préscolaire, de l'élémentaire, du moyen secondaire et des langues nationales* (Ministry of Preschool, Elementary, Middle Secondary and National Languages Teaching).

Djibril Dior, the acting president of the CNAECS during my research period, and a Qur'anic master himself for nearly forty years explained the "modernization" plans to me as being extremely efficient. He shared his own daughters' positive experiences with the model; at the time of our interview they were live-in *taalibes* at a private, all-girl "modern" *daara* in Dakar (Djibril Dior, Dakar, Senegal[182]). For Djibril Dior, "modernizing" *daaras* means providing students with the means to maximize study time and thereby minimize the overall number of years spent at the *daara.* This allows students the opportunity to easily transition into formal school programs. In this model, however, at least at present when government subsidies are still relatively small or entirely absent, parents are expected to pay for instruction. For those families unable to pay for such intensive instruction, this model is currently unavailable, except for a few notable exceptions that Djibril Dior cited for me, where the *daaras* function through generous endowments. One example that Djibril Dior provided was the large, historic rural *daara* located in Koki, in the region of Louga. This *daara* accommodates an estimated 3,000 live-in *taalibes*, and it integrates traditional Qur'anic learning with the Senegalese public curriculum. The *taalibes* in the *daara* of Koki do not beg, but the *daara* has participated in some state and non-state projects that have helped it provide meals to the children.[183]

If students are unable to concentrate on Qur'anic studies full-time, such as if they live at home and cannot study in the evenings, or if the children are expected to beg or work to pay for their live-in instruction, it would be nearly impossible to adhere to a three to four year time limit. As discussed in chapter four, memorization of the Qur'an is still the primary goal in most Qur'anic schools in Senegal. Among my Qur'anic master informants, the amount of time it takes *taalibes* to succeed at memorizing the Qur'an, if they finish, is at least six or seven years, but up to ten years. Djibril Dior claims that it is state educational funding that can increase their schools' efficiency by eliminating begging and working. He wants them to be funded like other schools:

> *Those taalibes, if they do not go out to beg for themselves, what are they going to do? We are… asking our governors to recognize the daaras like they have recognized the public schools and the Franco-Arabic schools. From that moment on, the daaras will benefit from the same advantages as the others. At that moment we will in any case eliminate this phenomenon [of taalibe begging]* (Djibril Dior, Dakar, Senegal*).*

[182] Personal Interview, December 28, 2010, video recorded.

[183] When I interviewed a Qur'anic master in the *daara* of Koki, he refused to acknowledge outside funding sources, but according to Djibril Dior's comment, the *daara* receives regular generous contributions from fellow Muslims, perhaps from abroad.

In other words, Djibril Dior expects that the integration of Qur'anic schools into the Ministry of Education will mean that they will get school support and a salary of sorts to be able to effectively "modernize." But as far as I can tell, this idea is not even on the table.

What does the government mean when it says that "recognized" Qur'anic schools will be issued "subsidies"?

Despite my getting the same impression as Djibril Dior from general government statements regarding "modernization" – that Qur'anic schools would get state funding – my investigations indicate that the process may not be so straightforward. It is not even the government's plan, let alone within its power, to provide a regular income to all of the country's Qur'anic instructors. Bassirou Dieng, of the Ministry of Education, made this clear in the following statement:

> *No, what is foreseen is not to put the Qur'anic masters into the formal system. What is foreseen is to support them, it is to give subsidies and support the daaras. Because the daaras are private structures. They are not formal structures, they are non-formal structures that even ask the taalibes to pay… And now what the state is doing is making decrees and texts to apply for recognition and authorization. The state has said that from now on, the daaras are not going to install themselves as they wish. Now, to open a daara one needs an authorization. A recognition is necessary to have a subsidy. So it is on that level that the state will provide support. But take in all of the daaras as salaried employees, no, no. The Qur'anic masters cannot all be salaried employees* (Bassirou Dieng, Dakar, Senegal).

In other words, integrating Qur'anic schools into the Ministry of Education does not make them public or formal schools, and they do not in turn become a public charge. However, Kadir Mbacké of the *Inspection des Daaras* claimed that once they are officially "recognized", "the *daaras* are going to benefit from subsidies, etcetera" (Kadir Mbacké, Dakar, Senegal[184]). So what exactly does that mean? Mr. Mbacké responded to that question by citing the government's investments in *daaras*, such as the 18 "modern *daaras*" it recently constructed. He explained how the Ministry of Education continues to support these *daaras* by "assigning them with Qur'anic masters" and other teachers who have been certified in government training schools to teach French or help with their management. Additionally, the government provides "support" for some *daaras*, "for example with tables and benches, etcetera." Mr. Mbacké concludes with, "So, truly there are a lot of things that are being carried out for this "modernization" of *daaras*."

Mr. Mbacké's response, however, glosses over the question of "subsidies, etcetera" for Qur'anic masters – virtually all of whom are *not* teaching in state-run *daaras*. Moreover, the

[184] Personal interview, October 14, 2010, audio-recorded.

preference of the state to directly train and employ instructors for its own Qur'anic schools is highly reminiscent of the early 19th Century efforts of French colonial officers to control the sector. They sought to attract higher numbers of students with *medersas*, incorporating religious, Arabic and French language instruction, while keeping tight control over their programs of study and operations (see chapter six). But it remains to be seen, when "subsidies" are rolled out on a national level whether or not private Qur'anic masters, like those profiled here, will receive the kind of funding they are expecting.

If the support offered to Qur'anic schools comes down to offering tables and benches to every officially-recognized *daara* in the country (which is optimistic), for example, this is not going to be enough to keep Qur'anic masters like *Seriñ* Diallo and *Seriñ* Diouf from sending their *taalibes* out to beg to maintain daily operations. As the subsequent profiles demonstrate, even when significant aid packages are offered to select Qur'anic schools to bolster their teaching, provide educational supplies, offer food aid, or reinforce infrastructure – that is not usually enough to allow Qur'anic masters to abandon begging, at least according to the Qur'anic masters themselves.

Issue 2 – NGOs and Aid to Qur'anic Schools

The financial hurdles to Qur'anic school "modernization" outlined above have led the government of Senegal to depend on aid groups to pick up the slack, including NGOs operating in often diverging or competing ways. Beginning with one Qur'anic master profile, I go on to examine the practical limitations of direct aid to Qur'anic schools, as well as the complications that come with this outsourcing of support on a large scale.

Profile 3: Aboubacry Ndiaye's[185] *Daara*

At the time of our interview, Aboubacry Ndiaye, then 50 years old, had been teaching the Qur'an to young students for 30 years. He started teaching in his home village in the region of Kaolack, but in 1994 he migrated to a suburb of Dakar called Ginaaw Rail (meaning "behind the tracks" in Wolof). Aboubacry Ndiaye is Wolof, has two wives and 11 living children, all of whom studied both the Qur'an and the public French language curriculum of Senegal, just like him. He proudly introduced to me his oldest son, who is currently in his second year of public university.

[185] Information gathered in a personal interview, Aboubacry Ndiaye, November 22, 2010, video recorded, Ginaaw Rail, Dakar, Senegal.

Aboubacry Ndiaye spoke very pragmatically when I asked him why he teaches the Qur'an – "Because it is a need of the population. There is an important part of the population that would *never* wish to bring their children to the French school only. So, for those people, we need to create structures to satisfy their choices. Otherwise, without these Qur'anic schools, those children would end up lingering around in the streets." Aboubacry Ndiaye's *daara* brings the public school curriculum to these students along with the Qur'an[186]. I ask, "But doesn't that bother those parents who didn't want their kids in public schools?" He explains:

> *There are several types of schools. There are several choices. There is the French school, straight up. That is to say, without religious studies, what many parents refuse. Well, there is the other too, religious studies only, without French… There is also the intermediate choice, you study the Qur'an but you also study other disciplines. So, when I introduced French, indeed there were some parents who pulled out. Because they didn't want French at all. But still, there were other new ones who came, because that was what they were looking for. They wanted a Franco-Arabic school, which teaches French and Islam.*

His *daara* currently accommodates approximately 50 children, 13 of whom are live-in *taalibes* from his home village. When I asked him if he maintains regular contact with the parents of these children from his village he responded enthusiastically, "Yes!" He explained how they return home for holidays and parents come to see their children occasionally. He also maintains regular contact with the parents of the local children who attend his school through a parent association. He is currently an active member of an association of Qur'anic masters in Pikine, as well as two other associations of teachers of "alternative schools."

The parents of the neighborhood students in Aboubacry Ndiaye's *daara* pay for daily instruction, but *Seriñ* Ndiaye adds that there are many *cas sociaux*, or "social cases" where students attend without paying due to a lack of means. He described the families of the live-in *taalibes* as "villagers from the forest" who "do not have the possibility to pay". The paying parents of Dakar, therefore, pick up the tab for underprivileged students from their neighborhood as well as from the village.

While Aboubacry Ndiaye sees himself as a Qur'anic master and calls his facility a *daara*, the time spent teaching the Qur'an versus other subjects is now 50-50. On Monday the students learn the Qur'an morning and afternoon, and on Tuesday they learn French-language subjects, such as grammar, geography, history, science and mathematics. When I inquired how much time it took the

[186] *Seriñ* Ndiaye's training to become a Qur'anic master began by studying the Qur'an in a *daara*, and continuing on to a Franco-Arabic school (meaning that the public curriculum was taught bilingually in French and Arabic languages). He completed a training program in pedagogy with the state and was granted a *Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle en Enseignement* (CAP, Certificate of Professional Aptitude in Teaching).

children, on average, to memorize the Qur'an on this schedule, *Seriñ* Ndiaye clarified: "Our objective here is not the memorization of the Qur'an. Our objective is to attain a certain level with the children." That level is to study half of the Qur'an – and not through memorization, "because we have other subjects to do."

The children at Aboubacry Ndiaye's *daara* do not beg. He makes ends meet primarily through the contributions of some parents, as well as through partnerships with various groups who at times have provided his school with support. *Seriñ* Ndiaye described some of his experiences with this aid, which was never "too fructuous" and always time-limited, leaving him a bit frustrated and in constant search of more aid. He has been working with NGOs since he moved to Dakar in 1994. These groups have at times provided study materials and training sessions, educational field trips, medical aid, and sometimes foodstuffs such as rice and oil. But *Seriñ* Ndiaye is frustrated that he has been unable to secure any sort of long-term aid that his school can depend on:

> *Sometimes one NGO abandons and another starts. It's like that (physically gesturing the up-and-down process with his hands alternating in the air). We are always in the process of looking for partners… Often with NGOs, there are contracts, time limits. The NGO comes, 'I can support you with this but it is for a limited duration.' So after that duration (smiles a bit and swipes his hand to the side), the NGO goes somewhere else and you find another.*

One NGO financed a professional training program for the students at *Seriñ* Ndiaye's school, in which they were able to choose and learn a trade, such as carpentry or metalworking. "But since that NGO disappeared, we have simply continued with our general curriculum…Although we are still looking for a partner who could finance that program again." He admits to having hesitations, like most others he knows, of working with foreign partners, due to the West's complicated past of conquest and repression of "their ancestors". "We hesitate. Even with you (looking at me), we hesitate. You! Yes! (laughs). Ah, it has to be said. Even now we often have doubts about their goals. I don't know. In any case... We teach, we accept their aid, but still… there are hesitations." Despite this reticence, *Seriñ* Ndiaye reports never having to refuse any program elements proposed by the NGOs he has worked with – "so far…there have been no propositions negative to our work."

Due to his continued meager means, our interview concluded with Aboubacry Ndiaye reiterating his need for aid of various sorts, and that he would appreciate any NGO contacts that I could make for him. But his own lived struggles and experiences with NGOs up to now has made him a bit critical of the whole NGO aid market flourishing around the *taalibes*, and the potentiality of

corruption therein. Regarding the large amounts of aid money destined for the *taalibes*, he confided to me:

> *Most of these funds go directly into pockets, into pockets. For example, these NGOs, they are set up in luxury houses. They drive luxury cars. At the end of the month, they receive luxury salaries. While the taalibes are still hunched over on the ground. They sleep under the sun. So, those funds, they don't arrive at their destinations. Those funds, they stop in the pockets of NGOs, states, the like... So the question of begging, it is a market for those people. Often we smile. The question of AIDS, it's a market. Excision, it's a market. Taalibe begging, it's a market. But the funds, they don't arrive.*

Aboubacry Ndiaye's observations struck a chord with me, and I responded by saying that it is often similar in academics, where the most flashy or empathy-drawing topics are often the most competitive in terms of securing funding and gaining popular notoriety. I cannot say how many times my readings of human rights and children's rights have focused on the question of excision (a.k.a. female genital mutilation), or torture. Human rights work on less visceral topics, such as access to financial credit or potable drinking water, don't get as much media hype. With respect to AIDS, I think of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, created in 2002. While hugely effective at raising money for key initiatives for these infectious diseases, it has been criticized for its narrow focus on high-profile diseases, namely AIDS (Shiffman 2008), and an inability to ensure proper oversight of the massive finances channeled through the fund, which operated on spending time-limits.

As I tried to locate various NGO headquarters in Dakar neighborhoods, local residents frequently pointed me in the right direction with the indication, "look, you see over there, the place with the 4x4s". Such SUV vehicles, however necessary they may be to make regular treks to intervention sites in remote areas, have become the signature vehicle of NGO personnel in the capital. Other interviews with Qur'anic instructors from 2010 as well as 2007, corroborate *Seriñ* Ndiaye's critique of mass funding of NGOs in the name of begging *taalibes*, who despite their high-profile cause, are indeed still begging.

Aboubacry Ndiaye claims that Qur'anic schools do not need charity; they need equal treatment from the state in terms of educational funding:

> *The state has built schools, very beautiful buildings, for the children who study French. They recruit teachers. They furnish the schools. While those who study the Qur'an are totally abandoned by the state...*

He invokes children's rights as citizens to equal treatment under the law:

> *They are all children of this country, they are all equal. That is the problem. The problem of begging is a problem of poverty….If the state [treated these children equally], then there would be no more begging. Because nobody wants to beg! The Qur'anic masters do not want begging. The taalibes, the parents, no one. But they want to study, and it is their choice to study the Qur'an.*

Therefore, for *Seriñ* Ndiaye, it is not the child begging that is an infringement of children's rights, rather the discriminatory treatment by the state toward its school-aged children. As equal citizens of the state, parents have the right to choose what type of education they wish for their children.

NGO Projects, Scattered Interventions

The past two decades have witnessed what has been called an NGO "revolution" resulting in a sudden explosion of their presence and importance globally (Igoe & Kelsall 2005:4). Multiplying within the climate of neoliberal structural adjustment and privatization initiatives of the 1990s, NGOs were championed by donor countries and proponents of development for their supposed proximity with recipient populations and their democratic structures and goals (Schuller 2007; Pfeiffer 2004; Crewe & Harrison 1998).

According to recent government statistics, there are over 463 registered NGOs operating in Senegal, a country with a population of less than 14 million, and thousands of local voluntary service associations are also registered with their respective local governments (World Bank 2013; Floridi, et al. 2008). More than 43 registered NGOs work specifically on issues of child protection in Senegal[187], with most projects and services concentrated in urban areas. They tend to target highly specific sub-groups of children for protection from particular abuses such as trafficking, excision, child labor and hazards of street life (Senegal 2011:68). The size and scale of operations of each group ranges from local and low-budget neighborhood voluntary groups to large transnational NGOs with global expenditures in the hundreds of millions of dollars[188].

All of the major transnational NGOs that work with children in Senegal are aiding *taalibes* in some capacity throughout the country, and most are clustered in urban areas (Senegal 2011:4). The *Cellule d'Appui à la Protection de l'Enfance* (The Support Cell for the Protection of Childhood, CAPE), a government office created by presidential decree in 2008, is dedicated to creating a national vision and policy toward children and child protection in Senegal – which had otherwise been entirely

[187] This number does not include local associations and non-registered organizations. The process to become an NGO can be drawn-out and costly, therefore some groups may choose to forego the tax benefits offered by the government and operate without formal NGO accreditation (*agrément*).

[188] For example, *Plan International* carries out projects of numerous types destined primarily for children. *Plan*'s global budget in 2012 was 633,828,000 Euros (taken from the 2012 Annual Review financial statement (Plan 2012:20).

lacking despite the multiplicity of activities being carried out on the ground by state and non-state actors. A representative from the CAPE confided to me that, "There are good things that are being done… but in a manner truly, if I can permit myself to express myself, it is in a disordered manner" (Program Manager at the CAPE, Dakar, Senegal[189]). She later used the word "scattered" to refer to the projects being carried out by the more than 43 NGOs and fifteen government ministries dealing with partial aspects of child protection. The CAPE seeks more of a "synergy" among actors and actions, to avoid the double-ups and geographical gaps that they so often see on the ground today. But unfortunately, despite participating in a joint effort to "map" interventions on the ground, the CAPE as a government unit has no mandate of surveillance or enforcement with respect to any recommendations it makes to NGOs or government ministries regarding improved intervention strategies.

A recent five-year USAID-funded project supporting basic education in Senegal (subsequently referred to as USAID-EDB), with a budget of $40 million USD was carried out from 2008-2013[190]. As one of its five components, it targeted 50,000 "vulnerable children", most of whom were *taalibes* and former *taalibes*. USAID-EDB united five key intervening NGOs - *Plan International*, ENDA, *Avenir de l'Enfant*, *Counterpart International, Senegal*, and *Paul Gerin LaJoie*, most with long-term experience working with *taalibes* in Senegal and other populations of children in high risk categories. This effort represents a major step toward NGO collaboration with respect to project planning, objectives and evaluation in Senegal.

But the collaboration incited by the large grant did not extend to most aspects of actual intervention. Aid funds were still allocated to the individual NGOs to support their unique or on-going projects aiding vulnerable children, mostly for the populations that each individual NGO had already been aiding. Furthermore, Mbagnick Ndiaye, a long-time aid worker and manager of the *taalibe* project at ENDA explained that even when there is aid money specifically set aside to forge NGO "cooperation", as soon as the money runs out, "You will no longer see anyone… Each [group] is in its own corner, and does what it does" (Mbagnick Ndiaye, Dakar, Senegal[191]). "It is the state that should organize all of that. But the state doesn't do it," Mr. Ndiaye comments. "So it is the actors themselves who, depending on their objectives, say, 'Okay, we should get together,

[189] Personal interview, audio-recorded, January 20, 2011, Dakar, Senegal.
[190] I am not aware of how much was budgeted for the "vulnerable children" component, but one of the 5 participating NGOs, *Plan International*, received a grant of $2,240,475 for their work on this component over the 5-year intervention period (http://www.planusa.org/content2674995, Accessed Nov. 18, 2013).
[191] Personal interview, video-recorded, January 18, 2011.

because it is important.' But often there is a problem of legitimacy, with respect to who should be heading that up... People try to organize themselves to coordinate activities, but after a while, that gets heavy (*lourd*)."

The National Coordinator of the USAID-EDB's *Vulnerable Children Component*, Abdoulaye Sao, was situated directly within the Ministry of Education to carry out the joint NGO-state cooperative effort. He explained to me how four of the five components of the project were directed at training government ministries. They helped to develop strategies to accommodate children who have been neglected by the government in terms of basic rights to a quality education. The overarching goal of the USAID-EDB project from 2008-2013, beyond helping 50,000 children gain a better education, was to "provide a model [to the Ministry of Education] which permits teaching within their system which is countable toward *Education for All* (EFA) in the *daaras*" (Abdoulaye Sao, Project Director USAID-EDB, Dakar, Senegal[192]). This approach appears fundamentally concerned with assuring sustainability of the project's efforts. But sustainability would clearly only follow if the government of Senegal were to commit the necessary funds to pick up where USAID left off. However, multi-million dollar grants coming from abroad earmarked for the *taalibes*, for which the state receives credit as an intervening actor, may also function to release it from immediate pressures to adopt a sustainable plan.

The official mid-term evaluation of the USAID-EDB project noted that after the second phase of intervention, nearly one-third of the participating Qur'anic schools had dropped out of participation due to "budgetary constraints" (USAID 2013:23). This outcome is comparable to that of the state's overall TFP project – the schools simply could not keep up with all of the reforms, despite assistance. In other words, aid targeting the *taalibes* in Senegal, even in the best cases – with generous funding and a focus on cooperation and sustainability – remains scattered, temporary and simply not enough. It can in no way replace the comprehensive support needed to catch all of Senegal's children currently slipping through the cracks of Senegal's educational system.

Anthropologists have long scrutinized NGOs for their limited scope in anticipating adverse secondary results of intervention (e.g. Ferguson 1994; Farmer 1992), their enhanced abilities to operate transnationally virtually free from legal restriction (Pandolfi 2010; Goodale 2009; Ong 2006; Litzinger 2004), and participation in and perpetuation of humanitarian aid markets (Adams 2013, potentially leading to a brain drain on local industries and public services, as well as the exacerbation of financial gaps between the elite and the less educated in countries of intervention (see Pandolfi

[192] Personal interview, audio-recorded, October 7, 2010.

2008; Ferguson 2006; Redfield 2005; Dorman 2005; Pfeiffer 2004; Bornstein 2001; Crewe and Harrison 1998; Fisher 1997).

These flaws in the NGO model are related to their funding and evaluation structures, favoring short-term goals, narrowly-targeted recipient populations and easily demonstrable measures of success – usually through brute numbers of children "saved", "treated", "reintegrated" or "educated" in an "aesthetic of statistics" (Hyde 2007:37; Pfeiffer 2003; DelVecchio Good 2001:400). Drawing on their consulting experience with IOM in Aceh, Indonesia, DelVecchio Good, et al. (2010) note identifiable patterns in many humanitarian and aid organizations' on-the-ground operations, including, "projectization", "compartmentalization," and "donor time" among others. For them, aid organizations must actualize broad philosophies and established strategies through discrete *projects* with particular donors. Moreover, *donor time* does not necessarily correspond to the timeframe of need on the ground. The often arbitrary donor priorities draw funding proposals, but intervening groups can wait months before they know if and what activities will be funded. Rather than allow populations' needs to guide intervening groups' actions, these direct links between donors and on-the-ground activities push organizations to seek short-term "measurable outputs," on potentially "irrational donor time" (DelVecchio Good, et al. 2010:261). As I discuss below, questions of project time and timing are central to Qur'anic masters' qualms with transnational aid.

In Senegal, the *taalibe* children receive aid through projects as trafficked children, street children, vulnerable students, neglected and abused children, and more. Each intervention seeks to treat the predicament of a sub-set of boys through frameworks for the specified types of abuses, such as anti-trafficking measures, crisis shelters or public campaigns against corporal punishment. Most cluster interventions in urban centers near their headquarters (Senegal 2011:4). Good, et al. (2010) refer to this as *compartmentalization* of expertise within intervening organizations. This frequently results in highly complex social problems being divided up into particular domains to be addressed by different actors through discrete projects. This specialized and urban-centered targeting of recipients in Senegal leaves out most children throughout the rest of the country who are in need of basic financial support to pursue an education. In the case of the *taalibes*, it leaves in place the conditions which have given way to the urban migration of Qur'anic schools. This is a consistent problem noted by scholars in children's rights promotion in a global context: interventions focus more on reacting to specific abuses than striving to implement systemic change in funding and legal structures that could have the potential to reduce the overall risks of victimization (Majka & Ensalaco 2005).

Suspicion Surrounding the Short-Term Aid Targeting the *Taalibes*

Aboubacry Ndiaye's profile reveals some of the frustrations that Qur'anic masters have with NGOs and aid destined for the *taalibes*. Birima Maal, Secretary General of the CNAECS sums up here some of the problems that he hears arising among the collective's members:

> *The NGOs, we have a few words to say about their work. We have seen that they exploit us. They exploit us, but they have done practically nothing for the daaras… There are a lot of NGOs who say that they work for the daaras, but, nevertheless, we have noted that they organize training seminars, they create T-shirts, they prepare meals, and so on. That is not the support that the daaras need. The daaras in Senegal, they have a problem of daily survival* (Personal interview, Birima Maal, October 15, 2010, Dakar, Senegal).

Birima Maal claims that NGOs use the actions they carry out on the ground to boost their image as beneficent, while their isolated acts may have very little impact on the problems facing *daaras* throughout the country:

> *[With respect to] NGOs… we as a collective have not seen anything very palpable, productive, anything that is beneficial, in favor of the Qur'anic masters or daaras. Perhaps there are those who benefit from their support - sacks of rice, cans of tomato paste - but it is for a lapse of time. It is for a day, or maximum a month. And then it is done. They leave, and then they say, 'I did something, I went to the daara of Mr. X and I gave this, I gave that,' and so on. While it is false. They don't do anything at all that merits such presentation.*

In the face of accusations of inefficiency and short-sightedness, groups aiding *taalibes* argue that they are performing important services for children that the government of Senegal is not performing. In other words, it is difficult to simply say that they are not helping anything. However, it likely does feel like a slap in the face to struggling Qur'anic masters that aid workers are earning good money to help impoverished *taalibes*, while these latter still have to worry about what they are going to eat that evening. A steady income in Senegal is hard to come by, and those who work for major NGOs are among the privileged elite. But Qur'anic masters repeatedly complained to me that the money these aid workers are living so well on has the names of suffering *taalibes* written all over it.

In this sense, the constant need of the *daaras* creates a permanent site for the production of charitable activity within what Vincanne Adams (2013) calls an "affect economy." In her ethnography about aid distribution post-Hurricane Katrina, Adams(2013:9-10) contends that within an affect economy, "problems of need after a catastrophe circulate as emotional calls for the witness of suffering and also as urgent ethical demands to intervene and help." The concerns expressed by *Seriñ* Ndiaye about "hesitations" with aid echo what Adams (2013:11) refers to as a "virtuous circle,"

where the needs of beneficiaries attract charity to feed corporate structures of aid distribution rather than function to reduce overall suffering. In this economic "reproduction of need," Adams (ibid) flags how assuring the basic social welfare of individuals becomes an "affective choice" through charity rather than a civil right to be defended.

Mbagnick Ndiaye of the ENDA *taalibe* project corroborated Birima Maal's claims about the long-term ineffectuality of some "aid" projects. He admitted that there are NGOs whose interventions are "punctual" (Personal interview, Dakar, Senegal[193]). He gave the example of a group who goes to a *daara* and gives the Qur'anic master soap, perhaps performs a "day of cleaning" for the *daara*, and then they never come back. Mr. Ndiaye distinguishes ENDA's approach to direct aid as being one of "development", where they help Qur'anic masters find ways to become self-sufficient in terms of food and upkeep. But, in the current aid market, shopping for aid packages, whether or not they are "pertinent" for the *daaras*, has become the "business of the Qur'anic masters," according to Mr. Ndiaye. He explains that this is partially due to the current availability of these material aid packages, but also because Qur'anic masters are trying to maximize their aid income, sometimes shielding their other aid relationships from potential donors: "If you go to Guediawaye, in a *daara* you can see that today it is ENDA, tomorrow it is another NGO, and the day after that it is another NGO, and it rotates like that." He notes that an NGO can approach a Qur'anic master with a project, and ask if he already has aid partners. "No!" they respond. "While they already have a partner." At this, Mr. Ndiaye smiles slightly, as if in recognition of the ubiquity of the practice, and says, "It is afterward that the partners realize that is was not true."

This distrust surrounding aid targeting the *taalibes*, both toward recipients and those administering it, can be compared to what Erica Bornstein (2012:59) calls the "culture of suspicion" pervasive in the aid relationships she observed in India. Bornstein describes how among her informants, beneficiaries and recipients, transfers of aid are believed to be surrounded by and transformed by criminal activity. This culture of suspicion, for her, acts as a check on aid activity, a local audit of sorts. She notes how NGOs administering aid are "part of a global civil society whose very presence embodies the auditing principle on a global scale" (ibid:60). For this reason the question of how to assure accountability and assess results becomes paramount in the politics of aid distribution. Indeed corruption in the administration and receipt of aid is a real concern in the case of the *daaras*, and the topic often came up in my discussions with government officials about aid to *taalibes*. But most of the complaints that I heard from beneficiaries and third party observers about

[193] Video-recorded, January 18, 2011.

the aid funneling through NGOs and earmarked for *taalibes*, were more along the lines of injustice, than criminality.

Aid Management through Community Committees:
Questions of Communal Sharing

Fallilou Kanté, a government technician working on the *Projet de Lutte Contre les Pires Formes de Travail des Enfants* (Project to Fight Against the Worst Forms of Child Labor), explained to me how the project, and the Senegalese government in general, is attempting to affront the very real problem of aid management and distribution – through CTS's, or *Comités Techniques de Suivie* (Technical follow-up committees). The government relies on CTS's to manage aid within communities, but increasingly NGOs that provide direct assistance to communities are also working through these structures. The goal of this is to encourage a community-wide participation in the management of aid as well as to incite community engagement on the issues targeted. CTS's are structures comprised of governmental, NGO, and local community actors, who are charged with discerning the area's aid needs, receiving aid, distributing it, and overseeing its proper use.

While the communal management of aid in Senegal can streamline local acceptance and distribution, it does not necessarily translate into transparency or assuring that the goods and services arrive in full to their beneficiaries. In fact, I got a clearer look at what aid destined for *taalibes* really looked like in rural communities when I observed one intervention site near Podor in northern Senegal in 2007 – it is communal. The presence of the CTS in this case was instrumental to the social acceptance and functioning of the intervention, but it also assured that the whole community was able to benefit from the incoming aid in some way. The foodstuffs given to the *daara*, including rice, sorghum flour, vegetable oil, and dried fish, were reportedly shared among the village chief, village families, affiliated school-teachers, other people sitting on the committee, and of course the *daara*. The same happened with incoming material goods such as wash basins, cooking utensils, and medical supplies.

This sharing of aid was normal and expected in the community, but it was not done entirely openly - the CTS knew that the materials were specifically destined for the *daara* alone. The NGO administering this aid was aware of this community sharing, and they attempted to counteract its effects by making regular visits to the *daara* and stressing the responsibility of the CTS for the project's success. But in reality, they had to look the other way at times, as they knew that they would not be able to stop a practice that was so culturally engrained into the minds and actions of

the people involved. This community sharing in Africa is well-documented by anthropologists and others – aid coming into mutually-supporting social systems is communal by definition. Beth Buggenhagen's (2012) work on reciprocal giving in Senegal is an ethnographically rich illustration of how goods circulate among ownerless recipients in a constant flow of gifts, assistance and payments.

This particular example from Podor makes me think about the Peace Corps memoir I read before my first trip to Africa, *The Ponds of Kalambayi*, by Mike Tidwell (1990). In it he recounts his personal trials with communal sharing in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (then Zaire) as he worked to help a young man, Ilunga, establish himself as a fish farmer. Tidwell describes in vivid detail the social and personal struggles that this man endured for over five months to raise a crop of tilapia fish large enough to sell and sustain his farming. But when Ilunga was suddenly forced to harvest his first crop early to settle a dowry dispute with his father-in-law, he gave away so many of the fish to relatives and villagers that he could not even sell enough to make the payment. That crushing moment of community "sharing" is recalled by Tidwell:

> *My stomach sank. It was suddenly all clear – the crowd, the well-wishers, the brothers of Ilunga who had never even seen the pond until that morning. They had come to divide up the harvest. A cultural imperative was playing itself out. It was time for Ilunga to share his wealth. He stood by the buckets and started placing fish in the hands of every relative and friend who stepped forth… He was just giving the harvest away (ibid:84).*

Tidwell's expressions allow readers to feel his frustration at what he perceived as a bunch of lazy people taking away Ilunga's crop. Worse, they had mocked and scorned the project since its start. Yet Tidwell was aghast at the ease which with Ilunga gave away his months of toil, "There was no trace of anger on his face as he did it, either. Nor was there a suggestion of duty or obligation… This was Ilunga's village and he had a sudden surplus and he shared it. It just happened. It was automatic" (ibid:84).

By selling the rest of his tilapia crop, and through some help from family members, Ilunga gathered up as much money as he could to pay off his father-in-law, but he still fell short. Regardless, in the end the father-in-law forgave the rest of the "debt", and Ilunga's pride was restored. Tidwell was forced to learn a different way of conceiving of the value and ownership of labor and goods in order to be able to continue his mission in Zaire. He used sarcasm to convey the irony in his frustrations with communal sharing where resources are so scarce:

> *"Stop the giving" – that was the real, the final message I wanted to bring to Ilunga and the other fish farmers. Stop the giving and the community-oriented attitude and you can escape the worst ravages of poverty… Forget, for now, the bigger society. Forget the extended family. Step back and start thinking like self-enriching entrepreneurs, like good little capitalists (ibid:89).*

Tidwell remarked that despite the impossibility of "getting ahead" of one's neighbors in one such "societal boat", everyone "stayed afloat…no matter how low provisions ran on board "(ibid).

NGOs administering material aid to specific targeted populations within African communities are in a comparable situation. Transparency in aid for Western donors means that the goods must arrive at their destination, and they must not to enrich non-specified others along the way. In her ethnography, *Disquieting Gifts: Humanitarianism in New Delhi*, Erica Bornstein (2012) discusses this inability to simply translate Western norms and forms of "accountability" in aid work and charitable giving throughout the world, where giving and its impacts are not necessarily counted or evaluated in similar ways. Western donors often ask of organizations, "Where does my money go?" and it is considered an ethical responsibility of the organizations to know the answer to that question (ibid:63). But how does one calculate the real-life impacts of donated money on recipients? Responding to this need for accountability is the production of statistics reporting calculable actions on countable bodies. Moreover, an ethic of policing aid is instilled to ensure that *these* targeted bodies are indeed benefiting, and not *those other* needy bodies.

But in order to reach target populations, such as in the case of Qur'anic school students in Senegal, interveners may overlook aid sharing, or even calculate it into the costs of successful intervention. In reality, because community poverty is a prime underlying factor in the precarious situations of most Qur'anic schools, a community-level aid approach might even be an optimal route. Or, a more cynical perspective is that the NGOs administering aid projects have no easy or risk-free way of limiting aid sharing without jeopardizing the projects' local acceptance.

One key role of CTS oversight is to prevent "doubling up" of aid projects (Fallilou Kanté, Dakar, Senegal[194]). Mr. Kanté explains,"It is not ideal to see partners intervene in the same zone, while in other zones there are needs that are felt (ibid). CTSs represent a "participatory decentralized approach," which, in addition to overseeing aid distribution, is hoped to increase community acceptance and support to cultivate a longer-term sustainability of initiatives, so that, "as soon as a project finishes, the local collectivities will be able to take over" (Fallilou Kanté, Dakar, Senegal): "Because we know, after all, a project has a duration of life. It will not be eternal. But, our hope is that we can secure more financing to continue, to sustain it."

Although it was not brought up as a major concern by the CAPE, NGO project sustainability will likely continue to be a challenge due to current NGO funding structures and conventions of accountability based in countable, verifiable, short-term results. In the absence of a

[194] Personal interview, video-recorded, November 30, 2010.

clear national policy on child protection and effective coordination of local and foreign interventions targeting the *taalibes*, this question of the long-term impacts of time-limited interventions will become increasingly salient. While they provide needed goods and services in the short-term, when food and supply-based aid expires, the participating schools simply stop benefitting. Aboubacry Ndiaye's experiences with aid, presented in Profile three above, as well as those of Mame Diop, described below, show how frustrating and even senseless participating in time-limited aid projects can feel to recipients.

Issue 3 - Collective Action for Rights to Quality Qur'anic Education

It has become clear that many of my Qur'anic master informants, including those not quoted in profiles, echoed cries of injustice; they claim that Qur'anic schools are being unfairly neglected from state money despite their performing a crucial social role. Some have harnessed this frustration to resist current state efforts to modernize, but many have eschewed traditional discourses of resistance to state control in favor of a language of citizens' rights to equal funding in education. Beginning with the personal experiences of Mame Diop, a founding member and current president of a prominent Qur'anic master association, I look in detail at Qur'anic master collective action to lobby the government for their fair share of assistance.

Profile 4: *Daara* Mame Diop[195]

I first met Mame Diop in 2007 when I attended a Qur'anic instructor workshop on children's rights at the NGO ENDA. The ENDA office was located in Guediawaye, a growing Dakar suburb with a growing problem of *taalibe* beggars, as well as a high-concentration of major NGO projects targeting them. Mame Diop is the president and co-founder of a prominent Qur'anic master association there. The several times we met, he was animated and jovial – most of the time wearing a big smile across his face, and frequently heard letting out a hearty, raspy laugh – such as when I tried to participate in the workshop in Wolof. At the time of our interviews, fifty-eight year old Mame Diop had been teaching the Qur'an to children for 23 years, for eight years in Guediawaye where I met him, and prior to that in a different Dakar suburb, Pikine. Originally from a village in the region of Thiès, Mame Diop is of Sereer ethnicity and is married to three wives, with whom he has 13 children. Now he is President and co-founder of a prominent Qur'anic master association.

[195] Information gathered from personal interviews with Mame Diop, November 4, 2010 (audio-recorded) and December 3, 2010 (video recorded), Guediawaye, Senegal.

For the foreseeable future, Mame Diop plans to continue teaching the Qur'an to children in his *daara* in Guediawaye, which accommodates approximately 60 *taalibes*. He estimated that 10-12 of the boys are "internal" *taalibes*, or live in the *daara* full-time, and the rest, mostly boys and some girls, attend Qur'anic lessons during the day and return to their neighborhood homes in the evening. All of the internal *taalibes* are from Mame Diop's village of origin. Some of the urban families pay token sums for instruction, but the rural parents do not pay him for his services. Occasionally they contribute in other ways. "They are farmers… so…" he trails off, and then explains that these families do not have the means to pay him, unless in kind when crops are harvested. I asked him if the limited economic means of parents play into their decisions to send their children to his *daara*. He enthusiastically responded, "Voila! There are some parents who bring their kids to modern *daaras* and pay around 20,000 [fCFA, approximately 40 USD] per month. Those, you know, who have money, they bring their kids there. Those who don't have that kind of money bring their kids here."

I took a tour of Mame Diop's *daara*. The complex is made up of various structures situated on a white sandy surface, as it is near the g*uedj* (beach) from which the community, Guediawaye, draws its name. He proudly showed me his newly cement-constructed latrine and shower stalls, and the shaded, enclosed classrooms and *taalibe* sleeping quarters built of wooden frames, straw walls, and zinc roofs. Each classroom is equipped with tables and chairs at which diligent *taalibes* sat loudly reciting Qur'anic verses from ruled notebooks. Lessons are written out on blackboards with chalk, and the students study the Qur'an as well as French and mathematics. When I asked if I could film them, the children sat up extra tall and many smiled brightly as they proudly recited the Qur'anic verses that they had learned.

Our interviews took place in a cement pavilion located in the center of the complex. It was filled with desks and had two large blackboards. The structure had open sides, providing good daytime lighting and a well-ventilated space for instruction. This structure, the latrines, the desks, and other furniture and supplies were all donated by ENDA, which also provides Mame Diop's *daara* with ongoing French, Arabic and mathematics instruction, prescription drug reimbursement, and periodic workshops and activities on topics ranging from sanitation to human rights. In addition to this private funding from ENDA, Mame Diop's *daara* has received sporadic aid from the government of Senegal, such as a one-time cash subsidy of 100,000 fCFA (approximately 200 USD) in 2008, or another time when his *daara* was randomly chosen as the only recipient of cleaning supplies and some household items at a public celebration hosted by the Ministry of Social

Development. Mame Diop expressed frustration with this sporadic and limited aid from the government, which he repeated several times as coming "one time only." "That's all!" he cried as he brushed his hands together briskly in demonstration of its finality. "But God is good," he concluded, smiling somewhat defeatedly.

Mame Diop's *taalibes* beg everyday – this is how they keep up with daily needs like eating and paying bills. The live-in *taalibes* beg three times daily for a total of about five to six hours per day. In the morning, all of the *taalibes* (live-in and not) beg from around 7:30 and report to the *daara* to study by 10:00 am. They are supposed to eat breakfast while they are out – either something that they receive from donors, or that they purchase with begging money, such as a baguette of bread. The children study the Qur'an from 10:00 until 1:00 pm at which time they break for lunch. For lunch, Guediawaye-based students return home to eat with their families, and the live-in *taalibes* head out into the neighborhood to ask for leftovers. Mame Diop proudly displayed their shiny yellow plastic bowls to me, each one with a red snap-on lid. He purchased them himself to make sure that the children's food stayed clean as they passed from house to house. When they finish their afternoon lessons, neighborhood *taalibes* return home to eat dinner and pass the night, and live-in *taalibes* head out again to find something to eat.

When I asked Mame Diop if he required his *taalibes* to bring back a set sum of money or goods each day begging, he denied it. He said that whatever they can bring back is fine. He counts the money brought in and takes out what the *daara* needs. Whatever money is left, after the portion for the *daara* is removed, is reportedly returned to the *taalibes* who brought it. He chuckled when he told me a story about one boy, Mbaye, who had just purchased two pairs of jeans at a resale clothing market the day before with his own money. Mbaye wanted new clothes to wear home to his village for the approaching major religious holiday of *Tabaski* (Islamic holiday of *Eid al-Adha*). Mame Diop summoned Mbaye, who looked no older than nine years old, to display his new jeans. He did this, smiling shyly.

I asked Mame Diop how he managed to run the *daara* while supporting himself, his three wives and his many dependent children. He responded by saying, "the first thing, with respect to living costs, is the children begging." "That does not mean," he continues, "that begging is the only thing there is." He goes on to explain how people from the neighborhood give him donations somewhat regularly, as he is a "man of God, and man of the Qur'an," and they know he needs help maintaining his *daara*. This might amount to neighborhood families spontaneously donating around

5,000-10,000 fCFA (10-20 USD), perhaps once or twice a year. He also raises livestock, mainly sheep, for sale.

For Mame Diop, begging is simply a necessity brought about by a lack of means. Despite receiving more aid than most *daaras* in the country - from ENDA for many years, and sporadic aid from the state government and community member supporters - Mame Diop still depends on the begging of his *taalibes* as a primary source of income. Hence, while he is a vocal advocate of "children's rights," he supports the legality of child begging to support Qur'anic education, Qur'anic masters included, until some other significant funding source is secured for the profession. He does not see this as contradictory to the rights of the children in his charge.

Mame Diop sees himself as doing unequivocally better financially in Guediawaye than in his village. In 1992 he participated in a UNICEF-funded *daara*-return program. He went back to his village, and for three years the program provided his *daara* with food and supplies. But after that, the funding stopped. "UNICEF *inditul dara"* ("UNICEF no longer brought anything"). "They didn't bring any food, supplies - nothing." So Mame Diop went back to Dakar. "Some projects set you up with a farm or something to make money, but us, we had no project, no farm, nothing." As a result, Mame Diop remains skeptical about such aid offers. He agrees in theory with the idea of *daara*-return projects, but only if they are sufficiently supported. If continued funding were guaranteed, he noted, "then I would go home. But in the meantime," he smiles and lightly laughs, "*mangiy toog!"* Wolof for "I am staying right here![196]"

The Duality of Qur'anic Master "Organization"

Alongside the aid boom for *taalibes* and Qur'anic schools, hundreds of associations of Qur'anic masters have sprung up throughout Senegal and Mali during the first two decades of the 21st century, mostly through the efforts of NGOs, particularly ENDA. The move to organize the Qur'anic masters is heralded as absolutely essential by the Senegalese government officials I met with at the *Inspection des Daaras* and the *Ministère de la Femme de la Famille et de l'Enfance* (Ministry of Women the Family and Children), including the *Direction de La Protection des Droits des Enfants* (Direction of the Protection of Children's Rights).

But I find this celebrated push to "organize" the Qur'anic masters as having two separate meanings. First, the Qur'anic masters are "organizing themselves" in the sense of creating a public forum in and from which they can articulate their needs amongst themselves and to the government.

[196] Phrase can be literally translated from Wolof as "I am sitting".

This provides them with a political base that they can rally together to make claims on the state in terms of education, economic entitlements and opportunities, and maintaining a political voice. But I also hear government officials rejoicing that the Qur'anic education sector is finally getting "organized," in the sense of getting cleaned up, more responsible, and more accountable.

This push for organization is intimately tied to NGO efforts to lobby for more public support and regulation of the Qur'anic schools. Therefore, part of this enthusiasm is clearly logistical – how can the government possibly even think about setting up a formal system of subsidies to Qur'anic schools, if nobody knows how many there are, where they are, and how long they are going to stay in that particular place? ENDA has been central to the organization movement of Qur'anic masters throughout the region. The director of the ENDA-Mali *Talibé Project* in Bamako reported that the Malian state ministries would potentially support the Qur'anic schools more, but due to their lack of formal structures, they did not even know how it would be feasible:

> *As long as the Qur'anic masters are not organized, the government itself cannot help them… Because there are so many of them, if there is no internal organization it is difficult for the state to bring its support* (Salif Konté, Bamako, Mali[197]).

The head of the ENDA-Mali *Taalibe* Project in Kayes bluntly stated how Qur'anic master organization helps ENDA to carry out its own aid mission:

> *It was necessary to help them get organized, to be an organization. Because they were not organized, and to work with people who are not organized is not easy. So, the procedure of organization was effective. They have been a cohesive enough group to facilitate the job for us.* (Personal Interview, Salif Konté, July 16, 2010, Kayes, Mali).

Mbagnick Ndiaye of ENDA in Senegal explained to me how he sees the organization of Qur'anic masters as the only route to making aid to *daaras* sustainable. ENDA's "development" approach to aid has led Mr. Ndiaye to bring Qur'anic master groups directly to the key government actors with whom he had previously negotiated services for *daaras*. It would then be the Qur'anic masters' responsibilities to negotiate assistance directly. Mr. Ndiaye noted that the existence of organized Qur'anic masters who are trained in such development techniques could ideally then allow ENDA to disappear as an intermediary.

These benefits of Qur'anic master organization have been echoed by Malian and Senegalese state officials, in terms of aid distribution. According to them, widespread, formal government aid to *daaras* has remained an impossibility due to the sheer inability to get it where it needed to go. A more politically-motivated aspect to this movement, however, lies in the implicated state

[197] Personal interview, audio-recorded June 17, 2010, Bamako, Mali.

governments hoping that the organization of Qur'anic masters may finally allow them to get a handle on the sector that has been forever out of their control. Dating back to the colonial encounters between the public administration and Qur'anic education circa the turn of the 20th Century, Qur'anic schools are notoriously under the radar, unregulated and unregulatable.

Qur'anic masters are aware of this dual role of organizing, and some are consequently skeptical of the NGO origins of much of the movement, as I perceived in my interviews with those not currently members of an association. They continue to operate solely through their customary networks and have resisted joining government-registered organizations, because of their involvement with NGOs and the state. Qur'anic masters in support of organizing see it as an opportunity to gain political power in an arena where they have traditionally been voiceless. They have always been social and religious authorities in their communities, which has meant that they have maintained a degree of political power through popular influence. But the advent of associations and now the CNAECS has provided them for the first time with a seat at the negotiating table with government and NGO officials, to debate policies and programs which directly affect them.

A National Collective: Negotiating Rights to Government Support

The *Collectif National des Associations des Ecoles Coraniques du Sénégal* (National Collective of Qur'anic School Associations of Senegal, CNAECS), regroups about 700 Qur'anic school associations throughout the country. It was created in 2008 with the mission "to reform and ameliorate the educational system of the Qur'anic schools" and "facilitate the state to have a credible interlocuter vis-a-vis the Qur'anic schools" (CNAECS brochure). According to the collective's brochure, given to me by the Secretary General, Birima Maal, its specific goals are to elaborate a common curriculum to be used for Qur'anic teaching, increase solidarity among Qur'anic instructor associations, reinforce the professional and academic capacities of the members, permit students having memorized the Qur'an to be able to continue their studies, and create a framework of consultation between the Collective and administrative bodies.

As may be apparent from the stated objectives, actors from the collective's twelve founding Qur'anic instructor associations developed its mission in close collaboration with the newly-created *Inspection des Daaras*. The CNAECS administration has continued to work in close consultation with that government office on issues such as conducting a census of *daaras* in Senegal and developing the official Qur'anic school curriculum and framework agreement which delineates the criteria for

daaras to be recognized by the state. In order to become members of the CNAECS, Qur'anic master associations must be officially recognized as such by the Senegalese government. At present the CNAECS has offices in all regions of Senegal, and it represents over 16,500 *daaras* of Senegal.

Also included in the brochure of the CNAECS quoted above are the collective's "expected results" which, contrary to the objectives which address the quality of Qur'anic education, speak to the doubts that have been raised about the integrity of Qur'anic education and Qur'anic masters with respect to the exploitation of children. The five expected outcomes include that the collective will serve to: "*1) rehabilitate the image and the ethic of Qur'anic education; 2) push certain mal-intentioned organisms or persons to stop living under the cover of daaras; 3) formalize the Qur'anic daaras in all forms; 4) establish a participative process in order to implicate all instances of the collective; and 5) contribute to the fight against poverty which engenders begging.*"

Indeed begging is a central issue in the activities and advocacy of the CNAECS. The collective vows to work to decrease and even eliminate *taalibe* begging, an outcome they describe as in the best interests of the children and Qur'anic education in Senegal in general. But at the same time the group was highly vocal against the Dakar begging ban implemented in August of 2010 – and their actions can be interpreted as highly influential in bringing about the President's subsequent reversal of the ban. The administration of the CNAECS was shocked at the sudden decision by the state government to ban begging in Dakar. They did so without any consultation or forewarning to members of the collective despite their having worked with government structures on these very questions. Further stirring Qur'anic master indignation, they heard about the decision through the media - not from the mouths of their government "partners". For Birima Maal, Secretary General of the CNAECS, the proverb, *gouverner c'est prévoir*, or "to govern is to forewarn," sums up the state's misstep, justifying the collective's protestations:

> *Concerning the law which prohibits begging, it was us who were making declarations of ripost. Because we cannot allow, as Senegalese [citizens]… our governors to just show up one day and make decisions like that without even contacting us. While we, we worked together with them! …To govern populations, it is necessary to forewarn them of what awaits them. But this was like a bomb!…that is to say there was anger among the Qur'anic masters!* (Birima Maal, Dakar, Senegal[198])

Birima Maal declined to think of the president's reversal of the ban as a "retreat" (*reculade*) in the face of a religious uproar, as the press was bantering. For him, the president simply recognized his duty as the leader of the entire country to consider the perspectives of all of its citizens:

[198] Personal interview, October 15, 2010.

> *Often people say that the president retreated. No, it is not that. It is a responsible decision. Because the head of state, he is the head of state of all Senegalese. So, according to principle, and by a measure of prudence, he must look at all angles. As soon as he sees that there is an angle where there is probably a fire that will flare up, well it needs to be put out. As soon as possible* (Birima Maal, Dakar, Senegal).

Djibril Dior, the acting president of the CNAECS, explained why the collective reacted as it did, despite supporting the eradication of begging in its own mission statements – because its members have no other means to support their schools:

> *The collective reacted in a very energetic manner. Because the government did it [banned begging] precipitately… We do not want our children to go into the streets to beg... We can discuss with the government, we are ready to find mechanisms to eradicate begging… But there needs to be other means to be able to stop it. Because if you tell that person, 'stop begging', and you do not give him anything that can replace it, that creates a problem. So, as for now, we have said no [to the ban], but it is not … that we want to leave people out there to keep begging… But we want to find a favorable solution, so that everyone benefits. The daaras and the state* (Djibril Dior, Dakar, Senegal[199]).

Organized Qur'anic masters have adopted a language of rights-claims on their state government. These arguments all turn around the belief that, as Senegalese citizens and Muslims, the people have the right to choose the type of education that they want for their children – and the government should consider Qur'anic education as an option within the framework of *Education for All* and the Senegalese laws mandating primary education for at least ten years (Senegal 2005).

Historically, and even now in some cases or at least symbolically, it was the lack of government control over religious brotherhoods and religious education that reserved for these religious actors operational autonomy and negotiating power with state authorities in exchange for political support (O'Brien 2003). But leaders of the Qur'anic master associations and the national collective find themselves at odds with that isolationist approach. Upon supporting initiatives to formalize the sector of Qur'anic education and become recognized within the public educational system, their base of negotiation has shifted from outside of the state to within. They no longer claim autonomy and freedom to operate without hindrance from government control – they claim their rights as equal citizens to receive state subsidies for the socially-valued education that they provide to children.

Prior to my interview with Birima Maal, President Wade had revealed in a speech that 40% of his national budget was consecrated to education, and this number was brought up consistently in the news media and among my interview participants. Birima Maal cites this statistic to decry the

[199] Personal interview, December 28, 2010.

daaras' abandonment: "Forty percent of the budget – that is close to 400 billion [fCFA, approx. 800 million USD]. In those 400 billion, it could be only one billion that could go to *daaras*! One single billion!" He laments, "But nothing, nothing at all" (Birima Maal, Dakar, Senegal)[200]. For the vast majority of Qur'anic school masters not receiving any government funding for their educational services, this number can be particularly frustrating, but perhaps at the same time a bit promising that the government of Senegal has a willingness to invest in education. Many now believe that they simply need to set themselves up in such a way as to get access to it.

Except for the public protests that they led against the begging ban in August and September 2010, Qur'anic masters with new-found citizen's rights-claims do not tend to take to the streets. According to Birima Maal, it is the Qur'anic masters' pacific "Islamic education" that is preventing them or their *taalibes* from launching wild street protests. In reference to the ritualized and often violent strikes led by university students demanding scholarship payments and improved study conditions, Maal retorts: "What the students at the university do, the *taalibe* students can do that too!" But he asserts that the *taalibes* are taught to avoid these violent outbursts:

> *You know, it is Islamic education that has saved us. Because Islamic education taught us that one should never break a bus. One should never block the route to prevent others from passing…To throw stones like that –that's easy! But there is a sort of education that has been inculcated in us… We don't see many problems with Qur'anic masters, or begging taalibes. We are trained like that; perhaps that's what the good God has wanted.*

While I have noted a shift toward rights-based claims among the "organized" Qur'anic masters, the experiences and opinions of Qur'anic masters throughout Senegal vary greatly. Not all Qur'anic masters claim that the state owes them something – in fact some want nothing to do with it. This opposing stance is critically explored in the following section.

Issue 4 – Qur'anic Masters and Resistance to French-Speaking State Schools

One Senegalese government official estimates that over 10% of Qur'anic masters in the country do not want to *modernize*; they do not want to be integrated into the formal system[201]. While that figure leaves potentially 90% in agreement with *modernization* initiatives, a 10% rate of resistance still means that thousands of Qur'anic masters are in disaccord, affecting tens of thousands of

[200] Within six months of that interview with Birima Maal, the Qur'anic master association of his neighborhood brought that budget-based argument public, as documented in the newspaper article from April 21, 2011, "Les talibés réclament leur part des 40% du budget alloué à l'éducation" (Ly 2011).
[201] Drawing on a personal interview with Bassirou Dieng, an official within the Ministry of Education, and director of the TFP program, December 31, 2010, Dakar, Senegal.

taalibes[202]. Because of the continuing importance of this perspective in current negotiations and portrayals of the *taalibe* problem, I explore this stance of "resistance" - where autonomy from government control is key.

Profile 5: Amadou Kane's[203] *Daara*

Similar to many of my Qur'anic master interview participants, Amadou Kane was "born into" the profession. *Seriñ* Kane currently teaches in Medina, a downtown neighborhood of Dakar, in a *daara* that was opened by his grandfather in 1947. *Seriñ* Kane is of the ethnicity Toucouleur, has two wives and a "number of children" (it is actually customary in Senegal never to count your children, and he has abided by that custom). His *daara* is reportedly "very large" and employs six or seven teachers. He declined to provide an estimate of the number of students, "as he was doing it for Allah" and "one should not be arrogant." He is not a member of a Qur'anic master association.

My interview with *Seriñ* Kane was remarkable in that his exchanges with me were much more distant and conservative than those I experienced with most other Qur'anic masters. He received my research assistant and me in a small, dimly lit area which appeared to be used for sessions of religious guidance. He was seated opposite us in a physically-higher position, and our interactions were heavily regulated with social and religious formalities. His position of authoritative power as a religious guide was reinforced, affirming our inferior positions as patrons and youths. His responses to my interview questions expressed his complete confidence in the practices that he and other Islamic scholars undertake with respect to the best interests of children and the society, and when he declined to respond it was on grounds of religious propriety.

The *taalibes* in his *daara* are mostly of Pulaar or Toucouleur ethnicity, and originate from throughout Senegal plus Guinea-Bissau, Guinea-Conakry, Burkina Faso, and more. Their parents do not pay for instruction – on principle, as he "works for God." According to *Seriñ* Kane it would be "against Islam for the parents to pay". If possible, he would give to the parents, not the other way around. When I asked him if limited economic means led to parents to send their children to him, he categorically refused: "No, not at all." He gave the example of how parents of French

[202] For example, if one simply counts 10% the 16,500 Qur'anic masters represented by the CNAECS, this would leave 1650 Qur'anic masters wary of *modernization*. The CNAECS, however, does not incorporate all Qur'anic master associations, however, and certainly not all Qur'anic masters are associated. Furthermore, some Qur'anic masters operate *daaras* with tens to hundreds of children. In other words, a 10% resistance rate leaves a substantial number of *taalibes* excluded from any proposed curricular or pedagogical improvements.

[203] Information gathered in a personal interview, Amadou Kane, December 23, 2010, hand-written notes, Dakar, Senegal.

nationality, living in France, have often chosen to send their children all the way back to Senegal just to study under his instruction.

Seriñ Kane claims that his *taalibes* do not beg or work to contribute to their costs of schooling. They also do not receive any direct aid from the government or NGOs. When I asked how that was possible, he told me that they basically live off of the good will of the people. "If you want to have an easy life, you just have to work for God, and everything you need comes to you." He gave me the example that just a day before our interview, a man anonymously dropped off ten bags of uncooked rice.

Seriñ Kane's *taalibes* only study the Qur'an at first, and later they learn Islamic law. They do not learn French or other subjects or trades in the school. This is a choice, not a limitation of the *daara*, as he explained that at a young age the students should only study the Qur'an, with no other subjects mixed in. When they get to an age when they start to become aware, such as nine years old, they will start other subjects in his school, like Islamic law. Understanding that *Seriñ* Kane had a unique historical perpsective on Qur'anic education in Senegal, due to his single *daara* having educated several generations of *taalibes*, I asked him if he thought that Qur'anic education was changing in the country. He responded, a bit to my surprise, by saying that it is the same. "It is the same, and it always was. If it changes, you are not a good *seriñ*, because you shouldn't change." He explained how changing too much would be against what Islam prescribes, such as by adding Arabic language instruction, or "modernizing" too much, when it should just be a Qur'anic school, and nothing else.

For *Seriñ* Kane, a child's right is to be educated. He explained how Islamic law says that through studying and learning, a person will get everything he/she needs. It is for this reason that, although his pupils do not beg, he is not against some Qur'anic instructors making their *taalibes* beg or asking their parents to pay. He accepts this, "because it is true that there are problems of poverty." He explains his tolerance of others' choices: "People will use begging, or get assistance from an NGO, but that is okay, because then the child will learn from his experiences." *Seriñ* Kane invokes the residual pedagogical benefits of *taalibe* begging, hesitating to completely attribute the practice to a lack of means. "Even without poverty," he explains, "the *grands marabouts* say that the practice can never totally be eradicated, as it is part of education and Islam."

Profile 6: El Hadj Barry[204]

Seriñ El Hadj Barry is a major figure in his prominent Dakar suburb. He is *Imam Raatib* of Medina, meaning he is a revered religious and social figure among his peers and the population, and he regularly leads prayers in the mosque. He reported being the president of an association of Pulaar-speaking Qur'anic Masters originating from the southeastern region of Senegal[205]. This association is not a member of the CNAECS. Of Peulh ethnicity himself, *Seriñ* Barry was originally from the region of Kolda, located south of the Gambia River and sharing an approximately 190 km border with Guinea-Bissau to the south. The region of Kolda is now widely proclaimed to be a prime source and transit area for migrating Qur'anic schools moving from the sub-region toward Senegal's cities, and has recently been heavily targeted by anti-trafficking initiatives.

At the time of our interview *Seriñ* Barry was 64 years old, and he been teaching the Qur'an most of his life. With his three wives, he has 20 children, all of whom studied the Qur'an under his instruction. His own personal training to become a Qur'anic instructor consisted of studying the Qur'an and *xam-xam*, or mystical Qur'anic knowledge, from some of the biggest names in the Tidiani Brotherhood at the time. He sees his primary role in Dakar today as serving as a cultural and religious emissary for those in his home region of Kolda, "Like an ambassador of the Fulani people."

When I met him, *Seriñ* Barry's *daara* accommodated over 100 live-in *taalibes*, as well as a limited number of neighborhood children, including a few girls. The children come from all over the region and are of various ethnicities; he cited Pulaar, Wolof, Socé, and Jolla. The parents do not pay for the instruction he provides to their children. But, he said that "most of them are Peulhs", and he often helps them out with money, not the other way around. When I asked him if this lack of means played into parents sending him their children, he outright refused the idea. "No, no! It is not their lack of means! It is what they believe in." He gave examples of *taalibes* with parents who have 100 or 200 heads of cattle, or who pass by to see their children on their way to a Mecca pilgrimage, obvious indications of wealth. But his previous comment about helping parents makes me think that there are children from a variety of economic backgrounds studying with *Seriñ* Barry, some with abundant means, and others without much at all.

Seriñ Barry employs seven instructors to teach the Qur'an as well as the Arabic language and Islamic law to those who have completed memorization. He does not receive any government or

[204] Information gathered in a personal interview, El Hadj Barry, November 9, 2010, video recorded, Dakar, Senegal.
[205] While many Qur'anic master associations were founded with the assistance of NGOs, *Seriñ* Barry's association was not created as a result of NGO activity.

NGO funding for education taking place in his *daara*, but he decided to offer French language subjects for practical reasons, despite some negative reactions from parents. He explained that "in these times," students need a working knowledge of French just to get by. "Now I add French language to the subjects taught so that in the future if he [a *taalibe*] sees something written, he will be able to read it."

All but the youngest of the *taalibes* at *Seriñ* Barry's *daara* reportedly go out and beg daily. *Seriñ* Barry was very vocal on the begging issue, faulting the state for neglecting students enrolled in Qur'anic schools compared to public ones. "I do not want [begging]." He extended his palm to me as a gesture of giving or receiving, "It is better to say, 'here, take this' than to say 'give me'. But," he continues, "if it turns out that I don't have any means, and you do, you should give to me."

He says that he prays for the government to give him assistance, but he gets nothing. "What am I to do? This is what my child faces – so I tell him to go out and search. This is what brings begging. If the government had done for these children what it did for the French school, nobody would beg."

I asked *Seriñ* Barry if he spoke out publically or reacted politically against the begging ban implemented earlier that year by the state administration. He responded:

> *Yes, that was painful for us. Here is why it was painful for us. It wanted to kill the children. The law, it wanted to kill the children. Here is how it wanted to kill them, this is how I make sense of it. You [as in the state], you have means, you do not give me anything, so I have nothing to give them. You say that the children should not go out [to beg]. If they stay inside, they do not eat, they do not drink. You stop them from going out. When they die, who will have killed them? You!*

I asked *Seriñ* Barry what should be done instead, assuming that having children beg for their education was not an ideal solution. He responded, "Yes, in my thinking, the people, they can organize [donations] in a big way. Instead of passing through the big NGOs, they should go directly to the *seriñs*. Me, if someone brings me 5 million fCFA (approximately 10,000 USD), within 2 months not a single *taalibe* would beg."

But the money does not come directly to him. "That is our problem" concluded *Seriñ* Barry. Qur'anic masters have a large task with respect to educating the children in their care, but they do not feel that they are permitted the tools, or offered enough assistance, to properly complete that task.

"But what would you do if that money ran out?" I retorted.

He declared simply: "If we have money to study for five years, then when another five years come, Allah will bring it!"

The Specter of Qur'anic Master "Resistance" to "Modernization"

Reports on the situation of education in Senegal frequently invoke the scenarios of popular resistance to French language public schools. But the true degree of such resistance in Senegal today remains mostly a mystery. NGO workers will report that most Qur'anic instructors are happy to receive aid and support education of various types. But are these the Qur'anic instructors already participating in their programs? Who is not participating? The Qur'anic instructor association presidents I interviewed, as well as the leadership of the national collective, all openly recognize something similar to *Seriñ* Ndiaye's candid remark about his colleagues' continued "hesitations" to collaborate with "modernizing" initiatives (Aboubacry Ndiaye, Dakar, Senegal). Despite Qur'anic master suspicions of nefarious state or NGO objectives, aid usually still gets disbursed after a period of negotiation. This is because the Qur'anic masters are faced with pressing, immediate needs in their schools. This position of relative impotence to refuse aid despite reticence complicates the portrayals of some Qur'anic masters as simply profit-seeking aid-shoppers.

In 2007, I observed the USAID-funded "Vulnerable Schools Pilot Project", the precursor to the USAID-EDB project that I referenced above, which was carried out in the rural northern and eastern regions of Senegal by the NGO Counterpart International, Senegal (CPI). This project aided select village Qur'anic schools. Their idea was that if Qur'anic masters had the means to live and teach in the rural areas, they might be less likely to move to urban areas where they would depend on child begging. As a pilot project, much of the execution of the project was experimental, and participation was limited to chosen *daaras* in particular communities.

According to the project's quarterly reports, nearly all of the *daaras* receiving aid through CPI fully participated and expressed satisfaction with the goods provided and services rendered[206]. Numerous non-participating *daaras* throughout the regions of intervention were reportedly contacting CPI to see how they could sign up to receive aid as well. But one Qur'anic master refused to accept any changes to the curriculum in his historic *daara*, located in a village in northern Senegal, causing a bit of a disturbance for CPI. This *daara* was in fact the original *daara* participating in the project. The head Qur'anic master there had corresponded with a US Embassy official who

[206] The Qur'anic masters of two of these *daaras* expressed overall satisfaction with the aid they were receiving, which consisted of food and material aid, the construction of shaded study areas, health and sanitation support, the provision of educational supplies, and the expansion of the curriculum to include mathematics, life skills, and, as part of the TFP project (see chapter six), French and either Arabic or a national language and one or more training programs in a professional trade.

was instrumental in setting up the USAID project in the first place. But when the project was rolled out, that Qur'anic master claimed the aid morphed from being assistance to a mode of control. He expected food and material aid to help his students study better, but he did not ask to, nor want to, add any other subjects to his *daara*'s curriculum. And when the public school teachers and inspectors arrived to implement the language classes and other core courses into his *daara*, he sent them away (Thiam 2008).

Despite a local educational inspector explaining away the Qur'anic master's resistance as a mix of personal avarice and the exploitation of lasting popular resentment of French colonization, the question of Qur'anic master and parental refusal to allow children to learn French or French language subjects is still very real and very contemporary. We must be recall that one of the key reasons why the government of Senegal is now pursuing policies of "modernization" of Qur'anic schools is due to the significant number of families who are believed to keep their children out of public schools in protest of the French-language curriculum (see chapter six). Some parents will allow their children to learn these other subjects after they learn the Qur'an, but some refuse outright, linking French language instruction to the dissemination of French customs and values, with which they do not want their children infected.

Abdoulaye Sao, the USAID-EDB Vulnerable Children National Coordinator, cited statistics that illustrated how considerable numbers of families, mainly from areas of Senegal historically resistant to French domination, are persisting in keeping their children outside of French-speaking public schools. Drawing on a recent study conducted in the region of Louga by the *Académie de Louga*, Mr. Sao reported that 33% of school-aged children are not in formal schools; they are in *daaras* (from a personal interview with Abdoulaye Sao, October 7, 2010). The continued aversion among some to French creates problems for projects attempting to bring the public curriculum, including the French language, into Islamic schools. Still, USAID-EDB project administrators[207] note that prolonged negotiation with Qur'anic masters and families has almost always led to acceptance of their initiatives.

Despite reports of increasing acceptance of integrated programs, media accounts of the historical and present divides between Islamic and Western education in Senegal continue to stress

[207] This was specifically stated by both Abdoulaye Sao (personal interview, audio-recorded, October 7, 2010, Dakar, Senegal) and his colleague (personal interview, October 7, 2010, Dakar, Senegal).

the importance of popular resistance[208]. They bring up the lingering "ambiguity," as described by celebrated author Cheikh Hamidou Kane, that the Senegalese encounter in their educational pursuits, as students straddling two civilizations.

While the CNAECS represents many *daaras* and Qur'anic masters throughout Senegal, and it speaks authoritatively in the name of Qur'anic educators at the state level, not all Qur'anic instructors have chosen to be members of Qur'anic master associations, and not all associations have adhered to the national collective. Some Qur'anic masters undoubtedly prefer to maintain their autonomy to function free from government inspections, regulations, and curricular controls.

In Search of Middle Ground: Developing a "Modern" Qur'anic School Curriculum Supported by Qur'anic Masters

Bassirou Dieng, of the Ministry of Education and a director of the Trilingualism and Professional Training Project (TFP), minimized the importance of this so-called question of resistance to the nationwide "modernization" of *daaras* and their incorporation into the public sector:

> *Yes, there are still some who are reluctant, but [the importance of] the reluctance is minimized by the state, because out of 100 daaras you have at least 90% that accept. But there are some marabouts who say that their daaras are there for nothing except teaching the Qur'an and Islamic sciences. So no other subjects such as arithmatic, French, etcetera. And especially French. They are very reluctant about French, certain marabouts. But, what is essential is that the majority, that is to say 95-98%, agree with the program* (Personal Interview, Bassirou Dieng, December 31, 2010, Dakar, Senegal).

Instead of thinking about resistance, Mr. Dieng focuses on working with the 90% or more who are eager to modernize with state support. The recent curricular proposal to accelerate Qur'anic teaching, which introduces French language subjects only upon completion of the Qur'an – if it were financially feasible - is promising in terms of gaining support among hesitating Qur'anic masters and parents. It bypasses what turned out to be a major hurdle in the TFP project: teaching French language subjects simultaneously with the Qur'an.

Djibril Dior commented to me that one of the major reasons that the *daaras* participating in the TFP ended up dropping out, beyond lagging in financial means, was that the students were overworked. Learning the Qur'an to memory is challenging enough, but simultaneously adding two

[208] A newspaper account by prominent public intellectual, Iba der Thiam, published in the national newspaper Le Soleil discusses the complicated history of Qur'anic master resistance to colonial repression (Thiam 2010). The article was printed four days before the president reversed the Dakar begging ban.

other languages, mathematics, and life skills put so much pressure on the *taalibes* that they were having a hard time keeping up. Djibril Dior called this an unfair burden on *taalibes* as opposed to students in the public school sector. He noted how "French school" students have six years to master only their primary studies. Middle school comes later, as do professional training programs. So, he asks, "Why do we want the *taalibe*, as soon as he is in the *daara*, to learn four different fields at once? It's not possible."

This "overcharge" placed on *taalibes* in the TFP *daaras* was noted in interview quotes from participating *daaras* and partner NGOs included in the project's evaluation report with respect to the "effectiveness" of the TFP model (Touré 2009: Section IV.1.1.). Despite keeping the Qur'an as the principle subject taught in the *daaras*, the *taalibes* were expected to share much of their time with other subjects. Such a formula is read by some skeptical Qur'anic masters as an obvious attempt by the foreign-funded initiative to minimize the importance of Qur'anic education in participating *daaras* by adding in nearly an entire primary school program of studies at the same time. As discussed in chapter six, French colonial administrators used this strategy in their official *medersas* to minimize the religious focus of Islamic learning in favor of cultivating religious tolerance and literary critique. While this may have passed in the government-run *medersas*, French colonial attempts to insert French language and culture into the daily routines of *taalibes* in private *daaras* had always encountered fierce resistance. Their underlying motives, to draw students away from Islam toward French language and culture at an early age, were perceived by the population at that time, and boycott ensued. We are seeing some similar popular sentiments today.

Seriñ Dior explained that the education of *taalibes* should be done "in steps," rather than the shotgun-type approach of the TFP model. "They must have three years – during those three years the child does not learn anything except the Qur'an." Then they do three years of primary studies before taking the test to enter into middle school (*sixieme année*). If the child wants to continue to do secondary studies, "all the better" otherwise he/she can be oriented toward a professional training program[209] (Djibril Dior, Dakar, Senegal). After establishing a religious base in Qur'anic education, which includes a healthy dose of discipline (as examined in chapter four), the child can then embark on various types of religious or secular education.

Therefore, this is different from all past attempts to reform the Qur'anic school curriculum in that it takes into consideration the concerns of Qur'anic masters and families: that memorization

[209] Among many Qur'anic masters I have spoken with in Senegal and Mali, there is a tendency to see some students as "bright" and "cut-out" for Qur'anic education, while in others, their "intelligence is lacking". These latter are frequently oriented towards other career paths upon completion or cessation of Qur'anic studies.

of the Qur'an should be studied exclusively before the child studies any other subject. The new curriculum, implemented in a "modern *daara*" would perhaps incite even more children to study the Qur'an intensively, as they would not be forced to make a choice between Qur'anic education and public schooling. Thus, with this plan public approval is likely to be less a concern than in the past, but the questions remain of financial means, logistical resources, and particularly political will to actually implement and regulate the teaching of the new curriculum in *daaras* throughout the country.

***La Restitution du Curriculum*: An Ethnographic Encounter**

After interviewing several representatives from the CNAECS national and departmental leadership, and speaking with the *Inspection des Daaras* several times, I was under the impression that the development of the curriculum discussed above was the result of balanced collaboration between these two structures, in consultation with experts in education, and with the financial and logistical assistance of NGO groups. But after I had the chance to attend the "*Atelier de Restitution du Curriculum des Ecoles Coraniques*" (public workshop presenting the Qur'anic school curriculum in draft form) which took place in a large hall in a downtown Dakar meeting center[210], I observed proceedings that suggested that the power balance was tipped significantly toward the government and non-governmental actors – at least with respect to the official curriculum. Yet, at the meeting, the disempowered Qur'anic masters invoked their religious authority to publically discredit the meetings' organizers and effectively save face for being virtually excluded from the proceedings altogether. This ethnographic encounter allowed me to contextualize the Qur'anic master "resistance" that is often cited for holding up reform in the sector within the ongoing symbolic power struggles between Islamic authorities and state actors.

"Symbolic Confrontations" Over the *Daara* Curriculum

In his 2003 book, *Symbolic Confrontations: Muslims Imagining the State in Africa*, Donal Cruise O'Brien[211] frames the kind of public theatrics of power and resistance that I witnessed during the curriculum workshop meeting as "symbolic confrontations." For him, these symbolic battles play a key role in Muslim groups gaining concessions from the Senegalese state. He documented how,

[210] The meeting was held on December 29, 2011 from 8:30 am – 1:30 pm at the *Centre Africain d'Etudes Supérieures en Gestion* (CESAG), in downtown Dakar.
[211] His prolific scholarly work on the Mouride Brotherhood of Senegal since the 1970s has significantly impacted scholarship on religious politics in the country.

during a devastating 1970s drought that decimated rural agriculture in Senegal, the leadership of the Mouride Brotherhood harnessed religious symbols to force the Senegalese state to subsidize agriculture there. The Mouride *cheikh* (leader), Abdou Lahatte Mbacké, gave a defying speech on nationally broadcast radio in 1973 in which he likened the secular state to the devil. The speech, in addition to being a "cry of pain on behalf of a hard-pressed peasantry," was part of a negotiation, according to O'Brien (2003:5), in which the Mouride Brotherhood "staked a claim to government support."[212] In exchange, the Mouride *cheikh* gave the ruling Socialist Party his political backing - henceforth issuing pre-election *ndiggals*, or orders, for Mouride disciples to vote their way.

The way in which the Mouride leader demanded support from the state, while maintaining a discourse of religious superiority over it, has permitted Mouride disciples to imagine the ways in which they too could maintain their religious identities while "considering how their own deal[s] with Satan might best be struck" (ibid:7).[213] The Mourides' deal with the devil speaks to Qur'anic master Aboubacry Ndiaye's "hesitations" with the NGOs that he gets aid from (profile three above). He questions their motivations, but he still pragmatically contracts with them to obtain needed resources. When Mbagnick Ndiaye of ENDA laughed about Qur'anic masters doubling up on aid partners, he was making reference to their detached pragmatism. They need the aid, so they accept it - but they are not making any moral contracts with the donors, most of whom they inevitably perceive as outsiders with goals different from their own. Another reference indicating a willingness to strike a deal with Satan is in *Seriñ* Barry's accusations that the government is effectively trying to starve *taalibe* children through neglect and cracking down on begging. Logically, only an evil force would purposely try to kill children – but *Seriñ* Barry indicated that he would still welcome funding from such an evil source if it meant being able to take care of those children himself.

The public curriculum workshop was rife with religious and secular symbolism – from philosophic appeals to the virtue of education, to the sacred ability of Arabic script to transmit a holy message. It was primarily a time in which the state and its NGO partners took the stage, literally, to disseminate their enhanced Qur'anic school curriculum. But the Qur'anic masters and some other audience members still managed to get their points across – through symbolic

[212] O'Brien credits the state's reaction to the speech with the resulting massive development of the once isolated religious village of Touba, making it the second largest city in Senegal by 1999. The changes included the state's increase in the price of peanuts and Touba gaining a special tax-free status from the government.
[213] O'Brien notes how this religiously-based symbolic resistance opened up avenues for negotiation between the state and the Mouride Brotherhood, while allowing the latter to remain at a safe distance from state authority within its ideological, physical and political "enclosure" in the Mouride capital of Touba.

confrontation – that Qur'anic education is still in the domain of the religious authorities of the country, not the secular state.

Present at the meeting were many familiar faces representing the various structures involved in Senegalese Qur'anic school reforms.[214] On a stage facing an audience of about fifty people, was a panel comprised of actors representing PARRER and the Ministry of Education. One member of the panel was Cheikh Hamidou Kane, the President of PARRER and celebrated author of the book *l'Aventure Ambiguë* (1961), a classic novel which vividly depicts the suffering and confusion of Qur'anic pupil and later French scholar Samba Diallo. At the meeting, the author, like his book, evoked the ambiguity in the lives of the Senegalese people emerging from colonialism – torn between Islamic and Western beliefs and forms of education.

The title of the meeting to present the new Qur'anic school curriculum, the *Atelier de Restitution du Curriculum des Ecoles Coraniques*, gave the impression that the meeting was to be a "workshop" (*atelier*) to learn about and publically debate the state's plans for the new curriculum. Indeed the scheduled program reflected this focus, with nearly half of the meeting time officially designated for discussion. But in reality, a few of the state and NGO presentations went very long, and discussion with audience input was reduced to a mere 37 minutes, including responses and transitions. This imbalance did not go unnoticed among audience members who wanted to contribute to the dialogue. Some of them vented their frustrations at being muted:

"But I speak in the name of thousands and thousands of these *daaras*!" retorted Lamigne Fall, an administrative member of the CNAECS, after the moderator Cheikh Hamidou Kane attempted to conclude his contribution. This attempt to cut Mr. Fall's contribution short came just after he started talking about the living conditions in the *daaras* in question, and how that issue must be addressed in order to implement the plans for the curriculum. Ironically, we have seen how the state's own evaluation of the TFP program cited those same financial concerns as central to the success of any future curricular reforms in Qur'anic schools. This abbreviated comment was the meeting's only mention of the financial needs of the *daaras* potentially hindering curricular reform.

After the final speaker from the audience gave his compulsorily brief contribution, the organizers of the workshop requested that the remaining comments be submitted to the *Inspection des*

[214] On the panel and present at the meeting were many people I had met with and interviewed, including Mamadou Ndiaye of the *Institut Islamique of Dakar*, a project manager of PARRER, and Kadir Mbacké of the *Inspection des Daaras*. In the audience were Abdoulaye Sao from USAID-EDB, Fallilou Kanté from the *Projet de Lutte Contre les Pires Formes*, Djibril Dior, acting president of the CNAECS, Ian Hopwood, former director of UNICEF in Senegal, and Kelly Billingsley from the US Embassy Political Section – one of only two woman present in the audience in addition to myself.

Daaras and PARRER in written form. At this, a representative from the CNAECS sitting next to acting president Djibril Dior interjected to loudly declare, without the microphone, "The contribution of those who are left, it is not for tomorrow, it is for today, and it is for the audience. We want at least 30 seconds, we have things to say!"

Mr. Kane responded, in the same even tone with which he had been handling the tumultuous period of audience participation, "Yes, but unfortunately we have to leave the room in ten minutes…"

"We will have one minute each, then!" replied the CNAECS member.

Mr. Kane responded flatly, "The organizers of the meeting will take the floor to synthesize the comments."

Realizing that he was not going to be granted his request for time for more audience comments, the vocal CNAECS member invoked his authority as a religious leader and teacher to discredit the organizers of the meeting: "We teach in *daaras*, and we pray. If we are going to do a meeting concerning the *daara*, it should have been done correctly, by opening with a prayer."

At that, Mr. Kane replied that his comment was noted, and he and fellow panel members proceeded to acknowledge the various comments, and welcome further commentary in the form of written contribution. After a brief prayer, participants and organizers were thanked and dismissed to the courtyard for lunch. But the tension in the air was palpable. I left the meeting hall feeling that the active role I understood the CNAECS to be playing in this process was perhaps not as large as I had come in believing. Qur'anic masters remain the experts of the Qur'an and religious rites in Senegal, but at the meeting described here, they were publically reminded that they take a back seat to the Ministry of Education and expert partners on matters of elementary child education. It was the audience member's final cry reclaiming religious authority over all of the actors on the stage that suggested to me that despite Qur'anic masters' new language of rights-claims upon the state, the strategic use of religious symbolism to maintain an air of distance from the workings of the state and the NGOs is not yet obsolete. In fact, as O'Brien pointed out, the Mouride Brotherhood's symbolic distance in the 1970s not only gained concessions for its membership, but it was the very way in which dialogue with the newly-formed state was opened. This dialogue became a central part of disciples' newly-forming identities as engaged citizens of the nation.

Social and institutional power structures persist in placing the state and NGOs in positions of authority over the Qur'anic masters. My observations of the state bureaucratic process of

attempting to implement a new curriculum into the ancient Senegalese institution of Qur'anic education reveal that old wounds may continue to hurt efforts at "modernization."

Conclusion

While state and transnational actors are envisaging reform for Qur'anic education in its current state for its inadequacy with respect to children's rights to quality education, Qur'anic masters are finding a new language to advocate for parents' rights to alternative forms of education. They flag the duty of the state to provide subsidies to make these choices viable as an education of quality. Qur'anic masters, after fully registering and complying with state regulations and principles about the operation of their *daaras*, have a chance at receiving "subsidies", however unclear the term has remained. It appears that these will only become available *after* such reforms are made. They will not assist in making the reforms possible, such as to remove the need for child begging. This will likely incite organized Qur'anic masters to continue to defend the legality of child begging, given no other option. The cycle of threat and stand-off continues.

Qur'anic masters' efforts at self-organization have secured them a VIP invitation to public events concerning Qur'anic school reforms, like the *Restitution du Curriculum*. But I hesitate to call their participation collaboration. It is more like an invitation to give their *blessing* as respected religious figures. In entering the meeting hall where the state and partner NGOs unrolled the new curriculum for Qur'anic schools within the national educational system, the Qur'anic masters effectively ceded their authority over the education to be dispensed in their schools. The Qur'anic school, for centuries providing *taalibes* with a "religious education" is effectively divided. It is now a place to gain both an education and religious training, as separate services – the first to be overseen by the state, relegating Qur'anic masters' authority to the "purely religious." While the voices of Qur'anic masters are becoming more unified and pronounced through their organization, the Qur'anic master voices I brought forth in this chapter demonstrate that voice does not necessarily equal power. In the next chapter I demonstrate this very point with respect to broadcasting children's voices to promote their rights.

Indeed, the prime losers in these struggles for authority over Qur'anic education appear to be the *taalibe* children themselves. Their begging is harnessed as one of the only cards that the Qur'anic masters feel that they have left to play with their state opponents in order to demand assistance. The *taalibes* are stuck in the middle of an ongoing struggle over rights and resources

domestically, and they drowning in a torrent of stories of suffering sparking empathy and intervention on a global scale – to which I now turn.

Part IV

Compassion and Rights:
Telling Two Tales of Suffering *Taalibes*

Part IV delves into how transnational organizations engage in *politics of compassion* to raise money for their operations as well as pressure actors on the ground for change. Chapter eight critically analyzes how Qur'anic masters and transnational organizations expose the suffering bodies of *taalibes* to onlookers – confirming their need to potential donors. They tell *stories of suffering* to *shock by exception* and they create *illusions of aloneness* to incite charitable reactions. Actors promote *taalibes*' rights as "children" or as "Qur'anic pupils" or citizens of a nation, but most fail to incorporate the actual perspectives of *taalibes* or former *taalibes* into this plethora of stories about their suffering.

Chapter nine shows that these compassion-seeking actions, while objectifying the *taalibes'* suffering, do not necessarily help to provide the *taalibe* children with enforceable rights, in the short of long-term. Through a critique of the political maneuverings of aid negotiation and distribution, I depict how actors dance between discourses to sound like they are working hard to help the *taalibes*, all while avoiding making significant changes to the status quo on the ground. I conclude by asking where the *taalibes*, as social actors and recipients, figure (or do not figure) into the politics of compassion that surround stories about their suffering. I ask how their rights, in the short and long-term, should indeed be determined and subsequently upheld.

Chapter 8 – Shocking Global Audiences:

Exposing Suffering and Eliciting Compassion for the *Taalibe* Children

> *When we are always so much more deeply affected by whatever concerns ourselves, than by whatever concerns other men; what is it which prompts the generous, upon all occasions, and the mean upon many, to sacrifice their own interests to the greater interests of others? It is not the soft power of humanity, it is not that feeble spark of benevolence which Nature has lighted up on the human heart, that is capable of counteracting the strongest impulses of self-love. It is a stronger power, a more forcible motive, which exerts itself upon such occasions. It is reason, principle, conscience, the inhabitant of the breast, the man within, the great judge and arbiter of our conduct.*
>
> *-Adam Smith, The Theory of Moral Sentiments (2004[1759]:162, Part III, Chapter III)*

Introduction

In April 2010, Human Rights Watch (HRW) released a 114 page report containing 13 full-color photographs depicting child exploitation and abuse called "Off the Backs of the Children, Forced Begging and Other Abuses against Talibés in Senegal." The report details the violation of numerous international and national human rights and criminal statutes. Perpetrators include abusive instructors, the responsible state governments, and in some cases even parents who knowingly send their children into harmful circumstances. The report's worldwide release was covered by news outlets throughout Senegal and major global news agencies like the BBC and NPR. It shockingly estimated that "at least 50,000 children attending hundreds of residential Qur'anic schools… are subjected to conditions akin to slavery and forced to endure often extreme forms of abuse, neglect, and exploitation by the teachers, or *marabouts*, who serve as their de facto guardians" (HRW 2010:6).

The report is designed to shock readers with the abuses committed against the *taalibes*. Its graphic cover and full-color, multi-page interior images depicting *taalibes*' hardships grab readers' attention. Its 36 personal testimonies by *taalibes* and former *taalibes* draw readers close to their lived experiences of suffering from violent abuse and severe neglect. Finally, the report's clear delineation of the victims and perpetrators, and straightforward historical and contemporary explanations of the causes of the abuses guide readers to effortlessly direct outrage at what are made out to be blatantly culpable Qur'anic masters and a severely neglectful Senegalese government.

In part I, I argue that the HRW report on the *taalibes* not only aims to reveal abuses, but to maximally shock audiences, mostly transnational, by highlighting the severity and scale of suffering. The highlighted abuses range from severe neglect to extreme forms of physical, psychological and

sexual violence through the exploitation and trafficking of minors. But merely being shocked does not mean that audiences will necessarily feel compassion for the *taalibes*' cause, nor react with indignation to pressure for change. Part II looks at how the HRW report tells a story of the outright exploitation and abuse of innocent victims by malintentioned or severely neglectful perpetrators to cultivate this compassion for the *taalibes'* suffering. Graphic images and personal testimonies enable the report to bring the sufferers visually and emotionally close to audiences, enhancing the capacity for empathy despite the vast geographical and cultural distances that separate them. To ground my reflections, I access contemporary works in addition to making reference to three key historical philosophers, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Adam Smith, and Thomas Hobbes, whose writings on the nature and function of compassion for fellow humans were arguably foundational to the development of modern conceptions of human rights and consequent strategies for their promotion.

In part III, I reflect on how rights' promoters aim to incite support - political or financial - in response to feelings of compassion by focusing on simulating a one-on-one connection between potential donors and sufferers. I call this singularizing effect the *illusion of aloneness* in aid solicitation. Finally, the HRW report capitalizes on the young ages of the named victims to accomplish its goals. Children hold a unique place in the hearts and minds of audiences of the Global North today. Children are seen as inherently vulnerable and innocent; they need protection and care despite political, religious and geographic boundaries (Bornstein 2012; Cheney 2007; Stevens 1995). In part IV, I demonstrate how the HRW report harnesses this idyllic image of the universal child to communicate to audiences the gravity and urgency of the situation, but I also flag the ethical complications involved in harnessing the images and voices of suffering children in support of human rights or aid campaigns.

A recurring theme throughout this chapter is the element of exceptionalism in the exhibition of suffering – what I call *shocking by exception* – which I show to be central to human rights promotional campaigns. It is novelty, not the habitual, that shocks. Actors seek maximum shock value by exhibiting the most egregious abuses globally. This need to shock provides insight into the geographically distant focus of human rights promotion, as well as the physical severity of the abuses addressed. I argue that this focus does not necessarily represent the most pressing cases or the most widespread suffering. The lack of potable drinking water globally is arguably one of the gravest human rights issues before us. But the apparently exceptional nature of exposed suffering is what allows activists to shock audiences in search of public mobilization. However, the use of

exceptional cases of child suffering to accentuate shock can itself lead to child victimization, rendering it an ethically questionable technique to promote human rights.

Part I: Exposing Abuses, Shocking Audiences

Shock and Shame in the Promotion of Human Rights

"Shock and shame" is a widely-used tactic for promoting human rights. Organizations or individuals who employ it, such as HRW and other activist transnational agencies, documentary filmmakers and investigative journalists, strive to pressure human rights offenders to abandon their abusive practices through public shaming. This shaming may expose human traffickers themselves, for example, or shame a state government for not sufficiently prosecuting abuses. "Naming and shaming", as it is referred to by scholars and human rights actors themselves, is often heralded as being one of the most effective tools for defending and promoting human rights globally (Hafner-Burton 2008; Roth 2004).

The technique consists of identifying human rights abuses, the perpetrator(s), the victims, and then using the media to stir compassion for the victims' suffering and "generate public outrage" against the perpetrators (Roth 2004:67). Ideally, this shaming will push human rights abusers, often heads of state or armed groups, to reform their ways; or at the very least will mobilize others to apply pressure for change. Recent high-profile examples of this technique in action include the news media efforts to expose government-ordered violence in Egypt, Libya, and Syria to international audiences. This press coverage succeeded in stirring outrage to push global governing agencies to react. It is unclear, however, that reactions incited by the name and shame technique actually improve human rights among the populations in question.[215]

Rather than "naming and shaming," I call the technique "shock and shame", as I remark how the naming and shaming that take place are actually highly dependent on *shock* to generate both compassion and outrage among targeted publics. The sensation and efficacy of shock, I will argue here, is that it arises from a simultaneous feeling of injustice (regarding the acts committed) and of compassion (for the suffering of the victims or their families). It is this shock, human rights activists believe, that sparks the outrage they feel is necessary to shame perpetrators into changing their actions. Communications of suffering in human rights campaigns expose human cruelty and

[215] For a detailed discussion of the intended versus actual on-the-ground consequences of the HRW-led shock and shame campaign to improve the rights of the *taalibes* of Senegal, see chapter 9.

violence, and there is some evidence to suggest that seeing these can mobilize spectator publics, albeit only when accompanied by a credible story (Roth 2004). Credibility here is most often marked by vivid depictions of suffering and clear descriptions of its unjust causes. In that sense, the *stories of suffering* are important for fund-raising, sparking political action, or swaying public opinion.

Audience reactions are key to the functioning of all parts of this technique. The entire strategy of shock and shame hinges upon actually shocking publics and successfully shaming perpetrators; but which publics, and where are they located? With my analysis of the HRW report promoting the rights of the *taalibes* of Senegal (this chapter) and its actual impacts on the ground (chapter nine), I demonstrate that the choice of audience and the tailoring of the campaign for that audience can have crucial impacts on the ground for the identified victims.

Human Rights Watch Exposes Abuses against the *Taalibes* of Senegal

The HRW report about the *taalibes*, "Off the Backs of the Children; Forced Begging and Other Abuses against Talibés in Senegal," enjoyed wide dissemination, both among concerned high-level actors in Senegal and transnational audiences through global news agencies. It was made available for free download on HRW's website in multiple languages, including English, French and Arabic. In Senegal, HRW representatives personally handed the full-color printed version over to "all of the government actors" concerned with questions of criminal justice, children and childhood, health, and education (Personal interview, Matthew Wells, October 25, 2010, Dakar, Senegal). Additionally, HRW organized a coalition of NGOs, associations, and activists to develop strategies to deal with the issue of forced child begging. They put collective pressure on the Senegalese government to both assist Qur'anic schools and children in need, and to crack down on criminal activity. The HRW report was also disseminated to foreign diplomats, including the US Embassy in Dakar, in hopes of maintaining their continued support of counter-trafficking efforts. According to Matthew Wells, the principal investigator and author of the report, officials within the Senegalese government took the report very seriously; he observed many showing up to meetings with copies bearing highlights and comments.

The report includes a sizeable background section discussing Islam in Senegal, the colonial repression of Islam and Islamic education in Senegal by the French, and the post-independence rise of forced begging and child trafficking, with brief comments on the importance of almsgiving in Senegal. It distinguishes between five "types" of *daaras* [Qur'anic schools](HRW 2010:36), some using child begging, and some not, acknowledging that not all "talibés" are victims of slavery or

human trafficking. The report then promptly dives into exposing the crimes currently occurring, naming the victims, and revealing the perpetrators.

The principal perpetrators are named outright: the *taalibes*' instructors – the report uses the term "*marabouts*." Parents who willingly turn their children over to corrupt *marabouts* are also directly faulted. The report blames the state governments of Senegal and Guinea-Bissau for their social neglect of the children and lenience with respect to the activities of *marabouts*. Finally, intervening actors including some NGOs are denounced for encouraging aid-seeking urban migration and ignoring child exploitation committed by *marabouts* receiving their aid.

The report specifically dedicates 38 pages to documenting the abuses committed against the *taalibes* (37-75). It provides graphic, detailed, and often first-hand descriptions of punishments, drawn-out scenes of suffering, and dismal conditions of both exploitation and neglect that *taalibes* have endured. Thirty-two *taalibe* testimonies (plus four from former *taalibes*) are interspersed with researcher observations, background information and explanations about the alleged abuses. Each sub-section delineates a different kind of abuse endured, such as beatings, car accidents from begging in city traffic, unsanitary and crowded conditions in the *daaras*, food and nutritional deficits, poor health conditions, sexual abuse, the deprivation of play, a lack of quality education, and psychological violence. The sub-sections conclude by citing the various national and international criminal and human rights laws that are violated in the particular cases. Each type of abuse described is supported by at least one, but often several, first-hand accounts from *taalibes* or former *taalibes*. For example, the following quote from nine-year-old "Moussa A." accompanies HRW's description of the crowded and difficult living conditions within *daaras*:

> *There are 57 of us and we all sleep in two rooms. It is very cold right now and we sleep on mats, with no cover. When it gets cold, we huddle and sleep as close together as possible to try to stay warm, but it is really hard. Some nights we hardly sleep (56).*

The following quote is from "Ousmane B," aged 13, who witnessed the sexual violation of a young boy in his *daara*:

> *Several times when the marabout was gone, I saw one of the [assistant] Qur'anic teachers do something to another kid in the daara. While we were sleeping, he came into the youngest boys' room and pulled one of the talibés outside. I was in the room, not far away. He started trying to take the talibé's clothes off – the young talibé struggles, and some of us made noise, and he got away. The teacher came again the next night and took the young talibé farther away, and that time he did not get away. He was too small. He told me what the older one did [male rape]. It was not the only time (65).*

This testimony from 13-year-old "Ibrahima T." graphically describes the violent beatings he endured in his *daara* before running away. He is one of eight *taalibes* interviewed by HRW who described being chained or bound with rope during beatings:

> *Every time I could not complete the quota by 10 a.m., one of the grand talibés would take me into a room and chain me around my ankles. Then he would beat me with electric cable or a tire strip – the strikes were too numerous to count. After he finished, the grand talibé would leave me there, chained, until seven at night, sometimes beating me again… The punishment was the same for arriving late. If I came back after 10 a.m., even with the quota, I was chained until nighttime and beaten – the marabout was very strict about it. – Ibrahima T. 13 (51-52)*

The many testimonials included in the HRW report provide it with an aura of authority to speak on behalf of the children. They bolster the organization's descriptions of human rights abuses committed against the *taalibes* – serving as first-hand proof of the violations beyond mere activist claims. They also vividly communicate personal suffering and raw emotions in ways that third person descriptions cannot.

Keeping Publics Shocked – Severity, Novelty and *Shocking by Exception*

The shocking stories and images of real life suffering in works like the HRW report are meant to stir reactions in recipient audiences, which may include sentiments of pity, compassion, indignation, fear, disgust or horror (Sontag 2003). But not all images and stories of suffering or injustice shock readers with the same intensity. Shock is relative to what people are habituated to seeing – it is not an absolute quality. Furthermore, for the same reasons that some might feel compelled to react compassionately by vivid depictions of suffering, others may end up emotionally fatigued by the incessant communication of suffering to them, dulling compassionate reactions or even sparking reactions of resentment toward the messages or messengers and a denial of sympathy. This is comparable to the effects of "the Metropolis" on individual psyches as reflected by Georg Simmel in 1903 (2002).

In search of shock, gathering and exhibiting heart-wrenching, stomach-churning evidence of suffering is central to many watchdog organizations' primary methodologies (e.g. Roth 2004). This is in part because suffering bodies of victims (or traces of their corpses) are often the only proof of human rights abuses having occurred. Particularly shocking examples of human rights abuses exposed by activists have included photos of Pol Pot's countless victims' skulls, and the eerie, serene faces of those waiting for execution in Cambodia; video scans of villages of Rwandan survivors with missing limbs; and YouTube films showing young African girls screaming as they are held down

with their legs open and their genitals cut. In this way, these communications serve not only as evidence but simultaneously as a strategy to elicit change. These, like less shocking human rights abuses, do occur, but these are the ones that steal our collective attention.

In the case of the *taalibes*, visual displays of abuse within the HRW report– most covering one or two full pages – include a boy with open wounds across his back from a brutal lashing by his master (11); a begging *taalibe's* frail, festering hand outstretched to receive sugar cubes (13); hoards of boys wielding begging cans weaving in and out of busy city traffic (cover; 4-5; 6-7); six boys sleeping side-by-side without covering on a thin plastic mat over a dirt floor (16-17); an aerial photo of nearly 100 *taalibes* lining a city curb with their begging cans in hand (8); and a late-night shot of *taalibes* grouping together with wary faces (22-23). This last image was accompanied by the explanation: "Afraid of the beatings that frequently await them if they fail to return to the *daara* with the daily quota, many talibés beg on the streets late into the night" (22).

What might appear horrifying or atrocious at one time or by some people, may be viewed with relative indifference in different circumstances, forever shifting the nature of evidence needed to communicate suffering for human rights purposes. Female genital cutting, or female genital mutilation – the terminology is dependent upon one's perspective on the practice – is one human rights issue in Africa that has caused much controversy in anthropological and wider academic circles (see Gruenbaum 2009; 2001; James 1998). In some practicing communities the procedures are not only widely accepted; they can be framed as a purifying process. But for most outsiders, especially Westerners, the cutting of a girl's genitals is outright horrific. This horror stems from the implications that the practice has for the rights of women to bodily integrity and sexual pleasure. Miriam Ticktin (2011), in her ethnography, *Casualties of Care: Immigration and the Politics of Humanitarianism in France* notes that cases of sexual violence and violence against women represented the "most morally legitimate form of suffering" for her French informants charged with hearing sufferers' stories to then grant or refuse temporary residency papers. Sexual violence, including female genital cutting is a practice that is so obviously wrong in the eyes of the human rights-promoting "global community," that is has become an easy issue to rally around. Other morally-charged issues by which Westerners are often outraged include child trafficking, modern slavery, and child physical and sexual abuse. The *taalibe* children of Senegal were described as victims of all of these types of violence in the 2010 HRW report.

But even without its moral and political baggage, female genital cutting is also horrific in the eyes of Western onlookers due to its novelty – an element that can alone lead to shock.

Consequently, some shock is fleeting. What was once shocking may become commonplace and therefore cease to elicit intended reactions. This may contribute to the phenomenon often referred to as compassion fatigue (Niezen 2010). For example, images of famine-stricken communities in the Horn of Africa may produce a visceral reaction in Western onlookers, among whom starvation is rarely witnessed (Omaar & de Waal 1993). Similarly, viewing *taalibes* with bleeding welts on their backs or debilitating skin diseases can shock those not accustomed to viewing children in such conditions. The problem for human rights and aid campaigns is that shock tends to disappear when onlookers become habituated to the sights.

Adam Smith (2004[1759]), who wrote extensively on the subject of human compassion in the 18th Century, noted how average individuals may wince at the sight of blood or broken bones, but that this sensitivity is easily dulled in people working in the medical profession, who come in contact with such scenes on a regular basis. William Osler, credited with establishing the medical residency standard in medical training at the turn of the 20th Century, likewise knew this when he mandated that physician trainees gain practical experience with real patients in healthcare settings (Gunderman 2011). With face-to-face training, Osler strove to prepare young doctors to both care for their patients but also retain their composure and ability to work when confronted with massive hemorrhaging or tragic personal loss. In practical and professional terms, this repetition of medical acts, and habituation to witnessing patient suffering, limits compassionate reactions based on novelty, bolstering physicians' capacities to medically intervene in crises (Bellah 1994:21).

Similarly, becoming habituated to images of suffering displayed in human rights and aid campaigns can dull the effects that they produce in audience members. However, Susan Sontag (2003), in her book, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, suggests that such habituation to suffering is not always possible. She asks if anyone could ever get used to faces, "cleft by machete blows of Tutsi survivors," or those "melted and thickened with scar tissue" from atomic bombs (Sontag 2003:83). Yet she notes that other types of shocking images can have "term limits" (ibid:82). Sontag uses the example of the Canadian Government's attempt to curb smoking by displaying grotesque photographs of the bodily effects of smoking right on the wrappers of tobacco products. She notes that the smokers in Canada were "recoiling in disgust" from the graphic images of cancerous lungs or a bleeding mouth, but asks, "Will those still smoking five years from now still be upset? Shock can become familiar. Shock can wear off. Even if it doesn't, one can *not* look" (Sontag 2003:82).

Indeed, a new study from the University of Montreal based on functional-magnetic resonance imaging revealed that heavy smokers "have modified emotional reactions when they see

any images warning about the harm tobacco and smoking causes" (Sonawane 2014). Another study showed that smokers abstaining for as little as two hours manifest decreased activity in the amygdala, or the brain's "fear center," compared to smokers not abstaining and non-smokers[216]. This decreased activity in the amygdala meant that the subjects reacted very little to graphic images depicting the bodily dangers of smoking, rendering them ineffective for a population of people trying to quit. Therefore, while graphic images have been shown to effectively incite fear in non-smokers (Hammond, et al. 2007), the brains of habitual smokers may adapt in multiple ways to negative images of smoking. Moreover, it is unclear how the fear response actually impacts people's choices to smoke. While the public health literature on this topic is too vast to cover here, my point is simply that not enough is understood about when images widely thought of as shocking will produce particular effects in audiences. An understanding is lacking of the duration of images' shock values and how they actually impact the onlooker's decisions in the short- and long-term.

One result of the fleeting nature of shock is that human rights campaigns based on shock and shame are continually searching for more shocking or differently shocking images to get audiences to react. This point is crucial to understanding the current trajectory of human rights promotion. While clean water, primary education, employment, and healthcare are all currently recognized as basic human rights, essential to a life of dignity, these issues rarely create front page headlines. Headlines, however, are vital to shock and shame campaigns. Promoters of human rights are therefore incited to focus on the most egregious abuses, even if these are exceptional cases.

The HRW report on the *taalibes* contains several examples of this technique that I call "shocking by exception." For example, the report describes children being beaten for not obtaining their daily begging quotas of money and foodstuffs. Testimonies from *taalibes* reveal their fear and pain of living within such a system. But the testimony of one child, Laye B., is highlighted in a separate text box covering an entire page. He describes the actions of what HRW called, "one *marabout* [who] employed a particularly heinous method of punishment" (HRW 2010:52). The first-hand account of the 18-year-old former *taalibe* reads:

> *Each day, the marabout divided us into groups of two. We had to bring 350 FCFA ($0.76), rice, and millet – all were obligatory. Then, if one of the two of us found the sum, but the other one failed, the marabout forced the one with the most money to beat the other – with an electric cable laced with a strip of iron. If the talibé refused, then the marabout himself would beat both talibés (ibid:75).*

[216] MyHealthNewsDaily Staff (2011).

I do not doubt the credibility of this account. Though – it is marked as an exception. Yet, it is highlighted and set apart from the rest of the text to attract readers' attention. This was done to cause a maximum degree of shock. *Taalibes* forced to beg number in the tens of thousands, but this highlighted focus on the exceptional invites readers to visualize the heinous experiences of this one boy as somehow representative of thousands of others.

Socio-Politics of Shock and the Distance of Suffering

Dependence on the need to shock audiences can be directly related to the focus on distant suffering in human rights campaigns. Sontag (2003) points out that the types of suffering we see regularly in photographs and reports from abroad diverge from what is socially appropriate to display at home. For example, spectator publics can consume images of massive war casualties abroad – as proof of injustice or to stir indignation or compassion – but the fallen among a nation's own military are not similarly displayed for public consumption (ibid:70). This discretion with war corpses – such as by displaying caskets only, covered in flags – is generally attributed to a respect for the families of those who have died. Sontag (2003:70) notes that no such respect or protection from exposure is considered necessary for foreign peoples: "The more remote or exotic the place, the more likely we are to have full frontal views of the dead and dying" (and I add beaten children).

Indeed, exposing the suffering of distant others while shunning the objectification of local bodies can be the result of respect for victims' privacy. Equally likely, however, is that local suffering is locally political. Displaying war corpses at home, for example, would likely be politically damaging for the government in power, and would therefore be avoided. The revelation of local suffering may spark social unrest or enhanced partisanship through a heightened public awareness of injustice or inequality. As Ronald Niezen has argued regarding the hypocrisy of spectator publics, it is "easier" to rally around transnational causes "as a way to avoid the discomforts, responsibilities and sacrifices involved in self-examination and self-correction" (Niezen 2010:42).

Furthermore, those who circulate accounts of distant suffering inevitably have partial views – however noble and righteous they perceive their causes to be (Fassin 2010; Moyn 2010). Their choices of what suffering to expose, and how to explain it, have a significant impact on how the suffering is viewed within audience populations. All reports of suffering, and those choices of what *not* to report, are in this sense political. Add to this that a difference between distant accounts of suffering and local ones is that audiences depend much more on intermediaries to contextualize (or *de*contextualize) the depictions of suffering for them.

As true as it is that universal human rights movements by definition have a global focus, it does not necessarily follow that the emphasis on distant suffering is simply a result of the universal mandate to protect all peoples from abuses. As was suggested in the reflections by Sontag and Niezen above, the prominence of distant suffering in human rights promotion is also bolstered by political, social and emotional factors – like the depoliticization of suffering bodies of foreign peoples and the mass media coverage of exceptionally egregious abuses wherever they are occurring. These factors at times favor the cultivation of empathy over distances, while local suffering is ignored or left unseen. I turn to an in-depth examination of this paradox of compassion for distant suffering in part II.

Part II: Theorizing the Cultivation of Compassion over Distances

The success of shock as a motivational device ultimately depends on audience manifestation of compassion for others. Not all shocking images and stories elicit compassion. For shock to elicit empathy, the onlooker must be made to vividly conceive of the suffering in her own mind (Hunt 2007; Arendt 1990[1963]; Smith 2004[1759]) and the suffering must be understood as unjust (Boltanski 1999). Once compassion has been generated it may then be harnessed as action– a step that will be examined in the next section –here I focus on how publicizing human rights abuses evokes compassion in spectator audiences.

I begin by reflecting on the historical development of human empathy for distant peoples and the relationship of this empathy to modern conceptions of universal human rights. I then explore the theorized "nature" of human compassion with reference to 17th and 18th Century thinkers Thomas Hobbes, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Adam Smith, and examine factors which impact whether or not people manifest compassion for the misfortunes of others, like the perceived likeness between the sufferer and onlooker and the degrees to which stories of suffering create a proximity of experience. Understanding why and how compassion is cultivated is key to grasping how efforts to promote human rights, such as the HRW report about the *taalibe* children of Senegal, function as an effective catalyst for evoking audience reactions. They emotionally connect audiences to victims through a simulated proximity in essence and experience.

Compassion in History and Modern 'Universal Human Rights'

Lynn Hunt (2007), in her book, *Inventing Human Rights; A History*, traces the foundations of the modern notion of universal human rights to the historical development of human compassion

and autonomous personhood. Basing her argument on a variety of historical artifacts like fictional works, legal statutes, and anti-torture literature mostly from the 18th Century leading up to the 1776 *American Declaration of Independence* and the 1789 French *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* (*Declaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen*), Hunt observes how, over time, the people of Europe and colonial America began to feel compassion upon a foundation of common humanity. Hunt (2007:26) justifies her focus on autonomy and compassion, because the apparent "self-evidence" of basic human rights today "rel[ies] ultimately on an emotional appeal; it is convincing if it strikes a chord within each person." She continues: "Rights remain open to question because our sense of who has rights and what those rights are constantly changes" (ibid:29). The capacity to empathize with others, therefore, played a significant role in expanding the definition of who could be considered "morally autonomous" rights-bearers. For Hunt it was the collective transformation of individual consciousness – consisting of "ordinary people" gaining "new understandings that came from new kinds of feelings" – not simply shifts in cultural or social contexts, that has allowed large scale universal and individualistic projects, such as human rights, to be possible and attractive today (ibid:34).

Hunt notes that for people to conceive of human rights for individuals, they had to see themselves as autonomous actors, rather than a mere servant to a higher social order. Shifting social conventions after the 14th Century, such as the use of a handkerchief for personal hygiene, the creation of private spaces in homes, and by the 18th Century, the increasing popularity of individual portrait-painting, demonstrate for Hunt (2007:82-92) a gradual progression toward more autonomous personhood – people became more "self-contained." As bodies became recognized as private and personal, the witnessing of their public torture and execution, for example, became less tolerable – or at least nonsensical. If public tortures were established in European societies with a sacrificial role to expiate the sins of one for the good of the whole, then the physical punishment of fundamentally similar, secular human bodies no longer served to benefit society. Rather than cleansing the population of evil for the common good, public torture and execution began to be seen as a superfluous spectacle of "barbarity", "useless cruelty" and "furious fanaticism", as described by the Italian aristocrat and political critic Cesare Beccaria (Hunt 2007:81). In an increasingly individualistic society, criminals were treated as needing to pay their individual "debts" to the group, and so punishment tended toward reform rather than sacrifice. This transformation of criminal punishment from physical to correctional was thoroughly documented by Foucault (1995[1977]) in *Discipline and Punish; The Birth of the Prison*.

As autonomous actors, believing that others should possess one's same basic individual rights was predicated on seeing them as fundamentally similar to oneself – as essentially human. If one looks back far enough into European history, Hunt points out that people did not see those from differing social groupings as essentially similar to themselves – inhibiting empathy. She argues that technological and cultural developments over time, however, like the translation and exportation of romantic novels, increasingly allowed people to cultivate empathy for others. Hunt claims that learning about the passions and struggles of personages from different class, religious and national backgrounds drew readers to imagine themselves in their places, permitting empathy to travel distances and break social barriers. These developments, Hunt argues, were critical to the eventual spread of certain secular ideals based on universalized humanity articulated as human rights today.

Samuel Moyn (2010), in his book, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*, minimizes the impact of the 18th Century emergence of autonomous personhood and distant empathy on the prominence of human rights today. Directly contradicting Hunt's (2007:29) attempt to trace modern human rights through "deep roots", and "over the long term of several centuries," Moyn cuts the history of the modern universal human rights movement much shorter – to the 1970s. While he recognizes precursors to the movement, one of them being the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) itself in 1948, he points out that none of them assured that human rights would gain the universal appeal that they have in recent decades. To assume this, he claims, would be presentist - an approach he compares to "church histories" which merely trace events emerging toward the inevitable and pre-ordained, disregarding alternate outcomes or the role of chance in bringing about the present (ibid:5)[217]. Moyn's question is not what has made universal human rights possible to conceive of today, but why human rights have succeeded in mounting a worldwide social justice movement, as opposed to other competing "utopias" such as revolutionary nationalism or communism.

Despite disavowing the historical development of distant empathy and personal autonomy as bringing human rights to prominence, Moyn's (2010:5) argument acknowledges the moral basis of

[217] Moyn draws a clear distinction between the oft-cited historical movements invoking "human rights", including the 1776 American Declaration of Independence's appeal to the "inalienable rights of man," and the 1789 French *Declaration des Droits des Hommes et* Citoyens, and the current human rights movement. The former were entirely based on rights to be allocated under the authority of state government, which the latter are meant to transcend, shifting from "the politics of the state to the morality of the globe" (ibid:43). Moyn makes similar arguments with respect to seeking out the roots of modern human rights in prior universalist movements and utopian visions throughout history– which he shows to be highly diverging in goal and application – and among which he claims modern human rights are only the most recent, yet widely influential, example.

universal human rights today – as an "alternative to bankrupt political utopias". For Moyn and Hunt, the key to the appeal of human rights today is moral consensus. Moyn points out that the movement is primarily manifest as "a politics of suffering abroad" (ibid:12), in which overwhelming numbers of people are embracing the UDHR framework to articulate others' appeals for justice. If this global suffering were falling on deaf ears, the human rights framework would be devoid of power. Indeed, Moyn documents how the UDHR was virtually useless for several decades after its inception as activists made recourse to other political utopias. But global suffering articulated as human rights violations are being heard today – indeed the movement's power comes from the communication of this suffering to concerned listeners. Activists appeal to spectator publics' compassion, to pressure perpetrators to cease their crimes against fellow humans – crimes deemed as such by the individuals who make up the global community itself by virtue of their empathic reactions.

Enlightening the Nature of Human Compassion: Compassion as a Fundamental Social Virtue

> *…so long as [man] does not resist the internal impulse of compassion, he will never hurt any other man, nor even any sentient being, except on those lawful occasions on which his own preservation is concerned…*
> *- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality"* (2002[1755]:47).

Compassion for human suffering has been intimately linked to the "human rights" enterprise since the phrase's inauguration into politics in the late 18th Century (Hunt 2007). Jean-Jacques Rousseau is often credited as the intellectual father of the 1789 *Declaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen* (*Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*) and subsequent French Revolution. He thought of compassion – meaning the sharing in another's suffering – as an innate human quality and the root of all social virtue. Rousseau describes the importance of inquiring into the "nature of mankind" in order to inform theories of natural rights, and for him, compassion toward fellow humans is among the most basic human instincts. His inclusion of interpersonal compassion into thinking on natural rights added a social element to rights that were generally restricted to the level of the individual by Enlightenment philosophers before him. Naturally feeling compassion for others ultimately meant that those others needed equal rights to protection from harm.

Indeed, I argue that the manifestation of compassion is central to the human rights movement today for two reasons: 1) it permits ideas of shared basic protections for all humans, as argued by Hunt, resulting in a widespread moral consensus on human rights; and 2) it is used as a

strategy for eliciting social and political action to end suffering through techniques like shock and shame. In other words, compassion underlies human rights conceptually and practically. I therefore trace an intellectual history of compassion as a fundamental social virtue as well as examine the conditions under which it is most manifest.

Rousseau argued that compassion has a biological root; it is not unique to humans but can also be observed in the behaviors of various animals like cattle and horses (2002[1755]:74).[218] Rousseau imagined in his writings that "original man" in a "state of nature," felt the pangs of compassion so fiercely that he would be loath to harm a fellow creature unless solely in self-defense (2002[1755]:47). Self-preservation was indeed the only other natural human drive Rousseau identified. Compassion was the sole check on human selfishness and brutality, for Rousseau, and thus formed the foundation for other social virtues, namely generosity, clemency, humanity, benevolence and friendship. If people could remain in a more natural state, uninfluenced by society's artificial divisions, then their natural compassion would remain unfettered –directing their behavior toward primarily peaceful interactions. Rousseau was writing at a time during which the influence of Thomas Hobbes loomed large, and one can read the former's "Discourse on the Origin of Inequality" as a direct refutation of the thesis of innate selfishness furthered by Hobbes.

Thomas Hobbes, who published his seminal book *Leviathan*[219] in exile from the English civil war (1642-1651), maintained a skeptical perspective about the power of human compassion to avoid violence. For him, empathic behavior was not innate, but the result of people's self-seeking interest to avoid suffering and death through mutual assistance. In fact, he argued that without a source of regulatory power to constrain men from reneging on their social contracts, man would be in a constant state of war, "or every man, against every man" (Hobbes 1981[1651]:185). But Hobbes distinguished this 'might makes right' fact of nature from the Laws of Nature developed through reason to allow men to live together in peace. He argued that certain of man's natural passions, which are essentially selfish, can nevertheless incline men to peace rather than to war, if properly harnessed. Among these are the natural fear of death, the desire to live comfortably, and the hope that one might obtain one's desires through industriousness. Reason allows men the foresight to see that with certain controls on behavior, one might obtain one's desires, and live longer.

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[218] Although these examples, from his "Discourse on the Origins of Inequality," support compassion as an almost involuntary reaction to bodily suffering, his other writings clearly demonstrate his conception of compassion as referring to an unpleasant experience resulting from contact with any sort of misfortune of another, physical, emotional or other (Rousseau 2002[1755]:47).

[219] *Leviathan, or the Matter, Forme, and Power of a Common Wealth, Ecclesiasticall and Civil* (1981[1651]).

This can only happen, though, according to Hobbes, if men subject themselves to a greater power, which for him is the *Leviathan* – an all-powerful head of state. Touted as one of the most infamous calls for political totalitarianism in Western history, Hobbes proposed that all men cede their individual liberty to an absolute sovereign who is able to harness people's natural fear of death and punishment (i.e. suffering) to enforce the Laws of Nature and ensure the peaceful interaction among men in a society.

Adam Smith, in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (2004[1759]), published four years after Rousseau's "Discourse on the Origin of Inequality," makes a close examination of the human passions – particularly compassion. As a moral sentiment, he asserts the importance of compassion for the peaceful and healthy functioning of society. Like Rousseau, Smith responds to Hobbes' thesis of innate selfishness. While Smith takes many of Hobbes' assertions at face value regarding man's natural passions, including his essential selfishness and fear of death, he reflects upon how mankind nevertheless tends toward peace and compassion without force. Similar to Rousseau, Smith notes that the reactions one has to witnessing suffering are essentially involuntary. He suggests that a sort of invisible force exists between humans in interaction, which enables commensurate passions to pool together. These can be mutually enhancing in the case of shared joys, but suffering too can be shared and thereby assuaged. Perhaps this is Smith's "invisible hand" of emotions - counterpoint to his famous metaphor referring to the movements and social balancing of money and goods in a free-market society – the passions naturally enable mankind to both assist others through misery and accompany them in joy. While Smith's *invisible hand* in economics has since been criticized for overemphasizing the regulatory power of free-market trade to distribute wealth, his theory of the "transfusion" of passions among discrete individuals has been reinforced through recent research on mirror neurons[220].

Whether humans are considered naturally or pragmatically compassionate beings, all three philosophers examined suggest that empathic behavior is mutually beneficial and they maintain that it is key to a peaceful and prosperous society. Likewise they all describe factors that foster or hinder empathic behavior; each is especially interested in the variable nature of empathic reactions to witnessing human suffering. Rousseau remarks that compassion for suffering is often rationally

[220] New knowledge about human cognition reveals that Smith's mysterious empathic force may indeed have a biological component. Neurobiologists believe that the brain's *mirror neurons* can incite involuntary reactions in people who visualize certain actions or emotions in others (Iacoboni 2009; Oberman & Ramachandran 2007; Gallese 2003). Mirror neurons, for example, have been credited with the direct contagion of yawns, smiles and cries among people starting from infancy, and with empathic behavior toward apparent sorrow or joy among children and adults (Reiman 2008).

reserved for those within one's own social groupings, and Hobbes notes that sharing in another's suffering is only proportional to one's fear of succumbing to the same fate. Smith asks why one can feel genuine sorrow for a single person who merely loses his pension in a stock market crash, yet barely feel a pang of pity for tens of homeless people one crosses on a morning commute. As these thinkers reveal, compassion is a complex, highly variable and unfair sentiment.

Factors Influencing Compassionate Reactions to Suffering

What might influence the intensity of a compassionate reaction? What might render it trivial or even absent? A number of factors have been suggested as critical to how onlookers feel, experience, and deal with compassion for sufferers. I have divided these factors into two general categories: 1) the degree of perceived likeness between the suffer and the witness to suffering, including the boundaries of the concept of humanity employed by the onlookers; and 2) the ability of witnesses to emotionally relate to the sufferer. This includes emotional, social, and physical proximity of the sufferer and onlooker, whether the suffering is on an individual or mass scale, and how the information is transmitted to the onlooker.

Rousseau's "original man" naturally felt compassion with the suffering of fellow humans because he saw them like himself. For him, the development of rational thought has permitted humans to differentiate themselves from their neighbors. Ergo, social inequality and violence is the result of the fall of man from his selfless beginnings, his progressive development of abstract thinking and complex language, and little by little his learning to describe in myriad ways how he is similar to some and distinct from others. In Rousseau's logic, bearing witness to the repression of distinct "others" is more tolerable than seeing someone like oneself treated unfairly.

Discrimination through categorization – by religious affiliation, gender, social status and class, ethnicity, and nationality – was the *de jure* and *de facto* status quo of social life in 18th Century Europe (Hunt 2007). In these cases, basic rights and duties preserved within the defined group, such as one's right to life or one's duty to assist others in need, do not hold outside the group. With social violence as the norm, people may have embraced such differentiation to make sense of surrounding mass suffering.

Christian European leaders have persistently persecuted populations ascribing to other religions or non-official Christian denominations. Moreover, when speaking of rights within the context of Islam historically, religion and religious belief have been a powerful means with which to

limit one's empathies[221]. In other cases, however, religious beliefs have been a prime propellant to expand the application of compassionate feeling beyond certain social categories. Islam is currently the world's fastest growing religion, and its adherents see themselves as part of a single community of faithful under God despite diverging racial and social backgrounds. Modern Christian teachings have espoused the concept of the universal human, creating a global spiritual family of sorts, which is a major underlying precept of the *natural rights* of the Enlightenment, and arguably of universal human rights as they are conceived of today. The Christian parable about the Good Samaritan is often referenced to support this non-discrimination policy, as it advises followers to aid people in need regardless of their religion or ethnicity. Teaching, nevertheless, often diverges from practice. Christian and Islamic religious ideologies remain powerful forces dividing actors in modern geo-politics, particularly post-9/11, increasingly discriminating by religious affiliation rather than uniting peoples through a common humanity.

In Senegal, I observed appeals by both Christian and secular groups to aid the *taalibes* on the basis of human or spiritual universality, despite the boys' specific religious identities as Muslim pupils (Thiam 2008). For example, during my MA research on interventions targeting the *taalibe* children, I came across Christian evangelical missions and charities aiding the *taalibes* on the grounds that they were human souls suffering under God. By contrast, some secular Western aid groups appealed to the universality of the suffering body by officially stripping the religious identities from the *taalibes* they assisted. One result of this secularization of *taalibes* was a terminology that shifted away from *Qur'anic school pupils*, to *vulnerable children* and *vulnerable schools* (ibid). In both cases – that of universalizing the soul of the *taalibe* and that of secularizing his body – categorical divisions were bypassed to cultivate compassion for suffering based on the premise of universal humanity. The Christians did this despite religious divides, and the secular NGOs did it by transcending religion and thereby disavowing them.

In the same way that social categories can inhibit compassion, one's definition of humanity can also have an impact. While in Rousseau's writings, humanity refers to all peoples, traversing boundaries and epochs, Smith's use of the word is quite different. For him, *humanity* is a moral

[221] Ann Elizabeth Mayer's (2005) account of human rights in the Muslim world relates such stark categorizations between self and other to the determination of who should be considered eligible for human rights protections. One of the key discrepancies she identifies between traditionally-derived conceptions of Islamic human rights and the UDHR is that of rights restricted to group members versus rights granted to outsiders. Islamic religious texts recognize a host of rights for believers many of which differ according to one's age, sex and status. People of other recognized religious affiliations (i.e. Judiasm and Christianity) are considered deserving of certain rights, but not all the rights accorded to the Muslim faithful.

precept, referring to acting with compassion or good will. Someone can act with humanity toward another, but one's actions or composure may equally be considered inhuman. This perspective on humanity, as an acquired quality, is representative of much thinking during the Enlightenment. One is socially expected to act with good will toward one's neighbors, but Smith's humanity has definite boundaries that he does not critically address. It tends to follow the vague lines of what he refers to as "society" - or a group of people, resembling each other, living together. So, Smith allows the limits of "humanity" as a moral sentiment to be practically limited. As popular conceptions of humanity increasingly took on the quality of universality in the West, group-based rights to life and sustenance gave way to modern day conceptions of universal human rights, allocated solely on the virtue of being human (Hunt 2007).

However, ethnographic studies scrutinizing social designations of human versus non-human have shown how the boundaries of humanity have been limited culturally and linguistically. Examples include Navajo or Hopi articulations of "the people" (see Wilson 1997:6; Palmer 1996); caste divisions in India (Dirks 2001); humans versus non-human animals (Asad 2003); humans versus non-human life (Tsing 2005); child versus fetus (Williams 2005[222]; Rapp 1999[223]); persistent vegetative state versus brain dead (Lock 2002[224]); and child versus spirit (Einarsdottir 2004; Scheper-Hughes 1993) [225].

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[222] Conceptions of when life begins and when it ends also serve to delimit humanity, and correspondingly, what can ethically be done to bodies not recognized as human. Anthropologists have shown how a life's temporal boundaries not only vary cross-culturally, but may shift over time and according to available technologies. Claire Williams' (2005) work on fetal pain has documented the ways in which new biomedical imagining technologies sparked new debates regarding the ontological status of the unborn fetus. Questions as to whether fetuses feel pain led to consideration of whether anesthesia should be administered to them during surgical procedures, and of course to continued debate surrounding the legality of aborting a pregnancy.

[223] In an interesting aside, depending on how one defines the beginning of life, of course, is feminist anthropologist Reyna Rapp's (1999) work on amniocentesis. She documents how prenatal genetic testing has led to both increased knowledge about the future viability of the developing fetus, but also to new and difficult choices for those expecting children – in terms of whether or not to screen for genetic abnormalities, as well as what to do if they are found to be present in a developing fetus. A genetic abnormality is grounds for ending the progression of development of the fetus – a sort of biomedical *iran* (see Einarsdottir [2004] reference above).

[224] Margaret Lock's (2002) title concept of *Twice Dead*, speaks to the paradoxical possibility of being able to experience two deaths in biomedicine as a result of the development of the clinical condition of "brain death". Brain wave activity levels indicate to physicians when the clinical condition of brain death has occurred in a trauma patient, while the rest of the body survives with the assistance of a respirator. This new type of death then serves to allow for the ethical procurement of thriving organs from the patient's body for transplant, as the patient has been officially declared *dead*. Well, once at least.

[225] This cultural approach to tracing the boundaries of humanity has also been widely used to consider the case of children. Numerous ethnographers have pointed out that the degree to which children of various ages are considered fully *human* varies greatly cross-culturally. Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1993:413-417) points out that the impoverished mothers of Alto do Cruzeiro often do not name their children until their first birthdays, and are referred to as *angels* upon death before this age, alluding to their assured happiness post-mortem as cherubs. Jonina Einarsdottir (2004) noted that among the Papel of Guinea-Bissau, some of the creatures which are born to mothers and more or less

There is a detectable relationship between a group's attempts at limiting social conceptions of humans, or rights-bearing people, and the consequent empathy that is felt or expected to be felt. Clare Williams (2004) documents how the advent of fetal surgical procedures has raised questions about whether or not fetuses can feel pain, which is in turn related to physicians' and others' perceptions about fetal patienthood, and perhaps in consequence, personhood[226]. Anthropological studies make clear that not only is the concept of humanity culture-bound, it is subject to political whim and technological manipulation.

But what impact do these limited visions of humanity have on the manifestation of compassion for others, within or outside these boundaries? What does this say about the consequent allocation of universal human rights to individuals? With respect to the advent of the fetal patient, for example, one might ask how shifting perceptions about prenatal personhood may impact future abortion debates, as patients and people have designated rights. Acknowledging a fetus' capacity to feel pain is associated with increased personhood, and pain can draw compassion. This perspective may allow abortion to be more easily framed as killing a sentient being, rather than benignly terminating an unfeeling and therefore not-yet-human fetus. Those falling within cultural designations of "humans", "rights-bearers", "the people", or "the living" merit compassion with their suffering. Those outside of these categories, whose situations successively appear farther away from those of a given spectator, command less sympathy. But again, compassion is an unfair sentiment, and sometimes it is the very distance between people that allows for the greatest emotional or political reactions to their suffering.

Beyond the identities of the principle actors with reference to social categorizations, other key elements can also play into the degrees of passion felt for the suffering of others, creating a paradox of disproportion between degrees of suffering and consequent compassion. One basic factor is whether the problem appears individual or general. Is the suffering representative of a mass of people suffering or is it an isolated case? Logically, it might follow that hearing of mass

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resemble children, are indeed *iran*, or spirits that prevent the soul of a human from entering into the fetus. Once the *irans* leave the wombs that they occupy, they are beckoned to return to the sea from where they came. Einarsdottir (2004) reports that those who tend to be identified as *iran* suffer from obvious physical and/or cognitive abnormalities, such as albinos, intersexed children, and those with bodily deformations or growth problems. These children are generally left on the ocean shore, and if they are indeed *iran*, they are said to let the tide take them home.

[226] Williams (2005) discusses how enhanced prenatal diagnostic technologies, including the ultrasound and genetic screening have increasingly led to viewing the fetus as subject, shifting the reproductive focus away from pregnant women. The development of prenatal fetal surgical procedures have then allowed the fetus to become a direct patient - and if suspected to feel pain, the patient will be anesthetized – in concordance with norms of humane treatment. This shifting cultural conception of the fetus expands the limits of humanity to within the mother's womb, while some cultures do not grant humanity to neonates for weeks or months after birth.

suffering should arouse much more compassion than one individual case. Thousands of people suffering versus one person suffering - it is not difficult to calculate which outcome brings more overall suffering. But, it does not necessarily draw more compassion. Due to the impact of what I call *illusions of aloneness* on the manifestation of compassion, it will become clear that this reaction is not illogical at all. It is simply disproportionate - following the irregularity of the human passions themselves (Arendt 1990[1963]).

Social reactions to hostage situations or missing persons cases involving single individuals can stir nationwide or global manifestations of compassion for the victims, while occurrences that kill thousands such as natural disasters or foreign wars may arouse less sympathy for victims among the same audiences. *What accounts for the difference?*

Compassion and Distance

As noted by Adam Smith, it may be easier to ignore suffering the more geographically distant it is[227]. At the same time, I note that distant suffering often retains greater shock value, and aid can sometimes be more easily directed to far-off distant sufferers, than to families in need in one's own neighborhood. Which is it - does distance decrease compassion or increase it? I argue that both are true, and that the key is in the *story of suffering*. I turn to Hannah Arendt to think about how distance can decrease compassion and then I reflect on how methods of communication can create emotional proximity to physically distant suffering in order to foster compassion over distances.

While the words "compassion" and "pity" are interchangeable in common parlance and for some social scientists, Hannah Arendt (1990[1963]), in her discussion of the central role of compassion in revolutions, defines the words in opposition. For her, compassion is a human passion, which includes suffering "in the flesh" as a result of coming into close contact with another's suffering. True compassion, therefore, would suggest that "it is easier to suffer than to see others suffer" (Arendt 1990[1963]:86). Miriam Ticktin (2011) reflects on how this "face-to-face" element of compassion played out with French nurses charged with evaluating patients' claims to temporary residence status through France's immigration policy's "illness clause." Normally, these nurses should be evaluating whether or not the applicant has a "life-threatening" condition

[227] Rousseau similarly notes this problem of distance and scale. He consistently encourages an idea of universal humanity, so as to expand compassion to the "suffering masses," but taking into consideration practicality and the happy and peaceful preservation of a community, he has no problem with limiting compassionate efforts to a nation of people, united by geography, custom and common interests (in "The Origin of Inequality" [2002(1755):75]).

necessitating treatment in France (ibid:90). Yet Ticktin noted that nurses regularly engaged in "moral decision making" when granting permits, and at times they felt so much compassion toward the applicants that they "would find a way to help," even when the facts of the case did not correspond to legal categorizations for the *illness clause* (ibid:114,117).

Pity, by contrast, Arendt (1990[1963]:86) calls the "perversion of compassion" as it is merely a sentiment toward a sufferer, discovered when Romantic writers' loquacious explorations of the range of human emotions rendered compassion articulable rather than solely experienced. For Arendt, compassion involves actual suffering of the observer, in response to the suffering experienced by another; while pity as a sentiment not only involves no suffering, it can be unsympathetic to the level of cruelty, or even cause pleasure or excitement by virtue of being a sentiment. The sentiment of pity can be generalized and harnessed politically, through statistics, news reports, and talk of mass suffering, in order to sway public opinion with a "politics of pity." But, for Arendt, this mere talk of suffering can incite no real compassion, or shared suffering, for those described. Ticktin (2011) complicates, however, Arendt's portrayal of physical proximity as a determining factor in the cultivation of compassion. She notes how some of the *illness clause* stories of suffering she observed "did not strike a chord" with nurses, however passionately they were presented. She ventures that these unfeeling reactions likely had more to do with socially-supported ideas about who and what warrants compassion (e.g. victimized, passive women rather than active, struggling men) than with the face-to-face, one-on-one transmission of suffering.

Similarly, Luc Boltanski (1999) adds a layer of complexity to reflections on how distance impacts compassionate reactions. In his book *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media and Politics*, he describes how proximity can be simulated, thereby allowing compassion to travel distances and play a central role in "politics of pity" as introduced by Arendt. Boltanski draws on Arendt's reflections that distance diminishes one's ability to feel another's suffering in order to point out that bringing distant suffering visually and emotionally close through media creates avenues for compassion. Boltanski explains that a politics of pity individualizes communications about suffering, while "under-qualifying" those individuals as particular. It is not because it is *him* suffering, or *her*, but that he or she is suffering from *that*; it could be anyone. He explains: "Around each unfortunate brought forward crowds a host of replacements. The sufferings made manifest and touching through the accumulation of details must also be able to merge into a unified representation. Although singular, they are nonetheless *exemplary*" (Boltanski 1999:12). This is the point at which the sentiment of human compassion for suffering others can be generalized and mobilized.

Modern techniques to promote human rights are particularly adept at this process of simultaneously singularizing communications of suffering, while underqualifying the sufferers as distinct. The HRW report on the *taalibes* of Senegal speaks of over 50,000 *taalibes* who are forced to beg for their masters, and subsequently provides testimonies and accounts of individual experiences to flesh out personalized stories of suffering. Brief vignettes communicating personal experiences of suffering through the words of individual children reduce emotional distance between sufferers and observers. Images reduce perceived physical distance, as spectators can view close-up scenes of suffering. Then, to promote human rights for an entire population, actors direct this personally-inspired compassion toward the generalized category of *taalibes*, defined in the HRW report as a group of at least 50,000 victims of exploitation through begging. The singularized accounts of suffering are labeled as coming from "*talibés*" or "former *talibés*". This points readers to associate the abuses endured by these individuals with the totality of begging *taalibes* mentioned. Yet, regarding the technique of "shocking by exception" that I mentioned above, I question whether these representations of individual *taalibes* used to evoke compassion for the entire population are indeed "exemplary," as mentioned by Boltanki, or if the HRW report harnesses exception-inspired compassion for political or fund-raising ends.

Stories, Technology, and Distant Empathy

Technological advancements in communications over time have allowed for vivid stories of suffering to be shared across larger distances. Adam Smith and Jean-Jacques Rousseau would assert that such developments enable increased compassion, as they both wrote that compassion is more keenly felt the more one is able to relate to the person suffering. For Smith, this process of relating begins by imagining oneself in the place of the sufferer[228]. He points out that although an outward manifestation of suffering may cause an involuntarily reaction in onlookers, it is not the actual suffering that is contagious. Rather, suffering is transmitted between sufferer and sympathizer when the latter imagines encountering the original provocation of suffering. This imaginative exercise is

[228] Smith describes how a person might react upon approaching someone crying. Smith explains that the onlooker will immediately be drawn to feel sympathy for the crying person, but only to a limited degree. This initial emotional jolt sparks "curiosity" rather than sorrow; the onlooker then begins to wonder what in fact caused the person to end up in the sorry state (2004[1759]:6). It is only after inquiring into the cause, and imagining how one might react if faced with a similar situation, that a fuller degree of sympathy will be experienced. Smith explains that if the onlooker judges the original provocation of tears to be something that would likely cause her to cry, she is likely to feel compassion with the suffering. If the opposite were true, and the onlooker assesses that the crying is caused by a mere trifle, she may experience a reversal of any original sympathy caused at the sight of the person's distress.

bolstered by images, videos and first-hand testimonies to convey the severity of suffering and explain its source.

Ergo, compassion comes from the story, not from the manifestation of pain itself. The more vivid a description of the reason for suffering, the more potential it has to spark compassion in the spectator - that is, if the spectator chooses to internalize it and deems the suffering genuine. In this way, technological developments in modes of communication can crucially impact the manifestation of compassion. The invention of the printing press in the 15th Century allowed for novels and news reports to become widely accessible, permitting increasingly distant empathy over time. In his epistolary novel, *Julie ou La Nouvelle Heloise*, Rousseau (1968[1761]) not only created a compassionate utopia, but utilized the format of emotional, inter-personal letters to richly develop the sensibilities of the characters, allowing the reader to feel compassion for each of them. The novel evoked passionate understanding beyond the social barriers Rousseau credited with hindering empathy[229], including religion, ethnicity, and gender.

Likewise, in recent times, technological developments have vastly increased the circulation of stories of suffering from human rights violations. Television journalists and bystanders with smart phones now allow people to become instant visual spectators of profound human suffering throughout the world from the intimacy of their living rooms. Enhanced visual technology and increased global virtual communication allow onlookers to make personal connections with sufferers in far-off lands that would have been impossible only decades ago. Social media connects concerned actors across geographies, allowing for the instant transfer of information to vast networks of targeted audiences. Because of modern techniques of media distribution, the world has come to know the *taalibes*. Since my fieldwork began, I have seen and heard about the plight of the *taalibes* from global media sources in diverse, widely-disseminated formats, including online and print news articles, documentary films (Sie 2009; Kon 2011), downloadable reports (e.g. HRW 2010; Thorsen 2012; Einarsdottir, et al. 2010; UCW 2007), national and international radio programs (NPR and BBC), NGO and aid organization publications and promotional communications, and most recently in a 24 minute televised and online newscast produced by PBS.

[229] The letter-based format, at a time when transmission took days to weeks rather than seconds, results in elongated monologues, in which each character passionately pleads his/her case to the recipient, describes his/her observations, and pours out his/her emotions - knowing that this would be the only communication for weeks or months. The reader is drawn into the reflections and feelings of the numerous authors - as each person writes from a first person point of view and we are literally called to put ourselves in their places, to see the events unfolding through their eyes.

It should be noted that the human rights issues that attract the attention of these types of global news outlets tend to be among the most egregious abuses worldwide (Niezen 2010). By their extreme nature, these high profile cases occurring worldwide are likely to cause more shock than those heard about locally, linking increased compassion to distant suffering. In this case it is not the distance that causes the increase in compassion, but the extreme nature of the abuses being communicated from afar. Moreover, when televised, people can see, hear, and in consequence *feel* the suffering of the victims, despite their distance. This is while the suffering of a neighbor or a relative – as severe as it may be – may remain invisible and therefore unable to elicit empathy.

I claimed in Part I of this chapter, that human rights promoters seek to shock audiences by revealing abuses, including victims' suffering. In this part, I discussed various factors that influence the intensity of compassionate reactions among audiences to witnessing suffering. I now go on to ask, how do groups promoting human rights harness audience compassion to elicit the reactions they seek?

Part III: Drawing Audiences to Act - The *Illusion of Aloneness* and the Impression of Personal Impact

In an effort to elicit audience support, the HRW report, *Off the Backs of the Children*, singularizes the *taalibes* as victims through personalized stories of suffering. These first person narratives create an *illusion of aloneness* in suffering, as they record each child's experiences of struggling through difficult situations, far from their families. The report similarly singularizes adult readers as witnesses to these stories of suffering. It criminalizes many surrounding adults, and renders others ineffective at helping – presenting the HRW audience with an impression of aloneness as potential supporters. I argue that these *illusions of aloneness* function as a strategy to draw audiences to act.

Those who mount shock and shame campaigns strive to cultivate compassion within audiences for victims of abuses, with the end goal to improve human rights. Compassion, as I interpret it here, is the feeling of shared suffering for the victims; it is not an action in itself. Human rights promoters must therefore also incite compassionate spectators to act in ways that can contribute to a change in the human rights situation on the ground, generally in the form of political activism or financial support. There are two factors that campaigners must consider when looking to incite desired actions from compassionate onlookers: 1) the onlookers' perceptions of the

necessity or urgency of assistance; and 2) the onlookers' perceptions of the potential impact(s) of their assistance on the situations of the victims.

Both of these factors are influenced by a process of singularization in aid solicitation – of sufferers, potential donors, and suggested contributions. This singularization process functions to foster an impression among potential donors that they have the power to make a personal impact on the situation. Aid communications that promote an illusion of aloneness tend to feature photos of a single child, or children without adults present, in order to convey their need for aid, as essentially vulnerable beings left alone. Moreover, the lack of adults in images displaying suffering children can give witnesses the impression that they, as outside viewers, are lone adult witnesses to the exhibited suffering. This emphasizes the urgency of their own intervention – as perhaps no one else will respond. Finally, campaigners singularize suggested contributions of money or action, tying their personal offerings to concrete changes for the individuals featured. Through this process of singularization, aid and rights campaigners strive to make potential donors perceive their individual contributions to be crucial to efforts to help sufferers.

Lone Sufferers and Lone Witnesses

In the 13 images in the HRW report, featuring over 100 *taalibes*[230], there are no images depicting the prime perpetrators, the *marabouts*. Indeed, there are no pictures of aid agency workers either, or *taalibes'* parents. The only four adults appearing in the entire report include a magistrate accompanied by a woman in Guinea-Bissau who are shown with five *taalibes* (HRW 2010:21), and two women fanning a *taalibe's* open wounds (ibid:10-11). Moreover, the report contains 36 *taalibe* and former *taalibe* testimonies, but only includes direct quotations from four *marabouts*. I argue that this focus on *taalibe* children to the exclusion of surrounding adults was not an oversight, but a deliberate choice. It was part of a strategy to portray the *taalibes* as children left alone, without adult care. The report states that *taalibe* children are frequently left unsupervised in their daaras, sometimes for periods of days or weeks while their *marabouts* travel (HRW 2010:52). Moreover, *marabouts* are reported to purposely cut off communication between *taalibes* and their families (ibid:66-68) The silence and visual exclusion of *marabouts* and other adult actors in the report insinuates their absence. I might also note that while the report verbally depicts the concerned *marabouts* as criminal human traffickers rather than legitimate Qur'anic masters, their photographic

[230] There are 56 *taalibes* featured in 11 photos, plus 83 *taalibes* in a single aerial photograph of children lining a city curb.

presence could suggest the contrary if they are shown bearing visual markers of Muslim piety such as a skullcap or ritual prayer beads.

I am aware that *taalibes* likely spend much of their time surrounded by other *taalibes* rather than interacting with adult actors, particularly when they are in the streets begging. However, excluding portraits of the adults who maintain power over these children, such as their masters or parents, or those who assist the *taalibes* regularly, including NGO workers, government officials and community members, appears to me to be a highly partial vision of their lived realities. For example, far from lone street children, all of the *taalibes* I visited in Qur'anic schools functioned on extremely tight schedules studying and often begging enforced by their Qur'anic masters or tutors. While perhaps not easy to comply, and not believed by all onlookers to be a true education or even a useful form of disciplining, the children I saw were not left to their own devices. If nothing else, it is important to know that the *marabouts* maintain direct power over the children, for better or worse. But presenting the reverse - including images of Qur'anic masters, parents or aid workers – might suggest to readers that the *taalibes* are surrounded by adults who can look out for them, rendering their own intervention less pressing. Falsely portraying the *taalibes* as on their own, however, raises immediate ethical concerns if the depictions are harnessed by aid groups to draw support– as any aid solicited in the name of the *taalibes* inevitably passes through their Qur'anic masters, local aid workers, government officials, or their parents. Moreover, the passive attribution of blame to adults for their perceived absence in order to directly target children for aid may itself effectively contribute to the displacement of parents from their decision-making roles, as argued by Pupavac (2001), by a "children's rights regime" of third party experts.

Childhood studies scholars have noted that images of children in fundraising and advocacy materials are usually featured alone, without their families or other adults, such as the *taalibes* in the HRW report, or the boy on the donation page on HRW.org (Wells 2007; Holland 2004; Kleinman and Kleinman 1997; Burman 1994). I ran a Google Image search on the phrase "*unicef children*," and the results overwhelmingly featured individual children and children in groups, often sad and lonely. Almost no adults appear in the photos. Some of the images were featured alongside campaign slogans emphasizing the importance of helping individual children in need, such as "One child at a time" from the CNN *Survival Project*, and "This child is **one in a million** who fled Syria/ **one** child is too many," from the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR, Bolded terms much larger in size in the original.) The poster draws on the familiar phrase to emphasize the importance of each individual child, while also stressing the magnitude of the Syrian refugee crisis.

A photo of a lone, suffering child cries out to potential donors to help, as it is not clear if anyone else will. Picturing children with their families or in community settings does not illustrate this same desperation. Erica Bornstein (2012) notes that the nomination "orphan" tends to produce powerful reactions in Western audiences – signifying abandonment or aloneness – and therefore in urgent need of protection. Ironically, however, many of the children named "orphans" by aid groups are not abandoned, and have not necessarily survived the death of their two parents, as the term is commonly assumed to suggest. Bornstein's research reveals that most children in the "orphanage" she observed in India were temporarily placed there by impoverished parents in times of crisis – to assure their basic care. However, aid groups still capitalize on the power of the word as suggestive of abandonment and aloneness.

Indeed, beyond visual impressions, the text of the HRW report on the *taalibes* supports this sentiment of abandonment. It outright criminalizes the *marabouts*, the *taalibes*' primary adult caretakers, and they are portrayed as present only long enough to collect their begging revenues and remit punishments. The Senegalese government is described as unwilling to save the *taalibes* from abusers: "The authorities have chosen to avoid any challenge to the country's powerful religious leaders, including individual marabouts" (HRW 2010:13). The report tells readers that the children's parents cannot be expected to help solve the problem of *taalibe* exploitation, because "After relinquishing their parental rights to the marabout, some then turn a blind eye to the abuses their child endures" (HRW 2010:13). It reads:

> *Many talibés who run away and make it home are returned to the marabout by their parents, who are fully aware that the child will suffer further from forced begging and often extreme corporal punishment.*

Finally, the multitudes of aid workers on the scene are described as well-intentioned, "Yet, in some cases, they have actually made the problem worse" (HRW 2010:13). In other words, readers are made to believe that none of the surrounding adult actors are willing to or able to help the *taalibes*. The HRW report recounts a horrendous problem involving the profound suffering of masses of children, and it systematically demonstrates how there is nobody helping them. Compassionate readers may be compelled to help, and HRW, has explicitly set itself apart as an organization from the apathy and inefficacy of the other adult actors.

Above, I referenced the parable of the Good Samaritan with reference to extending compassion beyond ethnic and religious boundaries. But there is another key element that I would like to explore in that scenario – that of being the sole witness to a person in need. The passers-by

in the story are each faced with the lone sufferer on the long and perilous road between Jerusalem and Jericho, and each onlooker cannot assume that someone else will pass soon enough to be able to help him (Boltanski 1999). Only the Samaritan is considered to have responded compassionately, distinguishing him from the other two, who avoided the fallen man. In this sense, compassion is viewed as a manifested act to assuage the suffering of another, not a mere internal passion. The parable does not focus on whether or not the first two passers-by felt a sentiment of pity for the sufferer - it is the action or the lack of action that is deemed important. If two or more people passed by simultaneously, or if the sufferer was lying in a busy locale rather than along an empty road, the moral imperative to intervene would not fall on any one individual. The presence of others would take pressure off of any one person to react knowing that the sufferer's life does not depend solely on him. But the fact that each onlooker was the sole witness to suffering is key to this parable – as compassion is portrayed as a personal experience of sharing in and alleviating another's suffering.

Human rights campaigns based on exposing suffering to spectator audiences appear to promote feelings of personal responsibility among spectators to react. In other words, the communication strategy of hyper-singularizing suffering mentioned by Boltanski to reduce distance between onlookers and distant sufferers, works both ways. It also seeks to singularize the onlookers. The cover of Jonathan Benthall's (2010) book, *Disasters, Relief and the Media*, presents a critical perspective on this tactic – it reveals the actors who remain hidden behind the cameras lenses that produce synthesized singularity. The cover features two white men operating a large video camera positioned above a black infant lying on a straw floor mat placed on top of a cot. There are two other white men pictured in the African-style hut - one holding a data card in front of the child, and another in the background. Off to the left of the image is a black woman smiling down at the child, perhaps her mother[231].

The final cut of this video session appears like it will only feature the child, and all of these other contributing actors remain outside the scope of vision. If such a video were being shot to accompany a story of African famine, the viewers would only see the child, not the mother nor the numerous bystanders planning and capturing the footage. This singularizes the child's suffering, representing the suffering of the thousands of other children that will have been reported to be dying of starvation through statistical estimates. But it also isolates the viewer. Activists and aid

[231] While this scene appears to take place in an African setting, the caption indicates that it was indeed in London during a studio shoot for a commercial.

groups want spectators to feel like the fate of the depicted sufferer is in their hands alone. The viewer is put face to face with the child on the screen, and is left to wonder if the infant has a mother or a father or other community members who can pick her up off of the mat and cradle her. While physically cradling her is not possible, this image may draw compassionate viewers to reach out to her through charity. Potential reactions to the image would likely be tempered, however, if it also featured the surrounding actors as they appear on Benthall's cover, including the mother and the photographers. In fact, this potential difference in audience reactions is so great that the cover image revealing the photographic staging suggests that humanitarian photography involves visual deception, portraying need through *illusions of aloneness*.

Personalizing Donor Impacts

> *Human Rights Watch accepts no funding from governments. We rely solely on the generosity of people like you [the six preceding words in contrasting blue] to defend human rights.*
>
> *-HRW.org, "Donate to Defend Human Rights"* (Accessed May 7, 2014, blue writing in original.)

The visual singularizing of suffering, coupled with the singularizing of witnessing, work to draw on people's emotional inclination toward personally feeling compassion for that suffering. The solicitation of contributions is also frequently singularized to provide potential donors with the feeling that their individual contributions will make a real impact on the suffering witnessed (Boltanski 1999). HRW.org, like most other non-profit organizations' sites, has a prominent "Donate Now" link on the front page, and it provides information on several ways to contribute. The site stresses the importance of the reader's individual donation to its ability to accomplish its goal. It reads, "For more than 30 years, Human Rights Watch has worked tenaciously to defend human rights — and bring justice to those who are oppressed. But we can't do it without your help…Together, we can make a real difference in people's lives." In attempt to personalize the donation process, the HRW donation page uses the word "you" nine times. The only image on the donation page is of a boy grasping onto a barbed wire barrier, looking serenely into the camera, into the eyes of potential donors.

To highlight the importance of individuals' donations, aid organizations frequently tie contributions to specific impacts. They may divide the targeted amounts into manageable monthly or daily contributions, or frame them in terms of the cost of individual surgeries or meals. Donations are often directly associated with the people pictured and named in promotional videos,

images or descriptions – explaining exactly what the viewer's contribution would buy for each of them. Adopt-a-child campaigns have been particularly successful at personalizing donations and creating an air of direct impact of the donor's contribution on the life of the "adopted" child (Bornstein 2005). In reality, however, such campaigns may end up pooling donations to be used for community-wide development projects in addition to direct assistance to the children featured in publicity materials (personal interview, World Vision representative, October 2007, Dakar, Senegal). The strategy of tying individuals' contributions to individual recipients, divided into the costs of living day-by-day, capitalizes on the *illusion of aloneness* produced through images and descriptions which simulates a personal connection between donors and their intended beneficiaries. *Illusions of aloneness*, in suffering and witnessing, draw people to feel compassion for individual people suffering, while personalized donation structures allow them feel like they can do something to help – particularly those individuals.

Framing humanitarian problems generally, solely as community or national development problems, by contrast, is more likely to overwhelm potential donors rather than move them to react. Individuals hearing that organizations need hundreds of thousands of dollars to reduce hunger in West Africa, for example, may see their own potential contributions as insignificant. One may ask, "How could my $30 or $100 do anything to even make an impact?" Nobody wants to feel like his/her contribution is a mere grain of rice among the 3.1 million metric tons of food aid distributed globally (WFP 2014). Moreover, communications stressing widespread need do not place an ethical responsibility on any one individual to intervene. Rather, they may incite audiences to pose questions about who is ethically responsible for alleviating the mass suffering. *Where is the national government of the area affected? Where are the adults of the communities?* NGOs working on problems of widespread need strive to counteract these feelings of detachment and helplessness by personalizing the participation of donors, calculating and translating the direct physical impacts that their contributions can make – even if they are merely abstract computations.

I drew on the charitable sensibilities of my mother to test my thinking, as she has given modest donations to a number of children's causes. I asked her what she thought about my reflections on individualizing suffering and personalizing contributions to elicit charity. She responded with reference to herself – that if a report were talking about hundreds of children in hundreds of villages who needed help, she would not know where to start. But she did not feel that sort of helplessness when she had contributed to charitable organizations. They spoke of aiding

individuals in need, such as one girl, Maria, who needs $25 per month to attend school. In those cases, she explained, "I felt like, 'I can do that. I can help her.'"

The Suffering of the Masses: Disillusionment and the Search for Meaning in Helping One among Many

> *It is necessary in some degree to confine and limit our interest and compassion in order to make it active.*
> *-Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "A Discourse on Political Economy" (2002[1758]):142).*

The *illusion of aloneness* in aid solicitation functions to simulate a personal connection between donors and beneficiaries; but there are cases in which this illusion is exposed. I find that this frequently happens when people personally invested in humanitarian work come to terms with the vast magnitude of need in comparison to their own limited capacity to help, as revealed in humanitarian memoirs (Grennan 2010; Orbinski 2009; Rieff 2002). Individuals express feelings of hopelessness as their incessant labors fail to curb continued mass suffering and violence. It becomes difficult for people with this perspective to feel that efforts to help one person are somehow making a real impact on the ground, when hundreds or thousands are still suffering or will soon be victimized by war. Illusions of aloneness are dashed with the witnessing of such mass suffering and understandings of complex social and political realities surrounding it. This is where I notice that *illusions of aloneness* in humanitarianism shift toward the search for meaning in aiding a single individual among many.

Christian beliefs boost this search for meaning in aiding a few among masses, as Christian teachings stress the idea that each human possesses an individual soul. Ergo, even if you only save one person (often referred to with respect to conversions to Christianity, but can also refer to saving lives), you save that unique soul for God. Connor Grennan (2010) evoked this belief when speaking about his best-selling book documenting his humanitarian adventures in Nepal, *Little Princes: One Man's Promise to Bring Home the Lost Children of Nepal*. In the text, he repeatedly revealed frustration with his nearly hopeless mission to save seven trafficked children, when they were only seven "blips on the radar" among countless suffering children (ibid:119-120). Grennan (ibid:120) wrote about scanning through hundreds of children who were kept like slaves in dark, dingy rooms: "I was no longer looking for the seven children – they were in front of me. The children in these rooms were the ones I hadn't found, the ones I hadn't lost. They were never even blips on the radar". But when I heard him speak about his book, Grennan mentioned having come to terms with his choice

to search for only seven specific children to assist when thousands needed aid. He said that, despite so much need, he had to "set expectations [he] could deal with" (Connor Grennan, August 28, 2012, discussion at Michigan Technological University). He explained that even if he could only change the life of "one person", that this one person's life is forever changed – which for him is a worthy accomplishment.

This process of coming to terms with one's limited capacity to aid those in need appears to be similar to Rousseau's process of reasoning to limit compassion, which he both disdains yet accepts as a psychological need. In his "Discourse on Political Economy," Rousseau (2002[1758]:142) points out: "It appears that the feeling of humanity evaporates and grows feeble in embracing all mankind, and that we cannot be affected by the calamities of Tartary or Japan, in the same manner as we are by those of European nations." He proposes, as a practical solution, that people should seek to direct compassion toward "fellow-citizens" due to their living together day-to-day. Today, with the advent of universal humanitarianism and human rights promotion, neither geography nor socially-construed categories direct or limit compassionate feelings or actions. In these universal realms, potentially all people suffering throughout the world merit compassion. But, as seen above, conceiving of suffering on a mass scale is still likely to overwhelm a compassionate person. In response, some simply find their own ways to limit their compassionate responses – by accepting *illusions of aloneness* in communications of suffering which produce feelings of affect in donors for featured recipients, or by finding spiritual meaning in saving an individual among masses.

I now reflect in detail upon how these factors influencing compassion and resulting compassion-inspired actions make stories of suffering children particularly powerful and at times ethically questionable advocacy tools among transnational audiences.

Part IV: Child Images, Imagining Childhood: Innocence and Vulnerability in Stories of Suffering *Taalibes*

As demonstrated above, human suffering can incite compassion in onlookers. But seeing or hearing of suffering *children* in particular, can increase the sentimental effect among some. Powerful social ideas, or rather ideals, throughout modern Western thought about the inherent, universal innocence and vulnerability of children make witnessing their suffering particularly shocking. Consequently, eliciting compassion for suffering children among Western audiences is relatively easy. The various criteria to maximally cultivate compassion, as listed above, are readily fulfilled in the case of suffering children: First, by universalizing the child, Western audiences can easily relate

to children, through their own experiences as parents or in remembering their own childhoods. Moreover, children are generally viewed to be outside of the realm of politics, removing powerful transnational political barriers that may apply to adult populations. Finally, transnational audiences will overwhelmingly deem any abuse, exploitation or neglect of a child as a serious moral offense, due to widespread beliefs in the innocence of children and the importance of a happy, carefree childhood. Simply by virtue of being a child, the innocent, apolitical and emotionally-invested *taalibe* victim makes a particularly powerful protagonist in HRW's story of human rights violations.

Victims, Villains and Heroes: Tales of Innocent *Taalibes*, Evil *Marabouts* and Heroic Activists

In terms of pedagogy, stories can enhance learning, help retain interest in a subject matter, and improve understanding (Huber, et al 2013). The framing of information in a coherent format, with a clear progression from beginning, through events, to a resolution enables people to make sense of, and pay attention to key details amidst what might otherwise be information overload on any given topic. Furthermore, stories appeal to our passions - our fears, our desires - transporting our imaginations through diverse scenarios, and forcing reflection about the unfolding events at every stage (Jackson 2005). We follow protagonists through trials, sorrows and joys; stories pull us to imaginatively place ourselves in the situations of others (Hunt 2007). In terms of reporting human rights violations, stories function in all of these ways while describing a clear abuse of justice and naming innocent victims and (often evil) perpetrators (Cree, et al. 2012; Vance 2011). Asking audiences to intervene, therefore, essentially asks them to insert themselves in a fight between good and bad, right and wrong, just and unjust.

As a New York Times Best Seller, Connor Grennan's (2010) book *Little Princes* has become a powerful fundraising tool for his non-profit organization Next Generation Nepal. I argue that this is in part due to the book's resemblance to an adventure novel. In addition to simply making it more engaging, Grennan's gripping storytelling techniques draw readers to feel the children's experiences, and to relate to Grennan himself, the narrator, as a compassionate humanitarian on a mission to fight evil. Grennan documents how he accomplished the seemingly hopeless task of locating each lost child. He describes how he travelled for days at a time through rough terrain to speak with their families, during which time Grennan experienced many setbacks and much self-doubt. Grennan's narrative personalizes his interactions with others; he includes dialogues and speaks of each person by name. He unfolds events sequentially to mount suspense and chronicles

the developing romance between himself and his future wife. The trafficked children are shown to be innocent victims of a quintessentially evil trafficker named Golkka, whom readers come to despise for his repeated detestable actions that unfold throughout the book. In the face of such evil, Grennan's work to help the children becomes heroic. Didier Fassin (2011:37) notes that this sort of heroism is often associated with humanitarianism; it has lent the enterprise a sacred quality, or "untouchability", effectively insulating it from scrutiny.

The story of the *taalibes* as told by HRW is a similar tale of good, evil and heroism. It is a passionate display of innocent children suffering at the hands of profit-hungry, unscrupulous human traffickers. The report states outright that, "By no means do all Qur'anic schools run such regimes," but within the same sentence, it declares that "many *marabouts* force the children… to beg on the streets for long hours – a practice that meets the International Labour Organization's definition of a worst form of child labor – and subject them to often brutal physical and psychological abuse" (HRW 2010:6). It continues: "The *marabouts* are also grossly negligent in fulfilling the children's basic needs, including food, shelter, and healthcare, despite adequate resources in most urban *daaras*, brought in primarily by the children themselves" (HRW 2010:6). Readers are persuaded to have no doubts about the evil nature of *marabouts'* actions.

Most damning of the *marabouts* are the many *taalibe* testimonies that directly implicate their masters in their abuse, neglect or exploitation. Pape M., age 13, was quoted as saying, "When I was sick, I was never treated by the *marabout*. If we said that we were sick, the *marabout* would tell us to find medicines by ourselves" (HRW 2010:62). A quote from Assane B., age 15, describes his *marabout* as a heartless and violent brute: "When the *marabout* found runaways, he would put them in a room, strip them, and have four talibés hold each of the hands and feet of the runaway while he beat him. It was a very severe beating; every time he would continue until you could see bad wounds on the body. It was only when he opened skin – sometimes multiple times – that he would stop" (HRW 2010:72). Boubacar D., age 12, told of his *marabout*'s system of violence-enforced debt collection: "If we cannot bring the quota one day, our name is put on the board with the sum we owe. We are in debt. If we cannot bring it all the next day, then we are beaten badly with electric cable" (HRW 2010:50).

HRW interviewed approximately 30 *marabouts* to produce the report. Yet very few quotes or references to *marabouts*' comments are actually included. Instead, the quotes from the children are made to speak for the actions of the *marabouts* – virtually all of which are cruel, abusive or exploitative. In fact, in the section entitled, "Perpetrators and Complicitous Actors", only four

direct quotes from *marabouts* are included, two of which denounce *marabouts* who send their *taalibes* out to beg. The first sentence in the subsection, "*Marabouts* and Religious Leaders" justifies their forced silence: "*Marabouts* interviewed by Human Rights Watch often rationalized the practice of forced child begging with explanations that hardly withstand reason. Some *marabouts* who hide behind these explanations ultimately stand to gain considerable money from the talibés' labor" (HRW 2010:76). That section briefly outlines the general justifications cited by *marabouts* for *taalibe* begging, and subsequently disregards all of them as "wholly inconsistent" with reality (HRW 2010:77). This perspective is likely representative of the *marabouts* of the population of *taalibes* interviewed – most of whom were resident at a shelter that seeks out and takes in children living in the streets. But this is an inherently exceptional sample of *taalibes* and resulting descriptions of their *marabouts*. Is it ethically necessary to clarify this suffering as exceptional when presented to worldwide audiences unfamiliar with the children and their context?

HRW's perspective on the *marabouts* directly contradicts that echoed by most NGOs working on the scene. As noted in chapter 6 above, state and non-state actors intervening on the ground have created a discourse of "vulnerable schools", which describes the *taalibes* and their masters as victims of poverty. The reports produced by these actors include quotes from *marabouts* who justify child begging with impoverished conditions and the right to religious education (e.g.UCW 2007; ENDA 2005,2003) Numerous aid workers have personally expressed to me how such arguments are difficult to support – as the *marabouts* in question willingly take in more children than they can handle. But due to their aid-based relationships with the instructors, aid organizations still officially give credence to *marabouts*' justifications for child begging in their statements and publications.

In communications about human rights, having a voice equals power. Considering the goals of HRW in writing the report on the *taalibes*, the authors had chosen not to give voice to the actors they were actively striving to condemn for outright brutalizing and exploiting children. The testimonies of the *taalibes* against their instructors, and the relative lack of voice of the *marabouts*, results in the creation of polarized, morally-charged characters. The *taalibe* represents innocence and vulnerability, and the *marabout* incarnates evil – capable of unrelenting brutality against innocent victims for the sake of power and greed. And this Qur'anic school nomenclature is employed despite not all *taalibes* being victims, and not all *marabouts* perpetrators of child trafficking. This unquestionable presentation of good in the face of evil guides compassionate readers to feel sympathy for the named victims, *taalibes*, and to blame the named group of perpetrators, *marabouts*,

without the psychological hindrance of needing to weigh multiple perspectives before passing judgment.

Picturing Universal Childhood Vulnerability: (*Taalibe*) Children as the Most Worthy Aid Recipients

> *…pictures of sorrowing children reinforce the defining characteristics of childhood – dependence and powerlessness. Pathetic pictures of children create a desired image in which childhood is no longer a threat and adults are firmly back in control.*
> *- Patricia Holland (2004:143)*

Images of the lone child in need embody the singularity of the universal child model, where young people are portrayed as inherently similar in fundamental ways due to biological immaturity, social inexperience, and emotional innocence (James & Prout 1997). Notions of universal childhood contribute to the ways in which Western audiences perceive displays of suffering children. Inasmuch, imagined proximity with children throughout the world broadly draws Western onlookers to feel compassion for those appearing to be "missing out" on typical childhood experiences (Stevens 1995). The same scene, however, may not arouse the same types of sentiments in the adults of the communities surrounding those children due to cross-cultural differences in conceptions of children and their social roles. By contrast adults draw less sympathy due to their status as socially competent actors.

Anthropologists and childhood studies scholars such as Sharon Stevens (1995), Alison James and Alan Prout (1997) have demonstrated how children, in the modern Western imaginary, are innocent, vulnerable and dependent, at least until the age of 18 (see Cheney 2010 for critical introduction to literature on vulnerability and childhood). These scholars deconstruct this universalized vision of the child by juxtaposing it with reports of global *childhoods*, the plurality suggestive of the diversity of conceptions of childhood and childhood experiences cross-culturally, within varying socio-economic realities, and over time. Anthropologists have studied child workers worldwide, for example, examining not only health and developmental risks of their work but the active choices of many to earn money for their families and their futures (Lancy 2008; Nieuwenhuys 2007, 1996, 1994; Bass 2004; Polak 2003; Schlemmer 2000; Reynolds 1991). These findings directly contradict ideas that children are excessively vulnerable, and many are able to gain degrees of dependency long before their 18th birthdays.

Ethnographic and historical studies have shown that children's perceived inherent innocence varies cross-culturally. Steven Mintz' history of childhood in America reveals that 17th Century

Puritans in colonial America viewed newborn babies as impure and sinful until baptism could wash them clean. Consequently, Puritan babies who died at birth were believed to be "doomed to eternal torment in hell" (Mintz 2004:15). Today, categories of young people that pose conceptual problems for conventionalized definitions of the child as dependent, vulnerable or innocent include: street children (Kovats-Bernat 2006; Droz 2006; Panter-Brick 2001, 2002; Nieuwenhuys 2001; Hecht 1998; Connolly & Ennew 1996); child prostitutes (Montgomery 2001); and child soldiers (Rosen 2007; Cheney 2007; Boyden 2003; de Waal & Argenti 2002).

What do these counter-examples say about the nature of childhood – are these actors not *children*? To those subscribing to the universalized model of childhood described above, these children have effectively *lost their childhood* (Stephens 1995). If Westerners believe that children are inherently innocent, vulnerable and dependent, a corresponding ideal childhood should therefore be carefree, protected, and apolitical. With this, one can begin to understand the pity that Western onlookers might feel when gazing at images of a 12-year-old head of household in Ghana, a 9-year-old street boy in India, or a 14-year-old soldier in Sierra Leone – they are viewed as missing out on childhood. By universalizing their own models of ideal childhood, spectators of distant children in roles considered unfit are moved to restore "natural" child happiness, and protect them from impending dangers.

Karen Wells (2007:59) sees the apolitical, inherently innocent status accorded to children in the West as the result of a process of biologizing the child to render it universal: "The child, understood to be closer to nature than to culture, exists in an uneasy tension in the space between adults' desire to socialize and enculturate children and their regret that children have to be initiated into society and culture." Wells likens the child's transition from nature to culture in Christian iconography to "the constant retelling of the story of Adam and Eve's fall from Grace and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden" (Wells 2007:59). I compare this thinking to Rousseau's reflections on how the acquisition of reason, by peoples over time or humans as they age, inhibits the innate compassion that he saw as the root of all goodness towards others. This socialization into rationality amounts to the perpetual corruption of youth with every generation and the repeated death of Rousseau's *noble savage*.

The HRW report draws on Western childhood ideals to alert audiences to *taalibes'* drastically diverging experiences. Beyond attributing much attention to abuse and neglect, it dedicates a section to "Denying the Right to Play," which is described as, "the ultimate symbol that a talibé has no chance, nor right, to be a child" (HRW 2010:70). Only three children, out of 73 interviewed,

reported that their *marabout* allowed them time for leisure or recreation. HRW declares that play is "an essential element in the healthy development of a child and a guaranteed right under the CRC" (HRW 2010:70). While this statement frames the problem in terms of rights to health and development, the report also highlights the injustice of being forced to forego the pleasures of childhood. The words of one *taalibe* communicate sadness from missing out on the fun that other children are allowed to have:

> *If the marabout saw us playing, he would beat us. In the early evening, almost every day, all the other neighborhood kids would be out playing football, but we never could unless we were far away from the daara where the marabout could not see (ibid).*

The Western sentiment of universal childhood traverses even contentious political and religious borders. A 1980s famine aid slogan noted that, "A hungry child has no politics" (Burman 1994:243). Adults are considered to be responsible for their actions and their predicaments in ways that children are rarely seen to be so by Western audiences. This is largely because adults are considered competent social and political beings who are tied to the consequences of their socio-political actions and beliefs. Images of adults, especially distant ones, rather than evoking a sense of familiarity, often spark a sentiment of foreignness and difference, as they are not as easily divorced from culture and politics (Malkki 1996). And while not always consciously recognized among donor populations, not all sufferers are deemed "worthy" of aid, as revealed by Liisa Malkki (1996) in the case of Hutu refugees in Tanzania. While this discourse releases children from culpability for their predicament, it also strips them of their social and political agency.

In the HRW report, the victimhood of the *taalibes* is expressed through passive grammatical structures. They are "moved from their villages" to Senegal's cities, "forced" to beg, and "subjected to" violent and unsanitary conditions (HRW 2010:6,9). The *taalibes* are "Unfed by the *marabout*, untreated when sick, forced to work for long hours only to turn over money and rice to someone who uses almost none of it for their benefit – and then beaten whenever they fail to reach the quota – hundreds, likely thousands, of talibés run away from *daaras* each year" (HRW 2010:10). Then when these children choose to run away from these difficult conditions, they are again framed as passively "thrust into a life of drugs, theft, predatory behavior, and violence" (HRW 2010:74). The report reads that "…the dire conditions lead them to steal in the market and from houses" (ibid). Like runaway *taalibes*, child soldiers are similarly stripped of culpability by transnational aid and rights groups for crimes committed due to their under-18 status (Rosen 2005). This is even if they claim to act voluntarily or are socially inculpated within their own communities. Despite committing

criminal acts, thieving *taalibes*, like child soldiers, are seen in Western circles as apolitical victims of violent circumstances, in need of protection and rehabilitation, not punishment (Cheney 2007).

Where Ticktin (2011:122) observes sexual violence as the "most morally legitimate form of suffering" according to her French medical staff informants, in Senegal and in many contexts throughout the globe, it is senseless child suffering that can take this title. Both of these victim types are ideal objects of compassion through their *passivity*. Ticktin notes that this widespread compassion for victims of sexual violence draws on social depictions of victimized women as passive and apolitical. This is the same reason why children are such worthy objects of pity. But, Ticktin notes that where compassion is based on passivity, its duration depends on the perpetuation of unequal power structures that restrain women and children in passive and apolitical roles. In terms of her project, for the women granted papers for reasons of compassion for their status as passive victims of sexual violence (rather than solely for a life-threatening medical need, as indicated in France's immigration policy's "illness clause"), their continued residency status would depend on them maintaining an illness profile as passive and victimized. In my project, I find that where aid for *taalibe* children is based on compassion, it is therefore also contingent on their continued passive, apolitical status as sufferers.

Absent from the HRW story of innocent *taalibe* victims is a critical reflection about the agency of the children themselves in these processes, including begging. I do not suggest that the *taalibes* are not victimized by their instructors, nor that they have somehow acted on their own will to end up abused. But the passive language about the abuses that they have endured, coupled with testimonies highlighting only suffering, serves to render the *taalibes* into one-dimensional, victimized and vulnerable characters in the HRW story. A couple of children explicitly expressed to me that they genuinely enjoy their Qur'anic studies, even though they must beg daily and sleep on cement floors. I have come across boys who beg for extra time to save up money for clothing, cell phones and music players. Leslie Moore (2006) reports that Qur'anic pupils in Cameroon willingly endure strict rules and beatings with the understanding that they will be in control of others in years to come. The *taalibes* of Senegal are similarly socialized into a hierarchical system of social control – if at first they are passive recipients of punishment, they may later become avid enforcers against neophytes.

Taalibes' active roles put into question images of the boys as mere passive victims needing someone to rescue them from slavery. Many *taalibes* have situated themselves as actors within a socially- and religiously-validated cultural system. In consequence, they may not always see

cooperating with intervening actors as in their best interests. Moreover, local populations do not necessarily see *taalibes* as passive and victimized. In fact, Qur'anic masters and families who support *taalibe* begging frequently bolster their position by conveying the act's spiritual and pedagogic value. Suffering in search of future strength and exultation is not considered *passive*. Although the HRW report focuses on the passive victimhood of abused *taalibes* to muster support for their cause, consideration of *taalibes*' agency as social actors is crucial to understanding how to actually assist them, as I demonstrated in chapter three on youth migration.

Perhaps the HRW report avoids highlighting *taalibe* agency because the image would more likely cause apprehension in audience members than compassion. Despite their presumed innocence, uncontrolled children have a unique ability to incite fear in adult onlookers – distant or near. Children living in the streets, for example, can cause much anxiety for urban inhabitants or visitors, which in turn becomes a motivation for intervention (Kovats-Bernat 2006; Droz 2006; Panter-Brick 2001, 2002; Nieuwenhuys 2001; Hecht 1998; Scheper-Hughes 1998). "A problem that had been endemic and much commented on since Tudor times," comments British historian of childhood Hugh Cunningham (2006:106), is "the idleness of children and the lack of jobs for them." He points out that current preoccupations are not novel, but "children in the streets had long been seen as a threat" (ibid). Children forced to wield machine guns are viewed by Western audiences with heavy-hearts, and trembling hands. These fears are related to underlying beliefs in the emotional immaturity and malleability of children: that children must be socially controlled for their own protection, so that they cannot be manipulated by others to perpetrate crimes (Holland 2004:120-126). In the case of the *taalibes* of Senegal, aid organizations make urgent calls for funds to get the malnourished, exploited boys out of the streets, before they are lured to turn the wrong way.

Visions of universal childhood suggest that all children, in their biological and social immaturity, share certain universal characteristics. This may evoke a sense of familiarity, even nostalgia, between distant children and onlookers – because everyone is presumed to have passed through the shared experience of childhood (James & Prout 1997). This can facilitate compassionate action. Whether through compassion for an innocent, suffering child, or for fear of emerging delinquents, appeals to aid the *taalibe* children are tremendously powerful, as the continued flourishing of large-scale projects attests. But, as I go on to discuss, these powerful pleas to save children raise certain ethical concerns.

Shock for Children's Causes: The Power and Ethics of Harnessing the "Voices" and Images of Suffering Children

While I have shown that the spectacle of suffering is astutely used by human rights and aid groups to rally support for their causes, it also has its darker sides – with criticisms ranging from it being entertaining and sadistically pleasurable for some; that it perpetuates conceptions of people of poorer nations as passive and victimized; or that the dissemination of disaster images is merely a profitable pursuit (Benthall 2010; Holland 2004; Sontag 2003; Boltansky 1999; Kleinman & Kleinman 1997; Omaar & de Waal 1993). There are troubling ethical questions to be asked about how stories and images of suffering others, particularly children, are used in relief or rights-promotion efforts. In addition to complications of informed consent of participating children (Roberts 2000), particularly in the absence of their parents, such portrayals potentially reinforce their victimization, disavowing child agency (Montgomery 2001). Furthermore, the authenticity of children's "voices" can be put into question, even when directly quoted, when used to communicate particular political or social messages by adult others (James 2007).

The many first-hand testimonies of *taalibe* suffering included in the HRW report intensify the document's potential impact on audience compassion. The report presents 36 direct quotes from *taalibes*, giving an aura of authenticity to HRW's claims of abuses committed against the *taalibes*. One can simply declare that a boy was beaten by his *marabout* because he did not collect his daily quota. But adding a personal voice brings the story to life:

> *If I can't bring the quota, then the marabout beats me with an electric cable or a club. He takes us into a room and brings other talibés in to watch. Every time he forces us to hold our ears and move up and down as he strikes us – he keeps striking while we do this until we tumble over. If we tumble over right away, he starts again (HRW 2010:51, "Cherif B., 11 [years old]").*

The level of detail included in the quote, as told personally by a boy named Cherif, allows readers to recreate the actions in their minds. Envisioning the scenario in this way can produce emotional reactions in readers by allowing them to relate to the narrator.

Child-centered anthropologists and social scientists have applauded recent shifts welcoming children's "voices" into campaigns and research that concerns them. Sociologist Michael Freeman (e.g. 1997; 1998; 2006) is an ardent advocate for the use of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to enable children's "voices" to be heard in children's rights issues

concerning them (Freeman 1998:436).[232] Priscilla Alderson (2000) insists that children know themselves best, better than outside observers, and their perspectives should therefore be incorporated into all stages of the research process. Alderson (2000:287) claims: "Children are the primary source of knowledge about their own views and experiences. They can be a means of access to other children, including those who may be protected from strange adult researchers." Helen Roberts (2008) cites the power of children's voices to speak for themselves, noting the increased novelty of the approach and the publicity for the advancement of children's causes that it can incite. All of these researchers note the importance and power of children's "voices" in the promotion of children's rights and child-centered research, but they also are careful to make the distinction between passive and active participation – as objects or subjects of research. In other words, even if the words are quoted directly from *taalibes* – who is actually speaking?

From another angle, anthropologists Reynolds, et al. (2006) question whether Freeman's call for voices is indeed enough to change the status and life conditions of children in practice: "The idea that letting in the voices of children will alter the frame is part of the belief that the language of rights can and will ameliorate the fate of children in the developing world" (Reynolds, et al 2006:294). They point to practical complications in this idealistic power-sharing scheme – that the inherent paternalism of listening to children but ultimately deciding on their behalf may have an entirely opposite result than that desired. It has the potential of effectively eliminating opposing child voices through a veneer of democratic due process.

While the surge of children's voices in recent children's rights activism and social science scholarship has aimed to correct their past absence (Freeman 2009; Schwartzman 2001), Alison James (2007) signals the need to revise how researchers and activists use, interpret, and represent these voices. Clifford Geertz (1973, 1988), James Clifford (1986, 1988), Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1991), and Talal Asad (1997), among others, participated in the raging debates within the discipline of anthropology on ethnographic authority and questions of translation, mediation and

[232] The rights of children to "participation" in the CRC, based on premises that children are social actors in their own right, broadly include the following 9 articles (taken from Hartas 2008:94, cited from Lansdown 2001:1):

Article 5 – parental provision of direction and guidance in accordance with respect for children's evolving capacity;
Article 9 – non-separation of children from families without the right to make their views known;
Article 12 – the right to be listened to and taken seriously;
Article 13 – the right to freedom of expression;
Article 14 – the right to freedom of conscience, thought and religion;
Article 15 – the right to freedom of association;
Article 16 – the right to privacy;
Article 17 – the right to information;
Article 29 – the right to education that promotes respect for human rights and democracy.

representation (James 2007). These scholars helped to create and surmount a crisis of ethnographic authority that has henceforth obligated ethnographers to contextualize their quotations, qualify their claims, and remind themselves that they have not, in effect, *gone native*.

Allison James (2007), however, observes that while anthropologists have adjusted their claims to authority with respect to the overseas *Other* since the 1980s and 1990s, the relationship that anthropology has made with its underage ethnographic *Other* remains disturbingly unchallenged. James discusses various critical perspectives on the use of children's "voices" to caution against the haphazard use of children's words to claim false authority over their voices and the interpretation of their lives. In this sense, she calls on anthropologists to draw on the critical and reflexive history of their discipline to challenge contemporary research on and with children to reassess issues of representation, authority, voice and interpretation.

Children's voices detain extensive rhetorical power, but researchers tend to polarize around how these voices should be dealt with. Echoing James' concerns about the ways in which children's voices are represented, Helen Roberts (2000) proposes basic ethical guidelines for their solicitation and treatment. She concurs that children's participation in social science research can have all of the benefits mentioned by Alderson (2000), but she cautions researchers to be critical about when it is indeed appropriate to include children in projects and solicit their words, and when it is inappropriate and potentially harmful. She therefore challenges those working with children to question how they use children's words– if it is indeed to produce new insight, or if it is in order to reclaim a certain authenticity of voice to promote one's findings.

In making a distinction between *listening* to children and *hearing* them, Roberts argues that it is not always necessary to listen to children's audible words for researchers to make sensitive observations and recommend appropriate policy adjustments.[233] In fact, soliciting children to publically share painful experiences in order for researchers and activists to campaign against poverty or abuse, for example, may have lofty goals to better the lives of children, but may harm participants or exploit their privacy in the process. With respect to producing scholarship, Roberts stresses a need for researchers to keep in mind the balance between satisfying scientific curiosity or controversy with the right of children to not contribute.

[233] This does not mean that it is appropriate to put public policies in place that impact on the lives of children without sufficient effort to understand the potential impacts on the children themselves. She notes history's numerous examples of disastrous child welfare interventions which she labels social "experimentation" (Roberts 2000:263). For example, Roberts (2000:263) notes that neglecting to take seriously children's suffering while in residential care was a prime example of child welfare policy gone wrong.

HRW is an activist organization; the 2010 report produced about the *taalibes* makes no claims to unbiased social science research. But, because the entire focus of the report is to promote children's rights for the *taalibes* of Senegal based on the CRC, including the right to freedom from exploitation, the right to basic subsistence, health and development, the right to education, and the right to play, I note that the right to meaningful participation in the production of knowledge about them should then also be critically considered. The *taalibes* were given a choice to engage with HRW researchers or to refuse participation. But were they aware that glimpses of their faces, bodies and voices would be disseminated globally to display their victimhood and condemn their masters and their state governments? As proof that the ethical questions surrounding photographing suffering children, the Centre Ginddi, the Senegalese government's reception center for children in crisis, prohibits researchers and journalists from taking photographs of the children inside. With sufficient permissions, I was able to interview runaway *taalibes* – but I could not take photos. Non-governmental reception centers, however, like *Empire des Enfants*, generally allow the children to be photographed by journalists and researchers[234]. One could argue that in any case, the HRW report serves their best interests in that it advocates to free them from exploitation and abuse – the gold standard in children's rights promotion. But exposing suffering children can have powerful effects far beyond the immediate goals of the photographer, the person displaying it, and the child depicted.

Omaar and de Waal (1993) referred to the cinematic shots of the 1992 famine in Somalia as "disaster pornography" - shocking spectators with degrading pictures of emaciated, dying children and helpless adults. Not much has changed in methods of representing misfortune over the last 20 years, judging from the collection of provocative images that turned up in a Google Image search I ran in February 2012 for "famine in Somalia", where famine had been declared by the UN in 2011.

Proponents argue that it is precisely the most vivid representations of suffering children that are best able to communicate the extreme need that some populations face in order to elicit funds from potential donors. In their article examining the ethics of representing suffering, Kleinman and Kleinman (1997) document how Kevin Carter's controversial 1993 Pulitzer Prize winning photo was picked up by numerous aid agencies to document the region's distress. The photo was of a young, starving girl who fell to the ground out of weakness on her journey to a food hospital in southern Sudan. She was being watched with interest by a nearby vulture. Kleinman and Kleinman report that one agency justified the use of Carter's shocking image for aid solicitation "to prevent other

[234] At the time of my research, *Empire des Enfants* maintained a website that featured photographs of sheltered children as well as a short (7m:49s) documentary-style video on the *taalibe* begging phenomenon and their work (www.empiredesenfants.com). Since then, however, the site has either moved or been removed from the internet.

children from succumbing in the same heartlessly inhuman way" (ibid:4). Therefore, a photographer was honored and organizations increased their charitable income, on the back of this girl who could no longer even stand up on her own. In a tragic and ironic twist to this story, the photographer himself, who admitted to chasing away the vulture but leaving the girl to fend for herself, committed suicide just months after the prize announcement.

While visiting my mother one day, I came across some pieces of mail from charitable organizations that displayed children with cleft palates and cataracts on the front of the envelopes. The full-color photos were accompanied by bold-faced, attention-grabbing phrases like, "There's a 15-minute surgery that can restore the eyesight of children who are completely blind."[235] Another envelope from a different organization featured a blinded toddler on the verge of crying. The cover of an envelope from *Smile Train* displayed an approximately six- month-old boy with a cleft upper lip. In the photo, he is held by a woman, presumably his mother, who looks at him with concern as his sad eyes look directly into the camera. *Operation Smile* sent a large-sized envelope with a bright red background featuring 10 photographs of children with cleft lips or palates. They are all looking straight out at spectators with saddened eyes. In the center of the envelope, just above my mother's mailing address, bold-faced text declares: "**1 in 10** children born with a cleft **will die** before their first birthday. We don't want to lose any of them" (the bold words here are featured in a larger font size in the mailing). The presentation suggested that one of the 10 children featured on that envelope would soon die.

I currently peruse through a stack of over 50 charitable mailings that my mother subsequently collected for me per my request. Every couple of weeks she sends me another stack of mailings soliciting aid for children. Clearly word got out that she had contributed to a children's charity, and now she gets hundreds of mailings per year. When the envelopes do not outwardly display children with physical anomalies, they nearly always enclose full-color photos of suffering children– such as emaciated, crying infants; children with burn scars covering their faces; and children attempting to walk on clubbed feet. These images are accompanied by urgent, heart-grabbing pleas for help. I do not know how many of these groups actually receive donations through their mailing campaigns. But I feel I can safely conjecture that the face of the suffering child is being harnessed so ubiquitously for fund-raising because, on some level, it actually works.

Such images are shocking, and can perhaps create a sense of fear. My nine-year-old son glanced at the image at the top of the stack of mailings sitting on my desk and said, "That is scary."

[235] From the front of an envelope from the organization *Wonder Work*, located in Washington, DC.

But, as noted above, showing too much suffering can also contribute to a generalized insensitivity, or compassion fatigue. This misery overload can even push spectators to criticize the use of such images as profiting off of suffering, or to question the authenticity of the suffering depicted therein (Sontag 2003). Organizations concerned with children today are aware of, and have become self-critical with respect to the victimization of beneficiaries through visual or vocal sensationalism[236], yet they strive to counterbalance the ethics of representation against the sheer power of the child's face and voice to elicit contributions (Benthall 2010; Holland 2004).

Patricia Holland documents criticisms of the display of suffering non-white, developing-country children to primarily white, privileged adult audiences - that it promotes racism and visions of helplessness, which for some can "confirm contempt for those parts of the world that seem unable to help their own" (Holland 2004:154). This is particularly troublesome when aid agencies have purposely fostered impressions that depicted children are abandoned to increase compassionate sentiments and incite charitable action. Aid agencies have recognized these negative ramifications of displaying decontextualized, developing-world child sufferers; their communications have shifted to reflect children - not as victims of their own societies – but as victims of global economic forces (ibid). In consequence, the world has been made to discover supposedly "new" forms of child suffering as a result of global economic exploitation, including modern slavery and human trafficking (Holland 2004:154). This has meant that, according to aid groups, global economic restructuring has resulted in the apparent sudden rise of the *taalibe* child trafficking victim, a phenomenon I described in chapter two. This image serves to shift blame away from local actors and traditions, and instead blames the "new" child exploitation on the effective corruption of these traditions by global forces. The result is the need for intervention by global actors.

Conclusion: Shocking Audiences with Child Suffering – What Can be Gained, and at What Cost?

The 2010 HRW report, "Off the Backs of the Children: Forced Begging and Other Abuses against Talibés in Senegal," exposes human rights abuses against the *taalibes* in such a way as to incite shock, cultivate compassion, and harness public support to pressure for changes. The report presents graphic images of children in pain or in difficult situations. It includes powerful first-hand quotes from children testifying to having endured various types of violence and neglect. The report

[236] A representative from *Save the Children, Sweden*, told me that his organization invests very little in promotional materials, because it is generously funded by the population of Sweden. He expressed a concern with the frequent use of images of child suffering to elicit charity (personal interview, audio recorded, October 2007, Dakar, Senegal)

tells a Manichean tale about evil perpetrators ruthlessly exploiting innocent victims, and it capitalizes on the Western ideals of the inherent vulnerability and universality of childhood to communicate the severity of the violations and the urgency to intervene.

In this chapter, I have discussed several techniques that aid and rights groups use in their communications to bolster campaigns championing children's causes. I looked specifically at how the HRW report, characteristic of calls for charity among diverse groups, creates *illusions of aloneness* in the exhibition of child suffering to entice giving. I have also raised several ethical questions about the use of children's images and voices to lend the report shock value and authority, considering the report's goals to promote children's rights of all types, including to meaningful participation in decisions that concern them. This is particularly the case when these examples *shock by exception* yet are made to represent entire populations of children. Yet aid and rights groups may argue that even if shocking or illusory, images and testimonies of suffering children serve as crucial tools with which to cultivate compassion and mobilize support for efforts to help them (Kleinman and Kleinman 1997). And while I do not question that shocking accounts of lonely children suffering may attract higher charitable revenues or increased public support, I ask whether or not the use of the material indeed helps to improve the human rights of the children on display, as it is often supposed, so as to justify its use despite ethical risks.

While this may perhaps only be answerable on a case-by-case basis, by examining campaigns and outcomes, I suggest that the nature of children's human rights as they are situated within the larger human rights framework indicates that "shock and shame" efforts, inherently solicitous of rapid responses, have a limited chance of creating lasting change for the children concerned. While gaining public moral consensus is crucial to cultivating compassion for human rights violations, the success of human rights campaigns on the ground depends on gaining support from the *right* publics. Human rights are considered universal, and for various reasons that I have examined above, their promotion may take place primarily over distances; but their application - and violation - remain local.

While the HRW report's *taalibe* story is a moving account of child suffering, it is inconsistent with Senegalese popular conceptions of the characters portrayed therein. In other words – the report targeted transnational audiences and was successful at pressuring them to call for change; but it entirely ignored the local population – to whom the president and other key actors effectively respond. This is the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter 9 – A Tale of Two Discourses:

Stories, Audiences and Justified Inaction for *Taalibes*' Human Rights

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times…

- Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities

It can be argued that the Human Rights Watch (HRW) report examined in the previous chapter, and accompanying collaborative efforts to pressure for government action against forced child begging, were extremely successful. The head of state did not dismiss the allegations - his government banned begging in the city of Dakar and arrested several Qur'anic masters identified as having forced their pupils to beg. But the ban was short-lived, and the Qur'anic masters were fined and liberated. The reversal of the ban not only effectively legalized the practice of forced child begging in Senegal, but it provided credence to the religious, economic, and civil rights arguments that are frequently raised in its favor. To be fair, despite reversing the ban after a mere six weeks, President Wade pledged to regulate and support the Qur'anic school sector and establish an organized alms-giving system that could permit *daaras* to collect donations without child begging. But nothing came of his promises before his successor Macky Sall took office in April of 2012. There has still been no significant national progress on getting the *taalibes* out of the streets or into improved conditions.

The ban's quick reversal was due to a general lack of support from the population of Senegal. Opposing groups painted the president's move to ban begging as a capitulation to transnational pressures to end child begging. In reversing the ban, the state shifted its framing of the problem of child begging from the *trafficking discourse* to the *vulnerable schools discourse*. Rather than speaking of "criminal exploitation," it spoke of "alms-seeking in support of religious education." I call this discursive shift *dancing between discourses* to justify inaction on the *taalibe* issue. With the enactment of the ban, exploitation is acknowledged and publically decried (within the child *trafficking discourse*). With its reversal were proposals to aid Qur'anic schools (within the *vulnerable schools discourse*). This vacillation between competing explanations for *taalibe* begging not only suggests a self-contradiction on the part of speakers, it channels popular outrage at child exploitation toward assistive actions that turn a blind eye to child begging.

In this concluding chapter, I consider my original research question: *With so many actors taking up the cause to help the taalibes of Senegal, why are there still so many children begging in Senegal's streets?* I argue

that while politics, fear, tradition, religion and greed no doubt factor into the question of *why* the *taalibes* are still begging – it is the responsible actors' shifting between transnational and local discourses when debating about *taalibe* suffering that has overtly justified the perpetuation of forced child begging to both local and foreign audiences.

As actors *dance between discourses*, specific egregious and exploitative acts are repeatedly categorized as anomalies, not as endemic within the Qur'anic educational system. Consequently, the alleged perpetrators of these crimes are described as *faux marabouts* (fake *marabouts*), not even part of the Qur'anic system. All actors verbally recognize that these evil, "fake" *marabouts* exist – which would account for the visible abuses against *taalibes* that various groups and journalists have documented. But these characters remain elusive. Nobody is ready to accuse the neighborhood Qur'anic master of being a fraud, and so the status quo is left undisturbed as all await to uncover supposed *marabout* imposters. The result is that a generalized shame campaign to pressure the government to crack down on *marabouts* as child traffickers, which declares *marabouts* malintentioned merely because they send their *taalibes* out to beg, is a public relations campaign that is doomed before it begins. As long as indignation, local or foreign, at child exploitation in Senegal is channeled into explanations of begging as necessary for the survival of Qur'anic education, campaigns to promote *taalibes*' human rights will consistently fail to convict any perpetrators on the ground.

Human Rights Watch - Shocking the Wrong Audience

In chapter 8, I demonstrated how the Human Rights Watch (HRW) report, "Off the Backs of the Children: Forced Begging and Other Abuses against Talibés in Senegal" used the "naming and shaming" technique, or what I have called "shock and shame", in attempt to promote human rights for the *taalibes*. It sought to shock audiences by exposing the suffering and unjust treatment of the *taalibes* at the hands of their *marabouts*, and it strove to cultivate compassion, or shared suffering, with the *taalibes*. It brought the children's lived experiences close to readers through personal testimonies and by carving out a straightforward story of good versus evil. The widely-used tactic of shock and shame targets audiences to pressure for changes on the part of perpetrators. In this vein, the HRW report's overarching goals were to shame the perpetrators of human rights abuses and gather public support to pressure for change among responsible actors, namely the state governments of Senegal and Guinea-Bissau, from where most of the foreign *taalibes* in Senegal's cities originate.

Assessments of the success of the shock and shame strategy are often based on subsequent action or inaction on the part of those shamed. But close examination of short and long-term effects of such campaigns on the actual human rights of those deemed "violated" is lacking. Hafner-Burton's (2008) survey of global naming and shaming for human rights abuses by NGOs, journalistic media, and the United Nations, indicates that the strategy's success is linked to the types of abuses drawing shame. In some cases, particularly those of government repression, international shame may increase the likelihood of violent government crackdowns. And even in cases where leaders or abusers react to pressure, they may react erratically, and may implement some changes, usually legislative, in attempt to divert scrutiny from abuses they do not intend to cease or combat (Hafner-Burton 2008).

My own research suggests that in cases where a sought-out reaction at the level of the state is achieved, that does not necessarily signify success with respect to the situation of those being abused. These actions may in fact have unintended negative consequences as they play out in local politics. For example, transnational pressure led the Senegalese president to ban begging in Senegal, in order to show that he is making efforts to protect the *taalibe* children. On a positive note, the ban indeed opened up much public dialogue about *taalibe* begging - a topic that had long been described as too "sensitive" to be questioned. However the president's move did not improve the situation of the *taalibes* in the end. The ban's quick reversal effectively legitimized *taalibe* begging as a religious practice in the eyes of the Senegalese population. This is reminiscent of James Ferguson's (1994) iconic study of a notoriously failed development project in Lesotho where he details how allegedly "unsuccessful" projects can have multiple unintended and unacknowledged consequences on the ground. He documents how these effects are nonetheless frequently politically instrumental, functioning to strengthen state power while being actively depoliticized as development-based "technical" interventions. The unintended consequences of the anti-begging activism were that the Senegalese state could effectively allow *taalibe* begging to continue without significant fear of public reprisal. The begging ban and its rapid repeal in Senegal were the results of a successful shock and shame campaign – but one that targeted the wrong audience.

The release of the 2010 HRW report put pressure on the negligent state governments to crack down on trafficking and forced begging. It internationally shamed Senegal, a country with considerable recent economic growth striving to maintain a positive image abroad to continue to attract foreign investors and donors. Initially, this shame campaign appeared to be highly successful, initiating a final push that sent then President Wade over the edge on the issue of begging. Within

four months of the release of the report, Wade's administration emptied the streets of children with a Dakar-wide ban on street begging, and eight *marabouts* were apprehended. These moves were applauded by Kelly Billingsley, the US Embassy official responsible for writing the annual *Trafficking in Persons* (TIP) *Report* used to assess countries' eligibility to receive US aid (December 7, 2010, Dakar, Senegal[237]). And despite lasting less than two months, the mere effort to attempt to ban begging pushed Billingsley to remove Senegal's TIP "watch list" status, thereby assuring that its US aid would continue unabated.

Domestically in Senegal, however, HRW's shameful accusations were not what caused public outrage, rather the President's reactions to them. President Wade's political opponents harnessed the begging issue to launch attacks against him - painting him as an inadequate heartless leader, bowing down to foreign bodies to beg for money while not allowing the destitute at home the liberty to hold out their own hands in search of alms[238]. One opinion piece, commenting on the ill effects of the begging ban, began like this:

> *Under pressure from the NGOs and associations for the protection of children's rights', the State of Senegal has finally made the decision to ban begging in the streets of Dakar. This prohibition measure resounds like a punishment for the Qur'anic masters and their taalibes, who no longer know which saint to dedicate themselves to*[239].

The French news agency *Radio France International* (RFI) reported that President Wade's Prime Minister, Souleymane Ndene Ndiaye, indeed claimed that the original decision to ban begging was influenced by global funding agencies. He said that, "Senegal was under the threat of its partners who estimate that Dakar did not effectively struggle against the trade in persons"[240].

On October 7, 2010, in a meeting with his Ministers, President Wade expressed his "disapproval of the prohibition" on begging, "considering that almsgiving is a practice recommended by Religion.[241]" The sudden and quick repeal of the ban by President Wade six weeks after it was enacted was criticized by some as a "ridiculous tango"[242], whose administration first bowed down to foreign pressures to maintain funding, and then had "retreated simply because there was a small group of Qur'anic masters that stood up against the law."[243] This "small group" that

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[237] Personal interview, Kelly Billingsley, December 7, 2010, Dakar, Senegal.
[238] September 4, 2010, "US pressure leads to ban on beggars in Dakar," AP (Callimachi 2010).
[239] September 27, 2010, PressAfrik, (Sall 2010).
[240] October 9, 2010, "Sénégal : le président Wade conteste l'interdiction de la mendicité dans les lieux publics" (RFI 2010).
[241] October 8, 2010, "Le président Wade cherche à réorganiser la pratique de l'aumône, selon le PM," (APS 2010).
[242] October 11, 2010, *Le Pays Burkina Faso*, (Ouoba 2010).
[243] RFI 2010.

Seydi Gassama, director of *Amnesty Sénégal*, referred to when speaking with RFI, however, was the National Collective of Associations of Qur'anic Schools of Senegal (*Collectif National des Associations des Ecoles Coraniques du Senegal*, CNAECS), which represents over 700 Qur'anic school associations. Perhaps the CNAECS is somewhat unknown publically, but certainly not *small*. According to that article, Gassama of *Amnesty Sénégal* accused President Wade of "simply wanting to satisfy a potential clientele in the perspective of the 2012 elections."

Reclaiming Children's Human Rights as Rights

Shock and shame campaigns strive to achieve goals beyond merely exposing suffering to shock audiences and shame alleged perpetrators – they work to promote human rights. To publically promote changes in human rights on the ground, however, the campaigns must convince the targeted audience(s) that the suffering they expose is due to an infringement of human rights law committed by specific perpetrators, not simply faultless suffering. There is a major difference in how human rights promoters shock an audience with images or stories versus journalists or filmmakers documenting any other kind of human tragedy, such as those primarily considered "natural disasters." This difference is the naming of clear perpetrators and clear victims. Despite some campaigns tending toward seeking increasing entitlements and combating cyclical poverty, in which cases perpetrators remain diffuse and nebulous - human rights are framed as "rights" per force, and must be claimed against some opposing entity. In the case of the *taalibes*, this means that the *taalibes* have to be viewed as victims of human rights abuses (i.e. exploitation, severe neglect) committed by nameable perpetrators (i.e. the *marabouts* and the government of Senegal) – not mere victims of poverty in an impoverished region.[244]

As seen in the previous chapter, before they can advocate for justice, promoters of human rights have the task of exposing violations. This process that has two key components. First, as examined above, promoters reveal acts committed by perpetrators, usually through communicating the consequent suffering or death of victims through photos, videos, stories, and testimonies. But the complementary component consists of making the case that these actions constitute an infringement of human rights. This latter component may seem like a non-question, as long as the perpetrators and victims are clearly identified - as universal human rights are grounded in numerous UN documents detailing the rights of every individual man, woman and child, and certain

[244] The case could be made that this regional poverty is a human rights issue (e.g. Farmer 2005), however I have not seen the human rights frame used to decry *taalibe* poverty directly.

collectives. But it is one thing to declare a list of rights, and it is another thing to truly understand what that means for the diverse peoples throughout the globe. In order to effectively name a perpetrator of abuse to spark indignation, the act must without question be considered abuse by the people concerned.

Kenneth Roth (2004), writing as the HRW executive director, recognizes that shaming is more successful in cases of typical political and civil human rights abuses. Clear documentation of state-sponsored torture, or imprisonment without cause - these are the types of hidden abuses that a shock and shame campaign can be highly effective at exposing to elicit outrage. The more egregious the abuses, the more shocking are their exposure. While Roth heralds naming and shaming as being the principal strength of organizations like HRW, he recognizes the limitations of the technique - that it depends on there being a clear "violation, violator, and remedy" (Roth 2004:64).

Economic, social and cultural rights, however, due to their very nature, lend themselves less to this sort of campaign. First of all, they are not likely to be hidden at all, but plain for all to see, such as mass poverty, high unemployment, or low levels of primary school attendance. Therefore, the act of exposing them does not automatically incite public outrage. Secondly, it is much more difficult, in cases of economic, social and cultural rights, to determine who the perpetrators are. Who is to blame for social ills in the developing world - corrupt leaders? The IMF (International Monetary Fund)? Social inequality? It is not a straightforward process to cultivate indignation toward social inequality. Moreover, in the abstract, it is not very useful either, as popular indignation in itself is not likely to bring solutions to such widespread social ills.

Furthermore, children's human rights straddle these broad categories of rights, socio-cultural and politico-economic, yet neither framework fully encompasses the particularities of children's rights and children's rights promotion. Children, at least younger children, due to their varying degrees of physical and social maturity, necessarily depend on adult others to some degree for fulfillment of their basic needs. Furthermore, certain political and civil rights as social actors are withheld from children of varying ages due their status as minors. In this way, the fight for international children's human rights is often a question of state neglect of provisioning or oversight, rather than a state-inflicted abuse or neglect (Freeman 2000). The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes children as social actors with human rights as individuals, but they occupy a place within several overlapping social spheres upon which the recognition and protection of their rights depend.

Despite this lack of clarity with respect to what can be declared an infringement of economic, social, or children's human rights, who is at fault, and what is to be done, Roth suggests that there are indeed some important ways in which HRW and others can use naming and shaming techniques to highlight the responsibility of governments in such cases. It might document unequal distribution of goods and services, or expose arbitrary enforcement of the law to the detriment of a particular sub-set of the population. HRW used this strategy with respect to the *taalibes* to show that West African states are failing to support the basic education and protection of Qur'anic students. But even if transnational actors declare clear abuses and can clearly name perpetrators and victims, this does not result in clarity on the ground.

In the case of the *taalibes* of Senegal, severe abuses are frequently and increasingly revealed visually and orally. But, the other component of "revealing abuses", with respect to making it clear that a case indeed constitutes an infringement of human rights for the populations concerned, is lacking. The population of Senegal does not view *taalibe* begging in itself as a human rights abuse. The "clearest" part of its argument – that *taalibes* are unquestionable victims of human rights abuses – is not so clear at all on the ground. In Senegal, the HRW report led questions of forced child begging, child trafficking, and who is responsible, to become points of debate rather than a case in point[245].

Shaming Before the Right Audiences

Shame is a morally-loaded word, commonly defined as "the painful feeling arising from the consciousness of something dishonorable, improper, ridiculous, etc., done by oneself or another[246]. I sense that there is an underlying assumption within the shock and shame technique of human rights promotion, that merely exposing the atrocious acts of perpetrators will in some way get them to feel shame. Shame in this sense may incite one to seek repentance, perhaps redemption, at least outwardly in the eyes of spectators. This is what could lead to a change in the abuses – as perpetrators are no longer able to hide them. The case of the exposure of inhumane treatment of prisoners by American military police and CIA officers at the Abu-Ghraib prison in Iraq in 2003 and 2004 is an example of this. Merely revealing the nature of the torturous acts that were taking place behind closed doors brought swift outrage within the United States and globally, causing the

[245] September 10, 2010, "Mendicité, écoles coraniques : Au-delà des symptômes, interrogation sur le vrai mal", ContinentPremier.com ; September 10, 2010 "Mendicité : Les marginaux et l'Etat à Dakar," AfriqueActu.com (Ndongo 2010).
[246] Dictionary.com, first definition listed among others, accessed March 31, 2014.

investigation into the acts committed therein and prosecution of two soldiers (Tarabay 2014). The US military, and by extension the US government, was faulted for, at worst, sanctioning the acts, or at best, not keeping sufficient control over actions taking place within its facilities and institutions. The US government was effectively "shamed."

But neither the US government, nor the US military, are ethical persons – they are institutions. Their reactions to the shaming, including criminally convicting or dismissing individual perpetrators and implementing closer control of prisons, were based on the collective decisions of various individuals within these organizations in efforts to reform their functioning, or at least redeem their credibility in front of audience publics. But these actions are not the result of moral "shame." Rather, they are the result of sufficient real pressure placed on perpetrators or those in positions of power over perpetrators, in reaction to public indignation. Indignant spectator publics feel that those responsible should be ashamed, but it is their own collective political pressure that effectively forces changes by responsible actors.

This is how campaigns exposing the dismal situation of *taalibes* in Senegal work. The transnational audiences – human rights groups, international journalists, UN agencies, and foreign diplomats – harnessed the reports of egregious abuses occurring openly and systematically in Senegal to apply pressure to the head of state for change. It worked. By banning begging in Dakar, the president of Senegal effectively showed its foreign interlocutors that he agreed with them – that the abuses were inexcusable and needed to be stopped. As documented above, the foreign actors were sufficiently appeased, at least in the short-term. Senegal was applauded for its efforts to combat child trafficking, despite quickly repealing the ban on begging. President Wade strategically allowed the HRW report to shame him in front of his transnational spectators.

But what does it matter if the president of Senegal succeeds in convincing transnational audiences that he sufficiently cares about children's rights, if the situation of the children being abused remains effectively unchanged? The difference in the on-the-ground impact between the shock and shame campaigns regarding Abu-Ghraib and the *taalibes* of Senegal, is one of audience. The indignant audience in the case of Abu-Ghraib was the population of the United States, among others. This population has the power to pressure for US government reactions because of the latter's concerns about public opinion within political constituencies. In the case of the *taalibes* – the indignant audience pressuring for change came from outside of Senegal. It mobilized its resources to mount pressure on the president of Senegal to react, threatening to cut aid packages and tarnish

global perceptions of the stability and credibility of its government. This too is a powerful force, but not the only one that Senegal's head of state answers to.

The president's and his colleagues' political futures were depending on the support of their own political constituencies. The population of Senegal was not the audience pressuring for these specific changes. In fact, rather than demanding a begging ban, many actually opposed it. Rather than shaming the president for allowing begging, local actors effectively shamed the president for banning it. They sparked indignation at the ban's suddenness, its apparent foreign roots, and its lack of accompanying measures for those dependent on begging for survival. These local voices had public opinion on their side by focusing on the exacerbation of suffering that the ban was already causing for those dependent on begging, including the physically- and mentally- handicapped, the very poor, and the tens of thousands of *taalibes* who had been gathering their food in this way for decades. As a result, the divergence of messages for local and foreign audiences has led to their clash on the ground in Senegal.

When *Trafficking* Meets *Vulnerable Schools*: Accommodating Abusers as Outside of the System

Thus far, I have identified and examined two different discourses which speak of *taalibe* suffering: the "trafficking discourse" and the "vulnerable schools discourse." Each discourse, or what I refer to as a *taalibe story*, describes suffering in different terms, identifies different perpetrators and victims, and proposes different solutions. The *trafficking discourse* mobilizes indignation against egregious abuses perpetuated against the children, while the *vulnerable schools discourse* advocates for support for impoverished instructors and students in the face of state neglect and regional poverty. The end goal of the *trafficking discourse* with respect to the *taalibes* of Senegal is to get the government to crack down on begging and bring the traffickers to justice. The stated objective of the *vulnerable schools discourse*, by contrast, is to improve the living and learning conditions of the children by decreasing and eventually eliminating child begging, increasing their educational attainment at Qur'anic schools, and gradually changing popular attitudes against *taalibe* begging and migratory Qur'anic education. I have found that many actors concerned with the *taalibe* begging issue espouse both discourses at times, depending on their particular audiences and immediate goals. For many actors, the discourses are not mutually exclusive.

My research suggests that the convergence of these two discourses on the ground has hindered overall efforts to decrease *taalibe* begging and improve their conditions on a large scale.

Government and humanitarian actors in Senegal vacillate between the two discourses when discussing the harms of child begging and when proposing solutions. For example, government officials may decry the horrors of child trafficking in the abstract, while simultaneously claiming that Qur'anic masters make their pupils beg only out of necessity. In other words, the government criminalizes the act child exploitation, but does not see Qur'anic masters who force *taalibes* to beg as exploiters. Rather than punish them, the state has plans to reform and subsidize their schools. It is an action that, if it were actually carried out, would likely decrease child exploitation overall. It would not, however, directly root out criminals. But in any case, the plan itself appears to remain a mere rhetorical response to indignant, yet politically distant, transnational voices.

The *trafficking discourse* defines clear perpetrators – the government of Senegal for not doing enough to legally prevent and prosecute child trafficking, and abusive "fake *marabouts*" who transport, harbor, and exploit children. The qualification that the abusers are "fake" rather than real *marabouts* is central to this discourse. In other words, it does not condemn Qur'anic masters in general, not even the act of sending children out to beg, in theory, if it were done according to the non-exploitative tradition of neighborhood begging for food. It condemns traffickers who pose as genuine Qur'anic masters, but whose hidden principal goal is to profit from the children's begging or work, rather than to teach them the Qur'an. The victims are the *taalibe* children who are exploited, as well as their families, in most cases, who are duped into thinking that their children are travelling with a genuine *marabout* to study.

Those advocating a hard line within the *trafficking discourse* include the US Department of State, as examined in chapter two, human rights watchdog groups, such as Human Rights Watch, transnational activist journalists and documentary filmmakers, as well as numerous local groups who provide immediate shelter and assistance to abused *taalibes*. Other actors espouse the discourse in some circumstances, such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in cases where children flee their *daaras* and need assistance to be repatriated and reintegrated into their families. When *taalibes* do not flee, the IOM recognizes their situation as legitimate schooling – that genuine Qur'anic masters at times need to migrate with their pupils to survive off of begging.

In the *vulnerable schools discourse*, the line between *taalibe* begging as exploitation and *taalibe* begging for survival is much less clear. The *vulnerable schools discourse* indeed defines clear perpetrators and victims; however the perpetrators are institutions and social conditions, not individuals. Regional poverty, neoliberal structural adjustment, climate change, and historical and state discrimination are all blamed, and their victims are the *taalibes* (and their families) as well as their

impoverished migrant instructors. These victims are not viewed as having undergone an isolated crime, but they are part of a failing system in an environment of economic underdevelopment and state neglect of their rights as citizens to equal treatment and economic opportunity. This discourse of blaming a lack of means rather than malintention is generally adhered to by NGOs aiding Qur'anic masters in Senegal, the government of Senegal, and Qur'anic master associations. In addition, this is the perspective most readily drawn on by the population of Senegal, who generally support that Qur'anic masters have the sincere intention to teach children the Qur'an, but that their meager means push them to depend on migration and begging.

In the *trafficking discourse*, forcing children to beg is an act based on greed for profits. It is therefore a serious transnational crime. In the *vulnerable schools discourse*, *taalibe* begging in urban Senegal is not a crime. It is considered the unfortunate result of rural poverty and a lack of adequate state funding for education. At the extreme of the *vulnerable schools discourse* is Bassirou Dieng, of the Ministry of Education[247] who is responsible for implementing projects to modernize *daaras*. In our interview, Mr. Dieng completely sidestepped the question of trafficking to assert that the only problem in the Qur'anic school sector is a lack of adequate resources. His work to establish subsidies for *daaras* and provide them with an expanded curriculum fits within this perspective. For Mr. Dieng, as soon as the government of Senegal attains its goals to fully modernize the Qur'anic schools by officially recognizing them and providing necessary subsidies – *taalibe* begging will stop. This is indeed possible, but only if begging is solely need-based.

Excepting Mr. Dieng, many state and non-actors participating in aiding *daaras* (generally situated within the *vulnerable schools discourse*) at least recognize the validity of stories that allege trafficking. This is because with so much press on the issue it has become indisputable that at least some of the *taalibe* boys begging in Dakar are severely maltreated and exploited. To accommodate these two viewpoints, interlocutors simply exclude the exploiters as effectively outside of the Senegalese Qur'anic school system. In other words, the actual abuses are not committed by *marabouts*, rather "*fake" marabouts*. Or, the *marabouts* are foreign, not actually part of the Senegalese system currently under modernization. Speakers pay credence to the title *marabout* by acknowledging that any true religious guide would not exploit or abuse children. But who would dare accuse an established *marabout* of being a "fake"? This tendency to avoid pursuing perpetrators because of their religious titles effectively results in what I call *justified inaction* with respect to improving the

[247] Mr. Dieng is employed by the *Direction de l'Alphabetisation et des Langues Nationales* (Administration of Literacy and National Languages). Interviewed December 31, 2010, video recorded, Dakar, Senegal.

situation of begging *taalibes*. This is not unlike the impunity that had long surrounded criminal sexual abuse of children by Catholic priests. The power of their religious institutional roles effectively insulated abusers from criminalization for centuries (Dale & Alpert 2007). As I document in the following sections, intervening state and non-state actors, as well as Qur'anic masters acknowledge that stories of trafficking may well be credible, but the perpetrators remain forever elusive to those responsible for their criminalization.

Marabout **Traffickers as Foreigners**

Fallilou Kanté (November 30, 2010, Dakar, Senegal[248]) of Senegal's Ministry of the Family presents an illustrative example of how abuses are framed as being outside of the Senegalese Qur'anic educational sector at the intersection of these two discourses – the perpetrators are foreigners. At the beginning of our interview, Mr. Kanté's description of the project he works on[249] fit nicely into the *vulnerable schools discourse*. He cited the need for increased funding for impoverished Qur'anic schools, and he even mentioned some of the socio-cultural factors that have led to *taalibe* begging, including its pedagogical value. This description coherently accompanied his explanations of his project's interventions on-the-ground to aid *taalibes*, including some community micro-projects that directly or indirectly aid *taalibes* with food and hospitality, and others that provide cash subsidies directly to Qur'anic masters to fund their return and post-return investment projects.

But when I asked Mr. Kanté about the phenomenon of child trafficking – that, for example, HRW is calling *taalibe* urban begging a problem of greed rather than a mere lack of means to study – he quickly adjusted his story. He acknowledged that indeed, trafficking, *ça existe* (it exists). Mr. Kanté gave a third-hand account of trafficking to support that assertion. A colleague confided to him that a Guinean Qur'anic master was running "enterprises" of begging children, not Qur'anic schools. At the end of each month, the Qur'anic master would reportedly pass by his two "businesses" and recuperate his "profits." "So when I heard that, well I said, effectively, that's [trafficking]." "We do not hide from it. It is the truth. It is real." He had also heard that some Qur'anic masters would collect the dry food-stuffs gathered by their *taalibes* and bring them back to

[248] Personal interview, video recorded, November 30, 2010, Dakar, Senegal.
[249] *La Lutte Contre les Pires Formes de Travail de l'Enfant* (The Struggle against the Worst Forms of Child Labor). Funded jointly by the Senegalese state and the *Cooperation Italienne*, the project targets specific areas where children are exploited and put into hazardous work conditions. Mr. Kanté spoke of the parts of the project that specifically aid *taalibe* children, including funding, as well as a focus on returning *daaras* to their regions of origin.

their villages. But for him these cases of exploitation did not involve Senegalese *marabouts* (i.e. the *marabouts his* project aids):

> *If it only were a question of daaras in Senegal, there is no problem.* ***But the problem is with the daaras that are not from Senegal.*** *Those who come from Guinea-Bissau, for example, from Mali, from Guinea.*

Mr. Kanté animatedly explained to me that the *marabouts* causing problems are not usually Senegalese: "The majority of the children who are exploited, or the Qur'anic masters who refuse to return to their zones of origin [in *daara* return projects], the majority of them are from the sub-region [neighboring countries]." He explained that when Senegalese children are found to be exploited, the government can easily get in touch with their families, and their families will promptly recover their children: "That is to say that for the case of Senegal, for the *daaras* or Qur'anic masters of Senegal, the problem can be easily fixed." But that is not the problem, according to Mr. Kanté. He supports his point with anecdotes from his encounters with children in the streets, who are obviously not Senegalese:

> *It happened to me, it was not just once or twice or three times, that I encountered taalibes and tried to talk to them in the national language of Wolof, but they are taalibes who cannot…respond in Wolof…If you ask them, 'where do you come from?' sometimes they say, 'We come from Guinea-Bissau.' 'Really? And where is your Qur'anic master?' There, they categorically refuse. Because they [the Qur'anic masters] threaten those children… and the child does not want to be beaten.*

He revealed at the end of our conversation that he believes the real solution to the trafficking question to be one of stopping foreigners from entering the country, not of domestic regulation of Qur'anic education, nor of domestic criminal condemnations. Indeed, if the very real and serious problem of trafficking were equally a domestic problem, how could Mr. Kanté possibly justify his project's focus on offering funding to Qur'anic masters in Senegal's cities to return home and start businesses? Rather than punishing them for trafficking children, the government would be rewarding them with subsidies. This clearly does not sound right.

Elhadj Gueye, a paid intern animator at the *Centre Ginddi*, Senegal's Ministry of the Family's child reception center[250], echoed concerns about Senegal's international borders. Ninety-five percent of the children assisted by the center are *taalibes*, and in 2009, half of the children assisted by the center were Senegalese, one quarter were from Guinea-Bissau, and the rest from The Gambia,

[250] The Centre Ginddi was created in 2008 to respond to the elevated number of children in the streets of Dakar. It maintains a toll-free helpline, provides shelter for youths in crisis, and conducts mediation with families and communities to reinsert children in difficulty back into educational institutions or places of work or training.

Guinea, and Mali[251]. At the root of the *taalibe* begging problem, Mr. Gueye said, there is a clash between policies of free regional circulation and anti-trafficking initiatives.

> *There is the impact of trafficking, which is there, and which exists. There are marabouts who, I should not say, are they marabouts? Real marabouts? There are people who profit from these occasions to create a migration that is not at all controlled. An intense migration. To therefore create daaras, or well, to make the children work. That is the problem.*

Mr. Gueye declared that if the state arrived at controlling "entry into the country", the problem of *taalibe* exploitation could be resolved.

Indeed, some newspaper accounts suggested that the begging ban was essentially a measure to be able to crack down on the foreign Qur'anic masters in Dakar. Yet a social worker who heads ENDA Guediawaye's project to repatriate trafficked *taalibes* made a salient point to me regarding everyone's equality under law:

> *You know that when we say that we are going to enforce the law, we enforce it for everyone. We cannot say that we enforce it for Bissau-Guinean marabouts, or for Malian marabouts. No. It is a law against child begging to avoid the exploitation of children. So we should enforce it for everyone! If we distinguish between Senegalese marabouts and non-Senegalese marabouts, that becomes discrimination (October 12, 2010, Dakar, Senegal[252]).*

Despite Mr. Gueye noting the foreign origins of many abused *taalibes*, and verbally noting the need for border control, the *Centre Ginddi's* intervention strategy is firmly rooted in the *vulnerable schools discourse* – from explanations of *taalibe* begging to procedures to deal with abusive *marabouts*. Mr. Gueye began his explanation of the problem of *taalibe* begging to me as a "cultural phenomenon", and "related to education." Relating begging to poverty, he elaborates, "In the *daara*, the child will forcibly beg to have something to eat". Richard Tine, the center's coordinator, concurred that begging meant the survival of the institution of Qur'anic education, but him, that makes begging "obligatory" (Personal interview, Dakar, Senegal) [253]. "But," Mr. Tine continues, "this begging is not just to ask for something to eat, or to have something to survive." Rather, for Mr. Tine, it makes the child feel "human" and "modest," and allows him to understand "solidarity" and "mutual assistance." Mr. Tine explains, "It is a form of education to hold out one's hand to beg

[251] At the time of my visits to the center in November of 2010, it had already taken in and assisted 2288 children that year – 95% of whom were *taalibes* or runaway *taalibes*. That number was significantly elevated over the 1044 children assisted in 2009, as 2010 was when the brief Dakar begging ban led police to bring crowds of children to the *Centre Ginddi* in their efforts to clear the streets of beggars.
[252] Personal interview, audio-recorded, October 12, 2010, Dakar, Senegal.
[253] Personal interview, video-recorded, November 23, 2010, Dakar, Senegal.

to say that there is always someone who can help." It tells the child, "you are not superior to everyone else."

Like the ambiguous account of *taalibe* begging included in the UCW report cited in the introduction to this dissertation, where modern begging is framed as both pedagogical and dangerous, Mr. Tine claimed that city begging endangers children in ways that traditional begging in rural communities did not. Mr. Tine does not make a clean break from the traditional pedagogical value of begging to thereby condemn as traffickers those who currently make *taalibes* beg in cities – he merely observes that the tradition is not working in favor of the children today.

It is the protocol in the *Centre Ginddi* to provide direct assistance to the sheltered children, question them about their experiences, and contact their parents or other adult family members to inform them of the situation of their child. Depending on the will of the parents, the child will return home, or the child may return to the *daara*. Elhadj Gueye explained that the *marabouts* will often attempt to recover the children themselves, but that the *Centre Ginddi* "refuses" this, as it has a strict policy of first contacting the families. He explains: "Given the conditions in which the children were found, we cannot therefore put the children back into the source of the evil." Mr. Gueye makes reference to the children's reports of severe corporal punishment, abuse and neglect; claims often supported by wounds and illnesses upon arrival.

At a later point in the interview, however, I asked Mr. Gueye if there are children who choose to return to the *daaras* themselves. He admitted that the *Centre Ginddi* assists many transient children – who may spend only a few days or less than a day there, who generally "complain of sometimes difficult conditions." These children often return to their *daaras* voluntarily, despite likely facing severe punishment for disappearing. In such cases, the Ginddi center attempts to first "raise the awareness of the *marabout*, talk to him about begging, that there are laws that prohibit it." Mr. Gueye explains:

> *So, if we arrive at convincing the marabout about the dangers of the streets… if we arrive at fixing that problem, the child can sometimes return calmly. Because once the child is retained in the daara, he will no longer be exposed to the street.*

This comment reveals that despite acknowledging that the children who seek their assistance have been abused by the people responsible for their care and education, there are numerous cases where *Centre Ginddi* workers simply try to educate the alleged abusers that they are indeed breaking the law and that they are endangering the children by sending them out into the streets. Apparently, in the center's official policy, the Qur'anic masters who force begging are treated as perpetrators of

serious crimes, and their right to act on behalf of the *taalibes* is denied. But in practice, the "sometimes difficult conditions" that push the children to flee *daaras* are normalized, and the *marabouts* are treated as responsible interlocutors who simply need to make a more concerted effort to protect the children's welfare.

Mr. Gueye "reconciles" and "negotiates" with *marabouts* and families to elaborate reintegration strategies in the "best interests" of the children, often times settling on a solution that is merely "less bad" than their previous circumstances. He admits that the best scenario would include sending the children home with their parents to attend an educational institution nearby. Other compromised options include returning the children to a *daara*, but encouraging families to check up on them regularly. The last resort option, then, is letting the children decide to return to the *daara*, after speaking with the Qur'anic masters and "raising awareness" about the children's rights and improving conditions. What is perplexing to me, however, is how a government-sponsored reception center concerned with protecting children's rights can handle cases of violence-enforced exploitation of children without pursuing legal prosecution of the perpetrators. Even in cases where children are reunited with their families, the *marabouts* are merely denied custody of the children – they are not charged with any crimes.

On two occasions Mr. Gueye corrected himself from using the traditional and religious terminology related to Qur'anic education when speaking of trafficking, including the words "*marabout*" and "*daara*". He spoke above of negotiating with *marabouts* and sending children back to *daaras*. When speaking of trafficking, Mr. Gueye attempted to outright exclude the perpetrators from the realm of legitimate Qur'anic education by avoiding these terms, however unsuccessfully. He struggled with the terminology because when he actually encounters these abstract "people who profit from children through trafficking" in Dakar, he treats them as "*marabouts*" operating "*daaras*". They simply need "accompanying measures" to improve study conditions and to stop sending their children out to beg. This *dancing between discourses* may seem harmless – even pragmatic, to find a way to get direct aid to children in need. Indeed, in their chapter, "Complex Engagements: Responding to Violence in Postconflict Aceh," Mary-Jo DelVecchio Good, et al. (2010) acknowledge that they strategically framed their account of postconflict suffering in Aceh, Indonesia as a generalized psychosocial problem (with no named perpetrators) rather than a human rights issue (with naming and blaming). This enabled them to gain the local and institutional support needed to establish some much-needed mental healthcare infrastructure in the areas most affected by violence. Yet the authors point out that this framing was appropriate, and was not "disingenuous, for not calling a

spade a spade" because the area was in fact *post*conflict, and they concurred that peacebuilding and caring for suffering was the most important next step for all concerned (ibid:254, 259).

This is where I see strategic framing of the situation of the *taalibes* as less appropriate. Their situation is not *post*conflict, nor *post*-anything. As I write this dissertation, the *taalibes* are still begging in droves. Sometimes their predicament is called a human rights abuse, enabling solicitation of aid funds earmarked for their protection from ruthless perpetrators. At other times, actors adopt a non-accusatory "collaborative" frame, where there are no clear perpetrators, merely victims, and aid can be disbursed to *taalibes* through cooperation with Qur'anic masters. The problem with this is that there continue to be new and repeated "victims" in the human rights frame. The named human rights abuses, if the accusations hold merit as such, are still going on when other actors are pragmatically re-framing the issue to be a non-intentional situation of suffering in order to foster collaboration. Such pragmatism, in working with the Qur'anic masters at all costs, may prove to be the better long-term strategy to decrease *taalibe* exploitation through forced begging, however the shifting between discourses that I witnessed, between aid-seeking and aid-distribution, appeared only to reinforce the status quo of total impunity with respect to *taalibe* exploitation.

Robert Meister (2011), in his monograph *After Evil: A Politics of Human Rights*, articulates a shift that the modern human rights movement has taken from all preceding struggles previously articulated as human rights. Now, post-WWII and post-cold war human rights are moving the "moral psychology of struggle toward reconciliation" (ibid:8). Within this frame, all actors, including perpetrators and victims, must acknowledge past evil, and move toward reconciliation, rather than seek out retaliation. In this sense, the perpetuation of violence is evil in itself, even if only to seek out justice, while past struggles used human rights as a "slogan of popular resistance" (ibid). But this leaves human rights at a "time between times," after evil ceases and before justice begins (ibid:10). For him, these changes have led actors to drop the use of "dyads" such as victim/perpetrator to foster "nondivisive ethical relations among surviving witnesses to human cruelty" (ibid:8). Meister points out that human rights now have a "less political focus on compassion for bodies in pain," and they operate "in the realm of intervention and rescue" (ibid:8). I argue that "children's rights," except for a brief stint at their inception[254], have always been rooted in compassion for their apolitical, innocent, suffering bodies. That being so, merely ridding the evil is good enough promote their rights. In the case of the *taalibes*, if proposed interventions seek to decrease and eventually eliminate their suffering, this responds to the human rights mandate as

[254] Here I refer to children's rights as a liberation movement in the 1970s United States (e.g. Farson 1974).

described by Meister. While they are not necessarily eliminating the evil, actions on the ground promoting *taalibes'* rights are effectively making it *disappear*.

The Specter of the Evil, "Fake" *Marabout*

Mr. Gueye from the *Centre Ginddi*, besides claiming that *taalibe* exploitation is a question of the infiltration of foreigners, evoked the image of the *evil, fake marabout* to distinguish abusers from the actual educators he deals with. This notorious character frequently appears at the point where the *trafficking discourse* encounters the *vulnerable schools discourse*. With the *fake marabout*, interlocutors, including NGO representatives, state officials and Qur'anic masters, exclude abusers from the Senegalese Qur'anic school system by simply labeling them as imposters. Like Mr. Gueye, intervening actors can reconcile working with Qur'anic masters whose pupils beg by simply framing the situation as follows: *we help legitimate Qur'anic masters, obviously not the trafficking fake marabouts*. However, I point out that the *evil, fake marabout* is a specter - as real as the *taalibes* roaming the streets daily – but invisible. He is lurking around out there, somewhere, because the results of his actions can be readily seen – but nobody has actually seen him.

This framing of the problem of *taalibe* begging as the result of fake *marabouts* infiltrating the impoverished yet legitimate Qur'anic school sector in Senegal is especially important for Qur'anic masters active in the administration of the national collective of Qur'anic school associations, the CNAECS. As examined in chapter seven, the first two (of five) "expected results" of the creation and functioning of the CNAECS speak directly to striving to weed out fake *marabouts* in an effort to reform and regulate the sector. These include: "1) rehabilitate the image and the ethic of Qur'anic education;" and "2) push certain mal-intentioned organisms or persons to stop living under the cover of *daaras"* (CNAECS brochure). This is to say, officially, the CNAECS wants to work to weed out non-legitimate traffickers to redeem the legitimacy of their educational system and practices.

During the time I conducted my research, a Qur'anic master named Ibrahima Mbacke was the president of the Dakar office of the CNAECS. He clearly delineated the differences between "real" and "fake" *taalibes* and *marabouts* with respect to begging and exploitation:

> *There are people who come from far away…They take about ten children, bring them here, find any place to stay, they send the kids out and say, "bring me money". In Senegal, well they say "Sarax ngir yalla" [alms for the sake of God], but it turns out they are not taalibes. But they are carrying the can, and they look like taalibes. Here, at six in the morning to six in the evening, you can see them at the garage, they don't study. Those who are on the exterior [transnational observers], they see that, they say, that is what taalibes do, they beg. But you are here, you see my taalibes, they are here at the school. They are studying, they finish, they play football, they eat. But the kid who is*

> *outside all day - he is not a taalibe. The seriñ who stays home, he is not a seriñ. But he is looking for money. They [the children] go out and get it, and when they get enough, they can come back. In our collective, we have come together to fight against that (Personal interview, audio-recorded, November 3, 2010, Dakar, Senegal).*

Becai Gueye, the president of the Qur'anic master association of the Dakar suburb of Pikine, similarly identifies the existence of fake *taalibes* by observing the long hours that some children spend begging in streets and neighborhoods. While those begging may appear to be *taalibes*, "real *taalibes*" will only be found in the streets around "seven o'clock, eight o'clock or nine o'clock," like his own *taalibes* (November 5, 2010, Dakar, Senegal[255]). As the head of the Pikine association, he proposes that any child that a Qur'anic master sees outside after 9:00 am should be taken to the police, because he is not a real *taalibe*. *Seriñ* Gueye's explanation echoes that of the others who speak of fake *marabouts* – they merely go to villages, recruit children and force them to beg in cities. He admits that his own *taalibes* beg every morning, but that he truly laments this situation. "I closed my live-in *daara* twice," explained *Seriñ* Gueye as he brushed his hands together to indicate finality. Seeing the children beg everyday bothered him so much that he said he "would not take another begging *taalibe*." But families from his village continued to contact him to ask him to take their children to teach them the Qur'an as they did not have the means to pay for a school, and so he was "obligated" to re-open.

Ibrahima Mbacke explained how the CNAECS is attempting to put together a survey of all legitimate *daaras*, to weed out the fakes, "If it is not on the list, it is not a *daara*. That is our job. And when we are done, *incha allah*[256], you will not see another pupil of a *daara* begging." *Seriñ* Mbacke notes the importance of this self-regulation within Qur'anic teaching, because he and his colleagues are on the "inside" and they know "who is really a *daara* and who is not". He argued that if all serious Qur'anic masters denounced the exploiters, the system could be quickly cleaned up, and the government could easily grant subsidies to meritorious schools. But my interviews with Qur'anic masters allude to how this strategy may be much more difficult to carry out than *Seriñ* Mbacke lets on.

"I do not talk about others; it is a sin to condemn others," reported *Seriñ* Amadou Kane when I questioned him about child trafficking in the sector (December 23, 2010, Dakar, Senegal[257]). To illustrate his point, he gave me an example of a pregnant girl who went to the Prophet Mohamed

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[255] Personal interview, audio-recorded.
[256] An Arabic phrase used as a common interjection in Senegal, meaning "God willing".
[257] Personal interview, written notes, December 23, 2010, Dakar, Senegal.

to tell him that her father raped her. The Prophet told her to hold her tongue, as speaking ill of one's father is an even bigger sin than being pregnant by him. In other words, there may be trafficking and exploitation hidden within the Qu'ranic school sector, but it is not of *Seriñ* Kane's concern, and it is certainly not his place to pass judgment or alert others of wrongdoing. My other Qur'anic master informants did not claim that passing judgment in cases of suspected exploitation would be a sin; they openly decried child exploitation and pledged to report it. But in practice, they have remained silent. Despite intentions to self-regulate the sector from the "inside", for example, Djibril Dior, the acting president of the CNAECS, claims not to have come across the phenomenon of child trafficking:

> *I hear about the phenomenon, but I have not yet, in any case, me personally, encountered it.*

Seriñ Dior continues by acknowledging that perhaps people can take *taalibes* from the streets through coercion, to "traffic" them – but points out that it is not the Qur'anic masters themselves who are the traffickers. He throws his hands up in the air in resignation at the endless possibilities for the exploitation of children in Senegal, exclaiming, "That can happen! But it is not a phenomenon that simply touches the *daaras*. It is a global problem. So that does not have anything to do with Qur'anic education. It touches all children, so that can happen…." After fervently agreeing that trafficking "exists," he reiterates, "But me, personally, honestly, I have not yet encountered a precise case that I could give as an example."

Like Djibril Dior and Amadou Kane, practicing Qur'anic masters frequently make reference to these elusive criminal figures in order to distance themselves from accusations of trafficking and exploitation. Their refrain is as follows: *If exploitation is observed, it is certainly by those fake marabouts – because we are true teachers and we only make our taalibes beg out of need. If we had any other option, we would very much prefer keeping them inside all day to study.* To illustrate how remarkably uniform this framing is, I have listed interview quotes from five other Qur'anic masters on the question of trafficking *marabouts*. I asked these individuals if they knew of or came in contact with people who exploit *taalibes* through begging. Aboubacry Ndiaye replied:

> *In any case, I heard about it, but I am responsible for many Qur'anic associations, and I have never truly been able to put my finger on someone who brings children solely for begging. But, I have heard about it - that from neighboring countries, there are people who come with children solely to make them beg. But me, I have not yet ever put my finger on someone who behaves like that (Personal interview, video-recorded, November 22, 2010, Dakar, Senegal).*

The following four Qur'anic masters all migrated to the city of Dakar and outlying suburbs from rural areas of Senegal with their pupils in tow. They all migrated to the city because they did

not have enough money to run their schools in their villages, and they all support their families on their *taalibes*' begging revenues. Despite fitting the standard "trafficking" profile, these Qur'anic masters all state simply that they have had no contact with people who bring children to the city to exploit their begging:

> Latif Diallo[258]:
>
> *That, I don't know anything about it. Because, me, I don't do that at all. I have not yet seen anyone do that.*
>
> Amadou Diouf[259]:
>
> *I heard about it being talked about, but I have never seen it.*
>
> *Mame Diop[260]:*
>
> *I can't talk from my own experience, but I have heard of those [traffickers] coming from Kolda [near the Senegal-Guinea border] or Guinea-Bissau. I stop a taalibe in Dakar and he says Guinea-Bissau is where he is from... If there is a child who gets in a car and goes to Dakar to beg the whole day...the time he spends learning is very little, like two hours or one hour out of 24... That, yes that exists.*
>
> *Seriñ* El Hadj Barry[261]:
>
> *But the NGOs, what they are saying is that the children are brought here [to Dakar]. That they are brought here to be forced to beg. I am not saying that it doesn't exist! But I have never seen it. And it is only from the NGOs that I hear it."*[262]

Exploited children are visible, and their increasing presence in local and transnational news reports and documentaries renders their long hours in the streets impossible to hide. But the evil perpetrators behind the scenes remain unseen and unknown. How is it that so many children undergo what most interlocutors agree is exploitative treatment, yet nobody actually sees exploiters?

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258 Personal interview, video-recorded, November 10, 2010, Dakar, Senegal.
259 Personal interview, audio-recorded, December 1, 2010, Dakar, Senegal.
260 Personal interview, audio-recorded, October 28, 2010, Guediawaye, Senegal
261 Personal interview, video-recorded, November 9, 2010, Dakar, Senegal.
262 *Seriñ* Barry does not blame fake *marabouts* for infiltrating the system – he claims that there is no problem of trafficking. For him, the children that we see are students, and their instructors are *marabouts*. "What I see," says *Seriñ* Barry as he points to his eye, "is how many American children come here to the University of Dakar. In their groups. You know that there are a lot." He continues to explain that this is what brought him and so many others to Dakar – to study. "But what are you saying?" he asks rhetorically. "You are saying that there are *seriñs* who bring groups of children, groups from Guinea-Bissau, groups from Mali.. You say that they are not actually *seriñs*. I have yet to see them." He points to his eye again. "The NGOs say that they see this. But me," he shakes his finger in the air to indicate *no*, "In the name of Allah, I have yet to see them for myself!"

Seriñ Barry is a prime example of what HRW describes as a child trafficker. He sends his many *taalibes* from his many *daaras* out to beg every day. As examined in chapter seven, he openly admits to enforcing a daily begging quota with corporal punishment. He shamelessly defends these practices as appropriate and advisable for him as a respected Qur'anic master and religious leader. As the *Imam Raatib* of Medina in central Dakar, *Seriñ* Barry is a well-known and highly esteemed figure. This became immediately clear to me when increasing numbers of adult male spectators arrived on the afternoon of our interview to pay the *seriñ* a visit. No one, at least from my perspective, would even think of accusing *Seriñ* Barry of not being a credible man of God, or worse, of being an evil-doer. In fact, not a single Qur'anic master I spoke with has actually identified a peer as being a "fake". That is regardless of how exploitative their actions may appear based on factors of urban migration, *taalibe* begging time, the use of corporal punishment, and limited *taalibe* contact with families.

Seriñ Barry's powerful social image as a wise and influential holy man protects him from accusations of trafficking, and even emboldens him to change the terms of discussion from trafficking to poverty. From his perspective, there is no child trafficking at all, just Qur'anic masters and pupils doing what they have to do to ensure a religious education. *Seriñ* Barry does not dance between the *trafficking* and *vulnerable schools* discourses –what others call trafficking, he calls discipline and education – and perhaps his perspective is a bit more representative on the ground. This is how most other actors, from NGO personnel to Qur'anic masters and community members, are actually treating the situation – as one of vulnerable schools, despite openly accepting accounts of child trafficking. It is the image of the *evil, fake marabout* that makes this duality possible, allowing humanitarian and government actors to direct public outrage at the pitiable situation of *taalibes* without offending actual religious leaders. The only problem is that the fake *marabout* is a specter – he will not be found and brought to justice because he does not actually exist. I am not saying that there are no exploitative *marabouts*, rather that upon close examination, those who seem to fit the profile of *evil, fake marabouts*, turn out to be "real" *marabout* religious leaders, according to their colleagues and followers. This leads all those dancing between the two discourses, of *child trafficking* and *vulnerable schools*, into a ballroom of justified inaction.

Dancing between Discourses, Justified Inaction

I documented in chapter three that when Qur'anic masters travelling with numerous children are stopped at the border between Mali and Senegal under anti-trafficking laws, they are released. I

observed a pattern - the authorities learn that the adult travelers are not in fact traffickers, but legitimate Qur'anic masters travelling with students. While the children are indeed made to beg or work to support themselves and their masters, the fact that the adult is recognized as a "real" *marabout* removes the question of trafficking. The question for actors on the ground then becomes: *how can this Qur'anic master and his pupils be assisted to function without depending on child labor?* Qur'anic masters are not faulted for their poverty; they dedicate themselves to Allah and sharing the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed. The parents are not generally faulted, as it is customary to send children to live with a Qur'anic master for religious learning, particularly if they do not want their children to attend French language public schools. But is it not possible that a "real" Qur'anic master could be engaging in behavior that could be considered child trafficking?

My observations suggest that the answer to that question is **no**. "Real" Qur'anic masters are socially revered enough to effectively dodge public scrutiny. Non-clerical citizens may feel that it is not in their power to condemn the choices of a religious leader. If a *seriñ* says that he is not exploiting children but instilling discipline and making ends meet by sending *taalibes* out to collect alms – a time-tested practice – then who are they to question him? Moreover, people in positions of political and authoritative power also have difficulties condemning Qur'anic masters suspected of exploiting their pupils – their fear is one of political backlash. What results is a situation in which the reality of child exploitation through trafficking is recognized, but in which there are no actual perpetrators. Authorities and citizens continue to wait for the exploitative "fake *marabouts*" to be revealed – as if they will be exposed by a lack of knowledge of the Qur'an, or a fake identity. These expectations of crime occurring exclusively through fraud justifies inaction with respect to *taalibe* begging under the direction of "real" Qur'anic masters.

I call this inaction "justified" because the participating interlocutors – state officials, Qur'anic masters and humanitarian workers – simultaneously make recourse to both the *trafficking* and *vulnerable schools* frames to address *taalibe* begging. This shuffle between discourses ensures that the egregious abuses that periodically show up in newspapers, reports or documentaries are being officially denounced in appropriately indignant language, but that the actual reactions will not involve the punishment of the countless Qur'anic masters forcing their children to beg.

My interview with Ousmane Gaye[263] of *Plan Senegal*, introduced in chapter four, reveals a clear instance of *dancing between discourses*. He begins by framing begging as primarily a problem of rural poverty, that "begging has an economic foundation that is extremely important. We should

[263] Personal interview, video recorded, January 26, 2011, Dakar, Senegal.

not veil our faces. The *marabouts* who leave their zones of origin to come to Dakar, they come especially to better their and their families' living conditions." Mr. Gaye then went on to describe encountering questionable figures while negotiating the terms of *Plan*'s aid package to Qur'anic schools. He explained, "Madame Ba and I, we visited a *daara* last year, where the *marabout* had four wives. He was richly dressed, and he had wives… and I asked him the question of where he was pulling his revenues from. He told me, from the Qur'anic school. So, I looked at all of those children there, I told myself, it is these children who feed these women and that man!"

As Mr. Gaye continued to speak about questionable *marabouts*, it tended more and more toward a description of child trafficking for exploitation:

> *So the economic aspect, if we calculate… one child who comes every day with 500 francs, well for twenty-some children, you have 10,000 francs per day. 10,000 francs per day, that is 300,000 francs per month. That is the salary of a good portion of the Senegalese administration. And him, he does not move from home, right? But we calculated for 20 children. There are some that have 40, 50, 80. And so the socio-cultural aspect [of begging]…I believe it is to be completely banished now.*

Mr. Gaye commented that various *marabouts* refuse "*daara* return" projects, because they are making so much money in the cities. Others have reportedly given back NGO-loaned revenue-generating investments such as taxis because they made more money simply having their *taalibes* beg (without working on the side).

Such scenarios were clearly ethically questionable for Mr. Gaye. But I flag the fact that Mr. Gaye was not simply commenting as a Senegalese citizen and practicing Muslim, but as an NGO representative heading a project assisting Qur'anic schools with direct aid to their instructors. He occupies a place of considerable power with respect to acting on his observations of abuse and exploitation, yet our interview concluded with a detailed description of *Plan*'s nearly 30 million fCFA (approx. 62,600 USD) aid package to the Qur'anic masters of Pikine, sealed with a signed protocol agreement. When I questioned him about the protocol agreement's "Stop the Abuse of Children!" clause, which explicitly prohibits any of the association's members from abusing or exploiting their pupils, Mr. Gaye affirmed that none of the Qur'anic masters concerned were considered to be exploiting or abusing their children. He explained that PLAN retained the right to discontinue aid, "based on what is written" against child exploitation, "but to this day, that has not happened".

In reviewing that interview, I ask what exactly, "has not happened"? Mr. Gaye has personally witnessed cases he interpreted as unfair exploitation of children to maintain a luxurious lifestyle. He has also avowed the continued widespread use of corporal punishment in the *daaras* of

Pikine as well as continued begging. But, for the purposes of disbursing the aid money as planned, based on the premise that begging is the result of poverty, Mr. Gaye and his organization overlook all of the elements that suggest that at least some of the Qur'anic masters that they are aiding could be categorized as child traffickers profiting off of their pupils' begging revenues.

Bouba Thior[264] of the *Direction de la Protection des Droits de l'Enfant* (Administration for the Protection of Children's Rights, DPDE), situated within the Ministry of the Family, similarly danced between the *trafficking* and *vulnerable schools* discourses with respect to the *taalibe* begging issue. He began his explanation of *taalibe* begging as related to "two factors" - "socio-economic" and socio-cultural." Socio-economic factors that he cited are related to poverty, primarily a degradation in rural farming due to desertification and inadequate technologies to sustain it. The socio-cultural factors include "certain beliefs that the child needs to beg to cultivate humility," or that begging is pedagogical. "People still say that. But today, the state, even the Qur'anic masters, they have understood that [begging] cannot continue."

Mr. Thior believes that interventions must be developed by taking into account these causes of *taalibe* begging, "factor by factor". In addition to agreeing that the state must create a national strategy to deal with questions of childhood and child protection, he stresses the central importance of the state initiative of *daara modernization* to reign in begging. In his statement he mentioned that, "through prevention, protection, and extraction/reinsertion," actors could develop programs to support the *taalibes*. I took particular note of this assertion, as he almost verbatim repeated the Palermo Protocol's "3 P's" of *prevention*, *protection*, and *prosecution* to deal with human trafficking. But *prosecution* was missing.

I asked Mr. Thior about his administration's efforts to combat child trafficking, particularly regarding violence-enforced begging in the Qur'anic school sector. Mr. Thior responded:

> *Corporal punishment is prohibited by national legislation as well as international legislation on children's rights. It is prohibited, whether in schools or in daaras.*

He continued to repeat these phrases to me to stress that the laws of Senegal strictly prohibit hitting children in schools and in *daaras* – "There are no exceptions." But he followed up with a disquietingly ambiguous comment about the actual enforcement of laws in Senegal:

> *Now, the traffic code is made to be respected. But, generally, where there are no police officers, you can (hesitates) violate the code. That is how they [Qur'anic masters] have positioned themselves. But it is not something that is established as normal. No, corporal punishment is prohibited.*

[264] Personal interview, video-recorded, January 4, 2011, Dakar, Senegal.

Mr. Thior noted the illegality of beatings in Qur'anic schools and posed a problem of enforcement. He compared Qur'anic masters hitting their pupils to commuters speeding. When there is no threat of enforcement, people do what they want, and chaos ensues. Indeed, the new multi-lane highway recently built in Dakar, "the VDN", has proved to be a dangerous attraction for drivers to race at top speeds. On numerous occasions I feared for my life while sitting in the back seat of taxis, and I have had to ask drivers to slow down. I also noted regular announcements of VDN-related deaths in Dakar newspapers, including *taalibes*. Indeed, the lack of police enforcement allows this traffic chaos to continue unabated. But rather than accept it as a reality, might we ask, where are the police?

Mr. Thior's metaphor makes me wonder –where is the enforcement? He spoke on behalf of the administration in charge of protecting children's rights in Senegal, yet he said nothing of promoting enforcement of the laws in place. Rather than considering *prosecution* of those infringing on children's rights, Mr. Thior and the government unit charged with upholding children's rights (*Direction pour la Protection des Droits de l'Enfant*, "Administration for the Protection of the Rights of the Child," DPDE) have put all of their energies behind supporting *prevention* of begging through promoting a "change in socio-cultural behaviors," and *protection*, by gathering state and non-state actors together to provide the basic necessities to these children in terms of survival and education. This is in cooperation with Qur'anic schools, by "modernizing" them, not by antagonizing them. The third Palermo "P", *prosecution*, has dropped out where the *vulnerable schools discourse* meets the *trafficking discourse* on the ground in Senegal.

A Tragic Fire Killing *Taalibes* Sparks Local Indignation

On the night of March 3, 2013, a fire struck a makeshift shack that was situated between two large cement brick buildings in the overcrowded central Dakar neighborhood of Medina. Nine children died in the blaze, seven of whom were *taalibes* sleeping in their *daara*. The structure comprised 11 rooms that housed several families and an exterior sheltered area that served as a *daara* for over 40 *taalibes*. Firefighters delayed in arriving on the scene due to blocked passageways from overconstruction in the surrounding area. There was widespread public shock and outrage at the death of these children, described as housed in "totally inhuman conditions"[265]. The event brought national attention to the question of child trafficking and exploitation in the Qur'anic school system.

[265] March 5, 2013, "Neuf 'talibés' meurent dans un incendie à la médina; Macky Sall : "Il faut fermer les 'daraas' qui ne sont pas aux normes," *Le Soleil*, (Thiam 2013).

I argued above that the HRW report on the situation of the *taalibes* failed to stir lasting legislative change because it sparked indignation in the wrong audience – a foreign audience rather than the local population of Senegal. The fire of 2013, however, provided a brief political window during which the population of Senegal itself was united in outrage at the continued lack of control of exploitative Qur'anic masters. However, rather than seize the opportunity to gather political support to legally crack down against child exploitation, the President of Senegal chose to dance between the two discourses of *taalibe* suffering to justify further inaction to protect the *taalibes* from abuse.

President Maky Sall visited the site to express his sorrow for the loss of life, and to declare that, "very strong measures will be taken to put an end to the exploitation of children, under the pretext that they are talibés" (Thiam 2013). Clearly not criticizing Qur'anic education as a whole, the President specified that the children who perished in the fire were not actual *taalibes* – but exploited children who were made to look like *taalibes* to gain begging revenues. And while he did not speak about the Qur'anic masters, his comment indicated that they were clearly also operating "under the pretext" that they were genuine *seriñs*. This framing allowed the President to publically express indignation at the incident and the poor conditions of the begging children throughout Dakar, while not criticizing Qur'anic masters specifically. He asserted that the government would, "intervene and identify sites like this, [and] close them" (Thiam 2013). He went on to explain that the state would strive to "organize charity," and "support the establishments that are capable of receiving children," emblematic of President Wade's modernization initiatives that failed to come to fruition. In other words, President Sall decries the exploitation of children, yet his plans to address it are to subsidize the Qur'anic school sector – a flawless *dance between discourses*. His comments served to assuage the public's outrage at the sudden tragic fire that took nine young lives, while justifying impunity for the related criminal acts.

The Best and Worst of Times

Every year, transnational organizations are issuing increasingly urgent calls to save hundreds of thousands of West African children who are being trafficked and enslaved (chapter two). *Taalibes*, present throughout the region, many of whom beg, constitute a significant portion of the West African children described as trafficked. The moral outrage that accompanies reports of child trafficking and enslavement has ensured that non-profit and state initiatives to aid the *taalibes* have been able to gain support from diverse sources to implement projects to feed, educate and rehabilitate the children. Organizations on the ground have been able to secure generous grants to

cover operating costs, hire personnel, organize public forums and professional training seminars, and launch nationwide campaigns advocating against begging. In terms of aid acquisition for issues concerning the *taalibes*, it is *the best of times*.

Ironically, feeding these high times in the aid community are *the worst of times* for the *taalibes*. The *taalibes* are the designated beneficiaries – but they are still being forced to beg. These projects, while they bring much needed humanitarian assistance to children in extremely difficult conditions, are time-limited and do not provide enough aid to persuade Qur'anic masters to abandon begging. In fact, even the most ambitious, well-funded projects include no long-term plan to eliminate begging in the assisted *daaras* or communities. The continued suffering, increasingly documented and visualized, will continue to mobilize support. *It is the best of times, it is the worst of times.*

The egregious nature of the purported abuses against the *taalibes* benefits the activities of the multitudes of NGO and state actors working to obtain and distribute aid money in their name, many of whom enjoy competitive transnational salaries. The more horrifying the conditions of the children, the easier it is to gather charitable support for them. Add to this that their exploitation is alleged to take place under the guise of religious education, the hypocrisy of which enhances indignation. Finally, that this enslavement of masses of children is happening while teaching them only to memorize the Muslim Holy Qur'an adds an element of concern for the nourishment of Islamic fundamentalism in the region. This, when coupled with economic desperation, can be seen as a potential terrorism threat. Vivid documentation of the *taalibe* children's perduring "worst of times" feeds Senegal's aid sector to thrive as an industry.

For those who wish to see a bit of optimism at the end of these *taalibe* stories, I can name two potentially positive developments that resulted from activist pressure to fight *taalibe* exploitation through begging. The first is that the begging ban got the people of Senegal discussing and debating the economics and ethics of *taalibe* begging at levels never before seen. Increased public consensus that *taalibes* should not be begging for such long hours in the streets may over time push some to call on government officials to intervene, as well as push neighborhood *seriñs* to reform their practices. The people's alms are at the center of the *taalibe* begging problem - so if the population gets upset enough, they can force the rampant begging to stop by cutting off the supply of alms.

Secondly, intervening actors, such as the NGOs ENDA, *Plan International,* and *Save the Children, Sweden*, and the state/NGO partnership PARRER, are continuing their struggle to get religious leaders behind their efforts to eradicate child begging. Influential religious guides have spoken out in radio and television campaigns, and have given public speeches about getting the

children out of the streets and into schools. The High Islamic Council of Mali has publically supported the government of Mali's efforts to fight Qur'anic student begging through the creation of public learning centers (Diallo 2014). Even if these public shows of Islamic support do not address the economic undercurrents of *taalibe* begging, they work to discredit arguments that forcing children to beg is okay or even necessary for their proper religious education. Finally, recent reports say that West African nations are pledging to fight *taalibe* trafficking and exploitation with regional legislation through the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS 2014). It will be important to observe how this legislation will play out on the ground.

Conclusion: Stories of Suffering, Politics of Compassion and Justified Inaction

I have systematically demonstrated throughout this dissertation that shifting between these two discourses – the child *trafficking discourse* and the *vulnerable schools discourse* – results in the justified perpetuation of child exploitation. Government and humanitarian actors make recourse to the *vulnerable schools discourse* to propose reforms in lieu of criminally prosecuting Qur'anic masters – the latter remaining a politically-unfavorable move for elected leaders. As I noted in chapter six, however, the government of Senegal has not invested enough funds to even begin to monitor and subsidize the country's Qur'anic schools. It has outsourced the job to all willing aid organizations. Aid groups attract funds from abroad by describing tens of thousands of children as trafficked and exploited, leading to the sudden recent *rise of the taalibe child trafficking victim* (chapter two). *Stories of suffering taalibes* use compassion-generating techniques such as *shocking by exception* and *illusions of aloneness* to secure support for continued intervention (chapter eight). But then after paying their employees' competitive salaries, aid groups paradoxically turn around and give money to Qur'anic masters whose needs are manifest by their forcing their *taalibes* to beg. These are the very people who are allegedly trafficking the *taalibes* for profit. But in the *vulnerable schools discourse*, through which aid is disbursed, they are not traffickers; they, with the *taalibes*, are victims of poverty.

The Qur'anic masters, in turn, cannot consistently make ends meet with sporadic assistance, and so they justify continued *taalibe* begging despite receiving aid (chapter seven). Due to multiple converging socio-cultural, politico-economic and historical religious factors, including a *pedagogy of suffering*, parents continue to send their children over borders with Qur'anic masters (chapters three and four). Senegal's *alms-driven begging* economy allows multitudes of *taalibes* to collect large sums of money in the name of Qur'anic education (chapters five and six). This means that aid packages offered to Qur'anic masters can often function as a supplement to an already significant begging

revenue. In other words, the intervening adults, including government officials, humanitarian workers, and organized Qur'anic masters, all play a role in continuing the cycle of child exploitation as they justify their own actions through *taalibe* stories corresponding to their intervention strategies. The *trafficking discourse* is quick to bring in funds to save children from evil exploiters, and the *vulnerable schools discourse* protects Qur'anic masters from condemnation. I have come to conclude that without a systematic legal crackdown on child exploitation in concert with the proposed aid, *taalibe* begging will likely continue to be the topic of gripping *stories of child suffering* for years to come, mobilizing some and being mobilized by others.

A corrective to this image that I have sketched out of a self-perpetuating cycle of aid and exploitation surrounding the *taalibe* children of Senegal and Mali, West Africa, would necessarily take into considerations three key insights that this dissertation has generated. First, when it comes to humanitarian aid, at least in its current *laissez-faire*, *it-is-the-thought-that-counts* "untouchable" (Fassin 2010) form, "doing something" is not always necessarily better than doing nothing. Because so many groups have expressed interest in investing resources to help the suffering *taalibe* children, the government of Senegal has effectively shifted its responsibility to control and support the Qur'anic educational sector to third-party groups who have no established legal responsibilities toward those children or the Senegalese state in the short or long-term. I have shown that discreet humanitarian aid projects targeting the *taalibes* and the Qur'anic masters do not contribute to a nationwide or long-term solution to the *taalibes*' plight. A new standard should be established that places a burden on prospective aid groups in situations of perpetual "crisis" to demonstrate how their projects will contribute to the long-term advancement of the well-being and protection of the human rights of the targeted actors.

Second, the ways in which the *taalibes*' "best interests" have been declared and debated in efforts to promote their rights without any recourse to, or effort to gain and understanding of, the children's own perspectives, are inherently conflicting. My dissertation describes how numerous adult actors not only make decisions on behalf of "*taalibes*" and "children" as population groups, but many actually profit from the ensuing actions. This finding suggests that scholars, policy-makers and activists need to critically reevaluate what it means on the ground to speak for children and to solicit their "participation" in the promotion of their human rights.

Finally, as noble as they are with their philosophical foundations, humanistic objectives and universal scope, children's rights are rights only so much as they can be reclaimed against some governing body that is able and willing to uphold them. For those who envision the future of

human and children's rights to supersede the nation-state, where all the world's children are protected through all of the world's scrutiny and assistance, one must come to terms with the fact that however laudable a goal, the rights of children are firmly situated within multiple and complex layers of power and governance. Although the tactic of *shocking by exception* draws indignation and incites people to intervene, and *illusions of aloneness* reinforce the image of the impoverished child as a needy "universal child" detached from politics, children are not actually directly accessible by any aid campaign or any mail order donation. Conflating the notion of the conceptual "universality" of human rights with the idea of children's rights as *universally* accessible and enforceable - to be addressed from within a new, hypothetical globalized terrain of transnational NGOs and global agencies – contributes to feel-good utopian visions of direct intervention as the logical way toward attaining rights for children. As long as children's rights and human rights are linked to compassionate reactions, which in turn depend on an ever-changing set of shocking criteria and a shifting consensus of rights in practice, then they will remain at risk of serving as mere situational advocacy tools rather than a corps of legal rights. In order to call children's rights "rights", we must be sure to consider how they can be legally protected and systematically upheld – not just intermittently satisfied following aid groups' funding cycles or independent donors' whims. Rather, the goal should be to remove children's rights and well-being from global and local politics of compassion.

Appendix – Survey Instrument

☐ Homme ☐ Femme	Année de naissance :	Occupation :
Niveau d'études :	Ethnie :	Religion et confrérie :
Pays d'origine :	Région et lieu d'origine :	☐ Marié ____ Nombre d'épouses ☐ Divorcé ☐ Jamais marié
Avez-vous étudié dans une école coranique ? ☐ Oui, comme internat ☐ Oui, les jours seulement ☐ Oui, pendant les vacances seulement ☐ Non	Si oui, combien du texte avez-vous mémorisé ? _____	Dans votre enfance, aviez-vous besoin de mendier ? ☐ Oui, régulièrement ☐ Oui, parfois ☐ Oui, une ou deux fois ☐ Non, jamais par nécessité.

Donnez-vous de l'aumône ? Indiquez les fréquences et les récipients de l'aumône de votre part :

	jamais	tous les jours	presque tous les jours	3-4 fois par semaine	1-2 fois par semaine	1-3 fois par mois	1-3 fois par année	autre
l'aumône en général	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
enfant taalibe dans la rue	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
enfant taalibe dans une maison	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
mendiant handicapé ou aveugle dans la rue	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
mère mendiante avec enfant(s)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
des jumeaux mendiants	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
un parent en besoin	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
voisin/autre personne en besoin	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
une institution religieuse (i.e. mosquée, église)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
une organisation d'aide sociale	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
un groupe d'activisme social	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
autre(s)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Commentaires :

Qu'offrez-vous comme aumône et avec quelle fréquence ?

	jamais	rarement	parfois	fréquemment
de l'argent	◯	◯	◯	◯
de la nourriture préparée (restes du repas, etc.)	◯	◯	◯	◯
du riz non-cuit	◯	◯	◯	◯
du sucre	◯	◯	◯	◯
du pain	◯	◯	◯	◯
des habits/chaussures	◯	◯	◯	◯
autre	◯	◯	◯	◯

Autres (spécifiez) ou commentaire:

Est-ce que votre serigne vous indique parfois de donner de l'aumône spécifique (comme des offrandes spécifiques ou à des récipients spécifiques ? Pouvez-vous donner des exemples ?

A part aider une autre personne, est-ce que l'acte de donner l'aumône peut aider la personne qui donne ? Comment ?

Que vous inspire ou pousse à donner l'aumône ? Est-ce que les raisons diffèrent parfois ?

Que sentez-vous en offrant l'aumône ou après d'offrir l'aumône à une personne ?

Pensez-vous qu'offrir l'aumône peut guérir une maladie ? Pouvez-vous expliquer ? Est-ce que ca vous est une fois arrivé ?

Pensez-vous qu'offrir l'aumône peut enlever ou empêcher un malheur ? Pouvez-vous expliquer ? Est-ce que ca vous est une fois arrivé ?

Pensez-vous que la mendicité dans les rues de Dakar est un problème ?

Pensez-vous que la mendicité des enfants talibés est un problème ?

Si oui, que pensez-vous doit être fait pour régler ou améliorer la situation ?

(Pensez-vous que le gouvernement doit faire quelque chose ? Les ONG ? Les communautés ? Les parents ?)

Avez-vous d'autres commentaires sur des thèmes abordés dans ce questionnaire ?

Merci de la participation !

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