BEYOND THE ECONOMIC IMPETUS FOR MIGRATION:
PRE-MIGRATION COGNITIONS, SUBJECTIVITIES, AND OCCIDENTALISMS
IN THE AFRICAN POSTCOLONY

By

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I dedicate this dissertation to Africa that was and will be, and to all who work for her good; to my son, Augustine Chidubem Nwaenyi, my guiding light, Peaceful River without foe, the calm voice in the middle of the storm; to my mother, Susanna Ozuzuaku Anonyuo, teacher of harmony and dignity, everywoman; to the memory of my father and ancestor, Samuel Igboabuchukwu Anonyuo, eternal sage; to my Heavenly Father, His Son, Jesus Christ, and His Holy Spirit whose Love and Grace have shielded and yoked me forever.
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BEYOND THE ECONOMIC IMPETUS FOR MIGRATION: PRE-MIGRATION COGNITIONS, SUBJECTIVITIES, AND OCCIDENTALISMS IN THE AFRICAN POSTCOLONY

By

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This is an ethnography of postcoloniality in Nigeria and Senegal, with focus on how cognitions and subjectivities crystallized from colonial history have enabled constructions of the West among African peoples, and how these constructions catalyze migration to Western countries. A triangulation of data collection methods included questionnaire surveys, semi-structured and informal interviews, folklore, and autoethnographic perspectives from the author. Through 821 questionnaire surveys, baseline data was obtained from the two countries to measure the level of desire to migrate to Western countries. Semi-structured person-to-person interviews with 26 informants and more than 20 informal interviews were conducted focusing on what the people thought about White people and their countries, what people thought about those from their societies who had lived or still live in White people’s countries, and the connections people make between their social constructions of the West and African migrants, and the attraction of migrating to Western countries.

Archival data from three national archives, one in Senegal and two in Nigeria, showed the colonizers’ objectives and strategies that can account for present conditions of postcoloniality. Proverbs, given and assumed names, song lyrics, popular culture, and local legends or narratives
were collected from the intellectual elite, community elders, and regular folks at both sites. The questionnaire survey data showed that there was an extremely high level of desire among the Senegalese and Nigerians to migrate to the West. Folkloric data showed hyperbolic positive constructions of the West including attributions of beauty, power, intellectual superiority and more. However, the northern part of Nigeria was observed to be less enthusiastic about the West than the southern areas. In the analysis of the data, comparisons were made between constructions of the West among Nigerians and Senegalese. The concept of “soul drain” attributed to an interregnum conceptualized as the absence of nation-building governance in Africa was introduced as explanation for the morasses of postcoloniality, including a high rate of emigration. In conclusion, rudiments of a “Holistic Context” approach to the study of international migration are presented to temper the tendency toward economic determinism in the study of impetuses for migration.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Anthropology’s objective is to bring the human into analyses of events, processes, phenomena, everyday things and happenings, anywhere people exist. By anchoring social processes back to humanness, by causing them to become embodied, anthropology seeks to reject and counter tendencies in social science to warp human existence and sociality through extreme abstraction. Though anthropology’s faithfulness to this ideal, especially to the probity and ethical definition of humanness has been interrogated and challenged, the study of humanity in social phenomena remains the centerpiece of anthropology as an academic discipline. Thus, the incomprehensiveness of any analysis produced by intellectual forays into things that people do, or things that happen to people, will continue to invite anthropological intervention. Such is the case with the human phenomenon we call migration which reins in spatial dimensions of thought and action and mental calculus that both emanate from and define the place of individuals and collectivities in a universe that is known or knowable to them.

Several observations of the trajectories of migration study indicate a late entry of anthropologists into the arena of international migration, perhaps because of their long attachment to the notion of culture as spatially contained. But there is also a possibility that earlier studies of international migration have not allowed enough room for humanity holistically defined, automatically shutting out paradigms that pivot on holistic humanness. The dominance of economic paradigms in international migration discourse has subsumed human beings that are rather conceptually incomplete, and have precluded contextual determinants of human behavior and choice. With the entrance of transnationalism and its attendant “social fields” into the discourse on human migration, anthropology became animated and has since generated significant perspectives for debate on dynamics of international migration. But theoretical
vacuums remain. Over the years there have been attempts to bring attention to gaps and hiatuses in the theorization of human migration, but these gaps have not received adequate scrutiny, despite the growing importance of migration as an issue that touches virtually all human societies, and has preoccupied academe since Ernest Ravenstein (1885) sought to provide structure for its study.

This study is an attempt to identify, define, and fill a void in the landscape of theoretical perspectives that have been offered for the study and better understanding of the dynamics of voluntary international migration, with particular focus on African migration to countries of the Western world. The economic motive as an impetus for migration is acknowledged but its omnipresence and dominance in explanations of why people migrate has reached saturation point and leaves its most ardent apologists with a feeling that something is missing in their conceptualization of migration dynamics. There is now an unmistakable vociferous invitation to modulate the tenor of economic determinism in migration research. Scholars of international migration are invited to see humans as not only rational economic maximizers but as emotional beings with other values that are non-economic. Migrants are human agents possessing beliefs and instrumentalities that have connections to their histories and experiential packages, and give to their lives a multidimensionality that has hitherto been denied or submerged in migration research. This study responds to theoretical vacuums identified in international migration research, first, by sidestepping the skimming of the migration process which so far rests on retrospective assessments of motive and excessively on after-the-fact statistics. To capture a more accurate picture of international migration dynamics, the focus is on pre-migration cognitions and subjectivities and the determination of migration by social environment itself with the foundation of a baseline assessment of the level of desire to migrate to Western countries.
For African international migration, the postcolony is a conceptual distillation of factors and processes that have conjointly produced contemporary African societies. It is indeed a crucible for the intermixing of cognitive residues of European subjugation and originary African worldviews which have shaped the consciousness of African peoples, and has to a great extent created the subjectivities reflected in the choices they make in their lifeworlds, including choices about migration. A closer scrutiny of these subjectivities reveals the machinations and imprints of history, a corollary of processes similar to those that fostered what Edward Said (1979) called Orientalism, only that this time, the Other does not suffer from a minimized position of powerlessness, the Other actually signifies the locus of all kinds of power. The Other, in the case of the African postcolony is also subject to cropped and warped representations of alterity but in positive directions as it is endowed with hyperbolic affirmations of beauty, superhuman abilities, and essentialized aptitudes. The Other that was identified in this study is the West, an imaginary constructed from below and from positions of powerlessness, an object of the desire of the pre-migrant African. This Other that has risen from the embers of colonization calls for a redefinition of social capital in African contexts, and for the recognition and accentuation of the place of the pre-migration context and its explanatory power in the study of international migration dynamics. This study borrows James G. Carrier’s (1995) conceptualization of ‘Occidentalism’ to name this phenomenon and to propose a conceptual framework for its Africanization.

George Marcus’s (1998) proposals of multi-sited research have provided a methodological fit for the objectives of this study since its purpose is to trace colonization in two African societies, Nigeria and Senegal, and compare the two societies as products of social change brought about by colonial domination. Two themes highlighted by Marcus in his discussion of multi-sited research, “follow[ing] the metaphor” that highlights the role of
language and translation, and the “circumstantial activist” that the ethnographer becomes or reflects are useful in this ethnography. The concept of circumstantial activist additionally necessitates the separate recognition and integration of reflexive ethnography into the methodological framework, thereby extending the triangulation of data collection methods to include the ethnographer herself as source of data, and add an autoethnographic dimension to the discussion of the study. As Irma McClaurin argues, autoethnography is a form of cultural mediation, autobiographical reflexivity and ethnographic representation, a strategy of knowledge production that is suitable not only for black feminists but also for other “speakers of subjugated discourses” (2001:18).

In addition to the growing importance of migration in most if not all social science disciplines, the timing of this study could not have been better. In contemporary anthropology, critical evaluations of the discipline have either acknowledged the entry and the place of the native anthropologist (Harrison 2008; George Marcus 1998), or argued the pressing need in academe for the democratization of knowledge production (Appadurai 2000). The paucity of perspectives on postcoloniality and its heuristic value in studying contemporary issues such as migration was a challenge in this study, but also an opportunity to probe various areas of knowledge and multidisciplinary perspectives for inferential possibilities and meaningful deductions. It is hoped that more native anthropologists would emerge in response to the increasing acknowledgement of their role in anthropological knowledge production or in the social sciences in general.

The freedom and opportunity to study what one is can be liberating, and can bring about renewed enthusiasm for pioneering forays into domains of knowledge that have been too hastily considered in the past. But the idea of challenging the dominance of entrenched paradigms that
accompany ventures into rarely visited territories of knowledge production has its moments of apprehension. Being privy to nooks and corners in the field where knowledge was most likely to be waiting to be found helped to neutralize most of my apprehension. Because the subject of her fieldwork is part of lived experience, the native anthropologist has the advantage of not fearing the possibility of exiting the field with a feeling of emptiness and disorientation, but has the ability to focus on how to get field observations subjected to an academic *compte rendu*, so that the intellectual community can effectively participate in the discourse it hopes to inspire. The complexity of Africa’s past needs the involvement of African-born anthropologists because of their particular ability to originate research topics that a non-African could never imagine, and to access the nooks and corners in the field that will elude alien imagination.

I am an African immigrant in the United States. As a young girl, I attended schools run by Irish nuns and was taught by a majority of White faculty. We were taught Irish songs, not Nigerian songs, and I still remember completely and lucidly the lyrics and the melodies that were so ingrained in us possibly because of their strangeness at that time. At the boarding house, we were not allowed to wear African-style clothes. If I spoke my language which was called “vernacular” I was beaten with a wooden stick or sent into the field near the school with a small machete and told to cut grass, sometimes until I had blisters on my palms. Just like the colonial governance structure of ‘indirect rule’ in Nigeria, there were students whom we saw as the chosen ones, like the traditional African chiefs, charged with the responsibility of policing us and submitting our names if we spoke “vernacular”. My young friends and I learned to snub African-style clothes as taught at the boarding houses all over the country, run by Irish nuns, and shopping for second-hand clothing shipped down from Western parts of the world became a favorite event. We either came up with the most original Western designs that we made
ourselves or found a patient tailor to make for us, or we took the short-cut of getting them from
the second-hand clothing stalls at the market.

When we heard that one of us was being married off to a husband she had only seen in
pictures but who was living “overseas”, we envied her, and went to bed wondering whether we
might have the same luck. Other young girls about whom people said “she acts just like White
people” were our role models, and we craved the adulation they received from society. We did
not like boys who could not speak English as close as possible to the British accent, and we liked
more those boys who could use quotes from James Hadley Chase, not Chinua Achebe or Cyprian
Ekwensi. When I finally had the chance to leave Nigeria for the United States, I believe the need
for a cultural island to help me heal from an early widowhood was the reason at the tip of my
tongue, but I secretly looked forward to some kind of transformation that would make me appear
different enough to invite the adulation that the “been-to” received, and that made me feel
privileged.

My research, conceptually addresses the chasm between a prayer my mother made me and
my siblings recite most nights at bedtime and a prayer that was recited in all the Catholic
churches I attended in Nigeria during my research. The prayer of my youth was called a “Prayer
for the Conversion of Africa” (In Igbo, Ekpere Maka Niogha Nke Afrika). I can still recite the
prayer verbatim, because I said it so many times that it became registered in my soul, with all of
its meanings and ramifications. The prayer that was recited in the churches during my four
month- stay in Nigeria doing fieldwork was called ‘Prayer for the “End of Bribery and
Corruption in Nigeria.” It was recited in English; I did not hear it in “vernacular.” These two
prayers can be seen as the polar anchors for the range of transformations that have taken place in
an African context in the lifetimes of so many, starting with the colonial experience and continuing in the present as postcoloniality.

Because I had lived it, I knew going to the field that occidentalism soaked the social fabric of Nigeria, and even Senegal where I had spent nine months as a college student studying French. That familiarity of the social climate of the field did not trump my concern about how I could get my research subjects to describe to me in interviews the details of the process through which they developed their stylized images of the West. Just as I could not admit readily to the impact of wanting to be as Westernized as possible, nor to my desire for the status that it would give me among my people at home, my research subjects were not going to find it easy to psychoanalyze themselves. This vantage foreknowledge motivated me to find out how social science analyzed such situations or challenges in research, and I did find the answer in Anthony Giddens’s (1985) ideas on “structuration” and in Lacan’s analysis of consciousness which provided both methodological and theoretical orientations for this study. Multidisciplinarity, in general was crucial in analyzing my ethnographic findings, and it is going to be difficult from here on to imagine a study of African migration or migration in general using single paradigms, or subscribing to the disciplinary parochial tendencies. Clearly, no one academic discipline can predominate; the phenomenon is too multidimensional to confine.

This six-month ethnography of the Senegalese and Nigerian postcolonies involved surveys, casual but critical observation, semi-structured interviews, archival research, the collection of popular culture from print and electronic media, and most importantly, folklore. The usefulness of folklore rarely taught or discussed as ethnographic data in anthropology, was a useful find and indeed a highpoint of this research. Folklore impressed me as data with remarkable purity because it was no one informant’s particular voice, and yet it was the voice of the people in that
given society. It was a parsimonious way of collecting data and was instrumental in making it possible for my ethnography to fit into six months. The revelations it made possible had unique value for a topic such as postcolonialism which often reins in dimensions of cognitions and consciousness, but its most important revelation beyond this study is its potential for the streamlined study of culture and other topics where historicity is relevant. Three languages were used in this research: English (formal and pidgin), French, and Igbo. Data collected were expected to reveal three things: first, that there was a high level of desire among Senegalese and Nigerians (and therefore most African postcolonial societies) to migrate to Western countries; secondly, that manifestations of occidentalism or stylized images of the West were present in the society, and thirdly, that the pre-migrant Africans tied occidentalisms to the desire to migrate to Western countries.

In a dynamic global context, the study of migration needs to chase the various elements of a global society, and in doing so, it must keep up with the pace of the changes, but in doing so, it must be mindful not only of the continuity of these changes but their origins and their implications for different parts of the globe. This suggestion for retrospection is equally applicable to explanatory frameworks from the past that must not be cast aside quickly in the quest for trendiness of research directions. This study suggests that theories and studies of national consciousness should be mined for the heuristic compass they can be for the exploration of possible non-economic impetuses for migration. This direction of inquiry will help the exegesis of what I have termed ‘soul drain’ which could be fundamental in dismantling what Sakia Sassen (2006) has called “the centripetal scaling of the nation-state marked by one master normativity”. Not only should we acknowledge the conceptual fragmentation of the nation-state, but we should also anatomize and interrogate its very being and genesis, its essence, its realness.
Informed by Ernest Renan’s (1882) conceptualization of what a nation is, and Benedict Anderson’s (1983) arguments about how nations come to be, I argue that the so-called African ‘nations’ we study and analyze are not real, and that this ‘unreality’ has implications for contemporary African migration. I name the period between colonization and the present an interregnum in which the creativity that such periods inspire is for Africans directed at creative constructions of the West. In Lacanian terms, the West thus becomes the “Master Signifier” which commands the ways Africans see themselves, and the ways they view the entire global society. For development or progress, however defined, to take place in the African postcolony, the “Master Signifier” cannot continue to be the West. There has to be another compass for the African consciousness, and this compass has to lead inwards. But just as Africans themselves are architects of the West as “Master Signifier”, they too have to be the architects of the new inward leading compass that must replace the West.

To propose fundamentals of a more comprehensive framework for studying the reasons why people migrate, this study uses as a theoretical launching pad, a handful of forgotten or ignored theories from the 1980s and 1990s rooted in constructs from psychological and cognitive anthropology, that push for the tempering of economic determinism in migration research and the importance of the total contexts of migration decision making. I have called it the “Holistic Context” approach. This framework is purported to unpack the term “migrant” such that it should be more qualified based on the society of origin. It also aims at bringing together all the possible factors that could motivate migration for people from the same social context, including economic and non-economic variables. It is hoped that it would stimulate discourse that embeds the migrant and the potential migrant in the native or original social context as has been customarily done for the context of the destination society. This approach seeks to rehabilitate
the pre-migrant as a conceptual hybrid of Homo Economicus and Homo sapiens. More importantly, it attempts to bring in the realistically spatially and temporally variable social context, its membership of a variety of individuals, the dynamics and directions of their social constructions, and the various interpretations that can be made by individuals in that society based on their different interpretive systems.

Giddens’s (1985) idea of “intellectual sloth” calls to mind the role of the intellectual elite in nation-building. Africa’s historicity is speckled with intellectual elites mostly defined by their Westernized points of entry into the African cosmos, starting from the hand-picked species of the colonial era who have constructed and bestowed on Africa an era of neocolonial orientation, and continuing with the cohort who have abandoned African institutions with very suspicious claims to intellectual freedom, ceding the future of the country to anarchic sodalities. The linkage between the African intellectual elite and the exodus of Africans heading for Western countries is national consciousness or the lack thereof. Dominic Boyer and Claudio Lominitz (2005) view intellectualism as the social formation of knowledge that should be understood as a central dimension of the re/production of nations and nationalism both inside and outside of states, especially as it relates to locating the role of human agency in the creation, circulations, and contestation of national culture. It is my view that African intellectuals have been the role models for the desire of the West and the actualization of the same in migration. Their claims to intellectual freedom and the threats to it they see in their native countries are suspect because they too leak hints of occidentalism with their signature haughtiness, depredations, and ridicule of their native countries through hyperbolic and essentialized negative depictions of Africa and its peoples. Their tendency for intellectual sloth is exemplified by the subtle and open discouragement I received while conceptualizing the framework for this study. Postcolonialism
for them is the proverbial ‘third rail’ of academic career in the West, and anatomizing it is seen as professionally suicidal because it has the potential for infuriating White people. The intellectual freedom they claimed eluded them in Africa but awaits them in the West has not produced a spirit of intellectual or academic activism which, in my opinion, Africa needs to extricate itself from the morass of postcoloniality. The likes of Hegel fuelled colonization with their philosophies. Such brazenness and radical thinking is needed from African intellectuals to guide Africa to a dignified place in the global society; but it is not forthcoming, not yet. The desire to not be such an intellectual inspires this study. Meanwhile, academe should at least consider the benefits of debating such issues, even in connection with the study of African migration. Africanists should lead that charge.

The following research questions guide the design of the study and the data sought: How much do Africans desire to migrate to countries of the West? What manifestations or expressions of social consciousness among Africans indicate contact or exposure to the colonial experience? In what ways does the postcolonial social consciousness translate into the desire to migrate to countries of the West? Chapter 2 presents trends and statistics for international migration in the most popular destination countries and in Africa with focus on Nigeria and Senegal, theoretical perspectives that attempt to explain both human migration in general and international migration, and the contributions and foci of anthropology in the study of international migration. Chapter 3 focuses exclusively on perspectives and explanations for African migration and discusses extensively the dynamics and historicity of international (or intercontinental) migration from the African postcolony to the West, with focus on Nigeria and Senegal. Chapter 4 is a discussion of the literature that points to non-economic factors that influence migration decision-making and the logical lapses in economic theoretical perspectives.
on migration. Chapter 5 focuses on the production of the African migrant’s decision-making context beginning from the colonial era to the postcolonial. The two colonial ideologies that contributed to social transformation in Africa and persisting social contexts of the African postcolony, the British indirect rule and the French assimilation and association approach are discussed in great detail. The African migrant and how his or her context was created and still influenced by the neoliberal turn is also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 6 presents the conceptual and methodological frameworks of the study with a detailed anatomization of the postcolony and its formation, the opportunities presented by psychological and cognitive anthropology for understanding social manifestations and expressions of occidentalism or stylized images of the West, and its conceptual linkages to the migration of Africans to Western countries. The central concepts of the study, cognitions subjectivities, as well as social memory and social constructionism are related to the folkloric data sough in the study, and explained with the African postcolony as the backdrop. Reflexive anthropology and native anthropology are located within the ethnographic prescriptions of multi-sited research with juxtapositions of the benefits of this research design method and its threats, and those of of native anthropology.

Chapters 7 and 8 focus on the design of the study and the research questions, characteristics and observations of the research contexts as well as the data collected and their analyses. Chapter 9 discusses the findings of the study using theoretical perspectives from Carrier’s (1995) analyses of occidentalism, Pandolfo’s (2000) views on modernity and the consciousness of the colonized using Lacanian and psychoanalytic perspectives, Giddens’s views on individual knowledgeable agency, and levels and types of consciousness, Renan’s (1882), Anderson’s (1993), Kogan’s (2006) views on national consciousness. Collectively, these
theoretical perspectives allow the conceptualization of a process of “soul drain” and unimagined (African) nations that are colonial contrivances forced into existence and sustained by a “master normativity” of nation-states and sovereignty, according to Sassen (2006), such that the implications of their historicities and deep foundational structures are ignored. Lacan’s views on consciousness and alterity shed further light on occidentalist tendencies in the African postcolony and their construction of the West as the “Master Signifier” which directs and determines their views of the world.

Chapter 10 discusses the parameters of the ethnography presented here, its limitations and suggestions for the expansion of the study of migration. Most importantly, it presents the rudiments of a Holistic Context approach to the study of migration which combines theoretical perspectives from past studies of migration, and the contributions of cognitive anthropology to the understanding between cognitions, culture and human action. In conclusion, the ideas of Arjun Appadurai and Faye V. Harrison are evoked to shake loose the parochial fetters of social science disciplines that have hampered the comprehensive study of social phenomena such as international migration. According to them and other scholars of critical anthropology, the need for multidisciplinarity, the internationalization and democratization of knowledge production, and the recognition of the potential contributions of the native anthropologist to the discourse of human social phenomena for overcoming earlier handicaps is emphasized.
CHAPTER 2
MIGRATION – TRENDS AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Part of Being Human

Human migration as we study it today can be defined simply as the movement of people from one location to the other, voluntarily or forced, in search of conditions convivial for their physical and mental well being. This description can only serve the purpose of point of departure for the discussion of human migration as there is no standard or widely accepted definition for migration. The complexity of this human phenomenon has necessitated multiple perspectives that are difficult to channel or unify. There are perspectives from sociologists, political scientists, historians, demographers, anthropologists and geographers that reflect each discipline’s credos and paradigms, diverging, but with no significant contradictions. Despite the diversity in perspectives, there is an agreement, stated or implied, that human migration can be traced back to Homo sapiens, the ancestor of the modern human species. Efforts continue till today to accumulate evidence that establishes today’s world populations as a result of early migrations of Homo sapiens from its origins in East Africa. Human migration, therefore, can be thought of to a great extent as a habit inherited or learned from the forbears of our species.

Some names are associated with the progress of studies of human migration from back in the nineteenth century to the present. Patrick Manning (2005) provides a theoretical bridge from human pre-history to modern human populations that help our understanding of the origins and the changing face of human migration. The centerpiece of the framework he has developed is human language communities which he has used to identify language communities over periods of time, and then trace patterns of cross-community migration linking language groups. This framework is useful for the understanding of intra-continental African migration which sheds light on some homogeneity in language structures and cultural practices dating back to the
continent’s early history. Ernest Ravenstein widely credited with the introduction of a structure for thinking about and studying migration, offered a classification schema for migration. He identified the ‘local migrant’ who confines himself to moving from one part of the town or parish in which he was born to another, ‘short journey migrants’ who were the majority at the time of his study, ‘migration by stages’, ‘long journey migrants’ who to him were the exception to the rule and dependent on special circumstances, and ‘temporary migrants’ whom he described as migrants by compulsion not by choice (1885:83).

Mirjam de Bruijn and her colleagues acknowledge the difficulty in distinguishing between the types of migration offered by scholars and attempt to capture the contents of the extensive nomenclature by grouping them under six different criteria. They are ‘geo-administrative level,’ ‘destination areas,’ ‘duration,’ ‘choice,’ ‘legality,’ and ‘migrant’s characteristics in relation to motivation’. Geo-administrative level distinguishes between international (or inter-state) and intra-national migration. Destination areas refer to the rural-urban dichotomy, resulting in four types of migration: rural-rural, rural-urban, urban-rural, and urban-urban, with the most attention given to rural-urban migration by researchers. Duration of migration as a category can be put into a simple dichotomy: permanent versus temporary. This category helps resolve one of the bottlenecks in the study of migration, that of establishing whether a person should be classified as a migrant or not. Choice refers to whether migration is voluntary or not. Legality enables the classification of migration as conforming to prescribed legal processes or clandestine, occurring outside of formal legal processes (2001:11–13).

The various typologies represent the diversity of thought about human migration and at the same time demonstrate the intractability of this subject. While some scholars have called for efforts toward paradigmatic unity (Massey 1994), others have called for a dialogic approach that
will encourage and benefit from an inevitable multidisciplinarity (Brettel and Hollifield 2000; Vertovec and Cohen 2001). From its beginnings, migration theory has shown diverse but convergent perspectives, but the disciplines involved have entered the discourse at different times with different impetuses contributed by events and changing interconnections in the human society. Propositions on migration put forward by geographer Ernest Ravenstein in 1885, converge with perspectives from Dorothy Swain Thomas, a sociologist and demographer, two decades later, on the economic foundations of early thought on migration. The same economic foundations have not been outright repudiated by migration theorists, but have been debated, decomposed, or modified by various scholars as gradual progress is being made toward a cross-fertilization of ideas. While each academic discipline inevitably establishes its own epistemological identity through the research questions it asks and the paradigms it engages for the analyses of human phenomena, the study of migration has evolved to a predominant focus on international population flows, and as such has for many years shared a common pivot constituted by particularities and overlaps among a number of the same major theoretical models: the neoclassical economics model of immigration, the new economics model, the dual labor market theory, and the world systems theory. The diversity of perspectives notwithstanding, the challenge posed by the need for analyses and better understanding of human population flows has waxed stronger in tandem with intensifying global interconnections.

**Statistics and Trends in Human Population Flows**

**International Migration Trends**

It is estimated that as of 2005 over 190 million people in the world live in countries other than their country of birth or origin (www.nytimes.com/ref/world/20070622). In the United States, the foreign-born now represent more than 10 percent of the nation’s population. (Foner 2003:3) At an international conference on migration in 2006, former Secretary General of the
United Nations, Kofi Annan, noted that it was no longer easy to clearly identify “countries of origin” and “countries of destination” because many countries are now both because of the magnitude and scope of international migration. This statement suggests, for example, that as some Africans leave their countries for the West, other Africans head to African countries as well. There are imaginable differences in the impetus and choice of destination by migrants, but whatever the explanation and reasons for migration, the humanity of the migrant in all its complexity holds the key to understanding migration processes. In 1989, The International Migration Review (IMR) marked its twenty-fifth anniversary with a foreword from its editors assessing international migration research since its inception. They concluded that the intensification of globalization of international migration was the reason for the growth of scholarly inquiry into this phenomenon over the past quarter century.

The IMR editors also culled perspectives from a conference held in Bellagio, Italy, in July 1988, for the purpose of underscoring dimensions and contingencies of international migration that have compounded its dynamics. One of the most significant of these was the discovery of the state in North American research as a potent player and factor that must share the stage with economic determinism for the conceptualization of population flows. Though the capacity of the sovereign state as a mediating presence in the migration context was seen as conceptually limited, its inevitability as a determinant is established and reproduced by the policies it constructs and enacts as a consequence of its embeddedness in global structures. The Single Europe Act which eventually produced what is now known as the European Union, and the ensuing multiplication of migration issues related to identity and citizenship in the area (see Balibar 2004) was cited as an example of the impact of the dynamics that redefine or circumscribe state sovereignty vis-à-vis international migration. For the future of international
migration research, IMR noted that in addition to the ever-present need for multidisciplinarity, more research is needed in the non-industrialized regions of Asia, including Arab areas, Africa, South America, in order to detangle the intricacies of human migration. These areas have in common different but intricate histories of Western domination that can be conceptualized as the early stages of globalization. For a more complete understanding of international migration, their particular historicities suggest particular migration dynamics and impetuses that must not be ignored.

The following statistics paint the picture of a preponderantly upward trend in the flows of human populations crossing national borders. Member countries of the G8 (or G7) were selected for presentation here because they are regarded as the world’s major industrialized democracies whose sociopolitical ups and downs determine trends in international migration. They are also the most popular destination preferences for African migrants, the focus of my study. European Union’s membership in this group is qualified. It has a representative, who may sit in the summits but the union itself may not chair or host one. Spain is also included here because of the exponential increase in its immigrant flows and its relatively recent popularity as a preferred destination for certain migrant groups, including Africans. These statistics are provided by the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (see www.oecd.org/statisticsdata), of which all the countries discussed here are members and collaborators, with the exception of Russia, whose statistics were obtained from Migration Policy Institute (see www.migrationinformation.org/datahub).
International Immigration Statistics from 1996 to 2005 for Selected Countries

- **Canada** – The combined permanent and temporary inflows are 410,000 in 1996, with a mostly steady annual increase, to 536,000 in 2005. The temporary inflows show a decline, while permanent inflows show an increase.

- **European Union** – There are no data for 1996. There has been a steady upward trend from 1,602,000 in 1997 to a significant increase of 2,518,000 in 2005. The only slight decline occurred in 2002, from 2,708,000 to 2,194,000 in 2003.

- **France** – The number of immigrants is modest compared to other countries – from 74,000 in 1996 to 134,000 in 2005 – a slight decline from 140,000 in 2004.

- **Germany** – There were 615,000 in 1996, with a spike in 1999 to 673,000 to a peak of 685,000 in 2001, and a gradual decline to 579,000 in 2005.

- **Japan** – There were 274,000 in 1996, spiking to 373,000 in 2003, and a slight decline to 372,000 in 2005.

- **Russia** – Immigrant population is approximately 13,000,000 or 8.5% of state population, with 14,584 entering the country in 2005. Overall, immigration is on a downward trend.

- **Spain** – There are no data for 1996. The highest rate of increase in immigration occurred here during the period of interest – 57,000 in 1997 to 682,000 in 2005. There have been no downward trends.

- **United Kingdom** – There was an exponential rise from 237,000 in 1996 to 473,000 in 2005 with significant spikes in 2002 (418,000) from 373,000 in 200, and in 2004 (494,000) from 406,000 in 2003, and a slight decline in 2005.

- **United States** – Permanent and temporary inflows total 1,796,000 in 1996 with a slight fall in permanent inflows to 703,000 in 2003 from 1,059,000 in 2002, and a sharp increase to 2,445,000 in 2005.

The numbers and trends that define international migration in each country are determined largely by that country’s geopolitical variables and the ideologies and dynamics of governance involved. But stock must also be taken of how the external world, especially the societies of origin of potential migrants interpret these dynamics and factor them into their decision-making to migrate or not to, and where to migrate. Economic motivations are generally viewed as the
predominant factor in international migration but other factors must be explored and accounted for in the study of migration.

The historical trends put in perspective by Douglas Massey and his colleagues (1998) help to shed some light on how international migration arrived at its current levels. They identified four major periods in the modern history of international migration: the mercantile period, the industrial period, the period of limited migration, and the period of post-industrial migration. The mercantile period which spanned the period 1500 to 1800 was characterized by five different types of migrants: agrarian settlers, administrators, artisans, entrepreneurs, and a very small number of convict migrants imprisoned overseas. It was also the epoch of Europe’s expansion and significant presence in sizeable areas of the world. This expansion was based on economic activity in general, but more specifically on the pre-industrial production in plantations. To meet the demands of the labor-intensive production activities of the era, indentured laborers came from East Asia and Europe, and slaves were brought in from Africa to fill the labor demand of the plantations.

The industrial period which continued into the twentieth century was marked by European expansion through the industrialization projects in its former colonies. From the end of the mercantile period to 1925, about 48 million people are estimated to have left Europe for Argentina, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and USA which received the lion’s share of 60 percent. The sending countries at that time were Britain, Italy, Norway, Portugal, and Sweden. WWI and WWII were followed by periods of significantly reduced migration, a situation also affected by the economic catastrophe of the Great Depression. During this period of migration draught, the trickle of population movement was created by people who were displaced by the war, including refugees. Economic growth was out of the question (Massey et al. 1998).
Post-industrial migration began in the 1960s and marked radical changes in the dynamics of human migration, starting from the globalization of immigration. During this period, Europe was no longer the major sending region, and was overtaken in this regard by newly industrializing nations with labor supplies that exceeded demand at home, causing them to shed their populations to the more settled industrialized countries where the demand for certain kinds of labor was high. During this period, according to Massey et al., African, Asian, and Latin American countries became the main sources of immigrants to industrialized countries. The 1970s, which marked the end of the first postcolonial decade in previously colonized countries, also saw new additions to the group of receiving countries in Europe, among them France, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland and Sweden.

**African Migration Trends**

According to the International Organization for Migration, the majority of African migrants living overseas is in Europe, and is estimated at 4.6 million, a number that excludes undocumented migrants or those that remain underground because of visa violations and therefore cannot be counted. The same source estimates 890,000 Africans in the United States, a number that also excludes immigrants that cannot be included in official documentations because of their illegal statuses. The Migration Policy Institute estimates that there are between 7 and 8 million irregular African migrants living in the European Union (for the above statistics and much more, see [www.migrationinformation.org/datahub](http://www.migrationinformation.org/datahub)). The United Nations Population Division (2003) provides a comparison of the size of African migration in 1990 and 2000. The total for Africa in 1990 was 622,443 and 795,000 in 2000, For West Africa, the number of migrants in 1990 was 171,517, and 226,133 in 2000. The Migration Information Source, an online newsletter that provides various analyses of migration trends in the United States, states that the largest group of African foreign born in the United States, by region of Africa, is from
Western Africa constituting 35.2% of all African foreign born or 357,360 immigrants (see www.migrationinformation.org/Resources/). Over half of all African immigrants are recent arrivals, according to US Census 2000, with 56% of all African born arriving in the US between 1990 and 2000, while 26% entered between 1980 and 1989, and 18% before 1980. Nigerians outnumber all other national groups from West Africa at 139,493 immigrants or 13.8% of all African born immigrants. There were 65,600 Ghanaians.

**General Theoretical and Explanatory Frameworks for Human Migration**

Various perspectives have been offered in the attempt to capture the most important aspects of human migration. Some of them address human migration in general, some focus on local dynamics and others on international dynamics. In many ways, they contribute to the general understanding of international migration which is the focus of this study. It would be impractical to aim for an exhaustive discussion of all of these perspectives. Those presented here represent a sample from the smorgasbord, and are selectively tendered as markers of the great moments in the theorization of the knotty, multifaceted, human phenomenon that has engaged academic analyses for centuries. Where they have been abbreviated, the utmost care is taken to preserve their main concepts and arguments, with some bias for the project at hand. A strict chronological convention is not possible since there are overlaps, and retrospective arguments that link earlier ideas to newer ones or dislodge them completely from current threads of thought. Strikingly, time has not altered much of the fundamental concepts, connecting threads and logic behind the various theoretical perspectives.

Ravenstein (1885) devised what he called Laws of Migration for which the central premise is that migration trends in different parts of the country balance out one another by creating currents and counter-currents of migration that proceeded in the direction of the great centers of commerce and industry which absorb the migrants. The majority of migrants
according to Ravenstein are natives of towns and females. For over two decades, Ravenstein’s “laws” constituted the only elaborate effort to organize the study of human migration, but his theory is more useful for understanding intra-regional or local migration dynamics.

An American sociologist and demographer, Dorothy Swain Thomas wrote an article, Research Memorandum on Migration Differentials which focused on the question of possible differentiation between those who migrate and those who do not migrate (1938:4) and also suggests as did Ravenstein before her the centrality of economic impetuses for migration. She also believes there are other sources of motivation for migration including purely hedonistic ones, and even random unprovoked and unexplainable migration. One important contribution from Thomas which contemporary studies of migration have not exploited sufficiently is her propositions on migrant differentials. She insists that “The behavior of the migrants must be observed before and after migration; the migrants’ “own stories” must be obtained; the environmental settings of life in the communities of origin and destination must be described… (1938:14–42). Theoretical tussles about migrations far outweigh ethnography-based arguments. Thomas’s perspectives on how to study migration constitute a methodological springboard for this study and is hoped to help produce migrant perspectives that indicates different impetuses for migration as differentials for individuals as well as for groups and collectivities. In addition to looking beyond the economic impetus, migration dynamics and tendencies can be explained for different countries or regions of the world.

Samuel A. Stouffer’s (1940) sociological contribution to the study of the likelihood of migration states that the number of persons going a given distance is directly proportional to the number of intervening opportunities that have the likelihood of persuading the migrant to settle at a location short of the originally intended location. The latter part of Stouffer’s argument lends
support to what is known as ‘stepwise’ migration. Stouffer suggests the importance of a set of factors at origin and destination, a set of intervening obstacles, and a series of personal factors. His ideas inform the design of my study by validating the importance of pre-migration factors including the role of the social context that cannot be limited to economic determinants of choice. In 1966, a demographer, Everett S. Lee elaborated on Ravenstein’s laws of migration by offering details on processes and contingencies that significantly capture the multidimensionality of human migration. Despite the diversity of perspectives provided by these pioneering studies of migration and the multiplicity of global factors affecting people’s lives, migration studies have remained relatively conservative, and must venture deeper into factors that determine migration.

The occasional attempts by social scientists to import ideas from the work of natural scientists resulted in several interpretations and applications of the Newtonian formulations on gravity to the study of human migration. The Gravity Model as it was called by its main proponents in migration studies (Stewart 1941, 1947; Zipf 1942, 1946; Carothers 1956), predated Ravenstein but did not make appearances in migration studies until several decades after it was introduced. The thinking behind the gravity model is similar to Ravenstein’s idea about the relative sizes and locations of places and how they determine migration trends and can be expanded to explain the attraction of bigger cities or countries as attractive destinations for migrants. H.C. Carey offered the following description of the gravity model:

*Man, the molecule of society, is the subject of social science... The great law of Molecular Gravitation [is] the indispensable condition of the existence of the being known as man... The greater the number collected in a given space, the greater is the attractive force that is there exerted... Gravitation is here, as everywhere, in the direct ratio of the mass and the inverse one of the distance. (quoted in Carothers 1956:25)*

The gravity model was used in migration studies into the 1950s and 1960s, a period that witnessed the rekindling of migration discourse, and while it suggests a certain rapprochement of
modern man to its ancestor Homo sapiens who seemed ‘programmed’ to be on the move, its proponents cautioned that though human behavior can be described in mathematical terms, the behavior of molecules in the Newtonian formulation differs from actual humans because humans can make decisions. Migration is indeed an exercise of agency by humans and therefore involves complex mental calculus that subsumes a multiplicity of factors.

**Theoretical Perspectives on International Migration**

The study of international migration has benefited from elaborate redactions and amplifications of theories of migration that have emerged since early twentieth century and even in the final years of the century before. The proponents and challengers of the neoclassical economics theory of migration, the dual market theory, the new economic theory, and the world systems theory have helped produce statements and hypotheses derived from the central tenets and claims of these theories, thus widening the horizons for their further discussion. Many of the statements are discussed in Massey et al. (1993, 1998); Borjas (1989); Appleyard (1989); Portes and Borocz (1989); and Portes (1997). Contemporary theoretical perspectives on migration generally reflect four main theoretical categories determined to a great extent by socioeconomic dynamics operating in the world at large, impinging not only on migration but also on various other human phenomena. They are the neoclassical economic theory, the new economics of migration, dual labor market theory, and world systems theory. These theories appear in scholarly research where strong proponents have emerged, espousing distinct positions and sometimes modifying aspects of original hypotheses or postulations. Consequently, these theories are not snapshots of thought but evolving conceptualizations of fluid human phenomena and the academic exchange they have inspired.

Neoclassical economic theory, the oldest of theories explaining international migration, is a reworking and revival of the ideas of 18th and 19th century leaders of thought in mainly
economic phenomena. Physicists of 1840s and 1860s provided the foundations of economic applications of this theory as they quibbled with what they saw as limitations to the Newtonian formulations on gravity and motion. It is to be noted, therefore, that the neoclassical theory had some conceptual kinship with the gravity model of migration. It is based on the notion that an individual is a rational decision maker in economic matters when offered a variety of choices, and definitely when he or she is a potential migrant in the labor market. It specifically states that the migration of workers across international boundaries is determined by differential employment opportunities and wage rates between the origin and destination countries. A big difference in employment opportunities and the income earning potential increases the likelihood that the potential migrant will choose international migration. There would be no migration if these differentials did not exist. The impetus for migration, therefore, is entirely economic.

The New Economics of Migration represents a divergence from the neo-classical theory by identifying a different unit of analysis. It argues that it is the household or family, not the individual that is the production unit, and consequently the decision maker. Income levels and earning potentials are affected by the opportunities to enhance income generation when people migrate as a family or household. This would still be the case if wage differentials do not exist between origin and destination countries, and in consideration of the possibility that unemployment chances may be unequal for all members of a family. There is also the additional possibility that families often have assets at the country of origin which might affect their income calculations and expectations.

Dual Market Theory argues that in the first place, the labor market itself is segmented in industrialized societies, and that this stratification drives the labor needs. Poor economic conditions in developing origin countries, wage differentials across space, are not responsible for
international migration, instead, structural labor needs of a particular national economy is the
greatest influence. Advanced economies have two labor markets, a high-paying capital-intensive
market with better working conditions, and a labor-intensive one with lower wages, and
generally viewed among the native population as low status jobs with unattractive conditions.
Immigrants are seen as attracted to these low paying jobs which would still afford them
economic mobility relative to opportunities in their place of origin. They therefore meet the labor
demands of the advanced economies in the low-wage, unattractive segment of the labor market,
usually shunned or rejected by the native population.

World Systems Theory rejects not only the idea of wage differences as a cause of
international migration, but also the concept of immigrants as active agents in the decision to
migrate. The theory argues that the trajectory of the expansion of capitalism to various and
remote corners of the globe, from as far back as the 16th century, teleologically yielded the
political and economic phenomenon of international migration. A global core and a periphery are
acknowledged by the world systems theory, with capital and goods flowing from one direction –
the core – and labor flowing from the opposite direction – the periphery. This configuration of
capital and labor is attributed to the incursions of capitalist ventures into traditional societies,
upsetting their economies and displacing their labor which then turned to international locations
for employment. Applied to colonialism, this argument addresses the political and cultural
linkages that persist in the postcolonial period between the colonizer and the colonized,
promoting international migration.

Detailed theoretical analyses by Massey et al. (1993, 1998) produced new insights and
propositions for a better understanding of international immigration. Their efforts in this
direction are concentrated on social phenomena that are self-sustaining and interconnected, and
on their potential for determining international migration. The social capital theory they propose expands the concept of migrant networks and their role in minimizing perceptions of risks and costs by prospective migrants; their perspectives on ‘cumulative causation’ brings much needed attention to the importance and constitution of the social context within which migrants make their decisions. The importance of the relationships between structure and agency are highlighted in these relatively recent directions in immigration studies, lending much needed breadth and clarity to its underlying phenomena. Focus on structure and agency bring to light the idea that migrant actions can constitute and alter their societies of origin in which new decisions to migrate are made as the process becomes self-reinforcing.

Stefania Pandolfo (2007) does not offer a theory but deserves mentioning here because she illustrates how migration is determined by factors of social structure and agency with a unique glimpse into clandestine emigration (to Europe). Pre-migrant socialization as well as the concomitant possibilities and confounders of subjectivity, within the rubric of Islamic political theology and eschatology are the discussed in this study. Pandolfo provides useful insights for discourse on migration through her study of Moroccan youth whose Islamic socialization negates subjectivity, but who nonetheless reproduce it in their creative construction of the risks of death associated with clandestine emigration. They do this by constructing their subjective interpretations of clandestine migration as integral to the Islamic view of jihad for the benefit of the self. Lacanian ideological considerations of alterity are evoked in this article to highlight the implications of comprehending the Other and assimilating it into a pre-existing discourse. The exclusivity of the semiotic and ontological dimensions of life and death in Islamic socialization, as formed in the lifeworlds of these poor, young, candidates of clandestine emigration to Europe constitute dimensions of structure that impact subjectivity. Illegal migration is not a war against
the self, but a war against the enemies of the self that prevent its upliftment, “because the illicit migrant only seeks to resolve a personal problem.” The centrality of the social context and the socialization it provides the potential migrant is an important contribution of this study.

**Anthropology and Migration**

Anthropology, particularly as it developed in the United States, built its agenda around the concept of culture as timeless and bounded, thus limiting its horizons in the analysis of socioeconomic human phenomena, as well as possibilities for engaging perspectives from diverse academic orientations. This is a possible explanation for the late entrance of anthropology in the 1950s and 1960s into the study of human migration. When the study of population flows was still limited to the internal processes of rural-urban movements, anthropologists were interested in these flows not necessarily as intricate processes of migration, but as manifestations of the industrialization of previously agrarian economies, and their impact on the lives of tribesmen. Margaret Mead’s ethnographic work among the Tchambuli in New Guinea in the 1930s included observations of the young men who traveled long distances to work for the White man, but rather than analyze her observations as migration, what she described was the cultural dimension of the contact. Mead’s times and the analyses they generated were influenced by the then predominant functional paradigm and budding notions of cultural relativity. As these epistemological foundations began to wane, urban anthropology became the thematic thrust but would gradually give way to much broader views on the human phenomena that were unfolding at that period of radical transformation within the traditional societies engineered by European capitalist expansion.

Anthropology’s focus on culture sui generis has persisted, and despite its hotly debated and changing vistas, the focus on beliefs and behavior, social relationships, and the interactions between them have persevered, and in doing so provided a place for anthropology in migration
discourse. Consequently, adaptation and culture change, forms of social organizations, and issues related to identity and ethnicity have sustained anthropological foci on human migration. In 1961, Nancie Gonzalez, for example, studied migratory wage labor in the circum-Caribbean region (specifically the Caribbean coast of Guatemala), and offered a typology which would elucidate its impact on households and families as primary units of social organization. Her typology included “seasonal,” “non-seasonal,” “temporary,” “permanent,” “recurrent,” and “continuous” (Gonzalez 1961). Other anthropologists followed suit and applied this typology to studies in other parts of the world. Relatively recently, Margolis (1995) studied “recurrent migration” among Brazilians living in New York, a subject not far removed from Gonzalez’s “recurrent migration” among the Garifuna along the Atlantic littoral of Central America.

Theoretical perspectives demonstrating the biases and orientations from economics, the historical-structuralist paradigm, and political economy were also being reflected in anthropological research. The work of Nancie Gonzalez, especially her typology of migration (1961:1278), has helped invite anthropological perspectives on wage-labor considerations and linkages on migration research. Her typology suggests that international migration flows especially, are not unidirectional. In this tradition, Du Toit (1975), for example, studied patterns of migration among African wage laborers and classified them according movement frequencies within specified periods of time. The metanarrative of modernization fostered a welcoming context for the push and pull model of migration, by identifying factors peculiar to receiving countries and those peculiar to sending countries, highlighting differences between traditional societies and modern ones, and wage labor versus subsistence farming. P. H. Gulliver (1957) and Brian Du Toit (1990), discussed the “bright lights” perspective (see also Todaro 1969) which proposes alternative impetuses such as the sheer excitement of living in the city, for young men’s
migration from rural to urban areas. This is a noteworthy deviation from an established model of migration in order to make room for a fundamental anthropological perspective of sheer humanness.

In keeping with trends in the study of human phenomena, anthropologists have joined other social scientists in articulating migration issues and questions based on the world systems theory with the attendant core-periphery binary and related dependency model. At the macro-level, Gonzalez and McCommon (1989), for example, collaborated in interrogating the popular notion that migration is caused by underdevelopment. Their argument was that development encouraged migration by creating inequalities and sharpened awareness of what is not within reach, consequently causing relative deprivation. This line of inquiry and debate raised the micro-level issue of the individual migrant as an active agent rather than a passive recipient of the vagaries of the global market, and culminated in the discourse on transnationalism and the concomitant differentiation between immigrant and transmigrant, as well as the concept of migrant social fields. Though called a latecomer to the study of migration (Brettell 2003), anthropology continues to define its role in migration studies in tandem with unabated global transformations, and its relationships with the embers of combusting metanarratives of modernity.

The complexities of human migration were brought into clearer focus when the spotlight on migrants’ destination and integration dynamics was forced to shift to a dynamic duality of existence that linked both source and destination countries and contexts. When anthropology found “transnationalism” or vice versa, (Glick Schiller et al. 1992, 1994), its theoretical thrust and paradigmatic structures were radically transformed. Transnationalism and its globalization tropes lifted the earlier relative stasis in anthropology and induced a rather accelerated
metamorphosis that has provided conceptual anchors for current perspectives offered by anthropologists as well as other social scientists. In addition to the role played by the inception of transnationalism in casting a pall on the predominance of the unidimensional sociological perspective of assimilation, anthropology received further boost from the expansive analyses of the sociality of globalization in the social sciences (Inda and Rosaldo 2008). Since transnationalism took the spotlight from assimilation theories, contributions to the understanding of globalization as it has affected the movement of human populations have been sustained and diverse (Appadurai 1996; Levitt 1998; Ong 1999; Inda and Rosaldo 2002; Foner 2003, 2005; Trouillot 2003).

Before globalization was named as it is now known in the second half of the twentieth century, human society was already global and interdependent and has been that way since the sixteenth century. This explains why Mirjam De Bruijn et al. (2001) consider it important to analyze population movement in pre-colonial times in order to establish that period as the conceptual progenitor of postcolonial mobility now located in the context of globalization. The work of James Ferguson (1999) provides an opportunity to track anthropology’s involvement in the study of migration subjects and its transition from one historical moment to another. His study of the Zambian Copperbelt can be seen as an ethnographic landmark that provides a *compte rendu* for what kinds of residue have been left behind in the embers of modernity. Ferguson offers a glimpse of the transitions that took place for colonized peoples as the modernist projects of “progress” were being implemented. It also provided ethnographic grounding for the anthropological study of migration in what has been called rural-urban migration in Africa generally catalyzed by the establishment of cities as part of the colonial project. Ferguson’s study expands the concept of asymmetry in global transformations as shown
in the “core/periphery” binary. By presenting the array of possibilities that confront peripheral nations as they deal with the impact of globalization, he brings to closer scrutiny the inequalities that pervade the dynamics of globalization. He does so by placing the experiences of Zambians at the crossroads of the failures of the modernist project, and new questions arising from the emergence of complex webs of global interconnection.

Zambia glimpses civilization through its connection with the copper industry while being locally unprepared at the level of the population’s everyday living for the trappings and inconsistencies that come with modernization. The disconnect of the local from the global that Zambia exemplifies in this incomplete submergence in a global economic network, portrays what Ferguson calls the differentiation that poses a paradox to the interconnectedness we commonly expect from globalization. The concept of differentiation interrogates the universalisms touted by ideologues and apologists of Enlightenment. With the lure of perceived promises of the West providing some of the pull factors for the new immigration, and the migrant populations of the less-developed nations having to navigate the cultural challenges that accompany relocation to a new cultural context, Ferguson’s analysis of Zambia’s transformations midwifes the meeting of the technoscapes, financescapes and ethnoscapes of Appadurai’s analysis of globalization.

Arjun Appadurai’s ethnoscapes, or the moving landscapes of people, situate the new immigration in globalization discourse. The concept interacts with mediascapes, or the distribution of the electronic capabilities to disseminate information; technoscapes, or the global configuration of technology; financescapes, or the disposition of global capital, and ideoscapes, a chain of ideas composed of the Enlightenment worldview (1996:33). Ethnoscapes are described by Appadurai as an indication of changing social, territorial, and cultural reproduction
of group identity (1996:48). These changes, he clarifies, happen as groups migrate, regroup in new locations, reconstruct their histories, and reconfigure their ethnic projects. As these groups are no longer “tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogeneous,” there is a “woof of human motion,” that includes those people that “deal with the realities of having to move or the fantasies of wanting to move” (1996:34). Appadurai’s conceptual framework of *ethnoscapes* can be seen as a revised prolegomenon of what we know as diasporas. Vertovec and Cohen expand Appadurai’s “woof of human motion”—emphasis being on “motion”—and its implications, which is diasporas conceptualized as “deterritorialized” or transnational populations with origins in a land other than which it currently resides, and whose social, economic and political networks cross the borders of nation-states, or indeed span the globe (1999:xvi). This expanded view of motion as enacted or imagined by humans illuminates not only the compression of space as a facilitator of the fantasies, and the creation of communities with no sense of place but also the centrality of push and pull factors in the anthropological study of the new immigration. Appadurai’s concept of “-scapes” provides a conceptual scaffolding for the thought processes or imaginations that create or inhibit migration. The ideas and images that mass media produce are conflated with money and commodities to explicate the goods and experiences that deterritorialized populations and their referents transfer to one another. New immigration encapsulates these dynamics as it provides perspective on how sending and receiving societies of migrants impact upon one another through the agency, the integration efforts, and identity construction processes of globalization’s mobile subjects. It gives to anthropology a parsimoniously packaged conceptualization of what migration studies have now dubbed social fields, transnationalism, social networks, as well as financial and social remittances.
In an insightful analysis of the factors that influence contemporary human movement across national borders, Suarez-Orozco (2005:45) reminds us of the place of globalization as the general backdrop for any understanding of the anthropology of immigration. He emphasizes especially, the tendency for immigration flows to follow capital flows, and the role of deeply globalized economies that are increasingly being structured around a voracious appetite for foreign workers, the jet plane revolution and the increasing affordability of relocating, and the widely felt asymmetry of the outcomes of globalization. These perspectives represent a revision and realignment of economic theories of migration that encompasses notions of fluidity and process with the sociality of human experience, such that it becomes anthropology.

Malkki (1994, 1995, 1996) seizes the opportunity of the case of Rwanda and Burundi, to present the added dimension of the colonial roots of ethnic conflict and the resultant displacement and deterritorialization, but most importantly, social construction of reality in a condition of liminality. This ethnography of “displacement and deterritorialization,” views dispossession of selfhood through a humanistic lens, and features collective identity construction that was grounded in mythico-historical narratives, a consciousness of history that was expressed in an imagined nationality, culture, and traditions. The idea of collective histories juxtaposed with the colonial dimension of this ethnographic study takes us back to Benedict Anderson’s (1983) perspectives on the imagination of communities and suggests the different individual or collective constructions of what a nation is. This concept is germane to the conceptual framework of migration in the African postcolony where Africans can be seen as lacking rootedness of identity and are therefore are in a luminal state of nationhood. While Malkki’s study does not focus on pre-migration situations, it brings into the discourse of deterritorialization (an aspect of migration) the relevance of areas of human consciousness that
maintain the past as social memory, and illustrates how this memory is collectively constructed and individually interpreted in situations where identity and belonging are indeterminate. The constructions of mythico-histories by the displaced Hutu can be compared to the folkloric forms collected in my study as revelatory encapsulations of the constructions of the past by postcolonial Africans.

Ulf Hannerz (1989) highlights the dimensions and directions of center-periphery relationships that illustrate the morphogenesis of power relations between the West and the rest of the global community. At issue are the constraints, or lack of these, imposed by the wealthier and more powerful nations that constitute the core or center of global economic and political transformations, and the response or lack of it offered by the less powerful and poorer nations which constitute the periphery. The asymmetries that typify globalization in its cultural, political, and economic manifestations factor into the flow and direction of contemporary migration. These very dynamics are pivotal in Wallerstein’s world-systems theory and its applications to international migration and the historicities that establish and chart its course.

To juxtapose Hannerz’s core/periphery binary with Appadurai’s -scapes we may profitably view the latter as containers and conveyors of what the West, or most of it, contributes to fuel the engines of contemporary global transformations, and how the rest of the world responds. The economic and military power of the West in conjunction with an intense neo-liberalist trade and business environment and their regulatory apparatuses create conditions in the periphery that have elicited remarkable population outflows from societies in disarray. Hannerz helps us understand which groups of persons are most likely to move, the most likely reasons for the move, in what directions they are more likely to move. The picture presented by these dynamics is preponderant migration movements from the non-West to the West.
CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND EXPLANATIONS FOR AFRICAN MIGRATION

The tendency to homogenize Africa when studying the continent is sometimes understandable, especially when history is relevant to the subject matter under consideration. There are currently fifty-three countries in Africa, geopolitical entities created by European colonizers and sustained by the key players in the period following four hundred years of colonial occupation. Prior to these arbitrarily and even whimsically imputed schisms, people who spoke the same language and shared common beliefs and values did not move around with the idea of place that is applied to migration in contemporary societies where national borders are boldly defined, sometimes contentious, and requirements for crossing them instilled into basic understandings of place and belonging. The Bantu-speaking peoples of Africa, now found in southern Africa as well as some central and eastern African countries, were originally from West Africa from where they migrated thousands of years ago (Newman 1995). Cheikh Anta Diop suggests that the Nile Valley is the primitive cradle of the Black peoples today living dispersed at locations now geographically distinct all over the continent (1987:215). The Yoruba, he argues, lived in ancient Egypt during antiquity before migrating to the Atlantic coast where they now constitute a major linguistic ethnic group in Nigeria. Before the colonization of Africa, there were not fifty-three identifiable geopolitically defined spaces for people to consider when they decided to move. There were culturally differentiated societies and movement inside and between these groups did not have the complex meanings of the phenomenon we know as migration today.

De Bruijn et al. prefer the term mobility to migration in their study of population flows among the peoples of Africa. They have also chosen to pit movement against sedentarity in order to highlight the fact that mobility is engrained in the history, daily life, and experiences of
African peoples. Focus on mobility has enabled them to signal the importance of a crucial distinction between which forms of mobility are based or can be based on the perspectives of Western social sciences and those that more importantly can be based on the perspective of people’s own experiences, ideas, notions, and other aspects of society that inform their concepts of their world. They observe that sedentarity, that is, remaining within set borders or cultural boundaries, might instead be perceived as an act of escaping from social obligations (2001:2). The immediate causes of African migration have varied over time. They offer sometimes possibilities of control by the individual, and other times they do not. What is studied as migration is the underlying factors, processes, and experiences that are involved in moving, mostly from an authoritative etic point of view, with the gaping void of the African migrant’s analysis of his or her own motives and understanding of the contexts that drive and define their decision-making and actions. The dynamics of African migration can be partially understood by using as organizing principle chronologically identified trends of pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial periods (Adepoju 1995), with the acknowledgment of obvious overlaps in these fluid stages in the history of the continent.

During the pre-colonial period, people migrated mainly for subsistence or in response to situations brought about by ecological changes. They also migrated to escape bellicose neighbors or the encroachment of external aggressors into their habitual spaces, as was the case when slave raids became commonplace in villages and rural communities. These mainly rural to rural migrations were also sometimes undertaken by nomadic groups who moved with their herds and even households, as dictated by climatic conditions. The movements were also sometimes seasonal and necessitated by agricultural activities. These spatially based considerations and responses to life events and situations for the most part do not subsume the idea of rupture that is
often associated with travel or relocation, because they do not conceptually identify or acknowledge any demarcations, breakdowns, beginnings or endings in the worldview of pre-colonial African peoples in general. In this worldview amply discussed by De Bruijn et al. (2001), sedentarity and mobile worlds converge. That was the case at least until the radical transformations of the social life of Africans, and new meanings and motivations for moving brought about by the coming of Europeans and colonization.

The colonial era introduced wage labor and fostered the emergence of urban areas as an outcome of capitalist ventures which constituted Europe’s expansion to various parts of the globe. The export economy was propped up by mines, factories, and plantations, while large administrative structures and infrastructure were set up to ensure their smooth functioning. All of these operations, some with very simple technologies and others pre-industrial, had significant labor demands that could not be satisfied by the indigenes of any one locale. In addition to recruitments from distant areas and forced migration, there were some rural people for whom the urban areas were a major attraction. This is often referred to as the “bright lights” theory (Todaro 1969). Amin (1974) provides a glimpse into the conditions created by the pressures and outcomes of labor demand during the colonial period in Francophone West Africa. According to him, compulsory recruitment contracts and forced labor legislation and agreements to obtain cheap labor sparked clandestine large-scale internal and cross-border migration of unskilled adult males who were needed for work on infrastructures. During this period also, a “circular” stream of migration was established by the freedom to move across colonial boundaries and the imposition of taxes (Byerlee 1974). Reciprocal migration is explained by Adepoju (2005) as an outcome of circular migration involving short-term migration by laborers who, on returning home were replaced by family members or friends for an equivalent length of time. Also, the
mindless break up of ethnic groups during the colonial era was not entirely successful in thwarting efforts to stay connected to solidarity groups which persevered among those torn apart physically from members of groups toward whom strong ties and cultural affinities remained. To them the crossing of borders was essentially meaningless since those borders were imputed on them by external forces (Adepoju 1998a).

Migration during this epoch was marked by men who typically left their villages travelling very long distances to work in mines, plantations, and factories, for periods of two to five years. Byerlee (1974) points out that the exodus of men from the rural agrarian economies to the hubs of industry and modernization led to national food deficits and rising food prices, a trend which persists in many African countries. Also, urban employment emptied out labor supply in rural areas creating at least seasonal deficits and underutilization of resources, and ultimately, inequitable distribution of income. There were other reasons for migration during the colonial period. Gordon (1998) observes that between 1900 and 1950, over 31,000 Africans migrated to the United States mainly for the purpose of education. Though most of the migrants at the time were from Egypt and South Africa, Gordon notes a sustained upswing in the numbers of other Africans also migrating to the United States up to the 1950s, the eve of independence and triumph of nationalism for many African peoples. Migrations to the West during this period were often part of the attempts by the colonizers to provide African natives with the type of skills needed for participation in colonial projects, and in nation building. According to Gordon also, after World War II, recruitment of African labor continued in an atmosphere of competition for inexpensive labor, and in response to the rising costs of European labor.

The period after independence often referred to as the postcolonial period, at least chronologically speaking, presented new impetuses and new political, social, and economic
complexities for African migrations, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Migration within and out of Africa responded to events both internal and external to African societies. Externally, conceptual and practical distinctions were being made between the markers of development and lack of it. Global economic processes were producing a stratification of countries based on attributes ranking them along a continuum of development and economic success. Labor, because of its malleability in contrast to capital, was central to development and capital accumulation efforts of many countries, especially the industrialized countries of the West. Internally, newly independent African countries faced the challenges of governance, in a mix of social structures created by the collision of customary ways of Africans and those inherited from colonizers. Post-independence nationalism produced immigration laws and border control measures which were not successful in stemming migration between countries and regions of Africa.

Post-independence Africa, therefore, saw a continuation of pre-independence migration trends, and a persistence of most of the socioeconomic factors and issues experienced during the colonial era. By virtue of their newly gained autonomy, newly independent sub-Saharan African countries became part of the global economy, and as was the case during colonial rule, some of them continued to be recognized as the source of primary products used by the more industrialized economies. African economies in general did not produce or export much, but imported and consumed a whole lot of goods manufactured elsewhere. The dramatic expansion of the global capitalist economy which began after WWII would become the dominant factor for the context of post-colonial African migration. Former colonial powers maintained relationships with their former colonies which included immigration policies. France, for example, accorded favored nations status to some of their former colonies including some Senegalese cities,
Mauritania and Mali, mainly for the purpose of ensuring labor supply (Gordon 1998). Britain, on the other hand, progressively degraded the citizenship status of immigrants from their former colonies. But before WWII and the transformations brought about by colonialism, there was the involuntary or forced migration of trans-Atlantic slavery and before that, the mass movement of Cape Verdeans who were the first Africans to leave the continent voluntarily in search of work (www.migrationinformation.org/profiles/display.cfm?ID=68). In contemporary international migration, the most common destinations for African migrants are the United States of America, and Western European countries, mainly Britain and France and also Germany. Over the years, Canada has become popular.

Since the first attempts were made by Ernest Ravenstein (1885) to provide some structure to the study of migration, the dominant theoretical perspectives, namely, the neoclassical economic theory, dual market theory, new economic theory, and world systems theory, have been widely used in the analyses of migration. Extrapolations and extensions from these perspectives have constituted the predominant framework for the analyses of African migration. (for example, Adepoju 1998; Gordon 1998; Takougang 2005; Todaro 1969). These applications are defined within the context of a global economic community of countries stratified as developed or developing (underdeveloped), First and Third World, or core and peripheral. African countries are generally grouped under developing or less-developed, peripheral, or Third World countries. These broadly applied theoretical positions provide generalized formulations that are used to analyze migration with the backdrop of the hierarchical rankings of countries and global social phenomena that transcend the nation-state.

The classical economic theory would explain African migration from the point of departure that most African countries are considered to be labor surplus because of the inability of their
economies to absorb their labor supply, and most developed countries of the Western world have high levels of economic activity but not enough labor to service their production needs. African migrants moving to Western countries are seen by the proponents of this theory as the ultimate resolution of the economic imbalances and deficits on both sides. Frequently used to make arguments for the causes and solutions of underdevelopment (Lewis 1954; Todaro 1976; Borjas 1989), this theoretical perspective has persisted in the analysis of migration in African countries. The dual market theory (Piore 1979) proposes a segmented labor market of higher and lower skill level jobs with better working conditions, prestige, and pay for the higher skill level jobs, teleologically created by industrial production and other economic processes in developed countries. Immigrants from developing countries provide the labor needed for the less desirable low paying jobs that natives of developing countries reject or use as transitional jobs. For most immigrants, including a large number of Africans, whose primary objective is presumed to be the betterment of their economic conditions, these less desirable jobs are sufficient because in their countries of origin, they are at an economic disadvantage relative to the higher income from these jobs, and are thereby encouraged to trade dignity and comfort for economic gain.

The new economic theory of migration argues that the household as opposed to the individual is the unit of analysis for migration decision-making. Though not typically argued in these exact terms in analyses of African migration, the pivotal place of the household is more visible in the discussion of remittances, an important economic and developmental phenomenon in African migration (see for example, Russell 1984; Azam and Gubert 2005; Hoddinott 1994; De Haas 2005). The world systems theory (Wallerstein 1974, 1980, Simmons 1989) identifies core and peripheral countries where the core countries are made up of the wealthier developed countries while the peripheral ones are the poorer and developing countries of the world.
African countries constitute a significant portion of the peripheral countries. Wallerstein’s objective was to classify countries according to the degree of their dependency on the dominant capitalist powers, the “core” nations according to his definition. This theory argues that migration is the logical outcome of the penetration of capitalist economic relations into non-capitalist or pre-capitalist societies. International migration, usually in the direction of periphery to core countries, emerges as a natural outcome of disruptions and dislocations that inevitably occur in the process of capitalist development (Massey et. al.1998:36–37).

Evidently, all of these major theoretical perspectives pivot on economic factors and considerations, and have, themselves remained the nexus of extensions and conceptual formulations used to explain international migration, including the African dynamic. Most prominent among the distillations from the major perspectives is the concept of “push and pull” dynamics which has been used extensively to explain African migration (Gordon1998, Takougang 2005). Behind this paradigm is the argument that unfavorable conditions in the migrant countries or regions of origin cause people to move to their chosen destinations which offer attractions that “pull” migrants to them (Ferguson 1999). The type, volume and direction of international migration in the West African sub-region are located within the complex historical and political experiences and to socioeconomic structures in African countries (Adepoju 2005). It is in the analyses of these aspects of African socioeconomic histories that can be found the so-called “push” factors of migration.

The first decade of independence was generally a period of experimentation with governance propelled mainly by soaring nationalist aspirations that spilled over from the struggles of independence. By the 1970s, many African countries were experiencing severe adverse conditions in their societies and communities. Generally, there was widespread lack of
jobs, political instability, militarization, extreme poverty, ethnic conflicts, an ever increasing gap between the rich and the poor, and a variety of consequences from crumbling socioeconomic fabrics of these young polities. Gordon (1998) summarizes the five major factors that account for the patterns in African migration as follows: globalization and integration of the world economy, economic and political development failures in Africa, immigration and refugee policies in Europe and the United States, Anglophone background (for American immigration), and historic ties of sending countries to the country of destination. She links political turmoil to the failure of economic development, a connection which translates into pressures of poverty, disease and illiteracy, and environmental degradation. Added to an independent trend in the form of perverse rates of population growth, the problem is compounded. The interaction of these factors produce what Gordon refers to a "volatile cocktail of insecurity" which creates a cycle of wars, civil strife, state-sponsored terrorism, riots, and other forms of political violence, and often lead to the displacement of large numbers of people as migrants, refugees, or asylees.

Takougang (2005) adds perspectives from a closer look at trends since most African countries became independent of their former colonizers. From his study of push and pull factors in African migration, he suggested that most African migrants in the 1960s and 1970s, with high expectations from their country’s newly acquired independence, had the main objective to return to their respective countries with an American (or foreign) education and the skills that would confer on them the dignified social status of nation-builders. Contrasted with African migrants in the last two decades, the more recent groups want to settle in their host society, which they see as a better opportunity for higher quality of life for them and their families. Takougang analyzes migration trends in the context of postcolonial conditions. He sustains the widely theorized position that African states inherited authoritarian structures from the colonial regimes, (see
Mbembe 2001; Eze 1998; Mamdani 1996), reinforced now by patronage systems and social and kinship networks that have produced oligarchies. These neocolonial structures, according to Takougang, hinder the kind of open discussion and constructive criticism that might have fostered healthy and sustained economic development, and encouraged people to stay. Other aspects of African socioeconomic conditions that increase migration are corruption among political leaders, nepotism, and the entrenchment of highly repressive and dictatorial regimes that do not entertain criticism and have little regard for the human rights of their citizens across the continent. In addition, capital flight exacerbated by wanton pillaging of the national treasury has hamstrung development. Resources including financial and human capital that could be invested in the various African countries to generate economic growth and create employment opportunities are consequently misappropriated, wasted, or siphoned away to the West. The casualties of such economic paralysis and political suffocation have been particularly highly skilled professionals. As this study will argue, much more than African human capital is decimated by migration to the West. The type of consciousness needed by Africa’s fledgling polities to harness the people’s commitment to nation-building is also lost or undermined by the exit of African peoples, especially the most educated, to Western countries.

In addition to dysfunctional governance in African countries, the structural adjustment programs inspired by the neoliberal doctrine and prescribed by the International Monetary Fund as a solution to stalled national development failed, triggering dire social circumstances. These programs recycled loans and imposed contractual obligations on African governments to lay off public sector workers, open their economies to foreign competition, and lower wages, compounding the plight of Africa's middle classes who saw drastic slippage in their living standards. Local currencies were devalued in accordance with standards set in the structural
adjustment and reconfigurations of economic factors and as socioeconomic conditions seemed to skid out of control, people began to react. The catastrophic impact of the structural programs which were supposed to be corrective for Africa’s socioeconomic problems was directly felt mainly by urban populations, and those who could afford to leave did so at a rate that saw the hemorrhage of some of Africa’s best hope for future development. This probably explains why African immigrants are described as highly credentialed, hardly typifying the “huddled masses” that scramble to America’s shores in droves (Gordon 1998).

Portes argues that mere poverty or underdevelopment do not fully explain migration as much as the asymmetry between the capacity of a nation to produce numbers of highly trained personnel and its capacity to absorb them. This analysis is relevant to the African situation. He attributes this asymmetry to a lack of adequate manpower planning – producing high-level professionals without supporting them materially, nor rewarding them adequately (1976:489). An extension of this argument is Apraku’s (1991) critique of incongruent university curricula that mirror Western circumstances and needs, not local conditions. The international labor market, he suggests, offers more opportunities to these professionals where the local labor market offers none. This glut of professionals who are misfits in the local labor markets translates into the new immigration.

Based on survey data, Arthur identifies the reasons for African emigration, especially to the United States: the desire to pursue post secondary education, to reunite with family members, to take advantage of economic opportunities, to escape from political terror and instability. These factors significantly validate other perspectives. A new impetus for emigration identified by Arthur is what he calls an adolescent culture of “going abroad to the United States” (2000:24). This culture is created and nurtured by stories told by African returnees from the United States.
who paint fantastic pictures of the United States, replete with unflattering comparisons of the
home society and the society of their host country. The social remittances perspective analyzed
by Levitt (1998) conflates “push and pull” factors by presenting an analysis of transnational
living where migrant lives are defined by challenges, obligations, and ties between their source
and destination countries. Devalued currencies in the home countries enable ample conversion
rates and the possibilities of extending migrant earnings in the host country to business projects
at home, community obligations, and the livelihoods of those left behind.

The pull factors of African migration include immigration policies of destination countries,
their economic conditions and related policies, and the attitudes of members of the host society
toward immigrants. Information about conditions in destination countries is usually
communicated to prospective migrants in the source societies by contacts in their social networks
and by electronic and print media that bombard people everywhere with images of remote areas
with attractions that might invite future migration (Appadurai 1996). At the end of the slave
trade which brought over ten million Africans to service labor needs of the United States, the
agency of the descendants of slaves through such historic efforts as the Civil Rights movement
and pan-African organizations, were among the first pull factors that paved the way for modern
African immigration. There was persistent lobbying for the change of legislation that in their
opinion discriminated against Africans while favoring Europeans. The resultant McCarran-
Walter Act of 1952 eliminated all racially specific language from the Immigration and
Nationality act (INA), but still set migration from the African continent at the loWest quota of
1,400 annually. In 1965, the Hart-Cellar Immigration Act revolutionized the criteria for
immigration to the United States. This legislation privileged skills, profession, or relationship to
families in the United States as criteria for visas, and facilitated a period of rapid increase in the
rate of voluntary migration. From 1970, the increase was three times more than the preceding
decade, and by 1995, the United States admitted more than 40,000 Africans annually. The
numbers of Africans moving to the United States was also given a boost from a different angle
when migrants were forced to detour from the previously favored European destinations, because
of the widespread economic downturn that compelled European nations to stem the human tide
of immigration.

More changes in the 1980s in U.S. policy toward political refugees, especially the Refugee
Act of 1980 offered new arrivals permanent residence after one year. There was also the
Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1982 which set off a flurry of legalization activity
among Africans in the United States. About 31,000 Africans benefited from the provisions of
this Act, a type of amnesty program for those who had overstayed their visas, and were able to
make the United States their home permanently. The Immigration Act of 1990 introduced the
Diversity Visa Lottery which sought to identify national populations that were underrepresented
in the United States, and to offer immigration opportunities for individuals with at least a high
school level education, considered a human capital potential that would prove advantageous for
the U.S. economy. Currently, the immigration lottery program is the primary method of
immigration for Africans to the United States.

The consequences of migration stimulate concerns from a variety of professionals
including those involved in policy and diplomatic relations. Addressing the United Nations
General Assembly on International Migration and Development, in New York, September 14,
2006, the then Secretary General Kofi Annan told the gathering in his abridged version of
transnationalism, that the unprecedented number of countries now involved in, and affected by,
international migration are no longer easily divided into “countries of origin” and “countries of
destination.” Many of these countries, he said, are now both. To follow Annan’s thinking, the consequences of African migration to Western countries have repercussions for Africa as well as for the countries where Africans go to live and work. African migrants, however, are distinguished from other migrant groups, as Gordon (1998) has pointed out because of their high skill levels and education credentials on the average. This characteristic of African migrants exacerbates the developmental consequences that are attributable to migration.

Sako (2002) discusses the consequences of brain drain and its relationship to Africa’s development. For Africa, brain drain represents a major development concern. This phenomenon which seems to have trapped African countries in poverty is created by the combined roles of actors from the more developed and the less developed world. Recently, recruitment drives by the developed countries that target African populations, for certain types of human capital have received attention (see for example, Kapur and McHale 2005). While statistics can be compiled on the sums of money that flow to Africa across the Atlantic, it is impossible to quantify the potential of the professionals that could have translated into development had they not migrated. Individuals or households contrive a calculus that works best for them in their pursuit of personal and family objectives, and on the other side of the equation, inviting and enabling immigration policies, and proactive recruitment of talent geared towards labor needs in the developed world completes the dynamic. For African countries in general, the consequences of migration rest not on the sheer statistics of the flows but the immeasurable quality and potentials of the migrants.

Sako believes that the loss human capital and the potentials possessed by migrants has intensified capacity constraints in both private and public sectors, as well as the operation of civil society organizations. Medical services are widely believed to be the most affected with devastating consequences for the local populations. In his analysis, Sako also mentions some
perceived benefits of brain drain for the labor surplus countries including an outlet for skilled professionals who would have been unemployed had they not left. When this argument is added to those on remittances, some would deem brain drain a welcome economic phenomenon.

In a Center for Global Development brief, Devesh Kapur and John McHale (October 2005) also discuss the issue of the often forgotten repercussion of brain drain that is caused by the highly selective migration policies that deprive poor countries of scarce innovators and institution builders. They suggest that the poaching of talent from the developing countries by the more developed ones is seen to have had the returns of stimulating the growth of small business enterprises in the sending countries. It is left to be seen, however, how much of this supposed economic return is effectively harnessed toward national economic growth which is often seen as a potential counterforce for emigration.

There is also the devaluation of skills that erodes competency levels for immigrant professionals, because the racialized social relations in American society, for example, relegate skilled Africans to jobs at the lower rungs of the hierarchy. Africans who resort to self-employment in the host country often become part of the unregulated informal economy that has to deal with the uncertainties and the unexpected from the legal system, and other internally generated adversities and constraints that may not be subject to any legal code. This problem is part of Sassen’s (1996) discussion of how migration tests the new order and Stoller’s (2002) concept of unscented money.

A final cause of population movements that has been so far an undercurrent in the study of African migration can be subsumed under the rubric of social non-economic causes. It is related to what Ferguson (2002) discussed as the Africans’ chase after a place of their own in the global economic topography. According to Ferguson, Africans are caught up in the “mimicry” of the
West and the concomitant appetite to belong in the world of Westerners, as the route to the achievement of the much desired sense of belonging in the global economic world. If given the appropriate extensive analysis it deserves, Ferguson’s arguments, in addition to Portes’ and Sensenbrenner’s (1993) views on the concept of “embeddedness”– how social structure constrains, supports or derails individual goal-seeking behavior– can shed more light on the reasons Africans migrate to the West. I find the potentials of this direction both stimulating and challenging in the search for a holistic study of African migration, and for the acknowledgment of the pivotal role and impact of non-economic factors in the pre-migrant social environment.

**Nigeria – International Migration**

Nigeria witnessed a spike in immigration especially during the early seventies known as the period of oil boom when many Western Africans and Africans from other countries moved to Nigeria in large numbers looking for employment in the relatively stable economy at that time. But there were also movements to places outside of the continent during the years of colonial rule, beginning in the early twentieth century, that present different pictures for the British and American destinations. Before the colonial period, however, forced migration from Africa in the form of slavery was not restricted to the Americas only; some of those enslaved were also taken to the United Kingdom. According to the BBC London website (www.bbc.co.uk), over 200 years ago, the first Nigerians to land on British soil did so as a consequence of the slave trade. One name famously identified with this first cohort is Olaudah Equiano, also known as Gustavus Vassa, who in 1789 published his autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African*, which became a best seller and a catalyst for the abolitionist movement. Equiano had identified his origins in his writing as a place called Essaka of the Igbo speaking people located near the River Niger.
The connections and transactions between British merchants and the Benin chiefs in the 18th century were instrumental for the presence of the first Nigerians in Europe, thereby establishing the Nigerian community as the oldest Black community in the United Kingdom. As these connections became strengthened by the colonial relationship, emerging needs for education and skills acquisition created more movement of people to Britain even beyond Nigeria’s independence in 1960. The civil unrest or the Biafran War that came just a few years after independence added to the migration flow from Nigeria to Britain, including some skilled professionals among the refugees. According to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, United Kingdom (February 13, 2008), there are currently between 800,000 and 3,000,000 people of Nigerian descent in the United Kingdom, including illegal immigrants, British-born people of Nigerian descent, and recent immigrants.

Ogbaa (2003) discusses three main periods of early Nigerian migration to the West, with the main focus on the United States: 1925 to 1952, 1952 to 1960, and 1960 to 1970. During the first period, 1925 to 1952, British administrative control of Nigeria favored Britain as destination for Nigerians looking for higher education. A small number made it to the United States and were mostly students. This number included Nnamdi Azikiwe, the first Nigerian president who completed his studies and returned to Nigeria in 1934. In the second period, 1952 to 1950, a more diverse group of students migrated to the United States to pursue graduate education, having benefited from baccalaureate education from the then newly established University College at Ibadan (a branch of the University of London). Ogbaa observes that this group included a noteworthy number of immigrants who stayed behind in the United States after their studies. Others returned to Nigeria to help build and expand the mission schools and churches.
that sponsored them, or to occupy elevated positions in high schools, colleges, and the civil
service.

The high cultural value placed on education soon became widespread and more parents
spurred by the apparent success and elevation in social status for the returned migrants, pushed
their children in the direction of Western education. In 1958, Nigeria’s population was estimated
at 55,000,000 but there was only one university college. The demand for higher education caused
an overflow of applicants for British universities who were subsequently absorbed by
universities in the United States of America. Emigration to Britain was also engineered by the
British colonial administration that waged a war of propaganda among Nigerians, discouraging
them from going to American universities, with the claim that Americans were uncouth, and with
the sublimated fear of the budding nationalist spirit expressed by early Nigerian graduates of
American education. To the British, American education became equivalent to tacit
encouragement of Nigerian students’ postgraduation opposition of British rule and empire
(Ogbaa 2003:26). Consequently, many scholarships were offered by the British colonial
administration as an incentive for Nigerian students to pursue education at British universities.

The third period, 1960 to 1970 marked the end of the colonial administration and the
departure of the British from Nigeria. It also marked the end of the British control of visas for
migration to the United States, and a relative increase in the number of Nigerians headed for the
United States. The departure of the British also meant many job openings especially in the public
sector and opportunities for Nigerians to fill these positions. Higher education credentials were
seen as key to securing such jobs, and more Nigerians headed to the West in search of higher
education. Still the number of migrants at that time must have been a trickle, as Adepoju (2005)
noted that until the early 1980s, few Nigerian professionals saw emigration as a rewarding
option, because their working conditions at home were attractive and internationally competitive. The exchange rates for the local currency were good until the collapse in the price of oil. The ensuing economic fiasco brought in the structural adjustment projects which exacerbated living conditions of middle class professionals and catalyzed the exodus of skilled Nigerians to the West. It was estimated that 103,500 skilled Nigerians headed for the United States, the Gulf States, Canada, or the United Kingdom between 1987 and 1989 (Adegbola 1990). Adepoju also noted that academic staff turnover in Nigerian teaching hospitals and engineering departments had reached 12% with 60 to 70 percent of these choosing the US, UK, the Gulf States, Canada, and some parts of Africa (2005:34). According to U.S. Bureau of the Census Technical Paper 29, there were 25,528 Nigerians in the US in 1980 and 55,350 in 1990 (Ogbaa 2003:23).

Education as an impetus for migration seems to hold fairly steady, at least for Nigerians headed for the United Kingdom. John Gill (2008) reports that the number of Nigerians studying in the UK is being forecast to increase tenfold in the next five years, up from 2,800 in 2007 to an estimated 30,000 in 2015. The factors cited by this forecast include perceived poor quality of education at Nigerian institutions, and the rapid increase in the number of families that can afford to send a child to study overseas. Despite the dramatic increase in the number of institutions of higher education from only one university in 1960 to 90 universities, 100 polytechnics, and 150 technical colleges as of 2008, the demand for higher education far exceeds the supply. About 1.2 million students competed for just 148,000 places at local universities in 2008.

**Senegal – International Migration**

Senegal was a destination country for migrants in the West African sub-region, as well as Europeans, mainly French, and some Lebanese, until the 1990s. Emigration has increased in the last decade for several reasons, most of which are attributed to economic conditions and demographic developments in the country. The economic crisis which began in the mid-1970s
and intensified in the 1990s reduced chances of employment especially in the public sector, a situation compounded by a weak private sector with a very bleak outlook for employment opportunities. With a quadrupling of the population since independence in 1960, roughly half of the population is less than 18 years old, and this translates into spiking unemployment rates as young people exert pressure on the labor market.

At first, international migration was the outcome of the dire internal socioeconomic situation, but alongside this response there has been also popular culture that has emerged around the migrant as a modern hero and replacement of the civil servant who was the icon of success and high social status during and immediately following the colonial administration. In Senegal, there is a migration dynamic rooted in distant history but is also now the source of a culture of emigration that has emerged in contemporary Senegal. With little or no knowledge about everyday life in Europe which was not as rosy as it was in people’s fantasies, including the Senegalese who were already living abroad, young Senegalese looked for every possible way to reach their imagined Paradise. The social context of Senegalese migrants provides some explanations for the continuing rise in emigrants, despite unfavorable situations in the host society. A lot is expected of the migrant from the immediate family and the society at large, especially where the family has invested in the move. Without economic success, a migrant is deemed a failure and is treated with contempt by people at home. The Mouride brotherhood, a Muslim group in the Dakar metropolis is also seen as a major factor in the communication of the material attractions of migration including migration to Western countries. This group has been successful in developing transnational and local networks that have become powerful and influential in the creation of a migration culture in Senegal. A part of this culture, migrants learn not to discuss or reveal in any way at all negative aspects of living abroad, because this is
socially unacceptable and discouraged more by the adulation given to the returned migrant who exhibits behavior indicative of success in the local context. What is clear to the family and the neighborhood are the trappings of economic success, but what is unknown to them is how the money has been earned, that is, the challenges and travails endured by the migrant in the host society. The informants of my study feel that the front of success is beginning to crack for some people who have begun to suspect that the façade of positive experiences does not tell the whole story about migrant experiences overseas.

Military service in the French army was the initial portal into Europe for the Senegalese. The Marseille harbor became a haven for those soldiers who chose to join the labor force in France after their military service, and so began one of the most enduring centers of the Senegalese community in France. France was the favored destination country for Senegalese migrants because of relationships from the colonial era which included automatic citizenship statuses for Senegalese from Gorée, Rufisque, St. Louis, and Dakar. But all of that was to change in 1985 when France introduced compulsory visa requirements for Senegalese. Consequently, Senegalese migration was redirected in the early 1990s to Italy and Spain where immigrant labor in construction and agricultural sectors was more openly accepted and favorably legislated. The United States was also a secondary destination choice compared to France but gradually increased in popularity especially among the younger middle class Senegalese who engaged mainly in trade between Senegal and the United States.

The Senegalese government has been actively involved in efforts to extract benefits for the country’s economic development from emigration. For this purpose, the Ministry of Senegalese Abroad was established as a channel for enticing investment in the home country from its expatriates. Working with the French government, there have also been vocational training
programs and other incentives designed to ease migrant return to Senegal. On the other hand, there were also efforts by the Senegalese government to encourage migration to other European countries because of the value they placed on migrant financial remittances and the implications they held for economic development. Between 1998 and 2004, remittances sent to Senegal increased from 91 million US dollars to 563.2 million US dollars, and in 2005, these remittances constituted 7.6% of the country’s gross domestic product (Riccio 2005; Ratha and Xu 2007).

According to D. Ratha and Xhimei Xu (2003), The World Bank reports that in 2005, about 463,000 Senegalese, or 4% of the population were living abroad. The same source also reported that according to the Senegalese Ministry of Economy and Finance in 2004, 76% of urban households and 70% of households nationwide had at least one family member living abroad. While 46% have gone to Europe, mainly France Spain, and Italy, about 8% have gone to the United States and Canada combined. Among these migrants, 46% were employed or self-employed before they emigrated, about 29% were unemployed, 84% were men among whom 68% were between 15 and 34 years old. Senegalese migrants who move to industrialized Western countries tend to have above average education. More than half of a sample of 51 in Germany hold credentials from an institution of higher education, while 9% of those in the United States have attended school for four years or less (Marfaing 2003). Within Africa, Senegalese migrants have favored neighboring Gambia where they number about 300,000, and in Ivory Coast, about 125,000 before the recent war of 2002, in Mauritania, about 50,000 to 60,000, in Mali, 30,000, in Guinea Bissau, between 10,000 and 20,000 Senegalese (Diatta and Mbow 1999 [cited in Focus Migration, Country Profile Senegal, November 2007]; Fall 2003).

Clandestine emigration has increasingly become a source of concern for African countries, especially Senegal where young people are taking desperate action to join the esteemed class of
migrants. On March 12, 2007, Christopher Thompson, reporting for the online journal, *The First Post*, states that for the year 2005, 9,000 illegal immigrants tried to go the route of Canary Islands to Europe, usually Spain and Italy, with 1,700 perishing at sea. For 2006, the number was 31,000 with 6,000 dying at sea. The work of Penda Mbow, President of the Mouvement Citoyen in Senegal is dedicated to activism against clandestine emigration. In partnership with the ambassador of Netherlands, the Movement Citoyen published case studies of 192 males and 8 females in a study, “Emigration clandestine au Sénégal. Le profil des candidats” (Mbow n.d.) which points out the failures of political efforts to control clandestine emigration, and describes the study’s fundamental conceptual framework of anomie (Durkheim 1893) created by a perceived breakdown of norms and social exclusion with a linkage to criminal behavior among West African (focus on Senegalese) youth. Mbow argues that poverty is also a factor which she says has become a chronic problem in the Senegalese society, and the inequalities perceived in the distribution of wealth as fundamental sources of clandestine emigration.
CHAPTER 4
BEYOND THE ECONOMIC IMPETUS – THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF PRE-MIGRATION DECISIONS

Myrdal (1957) broached the concept of circular and cumulative causation, a departure from the pervasive and virtually tyrannical influence of economic explanations for migration. His intention was to bring attention to the relevance of social contexts as a medium as well as product of decisions made by individuals. He argues that individual decisions and actions are not only conditioned by contextual factors, but that the cumulative effect of independent decisions may, over time, alter the decision-making context. Circularity of causation is created when this newly produced context then becomes the ambiance or medium for subsequent decisions by succeeding individuals. Applying this argument to migration, Douglas Massey proposes that a “full theoretical account of migration must include not only interlevel dependencies among individual, household, community, and national-level factors but inter-temporal dependencies as well” (1990:9). Three decades later, Anthony Giddens restates the fundamental concepts in Myrdal’s theory by proposing the “duality of structure” envisaged as a dialectical process by which the “structural properties of the social systems are both the medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize” (1984:25). For a better understanding of the pre-migration context and its impact on migration decisions in the African post-colony, the explanatory frameworks proposed by Myrdal (1957) and Giddens (1984) suggest that meanings and interpretations of colonial imprints on African social contexts are cultural productions and reproductions. If fantastic hyperbolic constructions of the West have motivated migration in the past, a social context is constructed that sustains such orientations and socializations as impetuses for migration for the future.

Economic motives can be real for migrants as they decide to stay in their home societies or leave them, but as long as human thought and action are at play, such motives do not dangle in a
vacuum and cannot be sanitized from other circumstantial realities that exist for the migrant. The production and reproduction of social context by individual decisions can add breadth to explorations of processual details and dimensions of human migration, but more importantly, they invite a nudge to the omnipresent economic explanations of migration decisions and dynamics. The theoretical acknowledgment of migrant contexts will enable pertinent originary distinctions between migrant groups from different social contexts, consequently illuminating particularities that help the understanding of their ethos both before and after moving to a new place. In this sense, history and cognitions distilled from a collective past can serve not only as a much desired interdisciplinary bridge for the study of human migration, but they can also provide the cosmological blueprint of the contexts that produce or shape the decisions of migrants.

Everett S. Lee in agreement with other theorists before him (for example, Ravenstein 1885 and Thomas 1938) sustained the importance of individual differences and perceptions in understanding migration arguing that it is not so much the actual factors at origin and destination as the perception of these factors which results in migrations. The key term here is perception. He succinctly states that “the decision to migrate is never rational, and for some persons the rational component is much less than the irrational” (1966:51). Where then should theorists look for this suggested irrationality in the decision to migrate? This study of African postcolonial contexts and the migration predispositions found therein suggests that there can be no patterning or ordering of reality as implied by the most popular migration theories, but instead an interaction of a variable mix of circumstances or contingencies that represent different historicities, socializations, and experiential packaging for different individuals or groups. For African potential migrants, extensive and protracted colonial domination crystallized cognitions
and subjectivities that influence their worldviews and choices include systemic attractions to the Western world imagined as the standard for their goals and aspirations. Because of the prominence of oral traditions in the African past, folkloric forms such as proverbs, given and assumed names, song lyrics and legends are the repertoires and custodians of cognitive distillations from history. Occidentalisms underscore Africa’s historicity and the constitution of its social contexts and can explain the desire to live in Western countries by potential migrants.

Anthropologists who have tried with some success to apply conceptual brakes to economic determinism and the rationalist bias in migration theory include Nina Glick Schiller et al. (1992), who injected into migration discourse the need to look at both migrants’ original and host communities and what they mean for the duality of some migrants’ lives. They view transnationalism as the process by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement. Transnationalism is an outgrowth of their observation that migration discourse has been reduced to the circulation of labor power, and that the social, cultural, political and institutional dimensions of the phenomenon are subordinated to an economic logic. Glick Schiller and her colleagues succeeded in escalating considerations of migrant networks and social fields as crucial for understanding migration dynamics (Levitt 1998, 2001; Foner 1997; Smith and Guarnizo 1998; Ong 1999; Vertovec 1999; Faist 2000a, 2000c; Itsigsohn 2001; Vertovec and Cohen 2001; Khoser 2002; Reynolds 2004). But even in the migrant networks and social fields conceptualized by Glick Schiller and her colleagues and their interlocutors, economic considerations and variables still predominate mainly in the form of analyses of implications of remittances for the home society, and especially for development. Faist (2000a) offers an expanded view of transnationalism and a sustained attempt at clarifying and developing the idea of the social field but also attempts to bring together two well known
and widely applied earlier migration paradigms, push and pull models, and the center-periphery model (or world systems theory) with his discussion of transnational social spaces. Faist (2000c) argued for the inclusion of culture and citizenship in order to distinguish between transnational spaces for different migrant groups, but as in most of the studies in the discursive exchanges that have been stimulated by the entrance of sociality into the arena of migration, remittances, instrumental exchanges, ties of reciprocity of the financial type and what they entail feature prominently.

With the welcome social slant, however, there remain unresolved issues and questions that must be investigated to ensure progress toward more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of migration. It can safely be assumed, for example, that people belong to multiple networks with different constitutions, objectives, and dynamics, and that while not all of these networks will have something to do with migration, all of them will have some meaning or impact on the socialization and development of an individual and his or her value system—the same ones that inform his or her decisions. Individuals will reap different benefits from the networks that include them or to which they have chosen to belong, and will also garner from the networks different perceptions that affect their life’s decisions, including migration. What individuals or collectivities do with their perceptions, and the multiplicity and heterogeneity of factors at play in the constitution and internal dynamics of their networks in the pre-migration context remain barely explored in the migration literature. In brief, the question is what processes and factors define pre-migration social fields that may influence migration decisions among potential migrants? If the potential migrant can be construed (and should be construed) as part of the transnational social spaces and conceivably other social spaces, and considered as immersed in the pre-migration contexts thus created, it will be beneficial to the understanding of migration
decision making to investigate the internal realities, contents, and dynamics of the entirety of these networks or social spaces.

The enduring sway of economic logic and the rationalist bias that attends it have enjoyed remarkable tenure in migration studies. In fact, it has always been an integral part of theories and perspectives offered for a better understanding of migration. It can be traced back to classical economists such as Thomas Malthus and David Ricardo who are noted for sustaining the subordination of society to the economic logic of the market. Polanyi (1944) was one of the well-known critics of the concept of ‘Homo Economicus,’ or the ‘Economic Man,’ a term used by the opponents of classical economics. Much related to his opposition of the ‘economic man,’ he originated the substantivist thought, a cultural approach to economics which had substantial influence on economic anthropology. However, his most famous contribution to social thought was the concept of embeddedness. Polanyi looked at variations in economic systems of different societies and the ways they might differ from market capitalism, and concluded that in modern capitalism, the economy is embedded in the institution of the market place, but in economic systems of other cultures, the economy is embedded in other social institutions. In agreement with Polanyi, Wilk (1996) states that the economy in these other cultural contexts also operates on principles different from the market and from the logic of choice. Polanyi rejects modern capitalism’s elevation of profits and the market over society and human values, turning everything into a commodity to be bought and sold. To him, therefore, the economy is not autonomous as it must be in economic theory, but circumscribed by politics and social relations. Economists are therefore challenged to try to find out how the economy is embedded in the matrix of different societies. Other human decisions and actions considered to be located in the economic realm, such as migration, must by extension of Polanyi’s argument be seen as
embedded in broader social and political contexts. For the general population and potential migrants in the African postcolony, the social context can be seen as the crucible of the intermixing of both pre-colonial and postcolonial African worldviews, and their residues which can be found in folklore and popular culture.

Polanyi’s arguments about the relationship between economics and the social context resonate with some migration theorists. Winchie and Carment (1989) argue that the premise that man is economically rational, an economic maximizer who will perceive and evaluate migration on this basis, does not provide the correct point of departure for the study of migration motivation. Therefore, inferences from the existence of economic correlates of migration should not exclusively impute subjective economic motives on the migrants. Goss and Lindquist (1995) align their views on international labor migration more directly with Polanyi’s position on the role of social institutions in market dynamics. They reject the developmentalist bias on migration research which has caused researchers to be more preoccupied with evaluating the consequences of international labor migration on national economies, communities, or households, than with identifying the processes that lead individuals to pursue employment overseas. In their view, approaches to the study of migration should not reduce to the assumption that migration of labor is a response to a wage differential or inequality between the source and destination countries caused by a difference in the level of socioeconomic development. This is a direct critique of the neoclassical economic theories of migration which creates the discursive space for perspectives that go beyond the economic so as to explore the contents and dynamics of a holistic context for pre-migration decisions.

Polanyi’s concept of embeddedness was expounded by Mark Granovetter (1985) who also fundamentally disagrees with a pure economic approach to economic action, and suggests that
social structures can advance as well as constrain individual goal-seeking behavior, and more importantly, that they can go as far as redefining the content of such goals. Granovetter’s relatively recent formulations view markets as embedded in social institutions, and are seen as foundation for the genesis of economic sociology which have redirected attention to the application of sociology to economic life. This view emphasizes once more the powerful influence of society on individual decision-making and therefore the need to consider variations in migrant circumstances including multiple networks that will impose varying and sometimes even conflicting conditions or expectations on migrant behavior. Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) co-opt the embeddedness model in order to explore how it relates to immigration and ethnicity. They choose the concept of social capital which they view in close kinship with the idea of social embeddedness and prefer to apply its fundamental principles to their study of migrant economic behavior in the host society. They nonetheless acknowledge embeddedness as an umbrella term that provides a very useful standpoint for criticizing classical economic models. Social capital is defined by Portes and Sensenbrenner as those expectations for action within a collectivity that affect the economic goals and goal seeking behavior of its members, even if these expectations are not oriented toward the economic sphere. While Portes and Sensenbrenner focus on immigrant adaptation with the argument that immigrants’ economic destinies depend heavily on the structures in which they become incorporated, and, in particular, on the character of their own communities, they hope for a more general applicability of the concept. Taking their views in the direction of a generalized application, a comparable situation that can be seen as the other half of their conceptualization of social capital as conceptual surrogate for embeddedness is the migrants’ incorporation or membership in their communities of origin prior to migration. This flip side brings forth the role of pre-migration socialization of
the individual that draws from the multiple facets of the context in which he or she is and has been embedded, and on the social capital they not only possess or have amassed over time but also the social capital they seek to acquire. For in that context also, there are groups and affiliations with different expectations that govern and even prescribe individual behavior. In that context, social capital functions in a particular way that is meaningful for a particular migrant and can be both augmented and instrumentalized through migration.

Thaler (2000) provides an overarching review of the logical lapses in the Homo Economicus idea of classical economists who confer extraordinary capabilities for rational reasoning, self-interest, comprehensive knowledge, and an innate desire of wealth on all humans. He observes that the progression of economic thought into the second half of the twentieth century was characterized with the erasure of psychological factors in the explanation of economic behavior. This is in negation of earlier approaches championed by John Maynard Keynes and Irving Fisher who stressed the importance of psychological factors in their explanation of economic behavior (Lowenstein 1992). Thaler identifies the problems that hamstring economic models among which is the view of the environment or context of action as static. He suggests also that some of the information processing abilities conferred on human agents should be removed in order to demonstrate bounded rationality in decision making.

The void in economic thought that Thaler has identified is created by the absence of knowledge about human cognitions which translates into the denial of the place of non-visceral human emotions such as anger, hatred, guilt, shame, pride, liking, regret, joy, grief, envy, malice, indignation, jealousy, contempt, disgust, fear, and love. He explains this as a conscious bias against behavioral models and as a matter of theoretical convenience which causes economists to resort to the easier unemotional rational modeling rather than wade into the arena of more
complicated internal states and processes of quasi-rational emotional human beings. He argues that emotions are triggered by beliefs, and with this view, he accomplishes a rapprochement with Polanyi and his insistence on the role of specific traditions of different societies in determining economic action. With this view also, he invites the inquiry undertaken in this study into historicized cognitions and subjectivities that can be found in African postcolonial contexts and their potential impact on migration decisions. Thaler invites the engagement of contextual factors that produce the beliefs responsible for emotional states in individuals which cannot be excluded in considerations of economic decision making. If migration has been automatically viewed as a purely economic action as all the economic models suggest, and almost all other theoretical perspectives imply, then researchers must be convinced by Thaler’s arguments to confront this theoretical hiatus by considering arguments in favor of contextual contingencies. To respond, they must begin to allow structural contexts to originate and infuse some nonlinearity in pre-migration decision making.

Fielding summarizes the problem with migration research with this quote:

*There is something strange about the way we study migration. We know, often, from personal experience, but also from family talk, that moving from one place to another is nearly always a major event... Migration tends to expose one’s personality, it expresses one’s loyalties and reveals one’s hidden values and attachments... it is a statement of an individual’s worldview, and is, therefore, an extremely cultural event. And yet, when we study migration scientifically, we seem to forget all this. Migration is customarily conceptualized as a product of the material forces at work in our society (1992:201).*

J.J. Mangalam and Harry Schwarzweller introduced a radical detour from the exclusivity of economic considerations in their detailed arguments for the incorporation of contextual factors into the study of migration. They conceive of migration as a phenomenon having some aspects located within the cultural systems, some within the social system, and some within personality system sectors of human social organization. The central logic in their argument is a hierarchically ordered set of values or valued ends resulting in changes in the interactional
system of the migrants, thereby constituting the basis for the migrant’s pre-migration decision-making (1970:10). Mangalam and Schwarzweller argue that values are seen as overtly expressed in terms of valued ends, and they are the criteria used by a collectivity in determining the relative importance of existing deprivations. The motivation for migration derives from a situation where the deprivation of ends more highly valued within the hierarchy of values in a given social organization has greater positive effect on the decision to migrate than the deprivation of ends less highly valued, all other things being equal. (1970:10) They argue that all people experience deprivations of one kind or another, but that the mere existence of deprivations does not necessarily induce migration. In order to explore the dynamics of migration, therefore, the criteria by which existing deprivations bring about the decision to migrate and the processes involved must be studied and understood. Also, consideration of the suggested criteria that determine the relationship between deprivation and the decision to migrate must be situated in the cultural context. This perspective has great potential for understanding not only the role of context in migration decision-making, but the differentiation between those that do not migrate and those that do migrate even though they coexist in the same social or cultural context. In the African postcolony, an additional and crucial question is to whom do potential migrants compare themselves? Do they compare themselves to African migrants of whom they know through their social networks, or peoples of the Western world, of whom they know through their folklore and popular culture? This study argues that both contemporary African migrants to the West and the West itself as constructed by Africans as a result of colonization work together to impact feelings of deprivation and ultimately decisions by Africans to migrate to Western countries.

Gordon F. De Jong and James T. Fawcett propose a theoretical framework that in their view addresses the relative absence of considerations of “mobility choices at the micro-level”
To fill in the theoretical gap in the study of migration that they identified, they suggest that the analysis of the decision to migrate must proceed from the subjective position of the individual which must consider psychological processes involved in decision making. The Value-Expectancy model of migration decision-making proposed to fill these gaps is a psychological model based on a view of migration as instrumental behavior in which decision making is based on a “cognitive calculus” that involves a subjective, anticipatory weighing of the factors involved in achieving certain goals (1981:47). The model calls for a specification of personally valued goals that might be met by choosing among a set of possible actions of migrating and other alternatives. The reasoning behind this model does not privilege economic or non-economic factors in the migration decision but allows for a broad spectrum of the subjectivities of the individual to decide migration.

Bruce Moon rejects the functionalist approach to migration which in his opinion “imposes a structure in which the migrant is asked to respond and so predetermines the outcome gained” and prefers an approach which seeks the “extent of the institutional impact on the cultural experiences of the person” (1995:520). He proposes a combination of the cultural context with personal motivation as a means by which migration might be researched. The migrant’s valuation of his or her lifestyle experiences and ideals can be ranked high or low on a “mooring” scale. Moorings are defined as “those social expressions which not only allow a person to materialize his or her physical, psychological, and emotional well-being but also serve to bind a person to a particular place” (1995:514). They encompass a range of issues whereby a person gains meaning to his or her life. The reasoning behind this perspective, therefore, is that a person’s perception of his or her relative stability in a place will hinge on how well she values her moorings. If mooring is not perceived as locally binding or is viewed as readily replaceable...
in another location, the resultant motivation would be in the direction of migration. The concept of a “cognitive calculus” suggested above by De Jong and Fawcett (1981), and the fundamental logic behind Moon’s (1995) conceptualization of “moorings” contribute enormously to the concluding arguments presented in this study for a holistic context approach to the study of migration impetuses.

Fawcett and Arnold, in their study of Asian and Pacific immigration systems propose a “migration systems paradigm,” a loosely structured set of concepts that will stimulate discussion and lead to the objective of a reliable approach to a more encompassing study of the multiple factors that are pertinent to migration. They suggest that international migration be viewed as a unified social process, and that individual decisions and actions are conditioned by “contextual factors” (structural forces) operating at each stage of migration (1987:318). The suggestion that “contextual factors” condition individual migrant decisions must lead to an approach that considers migrant groups as separate groups from separate and different contexts that demand that they are considered as such, because migrants are human and are therefore defined by the values and beliefs of societies they come from. Asian migrants, African migrants, European migrants are social products of multiple social processes and histories of which the economic is just one component. It is therefore not enough to consider a migrant as a universal concept regardless of the social context that molded and produced his or her preferences and choices.

With his strong positions of a cross-cultural view of economies and the centrality of contextualization of social action, Polanyi provided entry into conceptual corridors that allow migration to be viewed as an outcome of contextual factors and values present in social environments that cannot be subordinated to only economic logic. Not enough theorists of migration have been willing to walk through that conceptual door. But the handful of theoretical
perspectives described above that factor the context in which an individual is embedded and the values and beliefs that the individual has culled from his or her particular context, provide collectively a strong basis for redirecting migration research to a reflection of the real world and a melding suggested by Thaler (2000) of Homo Economicus and Homo sapiens. When the individual faced with the decision to migrate or not is endowed once more with all his or her basic human attributes, then will there be progression toward more comprehensive theories of migration.

Massey et al. (1998) sees the crisis of push-pull as a camouflaged exclusively economic framework venerated by analysts and used to animate their own models of international migration. Virtually all studies and discussions of African migration take the push- and-pull model as axiomatic. Since this framework is complicit in the economic tyranny observed and expressed in the study of migration, especially African migration, and the traditional economic approach to migration has been questioned, it is time then to look beyond the economic impetus into the multiplicity of factors that define specific contexts that produce migration decisions. For African countries, the context of migrant decision making can be organized around two main historical and socioeconomic events: colonialism and neoliberalism.
CHAPTER 5
THE PRODUCTION OF THE AFRICAN MIGRANT’S CONTEXT FROM THE COLONIAL TO THE POSTCOLONIAL

The roots of the present lie deep in the past, and the real significance of contemporary events cannot be grasped unless the historical causes which have led to them are known. (Sir Harry H. Johnston, KCB author of *A History of the Colonization of Africa by Alien Races*. 1899)

The real significance of contemporary African migration cannot be grasped unless the historical causes which have led to the ways Africans interpret the world around them, and how their decisions are influenced by their assessments of local and global events are known. The world around Africans and any other groups from any country include both economic and non-economic dimensions of reality which must be equally considered in order to understand the choices they make, including the choice to migrate and where to migrate. The study of social phenomena, political or economic, in any part of the continent of Africa is often characterized by a certain generalization reflex about Africa, such that the question, “which Africa?” becomes the tenor of those who have quibbled with the concept of an “African” world in academic discourse (for example, Appiah 1992; Ferguson 2007). Generalizations about Africa should not undermine the identification and analyses of critical issues which for reasons sometimes difficult to articulate seem naturally applicable to Africa as a whole without according room or importance to specification. The study of international migration in Africa is a good example of subject matters that demand perhaps regional and even country specifications at least at the secondary level, but primarily, there is justification for a generality that cannot be overlooked. That generality is found in an “African unity” perversely forged by history.

Serequeberhan challenges Appiah’s questioning of a “metaphysical or mythic unity” or of a singular “African worldview.” He sees a coherence, validity, and utility in the theoretical legacy of the African liberation struggle which should be explored and engaged, in light of Africa’s contemporary political and historical needs, to serve as the secure foundation for “African unity” and “African identity.” His argument is as follows:

Indeed, beyond our ethnic identities, the heritage of the differing African liberation movements makes possible for us a historical and political world in which we all share as Africans. This “sharing” does not presuppose any kind of metaphysical or mystical African oneness. It only calls for the recognition that, beyond color and race, our being African is grounded in a shared history of subjugation, struggle, and liberation: a history we affirm and choose to perpetuate (1996:114).

An “African” context that defines an African migration is conceivable because the unifying role of history is a validating one that has conferred very deep marks on essentially all African societies. For the same reasons, the tendency to call African migration to the West international and not ‘intercontinental’ is understandable. Still because of the unifying role of history, there is a commonality of experiences that have been borne by the peoples of Africa for several centuries, such as international trade, slavery, colonization, and the aftermaths and vestiges of these benchmarks of history. In brief, there is hardly any significant part of the continent that has not endured the invasion, interference, or the injection into it of tension-filled foreign presence and attempts at plunder and domination, and most profoundly, the radical transformation of social practices, values, beliefs, and self-knowledge. The basic components for the constitution of an African context that can be of heuristic value for the study of African migration or any other social phenomenon for that matter can be found in these historical markers.

A glimpse into the Africa that was ransacked by colonization shows earlier encounters between European and African kingdoms in the beginning of the fifteenth century that were characterized as relationships between equals (Eze 2008). According to Eze, these relationships
involved the exchange of diplomatic counsels, and glowing European accounts of the thriving and vibrant nations of Bini, Dahomey, Ashanti, and other kingdoms or dynasties whose organizational powers and influence were constantly favorably compared by the Europeans to that of the Roman papacy (2008:214). Soon, the Euro-African trade shifted from raw materials to human labor, and the slave trade. Before African societies were able to recover from the quakes of slavery which for Africa was a monumental loss of human capital, and the destruction of entire communities and various resources that came with slavery, colonizers took over from where the slave dealers left off. On their part, the Europeans volubly rationalized their colonial projects with the narratives of Enlightenment which generally justified or defended European domination and exploitation of other regions of the world.

Two notable mouthpieces of the Enlightenment, David Hume and Hegel, defended and fuelled the European subjugation of Africans with their thoughts and writing. David Hume (cited in Eze 2008), who was serving in the British colonial office at the time, wrote a footnote to his essay, Our National Character:

*I am apt to suspect the Negroes to be culturally inferior to the Whites. There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion, nor even any individual eminent in action or speculation. No ingenious manufacturers amongst them, no arts, no sciences. . . . Such a uniform or constant difference could not happen. . . . If nature had not made original distinction betwixt these breeds of men (in Eze 2008:214).*

On his part, philosopher Hegel (in Eze 2008:215) depicted Africans as incapable of rational thought or ethical conduct. Africa was seen as a wasteland filled with “lawlessness,” “fetishism,” and “cannibalism,” waiting for European soldiers and the missionaries to conquer it and impose “order” and “morality.” For him, therefore, the African deserved to be enslaved and needed European subjugation and colonization because Europe inseminated Africa with its reason, ethic, culture, and mores, and thereby historicized it. Through the writings and expressions of Hegel and Hume, it is easy to see the motivations for colonization and the projects
and world views it inspired. It is also possible to imagine and try to understand the deep radical impact colonization has had on African societies, considering its connection with the prevalent ideologies of the time as expressed by Hume and Hegel.

The British and the French were the prominent colonizers in Africa, and though they shared similar strong justification for their colonial aspirations, they differed in their approach. In an article in *Le Courier Colonial* (July 9, 1937) with the title, “Deux Méthodes Bien Différentes” the French approach to colonizing Africans is compared with that of the British. The article was based on a book written by two Englishmen Dr. Munford and Major Ordebrown who undertook a voyage in the then French West Africa and wrote their observations in a book with the title *Les Africains Apprennent à Être Français* (Africans Learn to Be French). The book compares the French education of the natives to the British system which aimed at making the natives “good Africans.” The two writers felt that the French method was simpler. They estimate that it takes less effort for the French to make of Africans people like themselves, than to force them to evolve and progress without detaching them from their mores and their ancestral customs as in the British approach. The article comments that the French method of teaching natives to become French has, contrary to the intended objectives, resulted in the political battles in Tunisia, in Algeria, and in Morocco, and then concluded, “We don’t have anything for which to praise ourselves about our current system which far from making good French people of North Africans, especially, end up making of them enemies of our authority and exposes us to the loss of these territories while those of the English stay perfectly quiet. Who dares to say that their natives are less bellicose than ours?” (Translated from French by the author.)

This newspaper article represents a popular cultural optic of the fundamental difference between the approaches of the French and the British in dealing with Africans in their colonial
administration and also captures the essence of the general environment of the two colonies, and
the colonization philosophies often labeled assimilation for the French, and indirect rule for the
British. The means and ways for colonial administration provided by the respective philosophies
of the colonizers merit a closer look, especially those of the British and the French, selectively
targeted to provide the backdrop for the study of how colonization has predisposed Africans to
certain worldviews and the choices they dictate. This closer look should reveal the methodical
and strategic destruction of deep seated African values and institutions.

**British Indirect Rule**

The predominant British colonization approach is known as indirect rule, the name given
to the use of traditional chiefs as administrative intermediaries in Britain’s African empire
(Olson and Shadle 1996). This policy, which was essentially the imposed government of
Africans through their own institutions as interpreted and skimmed by the colonizer, was based
on the assumption that Europeans and Africans were culturally distinct and that the institutions
which had developed locally in African communities were best-suited for their government
under British control. The acceptance of native political authority should not be taken as a
wholesale adoption of local African practices but as a British redefinition and limitation of the
role of African political powers and radical modulations of traditional practices whenever they
were considered repugnant in light of European conceptions (Deflem 1994). In fact, traditional
institutions were thoroughly scoured and purged of all aspects that were offensive to the
idealized British morality before it was thought that they could provide a stable base for British
rule. The indigenous rulers used as intermediaries in the indirect rule approach were not chosen
randomly, but had to be strategically meaningful for the colonial administration, with
demonstrable utility as anchor of imperial authority (Olson and Shadle 1996:570). The indirect
rule was applied generally to British colonies with slight modifications as needed to suit
unexpected or anomalous exigent situations. Sometimes, such modifications roused profoundly rebellious responses by the natives, as in the case of the Igbo-speaking peoples where the British were forced to invent chiefs where none previously existed. So aberrant was such British encroachment on a deeply valued African institution that it gave rise to the violent Aba (Nigeria) rebellion of 1929.

The first application of the indirect rule in British Africa can be traced to Theophilus Shepstone’s administration of Natal in the 1870s where royal chiefs designated as “reserves” were recognized as subordinate officials under the authority of White magistrates. It was subsequently codified as an administrative system after the conquest of major African political entities such as Buganda and the Sokoto Caliphate, where the colonizers found it in their best interest to retain the African governance structures already in place. (Olson and Shadle 1996). Indirect rule was in principle either interventionist or non-interventionist, and ancillary to other structural components of British rule. When interventionist, the native chiefs were actually subject to the powers and supervision of the colonial administration hierarchy; they were dependent on them, and their traditional administration was gradually adapted to the alien institutions of British rule. When non-interventionist, the traditional rulers were allowed to run things on their own and with any policies they saw fit as long as those policies did not obstruct, interfere with, or threaten the over-all political and economic goals of the colonial administration. Whenever local politics was deemed at odds with ideals of colonial governance, especially when they contradicted Company Rule established to ensure the success of colonial commercial interests, political paternalism replaced indirect rule. This meant some autonomy for the native rulers but dependence for matters that were crucial to them, on the “father” British colonial structures for approval, support and guidance.
One of the major areas where indirect rule engrained itself into the African society was the legal system. According to Deflem (1994), colonial policing provides a provocative topic of inquiry to assess the impact of British colonialism on the subjugated African populations. Using the example of Nyasaland, he states that after territorial boundaries of the colonial regime were secured, a period of control set in, switching from military security to the formation of a colonial police force to perform civic duties, often armed with rifles as they collected hut taxes and obtained African labor for employment in the European estates. Though disputes were settled in separately designated native courts, the general colonial legal system was based on African social practices as interpreted through the optic of the British worldview and its perception of African traditions. The indirect rule, therefore, created a legal system that was purported to perform as its buttress not as a protector of any rights that may have been accorded or deemed as belonging to the African peoples in accordance with their own social institutions.

Education is the medium of acculturation of choice used by the colonizers including the British to carry out what they had long and repeatedly rationalized as their duty to mankind. In a paper he presented at a meeting of the African Circle Victor Murray argued for the recognition of important linkages between the indirect rule approach and the social institutions of the natives, especially education, the chieftaincy and religion. More importantly, he reminds his audience of the general impact of their presence on the social fabric of the Africans. But first, he defines indirect rule as a “situation in which black and White are associated, in which the White is on top, but where the institutions of the blacks are not abolished but incorporated as far as may be possible into the alien system of government.” (1935:227) “By all the laws of logic and psychology,” he argued, “indirect rule is obviously the only way to govern a backward people if we are concerned for their development and not just for their exploitation” (Murray 1935:228).
Urging careful considerations of the implications of education of the native, Murray, pressed for an approach that recognizes the impact of this new way of life on the Africans. He warned that “the mere fact that Whites are in the country [Nigeria] as well as blacks means that the old stability has been shaken… [and that] the Native people should not receive more shocks than are necessary…” (Murray 1935:228). While he felt that education was an agency for the progressive development of the people, he also expressed concern about the ways an educated African can be their enemy, as was exemplified at that time by “a third class” made up of the people who had a relatively advanced European education, and who were disliked by indirect rule administrators.

On the matter of chiefs, Murray noted the radical nature of the interference of British presence and the indirect rule itself in this profoundly significant aspect of the African social structure. His argument was that “[u]nder the old pre-European system, the chief derived his authority from the tribe. The African chief, to him, was not at all like a Moslem emir, a ruler over ‘his’ people; the relationship between ‘ruler’ and ‘ruled’ was much more intimate than that.” Murray also highlighted the spiritual dimensions of the position of chiefs in the African society, in addition to the closeness between them and their people. “He was a semi-sacred person because he represented not only the tribesmen that were alive but also those that were buried in the tribal land” (1935:239). For these reasons, the impact of the coming of the European on Africans was not to be ignored. Chieftaincy had been seriously shaken because with the Europeans in the picture, the chief derives his status from the European suzerain and from nowhere else. The European suzerain had therefore usurped the place of the tribe in giving meaning to the institution of chieftaincy. The problem with this situation was that “when a man has already got the subtle kind of prestige that is involved in African kingship any addition to it by a European authority such as an official title or official recognition is in fact not an addition
but a subtraction” (Murray 1935:239). Change in the perceptions of the people about the
chieftaincy was also brought about by men going away from their tribal land and from the
authority of their chief, to mines, schools, and the towns, and become transformed in the process.
Going away exposed them to more of life than they knew existed and caused them to become
accommodated to being treated as individual persons at these locations, and also to earning and
using money. Their worldview and the place of the chief in it become modified or entirely
eroded. “The mystical relationship between a chief and his people has not been able to survive
the shock of contact with Europeans,” concluded Murray.

The “third class” referred to by Murray (1935), that is the Western educated African, is
worthy of further elaboration, since it was this group that led the way in Africa’s liberation
struggles, were to inherit the colonial structures of governance after independence, and were to
be subsequently construed as the precarious bridge between the past and the present in African
sociopolitical metamorphosis. They are seen as the architects of neocolonialism, the bedrock of
what has been seen as Africa’s contemporary problems. Close to the end of the colonial era when
African nationalism was gradually becoming a force that could not be ignored by the colonial
administration, they, the British were enjoying the unholy alliance of the traditional chiefs who
were middle-men in the indirect rule, and who had over time developed a vested interest in the
colonial status quo. The position of the chiefs put them on a collision course with Western—
educated Africans, the nationalist leaders, who assessed the relationships between the traditional
rulers and the colonial administration as a monopoly of power where the chiefs enjoyed perks
from their adjutant roles in indirect rule. They also saw indirect rule as a subterfuge for arrant
disrespect for African traditions and an attempt to hold down African peoples through the social
hierarchies imposed by the colonizer’s philosophy. Paradoxically, these nationalists who were
mainly from the elite chiefdoms did not work that hard to maintain the power and authority of local chiefs after the departure of the colonizers.

What this brief discussion of indirect rule represents is a conceptual slice of the transformations that took place during colonial rule to lay the groundwork of African society as it is known today, the image of which was fashioned from this history. Achille Mbembe (2001) would argue much later that the commandement or the governance structure which originated with colonial rule was reincarnated to a great extent in contemporary African governance structures with perhaps some melding with traditional Africa’s perspectives on the meaning and symbolic power of the chieftaincy institution. Since the depth of the damage to African institutions by colonization is often minimized and sometimes rejected by some in academic circles, it is important to note that the Europeans themselves were aware of the damage they were doing as is repeatedly and clearly articulated in Murray’s paper and in a quote he attributed to Dr. Lucas the Bishop of Masasi (1935:254): “it is difficult, if not impossible, to interfere with any part of the elaborate structure of an old society without causing damage to the whole structure…” (Manchester Guardian 1935). Those who study African social phenomena need to see the importance of these transformations and take seriously their implications for contemporary situations and what light they shed on particular aspects of an African cosmology. While Murray notes that they the Europeans did not know what African society will become as a result of their actions, he also points out that “the African has not been in a position to speak” (1935:262). The Africans would speak subsequently with varying tenors and tempos, but with unmistakable indictment of colonization as the bedrock of most of Africa’s problems with identity crisis and loss of equilibrium in a global society into which it has been irreversibly drawn.
Betts (2005:1) notes that in contrast to the British whose empire was acquired “in a fit of absence of mind,” the French have never really had their heart in colonial activities. Assimilation, considered as the official French colonial philosophy did not have a smooth ride with the colonizers and the metropole alike. Though it was debated, cast aside, and readopted many times during the stretch of French colonial history, it persisted most of the time, giving only occasional and temporary spotlight to considerations of the colonial philosophy known as “association.” The assimilation approach to colonial rule meant that the colony was to become integral, if noncontiguous, part of the mother country, with its society and population made over—to whatever extent possible—in her image. (Betts 2005:8). Assimilation as a concept had a natural appeal to the French because apart from the uniformity of governance it would provide for the colonial administration, it spoke to the French love of order, belief in man’s equality and brotherhood as inscribed in the national ideal and consciousness, and there was also the ever-present desire to spread the French culture. The application of this policy meant the establishment of institutions that were similar to those of metropolitan France in the colonies, a measure which was hoped would accomplish an intimate union among French territories. The idea of assimilation gave France the mandate for its “mission civilatrice” aimed at the absorption of their colonies, administratively and culturally.

By the end of the 19th century, a strong voice of dissent arose from a new generation of colonial thinkers who thought that native cooperation and the respect of native traditions and institutions in the colonies would best serve the interest of France. The word “Association” was the umbrella term they used to define the spirit of the alternative approach they were proposing, the antidote for assimilation, and a reflection of a more flexible policy in which the colonized would cease to be just subjects but become partners in the colonial administration. The policy of
educating many members of the elite groups in the colonies to become involved in the promotion of the objectives of the French empire was an outcome of the “association” philosophy, the view of the native as a potential partner.

Georges Hardy, the Director of Education in the then Francophone West Africa in 1926 argued passionately the crucial role of an intellectual and moral education of the natives in the colonial project. He argued for the gradual transformation of their colonies and the native populations in such a way that they are made to understand the intentions of France, but he also issued a clarion call for what he called “une nouvelle conquête,” a new type of conquest which would consolidate all the success and liberation they had already accomplished with the aid of the Africans themselves. Their conquests were solid, he said, but not enough. According to Hardy these conquests should not be put at the risk of being eroded by mediocrity, because:

\[
\text{une maison que j'achète ne devient ma maison que le jour où je l'ai pourvu du confort qui me convient, décorée selon mes goûts, meublée d'objets et accrue d'annexes qui contient mes habitudes et révèlent ma personnalité (1917:39).}
\]

Using the metaphor of a purchased house to explain what needed to be done with the colonized Africans, Hardy is saying here that the house (the colonized) is not really his until the day he installs in it all the comforts that please him, until it is decorated to his taste, furnished with things and expanded with annexes in which would be found his customs, and reflections of his personality. The inhabitants of the colonies, he continued, had given up their resistance but he asks, rhetorically whether that silent acceptance was enough. To him, obedience was not acceptable if it was not founded on respect and love, and he preferred an honest rebellion to a long and passive defiance. The advancement of France and the reasonable attachment of the native to their work was the objective of the new conquest he was proposing. It would be a conquest less rapid and dazzling than the first but equally profound, and for which the only instrument would be the school (Hardy 1917:1–3). He went on to propose an education plan and
curricula for the different ages and stages of life, for the towns and the villages, for the children of the chiefs and for the peasants, for the médersas and for Christian schools. He extolled the beauty of French history and urged everyone to take pride in it, and the schools to teach it to the colonized children because “to learn history is to first and foremost love one’s country, it is to live with one’s country, to feel the pain of her suffering, to rejoice for its joys… History when it is appropriately handled shows also how people pass from savagery to civilization, or even return from civilization to savagery.” “There!” he exclaimed, “you have an excellent education.”

In a flourish of nationalist rhetoric Hardy suggests that:

\[
\textit{il importe au plus haut point d’améliorer l’âme indigène et si l’on peut dire d’augmenter la valeur morale des races que le hazard d’histoire nous a confiées. . . } \quad \text{(Hardy 1917:242)}
\]

This statement was preceded by the opinion that colonization would not be worth it if its purpose were only the development of the natural resources of countries they had conquered and the making of the natives well placed and rich men. But he states here that to him, what represents a higher level of importance was to improve the soul of the native and raise the moral value of the (black) race which the destiny of history had entrusted to them.

It can be seen from this obviously abbreviated representation of the motivations and objectives of the French and British that the colonization project aimed not only at the commercial value of the colonies but at the very “soul” of the people and at their social institutions. Nigeria and Senegal, the target societies of this study were colonized by the British and the French, respectively. In these two societies, colonial practices were not absorbed passively. They became inscribed, even seared in the cognitions of the people as is manifested in their lexicon and idioms, and in the work of African writers and scholars who lived the colonial experience, or who learned about it from their parents and elders, and subsequently recounted it in their work. Many examples of vivid expressions of the transformation of African societies or
ex-colonies in general can be found in the writings of both Francophone and Anglophone writers (for example, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong’O, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Hamidou Kane, Wole Soyinka) as well as people in academe who have studied the effect of colonial rule on African societies and other ex-colonies (for example, Achille Mbembe, David Scott, Mammoud Mamdani, V.Y. Mudimbe, Homi Bhabha, Cheikh Anta Diop, Kwame Gyekye, Emmanuel Eze, Kwame Anthony Appiah, Bernard Magubane).

It is clear that African social values and institutions were subverted or destroyed by European colonization, but what to do about this situation in the face of challenges faced by contemporary African society is contentious. The philosophical optic of Kwame Gyekye provides a conceptual bridge between the past and the present of the “African experience.” He considers what some may view as the root cause of Africa’s woes, the (alleged) neglect or denigration or subversion of the traditional cultural values of African societies in matters of development and the creation of African modernity (1997:233). The imposition of European colonial rule with its introduction of European cultural values and institutions, and the attempts by African societies to grapple with and adjust to the aftermath of colonial rule and its institutions, has produced a complex situation that has persisted and remained intricate, daunting, and resilient. Such complexity is found in efforts “to hammer out a new modernity on the anvil of the Africa people’s experience of the past and vision of the future. . . problems of nation building – of integrating and welding together several ethnic (communocultural) groups into a large cohesive political community called nation-state. . . problems of inculcating political morality and, thus, deal a death blow to rampant political corruption; problems of dealing with traditional moral standards that seem to be crumbling in the wake of rapid social change” (Gyekye 1997:viii). Gyekye suggests that what needs to be done to help construct a modernity
that is African is to effect “a realistic normative assessment of the cultural past or cultural
traditions by examining the experiences of the practice of specific aspects or areas of those

The African individual who makes migration decisions is socialized and embedded in a
context that has been defined as communitarian in African philosophical thought. Okot p’Bitek
writing on ‘the sociality of self’ states tersely, “Man is not born free. He cannot be free. He is
incapable of being free” (cited in Eze 2008:73). The communitarian argument he makes using
these statements is that being human is attained through “unfreedom,” that is, being in chains and
bound by those chains to the community or society. The depth of this belief for the African
person is expressed by p’Bitek as follows: “In African belief even death does not free him.”
Ghosts of beloved members of the community are revered and “fed” and ghosts of members who
die a shameful death are either “laid” or “killed.” The central idea of this argument underscores
the place and role of community in the lives of Africans. To understand the individual African
migrant, these tight linkages have to be taken into serious consideration especially in light of
arguments which have for long urged theorists of migration to bring the context into their
debates. In a situation such as this where the individual and community are closely bound, the
community informs the actions of the individual, and the individual acts to maintain his
membership in the community. To follow Myrdal’s (1957) arguments about circularity of
causation (of social behavior) social capital in this case would be both facilitator and cause of
behavior, as well as the outcome or effect of behavior. The African migrant’s decision to migrate
could be facilitated by the social capital acquired through membership in social networks and
communities, but because social capital is endowed with value in a given society, migration to
the West, for example, could purchase more social capital for the migrant, above and beyond financial capital, depending on the value the community places on migration to the West.

Chinua Achebe, the Nigerian Igbo writer universally known for his writings on Africa’s troubled encounters with Europe gives an autobiographical analysis of that encounter in his book, *Home and Exile*. Achebe’s focus on the literary world and its reproduction of European imperialism and the colonial devastations of African lifeways and worldview that resulted from it recognizes at a stage in his own life an invitation to “end Europe’s imposition of a derogatory narrative upon Africa, a narrative designed to call Africa’s humanity into question” (2000:44–45). In an analysis reminiscent of Edward Said’s explanation of *Orientalism*, Chinua Achebe views Europe’s assault on Africa as manifested in more than physical occupation and exploitation to creating a derogatory image and consciousness about Africans that was internalized not only by the outside global audience but by Africans themselves. Achebe observes that the contrived portrayal of Africa had done enormous damage because “Four hundred years was indeed a very long time; and the hundreds and hundreds of books churned out in Britain, Europe and elsewhere to create the tradition of an Africa inhabited by barely recognizable humanity have taken their toll” (2000:47). In a subsequent celebratory tone, Achebe hails the twentieth century as “a significant beginning in Africa and elsewhere in the so-called Third World, of the process of re-storying peoples who had been knocked silent by the trauma of all kinds of dispossession” (2000:79).

Ngugi wa Thiong’o describes an example of the dispossession referenced by Achebe as it was effected in colonial Kenya where he grew up, through attempts to erase or at least disrupt efforts by the African population to stay connected with their own values and deep-seated customs that tied them to their past. He writes:
The route to effective control lay through cultural dominance. Wherever and whenever there were communal or national festivals, which of course meant a gathering of peoples, these were stopped. A good example was the Ituika ceremony in central Kenya which was banned by the British colonial authorities in 1925. The Ituika festival was held every thirty years or so to mark the handing over of power from one generation to another. This was enacted through songs, poetry, and drama. So the ban meant the suppression of a whole cultural heritage that had taken generations to build. Under the colonial rule, then, native cultures were repressed while, through the school system, other imported traditions were encouraged. For instance, in the school that I went to, Scottish country dances were allowed even as the so-called tribal dances were banned (Ngugu wa Thiong’o 1993:88).

Wa Thiong’o went on to describe how resistance to the repression of the people began to emerge in oral traditions and was consistently met with what he called the “colonial wrath” and more repression (1993:88–89).

Aimé Césaire’s scathing confrontation of Europe in *Discourse on Colonialism* as part of the tidal wave of anti-colonial literature, and what he calls the lie in the juxtaposition of colonization and civilization is well known. In his view, “between colonization and civilization there is an infinite distance; that out of all the colonial expeditions that have been undertaken, out of all the colonial statutes that have been drawn up, out of all the memoranda that have been dispatched by all the ministries, there could not come a single human value” (1955:34). While Césaire focuses a significant portion of his critique on the collective persona of Europe, he also spoke quite volubly to the unforgiveable “sins” of Europe against Africa and other colonized peoples. He states in his famous equation which emerged from his interpretation of the Marxist doctrine as being instrumental in catalyzing the exploitation of African labor, that colonization = “thingification.” He was referring to the erosion of the humanity of Africans but also proceeded to list the destruction wrought by colonization, including societies drained of their essence, cultures trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary possibilities wiped out. To Europe’s claim on their economic superiority, Césaire juxtaposes “natural economies that have been disrupted. .
. harmonious and viable economies adapted to indigenous population. . . food crops destroyed, malnutrition permanently introduced, agricultural development oriented solely toward the benefit of the metropolitan countries. . . the looting of products, the looting of raw materials” (1955:43).

In conclusion to his series of juxtapositions meant to underscore the tendency to reduce the devastation of colonized societies to justifications from Eurocentric metanarratives, Césaire insists that Africa and other colonized peoples would have been the architects of their own progress, in their own terms, and at their own pace, but that prospect can only exist in the realm of imagination, because colonization has permanently obfuscated those possibilities. The conceptual framework for this study emanating from the reconfigurations of social contexts and worldviews delineated by Césaire is a contemporary African society imbued with stylized constructions of a near perfect and redemptory Western world, and it is in this social context that the potential migrant to the West is immersed,

    Academe has engaged European colonization of Africa since early twentieth century. More recently, James Ferguson has contributed significantly to efforts at understanding the implications of colonization for the social transformations that are taking place in contemporary Africa, and the different approaches taken by social scientists in that endeavor (Ferguson 1999, 2002, 2005, 2007). His ethnography of the Zambian Copperbelt works as critique of the enjambment of the narrative of modernity rooted on one side in the colonial contexts and all their dynamics, and planted also on the other side in the consciousness it has created among social scientists who study Africa, anthropologists, especially. Ferguson takes to task the major and minor premises of the classical anthropological approach to “social change” and interrogates the “development teleologies” that remain deeply entrenched in anthropological thinking. This approach has led to the reduction of the profound and pervasive colonial impact on African
societies in anthropological analyses to “culture contact” (according to Malinowski) between Africa and Europe, and “influence” by Europe on African societies (1999:25–26). Ferguson advocates a more accurate view of colonization’s aftermath as “social change” in line with Max Gluckman’s insistence that the “culture contact” concept espoused by Malinowski obscured the fact that colonialism in Africa was not simply a matter of one “culture” influencing another, but a matter of the “forced incorporation of Africans into a wholly new social and economic system” (Ferguson 1999:26). The development teleologies Ferguson writes about are akin to the economic determinism evinced in the classical economic theories of African migration, and their conceptual tributaries of remittances discourse and human capital calculus in migration decision making. This study explores possible “escapes” from the grip of economic explanatory models for the study of pre-migration decision making by anatomizing not just the social change brought about by colonization but its impact on people’s cognitions, subjectivities, and social memory, including occidentalisms or constructions of the Western world.

What might be called micro-level impacts of colonization on African societies and personalities are important indices of the complexity of factors that constitute the context in which migration decisions are made. They help trace the morphogenesis of the cognitions and subjectivities that emanate from changing values in African societies brought about by the injection of European culture and worldviews into African societies. They also help situate history in its central role in the formation of those cognitions and subjectivities. Bernard Magubane critically evaluates the representation of the impact of European colonization on African societies in academic research. He asserts that the “new society” created by White domination during the colonial era was not only economic but political and cultural as well, and that any theory of change in the patterns of behavior of the indigenous population must take into
account this total situation (1971:419). Studies of the “symbols of acculturation, or Europeanization, or Westernization” have identified “European” clothes, occupations, education, and income as the most frequently used indices for explaining the process of acculturation and the formation of new status groups in urban areas.

Magubane is concerned that the social dynamics produced and catalyzed by the colonial system were often omitted in these analyses or taken for granted, making it look like “the colonization of the African personality that accompanied economic and political subjugation was natural” (1971:420). To emphasize the gravity of this omission, Magubane invokes Jean Paul Sartre’s characterization of colonization as “an act of cultural genocide” which can only take place when the characteristics of the native society is systematically liquidated, and the natives are excluded from any benefits from the mother country. For the natives, Sartre insists, colonization means “the extinction of their character, culture, customs, sometimes even language” (Magubane 1971:424). The arguments Magubane offered almost four decades ago constitute a reference point for the tendency to submerge context in the analyses of crucial human phenomena. Juxtaposed with critiques of economic determinism in migration studies, the exclusion of context becomes even more critical as it shortchanges academic inquiry and sustains the entertainment of logical lapses. This can be said to be part of the reason for the continuing concerns about the theoretical gaps and incompleteness of perspectives offered on migration studies to date. The African migrant or potential migrant has continually been subjected to the imposition of Eurocentric conceptualizations of the world as African countries seek their places in the global society. In economic matters, the African subject is not differentiated as he should be from people from other societies of the world, consequently, his sociality is denied. Neoliberalism, though constructed in contexts worlds away, has been theoretically and
conceptually applied to the African individual without much qualification. It is, no doubt, part of the global economic phenomena that have produced the contemporary African migrant, but it has also consolidated, even worsened the distance between the African and the state in which he or she lives. The ontological dimensions of neoliberalism have shaped the context in which the contemporary African migrant lives and acts. But the African subject just like the African state of the neoliberal doctrine is qualified by particularities of the African context which fundamentally make both the state and the subject misfits altogether in the neoliberal world. The alteration of meanings of belonging and community among some Africans, as well as increased exits to Western countries are some of the outcomes of this misfit. Studies of African migration must accommodate these realities. Otherwise, so much is left out, and so much will be misunderstood.

**The African Migrant and Neoliberalism**

David Harvey defines neoliberalism as “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (2005:2). The economic doctrine of neoliberalism and the presumption of its universal applicability and efficiency epitomizes the same truncation in reasoning and analyses that have crammed contemporary African migrants into the universalized category of economic maximizers, and has sanitized them of their cultural contexts, of their past, and of any cognitive maps that may have been created by historical experiences.

The contextualization of the transformations wrought by the dynamics of neoliberalism calls for necessary differentiation at the micro stratum of the neoliberal force field, which is where the neoliberal subject, the African migrant or potential migrant, for that matter, is located. Such differentiation would rectify, among other things, what Bourdieu (1998) has characterized
as the erroneous tendency for theorists of neoliberalism to dehistoricize or desocialize the discourse at its roots. In the case of the African postcolony, the African person as well as the state is wiped clean of the residues of history. The individual that neoliberalism purported to redeem was universalized as being in the clutches of a paternalistic state, the compass and custodian of the individual’s socioeconomic wellbeing as well as the sentinel of the market and guarantor of rights. This imaginary had its roots in Western sociopolitical dynamics out of which the free market ideology sprung. In the African postcolony, it is easy to find that the African individual was not in the clutches of the state, and the state was neither in control of his socioeconomic wellbeing, nor did it constitute a security blanket or provider of welfare. It is well known that African states in general are unsteady structures of governance that impose no contractual or moral constraints on the African individual who rather is embedded in an intricate web of what Mbembe called regimes of social complicity, or communal social ties which he explains:

made possible a domination of a particular type, since it was founded on highly personalized relations, and on the power to distribute and protect. [This system] rested on arrangements or customary rules--on a complex of internalized norms that, ultimately, defined the modalities of legitimate subjection and social control whether in the framework of clientele relations, of kinship, or of wider alliances (2001:48).

This was a complex system of transfer, of reciprocity and obligations, binding members of a single household, even a single community, and governing relations within a vast field of regulated interactions (Mbembe 2001:46). The enhanced role of the community in the lives of the postcolonial African individual includes not only the cushioning of the individual existentially but also constitutes a wedge between the individual and the ineffective state. According to Mbembe:

Between the state and the individual were the family, the lineage, the kin, and perhaps the religious brotherhood. Should an individual find himself or herself destitute, without resource, even survival at risk, then it was not up to the state to ensure basic protection,
his/her kin must see to that. Should he/she face loneliness, homelessness and poverty, she/he had no right against the state, with which, in this area, she/he had no direct relationship (2001:54).

Postcolonial African states are spawns of the colonial administrative ideology and governance practices, characterized by non-participatory citizen-subjects that are immersed in autocratic, dictatorial, or oligarchic sociopolitical contexts. Mahmood Mamdani, sees colonial occupation as the source of contemporary African sociopolitical structures, and points out that the form of the state that contained the free peasant was comprehensively thought through by Lord Lugard, the architect of indirect rule (1996:62). The African nation-state, therefore, does not possess the prerequisites in sociopolitical infrastructure and ontological particularities that constitute the crucible of neoliberal dynamics (see Sassen 2006). The neoliberal state as construed by the proponents and apologists of this market ideology is nonexistent in Africa.

Under the aegis of neoliberalism, therefore, the African individual that feels no connection with the state is suddenly endowed with unfamiliar freedoms that lead further away from the state and toward other destinations for a sense of belonging and survival. This can come close to being nationless or existing in an interregnum where ample room can be found for imagining other places that can offer a sense of belonging. It is in this neoliberalist disjuncture that the imagining and desire for the West can wax strong.

The Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) prescribed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank were purported to provide traction for the downward spiraling African economies but were unsuccessful because they were driven by the unrelenting “developmentalist teleologies” discussed by Ferguson (1999) that seem to shove African nations along on the path to “progress” without considering contingencies that are germane to the African condition. One of the marks of the failure of the SAPs was the mass exit to the West of perverse numbers of African human capital. To fully understand the impetuses for African migration that transcend
the economic, it is useful to acknowledge that neoliberalist promulgations in the form of structural adjustment programs in some African countries actually exacerbated the distancing of Africans in some countries from any protective role of the state when the economy is in disrepair. This was a continuance of the lack of relationship between governing structures and the governed as was established during colonial rule.

Kai Erikson (1994) and Anastasia Shkilnyk (1985) offer parallels of the devastation of Native American Indian communities in the aftermath of the disruption of their lifeways by Western invasion and domination. Both studies look at Native American communities rocked by the injection of alien industrial projects calculated and justified by Western worldviews that reduced the potential impact these projects would have on the collective psyche of the Native American communities. They suggest that when societies have been shaken by a major social trauma, that society’s psychological foundations are weakened by the quakes of that initial social trauma such that even minor subsequent challenges wreak more devastation than would be expected by average logical calculations. According to Erikson, “[v]irtually all Indians in Canada and the United States, certainly all the hunters among them, have been ripped loose from a cultural fabric in which things made sense, having little idea, as can be said for the members of any society, (emphasis is mine) how deeply they relied on that fabric for meaning and security and a sense of self” (1994:57). In very close parallel with the concerns expressed by Victor Murray (1935) discussed above, about colonial Nigeria, Erikson expresses concerns he feels theorists need to consider about the magnitude of the shocks delivered to the lifeworlds of the Native Americans and the impact of these shocks. He writes:

*In fact, a number of different shock waves had pounded the people of Grassy Narrows before the mercury crisis of the middle 1970s, each of them, in its own manner, a result of contact with White people and White ways. If we could measure each of these shocks on a kind of Richter scale, they would surely prove to have considerably varied in size and...*
intensity. But we are concerned here with the influence of all that pounding on the people exposed to it, and that requires a different kind of calculus. The most modest of quakes can be devastating when the ground underneath has already been shaken loose and the timbers above weakened by earlier convulsions, so we need to be asking here how those blows reinforced one another, how their effects accumulated over time (Erikson 1994:40).

The contemporary African person is a conceptual kinsperson of the Native American with regard to the pounding and the loosening of ontological pillars that Erikson suggests. Both Victor Murray (1935), in the Nigerian colonial context, and Hardy (1917), in the context of French West African colonies, spoke lucidly about the sources, the nature, and the magnitude and objectives of the pounding that African peoples took from colonization. Magubane (1971) and his invocation of Jean Paul Sartre, among others, revives the need to capture their profundity in the discussion of social change in African societies. All these considered, it is easy to see that just like the societies of Native Americans described above by Erikson (1994), African societies stand on “ground underneath [which] has already been shaken loose [by colonization]. . . .” Their contemporary social environment is characterized by “timbers above weakened by earlier convulsions” and just as Erikson prescribes for the Native American societies, we must also prescribe for the study of African social phenomena, “a different kind of calculus” that would enable us to assess and analyze more accurately “how those blows reinforced one another, how their effects accumulated over time..” Neoliberalism as it affects Africa and Africans is a blow that has reinforced the blows delivered by colonization and has contributed significantly in ways not exclusively economic, in the production of a particular African context which produces and envelops the African migrant who has to make decisions about where to live.

Relevant to my argument in this study is the plausible assessment that neoliberalist interventions in African economies have also contributed to a weakening of any feelings of belonging Africans may feel toward their countries, governments, or nations. By ultimately producing states that appear impotent, they have affirmed and aggravated the disconnect between
the African person and what should have been nations in whose construction they can invest their hopes and resources. An increasing lack of commitment to their nations and interest in investing in its future in any form can have an exponential impact on motivations to move elsewhere. It does not help that African polities are contrivances of the colonization regimes that have made nation-building for Africans an uphill task. That was part of the first blow that Erikson described in the case of Native American Indians. Neoliberal projects can be seen as the second blow to the already shaky foundations of nation-building. The wanton imposition of neoliberal doctrine as panacea for human dystopias inexorably creates a logic of exception (Ong 2007) that is uniquely African, and adds yet another layer of disaster to the chaos of postcolonial sociopolitical reconfigurations.

This misfit of a universalizing market principle that presumes a homogeneous humankind, is relevant to Mamdani’s (1996) insistence that Africa’s underdevelopment be viewed with the optic of a devastating colonial subjugation, just as the development of the West is hinged on the history which includes the watershed period of the Enlightenment. This foregrounding of the historicity of the production of social contexts underscores the particularity of the African neoliberal subject. James Ferguson offers important arguments about the intermixing of factors that are involved in this production.

According to Ferguson, “[t]o take seriously African experiences of the global requires that any discussion of globalization and ‘new world orders’ must first of all be a discussion of social relations of membership, responsibility, and inequality on a truly planetary scale” (2007:23). The backdrop for this perspective is his consideration of Africa as an excellent example of the difficulty “in creating national culture and nationalist discourses of legitimation under conditions of neoliberalism” (2007:20). The African neoliberal subject, therefore, is deficient if
not lacking of imprints of a national culture, a condition that makes it difficult for him to lay any
claim to a clearly African belonging, at least in a political sense. This concept is illustrated by
Ferguson’s discussion of a letter from two Guinean boys to the “members of Europe,” in which
they pleaded with Europe, “help us to become like you.” The two young men, according to this
account subsequently lost their lives trying to get to Europe (2007:20). Their story has become
emblematic of a situation with teleological implications for the African neoliberal subject, since
all aspirations lead to Europe seems to be the prevailing mentality developed from an
Africanized neoliberalist calculus. The making of the African subject, however, was already in
progress starting from the era of colonial interventions and taking new forms and expressions in
the postcolonial context.

The neoliberal subject in Africa is essentially one that is desirous of self-improvement
defined in the context of his own values that may include both economic and non-economic
considerations. The pursuit of likeness to the West by the African neoliberal subject is believed
to be instrumental to the acquisition of the goods, and if all things are considered, other non-
economic social capital that frame him as an improved individual. Because of adverse local
conditions, the social class of reference for the African subject is a global one, not local, and not
strictly economically defined. The unfortunate Guinean boys gave their lives in pursuit of an
Europe they imagined from their glimpses of it from anywhere and everywhere. But even this
globally contrived social class has a place in the communal structures and perceptions of
prestige. A broadly defined pursuit of “likeness to the West” that leaves open multiple
possibilities in light of colonialism as discussed by Magubane (1971) can contribute to an
explanation of migration to the West as a popular choice for an African’s self-improvement. The
production of the African neoliberal subject is defined and circumscribed by complex factors,
and because of the fluidity of the conditions that apply to this process, it is definitely an open-ended production. For even when the African subject chooses migration as an expression of his conditioning, he is not just an immigrant; he is a transmigrant, meaning that he takes the community with him, as is seen in the transnational networks he develops and sustains.

The foregoing is a purposeful juxtaposition of logical lapses of economic determinism in the analyses of human action, and a cursory discussion of the particularities of African societies that cannot be evacuated from the mind of the African or considered inconsequential to his decision-making framework and process. It is intended to bring in the social context and all of its possible meanings and ramifications for the African person as a way to apply conceptual brakes to the sway of economic-based theorizations of the causes of migration. The African context described above and its manifestations in contemporary Africa are often subsumed under the term, postcoloniality. A formal definition of postcolonialism is offered by Quayson (2000:2) who sees it as a theoretical construct that “involves a studied engagement with the experience of [four centuries] of colonialism and its past and present effects both at the local level of ex-colonial societies as well as at the level of more general global developments thought to be after-effects of empire.” Quayson also suggests that postcolonialism has to be seen as a viable way not just of interpreting events and phenomena that pertain directly to the postcolonial parts of the world but more extensively as a means by which to understand a world thoroughly shaped at various interconnecting levels by the inheritance of the colonial aftermath. To locate this perspective in the study of African migration, it will be helpful to consider Fanon’s view of the colonized person: In *Black Skin White Masks* he states:

*When the Negro makes contact with the White world, a certain sensitizing action takes place. If his psychic structure is weak, one observes a collapse of the ego. The black man stops behaving as an actional person. The goal of his behavior will be the Other (in the*
guise of the White man), for the Other alone can give him worth. That is on the ethical level: self esteem (1991:154).

The contribution of this perspective to the understanding of non-economic reasons why Africans migrate is the elucidation of what it was exactly that colonialism has done to the African mind that persists today. Chinua Achebe calls it “dispossession” among other things. His representation of postcoloniality is captured in these words:

The ferocity occasioned by the act of dispossession and its continuing aftermath of cultural loss and confusion can usher in a season of ‘anomy’. . . An erosion of self-esteem is one of the commonest symptoms of dispossession. It does not occur only at the naïve level. . . even more troubling is when it comes in the company of sophistication and learning. It may then take the form of excessive eagerness to demonstrate flair and worldliness. . . (2000:80–81).

It would appear that Ferguson and his views of “mimicry of the West” discussed above can extend Chinua Achebe’s line of thought here. Ferguson would require that the question be asked: To what extent is the objective of the African seeking to migrate to the West, like the two Guinean boys, a desire to be like Westerners? For a more complete understanding of African migration, we need to consider to what extent colonialism, neoliberalism, and postcoloniality frame the cognitions and subjectivities of Africans such that they may seek the West for reasons beyond the economic, and possibly because of “an excessive eagerness to demonstrate flair and worldliness” as may be defined by the Westernized contexts in which they are socialized, where African traditions and values are either in constant tension with the European cultural marks or are completely lost; where the West is often presented and displayed, centuries ago and today, as the standard to pursue, or where Africa and the West are mixed up to produce an unrecognizable something that the African is but is not sure how to handle.
CHAPTER SIX
THE STUDY: CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

Focusing on the dynamics of international migration in Africa, my study investigates pre-migration cognitions and subjectivities as cultural distillations from colonial subjugation, its attendant social transformations, destruction of ontological pillars, and production of changing forms of knowledge and consciousness about self and global phenomena, as they may be manifested among African peoples. The legacy of colonialism is presumed to have shaped the perceptions and dispositions of African peoples about the Western world, and, consequently, the value they place on migration to the West. This study responds to the expressed need for a convergence of multi-disciplinary perspectives in the study of migration, the investigation of non-economic factors, principally the context of migrant decision-making that might help achieve a full understanding of contemporary migratory processes. By emphasizing the importance of social context and historicized experience as the source of subjectivities, predispositions, and impetuses for social action, particular histories are brought into focus, making it possible to distinguish between the impetuses of migrant groups based on their societies of origins. This research essentially looks at the sociality of pre-migration decision making, and explores its potential for explaining reasons for migration.

I hypothesize that postcolonial African peoples, located in contexts imbued with the residues and mutated forms of colonial subjugation, control, and erasure, have an ancillary non-economic attraction to the West because they ascribe high status to the mere idea of contact or association with the West; that such high status is an object of desire for many Africans, and that these values have been passed down from generation to generation through such enculturation conduits as school curricula, folklore, and forms of popular culture. The African postcolony is both locus and condition, whose contours and meaning are defined by a chronological ordering
of the experiences of African peoples, and the transmutations of social structures engendered by these experiences. It is locus because it contains the material marks and vestiges of institutional and structural transformations, such as the enduring recalibration of societies and bases of power and belonging, and it is condition because it reflects manifestations of embodied trauma of history. While it denotes a physical absence of colonial power and control, it is not devoid of reproductions and conceptual clones of colonialism.

**Conceptual Framework**

My study is constructed around conceptualizations of Africa and its postcolonial context, and in particular, the cognitions and subjectivities that are constitutive of it and are also reproduced in it. Social construction of reality as the conceptual glue which binds together and humanizes this process serves as an anchor for the conceptual framework and some of the methodologies used to unearth factors of African humanity and meanings that are fundamental for its full appreciation. The meaning of the term “Africa” remains contested and unsettled and therefore must be adequately unpacked and situated in the context of the study. This work in progress and the historically prescribed cognitions and subjectivities shared and exercised by the people of the continent fuel myriad debates and rich discourse about what Africa and Africans are, and how best to grasp the ethos of the people. Such debates are often organized around theoretical constructs like mimicry, social memory, social status values, and the compounded concept of largely untheorized African occidentalism.

**Africa and the Postcolony**

In his video series, “The Africans: A Triple Heritage” (1986) Ali Mazrui pithily declared, “Africa, you are not a place, you are a concept!” This statement provides polar anchors of the perspectival spectrum or continuum of those who have tried to theorize Africa. To begin his discussion of Africa in the “global shadows,” Ferguson asks the question “What kind of place
is Africa?” and thereafter wonders if there is any meaningful sense in which Africa can be described as a place, because in his analysis, all the empirical differences internal to the continent only paint a “dubious” picture (2007:1). His considerations of a possible “generic Africanness,” and a “civilizational sameness” do not unravel the conceptual conundrum that Africa remains but instead empties into what he calls “anguished energy” and “(often vague) moral concern.” But in Western knowledge, the stepping stone of Ferguson’s theoretical exercise on Africa, Achille Mbembe’s articulation of Africa is helpful. Mbembe (2001:2) sees Africa “as an idea, a concept, [which] has historically served, and continues to serve, as a polemical argument for the West’s desperate desire to assert its difference from the rest of the world.” And today, “for all that has changed”, concludes Ferguson, ‘Africa’ “continues to be described through a series of lacks and absences, plagues and catastrophes” (Mbembe 2001:2).

V.Y. Mudimbe (1988:1–2) views the process that produced Africa, its invention, as the tendency of colonists (regional settlers) and colonialists (those exploiting a territory by dominating a local majority) “to organize and transform non-European areas into fundamentally European constructs.” In his analysis, three main key processes account for the modulations and methods representative of colonial organization: the procedures of acquiring, distributing, and exploiting lands in colonies; the policies of domesticating natives; and the manner of managing ancient organizations and implementing new modes of production.” The culmination of these processes is what Mudimbe calls “the colonizing structure which embraces the physical, the human, and spiritual aspects of the colonizing experience” (Mudimbe 1988:2) In this analysis, Africa is both a place (represented by the physical and the human), and a concept (represented by the spiritual and, I must add, its subjective representations and expressions by the human). Mudimbe also presents an extensive discussion of how ideologies of the Western world
produced the conceptual framework for both intellectual and practical constructions of what we know today as Africa.

It is in the work of James Baldwin specifically in an essay with the title, “Princes and Powers,” which is a discussion of recordings and observations at the conference of Negro-African Writers and Artists held on September 19, 1956, that the production of contemporary Africa receives what to me is at once a kaleidoscopic and illuminating analysis. The unifying identity of the people gathered at the conference, Negro-African artists, was, according to Baldwin, “the fact of their subjugation to Europe, or, at the very least, to the European vision of the world” (1964:25). One of the speakers whom Baldwin called Alioune Diop described Assimilation, the French colonial ideology as a very special brand of relations between human beings which had been imposed by colonialism and which “demanded that the individual, torn from the context to which he owed his identity, should replace his habits of feeling, thinking and acting by another set of habits which belonged to the strangers who dominated him” (Baldwin 1964:26). The speaker illustrated this condition with the example of certain natives of Belgian Congo, who overcome with complexes “wished for an assimilation so complete that they would no longer be distinguishable from White men” (Baldwin 1964:26).

Also at the conference discussed by Baldwin in his essay, was Aimé Césaire from Martinique, who spoke about what he called a “cultural crisis” of the present and argued that “it is simply not true that the colonizers bring to colonized a new culture to replace the old one, a culture not being something given to a people, but, on the contrary and by definition, something that they make themselves. Nor is it, in any case, in the nature of colonialism to wish or to permit such a degree of well-being among the colonized” (Baldwin 1964:38). On the colonial economy and its relationship to black labor, the speaker, Césaire, maintains that “in spite of the absurd
palliatives with which they have sometimes tried to soften the blow… in order to accomplish and maintain this domination—in order in fact to make money—they destroyed with utter ruthlessness, everything that stood in their way, languages, customs, tribes, lives; and not only put nothing in its place, but erected on the contrary the most tremendous barriers between themselves and the people they ruled” (Baldwin 1964:38). Césaire asserted that the real intention of Europeans was to keep the people they ruled in a state of cultural anarchy, a barbaric state, and consequently, “The famous inferiority complex one is pleased to observe as a characteristic of the colonized is no accident but something very definitely desired and deliberately inculcated by the colonizer.”

The condition in the colonial countries were tragic, Césaire argued, because:

...wherever colonialism is a fact, the indigenous culture begins to rot. And among these ruins, something begins to be born which is not a culture but a kind of sub-culture... which is condemned to exist at the margin as allowed it by European culture. This then becomes the province of a few men, the elite, who find themselves placed in the most artificial conditions, deprived of a revivifying contact with the masses of the people. Under such conditions, this sub-culture has no chance whatever of growing into an active living culture (Baldwin 1964:39).

A decade after independence, Kwame Nkrumah, an icon of African nationalist struggle, takes stock of Africa’s morphogenesis, acknowledging at this crucial juncture the persistence of communalism and feudalism in some African societies where, he said, “ways of life have changed very little from traditional times,” while in some areas “a high level of industrialization and urbanization has been achieved” (1970:9). The commonality of political, social, and economic conditions in African societies, Nkrumah noted, derives from:

*traditional past, common aspirations, and from shared experience under imperialism, colonialism, and neocolonialism... There is no part of the continent which has not known oppression and exploitation, and no part which remains outside the processes of the African Revolution* (1970:9).

Nkrumah identified the next frontier of the African Revolution: class struggle, produced by the gradual death of “communalist socio-economic patterns” under the imperialist and colonialist
onslaught and “as a result of the introduction of export crops such as cocoa and coffee” as a result of which the economies of the colonies became interconnected with world capitalist markets, capitalism, individualism, and tendencies to private ownership grew.” Africa, therefore, has been irreversibly dragooned into the global capitalist arena. This process, in Nkrumah’s analysis precipitated the disintegration of primitive communalism and the collective spirit (Nkrumah 1970:14). Nkrumah obviously sustains a homogenization of the ethos of the African peoples, and in unmistakable terms reaches out to the ontological pillars whose erasure that began with colonialism exacerbated conditions in changing African societies.

Nkrumah’s views warrant an extended discussion since they provide a bridge between colonial conditions and the postcolony, and elucidate Mbembe’s (2001) discussions about the commandement, and the trope of the Janus-faced African individual whose complicities with the postcolonial state, described as an intimacy of tyranny, coexists with his social complicity, described as a social tax of indebtedness to his community, a resilient bond that has survived both colonial and postcolonial onslaught. Nkrumah acknowledges the existence of “embryonic class cleavages” under pre-colonial communalism and feudalism, but argues that “it was not till the era of colonial conquest that a Europeanized class structure began to develop with clearly identifiable classes of proletariat and bourgeoisie” (1970:22). It is this bourgeoisie group, Nkrumah maintains, that has joined “openly with neocolonialists, colonialists, and imperialists in vain attempts to keep African masses in permanent subjection” (1970:22). To him account must be taken of the “psychology of conflicting classes. . . [where] social habits, dress, institutions and organizations are associated with different classes.” The stark social class differences Nkrumah points out makes it “possible to place a person in a particular class simply by observing his general appearance, his dress and the way he behaves” (1970:23).
In an interesting analysis, Nkrumah discusses the ambiguities of the African bourgeoisie, who are “anxious to emulate European middle class attitudes and ideologies [but] have in many cases confused class with race” (1970:25). They have not succeeded either in differentiating between European classes “since they are not familiar with subtle differences in speech, manners, dress and so on…” (1970:25). In aspiring to ruling class status, the African bourgeoisie after independence copied the way of life of their European predecessors, the ex-ruling class, thereby perpetuating the master-servant relationships of the colonial period (1970:25). With an ideology of elitism, the African bourgeoisie subscribes to the fundamental tenets that underlie the essence and the role of the masses. They believe that power breeds power and that the masses are submissive, apathetic, and prone to deference. The elite in contemporary African societies are partial products of the colonial type who were mainly chiefs in the colonial legislative councils and in the colonial administrative services, lawyers and doctors, judges and magistrates, top civil servants, senior army and police officers. This African elite, along with African capitalists had interests that were protected and enhanced by the postcolonial administrations, and remain, in Nkrumah’s argument, “junior partners of imperialism” (1970:33). It can be seen that concepts such as mimicry, social class status have deep roots in the fluid constructions of African social complexes with a genesis in the colonial environment. These products of social change in Africa represent an unmined repertoire of explanation for a number of social phenomena in contemporary African contexts. They invite another look at Mbembe’s (2001) analysis of the postcolony, and Magubane’s (1971) exegesis of the representations of the colonial context in academe.

The dynamics of the transformation of African societies discussed above crystallizes contexts that portray various products of cultural intermixing between Africa and the European
world. An example of such a product was identified in Kwame Anthony Appiah’s work by Serequeberhan as “the pasticcio of spiritual beliefs in which contemporary Africa finds itself” (1996:112), a situation in which “African religious beliefs and practices coexist along with the sacramental duties of a Methodist minister and a Catholic archbishop as part of the same ceremony” (Appiah 1992:135). This intermixing is captured in Appiah’s work in his discussion of *The Postcolonial and The Postmodern*, and the iconic representation of the location of Africa in time and in the global context, in the ‘Man with a Bicycle,’ the polyglot whose “clothes do not fit him too well.” And the clothes may have fit poorly because they include parts and components that belong to someone else, a bricolage or pastiche at best, just as Africa’s contemporary sociopolitical vestment fits poorly because it is substantially of foreign origins and is therefore somewhat gauche. This imagery is applicable to the concept of hybridity which is more comfortable for Appiah to whom the Man with a Bicycle is a celebratory icon which testifies to the survival of African creativity despite the trials and tribulations of history (Appiah 1992:157). Appiah advocates a multicultural Africa for whom purist notions and claims to originary identities are irretrievably lost. The production process of the Man with a Bicycle and what it stands for can be compared to that which Aimé Césaire in Baldwin’s essay described as the production process of a sub-culture which, however, “Europe allows to exist only at the margins of society” (1964:39). The end products found in Appiah’s and Césaire’s arguments are not the same, but the real difference between the two is that the sub-culture grows from the “rot” that develops, in Césaire’s analysis, from the contact between colonialism and indigenous culture, while the ‘Man with a Bicycle’ grows out of the adaptive and dynamic creativity of the African people. This coexistence of resilient (hybrid) creativity and fungus-like growths or products that are sub-cultures may well be an appropriate depiction of the African postcolony.
Achille Mbembe (2001) offers a detailed analysis of a postcolonial state that replicates African sociopolitical history, such as that described by Nkrumah (1970), and the sketching of the contemporary African individual whose ambivalence is depicted by deep and meaningful ties and obligations to his community but is only bound to the state in an “intimacy of tyranny.” The postcolonial mode of domination is uniquely compounded by a species of sociopolitical relations of power that involve not just control but conviviality, and sometimes even connivance, as Mbembe suggests. It is characterized by ordinary people who do not confront power but play along with it as in a pantomime, channeling, deceiving, and toying with it. They participate by rote in rituals that affirm tyranny and ultimately become a “unitary system of ensnarement.” In the postcolony, this “intimate tyranny links the rulers and the ruled--just as obscenity is only another aspect of munificence, and vulgarity is a normal condition of state power” (in Ashcroft et al. 2008:65). Mbembe calls this alliance the commandement which began during colonial times as confusion between the public and the private, with its agents usurping the law at any time and in the name of the state exercise it for purely private ends (2001:28). This was a situation where a constellation of rights, privileges, and immunity, were usurped by a select group of people who also selectively accorded the same entitlements indiscriminately to just a few. Nkrumah, already discussed above, provided an elucidating morphogenesis of this situation.

When theorized as embodied, the social dynamics of the postcolony which is also a context for decision making offers an array of possible underlying cognitions that may be foundational in the formation of subjectivities that precipitate actions such as migration to Western countries.

**Occidentalism from Below**

The basic appeal of occidentalism as a heuristic concept lies it its suggestion at face value, as the flip side of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1979). The possibilities of any type of compounded views of orientalism and occidentalism are borne out by arguments presented by
Said himself. For example, he states that “as much as the West itself, the Orient is an idea that has a history and tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West” (1979:5). This is demonstrative of the fact, according to Said, that the two geographical entities support and to an extent reflect each other. If occidentalism conjures up thoughts of the empire writing back, such envisioning of contemporary dynamics of relationships between the West and the formerly colonized non-West would not be far flung. When Said explained quite copiously what he meant by Orientalism, he noted that the “most readily accepted designation for Orientalism is an academic one…” (1979:2). Theorists who have expounded on the concept have been obviously academics, which is conceivable because ordinary people do not go about their everyday business prefacing them with occidentalist or orientalist pronouncements or disclaimers. Ordinary people do not engage in self-psychoanalysis. But the picture that emerges from some of the conceptualizations of occidentalism seem to locate its workings within the confines of sociopolitical elite (see, for example, Buruma and Margalit 2004; Xiaomei Chen 1995). James Carrier, however, recognizes two poles in the conceptualization of occidentalism: the analysis of occidentalism in the work of a single academic, and the analysis of occidentalism in large publics (1995:15). My study focuses on the popular manifestations of occidentalisms in the “large publics” of African pre-migrant social contexts.

Carrier’s general notion of occidentalism is that of “stylized images of the West” (1995:1). In relating it as an outcome of essentializing processes, to those at play in the case of orientalism, Carrier agrees with Said’s description of the process as “one by which a set of people seeks to intensify its own sense of self by dramatizing the distance and difference between what is closer to it and what is far away” (1995:3). In the case of non-Western peoples,
occidentalism in Carrier’s view is contributing to the understanding of the ways they imagine themselves, because their self image often develops in contrast to their stylized image of the West (1995:6). The result of the encounter of the village and the intruding colonial social forms is illustrated with the example of Fijians who began to name and reify certain beliefs and customs for the purpose of making them markedly conspicuous (1995:7).

The Japanese example of occidentalism provided by Millie R. Creighton (in Carrier 1995:135) describes the Meiji Era, the first after Japan opened up to the outside world as one “characterized by intense curiosity about the West combined with a strong consciousness of Western power, technological expertise, and economic dominance” (Carrier 1995:142). It was a period during which the White Western world became the model to emulate, a standard by which to gauge Japan’s progress and modernization, the standard of beauty, a period during which Western-style clothes became better replacement for the traditional Japanese kimono. Ultimately this became a type of complex (Carrier 1995:142.). Creighton pointed out how the popular culture of Japan reinforced this stylized image of the West as the object of Japanese social ascendancy, a condition which was exemplified by the feeling and expressions that post-war Japanese history was the history of Americanization. America’s occupation had accentuated the Westernization with the importation of American popular and consumer culture into Japan, a trend which continued beyond the occupation but is now sustained by the continuing economic and political dominance of the United States (Carrier 1995:143).

Perhaps the most crucial aspect of occidentalism as a dynamic of essentializing and dramatizing alterity is that “these stylized images are not inert products… they have social, political, and economic uses of their own, for they shape people’s perceptions, justify policies, and so influence people’s actions (Carrier 1995:11). Though occidentalism has been theorized in
both negative and positive terms, as processes of both accommodation and resistance of the West, the African postcolony as pre-migration context has been characterized as fertile grounds for the construction of images of the West that resemble that of Japan’s Meiji Era, that is, in mostly accommodative terms. The issues of mimicry, hybridity, social class, subcultures, and other tropes of self-identification arising from the influence of European culture that resulted from colonization, point to positive African occidentalisms that are yet to be considered theoretically so that motivational possibilities for migration to the West can be exhaustively explored. The occidentalism in this case is clearly not the vastly confrontational academic and generally unfavorable literary expressions of images of the West which proliferates in African creative work but an occidentalism from the people who are embedded in social contexts that catalyze quotidian exercises of social construction.

**Cognitions**

With roots in the Latin word “cognoscere” which means “to know,” cognition is variously theorized in academic disciplines. My study finds in anthropological perspectives on cognition a useful conceptual framework, especially in the dimensions and linkages of cognitions and culture identified by Roy D’Andrade as he traced the developments and possible future of cognitive anthropology. Cognitive anthropology, he states, investigates cultural knowledge, knowledge which is embedded in words, in stories, and artifacts, and which is learned from and shared with other humans (1995: xiv). Cultural anthropologists believe that humans amass vast amounts of cultural knowledge and that the process of learning and organizing this cultural knowledge may be affected by other mental processes, such as the degree to which knowledge is involved with emotion and motivation (D’Andrade 1995:xiii–xiv). It could be logically deduced, then, that Thaler’s (2000) identification of the absence of considerations of the ramifications of human
emotions in classical economic models of rational decision-making opens a conceptual window to at least the fundamental theoretical constructs of cognitive anthropology.

Among the organizing principles of cognitive anthropology are the ways knowledge is used in ordinary life, and the way it is conventionalized into culture. One of the concepts that help explain these processes are internalization of the beliefs and values of a culture which from the point of view of cognitive anthropology emanates from secondary appraisals and the cultural shaping of emotion. The concept of internalization has its roots in psychological anthropology where it is defined as “the process by which cultural representations become a part of the individual; that is become what is right and true” (D’Andrade 1995:227). Motivation and its goals in the cognitive anthropology perspective are seen as produced through socialization, which causes the individual to develop a series of central motives and conflicts, the expression of which can help understand an interesting variety of cultural institutions. Efforts within cognitive anthropology to link motivation with particular types of action highlight the role of cultural schemas as goals for individuals. To affect motivation, cultural schemas must be able to instigate action; it must have motivational force (D’Andrade 1995: 231).

The most crucial aspect of this cognitive anthropology framework for the purpose of my study is the role that schemas can play as goals, especially in consideration of the idea that one of the main purposes of human cognition is to relate the individual to the environment through behavior. Schemas help define goals through their abilities to form hierarchies within which the constitutive schemas can have overlaps and interrelationships. With their stronger influence on the interpretative processes of the individual in the analysis of events in the environment, the schemas that emerge closer to the top of the hierarchy possess more motivational power. This theoretical perspective on schemas has great potential for explaining international migration.
because of its inherent diversity of factors and situational variability. The role of context and socialization in migration decision making gets a theoretical boost from this concept. If social networks and the cultural environment in general is to influence individual decision making, D’Andrade (1995) suggests that it is because “individuals learn to want to do things that are normal cultural goals by the ordinary experience of seeing admired others do these things, receiving approval for doing them oneself, and experiencing a variety of intrinsic gratifications by doing them and as a result of doing them” (D’Andrade 1995:239). These processes are all conceptual tributaries of human cognition.

Consciousness is a useful concept for linking the self and social encounters, as is presented in Anthony Giddens’s discussion of the constitution of society. He finds many analogous conceptualizations of consciousness in general parlance as well as in academic exegesis of human internal processes and their connections with their environment. Such expressions as “sensibility,” or “circumstances in which people pay attention to events going on around them in such a way as to relate their activity to those events” (1984:44) are examples of how Giddens explains consciousness in its elemental expressions. For conceptual clarity, he distinguishes between “practical” and “discursive” consciousness. When consciousness is practical, it refers to the reflexive monitoring of conduct by human agents, and when it is discursive, the agent is able to give a coherent account of his or her activities and the reasons for them (1984:45). In my study, Giddens’s explanatory framework for all forms of consciousness is relevant and useful, first, in locating the African subject in a constitutive and prescriptive social context in which he or she pays “attention to events going on around [them] in such a way as to relate [their] activity to those events,” secondly, in explaining how folklore or proverbs may play crucial roles as collective cognitions and social memory that may form part of practical consciousness which
though non-discursive enables reflexive monitoring of conduct, and finally, in explaining how African subjects are able to verbalize their social constructions of the Western world and its incursions into critical decisions including migration to the West.

**Subjectivities**

Subjectivity can be simply defined as the product of an individual’s construction of reality, that individual’s perception and interpretation of his or her context within which can be found the subjectivities of others, and the positionalities resulting from these perceptions and interpretations. Richard Werbner (2002) sees subjectivities in postcolonial Africa as products of global cultural flows as well as national political economy. Heuristically, subjectivities can be political when they are viewed as a matter of subjugation to state authority; moral when they are reflected in the conscience and agency of subjects who bear rights, duties and obligations; and realized essentially, in the subjects’ consciousness of their personal or intimate relations (Werbner 2002:2). The fluid nature of postcolonial subjectivities, and how they have been determined by discourses, political economy, state structures, and personal dispositions can shed much light on the predicament of Africans in the aftermath of colonial domination. Werbner does not espouse the decoupling of subjectivities and intersubjectivities, and actually makes intersubjectivities a precondition for subjectivity, thereby underscoring the primary role of context in determining individual action. This melding or annexation of the two concepts also lends weight to a central attribute of culture as “shared,” a centerpiece of anthropology’s disciplinary bias. Culture as a milieu for the interaction of pre-migrants in postcolonial Africa is replete with the subjectivities and intersubjectivities, produced, contested and reproduced from the vestiges of the colonial past. Werbner insists that subjectivities and intersubjectivities must be historicized such that the postcolonial transformations of the intersubjective might be fully
exposed as a fresh field that, in his opinion, has been neglected in postcolonial studies. (Werbner 2002:2)

João Biehl et al. explore the idea that subjectivity constitutes the material and means of contemporary value systems and may be functional in the remaking of culture as well as the inner transformations of the human subject. They argue that by “attending to subjectivity in ethnographic terms and in comparative social analysis, we encounter the concrete constellations in which people forge and foreclose their lives around what is most at stake” (2007:5). Their position is that inner states reflect lived experience and that this relationship can disturb and enlarge presumed understandings of what is socially possible and desirable. The ethnographic search for these inner states takes various forms, projecting epistemological incursions into cognitions, memory, and social consciousness.

Anthropology must then first and foremost battle what Biehl et al. feel is an “overemphasis on cultural representation… (which has had) the unfortunate if unintended effect of downplaying the conceptual significance of lived experience…” They recommend a more substantial conceptualization of experience “in which the collective and the individual are intertwined and run together…” (2007:14). This is very similar to Werbner’s analysis of the inextricable relationship between subjectivities and intersubjectivities. The subject, in the argument of Biehl and his colleagues “is at once a product and agent of history; the site of experience, memory, storytelling and aesthetic judgment; an agent of knowing as much as of action…” Among the sources of subjectivation offered along with this perspective are the vagaries of the state, family and community hierarchies, memories of colonial interventions (emphasis is mine), and unresolvable traumas. (2007:14). Ulf Hannerz (1987) points out the gaping void in anthropological foci on human phenomena, and argued that their concern has
been more “with bodies than with souls… more of an economic and political anthropology here than an anthropology of structures and meaning.” Expounding on the Geertzian view that subjects embody culture, Biehl et al. (2007) suggest that anthropology understand subjective life by analyzing the symbolic forms, such as words, images, institutions, behaviors, through which people represent themselves to themselves, and to one another. In the present study, subjective life in the African postcolony is assumed to be refracted in agency such as migration, but most directly in the subjects and cognitions that circumscribe or catalyze such agency.

Appadurai offers a unique perspective on subjectivities by placing them within the framework of what he calls “a theory of rupture foregrounding media and migration and their joint effect on the work of the imagination as a constitutive feature of modern subjectivity” (1995:3). He explains this as a situation which offers “new sources and new disciplines for the construction of imagined selves and imagined worlds” (1995:3) with the electronic media transforming preexisting worlds of communication and conduct by interrogating, subverting, and transforming other contextual literacies, which in the case of postcolonial Africa would be the literacies derived from oral traditions. This new context is characterized by the transformation of everyday discourse with a proliferation of “resources for experiments with self-making… and self-imagining” making them ubiquitously quotidian social projects. As a result, ordinary people begin to deploy their imagination in the practice of their everyday lives and “more people than ever before seem to imagine routinely the possibility that they or their children will live and work in places other than where they were born, this is the wellspring of the increased rates of migration at every level of social, national, and global lives” (Appadurai 1995:6). It needs to be added, however, that these relational transformations that are brought about by media are
mediated by the underlying cognitive structures distilled from webs of consciousness created by
history.

Folklore and popular culture can be placed in the realm of these symbolic forms that invite
engagement by anthropology. My study argues for the strong relevance of folkloric forms (as
manifestations of the distilled cognitions and subjectivities of a people’s lived experience and
history) to the individual’s repertoire of orientations about possible realities and how they can be
manipulated or instrumentalized. Folkloric forms, for example, contain elements of peoples’
cognitions that are produced from cultural learning and the intermixing of subjectivities in a
particular historical context. In the African context, as Werbner noted, subjectivities have not
been historicized though they are inseparable from history. Historicized subjectivities in the
African case can reveal their potential for producing goal-schemas that are described in cognitive
anthropology as energy sources that can, therefore, contribute to and nurture non-economic
attraction to the West.

Social Memory

Fentress and Wickham present a useful discussion of social memory as demonstrative of
the attachment of memory to membership of social groups. This perspective suggests that all
memory is structured by group identities and that the memory of the individual exists only in so
far as she or he is the product of an intersection of groups. Group identity is therefore
subjectively constructed by each individual, and functions as the locus of intersubjectivities that
determine what kinds of knowledge and beliefs are shared by the individual with other members
of the group. Again, this reflects Werbner’s conceptualization of the intertwining and circular
nature of subjectivities and intersubjectivities. Fentress and Wickham maintain that memory is
simply subjective, structured by language, by teaching and observing, by collectively held ideas,
and by experiences shared with others, hence the sociality of memory (Fentress and Wickham
1992:7). This understanding of memory finds conceptual unity with D’Andrade’s notion of semantic memory which underlies consciousness and encapsulates the individual’s concept of reality (1995:190). The individual as part of a group, experiences the present as connected to the past, and embedded in past experiences. These linkages enable connections between historicized and contextualized experiences with present decision-making and action. In the case of migration among peoples of postcolonial Africa, action in the present, the decision to migrate or not, is connected with experiences of the colonial past kept alive in folklore and other cultural forms which express social memory. These cultural forms are shared and transmitted from generation to generation. Once this relationship between the past and the present is recognized, and the possible repertoire of variegated experiences and the cognitions they produce are acknowledged, it becomes easier to see why an economic impetus to migrate can only be partially constitutive and not all encompassing of the calculations and desires that lead to the decision to migrate.

**Social Constructionism**

When positivist approaches to research on social phenomena which often aim for objective data are applied to human samples of a population, the dynamic at work is actually an unacknowledged presupposition of constructionism where reality is subjectively constructed by participants of a study. This reasoning underlies the assumption of representativeness of a sample where social construction of a few is assumed to reflect the situation and shared knowledge in a given population. The population under study is assumed to have epistemological commonalities that allow for assumptions about the society’s ontological pillars, and the selected sample for a study is expected to mirror these commonalities. These are the fundamental aspects of social constructionism which maps the social dynamics that culminate in the embeddedness of meaning into the institutional fabric and structure of society.
Sociologists acknowledge the foundational role of Emile Durkheim in articulating the sociality of knowledge production and the introduction of the basic concept he called social fact. According to Durkheim, “a social fact is every way of acting, fixed or not, capable of exercising on the individual an external constraint; throughout a given society, while at the same time existing in its own right independent of its individual manifestations” (in McGee and Warms, 2003:91). Durkheim includes the dimensions of objectivity and subjectivity involved in the meaning of social fact and notably links them to the idea of education. Education to him represents a continuous effort to impose on the child ways of seeing, feeling, and acting which he could not have arrived at spontaneously. The role of education, therefore, is the socialization of the human being which provides the historicity of the constitution of a social being. Parents and teachers, in Durkheim’s reasoning, are only representatives and intermediaries in the process of education, this unremitting pressure to which the child is subjected by the social milieu which tends to fashion him in its own image.

The central idea in contemporary social constructionism is the premise that human beings are agents rather than passive organisms or disembodied intellects that process information. This processing of information is carried out in the context of cultural practices and purposes, not to mention beliefs and sacred stories (Sarbin and Kitsuse 1994:2). The process and outcomes of sense-making among humans about phenomena that surround them is what social construction of reality is about. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1967) base their views on this process on the idea that social objects are not given in the world but constructed, negotiated, reformed, fashioned, and organized by human beings. They emphasize that phenomena of daily life are socially constructed and that the primary source of cognitive awareness is the historical sociocultural lifeworld of common people.
The underlying assumption of this study which purports to foreground social contexts as ancillary factors in the study of impetuses for African migration is that what has been theorized as the African postcolony is a social construction whose collaborative actors include the colonizer and the colonized but whose contemporary dynamics are constructed mainly by Africans themselves as they try to make sense of global and local phenomena around them. The African postcolony is imbued with constructed realities and valuations about what the West represents, based on transmitted understandings of their historical past. This process of African construction of the West can be found abundantly in folklore, including popular cultural forms, proverbs, oral traditions, given and assumed names, and song lyrics, among others.

**Methodological Framework**

**Multi-Sited Research**

Multi-sited research was proposed by George Marcus as the direction for anthropological research that would capture the intricate linkages among societies and globalized social dynamics that have been theorized as globalization. This new direction does not subvert pre-existing modes of ethnographic practices but seeks to foreground the objects of study and their locations. Ethnography is expected to move from its conventional single-site location, contextualized by macro constructions of a larger social order, such as a capitalist world system, to multiple sites of observation and participation (1995:95). The role of colonial subaltern situations in the modalities of global dynamics and the ethnographic exigencies they imply is accommodated in the new directions for ethnography proposed by Marcus but he insists that their embeddedness in a world system demands an approach that “moves out of single sites and local situations of conventional ethnographic research designs to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space” (Marcus 1995:96). In his reasoning, the design of research called for under the consideration of these current
contingencies must acknowledge macrotheoretical concepts and narratives of the world system but rely instead ‘for the contextual architecture framing a set of subjects’, on the tracking strategies of ‘transformed locations of cultural production’.

Immanuel Wallerstein who has been widely credited with the articulation of the dynamics and socioeconomic details of a world system, presents the trajectory of the capitalist world economy which, subsisting under the imperatives of the endless accumulation of capital had generated a need for constant technological change, and a constant expansion of frontiers—geographical, psychological, intellectual, and scientific (1974:2). He repudiates the prevalence of the “nation” as the theoretical unit of analysis of social phenomena, especially when complex interrelationships emerging from global flows of capital and labor have intensified over many centuries. Viewed as overarching and complex, a world economy contains many cultures and groups, practicing many religions, speaking many languages, differing in their everyday patterns, but also constituting a bifurcation of the constituents of global socioeconomic relations. A systemic view that includes all societies and the diversity in the identities and characteristics that define these societies seems to be the inevitable perspective for social research.

The world systems perspective on international migration is different from all other theoretical perspectives in highlighting, first, the dichotomization of the world’s societies into a core set of countries where rapid industrialization and capital intensive economic activity has created a set of countries at the periphery of these capitalist economies, and second, the impact of the broadly defined processes of globalization, starting from the colonial era in the 16th century (Massey et al.1993). This global landscape composed by the positions of countries in the core or in the periphery of an interconnected system makes it easier to track how each society’s historicity provides the particular characteristics of its context, and the role that this context plays
in the cognitions, socialization, and subjectivities of the individual. African countries are
generally placed in the periphery of the world system. As ex-colonies, they are to a great extent
homogenized by their experiences of subjugation and social change, but variations within these
experiences should qualify the particular contexts of each country, especially in their stylized
constructions of their former colonizers and their cultural forms. These constructions of the West
can elucidate the social dynamics of several African societies making it possible to compare
them on sociopolitical dimensions of their context. This logic explains the choice of Nigeria,
colonized by the British, and Senegal, colonized by the French as the sites of the present study.
Both are African ex-colonies of European powers; but because of the differences in colonial
ideologies, the two societies have experienced colonization in slightly different ways. These
differences are expected to translate into different constructions of the West or White people and
valuations of any type of association with them, and consequently different instrumentalities
attached to migration as a social action.

Multi-sited ethnography is seen by Marcus as a revival of comparative study in
anthropology which must not be temporally bound or constructed around separate fieldworks. In
this sense, the postcolony in its most general application includes both Nigeria and Senegal, and
its study in both societies though chronologically distinct with one occurring right before the
other as opposed to being mixed and in tandem, does not constitute separate fieldworks. An
assumption of temporal continuity is also made because postcolonial cognitions and
subjectivities are not temporally defined social phenomena. While they may be subject to
transmutations that are temporally determined, they have been theoretically constructed as
distillations of history that are socially inscribed on the cognitive maps of peoples from ex-
colonies, that are transmitted through various conduits from one generation to another.
The fundamental assumptions of the multi-sited research framework facilitates in this study, the mapping of terrains of postcoloniality and its attendant subjectivities with regard to migration decision-making. This study is not undermined by some of the methodological anxieties about the radical overhaul of the “conventional single-site mise-en-scène” that the multi-sited ethnographic orientation suggests, nor by its focus on postcoloniality as cultural formation that is diffuse as opposed to spatially contained. Rather, it enriches knowledge of contextual determination and circumscription of human agency by enabling comparison of “sites” of decision-making and action, and by triangulating data collection methods. Another apprehension about a systems view of ethnographic site discussed by Marcus is ‘attenuating the power of fieldwork’ which concerns the type of knowledge produced. The design of this study espouses a variety of locations purposefully and systematically selected and included so that even within two presumably different postcolonial societies, there is additional variety of locations that are differentiated by perceived ‘social class’ and ethnic linguistically differentiated groupings that are expected to enrich the ethnography by producing what Marcus refers to as “knowledge bases of varying intensities and qualities” (1995:29).

The predisposition to accommodative or resistant occidentalism in the two postcolonial societies that are the object of inquiry in this study has no known prior evaluation or systematically produced data, and therefore is not known in advance. The cognitions and subjectivities that may be indicative of occidentalism are assumed to be diffuse and mobile and therefore have to be tracked in the study population with purposeful sensitivity to the possibility of generational differentiation in the manifestation of occidentalisms. The role of translation in multi-sited research as discussed by Marcus is at the heart of the comparative attribute of this study, with the narrative of French assimilation colonial ideology expressed in the educational
policies of the colonial administrators of the then French West Africa, and its “Frenchness” juxtaposed with the subterfuge of ‘indirect rule” and its “Britishness.” The benefit of the multilingual researcher as advocated by Marcus (1995:100) was paramount in this study, making it possible to engage possible ‘multiply-situated’ manifestations of occidentalism as postcolonial culture. Ultimately, the focus on cognitions and subjectivities of occidentalism in the African postcolony reflects, in agreement with Marcus’s arguments, “a research design of juxtapositions in which the global is collapsed into and made an integral part of parallel, related local situations rather than something external to them” (1995:102). The global, colonization, is collapsed into postcolonial conditions and made an integral part of related local (African – Nigerian and Senegalese) situations.

**Reflexive Ethnography**

The previously entrenched notion of social research as something “outside” of the researcher needed the intellectual capital of the postmodernist turn to force it to yield, in principle, at least, to the simple notion that all researchers, at least in the social sciences are inseparable from the research process itself, and from the data they present to their audience. The issue of the authoritative position of the ethnographer is discussed by James Clifford and George E. Marcus (1986) as a political dimension in the representation of cultural realities which should be collaborative in nature and not as authoritative as is often thought, implied, or projected. With the political and epistemological crisis brought on by postmodernist critique, argues Clifford and Marcus, Western writers are being compelled to yield their customary monopoly of representation, and to accept that the process and knowledge production role of ethnography is increasingly and inevitably contingent, historical, and contestable. The production of text from field observations is the culmination of the univocality that renders ethnographies suspect of
perpetuating the inequalities that are often attributed to the relative positions of the ethnographer and the subject of ethnography.

Anthropology finds itself in a challenging position vis-à-vis these new demands for a polyphonic orientation in ethnographic production of knowledge because of its earlier perceived “complicity” in the reproduction of inequalities through the ethnographic enterprise. Faye V. Harrison suggests that the alleged complicity in the production of inequalities is justification for the enterprise of producing “an anthropology critically reconstructed and reworked to correct and transcend the most problematic aspects of the discipline’s colonial history and heritage” (2008:11). Epistemological concerns have given rise to questions as to whether the results of the research are artifacts of the researcher’s presence, and about the inevitable influence of the researcher’s presence on the research process. This departure from the positivist orientation that upholds the virtues of objectivity gradually developed into increased pressure on anthropologists to turn the searchlight on their methods and approaches to the production of knowledge. The outcome of this self-interrogation was the progression of anthropology’s earlier awareness of their effect on their research in its entirety, an undercurrent in earlier critical evaluations of the field by Malinowski, Franz Boas, Margaret Mead, for example, to the acknowledgement that self and process of research affect knowledge. This is the central idea of reflexivity which recognizes the anthropologist as a contextualized person whose positionality injects feelings, assumptions, personality and actions into the data gathering and presentation process.

When postmodernism buoyed the concept of reflexivity to become an integral part of ethnography or what anthropology had hitherto seen as the immersion into otherness, it sought the demise of representation and called for a place for the voice of the Other. Charlotte Aull Davies (2001) affirms the polyphonic production of knowledge such that reins in the voice of the
Other in a multivocal process that whittles away at the problem of representation. This conceptualization of the ethnographic process opens the door for the native anthropologist who partaking in the production of knowledge about self neutralizes the skewed structures of power that have been perceived to undermine ethnography. But the entry of the native anthropologist has potential advantages and disadvantages that are determined by the nature of the research question(s). Davies warns, however, that both native and non-native anthropologists should “examine carefully their relationships with their own societies and refrain from assuming that belonging is either uncontested or unproblematic (2001:35). Rather than expend efforts to eschew subjectivity, which is an untenable position in ethnography, Davis urges individual ethnographers in the field and out of it to seek to develop forms of research that fully acknowledge and utilize subjective experience as an intrinsic part of research (2001:5).

In conceptualizing data as collaborative product, the native anthropologist whose apprehensions might be lifted by Davis’s unchaining of subjectivity is invited to utilize her insights, incorporate varying standpoints, expose intellectual tyranny of metanarratives, and recognize the power of knowledge production that inheres in the authoritative voice of the researcher (Davis 2001:7). To be reflexive in the conduct of ethnography, the researcher is exhorted by Davis to address the situation by being aware of her own subjectivity, to aim for standard wording of questions, or sometimes to take the opposite approach and reduce reactivity by participating as fully as possible in the situation itself. When the researcher who is studying cognitions and subjectivities in the African postcolony that might influence migration decision is an African migrant to the United States who was subject to the dynamics of the same contexts she now studies, reflexivity waxes more force of exigency on the design and conduct of the research.
Popular Culture and Folkloric Data

Karin Barber describes cultural expressions—whether paintings, songs, novels, plays, anecdotes, cartoons, or slogans printed on cloth not as reflections of an already constituted worldview, from the position of the authors, but as part of the work of cultural production which produces consciousness. This consciousness production in the African context, often seen as involving the West or the traditional society in varying degrees, in Barber’s view, are genres that are grappling with new situations, and the consciousness which is being forged is open, negotiable, and in process (1997:6). This is mainly attributable to the continuous forging of new kinds of association, new forms of identity, and new publics in Africa colonial and neo-colonial eras (Barber 1997:4). The ambiguity of the concept of “popular” (culture), in agreement with Bourdieu (1983), is a result of the marks left on it by the history of political and cultural struggles which, nonetheless, does not diminish its empirical sociological basis nor its utility as a social category that refers to the “people.” But Barber prefers that the term “popular” be used to indicate an “area of exploration, rather than an attempt to classify a discrete category of cultural products” (1997:7). In an atmosphere marked by the production of new kinds of self and collectivity, the communicative values of cultural forms are important, for as Barber states:

*The proverb or praise – epithet selected by the taxi-driver to paint on his vehicle... may seem slight but they are recognized genres, governed by conventions, and produced specifically in order to be interpreted by a knowledgeable community.... They effect the ‘durable inscription of a sign’, a formulation which can be, and is intended to be, capable of transcending its moment of emission, something which will be taken up, interpreted, and repeated by others* (1997:8).

African popular culture, therefore, represents historical memory and maps of experience communicable to a knowledgeable general public that is not dichotomized into urban or rural, elite or proletariat sectors, but is devoid of social boundaries, allowing the circulation of cultural artifacts in a process where “elite and common people constantly imitated and appropriated...
elements of each other’s cultural forms” (Barber 1997:3) The African postcolony offers such a public because it is located in a wider global context where, as Barber explains, “[t]he workings of the international economy to circulate cultural products, the issue of ‘cultural dumping’, the question of the activity and agency of the African consumers of imported culture, are central to an understanding of the context in which local forms are produced” (1997:7). In this study of the potential for the existence of occidentalist tendencies in the African postcolony and its deterministic possibilities for pre-migration decision making and agency, proverbs, song lyrics, given and assumed names, “micronarratives” of experience, educational practices and curricula, print and electronic media, all converge to depict the dynamics of popular culture and its impact on the imagination exercise that characterizes the “ethnoscapes” described by Appadurai (1996).

**Proverbs as Data – Context versus Meaning**

Anand Prahlad offers a thorough discussion of various perspectives on the use of proverbs in research and how they may be analyzed for not only social considerations but also as “indices to national character” (1996:6). He acknowledges the higher significance of proverbs as historical data as is reflected in earlier research attempts to characterize various nationalities according to the author’s interpretation of their proverbs. In his discussion, there are three basic assumptions about proverbs as they have been viewed in research: as expressions of absolute truths reflecting cultural identity, norms, and values of a particular group; as containers of truths that are readily and universally accessible from the texts, and as suggestive of direct correlation between the truths they contain and the behavioral norms and actual behaviors of members of the group. Though this author’s bias leans in the direction of collecting proverbs in the context of their usage, he does not proscribe the possibilities of reading proverbs as text and analyzing their base meanings. To this end and in the context of slave proverbs which he studies, he states that “although the lack of adequate contextual data in existing collections renders impossible a
thorough examination of the numerous individual situations to which the proverbs were applied, it is possible to gain a general understanding of proverbs through an analysis of their base meanings, those meanings which allow them to be applied to specific situations to begin with” (Prahlad 1996:7). Though he quibbles with any consideration of proverbs outside of the context of its usage, Prahlad does not find it easy to dispute N. Barley who argues that a proverb can be understood and even paraphrased without knowledge of its context or of the objects to which it applies (1972:739).

Other viewpoints presented by Prahlad indicate that knowledge of the base meaning of a proverb from the personal reading of the text may be facilitated by the contemporary researcher’s familiarity with the dialects in which the proverbs are sometimes written. This is noteworthy in cases as in my study where a dimension of the research is autoethnographic data, where precisely, the I collect proverbs in my own native social environment. Additionally, Prahlad acknowledges that cultural background influences one’s interpretation (of proverbs), and that familiarity with a proverb increased the probability of its correct interpretation (1996:12). An overarching point of view offered by Prahlad is in his acknowledges that proverbs are one of the most important tools or indices for assessing the character, values, behavioral norms, philosophy, and ethnic identities of a group (1996:8). In my study, Prahlad’s (1996) and Barley’s (1972) views and arguments on proverbs in addition to Giddens’s views on practical (non-discursive) consciousness challenge the very popular argument that proverbs are useful as data only when they are collected and analyzed in the context of their usage (for example, Finnegan 1976; Dundes and Arewa 1964; Ben-Amos 1976).
The purpose of this study is to identify non-economic aspects of postcolonial social contexts and their possible role and impact on migration decision making. Rather than track trends or rates of migration, the study looks for constructions of the Western world in two postcolonial African societies, and how these constructions may predispose members of these societies toward migration to the West. The possibility of the logic that non-economic social consciousness attends and catalyzes migration decisions in African contexts has been occluded by universalist economic arguments that posit development and material improvements as teleological, and in doing so produced theoretical chasms in the study of African migration. In order to understand more completely the impetuses for migration in postcolonial Africa, collectivized constructions of the Western world and the social consciousness they produce must be considered along with economic motivations. The design of this ethnography is therefore based on the following premises:

- A more comprehensive measure of the magnitude or intensity of the migration dynamic for any given geographic area or society must include some measure of the desire to migrate among the non-migrant population of that particular locale.

- In the case of postcolonial Africa, the social context in which an individual is socialized, and in which he or she makes migration decisions is imbued with beliefs, values, and practices distilled from constructions of the Western world by Africans.

- Underlying the social construction of the Western world by Africans are cognitions and subjectivities distilled from the subjugation of Africans by European colonizers, and the resultant transformation of social institutions and worldviews of African people.

- The social construction of the Western world by postcolonial Africans produces stylized images of the West or ‘occidentalisms’ which impact decisions by Africans to migrate to the West.

- To fully understand the impetuses for migration among postcolonial Africans, occidentalisms must be viewed as ancillary motivators or compounders for economic attractions.
According to George Marcus, multi-sited research “is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography” (1998:90). These fundamental tenets provide a suitable framework for the study of colonization and migration because they essentially manifest at multiple sites, necessitating analytical constructs and proxies that may be metaphors, people themselves, life histories, strategies, story plots, conflicts, or material objects of study. Traditional methods of data collection such as questionnaire surveys and interviews are not subverted by the methodological scaffold of multi-sited research. Instead it expands the possibilities of the type of data that should be collected, and creates a place for the metaphoric role of folklore and popular culture as distillations of collective expressions of histories and their imprints on social consciousness. Marcus also suggests the advantageous role of a native anthropologist, and highlights the importance of language and translation in a research design concerned with “embedded discourse” and perspective voice. The importance of perspective as voice or embedded discourse in multi-sited ethnography lends weight in Marcus’s argument to the “significance of memory as the linking medium and process relating history and identity formation. . . .” (1998:64). Collective and individual memory in its multiple traces and expressions, argues Marcus, is “the crucible for the local self-recognition of an identity” (1998:64). This study of the legacies of colonization and the social constructions and instrumentalities they make possible draws its methodological framework especially from the notions of “juxtapositions of locations,” “logic of connection among sites,” the idea of following the metaphor, and perspective as voice or embedded discourse.
Colonization is a global phenomenon with broad-based legacy that is manifested differently in localized contexts. The colonial ideologies of France and Britain though part of the imperialist projects that subjugated and radically transformed almost the entire continent of Africa, were different in their approaches. The heterogeneity of the colonization experience and its extant manifestations in the cognitive representations of particular social contexts are very rarely subjected to ethnographic study. This lacuna is noted by Marcus (1998:64). Like colonization, migration is a globally relevant social phenomenon with locally distinct scales, dynamics, and impetuses, expressed with particular meanings and instrumentalities. Two postcolonial societies, Senegal and Nigeria, are selected as sites for this study because they stand to be exemplars of social milieus as localized manifestations of two global phenomena – colonization which spawns occidentalisms, and migration to Western countries which they catalyze.

**Research Questions and Design**

This six-month ethnography, with two months spent in Senegal, and four months in Nigeria, included observations, questionnaire surveys, interviews, archival research, and the collection of folklore and popular culture. The allocation of time spent in the two sites was roughly estimated based on the relative sizes of their total populations (subsequently boosted by ease of travel within Dakar and better cooperation from research informants) and the perception of available resources at the two locations. Senegal was expected to present more resource demands and challenges because of the researcher’s relative unfamiliarity with that country compared to Nigeria. It was anticipated in the design of the research and time allocated to the two sites that more would be accomplished within a shorter time, with perceived less logistic and language constraints in Nigeria, the researcher’s native country. The study was conducted
entirely in French in Senegal and in English (formal and pidgin) and Igbo in Nigeria. At both sites, the surveys and the interviews tried to address the following broad questions:

- How much do Africans desire to migrate to countries of the West?
- What manifestations or expressions of social consciousness among Africans indicate contact or exposure to the colonial experience?
- In what ways does the postcolonial social consciousness translate into the desire to migrate to countries of the West?

The Questionnaire Surveys

The desire to migrate to countries of the West was measured through 810 questionnaire surveys completed by the researcher. A total of 210 questionnaires were completed in 6 separate areas in the city and one suburb of Dakar, and 611 were completed in 7 cities in Nigeria. In both Senegal and Nigeria, the term “countries of the West” used in the survey was translated into the more colloquial form “White man’s country” which was expected to bring the meaning closer to all respondents, especially those who might not understand the concept of the West/East dichotomy. This became problematic in some of the surveys and to some extent insightful, as a handful of respondents mentioned Oriental countries such as Japan, Thailand, and China in the question where they were asked to specify the country to which they would prefer to migrate.

Respondents were screened with the first two questions to determine that they were at least 18 years old and also that they had never lived in any “White man’s country.” The meaning of the term “lived” was the second challenge posed in this part of the study, just as the challenge that can come from the significance of the term “migrant.” The issue was that of temporality and how length of stay at a location may determine who was a migrant or non-migrant. The survey was intended to measure the desire to migrate to the West (to relocate and reside or live there) and some respondents were allowed to proceed with the survey though they said they had previously visited a Western country for a couple of weeks or thereabouts.
Survey Sampling

Respondents for the surveys were approached at various open locations that were selected for their randomness in the context of a given city, such as markets where there would be both buyers and sellers, in the vicinity of public service buildings or workplaces, in public squares, and on streets in residential and business areas. Timing of the surveys was also crucial, for example, market places were surveyed on weekends or evening when workers were likely to be shopping after work; a middle-class residential area was scheduled for survey on a weekend because most of the residents would most likely be in the neighborhood rather than at work or at places of business; a public square in downtown Dakar was scheduled for survey around lunch time when there would be a good mix of workers, business people, and the general public. University campuses were purposefully included in the sample in both Senegal and Nigeria so as to ensure the inclusion of younger respondents, and to observe any impact of higher education on the desire to migrate to Western countries. In Senegal, 6 residential areas in Dakar, the capital city, were selected based on word-of-mouth information about possible geographical class distinctions, and one suburban location was included to enhance variation. In Nigeria, 7 different cities, 2 in the south-Western part of the country, 2 in the south-eastern part, 2 in the northern part, including the Federal Capital Territory, and one in the oil-rich delta region were included in the study. This sampling design was intended to capture the ethnic diversity in Nigeria’s population, with the three largest groups in mind: Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba. To ensure balanced gender representation, survey respondents were mentally tracked in each area. If it seemed that the last five or six respondents were of the same gender, the other gender would be actively sought. Women, for example, were sought purposefully when it was felt that men were overrepresented. In Nigeria, especially, women were more likely than men to refuse the survey.
General gender stereotypes about propriety of behavior leading to women being reserved in public may have been responsible for this tendency.

**Semi-Structured Interviews and Conversations**

The questions about types of manifestations or expressions of social consciousness and their connection with the colonial experience in African societies, and the ways postcolonial social consciousness may translate into the desire to migrate to countries of the West were addressed through semi-structured interviews, informal interviews better called spontaneous conversations, archival research, folklore and popular culture. With the exception of one professor emeritus who was interviewed by phone on the subject of proverbs, the interviews were person to person and lasted between 15 minutes to 2 hours, and were in some cases indistinguishable from unscheduled conversations which sometimes lasted longer and provided equally vital perspectives.

**Sampling for the Interviews**

All of the people interviewed were identified through direct casual contacts, snowballed references, volunteering, and specifically targeted individuals from prior knowledge of certain locales. There were 26 scheduled semi-structured interviews and at least 20 documented informal and spontaneous conversations. The original questions designed for the semi-structured interviews were not equally posed to all informants. Senegal, which was the first site researched served vicariously as a pre-test for Nigeria with regard to the semi-structured interview questions. The informants in Senegal did not have answers for all of the questions, but there were questions for which all informants had an answer, and those became the core questions that were asked of all informants. Not everyone had an immediate answer for proverbs or folklore containing references to White people. Most of the informants asked for time to recollect them. This is illustrative of Anthony Giddens’s (1985) practical consciousness which though part of the
individual’s knowledgeability cannot be verbally expressed. The questions were consequently separated or scattered for the Nigerian informants where they were all asked three core questions: on constructions of the West, constructions of the African migrant to the West, and connections between constructions of the West and migrants and the desire or decision to migrate.

Questions about folklore were presented to a targeted number of informants who through referrals were deemed knowledgeable about such matters. This might raise questions about widespread knowledge of the folklore in a given population, but the limited levels of discursive consciousness about proverbs for example does not reduce the level of practical consciousness about them. This means that though a limited few can articulate proverbs or other folklore, its place in social memory and as part of the socialization of people in a given community or society is not undermined. This is why the use of proverbs by a speaker is often preceded by the words, “our people say...” and often concluded with “is that not the way it is, my people?” The audience would then respond with “that’s exactly the way it is!” They may have heard the same proverb elsewhere, or they may understand its tacit message or the nugget of wisdom it conveys by their simple membership and participation in that social context.

The rest of the questions were randomly posed depending on the direction in which the informant took the interview, specific information provided by the informant, or even the level of sophistication or analytic ability observed in the informant. Representativeness was not pursued for the interviews as would have been ideal in the case of Senegal where informants repeatedly pointed to the Casamance area and some other southern cities as potentially folklore-rich because of their slightly different colonial history. In Nigeria, survey and interview refusals were high and the sheer geographical spread of the country posed logistic challenges for the time and
financial resources available. It would have been ideal to get more interviews from people from northern Nigeria because of their slightly different colonial experience. The 16 interviews from Nigeria fell short of expectations, but were compensated by richer repertoires of folklore than were possible in Senegal.

Archival Research

Three national archives were researched, one in Dakar, Senegal, and two in Nigeria – Ibadan and Enugu. They offered original documents from the colonial administrations as well as mimeographed copies of policy documents, press releases, news clips, confidential communiqués, book reviews, periodic or routine reports, books, and other documents pertinent to colonial policies and activities. The national archives in Dakar were particularly rich and had less missing documents than the archives in Nigeria. Some of the documents whose titles as listed in the catalogues suggested pertinent information about colonial practices were missing from the archives and some of these would have provided much needed information about the views of the colonizer about the “natives.” The preponderance of documents on educational affairs is noteworthy and possibly underscores the utility of education in the implementation of colonial ideals and plans.

Folklore and Popular Culture

Folklore, mainly in the forms of proverbs or sayings of the wise, given or assumed names, song lyrics and oral legends were collected through interviews of community elders, members of the intellectual elite, college students, regular folks, and from printed media. Popular culture was observed everyday and everywhere and through visits to targeted locations such as the Nollywood (Nigeria film industry) headquarters in Lagos, and television stations, print and electronic media, and conversations. While some popular cultural forms such as culinary and gastronomic practices, fashion, and social intercourse were observed, it was not always possible
to secure the underlying cognitions from the people themselves. Instead, they were subjectively interpreted by the researcher. In the case of Nigeria, the position of the researcher as a native anthropologist and therefore the shared meanings of the popular cultural forms facilitated the interpretations. In the case of Senegal, meanings secured from single informants could not be verified as shared among the population. Perspectives on the meanings of popular cultures offered by one informant is assumed to be shared at least by a subset of the population, though the significance of the size of the subset remains indeterminate.

The Research Context – Historical Backgrounds

Nigeria is the largest U.S. trading partner in sub-Saharan Africa, the most populous country in Africa with 250 ethnic groups and about 140 million people or half of the population of the entire continent, but also a product of a rich and complex history, European invasions and domination, about 10 heads-of-state in 48 years since independence, including 16 years of consecutive military rule mixed with violent coups. The Nok People, Neolithic tribes first located by archeologists for their terracotta figures and early use of iron technology, are among the earliest known occupants of the area known today as Nigeria. There were also powerful kingdoms and empires such as the Kanem-Bornu, Hausa, and Benin kingdoms and the Yoruba empires of Oyo and Ife which dominated the region until the Europeans came. First were the Portuguese who encountered and capitalized on the wealth and power of the Benin kingdom in the 15th century, and then the British, four centuries later, who came first to explore and then to exploit for commercial purposes. Through several classification and reclassification schemes, the colonial rulers attempted to somehow forge a unit out of the diverse ethnic and linguistic groups in the area, and finally in 1914 a landmark amalgamation was achieved, and the geopolitical unit known as Nigeria was born.
When full independence was achieved in 1960, the nationalists who took over the reins of government inherited not a harmoniously crafted population but a contrived polity ridden with factional tensions and reenacted schisms that remain to date endemic and unshakable. The Biafran war (1966–1970) was the epitome of the country’s unsettledness, a failed secession attempt by the Igbo of the south east which was crushed in 1970, the same year that the country’s oil wealth began to peak. With the oil boom, the fissures deepened mostly along major ethnic lines, with Hausas and other northern groups dominating numerically and politically, and sustaining a long period of political instability in the country. With the oil boom also came widespread and institutionalized corruption and the accentuation of clearly demarcated socioeconomic classes of very wealthy Nigerians living in luxurious residences and better maintained infrastructure, and poorer Nigerians living in crowded residences with poorly maintained infrastructure or none at all.

A Nigerian middle-class is hardly distinguishable, but tend to lean more toward the well-to-do elite. It is difficult, though, to apply these Western class identities to African situations since meanings of economic success may be subject to cultural interpretations. Some members of society whose income and lifestyle may be defined in Western terms as poor may not have the same labels in the Nigerian and Senegalese contexts. Though military rule ended eight years ago, Nigeria still witnesses recurrent incidents of ethno-religious, community, and resource-related conflicts. The government of the country is seen by many as a dysfunctional bureaucracy dogged by fiscal indiscipline that has produced a society with growing socioeconomic chasms between the rich and the poor. The Nigerian population today is 50% Muslim, 40% Christian, and 10% indigenous religion practitioners. As of 1996, there were 36 states in Nigeria but demands for
more states presage further internal demarcations. Less than 25% of Nigerians are urban
dwellers but at least 24 cities have populations of more than 100,000.

Senegal has a population of about 13 million or 9% of the population of Nigeria, composed
of 6 major ethnic groups: Wolof, Fulani, Serer, Diola, Mandingo, and Soninke. The earliest
inhabitants of Senegal were the Toucouleurs who were converted to Islam in the 11th Century,
setting the stage for the current lopsided Islam majority of 94% and 5% Christians who are
mostly Catholics. Though the Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive in Senegal, as was
the case with Nigeria, in the 15th Century, they focused mostly on the economic advantages they
could gain from Senegal and it was not until the French arrived two centuries later, settling first
in St. Louis, Senegal, that the colonial project came alive.

The transition from slave trading to colonization was muted in Senegal, since Gorée Island
was the major center for the Atlantic slave trade in the 1700s from where Africans were shipped
to the Americas. In 1895, Senegal was integrated in the colonial unit of French West Africa, and
in 1946, together with other parts of French West Africa, it became an overseas territory of
France. Administrative borders between the metropole and the colony were virtually nonexistent
as automatic French citizenship status was bestowed on residents of four regions of Senegal:
Dakar, St. Louis, Rufisque, and Gorée, and Senegalese-born Blaise Diagne sat at the French
parliament with French citizens. In 1960 Senegal formed an independent republic federation with
Mali which lasted only four months, after which Leopold Sedar Senghor became the first
president of the country. In 1981, he retired voluntarily in favor of his protégé Abdou Diouf, who
led the country for another twenty years. The current president, Abdoulaye Wade, took over the
reins of government in 2001, and in the same year, Senegalese voted in a new constitution which
would limit tenure of presidents to five years and two terms. This constitution also protected
women’s rights of equality with men. Despite initial tendencies of autocracy during the Senghor era, Senegal is noted as one of the few politically stable African states that has never experienced a coup d’état.

A notable aspect of the Senegalese society that has an important presence and significant impact on their culture is the Mouride brotherhood, a large Islamic Sufi order founded in 1883 in Senegal by Shaykh Ahmadu Bamba Mbakke (or Ahmadu Bamba) and headquartered at Touba, close to Dakar. The powerful influence of the Mouride dates back to the colonial period when they were known for their emphasis on work. Currently, they are recognized by Senegalese political groups for their power and influence in both the economic and political spheres of the society, and by the Senegalese people, especially with regard to migration, for their extensive network that includes a number of West African and Western countries, and for their circulation of wealth. Mayke Kaag (2008) studied the Mouride brotherhood in Brescia, Italy where they constitute a large proportion of the Senegalese and play important roles in helping people cope with the challenges of transnational lives. At least one informant in my study mentioned the role of the Mouride in creating and sustaining a culture of migration seen as part of the explanation for the clandestine emigration to which many young Senegalese are attracted. Their role in bringing the West home to Senegal is an important factor that must be considered in any study of international migration among the Senegalese.

**The Research Contexts – Observations on the Ground**

I was born in Nigeria, and received my elementary, secondary, and college education there, with an interruption of 11 months of which 9 months were spent in Dakar, Senegal, and 2 in Tours, France, as a required “immersion” component of my baccalaureate in French language and civilization. This research trip to Dakar was the first since my stay there, more than two decades ago, and the trip to Nigeria was the first since 2004 when I returned for my brother’s
funeral. I returned to Senegal and Nigeria primed and predisposed to the role of “circumstantial activist” discussed by Marcus (1995, 1998), anxious for Africa’s success as measured in contemporary modernist theoretical perspectives, but also protective of whatever is left of ancient or pre-colonial Africa which I do not want to see disappear in the unmistakable and very visible “mimicry of the West” among Africans. But I also wanted my research to tell the truth about what lurks in the shadows of the economic explanations and arguments about African migration and therefore could not underestimate the threat of presuppositions. But mimicry of the West was strongly present around me as I grew up in my native Nigeria, and has persisted as I could see through my transnational dealings and connections across the Atlantic. My motivation to undertake and complete this research was especially boosted by this knowledge and I was still in the taxi cab headed for my new residence when I started gathering data.

I got off the plane at Yoff International Airport in Dakar at the wee hours of the morning on July 15, 2008. Inside the airport building, things looked organized and I could not resist thinking, much like airports in some Western countries like the United States, France, or England that I had visited in the past. The nostalgia I have felt toward Dakar and the Senegalese people since the last time I was there gave way to excitement at the imminent opportunity to know the people again, though this time in a different frame. I thought of the people I saw as I exited the airport building as “data” for what I knew could be found there: easy to see vestiges of the colonial impact on the social lives of the Senegalese people, in an apparently unending tussle with what I call an Africanness that extended beyond the Senegalese people. First, I had to validate probably in my subconscious the adequacy of the expression “African” migration despite arguments that colonial history had accomplished some measure of homogenization of
African peoples. Some of my early experiences made me feel that Senegalese people were much like people in my native Nigeria in many small and subtle ways that I could not ignore.

During my first week in Dakar, I was taking a siesta forced by the merciless energy sapping sun and humidity, not quite free of the disorienting effects of the jet lag, when I heard a knock at my door and in tandem saw a smiling face and part of a woman’s torso dressed in some yellow lace appear between the parted curtain. My knee jerk Westernized reaction which was to someone “invading my personal space,” not waiting to be invited into the room, not even bothering to call first, all quickly fizzled. Disarmed by the warm and friendly smile from this face that I had never seen before, I sat up in the bed and smiled back. She informed me, still smiling, that my hostess had told her about me and she had stopped by to welcome me. In a few minutes, I joined the woman and her male companion in the living room; they asked what my research was about, an animated discussion ensued and she and her friend became my first informants. Somewhere in the middle of the animated discussion about how Africans constructed the West, my mind travelled to the woman’s spontaneity and no protocol entrance into my bedroom, and I told myself that I really was in Africa, not necessarily Dakar, Senegal – this whole setting and events were equally possible in Lagos, Nigeria.

The same first week, I was woken up again during a late afternoon nap and introduced by my hostess to a woman whom she said was a neighbor and had been asking about me. This neighbor was also hosting an American student researcher and wanted me to come over to her place a few yards away. I was urged to wash my face and come with her. My host and I walked over to this neighbor’s place where I was introduced to the American researcher, a student from Seattle, and without warning, a huge crock pot of the popular rice dish thieboudjen materialized on the dining table. I was not hungry and rice was not part of my diet, but I was tongue tied, and
I felt, as would be the case in my native Nigeria that refusing the meal would have undermined my social relations and reputation in the neighborhood. So I forced myself to eat a substantial amount of the meal. This, as far as I know, is how you cultivate and express friendship and acceptance. This was Africa. I felt I could say or think “African” migration – there were indeed, things that all or most Africans would do.

In the streets during my first few days, I sized up infrastructure and all kinds of impressive constructions around my new neighborhood and how the landscape was markedly different from the Dakar that I knew in my college years long time ago. There were flyovers which were not there before and imposing structures that seemed to suggest that Senegal was on the path to “progress” or modernization, which to the anthropologist in me meant that Senegal was Westernizing. There were women of various sizes clad in colorful flowing grande-boubous and many bone-thin younger women decked out in form-fitting jeans, tops, and skirts, looking like believable replicas of a black Britney Spears, Beyonce, Rihanna, or Janet Jackson. The West and Africa were adequately represented in the streets of Dakar. There were pizza and chicken restaurants, strip malls and grocery stores stashed with Western food items, convenience stores located at gas stations just like – I could not resist thinking it to myself – just like convenience stores and gas stations in the U.S. Again, and again, I found myself sizing up Dakar and how it was doing along the path toward development, indeed, the path toward Western civilization. The market places were crowded with people and wares, a picture of more sellers than buyers. But I thought that somehow people were living on their earnings from whatever transactions took place in these markets. There were also touts, young men whose job it seemed was to cajole you into coming with them to a market stall some yards away and hopefully get you to buy something. Usually the store belonged to someone else, they were just some sort of “agents.”
These were the people I was most concerned about and there seemed to be so many of them in the streets and in the markets, so many young men. Were they the candidates for migration? Were they the people who had unspeakable difficulties making a living in Africa and therefore hoped to leave one day for a Western country, their imagined El Dorado? It seemed at first that those economic theories were probably accurate, but when I started posing my interview questions, the unfolding logic was not that simple.

Downtown Dakar was also a sign of the march toward Westernization. The clearly numbered and identified buses criss-crossed through the streets and the bus-stops had seats and overhead structures that sheltered the people from the elements… just like, yes, in Western countries. The Place de L’Independence was a beehive of activity with some Western financial and business institutions such as Citibank standing out quite noticeably. Besides the ubiquitous vendors, most of the people in that area were very well dressed and seemed to have some important business to attend to. Dakar was indeed marching toward “development.”

The baguette or French bread was the most visible index of who instigated the Westernization. Its ubiquity and what seemed like a ritual built around its gastronomic
Figure 7-1. Downtown Dakar. Source: www.photosaroundtheworld.wordpress.com/

Figure 7-2. Research site Fann Residence in Dakar. Source: www.senkeur.biz/index.php?act
significance seemed to suggest that France gave birth to contemporary Senegal and really never left. It was served at every meal and the news media announced it when baguette makers were shutting down for one day because of some reason unclear to me. People were bewildered when they heard that baguette stalls and bakeries would shut down for one day. At least my hostess was. If I ever lost track of the subject matter of my research, the baguette brought me back to it, for when I visited France some years ago, the baguette was also an institution. The French were indeed in Senegal long enough to leave some marks, and the Senegalese have kept the marks.

There is no doubt that the warmth and friendliness of the Senegalese in Dakar made it easy for me to revise my survey target upwards and achieve those goals. It had crossed my mind that my different French accent as some of them described my elocution was a factor. I was told that I spoke more like an “erudite” than the average person in the street. I was also told by one person that I was “confusing” – a Black woman, apparently not Senegalese, speaking French like an “erudite.” It is possible that I was exoticized to some extent by my respondents and informants, something I thought worked to my advantage. My role as a native anthropologist, in the case of Senegal needed qualification. I had confirmed the Africanness of the Dakarois, phenotypically, and in the way they related to me and to each other, as something that I and my native Nigeria shared with them. I embarked on soliloquies wondering how it happens that we Africans seem to act alike, and what that said for the challenges to an African homogeneity. The language factor, however, once more brought to the fore some heterogeneity that must be acknowledged, at least as far as it validated the colonial impact. It remains to be seen whether these differences went beyond language and what they would mean for my research. The Senegalese were congenial and there was a humbleness about them that I knew would be hard to find in Nigeria. Was it because of Islam? I wondered. I grew up in the Muslim north of Nigeria and I remember similar
behavior among Nigerian northerners whose Muslim socialization showed significant differences in their general behavior and attitudes to life. My research would benefit from a basic understanding of the possible impact of Islam on Nigerian northerners and how this impact may translate into ways of constructing the West and predispositions or aversions toward migration.

I landed at the Murtala Mohamed International Airport in Lagos also in the wee hours of the morning on September 8, 2008, feeling very good about the service on the ground and during the three-hour flight from Dakar. My expectations had been lowered by the compounded impact of negative media about everything African but the superb service I received from this airline that was run by Nigerians in the majority was comparable to that of airlines in the United States, and was better than some. Trivial as this may seem on face value, it was noteworthy for me because it allayed some of my trepidations about my research context and the challenges it might bring.

I spent my first six weeks in Nigeria in the Lagos metropolitan area with a population almost equal to that of the whole of Senegal. Lagos was the same as I have always known it: crowded with people and automobiles of almost every imaginable model and brand, with businesses and residences intermixed in neighborhoods where living, buying and selling seemed to be equally hallmarks of human existence. There was what seemed like a constant motion of people and automobiles causing traffic bottlenecks and who knows what rates of pollution from the combustion of petrol. There was noise, a lot of noise, blasting from loudspeakers of electronic and music CD and DVD shops and horns of cars driven by impatient drivers who wasted no time hurling curses and insults at other drivers and pedestrians who threatened their progress to whatever destination they were headed. Pedestrian vendors carrying their wares on their head or rolling them on carts of various designs claimed their own spaces in the hectic
traffic, elbowing their way through or running people dangerously close to the open gutters which flanked the streets and were covered with thick green algae, garbage, or debris. The putrid smell coming from the gutters had lost any element of disgust, it seemed, because in some areas, the situation seemed to have been normalized as a result of being the same for as long as the buildings on the streets had been there themselves. Though this was not my first time in Lagos, I was overwhelmed, even intimidated by what I observed in the streets and it took me more than one week to gather the courage to venture outside with any research intentions.

But while I was indoors trying to gather myself, so to say, I was able to purchase and activate a cell phone just a few feet from my residence and within days, I located some old acquaintances who helped provide me with crash programs of orientation about the country and something else which was germane to my research: conversations reflecting a class consciousness, niceties punctuated with who or whose children was in the “States” or frequented it, whose children were studying in England for their Master’s or Ph.D. in computer engineering, pharmacy, petroleum engineering, chemical engineering, civil engineering, medicine, and many more impressive sounding academic fields. Those studying in Nigerian institutions seemed to be just footnotes, and it would sometimes be added that the parents were planning or had tried to send these ones also to some Western university as well. They told me who had built an imposing mansion in the village and in one or two cities, who was the director or regional CEO of some huge corporation, who was successful, wealthy, affluent, “loaded” as they called rich people.

What was striking about these detailed Western standards-based upward mobility and elitist evaluations of the acquaintances and colleagues from my college years and early adult life was that they were often unsolicited and the news on who or whose children frequented Western
countries, and who was planning to go to the “States” or England, seemed to be the first update I received right after the customary initial greetings. Some of these acquaintances were people I had not seen or spoken to in almost two decades, yet, the most important thing they felt they had to share with me was how Western-oriented everybody’s life was (successfully) becoming. It sounded like, in their eyes, and in their actions toward me when we finally met, that living in the United States had put me in a superior social position and these updates they were giving me were an assurance that they and the mutual acquaintances they talked about had not fallen “behind” me and other people who lived in Western countries. Some even tried to dress, change their behavior, their accents or lingo to appear or sound Westernized when we met. On more than one occasion, my compliments about beautiful furniture or some fashion accessory was followed by the sometimes impatient and sometimes demure response that it was not made in Nigeria. In some of these occasions, when the circumstantial activist role caught me by surprise and I commented truthfully that I had seen some beautiful furniture or other impressive items made in Nigeria, my intervention was met with surprising hostility and impassioned arguments that lifted up the West and ridiculed Africa. At the markets, people touted certain types of merchandise and tried to convince the buyer that the merchandise was not made in Nigeria, and was therefore of superior quality. In Senegal, the same was the case, and people would insist that the praised item was made in Paris. Nigerians would insist that it was imported from England, Italy, “States” or Germany. What all these claims suggested to me was that in their eyes and in their consciousness, Africa did not make good things, Westerners did, and they would not stoop low to buy African-made things.

Comments on what I was doing in Nigeria further confirmed the elitism that I was witnessing. This was not restricted to the residents of any one city. It was endemic among
Nigerians everywhere I went–Abuja, Enugu, Awka, Ibadan, Warri, Ihiala. Those who felt close enough to risk the repercussions of candor told me they were disappointed I was going to walk the streets talking to people. They shamelessly paraded me to their other acquaintances, neighbors, and family, clearly proud to be acquainted with someone who lived in the “States” but modified the part about me walking the streets talking to people. You are bigger than that, some of them told me in private. They felt that I should be hiring other people to do this talking to people in the streets for me. When I retorted that some of my highly paid and respected professors had done this same walking-the-streets-and talking-to-people for years and still did it, they still were not impressed. Throughout my stay in Nigeria, I got many invitations from my former colleagues to their homes, often spiked with “let me know when you would like to come and I will send a driver.”

At first, I was embarrassed, almost crushed by this unmitigated display of elitism, and even had flashes of feelings of inadequacy, but I bounced back quickly enough to realize that what my research was about was unfolding on its own with unasked questions. This was emblematic of the constructions of the West that I was looking for. This was also emblematic of the constructions of the migrant I was looking for. My first glimpse into the social dynamics in Nigeria was morale-boosting so far as my research was concerned. The data promised to be plentiful, I thought. I just had to prevail over the infrastructural challenges, the nerve-wracking traffic, the noise that sometimes prevented a good night’s sleep, and the hectic schedules of the people I intended to talk to, in order to collect the data.

One notable difference between Lagos and Dakar, at least, and perhaps other major Nigerian cities is that in the Nigerian cities, there were often two geographically distinct worlds: the world of the rich, and the world of the poor. The differences were as clear as night and day.
Across the bridge from the Lagos of putrid algae and garbage-filled gutters was a Lagos which though plagued with the suffocation of the neighborhoods by flashy and luxurious buildings and automobiles, was clean, organized, with malls like you find in Western countries, impressive restaurants offering local and international cuisine, multinational company headquarters, no open gutters or their putrid smell, and I am told, not a lot of crime. It was in these clearly upper-class residential areas that many expatriates and wealthy Nigerians lived. In light of these neighborhoods, it was clear that a lot of things had to be relativized about African populations, including the so-called poverty-driven migration or even constructions of the West. In Dakar, though I was informed that some areas were upscale, the differences were not as striking as they were in Lagos—impressive and upper-class type residences were often flanked by not so lofty-looking residences.

Put summarily, where someone belonged on the social ladder was a credo that seemed to drive relational dynamics especially among Nigerians. This helps to explain why Africans in this study were also looking for status in migration to the West. In both Dakar and in Nigerian cities, there was an ever-present suggestion that Africans live in the West psychologically. It seemed that if they could not live in France, Germany, or the United States, physically, they were satisfied to construct the West in their own locales and feed on these imaginaries.

This holds enormously relevant explanations for African migration to the West and raises even more burning questions for me about economic impetuses for migration. It was obvious that the wealthy and socially well-placed were as inebriated about the West as anyone else, and that the West was a consumable commodity, the amassment of which meant so much more social capital, and more prestige and respect in society. Relative deprivation seemed a plausible
Figure 7-3. Apartment living in Victoria Island Lagos. Source: www.picasaweb.google.com

Figure 7-4. Makoko slum Lagos. Source: www.skyscrapercity.com
explanation, but what were the standards that determined the feeling of deprivation? How can one distinguish between which Nigerians desired the life of those who lived in those local upscale areas, or the life of Western societies, and reasons for the difference? At least in my case, talking to people in the streets was overshadowed among my Nigerian acquaintances by my living in the States and that was my main value to them, at least in public. The data would have to tell the story convincingly.

Figure 7-5. Upscale Lagos residences. Source: www.hidroad.com/gallery/files/page1
CHAPTER 8
THE STUDY: DATA AND ANALYSIS

The Questionnaire Survey

The purpose of the survey was to measure the level of desire among Senegalese and Nigerians to migrate to Western countries. Its place in the research design is to provide baseline data which would serve as a possible index of the amplitude or pervasiveness of positive and perhaps inflated social constructions of the Western world, and consequently of African migrants who live or have lived in the Western world. A high level of desire to migrate to the West juxtaposed with pervasive positive and hyperbolic social constructions of Western societies and of migrants who have lived there should provide solid grounds for the argument that such social constructions are part of the impetuses for migration to the West.

Senegal – Questionnaire Survey Results

In Senegal, the 7 areas or quartiers surveyed were in the Dakar metropolitan area. Dakar has a population of a little over one million, about 10% of the country’s population, with a good mix of the country’s ethnic groups residing there. The specific populations of the areas surveyed were not available. They were (1) Fann Residence, an area of embassies and residences of diplomatic service personnel, government health establishments, and private small business; (2) Liberté 5 and 6, two of the six zones of mainly multi-unit and single family residences, some of which can be called upscale but a majority of which are said to be middle class, and also small businesses; (3) Université Cheikh Anta Diop, located at the ‘Corniche’ or ocean-front, right next to Fann residence; (4) Yoff ToNgor, an ocean-front fishing village and fish market located between the upscale Ngor and the Yoff International Airport, with mostly illiterate residents who could only communicate with the help of an interpreter, and who according to the legend, are the original natives of the area known today as Dakar; (5) Sandaga, the main market in Dakar where
one could buy anything from electronics, to spices, textile, handcrafts, jewelry, etc., located right next to Place de L’Independence; (6) Place de L’Independence, a huge square surrounded by government establishments with the president’s residence (Palais) and Senate a few yards away, and also foreign and local businesses and financial institutions; and (7) Thiaroye, a suburb of Dakar not far from a United States military base, about a 30-minute bus-ride from Place de L’Independence.

The choice of country-wide locations for the survey was constrained by information I received about residency requirements including identity cards or fees for entry into other Senegalese cities besides Dakar, accessibility by public transportation, and to some extent by a restricted budget. The quartiers surveyed were selected after demographical information was obtained by word of mouth with special emphasis on geographically defined social class. The surveys were completed within a period of six weeks. Primarily for analytical expediency but also for the purpose of comparison with the general African migrant population, the ages of the respondents are placed in three groups. As much as possible, both gender and age were randomized by sight at the survey locations and were also the driving factor for the choice of certain locations. Thirty surveys were done in each area with 31 for Thiaroye due to a miscount, adding up to a total of 211 surveys for Senegal. The following are the results:

In response to the question, ‘If it were possible, would you leave your country to migrate to a White man’s country?’

- Those who would leave – 74%
- Those who would not leave – 26%
- Of those who would not leave, those that have considered it – 35%

Demographics for Senegalese survey respondents:
- Ages 18 to 30 – 53%
- Ages 31 to 50 – 44%
- Ages 51 to 75 – 3%
Gender – Male = 58%; Female = 42%

In the survey, respondents who said they would leave their country for a White man’s country, and those who said they would not leave but had considered it, were asked their preferred destination. The following are the top four destinations for the Senegalese:

- United States of America – 25%
- France – 13%
- Italy – 12%
- Spain – 11%

**Nigeria – Questionnaire Survey Results**

In Nigeria, a total of 12 locations were surveyed, with 50 surveys for each location, and 60 for Abuja, a shortfall of planned 100 surveys caused by a personal emergency. Lagos received the lion’s share of Nigeria’s survey because it is considered Nigeria’s melting pot with a whopping population of 12 million people, an exponential growth attributed to the oil-boom of the 1970s when droves of Nigerians migrated there from their rural agrarian communities. Lagos has fairly distinct residential areas known for the preponderance of one ethnic group. While some areas were mixed in the ethnic groups of residents, especially the more affluent neighborhoods, the fairly well known ethnic enclaves, so to say, guided the choice of locations for the Lagos survey. Since it was difficult to accost the wealthy who drove around in their cars and rarely walked, a choice was made to find them at a local upscale mall in Victoria Island on a Saturday where a large number of them shopped alone or with their children. At a point in the survey, a mental calculation revealed that there were few Hausas thus far, and subsequent inquiries led to the surveys performed at Idi-Araba where Hausa residences and businesses dominated.

The areas interviewed in Lagos were: Balogun, a sprawling market and commercial area located at the general Marina area, containing its own internal sub-regions where one could buy
almost anything, much like Sandaga in Dakar; Victoria Island, where residences and business institutions of multinationals and upscale Nigerian businesses and residences are located—an indoor mall called ‘Galleria’ was selected as interview site because this was where rich and mostly Westernized families shopped, and because as already noted, it was next to impossible to find residents of this area walking the streets; Aguda, a mixture of lower middle-class, working class, and poorer residents with congested areas of small businesses and smaller markets; University of Lagos, one of the premier institutes of higher education in Nigeria offering Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Doctorate degrees; Marina, the official downtown of Lagos, equivalent to Place de L’Independence in Dakar, with many high-rises occupied by local businesses and multinational commercial institutions contiguous with the Balogun Market; and Idi-Araba, within the vicinity of the Lagos University Teaching Hospital, a predominantly Hausa business residential area with a not too distant minority of Igbo and Yoruba small businesses and residences as well. The remaining six cities surveyed in Nigeria were selected to ensure that the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria: Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba outside of Lagos were represented in the survey. They were (1) Nnamdi Azikiwe University at Awka, a town in the Igbo area of the country, with an estimated population of 200,000 people; (2) Abuja Federal Capital Territory, in the northern predominantly Hausa part of the country with an estimated population of between 800,000 and 1 million; (3) Ibadan, in the Western or predominantly Yoruba part of the country; (4) Ihiala, with a population of about 90,000 for the entire local government area which included other small towns; (5) Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, a town in the northern or predominantly Hausa part of the country; and (6) Warri in the oil-rich Delta State added for more variation. The surveys were conducted within a period of three months. The following are the results:
In response to the question, ‘If it were possible, would you leave your country to migrate to a White man’s country?’

Those who would leave – 79%
  Those who would not leave – 21%
  Of those who would not leave but have considered it – 5%

Demographics for Nigerian survey respondents:
  Ages 18 to 30 – 61%
  Ages 31 to 50 – 34%
  Ages 51 to 75 – 5%
  Gender – Male = 60%; Female = 40%

In the survey, respondents who said they would leave their country for a White man’s country, and those who said they would not leave but had considered it, were asked their preferred destination. The following are the top three destinations for the Nigerians:

  United States of America – 47%
  England – 28%
  Canada – 9%

**The Semi – Structured Interviews and Informal Conversations**

Two core questions were asked of all informants: (1) How do you or people in your society view White people? (2) How do you or people in your society view those who live in or have lived in the White man’s country? Additional questions or slight rewording of the core question for some respondents were dictated by issues raised by the general direction of the interview or conversation, and the informant’s perceived or demonstrated analytical ability and knowledge of the subject matter of the interview.

**Responses from Senegalese Informants – Part I**

Question: How do you or people in your society view White people and their countries?

I visited a Cultural Center where I was told a lot of people from around the city sometimes visited to see paintings and other artwork of local artists. It was a very hot afternoon as was the case most days in Senegal, and the few people who walked about were somewhat lethargic and
distracted. I walked toward a man reclining on a low chair in the shade of a tree and found out moments later that he was the coordinator of the artists. After showing me around and was walking me to the gate, we talked about my research. The following was his comment when I told him part of what I was looking for was Senegalese perceptions of White people:

>You see, when a Toubab (general term for ‘White person’) enters here, everybody runs after him or her looking for how to help, but you (referring to me), people acted as if you were not there. Nous avons un grand problem! (We have a big problem!)

A 45 year-old male who was visiting my hostess was having a conversation with me about my research and had this to say:

>People who do not understand believe that things that come from the country of White people have more value. They do things like exposing their passports when they are visiting home or flashing them around for all to see that they have been to White people’s country.

At a university in Dakar, I inquired my way to an office occupied by two elderly professors. After discussing the subject of my research with them, one of them was willing to talk to me but needed time to get his thoughts together. He asked me to come back the following Monday (I was there on a Friday). It was the older professor who wanted to talk. The reluctance and suspicion exhibited by the relatively younger professor was clear and noteworthy. When I returned on Monday, he told me he had could not recall anything about White people. I found this hard to believe but his body language showed something akin to fear and that reminded me of the attitude and behavior of many African intellectuals about subject matter related to postcolonialism – they generally tend to dodge the issue sometimes with the warning that White people might be offended by the subject matter, and even when they spoke, they were elusive. The gray-haired university professor had this to say but came across as tentative:

>Although colonization was bad, people have bad memories of it because colonization did many bad thing . . . the White person, it is he who has the means to conquer . . . an idea that is strongly believed. The Toubab has been very mean. He has been able to dominate the
African. It is because he has what it takes and people need to go there to find the means and ways of the White man . . . that attracts people.

I visited for the second time the cultural center where artists displayed their paintings and crafts and there were about three artists who had been informed I was looking to talk to them about my research. One of them was doing his afternoon Muslim prayer routine when I arrived. I got into a conversation about my research with one available young male artist and at a point where he commented that Africans had an inferiority complex about White people, the one (in his thirties) who had just finished his prayer and was doing something with a piece of canvass within earshot jumped in unexpectedly:

D’ou vient le complexe? (Where does the complex come from?) We have always been colonized by Whites. Colonization . . . that means everything. . . Africa does not believe in what they are, even when people have money they prefer to live like Europeans. They are no longer Africans . . . the majority of people think only about this. In the environment of the school, we are influenced by the education to think about White people. Look at how people dress . . . Africa is hot but they dress like Europeans. People mean to say that the life of Europeans is superior. Example, Cheikh Anta Diop, they are all great but look at them, they all married White women, our leaders. . . what does that mean? White people always prepare for the future . . . there are still French bases in African countries that are former colonies.

This impressive young man who apparently was not having it easy making a living had a serenity and sophistication about him and the way he analyzed the subject of postcolonial attitudes among Africans. Seeing his condition, one is attempted to accept completely and without doubt that migrants left Africa for the West for economic reasons so as not to live like this young man. I went back to the cultural center several days later hoping to find him and to chat with him some more on the subject of my research. He informed me that he was 34 years old, did some painting and odd jobs, and had tried once unsuccessfully to migrate to Spain by joining an art exhibit. My second visit had the objective of revisiting and clarifying some things he had said during my first conversation with him about the role of education and the examples
of the country’s leaders as they affected social constructions of the West and its peoples. He was one of my respondents who repeatedly anchored the attitudes they had observed among Africans to the colonial experience, and I came back precisely because this connection, experientially established by the respondents was crucial to the arguments on which my research was based. I asked him again what Senegalese thought about White people. He expatiated on his earlier views, emphasizing the causal role of colonization:

*Always, it comes back that we were colonized. The fact means a lot. The colonized tends to receive from the colonizer much of their tendencies to act in a particular way, their ways, their craftiness, ways of thinking, of dressing, and attitudes. We are not White but we have the education of Whites in us. The first president, Leopold Sedar Senghor was in fact a Toubab (White person). When he was young, he was raised at the Catholic school at Ngazobil with a brother Charles, then they had scholarships to study in France. When he came back he became president and married a White woman, Collette Senghor. He was at the Académie Française. Although black he reasons like a White man.*

Seeking to establish through this deeply analytical young man the role of socialization and upbringing in the development of certain attitudes toward the West, I asked him the following question as I did opportunistically when an informant opened up new windows:

*Are there any things you recall from your childhood that conditioned your view of White people?*

*When one was little, and we saw a White person (in middle-class neighborhoods), it was as if one saw an angel. The children said, “Toubab, cadeux! Argent!” (White man, gift! money!) We believed that the White man had everything and all he could do was give. When I saw an airplane, that made my head spin – I had dreams and some imagination about how one gets to make “un truc” (a thing) fly in the sky so as to transport people. When I asked the adults, always the response was the same: It is made by White people. I would ask, and us, can we make that? They responded, no. There were many examples saying that it was not given to us to make things like that. It was White people who made extraordinary things. There are many people of my age who thought like that.*
Responses from Nigerian Informants – Part I

How do you or people in your society view White people and their countries?

The informants were asked to discuss both their feelings and the feelings of society, but were also given the choice if they preferred, to discuss only their feelings or simply the general feelings of people in society. Some of them took time to indicate their personal feelings, and to separate them from the feelings of the general public.

A fifty nine year-old Nigerian male, a school principal in a small town whose wife is a transnational residing in the United States but visiting Nigeria regularly had this to say:

*Generally, Nigerians (we Igbo) see Whites as being superior to us in the sense that they colonized us and brainwashed us as being superior to us. Not only that, we see everything from over there as superior to what we have.*

When asked specifically how this view of the West might impact society’s way of life, he added:

*It has a negative impact because we equate everything superior to the White man, their food, their dress, culture so much so that in south-eastern Nigeria we prefer speaking the White man’s English than our own Igbo language and that is telling greatly on us. Their mode of dressing especially among those youth (between 12 and 20 years old) is fast eroding ours. The youth prefer their music, dressing, food, and way of life. On the average, our people prefer the European culture.*

A 50ish looking Nigerian female residing at Onitsha in the south eastern part of Nigeria, also a school teacher whose children lived in England and the United States where she had visited in the past said:

*Before, obodo oyibo (White man’s country) was seen as heaven, and not in this world. Our people believe that Whites are kinder than our people, and that they respect life more. Previously we thought they were closer to God because Jesus is always depicted as White. Our people think that they eat the best food. We think that there is no ugly person there, that they are all beautiful, that there is no poor person, no beggars like we have here.*

For a 38 year-old Nigerian woman residing in Abuja, the Federal capital Territory, a stay-at-home mother and wife who had an Information Technology degree:
We love them, we regard them highly, we believe they’re superior to us, we admire them. When we see them in the market, we favor them, we believe that they have money but still we give them gifts and extra things when they shop. Nigerians believe that ‘abroad’ is heaven on earth and that things work there, light, water, security, rule of law, and there is no oppression.

A 62 year-old Yoruba woman, a retired public servant residing in Lagos, recalled images from her childhood and how they viewed White people who were then colonial masters in Nigeria:

When I was young, ‘oyinbo’ (White man) was viewed as lords, something very superior. In my town, when we see Whites, we call them “orisha nla” (the supreme being). We worship them. That time, if you are opportune to work with them, you are nearing the God.

I was visiting an elderly woman whom I had known since childhood in my native village. She was bed-ridden with arthritis so I went inside her bedroom. Her co-wife was in the verandah, a few feet away, and heard me answer a question, explaining that someone we all knew who lived and worked in America, had left his professorial position to do charity work helping the poor and runaway youth. The woman (co-wife) who was in the verandah, called out to me and in unmistakable excitement mixed with disbelief, she asked:

Did you say poor people? He went to help poor people? Are there poor people over there?

I responded, explaining to the woman that there are poor and homeless people who sleep outside and beg for money and for food to eat, and when it is cold, some of them die because they cannot find a warm place to sleep in. A brief silence followed, then, she said:

Well, I am sure that those poor people over there must be the equivalent of the richest among us here in Nigeria.

This healthy-looking, neatly-dressed woman in her sixties, an illiterate who had never left Nigeria, chose to suppress the information that the homeless in America sometimes died sleeping in the cold and that some had no food to eat. Fantasy, a social epidemic, was at play here about Nigeria, and about the West, and as in many similar exchanges I had with Nigerians, the United
States or obodo oyibo (Igbo for White man’s country) was a place where no one suffered and if they did, their kind of suffering was better. The remarkable thing about these situations was that any attempt to counter their fantasy met with spirited resistance. The fantasy seemed to do something for them and they would not let it go, not without a fight.

In a scheduled interview at his office, I asked a 46 year-old Nigerian male, a public relations professional residing in Lagos: Do you feel that people in society think positively about Whites? He answered:

*Yes, they think that things are easy with the West because of modern technology, therefore, they see them as demigods. People feel that life is very comfortable with the West, therefore, we have brain drain. They feel they will be emancipated over there... They see them as God-sent, as if everything good comes from the West, but I believe they are the cause of our economic woes.*

For a 29 year-old woman, a secretary residing in Lagos, the following was her answer to the question: How do Nigerians view White people and their world?

*They were our colonial masters. We look at them as gods. We feel that they are more intelligent than us. We see them as superior to us. Looking at some of the things they invented we feel they are more intelligent than us.*

The second of the two core interview questions was intended to find out how social constructions of the West among postcolonial Africans might be projected on the migrants who have lived in the West, at least to some extent. For this question, informants were told that the economic attraction to Western countries was already acknowledged, but were asked if they thought there was something else besides the economic attraction to the West. Responses to this question are expected to emphasize non-economic attributions to migrants who have lived in the West, and when juxtaposed to constructions of the West itself, they can be argued to amplify the potency of the non-economic attraction to the Western world among postcolonial Africans.
Responses from Senegalese Informants – Part II

Question: How do you or people in your society view those (from your society) who live in or have lived in the White man’s country?

The following response is from a 22 year-old Senegalese male, a student at a university in Dakar. During my conversation with him, I expatiated on his earlier comments about the comportment of migrants when they visited home and how they were viewed in society by asking him: Are you able to recognize Senegalese who have lived in the White man’s country?

*If I see them, I can recognize them easily because they bring back the culture. They dress like White people. They live their lives without bothering themselves about others.*

Do these people attract admiration? I asked.

*They have friends, people want to be like them. People want to visit over there to see what is going on. Whenever they return, their living conditions change, they get better.*

The following is part of a conversation I had with a 52 year-old male at the fishing village, Yoff ToNgor. I asked him: What do you think of Senegalese who have been to or lived in the White man’s country?

*They have another way of life. They love to distance themselves from us. They go to the beach to tan like the Whites but we don’t need to tan. They invest in real estate. They are respected by people in society.*

I asked specifically: Do you think they are superior?

*There are people who think they are superior even if they have nothing. God made us unequal. They are admired in society.*

A 63 year-old woman, a retired teacher, was able to compare the way things were when she was younger and the way they are now. The following are her remarks about society’s attitudes toward those who returned home after, or while living abroad.

*People took them as Toubabs (White people) because when they returned, they were very critical of those who had not been to the White man’s country. They were very assimilated, that’s what they were called. They imitated the French so much that they became*
unrecognizable. Dakar, Rufisque, St Louis, Gorée were the automatic French citizens and they had an attitude of superiority towards others.

A female in her late thirties residing at Thiaroye jumped in when I was interviewing a young man and spoke in response to a follow-up question: What is the comportment of those who returned from abroad?

*It is a comportment of superiority. They don’t want to pass without being noticed. They want everyone to know they’ve been over there.*

Why? I asked, besides money, what do you think they go to the White man’s country for?

*They travel for the money but they also want to change how they speak, how they dress, when they return, their way of life. They don’t prefer any more the ways of the race. They imitate Whites a lot. It is warm and they wear jackets. They believe that society admires them like that.*

In the middle of a conversation about my research, I asked a 19 year-old Senegalese woman who was helping out at a batik retail store and told me later she was also a student: Do they (returned migrants) think of themselves as superior? She answered:

*Yes, especially that – and they say that they find those that stay in Senegal still the same.*

To the question: Do you see any symbols of the White man’s country in these people?

*Their accoutrement, their dressing, speech, conduct . . . people feel that they have emigrated and that they are superior to others. There are people who admire that. They say that they are different, not like people they meet every day. There are people who want to be like that because they say that girls run after those who have emigrated.*

A griot’s wife at Thiaroye threw in her opinion during my conversation with her husband who wanted very much to go to the White man’s country because his relative, a griot, became rich after some White people sponsored him to visit their country:

*People say only nice things about White people. They help a lot of black people.*

I asked her what she thought about those who have been to White people’s country, and whether she thought they went there for money. She added:

*It is not only about money it is to be like them, to copy them.*
Responses from Nigerian Informants – Part II

Question: How do you or people in your society view those (from your society) who live in or have lived in the White man’s country?

I met this 75 year-old Nigerian woman while I was doing surveys and interviews in Lagos. She had rare first-hand knowledge of colonial times and was very analytical in her comments. She agreed to talk to me some more and I had to track her back to her village up to 700 miles from Lagos – a small south-eastern town. To the question: What do Nigerians think about migrants? She responded:

Blacks who went abroad in 1940s and 50s were welcomed with merriment and feasting because his comportment and dressing, and accent set him/her apart from those at home. This is why they were welcomed with feasting and dance when they arrived at the airport. Those who returned from abroad are disciplined like Whites and they are accorded the high respect and status that is given to Whites. Whites always placed those who returned with foreign education in very high positions.

This 62 year-old Nigerian lady, a retired public servant residing in Lagos caught my attention when she was discussing the arrogance of another woman who was supposed to be her friend, but whose behavior toward her had changed gradually since her children migrated to the West. I secured an appointment to speak with her for this reason but also because she was old enough during the colonial times, had lived with and around the colonizers and was able to speak of those times and contemporary society. She had a lot to say:

After associating with them (Whites) as in travels, you come back a very big man to your people because you are exposed to White people.

I followed up: Apart from economic reasons, how do people in Nigeria view going abroad? She answered:

They think it raises their status in the eyes of people at home. People think that those who go abroad have more knowledge than those at home, that they are exposed to so many things such as health education and a better lifestyle. In those days, people went to White man’s land for education, there was a big celebration when they were leaving. People are proud to say that they have children living abroad and they seemed to demand respect just
because they have children in White man’s land. When you return from White man’s country, people worship you, they want to serve you, wash your clothes . . . you are given a top position, even today still. When people go to Mecca, they insist on their title Alhaji and Alhaja. It’s the same thing with those who have visited the White man’s country. It is as if they have acquired a title.

The view that level of education had a lot to do with how people viewed the Western world and migrants who had lived there, was raised a number of times among the Senegalese as well as Nigerians. The following are the comments of a 40 year – old contract manager, a Nigerian male residing in Lagos, in response to the question: Above economic benefits of migration, how are migrants seen?

There are two levels of attitudes, illiterate versus learned. For the illiterate, they see people that migrate as people that God has blessed, as lifted up from eternal suffering to the Promised Land . . . the selected few that have been blessed. They expect instant rewards from migration. For the educated, they see migration as a means rather than an end, a means to achieving personal desires or goals that the person has set for himself due to inadequacies of the Nigerian system . . . preventing achievement of personal goals. They do not see migration as a source of material gains but as a means of achieving personal ambitions.

I followed up with the question: Is there an issue of status attached to having touched the life of the White man? Again he drew distinctions between the educated and uneducated:

There are two views, educated versus uneducated. The uneducated see it as a status symbol, level of status beyond what can be seen. The educated view . . . they do not see going to the West as being glorified, they see it as an opportunity to be better prepared for the unknown. Some have the hangover of the uneducated view of status symbol value. They carry it over till they have to deal with migration. They have it somewhere buried in their brain . . . it comes up once in a while. The educated tend to stay here or visit (overseas) and return.

To the question about how Nigerians view migrants who have lived in the West apart from money benefits a 29 year-old Nigerian woman, a secretary residing in Lagos, gave this response:

Because of the way we view White people, it is expected that anyone who has been exposed to their lifestyle would have traces of that lifestyle. When they come back, you find that their intonation changes. Some think they are showing off but others who are not very learned (probe: those without academic credentials) have respect for those kinds of things – educated people find the lifestyle, accent change attractive but not necessarily a mark of superiority.
A 34 year-old Real Estate professional residing in Abuja the Federal capital Territory made this comment in my conversation with him about migration and social status:

*Everybody in Nigeria wants to associate with someone abroad. Nigerian government gives preference in projects to expatriates. High status is attributed to things associated with White people, it adds more value. For example, a medical doctor from America will be chosen over a Nigerian trained medical doctor because they feel their experience is superior.*

I followed up with this question: Why these positive views all over about Whites?

*Going there adds status. People associate themselves with the dress, speech, and culture brought home, they believe these people are on top.*

A 38 year-old female homemaker residing in Abuja was asked directly if she felt that social status was attached to returnees from Western countries:

*Going abroad has a social status attached to it, definitely, and this is besides the economic benefit attached. It makes one feel socially acceptable. People at home are attracted to migrate because they envy those who have been there both because of the money opportunities and by the social status that comes from the acquired culture. We love their culture even though we criticize it sometimes.*

A 59 year-old school principal was asked how our views of White people affected the way we viewed migrants residing in Western countries, and the following were his comments:

*Generally, our views of those who have been abroad, Europe, America, as superior to those at home is because they have acquired the cultures of the Whites and that gives us the false impression to rush over there because we think that that place is better than here, but Africa is better in my opinion. People get there and get stranded and frustrated and get into a criminal lifestyle.*

When asked directly if society attached any status to migrants, he added:

*The manner of dressing, accent, mannerisms, are ascribed a status symbol which our people admire and desire. Anybody that comes from Europe or America is adored. The young girls want to marry them more than the local boys without looking at anything else about the man. Money is not the only attraction; this status symbol is a major attraction.*

According to a 48 year-old engineer in the oil industry residing in the Delta State of Warri, our views about Whites affect the way we view those who have been abroad. He put it this way:
We transfer our perception of Whites to those who have been there. People attach high status to having lived abroad. We notice their complexion is different, their accent, their dressing, their general appearance.

When asked pointedly if he thought that these things made people want to migrate to White man’s country, he added:

You want to be there so as to look like those who have been there. Our girls like them without knowing anything about their financial situation and source of income. We feel that those abroad come here with good life and that is attractive to those at home. I still had that quest when I was small, that hunger to see why they are better and what they have. Young people here were the same way. They are crazy about things from abroad and everyone wanted that.

**Folklore**

Folklore data collected for this research include mainly given and assumed names, nicknames, proverbs, idioms, and sayings of the wise, song lyrics, and legends. In Nigeria, all names have meanings that communicate something about the philosophical beliefs, values, and aspirations of the person’s family, community, or kindred. It is usually a prayer, an acknowledgment of something of value, a remembrance of a significant aspect of the past, aspirations for the future, in all cases, it reflects reality in a word, a phrase, or a complete sentence. Proverbs are not only distillations and expressions of meaning that are vital to a people, a community, an ethnic group, but are also valued and esteemed indices of eloquence, wisdom and exceptional communication skills. The ethos of a people or a family can be learned from the names they give and take, and from the proverbs used or known them. For this research, Yoruba and Igbo names that make reference to White people or their world were collected. They are expected to communicate social memory or collective cognitions about the impact of colonization on the lives of the people. Those names are rare among the Hausa. Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa proverbs were also collected with noteworthy divergences in meaning and constructions of the West. The names and proverbs were collected from intellectual elite, college
students, traditional community elders, leaders of cultural organization, and some regular
individuals. The informants were asked to explain the context of the use of names and proverbs
they provided.

**Igbo Names**

- *Nwambooyibo* – a female likened to White people – a girl’s name associated with
  extreme beauty or features that are pleasing to the eye such as a long/pointed or nose
  characteristic of White people, and fair complexion. This name is also applied as
  nickname to someone who is neat and organized.

- *Okolooyibo/Ikorooyibo* – male likened to White people – male variant of above – a
  handsome male child or person.

- *Mmaduoyibo* – a person likened to White people. Someone positively viewed as well-
  behaved, neat, and organized with a lifestyle similar to that of White people.

- *Nwaamulunoyibo* – A child born in the context or surrounded by a lifestyle likened to
  that of Whites, therefore, wished to have qualities or attributes of White people. The
  name is also given to a child born in a Western country.

- *Egbeoyibo (na agho nko karia egbe Igbo)* – White man’s gun (is sharper than that of
  Igbos). This is a name given to a child born during the battle where the White man’s gun
  was seen as superior to the locally made one. The name is passed down to generations
  after colonial rule to signify power or superiority.

- *Oyibo ji eze (ochichi)* – White man is the proprietor of kingship (or leadership). This is a
  name given to a male child expressing the supremacy or power of Whites – an
  affirmation or projection.

- *Udeoyibo* – this means a widespread fame or acceptability of White people. This is a
  name given to a child purported as a wish by the parents that he/she be endowed with the
  fame and acceptability enjoyed by Whites. It is also an affirmation of local consciousness
  about White people and their world.

- *Oyibodieguwu* – Whites or things of the White world are wonderful/amazing/awesome.
  This is a name given to a male child.

- *Oyiboamaka* – White man /anything associated with White people is beautiful or good.
  An example is found in a case of a mother who was saved at childbirth by White people
  in a hospital, after which ordeal she gave her child this name attributing to White people
  the capability for performing miracles. This name is also given to show praise or
  admiration of things related to the White world.
• **Oyibojindu** – White man is the proprietor of life/White man holds life. This is a name that comes also from a positively perceived hospital experience at the hands of White people, affirming their technological supremacy. Generally, it affirms the feeling of superhuman qualities attributed to White people.

• **Oyibobungala** – A lifestyle like that of Whites is cause for pride/acquires bragging rights. A White lifestyle causes/procures pride.

• **Ugooyibo** – an honor/trophy/accolade that comes from Whiteness/or White lifestyle. A recognition won by likeness to Whites and their world.

• **Oyibokammadu** – White man is greater than humans – White man is superhuman. A man has this assumed name.

• **Oyibojaanu** – Someone likened to Whites/or lives like Whites/elevated to the level of Whites will marry her. This is a girl’s given name.

• **Agbooyibo** – White bloodline or species – a name purported to lift one’s offspring or a person up to the level of Whites or comparability to Whites. It confers on the child or person (honorary) membership in the White kindred. Family expresses pride through the child in associating or comparing their lineage to Whiteness or (superior) White lifestyle.

• **Egooyibo** – White people’s money/currency – a girl’s name meaning that she is precious.

• **Uzooyibo** – this literally means ‘paved roads’ brought by the White man as opposed to dirt roads. It can also mean the way/path of the White man – positively acknowledged by the people in a child’s name.

• **Ijeoyibo** – An odyssey or experience that is related to the world of White people. A journey that has to do with Whiteness or the White world – or is as good as Whiteness. The name is often given to a female child born abroad or when parent(s) live away in big city or are involved in White man’s business or affairs – or a wish for this.

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**Yoruba Names**

The suffix ‘oyinbo’ or ‘eebo’ (depending on the dialect), means any European or White man, with emphasis on skin color. These names were obtained from intellectual elite, a community cultural leader, from regular folks, and from ‘The Dictionary of Yoruba Names’ published by University of Lagos.

• **Efunteebo/Efuntoyinbo** – The creation god/fertility goddess is as great as the Whiteskin people.
• **Ogunteeb/Oguntoyinbo** - The god of iron is as great/powerful as the Whiteskin people.

• **Olutoyinbo/Oluwatoyinbo (Olodumare)** – The Lord/omnipotent God is as great as the Whiteskin people.

• **Odetoynbo** – The hunter god is as great as the Whiteskin people.

• **Babatoynbo** – Father is as great as the Whiteskin people.

• **Fatoyinbo/Ifatoyinbo** – The oracle/god is as great as the Whiteskin people.

• **Olatoyinbo** – Honor (if you have it) is as good as being like a White man.

• **Obatoyinbo** – The king is as good as the Whiteskin people.

• **Oyatoyinbo** – Oya is the goddess of the river, except the River Niger. This name means that this goddess is equal to the White man.

• **Oketoyinbo** – The Hill (Oke) is associated with a deity worshipped by some people. The Hill is seen as big, towering over everything. This name means that this deity is equal to the White man.

• **Agboketoyinbo** – This is a name given to a chief who built a two – storey structure. The name conveys the meaning of someone who lives in such a structure (which is generally associated with the power, wealth, and importance of the White man) and becomes as important as the White man.

**Igbo Proverbs/Sayings of the Wise**

*Oyibo kalili mmadu mana agu kalili oyibo.*  
White man is superhuman but hunger is greater than the White man. The meaning is that apart from hunger there is nothing the White man cannot contain. This expression indicates supremacy accorded to White people, and to emphasize the challenges posed by hunger – hunger here, is a metonym for hardship.

*Ugbo kpuru oyibo Chineke mara maka ya.*  
If the White man’s ship sinks only God can explain it. The meaning is that Whites are so above humans that a ship crafted by their hands can never sink. Should it sink, the reason would be beyond the understanding of mortals – only God can explain it. This is used to express one’s feeling of helplessness in explaining something baffling or something perceived to be beyond human capabilities.
Ndí oyibo gbara egbe na abu ha fú aja mkpu a wara ha oso.
Those who have been shot at by the White man take to their heels when they see an anthill (because the reddish color of the anthill is seen as close to the complexion of a White person). Being shot at by the White man is understood as something dreadful no one wants to experience twice, therefore, anything that resembles a White man, even as remotely as an anthill, should be reason enough to flee from being fired at. This phrase is used to suggest or advice the wisdom of learning caution from experience.

Oyibo a gbaala Uga.

White man has beaten up or routed the Uga who are viewed as very tough people) This is a legend – Uga people were celebrating their victory over Whites after a skirmish, with the head of the White man they killed displayed for all to see proof of their valor, with dancing and show of power at the village square. Suddenly, White people showed up in the middle of this event and killed all the Uga people in retaliation. This expression is used to depict or convey a catastrophe or destruction, or where a superior power has crushed another.

Oyibo/Bekee wu agbara

White man is a spirit – Expression of awe of White man and his ability to accomplish humanly impossible feats.

Yoruba Proverbs/Sayings

*Oyinbo l’onwo. . .  ija fara l’oun fe.*
The White man says he doesn’t mind if you steal but he wants you to be smart about it.

*Bi oyinbo fe lo o maa n ṣu saga n. . .*
When the White man wants to go away (or leave) he defecates on the chair (messes up the place). This a descriptive saying about the chaotic condition of postcoloniality.

*A kiyi shishe oyinbo l’a agu.*
If you work for the White man, you are not supposed to sweat. (White man’s work is easy). This proverb is also descriptive of the differences between the hard labor of the agricultural sector, and the ease of working for the White man. It might help explain the massive migrations in the early postcolonial years from the rural area to the cities.

*Oyinbo l’oma olowo.*
The White man does not respect a rich (black) man.
Eni ti oyunbo da fe ran ni ti ma le.
Those who are liked by the White man are the very ones he imprisons. This descriptive proverb means that the White man cannot be trusted, is insensitive, and unpredictable.

Ajá oyunbo rewa, o ku atinde.
The White man’s dog is good to behold, it only lacks the ability to hunt (in the bush). This is used to question the value of something or someone, despite its attractiveness (by sight).

Oyinbo mu tii, mo mu eko, omi gbignon l’a jo n mu.
The White man may take his tea, but I am satisfied with taking my pap – after all, the common denominator is having something hot to drink. This is used to convey egalitarian thinking vis-à-vis the White man or a person viewed as superior, or self-affirmation. The paraphrase is if I can do what the White man does, then we are equals. This may also indicate using White world or lifestyle as a standard.

A mo se bi oyunbo.
One who knows how to do things well like a White man. This is also a descriptive proverb meant to convey praise of approval and rapprochement to White standards.

Iya ji j’oyinbo ko ma se ri bata wo.
A White man cannot be poor to the extent that he won’t be able to afford shoes. Poverty can not affect a White man that deeply. A White man’s poverty can only be superficial, cannot denigrate him. This is used to convey ability to be on top of one’s challenges.

**Hausa Proverbs/Sayings of the Wise**

Hausa informants I spoke to could not identify Hausa names that expressed constructions of the Western world, except for such names as the Nigerian First Lady’s, Turai which was said to be a plain chronological location of her birth in the context of White man’s presence in the environs. They had some proverbs or sayings of the wise whose meanings unlike those of the Igbo were derogatory or expresses ridicule or taunting. All of these sayings were collected from a professor of folklore at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, in northern Nigeria. Many of them are metonyms, an important syllogism in Lacan’s treatise on the unconscious.
• **Nasara asarar Duniya.** A White man is a loss to the world.

• **“Banza a banza” bature ya ga zagi.** White people during colonial times saw the role of a zagi or emir’s assistant as useless. This phrase is now used as a negative comment about someone who is engaged in useless activity.

• **Dan ta salla ki salla.** Son of a praying mother who refuses to pray. This is used to trace the history of the Whitemen who claim to have brought religion but refuse to pray (or practice the religion they brought). It is also a reference to a lack of morals attributed to the White man or in general, a hypocrite.

• **Ka ci gari ka kwana a daji.** You take over a town but you live in a secluded area away from the people (the GRA – government reserved area). This is meant to ridicule the irrationality the Hausas saw in the activities of the White colonizers but is also used to convey irrationality of conduct in general.

• **Uban kare Gata kyanwa.** Father of a dog. Master of a cat. This ridicules the White man’s closeness to (animals) his pets. It falls in with the general attitude of contempt the Hausas had toward the White colonizers and can be used for someone who exhibits this perceived irrationality or illogical behavior.

• **Babban Mutum da gajeren Wando.** A big man who wears short knickers (shorts). This is meant to ridicule the White man’s manner of dressing, again irrational or illogical behavior in general.

• **Bature zaki.** White man is a lion. This saying refers to the powerful position that allows the White man to change things by force just like the lion in the jungle – a reference to the power that Whites have demonstrated by invading another man’s land.

Legend from the Gwari people (a community in the outskirts of Abuja, as told by a young man at the Gwari chief’s palace):

_Gmagma ba luwo nyelo, Sa zhiwayi duanasara su, anasarasu to bwiyen. N’ha gyewo nu’avnu. Ha geyyi na bye._

Translation by the informant: ‘Rain, rain, will beat him (White man) this year because chief of Jiwa is better than White man for us. If you see the chief of Jiwa in front, you’ll only see White man at the back. That is to show that he is braver than the White man.’ This legend comes from the resistance of the Gwagwa-Jiwa people who refused to let White people capture or dominate them. That is why when you see the traditional chiefs in those days, the people and Whites follow behind them.

Legend from Nassarawa (a group from Northern Nigeria – told by a *hajia* who later invited other ladies to help her remember).
When White people first came, they stood on tree branches in order to survey the land. The indigenes called them ‘red monkeys’ and killed and cannibalized them. This legend was represented in a song but the exact lyrics were forgotten by the informant. But according to the informant, in response to this, some Whites came back and started preaching the Gospel so as to snatch these people who committed such acts from the jaws of Satan. They tried to pamper some parents so as to get their children to follow their preaching, and from there started building churches and schools. Some women whose kids attended the schools and churches started composing songs about the White people. These songs had lyrics that conveyed positive images about White people to the community.

Senegalese Proverbs/Sayings of the Wise

These proverbs and sayings were collected from an elementary school teacher who grew up in the southern part of Senegal, the Casamance area, where according to her, Portuguese presence had a strong influence on the culture of the people, and in some areas, this influence was as strong, maybe stronger than the French. She said that she learned the sayings she provided me from her grandmother. Other sources were a librarian at a Dakar university, a professor of linguistics, and a painter. Versions and translations of the proverbs in Portuguese and French were provided by the informant, while English translations are by the author.

- **Brankou Na Kassa i Rispitou. (creole proverb from Portuguese)** - *La presence d’un blanc chez soi est signe de respect.* The presence of Whites at one’s home is a sign of respect. The explanation of this saying is that people want to associate with Whites or the White complexion. According to the informant, these days the brown complexion is going to change because there are families who want mulatto children. They want to marry White people. Whites are believed to be superior. People still believe that today. Social status changes with association with Whites. It is an honor to receive Whites into one’s home.

- **Bouta koume suma brankou di Nosoko.** – *Tu manges comme le blanc de Nosoko.* Translation: You eat like a White man from Nosoko. Nosoko was one of the largest commercial companies in Africa during colonial times. This means you eat like the wealthy, and the wealthy were Whites. This expression elevates the status of the person to whom it is addressed.

- **Bouta ri suma Brankou di Bapor. Tu ris comme le blanc du bateau.** Translation: You are smiling like the White in the boat. The image of blacks rowing the boat while the White man sitting in it relaxed and smiling was common during colonial times. This expression shows superiority of Whites over the blacks who served them or the hardship of the world of blacks and the luxury of the world of White people.
• *Brankou na dgongo, katibou na rema. Le blanc somnole, l’esclave rame.*
  Translation: White man dozes, the slave rows.

• This proverb and the one before it refer to the image common in colonial times when Whites travel in a boat for business or recreation. They both convey the thought among the people that *(La vie sans souffrance, c’est pour les blancs, mais la vie avec souffrance, c’est pour les noirs.)* Life with no suffering in it is for Whites and life with suffering in it is for blacks. (Translation into French is by informant; translation into English is by the author)

• *Brankou i foutecerou – Le blanc est un sorcier ou genie.*
  Translation: White man is a sorcerer or spirit. This is meant to ascribe superhuman qualities to White people.

• *Na outrou moundou brankou kouna sedi – Dans une second vie si je devais rennaitre je serai blanc. (c’est la reinearnation).*
  Translation: In a second life if I will be reborn, I will be White.

• A Ouoloff saying: *Toubab Djinella. – Le blanc, c’est un surhomme (genie).* The White man is superhuman (a spirit). *Tu peux pas les quantifier, ils sont mystiques. Ils ont dépassé stade de l’être humain simple.* They cannot be quantified, they have passed the human stage.

• A Serrer saying: *Maat na Tubab, maat na Serrer, na Roog a baftu. – Que ce soit le règne des Européens ou celui de Serrer, il vient de Dieu – tout pouvoir vient de Dieu.*
  Translation: Whether it is the reign of the Europeans or the reign of the Serrer, it comes from God – all power comes from God.

• *Kor Marie dafa xeren. (Marie signifie un prénom générale qu’on utilise pour les blancs). On dit ceci quand on voit des choses extraordinaires ou impressionnantes) Le blanc est très fort.* Translation: White people are very strong. This is a reaction to extraordinary or impressive things (often associated with Whites).

• *Nassarane dafa beri pekhe. – Les blancs ont beaucoup de tentations par rapport aux autres. White people have many strategies compared to other people.*

Lyrics of a song the informant was taught by her mother

*Au peintre qui peind les anges, sur les vitraux des églises, il n’est qu’une chose étrange. Permet qu’un noir te le dise. Pourquoi peins-tu des anges toujours avec la couleur blanche? Mon coeur voudrait une image vers qui prier le dimanche. Pourquoi peins-tu des anges toujours avec la couleur blanche?*

Translation (by the author) – To the painter who paints angels on the church windows, it has be a strange thing. Let a black person tell you. Why do you always paint angels in the color White? My heart wishes for an image to which it can pray on Sunday. Why do you always paint angels in the color White?
CHAPTER 9
DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH DATA

The purpose of this ethnography is to explore the connections between a high level of desire among postcolonial Africans to migrate to countries of the West, their penchant for constructing stylized and often inflated positive images of the Western world (or occidentalisms), and the tendency to base migration decisions at least partially on these stylized images of the West. Postcolonial Africans project the occidentalisms they construct on African migrants, people who live or have lived in Western countries, attributing to them the superior social status they ascribe to everything that has to do with the Western world. This social status can be seen as a type of social capital which carries with it privileges and benefits in the home society, and migration to the West is seen as a means for amassing this type of social capital, in addition to the perceived economic benefits. Such perceptions and logic enhance the desire among postcolonial Africans to migrate to the West.

Desiring the West

In Senegal and Nigeria, a total of 821 people between 18 and 75 years old were asked if they would leave their country for any of the Western countries, assuming there is no obstacle to the move. Of all the respondents in the two countries, 77% said they would leave their countries if it were possible to do so. In Senegal, 74% of the people surveyed, that is 157 out of 211, said they would leave their country if it were possible. In Nigeria, 79% of the people surveyed, or 481 out of 610 said they would leave Nigeria if it were possible. The survey did not seek explanations for these expressed desires to leave the country in the absence of obstacles, but the sheer numbers of people who desire to live in the West other than their African societies of origin bear out Appadurai’s argument that increasing migration rates as a component of ethnoscapes in contemporary global flows is driven by an undercurrent of more people than ever
routinely imagining “the possibility that they or their children will live and work in places other than where they were born” (1996:6). According to Appadurai’s extensive treatise on the constitutive elements and dynamics of global flows in a modernity with centrifugal tendencies, the new role played by imagination in the post-electronic world, where “ordinary people have begun to deploy their imaginations in the practice of their everyday lives” is the main current that powers the desires that often translate into action (1996:5).

In the interviews, informants pointed out this element of imagination and fantasy. When asked whether the general positive view and the status attached to living in the White man’s world play any role in decisions to migrate, a 48 year-old Nigerian architect had this to say:

Yes it plays a big role. Part of the reason is fantasy, that is what you hear, that it is a better world.

This response presented an opportunity to elicit this informant’s view about the economic benefits of migrating to the West. When asked about the view that Africans migrate to the West because of economic benefits? He responded: “There is a question mark about the economic benefits.” Earlier on, this informant had interrupted another interview with another person in the vicinity of his workplace, when that informant was making the argument that people in Nigeria did not have the facts and numbers when it came to calculating the economic benefits of migration. This is what the interloping informant said:

Fantasy, imagination drives migration. . . people do not have the facts. The exchange rates is making things worse for those at home. People who visit put up appearances that are false. They spend lavishly and give false impressions about their “easy life” and this makes people at home want to go too. . . more fantasy than fact.

Appadurai further explains the social phenomenon of imagination as the result of

a shift in recent decades, building on technological changes over the past century or so, in which the imagination has become a collective social fact. This development, in turn, is the basis of the plurality of imagined worlds (1996:5).
The plurality of imagined worlds referenced here by Appadurai, at least in the case of potential migrants in postcolonial Africa, suggests a conceptualization of collaborative or complementary imagination that brings together those who have already migrated and have returned home for one reason or another, and those who desire to migrate but have not done so. The returnees are seen as “putting up appearances” and giving “false impressions” in the words of the informant just cited, while people at the home societies on their part “do not have the facts [but] want to go too.” The potential for the role of imagination as an undercurrent for the decisions and conduct of potential migrants and returning migrants referenced here is not difficult to capture. The question that needs to be addressed then is: what enables this collaborative imagination that unites migrants and potential migrants?

A 36 year-old Nigerian male civil engineer who lived in London for three years was very clear on the source of the fantasy and imagination, and its consequences:

*We feel they (White people) are superior because this is communicated to us through the media . . . I was encouraged to go there because of the things in the movies. People at home see the outcome of being there but not the details of the processes that produced these things . . . that is the suffering by migrants that produced the wealth. U.S. and movies make you start imagining. I went there and I saw that the life we heard and dreamed about is not real . . . Fantasy motivates migration and criminality results from a confirmation that all is fantasy and reality is so contradictory to the contents of the fantasy.*

Elaborating his views on the widespread desire to live elsewhere, Arjun Appadurai discusses how the media provides the connecting link between potential migrants in the society of origin, and “others in one’s social neighborhood who have become inhabitants of these faraway worlds.” The media, he writes, “present a rich, ever-changing store of possible lives, some of which enter the lived imaginations of ordinary people more successfully than others” (1996:53). Here, we have the benefit of a distinction between those that are motivated to imagine a move and often actually move, and those that may be equally exposed to the same stimuli but end up staying put in their society of origin. Faist (2000) sees this distinction as an important one.
that necessitates a consideration of social forces and their role in explaining why so many people migrate from so few places.

But the role of the media does much more to refract the disjunctures in the global flows of people or ethnoscapes. It is in the role of mediascapes, which includes “the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information” through television stations, newspapers, film-production studios and magazines” (1996:35) that Appadurai identifies the reach of what he calls ‘mass mediation’ in its ability to blur the lines between realistic and fictional landscapes. The media analyzed here challenges the idea of a global village by creating communities that have no sense of place, a rhizomic and even schizophrenic world abounding with tropes of rootlessness and alienation, according to Appadurai’s arguments. Postcolonial societies can be seen as constitutive of this group of communities whose membership in a conceptual global village is tenuous and even contentious.

Wallerstein’s (1974) dichotomization of core and periphery countries at least qualifies membership in a global village’, and similarly, Ferguson’s analysis of global shadows’ and Africa’s rank in an imagined (and real) world (2007:14) describe or reference the dynamics of economic marginalization. In Appadurai’s conceptualization of landscapes of global flows, economic marginalization straddles financescapes’ and ethnoscapes’ in their inextricable relationship with the rest of the ‘-scapes’ and their synergetic scoping of the cultural forms of the contemporary world. The location of the African postcolony in the topography of the global flows so conceptualized makes it fertile ground for the play of imagination and fantasy, because it is most likely to contain the audiences of the mediascapes described by Appadurai, to which lines between the realistic and the fictional landscapes are blurred. According to Appadurai, “the farther away these audiences are from the direct experience of metropolitan life, the more likely
they are to construct imagined worlds that are chimerical, esthetic, even fantastic objects…” (1996:35).

The respondents to the surveys, 74% in Senegal and 79% in Nigeria did not explain their desires and probably would not have been able to anatomize them had they been asked to do so. However, some occasions of my unscripted role as circumstantial activist (Marcus 1995) for Africa’s chances of finding its place in the world, and therefore its need to stop the hemorrhaging of its brains and minds to the West, produced some revelations. Sometimes it was the lackadaisical attitudes or even the intensity of the respondents in conveying the impression of “all roads lead to any Western country” with side comments such us “I am ready to leave today” or “are you going to help me get a visa?” that sometimes compelled me to ask them why they wanted to leave so badly? From the exchanges that followed in the few cases where such a question came up, it became clear that these respondents, both in Nigeria and Senegal knew nothing about “taxes” in the United States, nothing about some people working 18 out of 24 hours so they can have a modicum of a decent life, nothing about the fact that the statement common among potential migrants: “Nwankwo who left only two years ago has already bought a house” does not provide the details of mortgages and financial institutions and how they worked in Western countries, and that the said house which “Nwankwo” bought is not really his but the property of the financial institutions for many years to come. The respondents did not understand the credit system, neither did they believe that there were mindless crimes such as a postman who hated Jews and therefore killed kindergarten babies in a Jewish neighborhood; they knew nothing about racial profiling, nothing about random shooting in a train, nothing about a young woman who shoved her car into a lake with her two babies in it because they were distractions to her romance and because she could deflect attention from herself by accusing a phantom black
man of the crime; they knew nothing about a man who shot his pregnant wife sitting right next to
him in their car and also blamed it successfully for several years on the same phantom black
man; they knew nothing about the senseless massacre at Columbine of schoolmates and a teacher
by two young men who later shot themselves. There were so many aspects of their dreamland
that they knew nothing about.

Each time I presented this litany of realities, there was an indescribable puzzled look,
sometimes followed with confused and baseless arguments or airy defenses that seemed to
suggest that I had rained on their parade, or that I was some kind of dream buster. The Western
world they constructed did not include images of decrepit acts or individuals, financial pressures
and stress, but was imbued with the vitality of a fulsome life where everything was structured to
provide a life worth going after with all possible vigor. There is no doubt that the majority of the
people who wanted to move to Western countries knew little to nothing about the imperfections
and everyday realities for the average person or immigrant in those societies of their dream. They
were all mired in a precarious and deceitful game of imagination of which some respondents and
informants also said they and some members of their society were beginning to be disabused.

**Constructing the West and the African Migrant to the West**

Obtaining responses from informants on how they constructed the West and how that
might be connected with a high level of expressed desire to migrate there needs a jarring of the
unconscious that is forceful enough to successfully break through, somehow, into the sanctum of
their innermost thoughts and consciousness. In most human research, this is a standard challenge,
but when the impact of colonization is an integral part of the social dynamic, the challenge to get
people to articulate their thoughts intensifies. This is because the presence of White people and
their conduct while they colonized Africa was not experienced directly by the informants but was
transmitted to them through various channels including oral traditions and print media. What the
informants have to deal with when confronted with such questions in the process of fieldwork is not just piecing together nuggets and strings of knowledge that have accrued to them over the years as they became socialized in a postcolonial context, but also a measure of self-consciousness. Help in confronting the problem of delving successfully into the consciousness of the informant and the methodological ramifications of this problem is provided by Anthony Giddens’s structuration theory (1984).

**Illuminations from Anthony Giddens’s Structuration Theory**

Anthony Giddens presents the outline of structuration theory which concentrates on ontological concerns of social theory, reworking conceptions of human being and human doing, social reproduction, and social transformation. To achieve these objectives, it calls for the decentering of the subject and subsumes the idea that human agents or actors have as an inherent aspect of what they do, the capacity to understand what they do while they do it. In the case of this study, the parallel would be the assumption that postcolonial Africans have the capacity to understand their constructions of the Western world, while they are in the process of those constructions. The structuration theory is also based on the understanding that the structural properties of social systems exist only in so far as forms of social conduct are reproduced chronically across time and space (1984:xxii). The trajectory of African migration to the West has for almost half of a century created and still sustains structural properties of local values and belief systems in which the West as the predominant destination of choice is ascribed attributes that heighten the desire among postcolonial Africans to seek the West, almost teleologically.

The decision to migrate, as an expression of agency, is viewed as a unified social process, an outcome of the migrant institution which is a complex articulation of individuals, associations, and organizations that extends the social action of and interaction between human agents and agencies across time and space (Fawcett and Arnold, 1987:319). The circularity
implied in this conceptualization of migration has as its fundamental logic the duality of structure which in Giddens’s thought is construed as a “dialectical process by which the structural properties of the social system are both the medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize” (1984:25). Thus, when the decisions to migrate among postcolonial Africans are at least as a pattern partly informed by their constructions of the West, their social structure or context over time becomes the receptacle for the sedimentations of these occidentalisms, which in turn feeds more desire for the West and the desire to migrate there without sufficient knowledge of the difference between fact and fantasy.

The conceptual point of departure in Giddens’s structuration theory with methodological implications is the knowledgeability of the human agent, that is, the ability of a person to know about what they do and why they do it. In his related concept of a “stratification model of human action” (1984:5), individuals are knowledgeable within the constraints and opportunities presented by social structures. The role of consciousness in this scheme of things can be found in processes where people pay attention to events going on around them in such a way as to relate their activity to those events, and is distributed at three levels: practical consciousness, discursive consciousness, and unconsciousness. Practical consciousness applies to where personal motivations and institutional rules or resources can be exploited to provide a rationale for action but cannot be readily verbalized. It refers to the reflexive monitoring of conduct by human agents, and is therefore the vehicle of all things which actors know tacitly about how to go on in the contexts of social life without being able to give them discursive expression. Discursive consciousness is where knowledge can be employed and communicated in a verbal explanation. It is the human agent’s quality of articulateness which is the ability to give verbal expression to
the promptings of action. Unconsciousness is where motivations cannot be articulated, that is, not being able to put things into words (as in psychoanalytic theory).

Applied to this study, the question would be whether Africans in the postcolony know about their tendency or predisposition toward constructions of the West in extremely and possibly unrealistically positive and fantastic terms, and the projections of these same constructions on members of their societies who have lived in Western countries. It would also concern the ability of Africans in the postcolony to explain why they have such dispositions that impel their constructions of the West. In answering the question about how they or people in their societies construct the West or migrants to the West, informants would ideally be able to analyze their own thoughts about the West in the context of colonization practices and process of social construction thereof, any feelings of inferiority attributed to colonial subjugation as suggested in the literature, the value placed on the mimicry of Western cultures and the ways their formal education, socialization, and family upbringing may have reinforced such values and beliefs. They would also be able to affirm and articulate the fact that they actually value the admiration, adulation, respect, and attributions of superiority and higher status accorded to those people who have acquired habits and mannerisms of Western peoples or show somehow that they have been exposed to Western cultures. Ultimately and most importantly, they would be able to trump all inhibitions that might come from self–consciousness and proclaim that they do not mind migrating to the West so as to acquire such honor. The perceived inability of the informant to engage in such introspection on behalf of the self or other members of society is the nexus of the methodological approach of this study. To follow Giddens’s arguments, the informants would have to have discursive consciousness which should enable the discursive expression of their practical consciousness, which in turn would involve the unearthing or
mining of the unconscious in order to demonstrate knowledgeability. This ethnography is therefore designed to access pertinent information on postcolonial cognitions and subjectivities by triangulating with direct informant narratives, folklore, popular culture, archival data and experiential autoethnographic insights.

The percentage of the Senegalese and Nigerians who desire migration to the West for whatever reasons, can only be an index of a more pervasive type of consciousness. My conversation with a professor and social scientist at a major university in Dakar provides an enlightening perspective. At his request, I was describing the objective of the survey component of my research when he interrupted me with a chuckle and said (almost a direct quote translated from French):

_I was listening to a discussion the other day about Africans asking for remuneration for slavery and it made me laugh because if Europeans were to place a few boats, not even ships, at those beaches (he pointed to the Atlantic Ocean) and announced to Africans they were looking for slaves to take to the West, there would be no one left in this city. This university would be emptied out, maybe including the president. Africans would voluntarily go into slavery for the Toubab._

This same desperation among Africans described by the professor above, aroused feelings of shame in a 28-year old Senegalese male informant who told me he wanted everything possible done to stop clandestine emigration which as he explained it had young people escaping the country in small boats headed for “Barsac” (nickname for Barcelona, Spain) when they knew there was a high probability they would drown on their way and would never make it there. He was candid about his inhibitions and feelings of shame about describing this desperation: “J’ai honte de parler de l’Afrique comme ça!” he proclaimed, avoiding eye contact. (I am ashamed to talk about Africa like that!) Projected on other informants, it is possible to visualize their struggles with rising to the challenges of discursive consciousness, as suggested by Giddens’s theory of structuration. The suicidal attempts to get to the West cannot be articulated.
Interestingly, while talking to Senegalese informants, I noticed frequently enough, the reluctance or hesitation of some of them to verbalize “nous sommes complexés” or as some were subsequently encouraged to articulate: “c’est une complexe d’infériorité.” They would be expressing how the Senegalese constructed the West and everything that had to do with it as superior, imitable, and desirable, and when it came to labeling or giving a name to such tendencies among them, they would stop, mumble and ramble, as though they were subliminally soliciting help in getting the words out. Or they would argue and dodge the thought if I completed the sentence for them or tried to be a facilitator: “tu parles d’une complexe d’infériorité?” I would ask. They eventually agreed with my suggestion but still avoided verbalizing the idea that Africans had an inferiority complex problem toward the West. Here again in this chasm between what is known and what can be expressed is an exemplification of Giddens’s suggestions about discursive consciousness and the challenge it might represent for asking research questions to which informants can comfortably provide an uninhibited, coherent, and lucid verbal expression.

Inferiority complex or its psychoanalytic cousin, low self-esteem, was most likely at play with the informants described above who exhibited some trepidation in naming proclivities among Africans for subjugating their concept of self to their perceptions of superiority of the West. This has been widely theorized as commonly associated with the impact of colonization on the colonized, as can be found in the writings of Frantz Fanon, a Martiniquan, and Aimé Césaire’s former student and compatriot. Both men were profuse in their theories and commentaries about postcoloniality and are widely cited. In addition to his anticolonialist stance, Fanon’s writings were inspired by his professional experiences as a psychiatrist in Algeria which
led him to analyze and provide several perspectives on inferiority complex among the colonized.

He writes, for example:

*In Europe the Negro has one function: that of symbolizing the lower emotions, the baser inclinations, the dark side of the soul. In the collective consciousness of homo occidentalis, the Negro—or, if one prefers, the color black–symbolizes evil, sin, wretchedness, death, war, famine* (Fanon 1967:191).

And how does Fanon describe the reaction of the black person to these attitudes to which he is exposed? The following is his logic and explanation:

*When the Negro makes contact with the White world, a certain sensitizing action takes place. If his psychic structure is weak, one observes a collapse of his ego. The black man stops behaving as an actional person. The goal of his behavior will be The Other (in the guise of the White man), for The Other alone can give him worth. That is on the ethical level, self-esteem* (1967:154).

In Achebe’s words, “[a]n erosion of self-esteem is one of the commonest symptoms of dispossession” (2000:81). In Aimé Césaire’s speech as reported and discussed by James Baldwin, the perceived ramifications of purposeful creation of a cultural anarchy by the colonizers to keep the people they ruled in barbaric state was articulated as follows:

*The famous inferiority complex one is pleased to observe as a characteristic of the colonized is no accident but something very definitely desired and deliberately inculcated by the colonizer* (Baldwin 1964:38).

The desire for the West is therefore an inexorable outcome of what colonial experience made of Africans and what Africans themselves have done with the colonial experiences. Césaire in his speech painted a picture of inevitability when he said” “For they were all, now, whether they liked it or not, related to Europe, stained by European visions or standards, and their relation to themselves, and to each other, and to their past had changed” (Baldwin 1964:40). Ferguson (2007) would see the desire of the West by Africans as attempts at border-puncturing aimed at the perceived lines of demarcation between the West and the rest, an understanding that Africans have constructed because of failed promises of modernity, and their efforts to achieve a sense of
belonging in a world they feel has excluded them. He anatomizes the mimicry of the West by postcolonial Africans, and sees it as a reaction to these feelings of exclusion. Ferguson’s views provide a useful analytic framework for understanding constructions of the West by Africans by locating it between history and contemporary global processes, and by acknowledging the agency of Africans themselves. Taussig (1993:252), whose views inform Ferguson’s arguments, links the puncture of the border that separates “civilizations and its Others,” with “desperate emigration from the south”. The border, when punctured, therefore, opens up a world constructed for long by Africans, the Western word, which should for them enable a sense of belonging to somewhere.

Much like a precursor to Appadurai’s (1996) global flows emanating from a fragmented modernity, Taussig explains that the “global free flow of images and the new forms of coping unleashed by communications technologies” precipitates the decoupling of mimicry from its previously established colonial binary, thus facilitating the emergence of human capacity that is “potentiated by postcoloniality” which has set loose “mimetic excess upon the world to work its uncanny magic and to undermine the naturalness of all of our social and cultural arrangements” (1993:255). It is difficult to separate Africa’s mimicry of the West attributable to colonization from that attributable to the proliferation of technological advancements. What matters is the mimicry itself, and the object of the mimicry. Putting together Taussig’s explanations for mimicry in the postcolony, it can be said then that a combination of colonial conditions and contemporary technological advancements has woven a consciousness among Africans that leads to a deification and adulation of things related to the Western world. Because of these types of consciousness, migration to the West, therefore, becomes a logical terminal for postcolonial Africans.
Occidentalism: Distillations of Cognitions and Subjectivities

Interview data culled from informants in this study show decisively persuasive congeries of images of the West which socialization has obviously conveyed to postcolonial Africans. These are what Carrier (2003) called Occidentalism, or stylized images of the West. It is also clear from the words of the informants themselves that these occidentalisms are projected onto African migrants who have been exposed to the West, and that these constructions and projections feed the desire in potential migrants to migrate to Western countries. The appetite for all things Western among Africans is a long and sustained tradition in the postcolony, and has been extensively discussed and argued in literary and social science work including Magubane (1971), Nkrumah (1974), Taussig (1993), MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga (2000), Achebe (2000), Ferguson (1999, 2007), and so many more. In this study whether they welcomed or rejected the idea, all informants acknowledged that the desire for the West and things Western was a ubiquitous phenomenon in African societies. What was most interesting is that though speaking in their specific societies, Senegal or Nigeria, the informants referred to the desire for the West as an “African problem,” commonly asking “what is wrong with Africans” and making similar generalizations. As thought provoking as it is, this tendency to homogenize Africa by Africans themselves is a replication of a tendency mostly attributed to Western academe and general public that has not been explored as an intra-continental dynamic. The Senegalese, however, were more analytical of this situation and were more likely to make retrospective references to colonization’s causality.

The West and Western peoples were constructed by the informants of this study as: orisha nla (supreme being), “all beautiful, no ugly person there,” “God made them in daylight and us blacks at night,” “no poor person there,” “no beggars there,” “kind,” “respectful of life,” “superior,” “powerful,” “a place where everything worked,” “interested in helping Africans,”
“heaven on earth,” “a place with superior education standards,” “more intelligent,” “resourceful and committed to their causes,” “believed to be closer to God (previously),” “they eat the best food,” “they have the best fashions,” “we love… worship… admire them,” “a special species or creatures,” “a place where people are disciplined,” “status enhancer,” “a place where people were organized and planned ahead,” “a place where the government cared for the people,” “a perfect world, doing very well, where life is good,” “people try to copy their manner of dress and try to talk like them,” “a place with social comforts,” and more often than not, the characterizations of the West were capped off with the expressions, “unlike us”, or “unlike here.”

The near perfect uniformity of consciousness and the unrehearsed consensus exhibited by the informants in this regard indicates shared distilled cognitions about the colonial experiences and the intersubjectivities those experiences have spawned in the context of contemporary global phenomena such as migration. The commonality of understanding expressed by the informants is, additionally, emblematic of the breadth of the impact and preponderance of the social forces that generated these values and beliefs, and perhaps more importantly, underscores the relative absence of equally potent countercurrents that could have pushed back or doused this fire of desire and will that has led to the flight of African minds to the West. The potential countercurrents, the ontological foundations of African societies, their values and beliefs, were so violently shaken and extensively compromised that they could not resist the onslaught of colonialism. The thorough knowledge of the forces at play that is demonstrated by informants’ analyses of the impact of colonialism and some of its dynamics, juxtaposed with their occasional trepidation in expressing this knowledge discursively is a good illustration of Giddens’s views on “unconsciousness” and “discursive consciousness” and their relationships to a human agent’s knowledgeability and his or her ability to verbalize it. It can be correctly inferred from Giddens’s
views that many of the Africans living abroad would tell a researcher they are attracted to the West by economic opportunities, when the actual and maybe even stronger impetus for some, might be the desire for Westernization and the status that comes with it in the home society. This logic enables the understanding of situations where some economically advantaged Africans still migrate to the West or invest so much in sending their children to study in the West. As some of the informants said, some people in their society brag about their children living abroad and seemed to expect or demand respect just for that reason. This conversation came up a few times in the course of this ethnography in Nigeria, especially, and some of the people concerned, the Nigerian business elite, were either vigorously defensive or visibly uncomfortable about the topic.

When it comes to the constructions of migrants to the West among postcolonial Africans, informants were equally expressive. They constructed migrants to the West as “disciplined” “organized,” “neat,” “nice complexioned,” “they copy the White man’s culture and behave like them,” “do not allow other people’s affairs to bother them,” “distance themselves from those at home when they return,” “acting so much like Whites they were unrecognizable,” “commanding admiration and respect,” “advantaged in the award of projects, contracts, and employment,” “much like those who have made the hajj and have acquired a title,” “people bragging about having kids in a Western country and demanding or expecting respect just because of that,” “on top,” “of high social status,” “heroes welcomed in the past at the airport with traditional dances, slaughtering of animals, and thanksgiving services,” “people want to be like them”. These are a fraction of the positive images of the West that are constructed among postcolonial Africans.

While there are some negative views of the West, they are overshadowed by the preponderance of the positive, and are not included in this analysis because they are outside the
defined parameters and scope of this study. It is possible that there are people who do not migrate to the West probably because of negative images of the West known to them, but an investigation of such social dynamic belongs with expanded study of all types of both negative and positive types of occidentalisms. Suffice it to state here that my occasional role as circumstantial activist offered some resistance to the ubiquitous and hyperbolic images of perfection constructed by the informants. I encountered vehement insistence on the fantastic images. While suggestions rarely offered by some informants pointed to emerging knowledge about an overly fantasized West, the preponderant tendency was to cling to the fantasies. It is possible that further investigation of those who do not want to migrate to the West might reveal expressions of cultural resistance. The occidentalisms discussed in this research are the positive stylized images of the West that demonstrate the enduring impact of the social change and the transformation of the values, beliefs, and yes, the consciousness and cognitive maps of postcolonial Africans that are attributable to colonization.

**Occidentalisms: Fluid and Concretized--Folklore**

Perhaps the most telling of the indicia of cognitions, consciousness, and subjectivities that reflect colonization experiences and constructions of the West that come from them are African folklore, precisely proverbs or sayings of the wise given and assumed names, and song lyrics. These cultural forms are collaboratively produced devoid of particular authorship or chronology, and far removed from the researcher who collects them. They are therefore free from the political dynamics of representation in ethnography that sometimes occlude truths or realities of the researched, and from the possible clash of subjectivities of researcher and informants that may undermine usability of research results. Folklore is possibly the quintessential representation-free cultural form or data that modulates the authoritative voice of the ethnographer which has been a concern in post-structural or postmodern anthropology. Folkloric forms may be produced in the
context of political situations such as colonizer/colonized relations but they are vetted and ratified by popular use. They also tend to be puristic cultural forms since they tell the people’s story by the people, at their own time, and in their own language. They are accessible and not buried deep in the unconscious because they are part of everyday communication in African societies. To use Giddens’s explanatory framework, they are most likely to be located in the practical consciousness of human agents. Along with contemporary popular cultural forms that have perhaps been more vigorously produced thanks to advancements in media technology, they represent in this research the strongest containers of occidentalisms.

According to Michael Jones folklore is viewed as an index of historical processes prompting some researchers to use examples of folklore to reconstruct the past or to examine historical events and movements. Some researchers treat folklore as an aspect or manifestation of culture, as an index to cultural processes (1994:3). The richness and utility of the proverb as data is discussed by Kwesi Yankah (2000), who sees this folkloric form as conventional wisdom in a poetic capsule invented over time by individuals using traditionally sanctioned ideas and ways of speaking. Yankah suggests that when repeated and applied by others over time, the sayings may win acceptance and gain admission into the community’s treasury. The use of proverbs in communication in many African societies is a skill that distinguishes those who possess it and attracts admiration and respect. Community elders and adults seen as “wise” seem to be adept at using proverbs, suggesting that proverbs and other folkloric forms are “learned.”

Akintunde Akinyemi offers the following perspective on the pivotal social role of proverbs among the Yoruba in Nigeria, and their potential for telling the story of a people:

*The proverb constitutes a powerful rhetorical device for the shaping of moral consciousness, opinions, and beliefs. The store of Yoruba proverbs is inexhaustible and the subjects and imagery which form the basis of the proverbs cover the whole spectrum of life [and reflect] . . . social institutions, folklore, religious beliefs . . .* (2007:17)
It is commonly believed that the importance and usage of proverbs is an exclusive interest and privilege of the old and wise, but Akinyemi argues that while some proverbs are couched in very esoteric concepts and idioms believed to be accessible to the exclusive group of the old and wise, other proverbs exploit local history, cultural traditions, views of life, and social values of the people, and are of great importance for the transmission of wisdom and delineation of character. Most important to this ethnography, the functions of proverbs, according to Akinyemi, span pre-colonial and postcolonial times. This element of continuity makes of proverbs a crucible for postcolonial consciousness that includes the genesis of the colonial experience as well as its current manifestations. African occidentalisms, as products of history, are distilled into proverbs and other forms of folklore and are further validated in this ethnography by the replication of the same occidentalisms in the perspectives offered by the informants in the interviews.

Given, assumed, or salutation (hailing) names in Nigeria contain insightful references to the West, White people, and their world. In the book, *Traditional African Names*, Jonathan Musere explains that name definitions represent ground for a broader appreciation of the sociological environment of Africa, including the cultures, the preferences, the emphases, and concerns of the people (1999:2) Adeboye Babalola and Olugboyega Alaba (2008) in their compendium, *A Dictionary of Yoruba Personal Names*, exhort the users of the dictionary to bear in mind the patterns for the overview of the names to which the dictionary is devoted. These patterns include: praisename indicating a prominent possession, praisename reflecting a person’s appearance, praisename reflecting a person’s occupation or responsibility, chieftaincy title that persists as a personal name, name reflecting an important family tradition, circumstance, possession or mood that the child found, or did not find, on arriving in the home, name
constituting a declaration made or a comment passed by father or grandfather or other elder on the child’s birth, addressed to other members of the family, or to the child, or to an unnamed outsider, often referring to a recent incident in his life, family, or town. Somewhere in these patterns and others not included here is located the colonial experience and its resultant cognitions and subjectivities. African names can be viewed therefore, like proverbs, as distillations of social cognitions or expressions of social memory. Given names that parents traditionally impute on their offspring in many African societies are indeed expressions of cognitions salient to their experiences and the ontology they subscribe to. Aspects of a family’s history, experiences, and past dispositions can to some extent be accurately reconstructed through the names of the family members. When such names, given or assumed, reflect meanings anchored in the legacy of colonialism, they become rich sources of data that reveal cognitions and subjectivities distilled from the colonial contact.

The proverbs, sayings of the wise, and given or assumed names presented in this research, especially those from the Yoruba and the Igbo, attribute to White people and the West, (oyinbo for the Yoruba, and oyibo for the Igbo) the same positive, hyperbolic representations of deification and essentialized endowments of perfection and exceptional capabilities. A most remarkable observation is that the Yoruba whose cosmology is replete with powerful, awe-inspiring deities that control or rule over almost every aspect of life and nature raise the White man to the level of their gods through the names they take or give. Such names as Ifatoyinbo, Oguntoyinbo, Efuntoyinbo, and many others listed with other data of this research represent deifications of the White man. The Igbo whose cosmology is not as theocentric as that of the Yoruba still ascribe to the White man the attribute of “spirit”: Bekee (Oyibo) wu agbara and endows him with supernatural abilities: Oyibo ka mmadu. Attributions of beauty, power, and
awe-inspiring qualities are heaped on the White man and his world in African folklore as well as informants’ narratives in this research.

An illiterate woman from a relatively rural area who has never had contact with White people but gave her daughter the name *Oyibo ja anu* –Those who belong in the world of White people will marry (her)–explained to me her decision to give her daughter such a name, as follows:

*Whites are kings here because that is where we learned about the world, such as planes. They are better than us. Oyibo make something out of somebody. That is why I want people like that for my daughter.*

For this woman, as with so many in the Nigerian culture, *oyibo* is a metonym for all things Western. It does not refer only to a Western person, but is a concept of the West. While some Yoruba and Igbo names portray very positive and glorified images of the Western world, and Igbo proverbs maintain this tendency, Yoruba proverbs collected in this ethnography tend to be more descriptive, even satirical of the West and its peoples. It is tempting but plausible to infer an explanation that the given and assumed names are more decidedly positive and endure because they capture impressions made by the White colonizers at a particular moment that are indelibly inscribed in humans who have served as porters and custodians of these occidentalisms, in contrast with proverbs whose currency depends on sustained usage in society. Oral tradition as the predominant conduit for the registration of social knowledge by Africans is exemplified by the power of names to tell what is not written. In comparison with a name, a proverb would be more vulnerable to obsolescence once its usage or applicability to the reality of a given period is challenged by the predominance of contradicting newer impressions which would replace old proverbs in social memory. In this ethnography, informants frequently punctuated their responses with such phrases as “that’s how it used to be,” “in those days,” “things are changing now.” Precisely, adulation for the White man can be radically challenged by widespread
perceptions of brutality or oppression at a given period of time. It is possible also that along with cultural flows from the Western world is a measure of new enlightenment that can come from transnational ties or internal local social dynamics that counter the dazzle of Western hegemony, causing people in non-Western societies to look at the cultural supremacy of the West more critically. In fact, a 62 year-old Nigerian woman, a retired public servant, expressed this critical evaluation with a comparison between when she was young and now:

*That time, if you are opportune to work with them, you are nearing God. But when civilization was coming closer, when we were exposed to education, we realized they are normal human beings, and we learned a lot from them and exchanged culture and religion.*

Periods of unmitigated adulation and glorification of the White man, and periods of perceived harmony would produce and sustain generally positive occidentalisms while periods of conflict and disabused glorification and adulation of the White man would produce and sustain more negative or tempered ones. The dynamics of the colonial period in African societies were never unidirectional. Apart from differentiations in socialization of individuals in the postcolony, there were, during the colonial era itself, outbursts of confrontation and heated disputes, and other moments of relative peace with varying intensities in different areas. For this reason, names and proverbs have to be viewed in unison in order to find reflections of the varying tenors of the relationships between the colonizer and the colonized, but without markers for temporality or chronology, we are left with credible hints. In the context of this research, this variability contributes to the emerging picture of different occidentalisms in different areas, and different degrees of attraction to the White man and everything he represents, and ultimately different degrees of predisposition to migration to Western countries.

Despite arguments for the potential utility of proverbs for studying the character, values, behavioral norms, philosophy, and ethnic identity, and even nationalities of some groups and societies, conceivably more useful in societies where oral traditions have predominated in
conserving group values and historicities, proverbs have been underused in academic research. This distancing of researchers from exploring proverbs as data is attributable to ubiquitous and forceful arguments against the use of proverbs in the study of societies if the proverbs are not collected within the contexts of their usage. A personal conversation with Karin Barber on February 28, 2009, at a conference at the University of Florida was about the subject of this trepidation toward the treasure of meanings about a group of people that I felt proverbs represented. Prahlad (1996) presents a detailed discussion positing both meaning and context as defining parameters for the use of proverbs as data. While favoring arguments for the importance of context in the collection and analysis of proverb in research, Prahlad presents in his detailed analysis other arguments (for example, Barber 1972) equally forceful in favor of reading and interpreting proverbs for meaning without placing them in any context of their usage. M.H. Page and N.D. Washington (1987) further underscore the utility of proverbs in research outside of their context with the argument that “once internalized, proverbs, like values, become unconscious as well as conscious standards for action and attitudes toward self and others (1987:50).

Considering this argument and annexing it to Giddens’s views on consciousness discussed earlier, a well-founded argument can be made, especially in the case of many African societies and from an autoethnographic vantage position that the wisdom imparted to generations from the use of proverbs explicitly in public speech and implicitly in socialization transcend the utterance of the proverb itself in any given context. One proverb uttered in one particular social context can create ripples of socialization, instruction, or action which may or may not be traceable to the original utterance or source of that proverb at which time the wisdom it conveyed was communicated for the first time. It is for this reason that people sometimes acknowledge a value
they hold by prefacing their statements with, “my father (or my mother) used to say…” but may not always precede their behaviors or actions that may be attributed to their learned wisdom or value by articulating its proverbial source. This means that they may not exhibit, in Giddens’s argument, the discursive consciousness of the kernel of wisdom contained in a proverb, but their practical consciousness leads them to reflexively monitor their actions as human agents with the knowledge they have acquired from the proverbs in the context of which they have been socialized. My study takes the position that seeking to collect proverbs in context would be impractical in most research situations because it might require many years to collect any meaningful number of proverbs. This impracticality should not negate the critical value of proverbs in the study, for example, of societies that have evolved from oral traditions for the preservation of their histories. For the same reason, a native anthropologist who has been socialized in the context that produced the proverbs he or she collects, and has existed in an environment suffused with the meaning conveyed by certain proverbs is in a position to offer interpretations of meaning that do not have to be couched in specific contexts of utterance of those proverbs. That native anthropologist’s lived experience and lifeworld should be sufficiently contextual for the interpretation of the proverbs he or she is familiar with such that full attention can be accorded to the meanings conveyed by the proverbs in question. Proverbs, therefore, can be read as text and interpreted as such with cautionary attention to radically divergent subjectivities which can be accomplished through collaboration with informants in the field, or with native anthropologists who have been socialized in the contexts that produced the proverbs.

There remains a nagging feeling that there are yet to be discovered proverbs in various parts of the postcolony that would denote the same hyperbolic positive ascriptions to the West, and even their deification, but that these proverbs may never share equal prominence or currency
as the given or assumed names. More remarkable for the meaning and usage of names is that European names such as Bryan, Dylan, Justin, Brittany, Stephanie, and Ashley are virally gaining currency, replacing Nigerian names altogether in many segments of the Nigerian society, mostly the southern areas. In fact, I was present at a heated debate two decades ago between a Catholic priest and parents from the Igbo part of the country when the priest refused to baptize their daughter because the parents refused to give the child a Western name. While these situations may be found in other societies at some point in their histories, it would be difficult to exclude imprints of colonization and the occidentalisms it continues to engender in African societies as an explanation, currently sustained in popular culture in contemporary societies. The understanding at that time was that a child would not go to heaven if it died with a heathen (non-Western) name. As noted by Akinyemi (2007), Yoruba proverbs are inexhaustible as is true of Igbo proverbs, therefore, it is safe to say that the sample collected in this study is not nearly representative of the panoply of folkloric expressions reflecting African occidentalisms. What is most important is that these folkloric forms are evidentiary of the conversion of the colonial experience to social consciousness, social memory, and subjectivity which guide and circumscribe decisions and choices (D’Andrade [1995:182]; Werbner [2002:2]).

The Hausa and Northern Difference in Nigeria

The Hausa of Nigeria have no given or assumed names expressing occidentalism. At least my research did not find any. In fact, I was repeatedly told by informants that there were none. Possible explanations for this lacuna can be found in the colonial history of Nigeria where accounts have it that northerners generally known as Hausa were not very impressed with White people and their culture and therefore did not bow easily to the colonizers. They were also said to have resisted their domination more vigorously presenting more of a challenge to the colonizers.
than the Igbo and Yoruba. Gwari folklore as well as some colonial documentation of the attitudes of the three main ethnic groups of Nigeria, Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba illustrates this fact.

While the Igbo and the Yoruba ascribed to the West and its cosmos, power, perfection, superior and supernatural statuses, the Gwari of northern Nigeria extolled the virtues, bravery, and supremacy of their king, and the subordinate position of the White man vis-à-vis their king. The Nassarawa of northern Nigeria also, in their legends, viewed the White man as animal, red monkeys precisely, that were cannibalized. Though Christianity introduced by White people subsequently dominated the lives of most of their peoples, the Nassarawa of the north much like some other northern communities retained in their legends and exhibited a history of their tussle with Western civilization. The Igbo and Yoruba of southern Nigeria who were relatively more welcoming to the White colonizers as is illustrated by the names they take and give, and the less strident invectives addressed to the White man and his world, are noted more for their collaboration than for their opposition to the White colonizers. The content of the occidentalisms encapsulated by the proverbs collected from the Hausa is a credible indicator of the variable relationships between colonizers and specific areas. The following examples will illustrate this inference:

Hausa proverb: *Dan ta salla ki-salla.*

Translation (by informant): Son of a praying mother who refuses to pray.

Based on a conversation with the informant who provided this proverb, the proverb illustrates contradictions in the history of the White man who claims to have brought religion to the people but refuses to pray (or practice the religion they brought). Meaning: the White man demands or imposes moral standards that he himself does not practice. In current usage, it is applied to someone with hypocritical tendencies.

Hausa proverb: *Nasara asarar Duniya.*
Translation (by informant): A White man is a loss to the world.

This self-explanatory proverb and the other Hausa proverbs collected in this ethnography convey an overall negative, ridiculing or cynical attitude toward the colonizers. An archival document, ‘General Report of the Education Department, 1st April 1944 – 31st March 1945, page 7’ (archival document AR.5/E1, Nigeria National Archive, Ibadan, retrieved November 19, 2008) suggests that the greatest enthusiasm shown for Western education was from the Igbo (and Ibibio, another ethnic group from the south). They make references to the gradualness of the advancement of education programs in the northern part of the country, but notably point out in the “Annual Colonial Reports, Nigeria, 1937, page 61” (archival document AR.5/ND.6, Nigeria National Archive, Ibadan, retrieved November 19, 2008) that the education system in the northern part of Nigeria included 202,825 pupils enrolled in Koran Classes and 23,172 pupils enrolled in the colonial schools. In comparison with 502 schools in the Northern Provinces there were 35,438 Koran Classes. This translates into a noteworthy imbalance of education as a socialization index that favors the Muslim influence in the northern part of the country, with the European education system engaging only about 10% of all pupils in the education system. It is also important to note that the same archival document reports that in the “Southern Provinces” which includes the Igbo and the Yoruba, the fortunes of the European education system were reversed with a total of 3,286 schools and an enrolment of 224,788 in 1937. The picture that emerges here is one of the southern parts of Nigeria as a social atmosphere with less institutionalized interference or dilution of socialization and social constructions of the colonizer from countercurrents of another possibly competing system.

Deductively, it can be seen that the substantially more transformative impact of colonization on the southern part of Nigeria where the Igbo are found and the Yoruba are stronger, therefore, there was a social environment that allowed more facile installation of
Occidentalism as a perspectival compass that guides subjectivities of postcolonial Africans in their attitudes toward the West. This, in turn, can be extrapolated to the fecundity of folkloric representations that entertain and even celebrate the colonizer in the southern parts of the country, among the Igbo and the Yoruba, and the more cynical, taunting, or contemptuous attitude from northerners where the Koran Classes were a countercurrent against European socialization.

Mervyn Hiskett incorporated written documents and folklore in his analysis of the development of Islam in West Africa. His account of the encounter of northern Nigerians with the British, includes a poem in Hausa (1984:269–271) written by Caliph Attahiru of Sokoto Caliphate, who was on the run from the colonizers referred to as the Christians as was the practice among the Hausas at that time. He never made it to Medina where he was headed to live in exile rather than share his native land with the “Christians,” because he was killed by the colonizers in one of the various conflicts that characterized their relationship. In a poem that captures the colonial climate in northern Nigeria and the critical role of Islam in creating that climate, he repeatedly entreated God to “foil the intention of the Christians” and to keep the Hausa far away from them. He was fearful of losing Hausaland to the Christians and saw exile as the only option to living in the company of the Christians, a choice he remarked, was already made by many Hausa chiefs. As in the Hausa proverb, Dan ta salla ki-salla, meaning, son of a praying mother who refuses to pray, he listed the contradictions in the expectations of the Christians, who admonished them to stop oppression but were oppressors themselves who brought “evil civil strife and intrigue” and had “contempt for man’s rights.” He saw the Christians as a scourge from God for the transgressions of the people and decried the hypocrisy of Hausas who collaborated with them. The bodies of the Christians “are White but within they
are jet black,” he writes, and finally invoked the eschatological comparison of life with the ‘Christian” with death itself. This slice of the reality of the experience of colonization by northern Nigerians explains the low levels of enrolment in the colonizers schools, the dominance of the Koran Classes and the absence of adulation of Westerners in Hausa folklore, and the sharp contrast with the southern part of Nigeria.

In a study of social organization among African immigrants in the Atlanta Metropolitan area, including those from Nigeria and six other African countries (Anonyuo 2002), it was observed that while organizations of the Yoruba and the Igbo were many and easy to locate, only one organization of northern Nigerians was found. Using such an index to assess the impact of colonization on migration to the West in the context of different colonial dynamics in the northern and southern regions of Nigeria will be significantly valid. The very well known but formally undocumented fact that it is much easier to find Igbo and Yoruba immigrants in Western countries, than it is to find immigrants from the northern parts of Nigeria, can be attributed to the differences in colonial dynamics as detailed in the above historical accounts.

**Senegalese Folklore**

Research literature on the African postcolony establishes Senegal as an ex-colony of France. The historical fact that the Portuguese came first to Senegal is rarely discussed. This is understandable because the Senegalese speak French and have acquired the French culture which has made indelible marks on many aspects of their lives, from fashion to the dinner table. This ethnography which focuses on the past and its residues in the form of cognitions and the consciousness they create, found that when it comes to folklore, Portuguese legacy has not been obliterated by the cultural impact of France on the life of the Senegalese. Despite the intrusive even subversive nature of the dominant French colonial ideology, assimilation, cognitions about the Portuguese enshrined in folklore washed up and were easier to recall, at least among the
informants I spoke with, than folklore of the Wolof, Serrer, or any other language group in Senegal. This situation begs a question about the possibility that the drastic measures taken by French colonizers to transform the Senegalese into French people accomplished its objective more successfully than imagined, by effecting apparently significant levels of uncritical assimilation and normalization of French culture, thereby attenuating the implantation of the traditions and values of the Senegalese into social memory. But when it comes to cognitions of the colonizers that are phenotypically induced and undifferentiating of French or Portuguese, the expressions collected in this research were mainly in Portuguese creole, with all efforts to obtain occidentalisms expressed in the local Senegalese language groups amounting to very little.

The comparative slant of multi-sited research compels the observation that the metonymic construction of the White man as “spirit” by the Igbo, and comparisons or equations to deities by the Yoruba is replicated in Portuguese creole by the people of the Casamance area of southern Senegal. The Igbo say, “bekee/oyibo wu agbara.” and “oyibo ka mmadu,” the Yoruba compare the White man to the deity and powerful oracle ‘Ifa,’ “Ogun” the fierce god of iron, and virtually all their deities; and the Senegalese, in Portuguese creole say “Brankou i foutecerou” (in French, Le blanc est un sorcier ou génie) and in English, the White man is a magician or a genie (spirit). In Ouoloff (Wolof) the Senegalese say “Toubab Djinella” meaning, the White man is superhuman (a spirit). The informant explains: “Tu peux pas les quantifier, ils sont mystiques. Ils ont dépasse stade de l’être humain simple.” White people, she explained, are beyond human comprehension (because) they have surpassed the level of simple humanity. These similar corollaries in two spatially distinct ex-colonies constitute validation of colonization as a homogenizer for African societies, at least in a basic sense. This view is plausible because of the undifferentiated occidentalisms distilled from the impressions the
colonized Africans formed of the White colonizers that glorifies the White man, represented by the colonizer. The transference of these constructions to migration decisions is plausible, because migrating to the West would be for the potential migrant from the African postcolony the ultimate rapprochement of fantasy and reality, but to come full circle the possible roles of other factors as they are constructed in the different social milieus must be factored in.

Perhaps the most powerful of the occidentalisms found in this ethnography is the expression in Portuguese creole: “Na outrou moundou branou kouna sedi.” In English, this means: “In a second life if I have to be reborn, I will be White.” The informant—a 50 year-old Senegalese woman and school teacher explains that this saying refers to an African belief in reincarnation, and by extension, the choice demonstrated by this saying to part with an African identity and the wish to belong in the world of White people. For this research, this is better understood through Giddens’s lens and his conceptualizations of the unconscious and discursive consciousness. The cognitions at play here, reflecting Giddens’s idea of knowledgeability and its implications for the human agent, the postcolonial African in this case, would include various colonial experiences that have in turn crystallized the occidentalisms expressed in the proverbs and sayings of the people. While these experiences can be argued to be stored in their unconscious, some perhaps deeper or less retrievable than the others, proverbial expression or saying allows people to verbalize from the possible store of the unconscious that typically forecloses discursive expression, or from practical consciousness. That they would rather be a White person can be seen as the culmination or distillation of everything the user of this phrase feels about the White man. In this research, this is conceptualized as a surrogate for migration where the mind and consciousness leaves Africa through imagination and fantasy, before the body or the physical being actually does.
“Brankou Na Kassa i Rispitou.” is a saying from Portuguese creole which means that the presence of a White person at a someone’s home is a sign of respect. The informant feels that this expression presages “something sad” for black people. She went on to say that:

*these days the brown complexion is going to change because there are families who want mulatto children. They want to marry White people. Whites are believed to be superior. People still believe that today. Social status changes with association with Whites. It is an honor to receive Whites into one’s home.*

To bolster the semblance of a compass that the Western world has become for what Africans want to be and where they want to spend their lives, this popular cultural form, which reportedly provoked laughter from the audience of a stand-up comedian “Koudja” in Senegal, was recounted by an informant. It was a joke made on television which she feels is the kind of thinking that makes Africans want to migrate to the countries of White people. She describes the comedian Koudja as very popular among the Senegalese and therefore credible in the images he portrays about society and the world, such as this one:

*Le cheval en France est mieux traité que les gens ici au Sénégal. Être un animal en France c’est mieux qu’être une personne ici.*

Translation (by the author): The horse in France is treated better than people here in Senegal. To be an animal in France is better than to be a person here.

It is conceivable that there are some who buy into this comedian’s version of reality and choice. Young people who die senselessly in their bid to reach the Western world might be a good example. The problem of clandestine emigration is at the tip of everybody’s tongue in the Senegalese society because it has been ubiquitous in both electronic and print media, and the younger informants tell me, in popular culture videos and music. “Barca ou Barsax” which means “Barcelona or Death (or Afterworld)” is the leitmotif of clandestine emigration which has made its way to popular usage and to inscriptions on artwork, including an artistic impression of the phenomenon which I found at the Blaise Diagne Centre Culturelle in Dakar. There are
various elaborations of the meaning portrayed by this mantra for clandestine migration, but for this research, it represents a tersely stated desperation among Africans, in this case, the younger ones of both genders who can get on a “pirogue,” a small boat used mainly for small-time fishing, and try to make their way the White man’s world, to Spain, the closest European location from the vantage point of the Senegalese.

On July 21, 2008, my first week in Senegal, I watched a short film titled “Barca ou Barsax” (Barcelona or Death [translation by informant]) which stated a message, “Think before you take to the sea. The only thing that is certain is death.” This is the story of a very young-looking auto mechanic who tried to go to Spain. He seemed okay with a young wife, an infant son, and a beautifully furnished apartment, at least as constructed by the film. He needed only 100,000cfa so he could go to Spain, and his mother gave him the money. He left in a small boat. A girl in the film remarks that there are no real men left in Senegal, they have all left for Spain by boat. The Senegalese informant who watched the film with me explained that this was typical for Senegalese girls to ascribe higher status to the men who went Spain and other Western countries, and to desire them more. This mechanic in the film was the only child of his mother but his mother agreed with him to migrate to Spain illegally, in a small boat. The film ends with the family learning that the boat split in two pieces and no one was rescued. I was told by the informant who got me to watch this film with her that there are several more media products like this film, aiming at squelching the exodus of young Africans in what amounts to suicidal attempts to reach Western countries. With 74% of Senegalese desiring to migrate to the West as the survey in this ethnography shows, this is no surprise.

An elderly Senegalese, an Muslim apostate turned Catholic priest, and a media personality with whom I had the uniquely enlightening opportunity to speak toward the end of my stay in
Senegal, provided not only strong validation of the dynamics of colonial relations and history of Senegal with emphasis on the clashes between Islam and the West, but also an analysis of contemporary migration to the West. He identifies an economic and a cultural dimension to migration, commenting that the West had brought Africa to its knees, economically and culturally, and that people want to migrate for the perceived economic benefits but also because they want to become White. He passionately decried the continued impact of the West on Africans and the social changes that have resulted from that. He talked about how the French took Senegalese away to France to make them examples for those at home by teaching them how to be superior, just like the Frenchman is to the Senegalese. This transformed Senegalese, he said, returns to Senegal, and when he says he comes from France, one is made to believe that “il était voir le bon Dieu!” (he went to see God!) In a most dramatic conclusion, the abbé as he is called, decried the loss of lives in the seas by the young who desperately desire the West for reasons best known to them, and asked me to convey this message to the world to which he said he was ready to append his signature:

*Qu’ils y aillent! Qu’ils y aillent! (gesturing with his hands) Ils faut qu’ils y aillent mais pas par les pirogues . . . ces jeunes n’ont rien ici. Europe leur doit quelquechose. Aucune colonisation n’est bonne. Je leur remercie de m’avoir fait connaître Jésus mais je ne leur remercie pas pour leur culture. Je m’en fout! Je ne leur remercie pas pour leur éducation.*

His message is [my translation]: Let them go! Let the go! Let them go but not by boats . . . these youth have nothing here. Europe owes them something. There is no such thing as good colonization. I thank them for making me know Jesus but I don’t thank them for their culture. I don’t care! I don’t thank them for their education. The passion and the agitation with which this message was conveyed is indescribable and etched in my memory, perhaps because this was a person whom most of my informants recommended that I not leave Senegal without meeting. Could he be a *vox populi* then, speaking for the people some rarely heard truths about migration?
The Role of Education

In the curriculum proposed by the director of education of French West Africa, Georges Hardy for the indigenes, he acknowledged the challenging place of folklore and the implied threat it represented because it brings the whole tribe and the ancestors into the classroom.

_Avec le folklore, les ancêtres, les parents, toute la race, entrent dans la classe . . . le folklore ne se contente pas de faire des apparitions dans nos écoles indigènes: il y’est entré, il s’y est installé comme un hôte aimable et peu gênant, qu’on ne veut laisser partir_ (1917:235–236).

Translation (by the author): With folklore, ancestors, relatives, the whole race, enters the class . . . folklore does not stop at making appearances in our native schools: it has come in, and it has established itself like an amiable and hardly troublesome entertainer that one does not want to let go.

This seemingly sarcastic comment is demonstrative of the battle lines drawn by the French between the African tradition and the French culture. He followed this pithy proscription of the impact of tradition on the Senegalese by a superimposition of the importance of the history of France as part of the curriculum, and encourages its teaching in the schools for the indigenes, with pride in its beauty.

_Mais elle est grande, notre histoire, elle est, en comparaison des autres, pur, généreuse et noble. Notre histoire coloniale, en particulier, est une conte merveilleux qui fait pâlir les plus belles pages de l’histoire ancienne_ (Hardy 1917:240).

Translation (by author): But it is grand, our history, she is, in comparison to others, pure, generous and noble. Our colonial history in particular is a wonderful story which causes the most beautiful pages of ancient history to pale.

A pivotal role of history in the curriculum he envisions is “combattre at rectifier l’histoire des marabouts et de griots” (fight and rectify the history from griots and marabouts). Here again is his direct naming of what they wished to destroy, the oral tradition in which the people’s historiography was stored. The greatness of the history of France, which in comparison with other histories portrays the generosity and nobleness of France especially when it comes to colonial history, he said, is the knowledge they must convey to the natives. The history of
France, here is pitted against native Senegalese folklore represented by griots and marabouts, and Hardy makes clear what the natives need. In conformity with the assimilation ideology espoused by the French colonizers he feels strongly about how useful the teaching of French history would be for the colonial project in making of Africans people who love France and are willing to work for her prosperity. To make this possible, one condition was proposed by Hardy: that history is “maniée comme il convient” (properly handled). The ‘proper’ handling of history during colonial rule that Hardy was referring to was described by one of my informants, a 63 year-old Senegalese female and retired teacher as one which excised all potentially glorifying African images:

_In my time as a student, there was no history of Senegal but only history of France was taught in schools. They took us to be French subjects. African heroes were demonized when they talked about Africans. After independence there was a change in education. We had to begin with the history of Africa. We talked about Samoure Toure Keita but it wasn’t the same description we had been given. There was a cultural guilty conscience. Africans helped Europeans in the First and Second World Wars and other wars._

Actually, an interview with the director of an ‘École Normale Supérieur’ revealed that the curriculum left behind by the colonizers were kept in place until 1971--a decade after independence--a common reality of the African postcolony.

The role of the church was complementary in the colonial project as is well documented in colonial history. The church and the secular colonizers worked synergistically to create an African who was educated to know and understand the White man’s world, before he or she understood Africa. From an autoethnographic point of view, the church formed the hearts and souls of most Nigerians who rule the country today, and most of the first and second cohorts of emigrants from Nigeria. They ran the schools which many Nigerians scrambled for because they presented Western education as a marker for high status. This was the impression established by the colonizers, that education was something reserved for children of distinguished families who
were being molded as members of a high social class to sustain the colonial structures. This educated class and the high status and roles they are assigned in postcolonial Nigeria remains a critical part of the country’s ontological pillars.

The indirect rule has been defined as a colonial ideology which created a thin level of local representatives between the colonial administration and the colonized. In the postcolonial schools I attended, though Nigeria was officially an independent country, policies aimed at discouraging an African identity were rampant and crass. The formation of this thin line of local representatives as adjutants of the imperial colonial schemes was vital to the economic objectives of the colonizers, but remains in various forms in Nigeria’s postcolonial government. Before it was decided that we were allowed to wear an African style uniform at the boarding house on Sundays only, there were rumors, meetings, rumors and more meetings, and when it was finally decided, we were besides ourselves with joy, some, not all of us. Some students who had already been noted by the student population as the favorites of the Irish nuns kept a straight face. I learned at the boarding house many songs that described *Killarney’s Lakes and Fells*. Others that asked “Where Have Ye Been All The Day, Billy Boy, Billy Boy?” and talked passionately about “Ye Banks and Braes” and about someone “Waltzing Matilda,” songs about the lives of sailors, love songs that described emotions and acts for which I could not find a place in my world. There was “Golden Slumbers Kiss Your Eyes” that conveyed strange and unfamiliar imagery and lyrics that I did not quite understand. We were shown one Saturday per month a film in which the actors were White people, and black people were servants who were disrespected and poorly treated. The prayers we were made to recite at home suggested that Africa needed to be converted and saved because its peoples -- *na awaghali n’ugboko ebe fa ga efu ebebe* -- were roaming around in the wilderness where they would be lost forever. I, like many Nigerians today
waited for my turn to be like these other people who lived and acted like White people, the returned migrants that I also saw welcomed not far from our house with dances, slaughtering of animals, and thanksgiving services. I, too, like today’s potential migrant desired a life like that of White people.

The following is what a 59 year-old Nigerian male principal of a school had to say about the role of the church in his answer to my question. Did the church have anything to do with this (colonial) cultural impact?

_They played the role of imposing cultural imperialism. Lots of colonial missionaries were Europeans and the gospel was preached in the context of White culture. This made our people to believe that Christianity is based on European culture. They forced our people to choose European names which were thought to be superior to African names. Images of biblical personalities were presented as White. The impact was that these holy persons were White. The Europeans did not teach that God was for all, thereby lifting themselves above Africans. This was religious supremacy. God was for Whites and created them first._

A Senegalese female informant shared with me a song she was taught by her grandmother that she felt compounded her feelings as an African child that questioned God’s complicity in the unfairness of making her black and not White:

_Au peintre qui peind les anges, sur les vitraux des églises, il n’est qu’une chose étrange. Permet qu’un noir te le dise. Pourquoi peins-tu des anges toujours avec la couleur blanche? Mon coeur voudrait une image vers qui prier le dimanche. Pourquoi peins-tu des anges toujours avec la couleur blanche?_

Translation: To the painter who paints angels on the church windows, it is really a strange thing. Let a black person tell you. Why do you always paint angels in the color White? My heart wishes for an image to which it can pray on Sundays. Why do you always paint angels in the color White?

To Africans, the idea of God was not strange, and was not introduced by colonization. African cosmology is replete with imagery of a divine Supreme Being on whom great power, retributive justice, protection, and awe were bestowed by African peoples, though this Supreme Being had a hierarchy of spirits and divinity that attended it. Comaroff and Comaroff (1991,1993, 1999b) present extensive discussions about how this ontological configuration has
been jolted by modernity which as we see in the example of the informant’s experiences in the
above song lyrics, often sponsors interrogations of self and identity of varying breadth and depth
among African peoples. This residue of the obliteration of the nucleus of the African being
smears not only the spiritual but the whole range of conceivable components of African
cosmology. Parents and educational institutions in the African postcolony have been hapless
conveyors or alert culprits that have collaborated with colonizers as architects of the modernity
consciousness, by allowing its general halo to define the socialization of Africans. Comaroff and
Comaroff anatomize the genesis of this dynamic as follows:

…the self-sustaining antinomy between tradition and modernity underpins a long-
standing European myth: a narrative that replaces the uneven, protean relations among
“ourselves’ and “others” in world history with a simple, epic story about the passage from
savagery to civilization, from the mystical to the mundane. This story is, in fact a Progress.
It tells of the inexorable, if always incomplete advancement of the primitive: of his
conversion to a world religion, of his gradual incorporation into the civil society, of
improvement in his material circumstances, of the rationalization of his beliefs and
practices. (1993:xii)

The ‘god’ force-fed to the African peoples by the colonizers is exogamous to their cosmos.
It was a ‘god’ that belonged somewhere with this new structure of power, and may therefore be
inaccessible to them as the imagery and teachings of the European church conveys to them.
Hence the plea of the black person in the song lyrics for a familiar, and therefore trustworthy
anchor that would connect her to the realm of this Supreme Being that she is trying to grasp and
to whom she now has to pray on Sundays. This predicament is metaphorical about the ethos of
the African since colonization. It is played out today in the context of global processes where the
African whose ontological pillars have been rattled looks to the West where the compass of
history leads him, where the ‘self’ might find a place to which it could belong. This predicament
must not be left out in any considerations of African migration.
Emile Durkheim defines social fact as “every way of acting, fixed or not, capable of exercising on the individual an external constraint, or again, every way of acting which is general throughout a given society while at the same time existing in its right independent of its individual manifestations” (McGee and Warms 2003:91). He argues that one of the conduits for external control and socialization is education, and states that “all education is a continuous effort to impose on the child ways of seeing, feeling, and acting which he could not have arrived at spontaneously” (McGee and Warms, 2003:87). The aim of education in Durkheim’s thought is precisely the socialization of the human being, of which the process represents a map of the historical fashion in which the social being is constituted. Teachers and parents, occupy in this process of unremitting pressure from the social milieu, the roles of representatives and intermediaries. The historical fashion in which the postcolonial African as a social being is constituted includes the education policies of the colonizer. The indirectness of rule claimed by the British as colonial ideology is contradicted by the fact that their structuring and control of the Western education system in Nigeria is essentially a form of direct rule, but it is a rule of the Nigerian mind and soul, and therefore, a rule of the social future of Nigerians. This is more so because the colonial education structure was not replaced by a postcolonial system inspired by traditional values that are native to Nigeria. Where changes have been made, they are slight modifications which still retain most of the colonial characteristics and content. Thus, the Western influence continues.

An observation I made about Nigerian schools confirmed for me once more the differences between Nigerian northerners and people from other parts of Nigeria, and the possible inference that socialization and education which attends it can predispose people to desire the West and to seek to migrate there if the opportunity comes. It is almost axiomatic that
there are fewer Hausa immigrants in the West than any other ethnic group in Nigeria. At Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory, located in the north but relatively cosmopolitan, I observed an elementary school with students between ages 5 and 10. Their uniforms were like that of most schools in Nigeria, styled like Western wears and often inappropriate for the mostly hot and humid Nigerian weather. Many of the schools I saw at several locations in Nigeria had their pupils wearing ties, long sleeve shirts, and it was easy to see or at least imagine the children’s discomfort in the hot weather. The schools were trying to outdo one another in Westernization. I travelled to Zaria in the north and was lucky to arrive there just as schools were closing for the day, so I got the chance to observe that the school uniforms there were styled more like African fashion designs. They were essentially loose tops for both boys and girls that looked comfortable and more appropriate for the heat and humidity, worn with long pants or skirts, as an option for the girls. The same idea of attempts to preserve local identity that marked the colonial north seems to be sustained in the school uniforms for their schools, in contrast to the thoroughly Westernized looks favored in southern Nigeria.

The school I observed at Abuja had a Christmas program on a hot Saturday afternoon at which the teachers’ dress code was blue jeans, Western styled jackets, and the Santa Claus hat. I could only tolerate a pair of knee-length shorts and a spaghetti strapped top because of the humidity. During the program, the principal proudly announced the progress of the school and their addition to the curriculum of what she called “Royal English.” The teachers touted this new feature of their curriculum to the applause of the proud parents, as English that was free of Nigerian accent, and approached very closely the elocution in England itself. The addition of Royal English to the curriculum was the principal’s explanation for a tuition hike. A parent who sat next to me, and who, earlier had applauded enthusiastically when the “Royal English” idea
was announced leaned over gushing, telling me she did not mind paying extra for things like that (Royal English). Upon further investigation, I learned that Nigerian languages were not taught and not allowed in the school. This is only a slice of reality in contemporary Nigerian society where it seems Nigerians are channeled and chaperoned by popular culture to think Western and be Western locally, and when possible to go for the real thing by migrating to a Western country.

**Popular Culture**

I was in a car on my way to a social event in Lagos on the morning of October 9, 2008 when a radio station known as WAZOBIA FM was broadcasting a call-in Talk Show for which the topic was the trend towards the dumping of Nigerian languages and preference for English in Nigerian homes. It is noteworthy that the name of this radio station was coined from the word for “come” in the three major languages of Nigeria, Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo, respectively, and that the programs including the news were delivered in pidgin or what Nigerians call broken English. Pidgin is understood and spoken by many illiterates in Nigeria; therefore this radio station was very popular among the poorer people who seemed to listen to it all day. The discussion centered on who was most guilty, and the consensus was that the Igbo were most guilty of this mimicry of the West. As a member of that ethnic group, I agreed completely, and even more so subsequently when archival research revealed colonial documents stating that the Igbo more than other ethnic groups embraced Western education with alacrity. The Yoruba were criticized by the colonial rulers in the archival reports for holding on too long to their vernacular, something which remains a well-known fact about the Yoruba today, that they have developed and promoted their language over the years and love to speak it out loud everywhere, regardless of other occidentalisms they may construct. The concerns about the fading of Nigerian languages as some groups privilege the language of the colonizer over the native tongue, is another indicator of the installation of all things Western as the social compass for upward mobility in Nigeria. Good
command of English is often mentioned as a mark of distinction which attracts respect, praise, and admiration, especially among the Igbo, and was a quality sought after in suitors when I was a young girl.

There were many such indices for where Nigerian hearts are, such as a United States flag and a Nigerian flag mounted on the same base, sitting in front of me on the dashboard in a taxi cab. When I asked what that meant and why he had the flags like that, the cab driver explained to me that he bought it that way, and that he liked it because “our system here and everything we have is American, and it is good that way.” My secondary school classmate had on the dashboard of her car a facial tissue box marked “American Standard” on the side facing me as I sat in the passenger’s seat. A television advertisement that ran several times a day touted their security lock system as “not just any system but American standard.” Let me recall here also that Nigerian women often took pride in announcing that their clothes, fashion accessories, or jewelry were made or purchased in the U.S., England, Germany, or Italy, and habitually emphasized they were not Nigerian-made.

In my village which is now among the endangered species of former rural communities, a place where we used to go to spend time with other relatives and imagined ancestral spirits around us, where we were reminded of our culture and traditions when my father took a vacation from his public service work, I observed in the process of this ethnography that young women now wore form-fitting Capri pants, jeans, and tops, and walked around freely in them, with no one calling them names or throwing things at them. Not many years ago, young boys, and sometimes young girls too, would follow a young lady wearing pants or such male designs screaming and taunting “ashawo! ashawo!” —meaning “prostitute! prostitute!” Many homes in these former rural communities have televisions and DVD players which bring to them selected
Western programs and soap operas, and makes it possible for them to view films from Nollywood where the Western world has already been established through dress and language as objects of fantasy and desire among Africans.

I was invited to a heavily publicized “outing” of a new dance group for young married women in my village called egwu bandi (the band dance). I attended, and the “circumstantial activist” in me so used to rooting for Africa to find its footing, painfully watched these women, some of whom I knew, dressed in knee-length Western-style black skirts and form-fitting White tee-shirts. The musical instruments were actually bands, the types that were played in schools in Western countries. I could not decipher what type of music the bands produced, but the young ladies were actually doing what can be called choreographed marching slightly modified with the more traditional dance moves. This type of public dance event was very popular in the past but the instruments were African drums and other musical instruments; the beat of the music and the costumes were totally African. As a young girl, I watched my mother participate in these public dances, as did my cousin when she reached the age for marriage, for this was where many young men or their mothers came to look for a wife. Dance was a forum for celebrating African femininity or communal harmony. This experience was a complicated but deeply symbolic one signifying a point of no return for the march of Africans toward the West and their desire to proscribe things deemed traditional. No place or location can be more rural, if there still is any such thing, than the area where these women came from, my native village. And there too, the African drum and its extensive meanings and use in the African cosmos, has been replaced by the Western drum. For me and my experiential package, nothing could be more radical than this in pointing out where and what Africans wanted to be. The turning of consciousness and conduct in everyday life toward the West, or a sublimated “gaze” at the West that is now rampant in
Nigeria is easy to see in society and demonstrates the direction of global cultural flows. It is from the West to Africa where it was repackaged to exacerbate the desire for all things Western.

I watched some Nigerian films and television drama series in which the costumes were predominantly Western, and the better actors were pointed out as the ones that spoke English without a Nigerian accent; women bragged about their children eating only Western type or non-Nigerian foods like corn flakes, bread, ramen noodles, hamburgers, butter, fried foods, and a lot of things that were not African in television commercials; children and an easy majority of young adults in the southern part of Nigeria mainly wore only Western clothes most of which I learned are bought from the second-hand clothing market, or were paid heavily for when transnational friends, neighbors, or relatives returned from the West.Strangely now, Dubai has joined the list as a source of Western style clothing. The symbolism of this trend for the dynamic and impact of occidentalisms in the Nigerian society becomes even more important when it is a verifiable fact that the textile industry in Nigeria has made Nigerian textiles extremely affordable, with its own boom of traditional fashion designs.

Janet McGaffey and Rémy Bazenguissa-Ganga (2000) present a study of what is probably one of the most important social phenomena in African societies: fashion and its meaning in the complexities and juxtapositions of a globalizing world. Clothing and fashion occupy a very high position on the social ladder of status, respect, charisma, referent and social power among Africans. But when it comes to the proliferation and possible domination of Western – style clothing, and the fetishism or cultish behavior that surrounds it in some parts of Africa, it must be placed in the context of inferiority complex, a flight of the mind induced by the dynamics of colonial legacy, and markers of the unsettled self and evacuated African subjects that populate the postcolony. Ferguson (2007:161) presents perspectives on this subject mostly attributed to
Wilson (1941:19-20), stating that the acquisition and display of European clothes and other goods by colonial Africans represents a bid to assert claims to a civilized status comparable to that of the Europeans. Part of Fergusson’s discussion of the concept of mimicry as a way of seeking belonging in a global sociocultural order by postcolonial Africans includes references to “La Sape” as an appropriation of Western goods and signs within the terms of an indigenous cultural logic, in contrast to the perspective of some anthropologists who see it as a practice of cultural assimilation (2007:160). Mimicry does not have to denote the same thing for all postcolonial Africans and their societies. Depending on the colonial experience and its morphogenesis in a specific context, cultural practices such as mimicry may reflect an appropriation of Western goods within the terms of a given cultural logic, or a practice of cultural assimilation. Magubane (1971) has already debated the issue in great depth and breadth, but McGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga present a major reprise of the trope of fashion which they now place in the vortex of globalization and the reconfiguration of time and space which has transformed cultural interactions. Between Ferguson, McGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga (2000), and earlier, Magubane (1971) and his interlocutors, the crucial meanings of fashion and dress style in the context of colonization produce varied positionalities, impelling closer attention to the variation in colonial experiences and the ideologies that produced them, as with assimilation for the Senegalese and indirect rule for Nigerians.

“La Sape” is an invention of youth from Brazzaville Congo who become enmeshed in fierce competition for prestige, and therefore do everything possible to procure and wear ostentatiously French designer clothing. For these youth and others they attract into their cultural microcosm, it is not just the economic trappings that must be asserted, since clothing from Paris and its transportation to Africa has to be expensive, but it is also the difference or distinction the
Western clothing confers on those who wear them, the cosmopolitan look that identifies more with the West than their local Congo environment that must be asserted. This happens because though local people have the wealthy among them, the clothing designed and purchased from France comes with it social capital which can procure among other things, social status and prestige. Ferguson adds a dimension which brings the logic of “La Sape” closer to an occidentalism indicative of a self-image that is almost exclusive to the subjects of postcoloniality: the “La Sape” group also used certain skin-lightening cream, in their efforts to achieve the appearance of Europeans (2007:160). Such drastically severe reconstitution of the self relative to the European illuminates the magnetism that Whiteness has for potential African migrants, and how far they would go to actualize it.

Analytical frameworks such as “weapons of the weak” or even “oppositional culture” can be used to analyze the “La Sape” phenomenon where these youth can be said to indulge in a lifestyle ranging from criminality shown in their manipulation of the system to get to Paris and back, to ostentatious performance because they feel something akin to anomie in a society where the socioeconomic order has denied them a place. This phenomenon takes place in many African societies where France can symbolize the United States, Germany, Italy, and now Dubai and sometimes China. Those who cannot acquire these fashions in person or by proxy through transnational merchants do everything to convince others that their locally made ware is not locally made. I met a few of such people in the course of this ethnography. They too make that imaginary or fantastic journey to places Western that are believed to have everything superior to things African, and want everyone to know that. This phenomenon is emblematic not only of the value placed on everything Western but more importantly of the bee-hive of imagination that many African societies are and how very quickly physical relocation or migration can replace
flights of the mind. They reproduce the West and their hyperbolic positive occidentalisms in various creative forms when they cannot go there physically. And when it is possible to relocate to the West, 77% of the 821 Africans surveyed in this ethnography said they would leave their native African societies.

In the African postcolony, those who have already migrated and potential migrants are products of a history that has transformed their view of the world so radically that it should take much more than material attractions to turn their fantasies into reality, and their imagination of the West into actual migration experience. A totalizing economic rationale for African migration falls short of reality. This ethnography in no way denies the role of economic benefits in the attraction of a lot of people from all over the world to Western countries, but the impetuses of each migrant and potential migrant pool must be viewed separately. For postcolonial Africans, the intensity, breadth, and depth of the colonial experience is too relevant to the past, present, and future of African peoples to be relegated to obscurity by migration theorists. African migration has implications for development, but occidentalisms do not precipitate just the drain of human capital; it also represents a case of consciousness formation that presages the future of Africa, and has its roots in colonization. As long as the consciousness of a majority of Africans is trapped in occidentalisms that establish the West as ‘heaven on earth’, and living in Africa as traumatic as informants put it, the development deficit talked about in analyses of African migration will be chronic because occidentalism will become a prison of consciousness among postcolonial Africans. Continuing to underrate or even ignore the occidentalisms that control much of the mindset and migration decision making among postcolonial Africans would amount to willfully telling only a small part of the story of African migration.
Occidentalism: A Prison for Consciousness

James G. Carrier identifies a type of occidentalism that is growing in importance in anthropology because it deals with how people outside the West imagine themselves, often in contrast to their stylized image of the West. (2003:6) Orientalist imaginings presented by Edward Said (1979) can be seen as part of a dialectic that produces occidentalisms, which results in essentialized constructions of self and others within which particular customs and practices are emblematic. (Carrier 2003:7) To some extent and at different levels it seems human to use ideas about other people to set oneself apart or delineate one’s identity, but essentializing difference produces images that are not inert but have social, political and economic implications which among other things influence people’s actions. In the African postcolony, most occidentalisms that have been forged, like others, serve the purpose of self-description and delineation of identity, but because of the legacy of colonial subjugation and its morphogenesis in neocolonialism, Africans engage in occidentalisms from a position of powerlessness that comes from preconceived inferiority to White people. Their constructions of the West do not raise them to the position of power as was the case with those in the West who did or do the orientalizing by imposing essentialized berated constructions on the non-West. Postcolonial Africans essentialize the West as what they want or need to be, and in the case of migration, the dynamics of this African occidentalism sets the potential migrant on the path to the fulfillment of their desired identity. It also robs the country of the migrant’s origin of not only brain power that is often considered essential for development, but more importantly of the consciousness that allows people to dislodge themselves from the shackles of the past so that they can see the present in all its ramifications.

African migration is often analyzed within the parameters of the modernist narrative of developmentalist teleology, which is why remittances, brain drain, and development have
dominated the discourse and thereby have occluded the possibilities of finding any other explanations. The concept of occidentalism offers the opportunity to explore how the prevalence of certain types of attitudes, consciousness, social norms and values, and their connections to a historical past might make a difference in the decision to migrate. It has different manifestations and consequences for societies where colonization and subjugation to a foreign power has charted the course of their history. Stefania Pandolfo offers insights from psychoanalysis and analyses of the Arab quest for self and its struggles with past relations with the West. The challenges of looking into the future, she argues, are exacerbated by the inability to steer clear or to dislodge consciousness from the type of disavowal that has enabled the dependence of modern Arab forms of consciousness upon those of the West (2000:123). Contemporary Arab ideology, she states is:

*an assessment of the imaginary servitude in which Arab consciousness is imprisoned without its knowing and which makes impossible any autonomous definition on an Arab self. (Pandolfo 2000:122)*

The ‘imaginary servitude’ referred to in this statement captures the dynamics and content of African occidentalism, constructed from a mix of social memory and imagination, and an inferiority complex with roots in the past and buttressed by antinomies of contemporary global processes and particular local reinforcements. The position of perceived and essentialized inferiority from which the stylized image of the West, and self-perception is constructed in the African postcolony constitutes a “dangerous form of disavowal” (Pandolfo 2000:123) which according to Pandolfo hinders the emergence of the modern self, with a voice that is one’s own which can only be retrieved from a colonial past through a revision of mental tools. Following this argument, the emergence of a modern African self is hindered by occidentalism, and the possibility of finding a voice that is African, and I must add, a voice devoid of all forms of mimicry, can only be the outcome of a critical revision of the mental tools of postcolonial
Africans, among which is occidentalism. Once freed from the fetters of occidentalism, Africans will be capable of exercises of introspection and creativity which have the potential of moving them along on the path of bettering their lot, by focusing on Africa.

Like Arabs in Pandolfo’s (2000) analysis, African lives are determined elsewhere. In Fanon’s thinking, only the White man and the Western world can give worth to black (colonized) people. Of the Arab, he states:

*If psychiatry is the medical technique that aims to enable man no longer to be a stranger in his own environment, I owe it to myself to affirm that the Arab, permanently an alien in his own country lives in a state of absolute depersonalization... The social structure existing in Algeria was hostile to any attempt to put the individual back where he belonged.* (1967:63)

Africa’s failures since independence reflect the Arab world that Fanon describes here. The mimicry of the West and its valorization at the personal and institutional levels has established Africans as aliens in their own countries where they are depersonalized by their own constructions of the West resulting in what I call “bootlegged identity”. The idea of restoring an authentic or original African identity is bound to run into a Nigerian or Senegalese social structure where the West as compass for progress has entrenched itself and continues to pickpocket African social contexts of the souls that inhabit them. For the African, the industrialized West is the location of every type of power: economic, cultural, knowledge, aesthetic, and even spiritual power. This perspective is enshrined in their distilled cognitions and subjectivities presented in folklore, and in expressions of their own discursive consciousness. The problem, as stated by Pandolfo, is the Arabs cannot see this, (neither do Africans) for they dwell in another world, an unreal world populated by the ghostly presences of absent interlocutors -- a world made of mythic forms, images, fetishes -- a condemned past. (Pandolfo 2000:124) This is the colonial past where “domination holds its grip”. (Pandolfo 2000:123)
The colonial domination of Africa by the West is Africa’s past kept current by African occidentalisms, and reproduced in the disavowal of self that culminates in the physical flight of migration. If Africa is to find its self and its own voice, its consciousness needs to be dislodged from the prison of occidentalism, which constitutes self-subjugation to the West. Migration may well be, as a 70 year-old Nigerian male engineer put it, “the easiest way to escape the trauma of living in Nigeria,” and as a twenty-eight year old Nigerian female secretary put it, “the social comfort would be my only motivation for going there.” But these subjectivities beg the question of what types of comparisons produce the feeling of trauma’ or lack of social comfort’ that these informants claim. The concept of relative deprivation (Runciman 1966), suggests that people imagine or identify reference groups against whom they measure their own conditions and consequently may feel various degrees of deprivation. For postcolonial Africans, it is clear that their evaluation of their traumatic conditions and social comfort comes from their perceptions of the Western world. While they may measure themselves locally against others of worse conditions as Runciman suggests, their sense of belonging to a global society, and the perceived inequalities they see in their lives from that point of view is a global standard, not a local one. This way of looking at the world highlights two things: the first is the fact that the West is the standard against which Africans measure themselves, secondly, this shows that Africans do not feel a sense of belonging in their African societies. I will discuss this in greater detail in the next chapter.

A simplistic but logical conclusion from these thoughts would then be that if African countries could make life in their societies less traumatic (or just like life in the West), and social comforts more available and pervasive as they are in the West, perhaps constructions of the West might be reconfigured by Africans, and their chief mental tool, occidentalism might begin to lose
its efficacy. A sense of relative deprivation might begin to be inward looking. But then, can there ever be ‘social comfort’ that is authentically African? In the context of extensive depersonalization, the prospects are bleak. When introspection is released from the shackles of occidentalism it might be easier to see, then, how occidentalism has been the prison of consciousness in the African postcolony. This ethnography finds a very high level of desire among Africans to migrate to the West, and intense and pervasive constructions of occidentalisms. Migration to the West based on fantasy and imagination as some informants correctly stated, is no accident. It is already seen by scholars as an obstacle to development in terms of a perceived brain-drain, but above all, it is an outcome of the imprisonment of the consciousness which perpetrates the domination of the West at least in the consciousness of postcolonial Africans, and exacerbates the invisibility of Africa and its problems as the here and now that beg the attention and engagement of Africans themselves.

**Brands of Occidentalism: Comparison between Senegalese and Nigerian**

This ethnography makes possible a number of suggestions for understanding what kinds of transformations have been brought about by colonization in Nigeria and in Senegal, and therefore, what kinds of occidentalisms have emerged from these transformations. While both societies construct the West in significantly more positive terms, there are slight differences that could have noteworthy implications for the impetuses for migration for the two countries. It seems logical to conclude that the Senegalese have achieved a common understanding that the French culture has irreversibly suffused and occupied their society and that this has been played out among them for decades even after the colonizers left. The desire for the West as destination for migration, therefore, seems to have acquired new meanings as a locally contrived cultural identity makes its way to the fore: more people commoditizing and consuming the West, wanting less to be like them, but to have Western things.
The Senegalese convey the impression that the colonizer’s ideology of assimilation has been accomplished in their society though still regretted by some, but that the dazzle that engendered mimicry of France is wearing off. In an incomplete emergence from colonization, their Senegalese culture becomes compounded with the markers of Western culture that have been around for decades, and with that established, they look for Western things, but not the Western identity. It is possible that this state of affairs came about because Frenchness’ was pervasively installed in the consciousness of the Senegalese through the colonizer’s move to make of the Senegalese through their education, loyal and dedicated citizens of France and believers of everything she stands for. This objective became so eloquently expressed in the move, also, to offer automatic citizenship to some groups of Senegalese. According to an elderly female informant this dichotomization of the Senegalese identity created a social status system where those automatic French citizens became like surrogates for the colonizer’s supremacy. It seems then that the French and Frenchness were ubiquitous in a more intimate way long after the colonizers physically removed themselves from Senegal, thus bringing the French presence quickly to a saturation point in the Senegalese society.

The Senegalese postcolony, though saturated with Frenchness still exemplifies superficial emergence from colonization because the people still ascribe value to Western things not in a totalizing fashion, but as a critical ingredient to be accumulated and employed in their new constructions of identities. I hesitate to describe this process as hybridization because the component parts of this emerging Senegal are distinguishable, but the West seems to be constructed as indispensable, maybe even pivotal for the preferred Senegalese identity. This situation seems to have been bolstered by the attitudes of Senegalese leaders who according to one articulate young male informant, seem to hoist the West to the view of the people, either in
form of their chronically Caucasian spouses, as he stated it, or their declared but yet to be achieved objective to turn Dakar into Paris, or still by going to a G-8 summit uninvited to beg for development aid from Western leaders. Under colonial rule, French citizenship was offered to some but not others, thus creating a brand of inferiority complex, maintained in this case by local players, fellow Senegalese citizens that became surrogates of the colonizer in terms of social status, and still nurture that image in contemporary Senegalese society. The desire for the West as indicated by some informants was helped by this home-made brand of superiority and may well be partially responsible for the commoditization of the West that now helps the construction of new Senegalese identities.

It would seem then that a new and strong type of communalism is emerging, one that is centered on how much of the West has been “senegalized” or brought back into the community. It does not appear that those headed for Spain in fishing boats are all poor, in fact some of them have jobs or businesses but are constantly looking around them, making comparisons in the neighborhood about who has amassed more Western things and evaluating their lives accordingly. In this case, they may have arrived at a relative deprivation that has local reference groups. Several of the informants in my study talked about the attraction to the West not being based on want or need as such, but a competition among people in neighborhoods about who can outdo the other in amassing paraphernalia of the West. Mothers desperately encouraging their sons to migrate so that the other mother down the street is not superior to her for having a son or daughter sending Western goods of which she feels denied, has been a source of outrage in contemporary Senegalese society. Many of these mothers are not really poor since they can afford $100,000cfa in the “Barsac or Barsax” documentary, they just want to have their piece of the West which would baptize and ratify their Senegalese identity.
The idea that the “success” that comes from migration to the West is qualified was raised by some of the Senegalese informants. They insist that those who leave for the West do not desire the home-made success, because some do see examples of self-made “successful” local figures in their communities who have never set foot in a Western country, and are even privy of opportunities to succeed locally, but turn up their nose at these local brands of success. They explain that some migrants from Senegal to the West choose to endure possible humiliation in the West that they would in no way tolerate in Senegal, because “success” that comes from the West is more desirable, even superior, to success that comes from Senegal. In the context of my research, this can be seen as a mindset that upholds success that is achieved through migration to the United States, France, or England, as a source of social capital that distinguishes those who have accomplished it. This peculiar situation enables the argument that the easy to articulate economic impetus for migration is not immaculate but actually comes with it a smear of non-economic desires which in the case of the Senegalese is the commoditization of the West itself, with a cultural leaning, and its use in the construction of a Senegalese identity.

The situation is Nigeria seems less complicated when compared to the above deductions for occidentalisms and their ramifications for migration to the West. As in Senegal, the colonizer made his mark on the Nigerian people, but this was accomplished through the ideology of indirect rule even as the imposition of a Western education on the Nigerian people with its immediate economic objective for the colonizer, transformed the lives of the people. The so-called indirect rule achieved a very important distance which insulated the population from direct or pervasive exposure or restricted their contact with Western culture. It is well-known that the British were not very much interested in a “mission civilisatrice” as were the French, and
therefore were indifferent to the culture of the native as long as it did not pose a threat or interfere with their economic goals.

While knowledge about the West, precisely Britain, was taught in Nigerian schools, it did not have the same cultural impact as the planned, encouraged, rationalized, and strategic force-feeding of French culture to the Senegalese whose lives became suffused with Frenchness during and after colonialism. For this reason, the time after the colonizer had left Senegal and the people were in many ways French and progressing to a saturation point for Frenchness, did not play out that way in the Nigerian context. British culture was exoticized and given enhanced value among postcolonial Nigerians by the purposeful distance between the colonizer’s culture and the Nigerian natives designed and implemented through indirect rule. British culture which was the prized possession of a few Nigerians, and which carried a lot of power and social capital with it, became a scarce commodity in the postcolony, a scarcity that boosted its value and the degree to which it was desired by Nigerians. In Senegal, Frenchness became a common phenomenon early in their contact with the French and after the departure of the French; in Nigeria it remained scarce, uncommon, value-loaded, and therefore much more desirable after the colonizers left.

Thus in the two postcolonies, the desire for the West and the occidentalisms attached to these desires in the contemporary world can be seen as having different contents, and likely to be at different stages of value to the peoples of the two countries. While the Senegalese are saturated with Frenchness because of the colonizer’s assimilation ideology, Nigerians are at a relatively earlier stage of acquiring Britishness because of the relative cultural distance of the colonial indirect rule. This enables a logical explanation or deduction that Nigerians may still desire the West because of the cultural and social capital that comes with it and its utility for acquiring social status, and might therefore migrate to the West partially for that reason. The
Senegalese, on the other hand, for whom the attraction of French culture has been attenuated by its ubiquity, still desire the West not because it carries for them social and cultural capital as it does for Nigerians, but more because it has reached a stage where it is compounded and commoditized as a necessary ingredient in the construction of contemporary Senegalese identities. The Senegalese may be motivated to migrate to the West, but only for the purpose of senegalizing it.

Perhaps, the difference between Nigeria’s residential patterns and those of Senegal are indicative of the continued maintenance of a distance that is still a status marker as it was during the colonial era. Following the blueprint laid down by the colonizer, areas where wealthy Nigerians live resemble another world compared to areas where other Nigerians live. In these areas, there is the proliferation of imposing and distinguished architecture, the gentrification, the massive gates and guards, the better maintained roads, the eclectic traffic of high price automobile brands and the people who emerge from or enter occasionally the massive gates, smack of ‘neocolonialism’. Though there were areas called upscale in Senegal, such distinctions were not as easy to make.

The relatively newer and stronger fascination with the White man, his culture, and his power has been dramatized in a long-running Igbo television series called *Iche Oku*, Igbo for “Parrot” where a court clerk “parroted” a White judge as a translator in the adjudication of conflicts in an Igbo community. The show was a hit in the late 70s and remained until late 80s and even 90s in some areas when newer video technologies have forced it into hibernation. The court clerk acquired dubious but widespread popularity, power, and status, by being the White man’s right hand, so to say, and also by instilling great fear of the White man into the rural people, by manipulating the truth willfully or as a result of his limited knowledge of the
language, thereby making court hearings feel like doomsday when the indisputable judgment of
the White man brought delirious joy to the winners of a case and unspeakable helplessness and
distress to the losers of a court case. This television series appealed to the people because of its
novelty for many people, of the dynamics of the relations between Whites and Nigerians. The
distance at which White culture was placed during the colonial era for the average Nigerian
native, accounts for the sustained attraction to the West as “Paradise” in the postcolony, with
trappings of power and prestige, and an impetus for migration there beyond the economic.
Occidentalism by Nigerians is therefore quite similar to occidentalism by the Senegalese but
their instrumentalizations by the people have different objectives. Nigerians want the West as is,
to be kept apart from any sense of Nigerianness, but the Senegalese want the West for use in
forging a new Senegalese identity.
CHAPTER 10
STUDY LIMITATIONS, CHALLENGES, AND OTHER POSSIBLE IMPETUSES FOR MIGRATION

Few ethnographies have unlimited resources of time and funds. This study, as many other ethnographic projects had the challenge of temporality some scholars (for example, Berg 2008) have named as a major issue with multi-sited research, compounded by very limited funding. Generally, fieldwork is designed to be completed within a specified period of time, subject to availability of funding, without undermining the process of knowledge production that is its main objective. Since research funding is not equally distributed across all topics or subject matter, its impact on the research process and knowledge production deserves heightened attention by scholars because of its implications for the conduct of research (Morris 1994; Forsythe and Hess 2001). For this ethnography, the advantage of native anthropologist as the researcher offset some of the resource constraints but still there is no doubt that with better funding and time, more data would have been obtained, especially folklore which from the experience of this study tells a compelling and irrefutable story about the social memory of a people.

Whatever the circumstances of a research project, it is inevitable that when the time comes to pack up and leave the field, there is a feeling of having missed something, or that some potentially illuminating aspect of the research has not been sufficiently explored. Fortunately, such trepidation is countered by the recognition of social research as a dynamic process that allows for snapshots of isolated temporalities that constitute complex worlds. My study is a primer that begins to reveal dimensions of postcoloniality, with epistemological implications for complex and protean social phenomena like the contexts of migration decision making. It projects Africa as what Appadurai describes as heuristic device for the study of global geographic and cultural processes (2000:7). Because postcolonialism is a lightning rod for controversy where blame, guilt, subjectivities, and political correctness can run amok and
obfuscate important and informative revelations that are contingent on history, it has not been sufficiently explored beyond the literary realm. It is shunned mainly by African scholars in the social sciences who see it as “dangerous” for their career, and in my personal experience wave it off as belonging in the past, or an excuse African intellectuals use as subterfuge for the failures of their country. Raphael Dalleo explains this tendency within and outside academe as follows:

The ability of postcolonial approaches to insinuate their way into virtually all disciplines of the human sciences could be seen as their greatest success. Yet even at its moment of ascendance, many within and outside the field have wondered about the ability of the term postcolonial to describe the surging nationalisms and imperialisms of today’s world, while outside the academy a mounting McCarthyism threatens to withhold federal money from academic endeavors that appear "un-American," as postcolonial approaches may. (2004:129)

David Scott (2004) proposed the idea of new “problem spaces” which demands that as “conscripts of modernity” postcolonial peoples, and I must add, others who engage in intellectual quests about them, must pursue both production and liberation of knowledge through a better understanding of the past and the future. To accomplish this, interrogations of our relationships with the Enlightenment project as well as modernity as its general context are central. Migration from ex-colonies to Western countries exemplifies the intersection of the mottled past of history and contemporary social phenomena. Vigorous debate is needed on such subject matter so that the “world-generating optic” which Appadurai conceptualizes can be actualized through partnerships between academics and “symbolic analysts” (artists, journalists, etc) in teaching and research, and also so that “our picture of areas does not stay confined to our own first order, necessarily parochial, world picture”(2000:8). The role of “public intellectuals from outside the West” is seen by Appadurai as very important for this collaborative effort in knowledge production. The scarcity of perspectives, and the skewed tendencies of existing ones in favor of long-standing developmentalist teleologies, aided by the relative silence of non-Western intellectuals and the slow progress toward the democratization of research (Appadurai 2000) and
needed decolonization of anthropology (Harrison 1991, 2008), strains and limits studies such as this one.

Under the rubric of “anthropology of race and postcoloniality” and the exigency of “reworking anthropology in the global age,” Faye V. Harrison calls for the integration of the voices of “outsiders within” into anthropological discourse because of their potential role in influencing beneficial paradigm shifts in anthropology. The tenacity of parties in the debate over the role of Africans and their “interpretive rights… variously founded on cultural fluency, political engagement, lived experience, and immersion in daily Africa, a specifically African epistemological heritage” (2008:31) has been a strong index for Western anthropology’s perceived structured exclusion of Africans from elite institutional practice in the United States. Harrison makes strong arguments for the need to reduce knowledge deficits created by a tradition of marginalization in anthropology, and the need to empower the voices of scholars who are people of color or “native anthropologists” from the so-called Third World, in order to build conceptual and analytical bridges. The bases of the cross-fertilization of ideas that can be achieved through the reworking of anthropology must be ethnography-based discourse that will serve the purpose of taking facile arguments to task and of sidestepping “the comfort of established views” which as Giddens (1984:xxii) stated, can be a cover for “intellectual sloth.” These arguments adequately describe the dynamic that has dogged studies such as this one, especially the paucity of contextualizing theoretical and analytical perspectives.

The internationalization that can be achieved through the decolonization of anthropology sought by Harrison opens the door wider for the native anthropologist who should be a key player in the alternative anthropology of a model intellectual community which “would bring varied epistemological, theoretical, and methodological concerns into a difference-friendly
synergetic space characterized by neither a conventional center or margin” (2008:12). The opportunities for the native anthropologist implied in the desired new direction for the discipline is encouraging and inviting for the exploration of hitherto constrained areas of inquiry and the original perspectives the native anthropologist can bring to the discourse.

In the field, however, ethnography by a native anthropologist has both advantages and disadvantages. In the case of this study, postcoloniality as lived experience was an advantage, as the springboard of the study itself and the source of some specific research questions. The study enables the privileging of a native anthropologist’s immersion into everyday living in the African locale over contrivances from the superficialness of preconceived ethos of postcolonial peoples. Marcus acknowledges the changing demographics of anthropology and the role of “bicultural” or “hybrid” anthropologists which makes possible the fact that “extended exploration of existing affinities between the ethnographer and the subject of study is indeed one of the most powerful and interesting ways to motivate a research design” (1998:15). As a “halfie” or that native anthropologist who finds herself at an interstitial cultural space (Behar and Gordon 1995), I was positioned both inside and outside the (African) communities I write about (Abu-Lughod 2000) and of which I have clearly ambivalent claims of membership. But the situated knowledge which is the inevitable outcome of this multiple positioning was advantageous in my fieldwork. My knowledge of where to locate the type of informants I needed to enhance variability of the data for both the interviews and the questionnaire surveys enabled me to shun logistic challenges in planning and implementing my ethnographic project. Prior knowledge of the research milieu and familiarity with peculiar conditions in certain populations or local cultures proved advantageous and informed preemptive measures to forestall or prevent situations that might compromise the quality of data collected, and in some cases to gain access to informants.
While familiarity with the local culture and personally relevant social phenomenon can be powerful tools for the native anthropologist, they can also be its Achilles heel. In Senegal “difference” in terms of my French “accent” described by one informant as “erudite” and not street-style was an asset. I must have been exoticized by difference and therefore uniquely interesting to the people. As a Senegalese man put it, “[i]t is difficult to imagine an African woman who is Anglophone and speaks French without an African accent.” In Nigeria, however, I was one of them, and the benefits of distance or difference seemed unattainable except when I introduced myself and the purpose of my study. It seemed that a stranger (Nigerian but unknown) probing their lives and innermost thoughts was anathema to the people, and that was more serious than unfamiliar. I had the deep conviction while trying to complete my surveys that these people were not used to being researched. This, I felt was a direct result of excessive armchair theorizing on postcoloniality whereby scholars have been caught up in theoretical tug-of-war and have for the most part avoided or deemphasized direct studies and ethnographies of the subjects of postcolonialism. Asking the people questions they were not familiar with was irritating to many and I was not spared from the wrath I provoked. Refusal rates were high in Nigeria, especially among the women and because of extreme status – consciousness in Nigeria, the researcher role robbed me of social capital I had taken for granted and factored into my resources ahead of the fieldwork. Some of my anticipated “connections” could not fathom why I was “belittling” myself standing around in the streets and talking to strangers, some told me candidly they were disappointed I was still doing “this type of thing” so they seemed to distance themselves from me, at least selectively, thus diminishing the utility I thought in advance they would serve. A researcher differentiated by accent or by phenotypical markers such as a Caucasian would provoke a different dynamic that might elicit different observations or
responses from the informants. Still, certain kinds of “foreignness” based on complexion, for example, as would be the case for Caucasians, would also have the potential for compromising the data as a result of other forms of interactional dynamic, interestingly rooted in postcolonial consciousness and occidentalisms. Comparisons between data from a native anthropologist and a White non-native should advance the knowledge on occidentalism itself, in this case, with implications for research methodology.

Some Nigerian informants answered their questions reluctantly, questioning and analyzing almost every question on the survey or even ridiculed them. Others gave absent-minded answers, or asked what was in it for them; would I help them get a visa to go a Western country? Others exhibited sometimes shocking hostility such as giving me a scolding or yelling at me to get out of their face. I dressed in Nigerian fashions most days, my Western style attires made no difference anyway, because many women now dressed the same way. I alternated or code switched between pidgin and formal English depending on my assessment of the informant’s literacy or need for informality. Sometimes the source of the informants’ anger was verbalized, other times it was not. Some were incensed by what one Nigerian informant described as “the trauma of living in Nigeria” and complained bitterly about the chaotic nature of society and their feelings of abandonment by the government. It was explained to me by some empathic informants that the reason for all this was that I was what they wanted to be but couldn’t – a Nigerian who lived in America. Life was already easy for me and tough for them, why should they make mine easier? This, I believe was an outcome of a misplaced aggression or the “familiarity breeds contempt” relational dynamic, for which the antidote would probably be a visibly and clearly distinguishable non-Nigerian, preferably, a White-skinned person. There were days that demanded more than others stronger motivation for me to step out and face the
informants, and ended up highlighting time wasted in unsuccessfully explaining the rationale and potential good in research. Perhaps more surveys would have been completed and more interviews would have been done had this researcher/researched dynamic not existed. That these constraints were caused by my “nativeness” relative to Nigeria is noteworthy.

Migration is a hot button issue in both Senegal and Nigeria, therefore, my presence in some places quickly attracted a lot of attention. It worked as a snowballing dynamic for volunteered participation in some areas, while in other areas the exuberance of some people was doused by their confirmation that I was not going to help them get a visa. Some Senegalese women whispered to each other that I was probably sent by the government and queried me for some time before agreeing or declining to participate in the research. In Nigeria, especially, there was the additional challenge of a society in which the people were experiencing resurgence in the power and influence of the occult. Suspicions toward me and my intentions had become a common attitude among Nigerians toward people they did not know. Sometimes, the suspicions were openly expressed with people asking how they could know the real reason I wanted to ask them these questions. An ethnographer that is visibly non-Nigerian might be insulated from the suspicions addressed at the native ethnographer.

Another informant and some acquaintances explained that the hostilities were due to the pandemic of attributions of power and determinism for life or death, health or sickness, prosperity or penury, now attributed to unseen benevolent or nefarious supernatural powers for whom humans deputized. I was told bluntly that some might be afraid that I was a deputy of some unseen malevolent influence they would rather distance themselves from. Comaroff and Comaroff describe the “possibilities and perversities of the African present” that replicates modernity’s own magicalities and enchantments (1993:xiv), “where material transactions are
inseparable from a moral traffic in human and superhuman powers” (1993:xxiii). The impact of this social consciousness on the conduct of the ethnography itself and on the subject matter of occidentalisms that tends to suggest powerlessness in subjects, was not just a contextual matter that was enormously challenging and time-consuming for the ethnography but also an issue that had a broader implication for the tendency for postcolonial Africans to construct themselves as under-siege and needing escape, invariably to the Western world. White people, after all, were part of the spirit world as the folklore collected in my study shows, but perhaps would be constructed as benevolent spirits along the logic of occidentalism, in the cosmos and social constructions of postcolonial Africans.

A logical sequel for this ethnography should be a study of African immigrants already settled in Western countries. Being mindful of Giddens’s (1984) conceptualizations of various levels of consciousness and their methodological implications for research, it would be informative to compare social constructions of the West among postcolonial Africans living in the West with those of potential migrants. Though this type of study would be significantly hamstrung by the challenges of “discursive consciousness” and its interface with the unconscious in Giddens’s reasoning, research designs mindful of these constraints, such as free lists or pile sorts, might be helpful in their ability to locate and map cognitions surreptitiously and noninvasively. Such a study would have been complementary for this ethnography but would have constituted substantial data overload and challenges of temporality. Three informal interviews held with African immigrants in the United States so far, show the same directions in African occidentalisms, and great potential for validating the central thesis of this study: that beyond economic impetuses, Africans are predisposed and motivated to migrate to Western countries, because of occidentalisms they construct and the social capital they entail.
It would have been enlightening to elicit from the survey respondents some explanations for their desire to migrate to the West. With the exception of a few interview informants, the question of whether or not they would migrate to the West was not pressed. It would be helpful to connect an informant’s expressed desire or lack of desire to migrate to the West with his or her own occidentalisms or other explanations. Though this was accomplished through logical connections between responses provided by different informants, and the standard supposition in fieldwork that the informants are a representative sample of the postcolonial Africans, individual explanations of the desire to migrate would lend more weight to the inferential conclusions made from the data collected.

The commonality of colonial experience homogenizes African societies to a great extent. With the objective of this ethnography to bring attention to an important connection between contemporary global processes and consciousness from experiences couched in history comes a caveat for generalization. Colonial experience subsumes subjugation and different levels of erasure of self and ontological foundations, but local particularities that mediate social constructions in the postcolonies must be seriously considered. As differences exist in this study within one country, Nigeria, so can they between postcolonial societies in the forms and intensities of occidentalisms and their implications for migration. Internal dynamics of postcolonial societies might reflect different degrees of status-consciousness, and might reveal education curricula that move away from Westernization and toward primordial values. Western inspired ostentatious living characterized by mimicry of the West will conceivably range from non-existent to outrageous in African postcolonial societies, and therefore would vary in its motivational force for migration for people in these societies. Clearly, occidentalisms will vary
across the spectrum of ex-colonies and their implications cannot be expected to be homogeneous. Extrapolations from this study therefore, should be carefully made to allow for local variations.

**Other Possible Impetuses for Migration**

The decision to migrate under any circumstances cannot be easy. It invariably involves a tearing apart of connections and breaking established bonds. For a person to yield to the attraction of another place, the impetus for migration has to be very powerful. The effort to capture as much as possible the reasons for international migration, especially, has led to the call for a change in the tenor of totalizing economic theories in explaining this global event. While the caveat for the inclusion of non-economic variables has always been present in the migration discourse, it has gained prominence recently. Efforts to achieve comprehensiveness in theoretical and analytical approaches to international migration will increasingly include contextual factors because of the differentiated involvement or participation of societies in international migration, and the underlying dynamics that define these differences.

In the case of African societies, migration has to be examined through the optic of history so that contact with the West and colonization of the continent for four hundred centuries and the social transformations and consciousness it created can be accounted for. Occidentalism, which represents an aggregation of images of the West that came about because of the colonial contact and experiences has been identified in its various expressions and manifestations among postcolonial Africans in this study, and discussed in light of perspectives that elucidate the processes that create it. Beyond the economic impetus for migration, occidentalism looms visibly on the horizon of possible explanations for migration in the African postcolony. Africans view the West and its peoples as what they are not and what they would like to be, but despite these tendencies that have been widely discussed and analyzed in literary work, there persists in the social sciences relative silence about the ramifications of postcoloniality. The obvious but
unasked question in migration discourse is about non-economic feelings Africans might have about their own countries or societies in light of their pervasive and variously expressed yearning for the West. Evidence from this study suggests or implies graded feelings of detachment among Africans toward their native countries, and the hypothesis that this uncoupling might factor into their decisions to leave their countries. This aspect of the lives of citizens of a country must have broad applicability to a number of issues including migration, but has not been sufficiently theorized. For African migration, the possibilities are enormous.

Interregnum in Africa: Soul Drain and Nations Unimagined

In African countries, the thrones are empty. Africans are in an interregnum between colonial rule and nations that are really not theirs, really not there, to which they really do not belong, because they have not created or imagined them. From multidisciplinary academic discourse on African nations today, it can be argued that African nations can only be significations of a world that is still at odds with an original African cosmology, and artifacts of the radical alterations of colonization by Europeans. Homi Bhabha (1994:122) would locate Africa “[w]thin that conflictual economy of colonial discourse . . . the tension between the synchronic panoptical vision of domination–the demand for identity, stasis–and the counter-pressure of the diachrony of history–change, difference–[where] mimicry represents an ironic compromise.” Stated summarily, what we call African nations are protean geopolitical contrivances characterized by originary complexity and imagined by the colonizers. They are currently in the process of being deconstructed (disambiguated) because they acquired through history irreconcilable contradictory meanings that as yet cannot field sodalities of identity construction among Africans themselves. Since the physical departure of Europeans, the social structures that have attempted to stand in their stead are tenuous, teetering for decades at the verge of disintegration. Modernity which engineered Africa’s transformations has been
characterized by a certain malapropism in the conceptualization of African peoples and ontologies and by teleological assumptions, while residual tradition struggles in the attempt to refract its images. What history has created in Africa is an open-endedness that does not enable or entertain much introspection. As Ferguson (2007) suggests, African dreams are tinged more by the search for a global, not local identity. This research shows that Africa has virtually no sedimentations of inward leaning consciousness, identity, or characteristic ethos of nation-ness to claim; everything is in disorienting flux, including its peoples, their bodies, and souls, at least in comparison with the relatively more “settled” nations of the West.

Nation-ness, as well as nationalism in the conceptualizations of Anderson are cultural artifacts of a particular kind—spontaneous distillations of a complex “crossing” of discrete historical forces which once created are capable of being transplanted with varying degrees of self-consciousness... and of being merged with a wide variety of political and ideological constellations (1983:4). Anderson emphasizes that it is the “particular cultural artifacts” that arouse deep attachments. But in the case of Africa, the cultural artifacts that are the antecedents of nation-ness and deep attachments are centrifugal and in disrepair. Routinely morphing and far-removed from any sense of stasis, the cultural artifacts of the “complex ‘crossing’ of discrete historical forces” in the case of Africa, are not of the “particular kind” that spontaneously distills into nations, in which case the idea of ‘deep attachment’ is moot. African ‘nations’ for example, do not share the centripetal dynamic of the ‘creole states’ that were “formed and led by people who shared a common language and common descent with those against whom they fought” as Anderson points out (1983:47). The construction or distillation of African ‘nations’ is a jagged process characterized by radical difference, schisms, and chimeras distributed temporally across colonization and independence, spatially across the continent and its diasporas, and between
originary African cosmology and latter day Western orientations. Occidentalism is a product of this indeterminacy that characterizes the birthing of African nations which for now is attended by distracted midwives—African peoples—distracted by the beckoning of the Western world which has produced migrants and perverse numbers of potential migrants as this study has shown. It remains to be seen what will be born of these processes, but for now, Africans are in an interregnum characterized by the typical creative fervor of such historical moments, the enterprise of imagination and fantasy (Appadurai 1996), but markedly by a soul drain, a ‘flight of souls’ away from Africa.

Senegal’s relative stability as a modern democratic state in comparison with other African states has been noted and can probably be attributed to the country’s early predisposition toward a national identity based on the process of Wolofization, a predominantly urban phenomenon, dating as early as the seventeenth century (Fiona McLaughlin 2008:80). McLaughlin notes that from among the total of about 25 languages spoken in Senegal Wolof has emerged as a national lingua franca for a variety of historical and social reasons. In spite of this benefit of a linguistic base for nation-building (as suggested by Anderson 1983) and advantage for feelings of nation-ness and belonging for the Senegalese ahead of most African countries, however, “Senegal is far from being a linguistically or ethnically homogeneous nation.” (McLaughlin 2008:82). It is safe to argue, therefore, that African peoples still need a lot more settling of national identities than citizens of the Western world, for example. Somewhere in the vacuum created by this lack of settled national identity, my study locates African peoples compelled to craft identities as products of their own constructions of global social realities, and propelled toward those nations which in their fantasies are models of what they wish to be. For the Senegalese, the Frenchness which comes from the French assimilation ideology, becomes one of the tools for crafting a
desired identity. They may be attracted to Western countries not for the purpose of mimicry per se, but still for the purpose of extracting from the West, those aspects of its essence that may enhance Senegalese identities as has been stylized in Senegalese occidentalisms.

Vivian Kogan offers an analysis of the work of French historian, Jules Michelet, who sought to trace the progressive self-awareness of the nation from its origins to the present. Her discussion of self-fashioning and national consciousness based on the work of this historian offers conceptual elucidations into the African condition with a backdrop of contemporary global processes. Michelet, in Kogan’s analysis, posits history as the evolving national product of a particular people, a territory, a collective past, and a mobilizing principle. In the case of France, he emphasizes the psychological and the cultural rather than the political, although he remains expectant of political change (2006:12–13). To understand postcolonial Africa, history as a collective past must be juxtaposed with the psychological and the cultural and brought into the analysis of contemporary global processes without being subjected to the expediency of career mobility and academic fascism. Migration as one of the contemporary global processes was part of the discourse in Michelet’s riveting analysis of France’s saga of self-determination. In that vein, Michelet blames the extensive emigration of the Swiss on their discordance at home, “as if only an unpleasant and untenable existence would provide sufficient incentive to abandon one’s homeland” (Kogan 2006:253) Transplanting people from one culture and climate to another is fraught with difficulties in Michelet’s thinking, because of the formidable nature of the rootedness that attaches a person to his country of origin. Though Michelet sees colonization as a right move and a beneficial one for France, his arguments have implications for the mitigating role of national consciousness for the colonized in the African postcolony. Rootedness in the case of postcolonial Africans has not waxed strong enough to generate national consciousness in
many African societies, which from the perspective of this study can mitigate the erosion of psychological investment and soul drain, not just brain drain from Africa to the West.

The fervor of self-determination and nation-building which characterized the immediate post-independence period was squandered by Africa’s new leaders through the erroneous enlistment of that energy into the modernist apparatus of development and progress. Africa’s new leaders were more eager to step into the shoes of their predecessors, the colonizers, and largely adopted most of their projects without aiming for an environment of cultural renewal that would have provided a strong basis for national consciousness and nation-building. They did not attempt to channel the people’s consciousness back to the familiarity of an African cosmology. Efforts were not sufficiently directed at the ‘fusion of component populations’ as Ernest Renan (1882) would agree to, nor at the articulation of cultural difference. That the populations of African countries were haphazardly assembled through the purposive smashing and scattering of ethnic configurations and identities based on colonial agendas was not regarded as cogently deterministic of the success of nation-building, can be seen as a reason for the lethargic progress of African countries in the direction of nation-building. People who wanted to be instrumental in nation-building prepared themselves for this crucial task by acquiring as much Western education as they could. They immediately began to apply Western solutions they learned from Western or Westernized curricula, or the ones established by erstwhile leaders, European colonizers, to the unique and particular situations in African countries. They have ended up as failures in nation building, depriving Africans of a nation to which they can belong, and setting them loose to find that place of belonging by themselves. This research suggests that most Africans are looking West, moving there psychologically in their fantasies and imagination, or physically, by air or by fishing boats. Renan captures this logic in his argument that a community
of interest though a powerful bond between people does not suffice to make a nation because nationality, he insists, has a sentimental side to it, both soul and body at. He defines in great detail what he thinks a nation really is:

A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an individual form. . . The nation, like the individual, is the culmination of endeavors, sacrifice, and devotion. Of all cults that of the ancestors is the most legitimate, for the ancestors have made us what we are. A heroic past, great men, glory. . . this is the social capital upon which one bases a national idea. To have common glories in the past and to have a common will in the present; to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more – these are the essential conditions for being a people. One loves in proportion to the sacrifices to which one has consented, and in proportion to the ills that one has suffered. One loves the house that one has built and that one has hounded down (once (cited in Bhabha 1990:18).

If Renan’s conception of the meaning of a nation were to be applied to African countries, it would become clear that many of them are struggling to find their course toward nation-ness. In that course, the cult of ancestors, the most legitimate one for building a nation in Renan’s reasoning does not have the place it deserves in African countries because it has been rendered useless by the attraction of occidentalisms. International migration accounts for the loss of bodies and minds in the form of human capital dubbed ‘brain drain’ by theorists, but the other important prerequisite for nationhood in Renan’s thinking, the soul, ignored by migration theorists, is also drained through migration and the imagination that fosters it.

Saskia Sassen prefers to reconfigure the heuristic constructs of national and global into what she calls “transhistorical components present in almost all societies” (2006:4), namely: territory, authority, and rights. Among the instances of organizing logics she attributes to history that is of interest in locating the national in the conceptual landscape of my study is “the centripetal scaling of the modern nation-state marked by one master normativity” (Sassen 2006:10). The norm for national identity in academe is framed by such concepts as sovereignty,
democracy, and some sort of membership in a community of nations subject to international juridical principles. The historicity of nations may necessitate the acknowledgement of dimensions of entities that are legitimized by the “master normativity,” endowed with a body, an identifiable geopolitical identity, but whose internal dynamics have been centrifugal, producing political citizens identified by passports, but devoid of nationally identified “souls.” These citizens have territorial identities but do not feel any belonging to the territories they are identified with. The apparent conundrum constituted by this condition which I find adequately descriptive of Africa is captured by Sassen in what she describes as “deep structural shifts underlying surface continuities and, alternatively, deep structural continuities underlying surface discontinuities” (Sassen 2006:12). Colonization, postcoloniality, and occidentalism each frame the historicity of African countries and assume alternative positions for structural shifts, surface continuities, structural continuities, and surface discontinuities. For example, structural shifts can refer to colonization, surface continuities can refer to what we call African nations as defined by the “master normativity,” structural continuities can refer to postcoloniality, and surface discontinuities can actually indicate, in my analysis, the physical and psychological flights of rootless Africans to the West that undermines the construction of “real” African nations. While Sassen focuses on denationalization, Africans, in reality, are nationless to begin with. For Africa, globalization started with the first European to set foot in Africa in the 16th century. The deep structural shifts she refers to have not produced normatively defined nation-states, therefore, territories are probably more appropriate for describing African countries until they attain nationhood in the micro-constitution sense when the trend of soul drain is squelched or reversed.

The role of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) as spawns of the neoliberal doctrine in furthering the weakening of not just the fledgling African polities of the post-
independence period but also the connections between African peoples and their governments or so-called nations must be noted. This is because one of the known outcomes of these generally failed programs was a remarkable exodus of African professionals to the West which I argue cannot be adequately explained as simply a search for greener pastures spurred by some cognitive calculus by African professionals of the global labor market value of their human capital. Rather, it needs to be assessed as the inexorable outcome of a largely non-existent, or at best, loosely forged relations between postcolonial Africans and what should be seen not as nation-states in the Western sense but as territories whose accession to nationhood remain wobbly and indeterminate and should not be taken as a given. The SAPs can be seen as a socioeconomic landmark that alters the context of migration decision making in which what need be understood is not just the Western nations as the destination of choice, but the ease with which African professionals foreclose on their potentials for bringing about sustainable change to their countries. One cannot help but ask what if the gates to the West were closed? What if there was something that these African professionals found that was worth their investment in the countries of their birth? A partial explanation must be entertained for possible consequences of weak attachments or a total lack of attachment to a national identity and their implications for migration.

If we engage a holistic view of the reasons for migration and acknowledge the erosive effect of occidentalism on the consciousness of Africans, and the deficits and challenges it creates for nation-building, we can come to the conclusion that Africans are yet to have a nation which would engage their consciousness, their soul, motivate them to make sacrifices, and guide them as Renan suggests, to build a house which they can then love, and which would enable ‘rootedness’ and function as a countercurrent to the hasty exit to Western countries. This study
shows that the souls needed for nation-building in Africa, are not just of those who have already migrated, but of those who desire migration to the West because that is where their soul already resides, through revelations from their occidentalisms, the distillations of their imagination exercise, the processed products of the colonial experience.

**Lacanian Insights and Dimensions of African Migration**

Stefania Pandolfo analyzes clandestine migration among Moroccan youth by engaging with some contemporary forms of the theological imagination and the modalities of the subject it makes possible (2007:332). Through Lacanian perspectives on questions of alterity and the moment of including the Other which is enabled by the discontinuity of experience and openness to alterity, Pandolfo investigates the reconfiguring of migration among poor Moroccan youth after Europe closed their borders. Positioning these youth between the precepts of Islamic eschatology and the practice and the imaginary of migration, Pandolfo finds in her study “the work of creative imagination, the fact of struggling, and creating oneself with and against the limits of one’s cultural universe. (Pandolfo 2007:332). Migration becomes for the Moroccan youth in the study, “a work that pleases God,” and if death were to occur, as it did to many Africans trying to cross over to Europe illegally, “it would be like death in a religiously authorized war for which the faithful find reward in an after-life” (Pandolfo 2007:334). Migration, therefore, is constructed as Jihad, as self-war, and marks the discontinuation of the previously unshaken foundation in the world of Islam, experience of life in Morocco, and their previous constructions of the external world.

The discontinuity of experience and openness to alterity demonstrated here by the reconfiguring of subjectivities by the Moroccan youth about their own lifeworlds, as well as Europe and migration, enabled them to reconcile two worlds, one that is familiar, and another that is imaginary. Occidentalisms among postcolonial Africans can be seen as a conceptual
parallel of the processes of imaginary identifications, which lead to ‘the moment of including’ [the Other] in Pandolfo’s arguments. The possibility of a different lifeworld in the West, viewed through Lacan’s argument, is apprehended by postcolonial Africans through occidentalisms.

Lacanian conceptualizations of the unconscious help to understand the liminality manifested by African postcoloniality, which I have chosen to call an interregnum. As a gap or rupture, or as the discourse of the Other, the unconscious as conceptualized by Lacan can help explain the idea of the soul drain of Africans to the West, the absence of originary anchors and the consciousness needed to create a place where they can belong. The West can be construed as what Lacan calls Master Signifiers, those that the subject most deeply identifies with and which accordingly have a key role in the way s/he gives meaning to the world. Lacan emphasizes the efficacy of Master Signifiers in reorienting the subject vis-à-vis all of the other signifiers which structure his/her sense of the self and the world. The West reorients the subjectivities of postcolonial Africans and their sense of the world and themselves. This has been demonstrated in this study through their proverbs where a Senegalese wants to be a White person in her next life, the Yoruba compares the White man to their gods, and the Igbo and the Senegalese concur, calling him spirit of genie. The West structures the postcolonial African’s sense of belonging which has gradually left behind the native land and has moved toward the West, seen as everything the African wants to be but is not. To link this back to the language of modernity, development continues to elude Africa not just because it is a trope for an alien ontology, the Enlightenment, but also because Africans leave for the West with their souls first, before physical migration follows. Thus, the imagination of African nations remains in a liminal state, unfinished and indeterminate. To progress toward development, or the achievement of some sense of identity, African nations have to wrestle the place of Master Signifiers from the West in
the consciousness of postcolonial Africans. When this is accomplished, nation-building will be set in motion and eventually completed; Africans will have a house they have built by themselves not by others, a house that they can love, sacrifice for and be devoted to. When this happens, migration would have a countercurrent that would impede the flight of souls to the West. When migration theory understands and includes this reality, the economic impetus would have to be nudged so as to provide room for other explanatory frameworks.

A Holistic Approach to the Study of African Migration and Other Migrations

The four major migration theories have been critiqued for their disregard or omission of the role of the whole social context of a potential African migrant in the decision to migrate to the West or stay in the country of origin. They have all posited the centrality or exclusivity of economic considerations as the determinants of migration decisions. Consequently, African migration has been largely encapsulated in the concept of “push and pull” factors where certain elements in the receiving (Western) country, mostly wage-related, “pull” individuals away from their African country where there are conditions (mostly economic) that also “push” the migrant out. But because the decision to migrate is an embodied complex process, the context in which the decisions are made, its historical and experiential constitution and dominant dynamics must be central in the study of migration in Africa or any other part of the globe for that matter.

This ethnography does not see a possible dichotomization between factors that push or pull the individual in the African postcolony. Instead, it sees a medley of factors enshrined in the concept of occidentalism which undergird the migration decision. This is because, as suggested by Appadurai (1996), and substantiated in this study, the role of the imagination and fantasy is pivotal in the desire of another place to live, and the actual decision to relocate to that place. The idea of rational calculations by a potential migrant, of conditions, checks and balances in a possible destination country, is untenable for the conceptual framework of this study. Instead, a
holistic approach to explaining migration is espoused, which must consider a medley of subjectivities and cognitions emanating from the particular histories and structures of a social context, which in the case of postcolonial Africans distill mostly into occidentalisms, and must be added to any economic considerations by an individual to migrate to a given country.

Adding the findings of this ethnography to pre-existing theories of international migration in order to make them holistic is an exercise worth undertaking. The neoclassical economic theory of international migration focuses on wage differentials in the labor markets of the richer and poorer countries, which causes people in poorer countries to want to raise their earnings by migrating to the richer countries. The logical gap here is that the foreign currency market is fluid, with different degrees of fluctuation for different countries, therefore calculations of wages will never yield permanent results for any single location; the average person in the poorer countries does not have the facts on all employment opportunities, how much the jobs pay, and cost of living, especially if it is true that immigrants are generally and ultimately underemployed in the rich economies. The apparent deficit in this logic, at least in the case of African migration, can be remedied if imaginations and stylized images of the West as perfect, heavenly, and status-enhancing in the home society are factored into the reasons for migrating to the richer (typically Western countries). These non-economic attractions will compromise rationality in making migration decisions, and will both motivate and compensate the migrant where the economic does not.

The dual market theory of migration posits that in developed economies, the labor market is segmented into higher paying jobs with more prestige and better working conditions attached to them, and lower paying jobs with no prestige and poor working conditions; that citizens of developed countries shun the lesser paying jobs or use them as transitional jobs, leaving these
jobs relatively available for immigrants from poorer economies who do not mind taking these jobs because their main motive in migrating is simply making more money than they made in their native countries. The logical gap in this theory again is that, as shown in this ethnography, people are unaware of the details of a segmented labor market because they construct the Western world as a perfect place where life is easy. African migrants who are known to be highly credentialed do not leave their countries dreaming to drive a cab in New York and probably be robbed or killed doing that, or clean offices at night. They find themselves in this predicament at the same time that they realize that the West of their dreams has been compromised by the reality of having to take jobs they’d rather die than do in their status-conscious native society. Is it possible that this theory homogenizes the immigrant population and the potential migrant, at least in the case of the United States of America, imputing on them the characteristics of immigrants from neighboring Mexico, who are generally seen as undocumented and desperate, or the Africans who risk death in the high seas traveling in small fishing boats to get to the West? The fact is that most African migrants to the West do not fit this profile. For many African migrants, there is also the compensatory factor of the idea at home that an African migrant to the West often acquires Western culture which is social capital in the home society with purchasing power for prestige, respect, and high status. They generally consider that as this study has shown.

The new economic theory of migration posits that families or households, not individuals, make migration decisions and aim at minimizing financial risks to the family that might arise out of the decision to migrate. The logical gap here is that the success of migration as in qualifying for a visa to a Western country cannot be seen as equally possible, or as a given for all members of a family, and family relations do not follow the same dynamic in every society in the world.
External conditions such as visa policies of Western countries determine who can migrate, and these policies are not uniformly applied to all countries of the world. Families do not have that free choice, and not everyone in the family would be equally interested in migration. Those with the tendency toward occidentalisms are likely to be more interested than those who do not have that tendency. The situation described by this theory of migration as a family project has the potential to be the case in the two countries researched in this study mainly as an outcome of status competition in communities where the fact that a family member lives in the West, in and of itself, is an attraction for migration which parents brag about. It also relates to the picture where having a family member living in a Western country would facilitate their consumption goals for Western goods so that the family down the street does not outdo them. For many families, the detailed calculations said to be aimed at minimizing risk, therefore, should also include the status factor beyond the economic impetus.

The world-systems theory of migration dichotomizes countries into economic core and periphery based on their ranking and participation in the global economy. Western countries are mostly core countries while non-Western countries populate the periphery. Migrants come mainly from the periphery countries where, as a result of global processes, economic conditions are dismal compared to conditions in the richer core societies. Migration from periphery to core countries becomes a natural outcome of these global processes. African countries are mostly periphery countries, therefore, they are suppliers of migrants. As long as the global trends produced by global economic processes continue, migration will continue. This is the only theory that at least factors in history as a process that has precipitated a global structure of inequality, and colonization as part of that history. However, the logical gap in this theory is its economic exclusivity and the absence of cultural transformations that are linked to a country’s
historicity. As this ethnography suggests, non-economic factors such as cultural artifacts which are also part of global processes have an impact on migration. The periphery countries are also repositories of images of the West made possible by television and other media technologies, and are also crucibles of imagination spawned by global processes. Human agency in its diversity, complexity, instrumentalities, and thrust, in its full ramifications must be considered in the study of human migration. The major theories of migration most used or cited by scholars crop processes involved in migration decision making, leaving out aspects of this global phenomenon that should contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of migration. How then can migration theory capture the array of motivations and contexts that define and circumscribe migration (of Africans and other peoples) from one country or continent to another? How can a holistic approach to studying migration be accomplished?

Outline of a Holistic Context Approach to Migration

Predominant theoretical perspectives on human migration have tended to view migration as an event defined by aggregate motivations and tendencies which categorizes rich and poor countries, core and periphery countries, as if people from these places automatically assume the same attributes merely because they hail from these locations. It is the tendency for prospective migrants to interpret their contexts in a certain way that should define migration decision-making. When theories focus on decision-making, these theories field an archetypical migrant, supposedly a thinking, feeling, social person, and locate him or her as detached or separate from the matter of migration s/he is assessing and deciding on. In so doing, migration decisions are assumed to be made by an unfeeling, disembedded, and simple-minded prospective migrant with tunnel vision, whose overarching interest at any time is economic. As Thaler (2000) put it, to resolve this untenable approach to understanding human social processes and decision-making, Homo Economicus needs to be reunited with Homo sapiens. When this is done, the humanity of
the migrant will be rehabilitated, and progress can be made toward a holistic approach to explaining international migration. As Appadurai (1996) argued, global processes and flows are embodied and universally manifested, and as this ethnography suggests, nuances in contextual factors can facilitate the identification of attributes that may apply to individuals in specific populations at specific periods of time in their history, but not to others.

What is needed is a theoretical approach to the study of human migration that acknowledges the constitution of the whole human being, including his sociality or his immersion in a social context that includes other humans and the crystallizations from their actions. This social context impacts the behavior and decisions of those embedded in it, and most importantly shape their internal psychological processes such as cognitions, needs, and valued outcomes. Some studies in the past have already addressed these important aspects of the migrant as a whole human being with physical and mental dimensions, but have not gained traction possibly because of parochialism in social science disciplines, the rarely discussed elitism or even imperialism in academe where a few scholars, through a process endemic in academic discourse, dominate the field through no fault of theirs, and determine the trends in research, what is cutting-edge and what is not, essentially, which research trend lives or dies. These useful theories from past discourse on migration may have also been relegated to the realm of local migration, and have definitely been undermined by the lethargic progress toward internationalization of anthropological discourse, as Harrison (2008) points out. Important research from intellectuals outside of the West hardly makes it to mainstream discourse in Western institutions.

The Holistic Context approach which I propose for the study of international migration attempts to synthesize Bruce Moon’s (1995) perspectives on ‘moorings’ as a schema, Roy
D’Andrade and Claudia Strauss’ (1992) views on human motives and cultural models, the “cognitive calculus” concept from De Jongh and Fawcett (1981:13), and basic premises of existing major theoretical perspectives on international migration, that is, the neoclassical economic theory, the new economic model, the dual labor market theory, and the world systems theory. An additional and necessary component of the theoretical approach I propose is the concept of relative deprivation which highlights the role of frames of reference and further facilitates differentiation in the contexts in which migrants are socialized and within which they make their decisions to migrate. This synthesis will recapture a useful past in the theorization of migration by using the framework to explain ethnographic findings in my study and at the same time achieve an inclusive blend that does not minimize the value of contemporary approaches.

D’Andrade and Strauss seek to integrate knowledge, desire and action in a single explanatory framework for the study of the role of culture in human motivation. They build on shared cognitive schemas through which human realities are constructed and interpreted, and which make it possible to explain situational variability in human decision making. In their opinion, the cultural context has many implications for human action, and their arguments revolve around these implications:

To understand people, one needs to understand what leads them to act as they do, and to understand what leads them to act as they do, one needs to understand their goals, and to understand their goals, one must understand their overall interpretive system, part of which constitutes and interrelates these goals, and to understand their interpretive system – their schemas – one must understand something about the hierarchical relations among these schemas (D’Andrade and Strauss 1992:31).

To understand migration as human action based on the above argument, it would have to be located within the shared cognitive schemas of an entire social context which is the crucible of social constructions of the people. These social constructions frame the goals of individuals based on their interpretations of the values that are prevalent in their societies and the
alternatives that are possible. Goal hierarchies or the relative importance of different goals for each individual reflects individualized interpretations of the cognitive schemas of the society. As D’Andrade argues:

*individuals learn to want to do things that are normal cultural goals, by the ordinary experience of seeing admired others do these things, receiving approval for doing them oneself, and experiencing a variety of intrinsic gratifications by doing them and as a result of doing them* (1995:239).

This underscores the individual nature of migration decision making, and the error in the dominant theories in focusing on categories and analyzing migrants according their origins in poor, periphery, developing countries. A gigantic leap is made from the individual migrant to categories leaving out social construction and other processes that define collectivization of the motivation to migrate. Even when the entire household participates in the decision-making on migration, eventually, it is the individual who accepts or rejects migration as a goal based on his or her own interpretative system. D’Andrade points out that some cultural schemas function as goals for individuals in the view of cognitive anthropologists, simply because the main purpose of human cognition is to relate the individual to the environment through behavior. Precisely, one needs to know in order to be able to do. “The point of most knowing is to make possible doing” (1995:232). Migration as a goal therefore, can be seen as the outcome of how the individual’s interpretive system derived from his social environment converts what he knows into action. But before migration is decided upon, following D’Andrade’s explanatory framework, it goes through a process tantamount to the screening of a hierarchy of goals, all reflecting what the individual knows from the cultural environment he shares with other people.

Based on the findings in my ethnography, it can be argued that migration to the West as a goal among postcolonial Africans is an outcome of the processing of what the individual knows, possibly conveyed to him or her by folklore, media technology, formal education and general
socialization, and how this knowledge is interpreted in light of the cognitive schemas they share with others in the society. For example, they may have learned one way or the other that migration to the West is a status enhancer, that it is the best way to escape the trauma of living in Nigeria, or that it is something that gives one an advantage over those who did not migrate in employment, business contracts, and getting service at a hair salon. How they interpret what they learn and make decisions based on their interpretations constitute what De Jongh and Fawcett have called the “cognitive calculus” (1981:13). This cognitive calculus will differ among potential migrants based on context and environment, and may or may not lead to the decision to migrate to a Western country. Perhaps, more importantly, in terms of the shared cognitive schema concept, potential migrants choose migration over other alternatives available in their interpretive system, “by the ordinary experience of seeing admired others do these things, receiving approval for doing them oneself, and experiencing a variety of intrinsic gratifications by doing them and as a result of doing them” (D’Andrade 1995:239). In a hierarchy of goals, postcolonial Africans place migration to the West very close to the top because of their stylized images of the West or occidentalisms which is a component of their shared cognitive schema. As shown in this study, there is a high level of desire for migration to the West, 77% overall, a proclivity for the deification of the White man, as well as essentialized attributions of perfection, power, and superiority to aspects of the Western world.

Bruce Moon argues that migration ought to be viewed as a contradiction to the usual endeavors for locational and social stability. In his thinking, extraneous factors are often seen by people as the source of disruptions to their stability, therefore, understanding the person’s perceived linkages between himself or herself and the social structure is important. Mooring, which is the central concept in Moon’s theoretical framework, is described:
as those sociological expressions which not only allow a person to materialize his or her physical, psychological and emotional well-being but also serve to bind a person to a particular place... a person's perception of his or her relative stability in a place will hinge on how well he or she values his or her moorings (1995:154).

Moon argues that the importance of mooring in migration research is hinged on the idea that migration is an individual decision and a conscious choice to sever ties that ordinarily provide personal well-being and psychological and emotional stability. A holistic concept of society would also consider situations where the well-being of the individual are not provided for. The “rupture” constituted by the act of migration is critical because moorings encompass a range of issues whereby a person gains meaning to his or her life. The impact of the cultural and institutional factors that are part of a person’s motivation may be understood by the replaceability of a mooring relative to others, when it is not viewed as strong enough to cause an individual to stay put in his or her current location. In addition to the impact of cultural or institutional factors on the determination of the personal importance or replaceability of a mooring, a person’s own set of aspirations also provides motivational meaning. As in Moon’s hierarchy of goals, each mooring issue is perceived in relative terms, and is therefore value laden. Also, the power attributed to a mooring, or its value as a locational tie is determined by the manner in which a person conceptualizes each mooring issue, similar to the role of interpretive systems in processing knowledge gained from shared cognitive schemas, in D’Andrade’s and Strauss’ theoretical framework.

The commonality that stands out in Moon’s and D’Andrade’s and Srauss’ explanatory frameworks for the dynamics of the migration decision is the pivotal role of the social context in causing an individual to place migration at the top of a hierarchy of goals, and to allow it to motivate the action of severing ties and devaluing other moorings. Moon’s model conflates cultural and institutional factors with a person’s own set of aspirations in explaining how
migration acquires meaning for the individual, but emphasizes the multiplicity of factors and the
different values they have as a ‘mooring’ that ties an individual to a place. Applied to migration
in postcolonial Africa, Moon’s arguments bring attention to the fact that though many people
construct the West as very attractive, and endow it with attributes that enable the devaluation of
other cultural, institutional and personal factors, people in general will have to devalue things
that might make them stay put such as family and friends, a relatively stable economic situation,
(and this has happened), ease of language and communication, ties to the community, and
replace them with the prestige and status that migration to the West will bring, or the increased
financial well-being, or the Western things that can be brought home to enhance one’s standing
in the neighborhood. Those people who subscribe strongly to occidentalisms will be most likely
to migrate to the West.

The proposed Holistic Context approach to the study of international migration enables
the following statements:

- At any given period in time, individuals are embedded in dynamic social contexts
  characterized by shared cognitive schemas or common social values and systems of
  knowledge they co-construct and share with other people in that same context.

- Individual goals such as migration to a Western country are derived from individual
  interpretations of the systems of knowledge they share with others, and then placed on a
  hierarchical order of meaning and importance to the individual’s well-being.

- Individuals faced with the decision to migrate or stay where they are will compare their
  perceived condition to that of a reference person or group, and make their decision based
  on which goal emerges at the top of the hierarchy as a result of their interpretation of
  their systems of knowledge.

- As the social context changes and people who constitute an individual’s environment and
  reference group change, the cognitive schemas or common social values will change, and
  so will individual goals and their places on the individual’s hierarchy of goals.

The following example illustrates how this approach will capture the holistic context in
which the individual is embedded while he makes migration decisions. In Nigeria, for example,
migration to the West as a goal might occupy a lower place on an individual’s hierarchy of goals in the period immediately before the structural adjustment programs because society sees it at that time in its history as a status enhancer, and the individual agrees that high status is desirable (shared cognitive schema) but decides that status of that kind is not more important to him at that time than the status of getting married because his age mates are all getting married (individual interpretation of status). Therefore, he does not migrate but begins to search for a woman to marry. (Marriage is at the top of the goal hierarchy, and migration is low.) And during the period immediately following the installation of the structural adjustment programs, society begins to see migration to the West as the best thing to do if one wants to be financially comfortable, especially because of widespread economic problems in society. The individual agrees that being financially comfortable is a good thing like everyone else (shared cognitive schema) because he wants to start saving for his children’s future unlike his father who was a drunk and neglected his family (individual interpretation of financial comfort). And of all the ways he can accomplish that, migration to the West emerges at the top of his hierarchy of goals, and he decides to migrate.

In the two examples, the social context changes and social values change along with it because the members of society share cognitive schemas about status and financial comfort. The individual shares these cognitive schemas but applies his own interpretations on each occasion in order to process his goals and decide what action to take. On status, despite his shared cognitive schema with society, he acts differently as a result of his own interpretation system. On financial comfort, he shares the same cognitive schema with society and acts accordingly as an outcome of his interpretive system as well, and the value of his children’s future. In each situation, the individual had a reference person or group. The holistic complex approach highlights three
aspects of migration as action: (1) the changing social context with its members and the
cognitive schemas they share; (2) the individual and his or her particular knowledge and
interpretive system (3) The person or people the individual chooses to compare himself or herself
to in order to process his or her goals.

The premises of a holistic complex approach to the study of migration will enable
theoretical differentiation of migrants, their reasons for migrating based on their specific social
contexts, not just ‘poor’ or ‘peripheral’, and their systems of knowledge and values or cognitive
schemas which may include but may also transcend the economic. Relativity in the individual’s
feeling of need reflects the general environment and therefore enables differentiation between
societies or countries. Such differentiation will explain why migration is high in some areas and
low in others, despite poor economic conditions in all of the societies. It will also explain why
though individuals are exposed to the same conditions, not all of them migrate.

For potential migrants in the African postcolony, the holistic context approach would find
that occidentalisms are part of their cognitive schema which is subjected to individual
interpretations to produce goals; that occidentalisms may include economic or non-economic
attributions to the Western countries, and will have different meanings for different individuals;
that whichever value, economic benefits, or higher social status, privileges that come from
having “been to” the West, prevails at the time the individual is faced with the decision to
migrate or stay, will be the impetus for migration. The postcolony is changeable, and the reasons
for migration will also change. For other societies, other collectively constructed social
phenomena will take the place of occidentalism as impetus for migration.
CHAPTER 11
CONCLUSION

This study of pre-migration cognitions, subjectivities, and occidentalism in the African postcolony falls into the category known as “area studies,” of which Africa has been a mainstay in anthropology’s epistemological landscape. With the push of globalization and its implications for academe, Appadurai recognizes the significance of the various forms by which global power further seeks to extend its dominion. He brings attention to area studies which he sees as “the largest institutional epistemology through which the academy in the United States has apprehended much of the world in the last fifty years” (2000:3). Harrison (1991, 2008) repeatedly calls for the widening of the intellectual horizons of anthropological research by acknowledging the pressing presence of the voice of former anthropological subjects which can only diversify perspectives on a variety of anthropological areas of inquiry, thus enriching the discipline. These critical dimensions of the discipline and David Scott’s urging for the recognition of new problem spaces in postcolonial research collectively provide a clearing for this study.

Anthropology distinguishes itself from other social sciences with its focus not just on questions about how widespread social phenomena are, but on the meaning of behavior driven by the question: What is going on here? (Lareau and Shultz 1996). The idea of sampling in the investigation of human social phenomena, and the importance of informants’ own words underscore this notion, since field studies aim for meanings that can be extrapolated to a population in a shared context. This study treats Senegalese and Nigerian societies as samples of African postcolonial societies in the effort to find what is going on in these societies that can allow for linkages between constructions of the West among Africans and African migration to Western countries.
After 821 questionnaire responses, 26 in-depth, semi-structured interviews, more than 22 documented conversations and several undocumented informal interviews in two West African ex-colonies, collection and analysis of folklore from the two societies, archival research in the two countries, consideration of a number of popular cultural forms, and a lived experience replete with all imaginable forms of widespread occidentalisms, it is inevitable to conclude that any explanation of African migration must look beyond the economic impetus, to the contexts of potential migrants’ decision making, where the dynamics of postcolonial relations will be found and must be probed for occidentalisms and the compasses they constitute for African migrants.

The research questions addressed by this research are:

- How much do Africans desire to migrate to countries of the West?
- What manifestations or expressions of social consciousness among Africans indicate contact or exposure to the colonial experience?
- In what ways does the postcolonial social consciousness translate into the desire to migrate to countries of the West?

The research questions have been answered as follows: 77% of postcolonial Africans surveyed said they would migrate to countries of the West in the absence of any obstacles. The manifestations or expressions of social consciousness among Africans that indicate contact or exposure to the colonial experience are the constructions of stylized images of the West or occidentalism, the essentialized attributions of perfection, power, beauty to the West and Western countries, and their superiority to Africa in almost every aspect of life. The folkloric forms presented in this study convey these distilled cognitions and social memory of the societies studied. This postcolonial social consciousness translates into the desire to migrate to countries of the West by the projection of the same hyperbolic essentialized images of the West on African migrants who have lived in Western countries, linking these attributes to advantages, high status
and privileges in the home society, and deciding that migration will accomplish these things for them. From the words of the informants, their folklore, archival data and popular culture, it can be seen that as modernity pit itself against tradition with its tropes of progress and development, all that it accomplished was the rattling and weakening of Africa’s ontological pillars and the obliteration of their values and beliefs. After this turbulence of history, what is left for Africans are residues of their past and an interregnum between a colonial past and nations yet to be imagined, in which the strongest product of their imagination is preponderantly occidentalisms and their attendant mimicry and instrumentalized commodification of the West.

This ethnography set out looking for ways to explain African migration by acknowledging the workings of the economic impetus, and by centering history and social memory distilled from it as a potential conceptual compass which has led to socially constructed occidentalisms. The study reveals African postcolonial social contexts and peoples variably devoid of nation-ness and introspection but suffused with images of the Western world which frame the values and goals of the potential migrant. In the African postcolony, money alone does not satisfy desires, success is qualified by the context in which it is achieved, and here as in almost all aspects of African societies, success achieved in the West carries with it more social capital. The commodification of the West and everything Western makes it subject to accumulation, consumption, and mimicry by postcolonial Africans for whom there are only weak countercurrents or none at all from the postcolony.

Development and progress measured by standards of what Western countries have achieved has dominated the social sciences in their efforts to explain sociopolitical events in African countries. It is conceivable that they have become fixtures in academic discourse and will maintain their places as such for years to come. The discourse that this study wants to
stimulate can contribute perspectives to development and the so-called progress expected of Africa from the world and subscribed to by African leaders, by illuminating nation-ness, social memory, social consciousness and what I have called the soul drain as unmined areas for explanatory frameworks in postcolonial research. Acknowledging historical particularities of different nations, it would appear that the powerful nations against which Africa is measured and assessed were able to accomplish their prominence in history by their ability to construct progressively resilient national identities. Because of their particular histories, their challenges were probably less disorienting and less overwhelming than the challenges faced by African countries in the contemporary global order. But it seems that self-knowledge and the introspection it enables have proved to be helpful in nation building for the more developed and the more stable countries. The recognition and analyses of these historical variables and their implications may reveal new ways of understanding African migration to Western countries if the tenor of economic determinism would allow other factors to emerge.

The nations of the world and their peoples do not experience migration or decide to migrate exactly the same ways or for the same reasons. They do not have exactly the same historiographies, and their cognitive systems or ‘culture’ are not exactly reflective of one another. For these reasons, the term ‘migrant’ needs to be unpacked and qualified in such a way that allows for differentiation among possible groups of migrants from different social contexts of the globe. A Japanese, Cuban, or Russian migrant to the United States of America is a product of a social context that is much different from the African postcolony. Because this migrant shares in a cognitive schema that orientates him/her in a particular way, reasons for his/her migration to the United States would not mirror those of a postcolonial African. Consequently, explanatory frameworks for understanding why people migrate should be reconstructed so as to
accommodate global diversity and the variability of contextual factors that impact the socialization of the prospective migrant, and how s/he views migration. Based on the findings of this ethnography, the individual’s decision to migrate, therefore, should be determined by a medley of cognitions, subjectivities, and orientations, economic and non-economic, framed by the historical particularities and shared cognitive schemas of a given social context in which that individual is embedded, and mediated by the relative deprivation felt by that individual in comparison with a chosen standard. Only when this perspective is adopted will it be possible to look beyond the economic impetus to identify other factors that enable a comprehensive understanding of international or intercontinental migration.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Felicia Chigozie Anonyuo-Nwaenyi was born at Uzoakoli, in Abia State, Nigeria, the fourth of twelve children of Samuel and Susanna Anonyuo of Ubahuekwem Ihiala. She was a student at Queen of the Rosary Secondary School, Nsukka, and later, at Abbot Girls’ Secondary School, Ihiala from where she graduated as the class valedictorian, earning the West African School Certificate with the only Grade One Honors. After graduating cum laude in French with minors in German and Spanish from The University of Nigeria, Nsukka, an early widowhood and the desire to be the best parent she can be for her son caused Felicia to leave for the United States to pursue graduate studies at the Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio. There she earned a Master of Arts in Black Studies, and a Master of Labor and Human Resources.

After a period of almost a decade serving as adjunct faculty at Northeastern Illinois University and Chicago State University, a publisher and editor-in-chief of her own monthly paper and a panelist and public speaker in the Chicago area, Felicia relocated to Atlanta in 1997 following the death of her father in Nigeria, an event that altered her worldview and induced much soul-searching about the future. While raising her son in Atlanta, forays into the corporate world produced more self-revelation and only catalyzed her attraction and return to academia.

In 2002, Felicia wrote and published a book: You, Me, and September 11th: Bend Over America, Look under Your Table, We Need to Talk! In 2004, she enrolled in the graduate program in anthropology and also taught at Georgia State University, Atlanta, and in August, 2006, she earned a Certificate in Women’s Studies and a third Master of Arts in anthropology, with a thesis that was awarded ‘Outstanding Graduate Research in Anthropology.’ In August 2009, Felicia received a Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Florida, Gainesville, where she also taught various courses. After graduation, Felicia hopes to contribute to a better world through academic work including teaching, research, and writing.