

## **Burkinabè Experiences of Migration to and from Côte d'Ivoire**

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Migration is undoubtedly central to the economies and histories of many nations. It is a much theorized and studied topic across various disciplines and is often a site of contention for the governments and people of both sending and receiving zones. My research aims to expand the body of knowledge surrounding one particular, and important, migration system: that between Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>i</sup>

Viewed as a migration system, the collective movement of Burkinabè men and women to Côte d'Ivoire and back is the largest in West Africa. Despite its magnitude, this migration system does not figure largely in the English-language literature. This issue is further complicated by the fact that there has been inadequate new data collected on this particular migration system since the 1970s and what data has been collected since then has yet to be published (Cordell et al. 1996).<sup>ii</sup> Since the 1970s, when research on this migration system was rapidly developing, both nations concerned have undergone important political, economic, and social changes. These changes have affected patterns of migration from Burkina Faso to Côte d'Ivoire and the way that Burkinabe experience their migrations.

Writing with and against this literature, I recreate Burkinabè experiences of migration based on interviews and focus groups conducted with Burkinabe who have lived in Côte d'Ivoire, and with their relatives. I present a thematic analysis of the interpersonal relationships and structural forces that influence and constrain Burkinabe's experiences during their migrations. To do this, I divide the migratory process into moments that are analyzed separately: the decision to migrate, journeying in Côte d'Ivoire, and living and working in Côte d'Ivoire. Throughout the analysis, I pay particular attention to the ways in which gender and generation, in terms of age, as well as migrant generation in Côte d'Ivoire, affect Burkinabè experiences of migration. Finally, I will critically interrogate the use of the household as a unit of analysis in migration studies based on the experiences of Burkinabe who have migrated to and from Côte d'Ivoire and on those of their relatives.

### **Issues and Theories in the Literature on International Migration**

Migration has been an area of study for social scientists since the late nineteenth century. Because of its long history, the study of migration has benefited from numerous and varied theories and here I offer an overview of the important paradigms and the key theorists of international migration that have influenced the development of migration studies.<sup>iii</sup>

#### *Equilibrium (Neo-Classical) Approaches to Migration*

The orthodox approach to immigration over the last fifty years has been to understand the decision of an individual to change locations, as a rational choice, in the

face of larger economic factors. However, these models have come under much criticism because they focus too heavily on each individual migrant as a rational decision-maker – *homo economicus* – who makes a rational cost-benefit analysis to decide when and where to move (Papademetriou and Martin 1991). This theory also fails to explain why countries with similar socio-economic conditions do not send immigrants at similar rates.

Doug Massey and his colleagues (1998) conclude that these approaches are in crisis and are largely untenable in the face of empirical data. In addition, the neo-classical economic models have been criticized for ignoring social structure as it constrains migrants' decisions and ability to move. For example, Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) remarks that these approaches flatten the complex processes that characterize migration and that they ignore the role social structures play to constrain or determine migrants' behavior. Finally, feminists have criticized these models for seeing migrants only as men. Patricia Pessar (1999) reminds us that Lee's (1966: 51) push/pull model claims that "children are carried along with their parents, willy-nilly, and wives accompany their husbands though it tears them away from the environment they love" (see also Pedraza and Rumbaut 1996). Here we see emergent trends that will predominate in many of the migration models that followed these early attempts to theorize migration: gender and generation have been taken for granted categories to which migration theorists have tended to pay too little attention.

#### *Historical-Structural (Neo-Marxist) Models of Migration*

Neo-Marxist migration scholars developed their theories of migration in opposition to the neo-classical economic models. These models, also categorized as historical-structural models, "linked migration to the macro-organization of socio-economic relations, the geographic division of labor, and the political mechanisms of power and domination" (Massey et al. 1998: 35) and are largely interested in understanding how the forceful introduction of capitalism in pre-capitalist and non-capitalist zones creates a need for mobile labor (de Haan 1999). Like the orthodox migration models, historical-structural models have been criticized heavily. Whereas the classical models have been partially disproved by empirical research and are thought to be overly individualist, historical-structural models are not verifiable by empirical investigation because they focus on aspects of the global economy that are seldom easily measurable and they ignore migrants' agency because of their extremely macro-structural focus. Ferguson (1990a, 1990b) criticizes historical-structural models because they tend towards a periodization of history and typology of persons, and migration is seen as a way to modernize the pre-capitalist sphere and create a modern proletariat out of former subsistence farmers, which reflects the Eurocentric bias of world-systems theory, as noted by Ronald Skeldon (1997). Again, because of their extreme macro-structural focus, the historical-structural models neglect the "social dimensions" of migration (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994: 6); these models, seeing migrants as an undifferentiated mass, cannot understand differences related to gender, generation, race or ethnicity.

#### *Intermediate-Level Models of Migration*

In the late 1970s and 1980s models using intermediate-level analyses emerged to fill the gaps in the migration literature left by the individualist and the historical-

structural models.<sup>iv</sup> According to Demetrios Papademetriou and Phillip Martin (1991) the positions of the earlier approaches converged on the level of the household. From this convergence emerged the notion that migration is a household strategy in which households send some members to other locations to help diversify their incomes and improve their conditions relative to other families in their communities.

In addition, this approach has also begun to include a focus on migration as a circular process in which migrants maintain relations with their families in sending zones (e.g., Nelson 1976, Chapman and Prothero 1985). Rhacel Parreñas credits intermediate-level approaches with allowing a transnational approach to migration that considers migrants' links with their home communities (Parreñas 2001) because neither the Marxist historical-structural models, nor the neo-classical push/pull models can adequately describe transnational processes.

Although these models have become the dominant migration theories in recent years, they have not escaped criticism altogether. Patricia Pessar notes that starting in the early 1980's feminist "critics have objected to the notion that migrant households are organized solely on principles of reciprocity, consensus and altruism" (1999: 582). The use of the household as a unit of analysis is primarily a methodological decision because it is considered to be a "relatively neat" category that is easy to conceptualize and analyze (Fox-Genovese 1983, in Sotelo 1994: 222) and is "a universal enough kind of unit to be worth making a model of" (Guyer, 1981: 98). In the following section I will explore more in-depth how the household as a unit of analysis is often used in studies of migration in Africa and throughout this study I offer a critique of this model in the case of migration from Burkina Faso to and from Côte d'Ivoire.

### **Analysis and Synthesis of the Literature on Migration in Africa**

Since the migration literature is vast, with contributions from many disciplines, this review must be necessarily selective. However, it does point to some of the lacunae and problems of previous research. Although much of the literature on migration in Africa is geared towards characterizing and categorizing migrants, the majority of the empirical evidence presents conflicting information about what causes migrants to move (e.g., Coulibaly 1976 and David 1995). Additionally, many studies do not substantively engage with the concept of return migration, and tend to view migration as unidirectional and related to the rural exodus and urbanization (cf. Bartle 1978, Nelson 1976, Chapman and Prothero 1985, Ashbaugh 1996). Among studies of African migration that do recognize the significance of return migration, many tend to focus on decision-making behavior and remittances and often uncritically apply the theory that migration is a household strategy despite some empirical evidence that would lead one to question whether or not it is an applicable theory.<sup>v</sup> All too often migration studies operate on dualistic notions of the traditional and the modern (Amin 1974; cf. Amselle 1976 and Amselle 1978) and either focus on migration as a path towards the creation of an African proletariat while denying Africans' agency (Burawoy 1976), or tend to reify notions of tradition and culture through overly functionalist analyses that obscure that cultures have always been changing, even before colonial contact (Fieloux 1976, 1981). Unfortunately, the literature is confused, at best, over issues of gender and migration. Even some feminist analyses of women's migrations focus on women as victims and limit other

possibilities for women's participation in migration (e.g., Maloka 1997, Parpart 2000; cf. David 1995). Also, the literature has yet to examine the role that the border plays in migration, and in fact simply denies on many levels that the border is significant. Finally, many migration studies either fully ignore experiences of migration, or present it from a one-sided perspective that forgets that those who have stayed behind also have an experience of migration. Many studies of migration are presented with little qualitative data and the "voices" of the migrants and the members of their families and communities are obscured by economic and structural analyses. Even those who purport to be exploring experiences tend to use field-notes in the place of quotations from their respondents to tell migrants' stories (de Haan et al. 2002, Cordell et al. 1996; cf. Miescher and Ashbaugh 1999).

With my research I would like to address questions that have yet to be asked by studies of migration in Africa (or to re-ask those questions that have been answered and accepted uncritically) and I would also like to do this in a way that allows for a deeper exploration of the experiences that migration entails, both for the migrants themselves and for others in their lives. I am primarily interested in understanding the processes that migrants undergo in order to migrate and how these processes are structured by social categories.<sup>vi</sup> I am interested in paying particular attention to the issues of gender and generation and how they structure Burkinabè experiences of migration. However, in doing so, I will try not to impose my Western assumptions about gender and generational relations on the Burkinabè whose experiences I try to represent. Several African feminists have pointed to the uncritical use of Western conceptions of gender and family in African studies where there is "an entirely different gender ideology" (Ekejiuba 1995: 50; see also Oyewumi 1997 and Amadiume 1987). I am also not interested in writing about Burkinabè migration as if it is merely Mossi migration, as Cordell and his colleagues (1996) have noted many others have done. Nor do I wish to treat all Burkinabè who are not Mossi as if they are the same. While conducting these analyses, I will critically analyze the migration experiences of the research participants to assess the validity of the new economics of migration (i.e. using the household as a unit of analysis) for Burkinabè migration and to reassess the literature's current refusal of the importance of international boundaries.

## **Research Design**

In August and September 2003<sup>vii</sup>, I conducted research in a small town in southwestern Burkina Faso about 25 miles from the Ivorian Border. I was interested in the experience of migrants who had returned from Côte d'Ivoire and so I carried out three focus groups and twenty-one semi-structured individual interviews with the migrants and their family members. In addition to the formal focus groups and interviews, I also gathered data through informal and unstructured conversations with acquaintances and friends during my stay in Burkina Faso. I used these informal discussions to talk to people about my research and to get their advice on a number of topics, as well as to verify if some of my opinions in Burkinabe migration matched with theirs. Additionally, it is important to mention that I served in the Peace Corps from June 2000 to August 2002. I feel that this experience allowed me a level of cultural and linguistic knowledge

that informed my research in terms of the questions I posed, and in terms of the protocol I followed to assure a successful project.

## **Thematic Analysis**

For my analysis, I identified eleven themes in the interview and focus group transcriptions, some of which I had not anticipated before the project and others that I purposely explored in my interviews. These eleven themes included: 1) crossing borders; 2) interactions with the Ivorian authorities; 3) relations between migrants and native Ivorians; 4) changing ethnic and national identities; 5) gender and age differences; 6) being a second-generation immigrant; 7) strategies Burkinabe employ to live and travel in Côte d'Ivoire; 8) decisions about migrating; 9) remittances and establishing transnational contact; 10) being a land-owner in Côte d'Ivoire; and 11) feelings engendered by the migration process.

Next, I coded all of the responses for each of the eleven themes into a "moment" of the migration process. In the schema I have devised, the "moments" of the migration process are: 1) the decision to migrate; 2) journeying in Côte d'Ivoire; 3) and living and working in Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>viii</sup> Here, I will present excerpts from the analysis for the second moment, journeying in Côte d'Ivoire.

### **Moment 2: Journeying in Côte d'Ivoire**

#### *Life and Death: Journeying in Côte d'Ivoire*

I doubted ... if I departed to Côte d'Ivoire would I arrive?... I can say that my voyage to Côte d'Ivoire was a doubt because I was situated between life and death. I did not know what might happen to me between here [Burkina Faso] and there. We arrived there to find our parents, and then for our return we prayed to God a lot again.

-- Kambou Naba

Naba describes his journey to Côte d'Ivoire in 2001, which he undertook with his twin brother Djemi when they were sixteen. His description of his fear, literally for his life, reveals that some prevailing notions about migratory movements across geo-political space are not tenable: not for his experience, and probably not for the experiences of many Burkinabe journeying in Côte d'Ivoire. What are the reasons that a young man would have so much doubt about his personal safety when traveling into and out of the country in which he was born? His worries that something might happen to him result from his previous migration experiences, and probably in what he has heard from others as well. This is certainly the case for Ouedraogo Seydou, who upon hearing the migration experience of another young man, stated resolutely in the youth focus group, "Simply put, all these things that happen do not give me the courage to go and visit my brother in Côte d'Ivoire." The migrants that I interviewed describe in detail what does happen to them during their journeys to Côte d'Ivoire.

*Strategic Supplication: Crossing Security Checkpoints*

Arriving at the border<sup>ix</sup> [the Ivorian security agents] stop the vehicle and ask the passengers to present their identification cards. You take out your cards. If they are not complete, they tell you to get out. You get out and they tell you to go with them to where you will sit down. So they ask you why your cards are not complete.... You negotiate and negotiate and at a certain moment you agree on an amount. Then, again, arriving somewhere else they often stop and search you. They search you and they take your money.

-- Kambou Djiemi

In this quotation, Djiemi explains the basics about how journeying in Côte d'Ivoire works for a Burkinabe. However, he is clear to state that the process is not simply imposed by the Ivorians, but that it is negotiated. In many of the discussions I had with migrants, they described in detail the negotiations they made in order to make it across the security checkpoints. However, these strategies seem to vary significantly according to generation. In the following example, Dah Ollo, a second-generation migrant, describes one negotiation tactic he uses:

At the exit of one town, they stopped me again.... I gave them my *carte scolaire* [student identification card] and my vaccination card. They asked for my *laissez passer*<sup>x</sup> because there is a problem with trafficking children and children have to have one to be able to pass through the border. I did not have one. They said that I had stolen entry. I said that no one had asked me for a *laissez passer* before.... They told me to pay 1000F but I said that I did not have it so they let me go without paying.

-- Dah Ollo

Although Ollo did not have the appropriate identification cards to pass through the security checkpoint (which he calls a border), he negotiated his crossing by saying that he did not have any money. For their part, the security agents were not able to get any money from him in this particular negotiation, and instead of paying in terms of money to assure his crossing, he assured his ability to continue his journey by allowing himself to be insulted. Had he wished, he could have avoided being insulted by paying the security agents. In fact, this is the method that he preferred earlier in the trip. At the first four security checkpoints he encountered on this particular trip (he was going to Côte d'Ivoire), which were all in the same town, he chipped in 1000F with the other passengers, who totaled 18, to offer 18000F<sup>xi</sup> (about \$30 US) to the security agents. For them this strategy worked to avoid being searched individually by the security agents, which could lead to those with expired cards to pay much more substantial amounts. However, Ollo was also able to use other strategies to negotiate their crossings:

Leaving Daloa they caught me again and said that I had to pay. There, I said that I did not even have five francs in my pocket. They said that if I did not pay that they would take down my bags. I told them that if they were going to do that, then they should go ahead because I did not have any money. So they let me go.

-- Dah Ollo

At this security checkpoint, rather than engaging in a complicated discussion of his identification cards, he simply calls the security agents' bluff when they threaten to take down his bags. That is a threat of two things: searching the passenger's belongings at which point they might take all that he has; and/or detaining him at the security checkpoint for an indeterminate length of time. In this instance, because Ollo had already spent all of his money paying other security agents, he was telling the truth. Seeing that they would get no money from him, the security agents simply let him go. Although in this case, Ollo told the truth to negotiate his crossing, he also tells of situations in which he engaged in elaborate tales to negotiate crossing the security checkpoints:

I said that I come from Burkina Faso. If I had come from Côte d'Ivoire and was coming back to Burkina Faso and then it would be reasonable to ask for a *carte de sejour*.<sup>xii</sup> In Burkina Faso we do not have that, where would I get one?

I said that I have never before been in Côte d'Ivoire. I said that it was my first time there and I could not get a *carte de sejour*.

I said that we had come before they had begun their business of *laissez passer*. I said that is why we do not have them. They said that no, we had stolen entry.

I said that coming I had paid 1000F at each stop and that nobody had asked me if I had a *laissez passer* or not.

-- Dah Ollo

At times Ollo tried to use logic to outwit the security agents, and in other instances he told lies to try to fool them. For example, even though Ollo was born in Côte d'Ivoire and has made several trips back and forth to Burkina Faso he tried to convince the security agents that he had never before been to Côte d'Ivoire and that he could not secure a *carte de sejour* because of that. He also lied and tried to convince the agents at one post that others were not enforcing the new official policies. He employed these strategies with varying levels of success, paying between 500F and 5000F at various checkpoints.

Like Ollo, the other second-generation migrants also describe engaging in complicated negotiated supplications. For example, Kambou Naba describes how he and his brother negotiated with Ivorian security agents:

If you tell the agents that you are a Burkinabè student they say that our president talks bad about them and ask why we even come there. We say that we are coming to spend our vacation in Côte d'Ivoire. "Spending your vacation here?" they ask. "But they say that we traffic kids in Côte

d'Ivoire. Why would you want to spend your vacation there?" We say that it is so that we can help our father so that he can give us tuition money. They say that if that is the case that we will go back.... We tried to negotiate and finally they made us pay 1000F.... Again they stopped us and asked why we were going there without a *laissez passer*. We said that is very difficult because if we stay in Burkina Faso, who will pay our tuition? So we have to help our parents. They let us go there.

-Kambou Naba

Like Ollo, Naba describes the varying degrees of success that his negotiation strategy had. At some checkpoints this strategy seems to work, and at others they still pay. However, 1000F is not a large sum compared to how much others are required to pay, especially when their identification cards are incomplete. However, Djiemi describes one particular checkpoint at which they had to engage in an extreme display of supplication in order to appease the Ivorian security agents:

When we told them that we were Burkinabe students, they said, "This is not Burkina Faso, either you get on your knees, you work or you pay a lot of money." We said that frankly we are students and that in any case we did not have any money to pay them. And we said that we were not thieves and should not have to get on our knees. They said that we were trying to talk forcefully and that they would show us what was up, that we would work but we refused. They told us to get on our knees. We got on our knees. They said that we should sing the *Ivorian* national anthem. We said, "Really we cannot sing, we do not know how to sing it because we are not Ivorians, we are Burkinabe." They said, "You are Burkinabe, but where are you going?" We said that frankly we had a father and that we were going to his place to visit him.... The chauffeur went to ask for our pardon saying that we had been entrusted to him and that we did not have any money. They said no and that we had to pay. So the chauffeur took out the money and paid before we passed. We were three and he paid 1000F for each of us.

-- Kambou Djiemi

In this case, explaining that they were students, and that their father lived in Côte d'Ivoire, seemed to enrage more than appease the security agents. In the end, Djiemi and Naba needed to enlist the assistance of the chauffeur to complete this complicated negotiation, but not before they got on their knees to supplicate the Ivorian authorities. However, despite this act, they did not simply give in to the Ivorian agents; despite their precarious situation, they refused to work. While the older migrants I talked to, who are also first generation migrants, describe what I am calling negotiated supplication, their experiences seem to be quite different from the second-generation migrants. For example, Kambou Idjienté describes crossing security checkpoints with ease, even during his most recent journey to Burkina Faso, which took place during the crisis period.

During the most recent voyage I paid the transportation costs and 500F and some posts. When the border police stop me, if I offer 500 F, they say that I am old and that it is not worth it. They take the money.

-- Kambou Idjienté

Idjienté's experience makes clear that not all Burkinabe experience journeying in Côte d'Ivoire in the same way. When I asked him specifically why he faced fewer problems than other migrants, he replied, "It is because I am old that they do not bother me on the road." Although he has lived in Côte d'Ivoire for forty-two years and was traveling back to Burkina Faso to build a house, with a large sum of money, the agents do not harass him as much as they harass the students who are younger and have almost no money on them. I will venture several explanations for this. As African societies tend to be gerontocratic, it is possible that because Idjienté is old enough to be many of security agents' father, or even grandfather, they are less willing to treat him with disrespect. Additionally, since he has lived in Côte d'Ivoire for such a long time and made many trips back and forth, perhaps he has perfected his ability to negotiate with the security agents by offering an appropriate level of supplication that allows him to cross relatively easily. Finally, perhaps the security agents are interested in extracting larger sums of money from migrants where possible and because of his advanced age, they do not assume that Idjienté is a laborer who has been earning large sums of money. Therefore, they figure that he does not have enough money to make harassing him worth their while.

However, age also seems to be a factor for those who are young. Several of the second-generation migrants describe crossing security checkpoints easily when they were in their young teens:

They called me and they said that I was little and for me it would not cause a problem. They gave my card back to me.

-- Dah Mini

In my opinion I did not have any problems going to Côte d'Ivoire because they did not ask me for an ID card. Since I was a child they did not ask me for a card but I saw others relatives who suffered. They had to pay 1000F or 5000F at times, and sometime they took down their bags.

-- Kambiré Frederic

When I took out my card they looked at me and said "Take it little one." I can say that I arrived in Burkina Faso and they did not even ask for my ID.

-- Farma Yao

Like for Idjienté, Mini, Frederic and Yao's easy crossing is because although the students' documents may not have been in order, the security agents prefer to focus their energy on the migrants whom they suspect are carrying larger sums of money. Interestingly, at the time of Mini's interaction at this border post, she was carrying over 75000F (\$125 US), which her brother in law was sending back to Burkina Faso with her. However, these facile crossings are not always the rule and both Mini and Yao describe other security checkpoints in which the security agents threatened to send them home, or

even made them answer math questions in order to prove that they were students. Although so far, I have focused on negotiations that have ended fairly well for the Burkinabe migrants, migrants also report many times in which they were unable to negotiate small extractions of money and were constrained to pay large sums:

Since there was a crisis they threatened us and bothered us until the little money we had all finished on the road. The gendarmes, when you arrive ... there was a moment at a post that we paid 40000F (\$65 US) each. Sometimes it is 5000F, at times 10000F until we arrived here and we had spent something like 600000F (\$1000 US).

-- Dah Filkité

For me, coming back, when I got to a border, they said that they were going to search us and whoever refused would have to pay money, 80000F (\$130 US) to be freed from jail. We did not have what we needed; we had women and children and bags. At a certain place, with the help of my wife, I paid 80000F to be freed. They treated us like that all the way to our destination.

-- Dah Kompkieté

Filkité and Kompkieté are brothers and they traveled together back to Burkina Faso, with Kompkieté's wives and children. They report paying sums of money that equal two to four times the cost of their tickets at some border posts, which added up to 600,000F to move the entire family back to Burkina Faso during the crisis. This amount is roughly equal to the average annual earnings of a Burkinabe.<sup>xiii</sup> At this point, they were simply unable to negotiate appropriate supplications to avoid paying a lot at some border posts. Because of the crisis occurring, the security agents were well aware that they had been forced from their homes and were returning to Burkina Faso with all their money on them. This knowledge led to the Ivorian authorities' refusal to compromise and negotiate in the way they did before the crisis broke out.

Although the female migrants spoke about their difficulties with the Ivorian security agents, they did not tend to discuss specifically how they negotiated their supplication. This may be because they were often traveling with their husbands who handled the negotiations for the entire family. However, I did specifically ask one woman migrant who journeyed to Côte d'Ivoire as a single woman, if the Ivorian authorities treat women and men differently and she replied:

I should say that on that level it is the same treatment except that in the cells that I said that they could put you in if you did not have your identification card, there are separate cells for men and women. If you have a Burkinabè identification card you pay, they do not put you in jail, but you pay despite having your identification, you pay just for being a Burkinabe.

-- Poda Bourkoema

Although I did not have the opportunity to interview other women who lived in Côte d'Ivoire without husbands, some of the male migrants describe the migrations of their wives and children during the crisis. For example, Kambire Dinyité mentions in his description of his family's return to Burkina Faso during the crisis that his wife and eight children returned before him. He reports that he gave them 300,000F (\$500 US) for the trip and that they spent 225,000F (\$375 US) during the trip. In this case, we can see that his wife was subject to similar treatment as the other returning migrants; her gender and the fact that she was traveling with children did not seem to engender harsher or more lenient treatment.

In the end, there are also ways in which Burkinabe migrants subvert Ivorian authorities' intentions to benefit from them. Dah Mini describes what some of the other students she was traveling did in order to avoid paying the Ivorians more money. In the following quotation she describes the final checkpoint before returning to Burkina Faso:

The other students left their cards with the police, saying that a *carte scolaire* costs 150F and does not matter to them. They prefer to keep their 6000F and pay for their school supplies with it. So they just left their cards there.

-- Dah Mini

In this situation, which Ollo also describes in his account, in order to avoid paying the 6000F that the Ivorians wanted to require to vaccinate them (or in many cases, even to re-vaccinate the migrants), the migrants choose to leave their identification cards behind and to make new ones later. Ollo describes being able to see the Burkinabe flag only 200 meters away while making his decision to leave his card behind. Clearly, this situation and the others described raise the issue of the salience of the border in the lives and experiences of migrants. The notion that "migrants regard cross-border movements simply as fundamentally the same as internal migration" (Adepoju 2000: 390) is untenable in this case.

#### *Transporters: Taking Care of Their Clientele*

So, when we arrive somewhere we must take the passengers into consideration like they were our children. It is because of them that we went to Côte d'Ivoire in the first place. So we must get along with the authorities.

-- Kambire Tifiélé

Tifiélé was a transporter in Côte d'Ivoire for sixteen years, working the route from Loropéni to Ferkessedougou, a large town in northern Côte d'Ivoire. By referring to the passengers as children, he is not highlighting their inability to negotiate the situation on their own, but rather the degree to which the transporters feel responsible for their passengers welfare. Sometimes they try to collect money from each passenger (like Dah Ollo reports as one method of paying security agents) in order to offer it to the agents as one sum. This is a way of protecting the passengers whose identification documents are not in order and may save them from being arrested or from paying large sums to cross

the post. Additionally, Tifiélé describes one instance in which he was arrested by the Ivorian authorities for refusing to let them search a passenger. He reports that in his opinion that passenger was not a thief and should have been treated like one. In the end Tifiélé's boss paid to get him out of jail. However, it is not only Tifiélé who reports assisting migrants. Many of the second-generation migrants report the ways in which they relied on alliances with transporters to negotiate crossing through security checkpoints. For example in the previous section Kambou Djiemi describes how the transporters paid 1000F for him and each of his two brothers so as to be able to cross a particular checkpoint. After that, Djiemi's father enlisted the assistance of the transporters. Djiemi recounts:

Our father looked for a vehicle for us. He entrusted us to a chauffeur and said that if there was a problem, the chauffeur should negotiate with the police for us and if the police asks for money to say that there is 1000 F a piece for these children, and if he does not accept to offer 1500 F a piece. If that does not work, call him and he will come.

-- Kambou Djiemi

By entrusting them to the chauffeur, their father assured that the boys, who were in their mid-teens at the time, would be spared from negotiating with the Ivorian authorities themselves. In a similar instance, Dah Mini's older brother enlisted the assistance of a chauffeur who was a friend of his to secure a safe place for Mini to sleep if the vehicle she was traveling in had to stop for a night. However, it is not only the second-generation migrants who could count on the assistance of the transporters to negotiate their journeys in Côte d'Ivoire. Ouattara Kassoum described his journey back to Burkina Faso in 2002:

They said 2000F each, but the transporters said that we should say 1000F each. We spent an hour there and we gave them each 1000F.

The transporters helped some of us who went into the bush to fake out the gendarmes and others stayed in the vehicle. We arrived there and we were fifteen people. They said 9500F (\$16 US) per person. We asked them to reduce it, and they even chased the chauffeur back to the car and told him that if we did not pay we would all stay there. The chauffeur took the car and was about to leave, but to leave there and walk all the way to Burkina Faso was too far. I had a bike that I bought in Côte d'Ivoire, but since I was with my friend, to take two people on one bike all that way is too hard. So I told the others that we should pay and we did. 9500F per person, for all fifteen people.

-- Ouattara Kassoum

Kassoum, who was returning to Burkina Faso for the first time when the events he describes occurred, explains that the transporters helped the passengers in several ways. However, Kassoum's story also shows that the transporters are not willing to offer assistance in every situation. He describes that at one particular post where the security

agents were being extremely difficult, the chauffeur was ready to leave them, and they had to eventually pay 9500F each in order to be able to continue in the vehicle.

Whereas the transporters help Burkinabe migrants in many situations, there are some instances in which Burkinabe passengers help each other as well. Both Poda Bourkoema and Dah Ollo described situations in which Burkinabe men helped them along the way:

I should say that in going there, there are not too many problems.  
Especially, if there is a man next to you, you who are a woman, he pays for your food while you are on the road.

-- Poda Bourkoema

The man sitting next to me, who had two kids, told me to help him with a kid. So I took one of his kids ... and he told me that he was behind me and he would take care of me during the trip.... When the police would take my card he negotiated for me all the way to Djiglo where he got out and I continued alone.... For food, it was he who paid for me all the way until he got out.

-- Dah Ollo

I asked Bourkoema to specify which men might help her during a trip to Côte d'Ivoire and she replied that if a man from the same village was with her on the trip that he would help her by paying for her food during the journey. Although she did not specify whether or not that man might also help her to negotiate with Ivorian authorities, Ollo mentions that the man who was sitting near him, negotiated for him at each checkpoint and paid for his food until he got out of the vehicle. In this instance it become more clear that while women may not be treated differently from men at the hands of Ivorian authorities, their experiences of journeying in Côte d'Ivoire are still certainly gendered in some respects. Likewise, young persons (Ollo was fourteen at the time) may be able to escape harsh treatment from authorities in some circumstances and may be able to rely on the assistance of adult male passengers as well.

*Looting and Looking Away: Ivorian Security Agents*

But when we return, on the road they take back all our money. We are looted and when we arrive at the house we no longer have anything.

-- Kambou Tifiélé

When we return with little because we were looted on the road, it is with a feeling of sadness.

-- Dah Dagbefiré

When you get enough money to come back, coming on the road the security forces will arrange it so that you come penniless.

-- Poda Konayala

When you leave here to go there, they know that there is not any money, so it is easy to go there. But coming home, that is when they think that you have money.

-- Dah Mini

By all accounts the return to Burkina Faso for migrants is more difficult and costly than the trip to Côte d'Ivoire. It is when they return that authorities assume that they are taking large amounts of money with them. This means that those who have worked for years to make money to pay expenses at home (be they personal or family-related) return with little of their earnings. Both Dah Mini and Kambou Djemi explain a particularly interesting situation in which the same security agents make the migrants pay several times in a row:

And the people who just searched you ... take their motorbikes and wait for you ahead. If you ask them if they are the same people who stopped you, they say that it is their law. They say that they want their money.... A migrant does not have a choice; you have to pay to cross. You do that all the way, they stop you all the way to your destination

-- Kambou Djemi

In Djemi's description of this situation, he makes clear that the security agents say that they want "their" money. Similarly, in his description of his experiences with Ivorian security agents, he mentions that they take the money "back." In these descriptions, it seems as though the Ivorians conceive of the money in Burkinabe hands as their money: more specifically, as wealth that belongs in their country.

The Burkinabe migrants' descriptions of their experiences journeying in Côte d'Ivoire lead to a better understanding of how the Ivorian authorities have informally structured their system so as to assure themselves continued access to the money of Burkinabe migrants returning to Burkina Faso. At each security checkpoint that migrants pass as they enter Côte d'Ivoire and travel to their destinations, the Ivorian authorities extract some money from the migrants, but not enough to discourage them from journeying in Côte d'Ivoire in the future. They do this by letting the migrants pay to cross through the checkpoints despite their incomplete identification and documentation. One particularly telling example of this set-up comes from Dah Olo, who explains that as he was crossing back into Burkina Faso with some other students the same gendarme who had written a *laissez passer* for one student later claimed that the document was a forgery. He then tried to force the student to pay as if his documentation was incomplete. From this we can see that if the Ivorian security agents actually enforced their policies by requiring Burkinabe migrants to pay for complete documents, or if they forced them to return to Burkina Faso, they would be limiting their ability to extract even greater sums as the migrants try to return to Burkina Faso with their earnings. In a sense there is a conspiratorial and systematic disregard for the official policies that assures the security agents' ability to benefit from Burkinabe migrants and to take back the money that they believe belongs in their country. However, Burkinabe migrants are well aware of this situation and this is why they employ a variety of strategies to minimize the negative impact of the Ivorians' "policies."

*Regime Change: When Journeying in Côte d'Ivoire Became So Costly for Burkinabe*

In the beginning we did not have any problems. We traveled freely, without harassment from the police but as the years pass everything has been getting more complicated and we have been obliged to pay a lot, especially during the return. When we leave there we have to put some pretty substantial sums of money in our pockets to be able to make it home.

-- Dah Kompkieté

Kompkieté made his first trip to Côte d'Ivoire in the late 1970s and notes that the complications that are emerging are both in terms of harassment from the Ivorian authorities and in terms of the extractions of money required of migrants. However, Kompkieté does not propose here any reasons why his experiences have become more difficult lately. Similarly, Kambou Naba, a second-generation migrant, relates the way he has experienced the changes in the journey over the last few years:

The police are also difficult. We students, before, when the crisis had not started yet, they did not bother with us. Now, since there was the crisis<sup>xiv</sup> they bother us, but before they did not search students. They did not even ask for a *carte scolaire*.... You only had to say that you are a student and that your parents are in Côte d'Ivoire and that you were going to help them before they will give you some tuition money.

-- Kambou Naba

We have already seen some of the extreme harassment and difficulty to which he has been subject in recent years. Kambire Tifiélé, who worked as a transporter between Loropéni and Côte d'Ivoire for sixteen years also notes that before the crisis things were not as bad as they are now. Neither Naba nor Tifiélé link their changing experiences to more specific changes in the politics of Côte d'Ivoire. However, some migrants locate the date that their experiences began to change with the change of regime that occurred in the early 1990s:

Since the death of Houphouët-Boigny when President Bedié came to power things have become complicated at the posts during the voyage. Even if you have an identification card you have to pay, when going there and when coming back to Burkina Faso.

-- Kambire Dinyité

In the beginning there was not a problem. During the time of Houphouët-Boigny there were no problems; we went without any difficulty and the Burkinabe and Ivorians were practically the same. But ever since Henri Konan Bedié came to power and then Gbagbo, things became complicated for us Burkinabe during our voyages.

-- Poda Bourkoema

Certainly we can see that Bourkoema and Dinyité are aware of the changing Ivorian political structures that affect their experiences journeying in Côte d'Ivoire.

### **Conclusions:**

Here I have presented an analysis of interviews and focus groups conducted with Burkinabè migrants and members of their families in Burkina Faso in August 2003. For most of the research participants, interviews were conducted in the village of their birth, while for others, who are second-generation migrants, the village was the birthplace of their parents and their current place of residence. The approach I used was to reconstruct aspects of the migration experience of migrants and their relatives along three "moments" of the migration process. The moment presented here -- the second of three -- is "Journeying in Côte d'Ivoire."

The research participants describe crossing the international border and traveling in Côte d'Ivoire in terms of their interactions with Ivorian security agents (police, water and forestry agents, gendarmes, and customs officials) and the relationships they develop with transporters. In telling about their journeying in Côte d'Ivoire, the migrants describe negotiations with Ivorian security agents in which they trade supplication for passage. The migrants also fight back by establishing relationships with transporters and other journeyers who can help them negotiate their crossings. However, they should not be viewed purely as victims of the migration process. The migrants' tales of their experiences make clear that within the last decade crossing security checkpoints in Côte d'Ivoire has become expensive and difficult. In these last few years, Ivorian security agents have begun to require higher and higher payments from Burkinabe, especially when they are traveling towards Burkina Faso. The process they describe is one in which Ivorian security agents systematically disregard their country's requirement for documentation to assure a flow of exploitable migrants. Again, these experiences are affected by gender, age and migrant generation, as those who are older adults tend to have an easier time journeying in Côte d'Ivoire, and those who are second generation migrants are sometimes able to use visits to their parents as a way to convince security agents to let them pass; however, adult men and women tend to have the most difficulty crossing checkpoints. In any case, the literature's prevailing notion of geo-political borders as theoretically and practically meaningless is revealed to be problematic in this case.

In the future, instead of focusing on migration as a survival strategy employed by pauperized families, I propose instead to focus on strategies related and central to migration in a different light: 1) what strategies do migrant individuals and groups employ to "survive" their migration experience? 2) what strategies do Ivorian officials and citizens use to extract maximum benefit from Burkinabè migrations (or, to "survive" the massive influx of immigrants)?; and 3) what strategies do relatives of migrants utilize the "survive" out-migration? Taking this approach will help to further our understanding of the interpersonal relationships that migrants develop and the interactions that determine their experiences. In addition, by looking more in-depth at migrants' experiences and the migration process as opposed to studying migration with aggregate

data some important theoretical problems are revealed. The literature's refusal of the salience of international borders for migrants in West Africa, and in this particular migration system, is one glaring area for better theorization.

For this case in particular, future research should be done in Côte d'Ivoire to give Ivorian security agents, *patrons*, and *tuteurs* the opportunity to tell their stories. In addition to this, migrants from other countries who are in Côte d'Ivoire also have migration experiences that should be understood. Perhaps most importantly, Burkinabe who have not returned to Burkina Faso, and who have lost contact with their families also have an important story to tell, and single-sited research limits the ability of migration research to access their experiences. Only with detailed accounts from Burkinabè migrants in both countries, migrants from other countries, and Ivorians at all levels, can a more developed and accurate picture of migration to and from Côte d'Ivoire be approached.

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*The African Studies Association of Australia and the Pacific (AFSAAP)  
Annual Conference 26-28 November 2004, University of Western Australia*

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## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> Although Burkina Faso was formerly called Haute Volta (in English it was Upper Volta), I prefer to use the name Burkina Faso throughout this paper because many of the migrations discussed took place and much of the literature surveyed was written before Upper Volta became Burkina Faso in 1983. This is primarily a decision made in the interest of readability.

<sup>ii</sup> In a personal communication, Dennis Cordell mentioned that he and his colleagues are currently doing a revised version of their 1996 monograph, *Hoe and Wage: A Social History of a West African Migration System* in French, which will include the recent National Migration Survey and thus enable them to bring their representation of the story up to 2000.

<sup>iii</sup> For a complete discussion of these models see Massey et al. (1998). In this literature review I will focus on the literature that discusses the causes of international migration. Although immigrant assimilation and adaptation is another large topic in migration studies, to address it fully would take another entire literature review. Some central studies to be considered are Portes and Rumbauts's *Immigrant America: Labor and Industrial Societies* (1990), and Gordon's *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins* (1964), and Portes' "Immigration theory for a new century: some problems and opportunities (Special Issue: Immigrant Adaptation and Native-Born Responses in Making Americans) in the *International Migration Review* (1997). Certainly, these studies all deal with the adaptation of new immigrants to the United States, and may not be easily applicable to the case of Burkinabe in Côte d'Ivoire.

<sup>iv</sup> I will focus most heavily here on the new economics of labor migration approach, and less so on the migrant networks approach (e.g., Massey et al. 1987) which focuses on the familial and community networks that have evolved due to migrations. These networks facilitate the movement of people and the flow of remittances. I will do this because a central goal of this paper is to problematize the notion that Burkinabè migration is a household strategy. Furthermore I content that the migrant network model has been elaborated almost exclusively in relation to Western hemisphere migration systems, particularly between Mexico and the United States. For this reason, the model has yet to be applied consistently to cases of migration in Africa. In addition, migrant network models have not received as much attention or criticism as household models (Pessar 1999).

<sup>v</sup> See e.g., Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994), for an empirical critique of the household strategy model.

<sup>vi</sup> See Kum-Kum Bhavnani, John Foran and Priya Kurian's (2003) *Feminist Futures: Re-imagining Women, Culture and Development*, as I borrow in their approach. Here, I deal with culture, gender and generation and to some degree, ethnicity, as they are lived in relationships between people and not as fixed sets of social relations.

<sup>vii</sup> I should mention the timing of the research. Considering that I conducted this research less than one year after the eruption of a civil war in Côte d'Ivoire, and while the international border between Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire was closed, there was an abundance of returned labor migrants in Loropéni when I was there. They included both those who had been forcibly repatriated and those who had returned of their own accord. Luckily my sample includes both of these types of returned migrants. Because of this, I was able to capture a variety of viewpoints that may not have been possible had the research been conducted just a few months earlier or later.

<sup>viii</sup> Certainly, some of the data was difficult to categorize into one particular "moment" because they are not cut-and-dried categories which definable boundaries. However, I do believe in the analytic promise of this methodology to bring migrant experiences to the forefront, while not falling into a trap of extreme particularism or universalism.

<sup>ix</sup> Although I do not have the space to fully elaborate here, "border" in these interviews does not refer simply to the international border between Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire. Respondents refer to any stop by an Ivorian security agent as a border. Some explicitly call the international border, "the first border" and then discuss stopping at many subsequent borders during the journey.

<sup>x</sup> This is a document that attests that student has permission to travel. It was instituted in 2001 because of reports that Ivorian plantation owners traffic children to work in the fields.

<sup>xi</sup> The exchange hovers around 600 F cfa per one US dollar. According to the UNDP (2003) the average annual income for Burkinabe is \$1120.

<sup>xii</sup> The *carte de séjour* was instituted in 1991, before which foreigners did not have to have official documentation of their right to be in Côte d'Ivoire.

<sup>xiii</sup> However, this statistic may be misleading because Burkina Faso has extreme income inequality. It is hard to say how much a Burkinabe can make per year as an agricultural worker in Côte d'Ivoire because people are generally paid per hectare. For example, Dah Dagbefe cultivated a plot of 15 hectares to make 225,000 F cfa (West African Francs) which amounts to about \$375 US in one year. Kambire Tifiele reports making 150,000 F one year (\$250 US). Another popular arrangement for when the laborer harvests the cocoa or coffee is for him to keep one-third the price of the harvest after it has been sold (see Kouame 1990).

<sup>xiv</sup> The term crisis is used by some migrants to refer specifically to the time following the September 19, 2002 uprising, but others contest that it goes as far back as 1999 when Burkinabe migrants were expelled from Tabou. I need to try to use two different terms to refer to these so as to avoid confusion, but this will require interpretation since many times they simply used the term crisis.