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SUSTAINING RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS BORDERS: GENDERED LIVELIHOODS AND MOBILITY AMONG SIERRA LEONEAN REFUGEES

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INTRODUCTION

The presence of refugees constitutes an aberration in a modern world which is neatly partitioned into nation states. Within this framework, being a refugee is a temporary state of social and physical dislocation: refugee status is essentially a non-status. Refugees are viewed as existing in a social limbo, where the immediate needs of obtaining food, shelter, and medical attention overshadow all other concerns. However, recent ethnographic studies reveal the continued pursuit of livelihood strategies – economic as well as social projects – among refugee camp residents (Horst 2006; Kibreab 2004; Andrews 2003; Dick 2002).

For refugees in West Africa, pre-war mobility continues during displacement and sustains crucial social connections. “There is a clear pattern of multidirectional cross-border movements that indicates the ongoing, cyclical nature of migration – blurring the boundaries between “refugees” and “voluntary” migrants. The concept of a permanent resettlement or irreversible displacement does not take into account this multidirectional aspect of population movements” (Stitger and Monsutti 2005: 2). Refugees’ livelihood strategies depend on these multidirectional moves and the social connections they sustain.

Transnationalism, defined as “the processes by which migrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement theory” has, until recently, remained peripheral to the study of refugees and forced migration research (Basch et al. 1994: 7). This divide is due to academic divisions between voluntary and forced migration, legal definitions that set the category “refugee” apart, and fear of incriminating refugees who pursue mobility as a livelihood strategy. However, recent theoretical discussions of transnationalism contest notions of “rootedness” and the nation-state as defining populations and advocate for a fluid understanding of geographical, cultural, and political borders (Gupta and Ferguson 1999; Kearney 1986, 1995; Malkki 1996, 2002; Appadurai 1991; Glick Schiller 1995). It is apparent that the insights offered by transnationalism theory are of fundamental importance to the field of forced migration.

The experiences of Fula refugees from Sierra Leone lend particular insight into mobility strategies more appropriately identified as translocal than transnational.¹ The term “translocal”, as it is used here, signifies mobility between

adjacent nations; in the case of refugees, the state(s) of origin and the state of first asylum. Rather than assigning priority to nation-state and citizenship, Fula refugees see themselves primarily as embedded members of family networks that have spanned borders for generations. This paper examines the gendered aspects of refugee livelihood strategies such as child fostering, bulgur marriage, and trade which depend on these multi-sited family networks. For displaced Fula, the experience of conflict and refugee status does not represent so much of a radical interruption in social life, but rather an introduction of a new structure of opportunity and constraint into a much broader social, political, and economic landscape.²

BACKGROUND AND METHODS

The West African nations of Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea have been either embroiled in civil war or have hosted refugees produced by war for the last 16 years. People displaced by conflict criss-crossed national borders in reaction to the prevailing political climate. In the early 1990s, refugees fleeing from Liberia and Sierra Leone self-settled in Guinean villages along the borders, relying on long-term patron-client and kin relations. When the needs of refugees began to overwhelm the capacity of their hosts, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in agreement with the Guinean government, began to coordinate the refugee camp construction, food assistance, and human services that continue in Guinea today.

Refugees settled (either voluntarily or with the active encouragement of the host government and the relief agencies) in various camps and organized settlements where they were registered and received official assistance. However, residence in the camps did not prove to guarantee safety for those fleeing from civil war. From September to December 2000, cross-border raids and the consequent retaliation on the part of the Guinean government in several border regions displaced thousands of refugees and Guineans. This upheaval of the refugee population led to the construction of the Dabola region Sembakounya camp in 2001.

This article is based on ethnographic fieldwork in Sembakounya camp which spanned the brief two-year life span of the camp as well as the subsequent repatriation and transfer of the Sembakounya residents in 2003.³ In order to gain safe access to the camp, I acted as a research consultant and liaison officer for the International Rescue Committee (IRC). Fluency in the Pulaar language gained during Peace Corps service in Senegal led me to focus on members of the Fula ethnic/linguistic group who resided in Sembakounya camp. The fieldwork combined qualitative and quantitative methods in order to establish general patterns as well as in-depth portraits of particular families and individuals.

Given refugees' precarious position *vis-a-vis* the international aid community, I relied heavily upon participant observation and informal conversations for my understanding of camp inhabitants' perspectives of humanitarian assistance and UNHCR's repatriation program. As many Sierra Leonean Fula had originated from Guinea in the 1970s, I worked with Fulas who had returned to the nearby town of Dabola during the war as well as camp residents. In order to

understand the situation of repatriating Fulas, I also traveled to Sierra Leone with a UNHCR-sponsored convoy of refugees from Sembakounya in April 2003 and then again in December 2003. Through gathering refugees' migration histories it became evident that mobility was a durable aspect of Fula identity pre-war that continues during displacement.

LONG-TERM MOBILITY AND LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES

Rather than seeing displacement as clearly bounded in space and time, Fula people did not identify a clear beginning or end to the conflict that led to their residence in a refugee camp in Guinea. Instead, they related a punctuated experience of war, including repeated flights to the Sierra Leone/Guinea border and returns to safeguard their homes, businesses, and cattle. Likewise, they found that the end of conflict and disruption is equally hard to read, as evidenced by the continued presence of Sierra Leoneans in defunct Guinean camps despite the withdrawal of aid from the international community. Many still cling to the hope of resettlement in the United States or elsewhere and refuse UNHCR's attempts at local integration or repatriation. As Davis describes in his influential article "The Anthropology of Suffering", "...the experience of war, famine and plague is continuous with ordinary social experience; people place it in social memory and incorporate it with their accumulated culture" (Davis 1992: 152). For the Fula, conflict and migration have become durable aspects of the social landscape.

The continuation of movement as a livelihood strategy is not unique to West African refugees; Stigter and Monsutti describe similar findings among Afghan refugees: "For many, migration has become a way of life: it is now highly organized, and the transnational networks that have developed to support it are now a major, even constitutive, element in the social, cultural, and economic life of Afghans" (2005: 3). For the Fula, relocation has taken place not only in the course of a single life span, but over generations; beginning in the 17th century as "voluntary" migrants (cattle herders, traders, Islamic teachers) and then "involuntary" migrants in the 1970s and 1980s during the repressive Touré regime in Guinea.

It is estimated that by the end of Sekou Touré's rule, up to two million Guineans, predominantly Fula, had fled to neighboring countries. In 1970, the "Portuguese invasion" – a supposed Fula-led plot to topple Touré – was regarded as the climax of the Guinean Fula exodus to neighboring African states. Those individuals who fled to Sierra Leone were never officially recognized as refugees nor did the Sierra Leone government make an effort to incorporate them into the country as citizens. In the 1990s, Fulas fled to Guinea in waves depending on factors such as region of origin in Sierra Leone, gender, and relative access to resources. Oftentimes women and children were sent to Guinea to live with relatives or in refugee camps while the men and older sons would remain to tend to what property and cattle were left. Some families attempted to repatriate to Sierra Leone from Guinean camps in 1996 in the brief peace that followed the Lomé peace accords – when optimism didn't seem so far-fetched – and before renewed fighting broke out in Freetown and elsewhere, causing another flood of refugees

to enter Guinea. Those Fula who crossed the border to Guinea with their cattle tended not to live in the camps, but often settled near the camps so as to access food benefits periodically and to strategically divide family members between the camp and the bush. Others who self-settled in Guinean towns rather than UNHCR-run camps tended to have prior family contacts that they had sustained through the years.

For Sierra Leonean refugees who were born in Guinea or whose parents were born in Guinea, their continued visits back and forth problematize state-based definitions of identity and belonging. Given the primary importance of cross-border family ties, many Fula had multiple identity cards in order to facilitate movement and viewed nationality as situation-dependent. Despite their long-standing residence and commercial activities in Sierra Leone, Fula people were regarded by other Sierra Leonean ethnic groups as “outsiders” or “strangers”. In the Guinean camps Fula refugees experienced yet another type of discrimination. Fulas often recounted to me how Guinean workers told them “You shouldn’t be in this camp, you’re Guinean!” These Guinean Fulas, supposedly their brothers and sisters, refused to speak to them in Fula; if they were truly Fula they would not be refugees in the first place. Their assumption was that the Fula refugees should have maintained family connections to Guinea, despite their residence in Sierra Leone; “good” family members would have been allowed to return “home” rather than live in a camp.

Sembakounya camp became home to a variety of inhabitants over its life span, many of whom did not fit the “refugee” definition. Among the Fula there were a range of people who had ration cards: people who spent the majority of their time outside the camp working; Guineans who worked in the camp for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or ran small businesses; Guineans who had acquired a refugee card and appeared in the camp only to collect food and non-food items on distribution day; and family members (of varying nationalities) of camp residents who came to be with their relatives to attend the free IRC-sponsored schools, to help with household chores, or to visit for special occasions such as baptisms, marriages, or funerals. These strategies are not unique to the Fula: previous studies of camp-based livelihoods also discuss the range of strategies employed by refugees (and non-refugees) in order to survive and even prosper in the camps (Voutira and Harrell-Bond 1995; Dick 2002; Kibreab 2004).⁴

Literature regarding refugees often portrays people as either dependents or “cunning crooks” (Horst 2005: 1). Behavior seen to be duplicitous by agencies is alternatively viewed by refugees as prioritizing longer-term social demands of family and kin. Refugees exist within a framework constructed by the UN and the international community which they have little institutional power to change. The resources that are embedded in this framework shape the character of camps, and people learn to treat these benefits as both opportunities and constraints.

Lack of access to formal means of credit, loans, and currency prevented residents from achieving economic security through simply residing in the camp. The camp borders were porous: mobility was the norm rather than the exception. Substantial assistance came from social networks and friendships outside the

camp which were based on kinship, parental connections, and one's reputation as a businessperson. These networks facilitated the creation of business relationships with the neighboring villages or with non-refugee camp entrepreneurs.

The permeable boundaries offered opportunities to those with language abilities and/or familiarity with the region; they were most readily able to establish business relationships and start-up local and long-distance trade (Andrews 2003; 2004). Ethnic associations also provided small business loans and counsel. Assistance from the Liberian and Sierra Leonean diasporas was received primarily in the form of remittances and camp inhabitants would disappear for weeks at a time to travel to Freetown or Conakry to wait for money to be wired from a relative overseas. Mr. Bah's case study illuminates the importance of long-term connections in re-establishing livelihood activities.

Mr. Bah: trans-local trader

Although Mr. Bah was raised as a cattle herder in Guinea, he became a trader as a young adult, making his way to Sierra Leone and Liberia. By his own account, he was a successful businessman before the war and owned a storefront in Koidu, the diamond trading center of Sierra Leone and a hotly disputed area during the war. He and his family left Koidu for the border with Guinea due to rebel attacks in 1992. He then returned to reestablish his business with credit from friends, but the rebels came and looted all his merchandise and torched the building. It is at that point that he and his family left Koidu and became "official" refugees in Guinea. He brought his two wives, seven children and 85-year old mother with him to Sembakounya camp. He also fostered his sister's daughter, Salematu, who joined them in the camp to take advantage of the free IRC-sponsored education.

Although labeled as vulnerable in the camp by the UNHCR, due to loss of sight in his left eye and a hip problem, Mr. Bah was highly adept at accessing local resources. He was able in Sembakounya to secure a loan from a Guinean trader who knew him from before the war. With that credit he traded and stored large amounts of refugee food supply to be resold in the market. His reputation allowed him to act as the middleman for buyers from surrounding communities and the capital city. My conversations with Mr. Bah inspired me to draw out his family tree, which extended from Guinea to Sierra Leone to Europe. He called upon these relationships, such as with his uncle El Hadj, to re-build his diamond business in Sierra Leone and make repatriation feasible for him and his family.

El Hadj and his wife Swadu owned a bakery before the war and were surrounded by his 13 brothers and sisters who all had houses in Koidu. El Hadj and Swadu tried at first to live in a refugee camp when they fled to Guinea. However, they found life there to be too difficult and moved to the nearest town to find a place to stay until the war finished. Due to El Hadj's reputation as an imam and traditional mediator, the Fula community in Kissidougou put together money for El Hadj and Swadu to rent a house until they decided to return to Sierra Leone in 1999. El Hadj reestablished his political presence in the Koidu community upon return and was therefore an important connection for Mr. Bah.

Before Mr. Bah repatriated, he took a four-month reconnaissance trip to Sierra Leone to visit El Hadj and scope out possibilities for rejuvenating his various business ventures. This trip was unwittingly underwritten by UNHCR's repatriation program. For months prior to the closing of the camp, people in the camp (both refugee and non-refugee camp residents) had been using the UNHCR-funded truck convoys to repatriate to Sierra Leone as well as to "go and see" about possibilities in Sierra Leone and then return to the camp. Camp inhabitants traveled to Sierra Leone to investigate their family situations as well as opportunities for housing and work. From people's description of their visits to Sierra Leone it became apparent that it was not *where* you return, but *to whom* you return that was the crucial decider. These "go and see" visits were not sponsored by UNHCR. Instead, people bought black market refugee identification/ration cards from a broker in the camp who had obtained dozens of these cards. People bought these cards so as not to forfeit their legitimate card; particularly family heads with many dependents who were traveling solo. The system of multiple checks-medical, registration, transport, luggage facilitated multiple registration.

Those who traveled for a "go and see" visit quickly recognized the economic potential presented by the repatriation process. Upon arrival each convoy traveler was given a benefit package by the United Nations World Food Program (UNWFP). Benefits were based on the number of dependents listed on the card and consisted of food for three months as well as non-food items such as tarpaulins, mats, lanterns, cooking pots, water bladders, soap, and blankets. These items could be sold for a profit, around \$100 or more if the card listed many dependents. In order to reap the maximum benefits, some children were temporarily "borrowed" from Sembakounya camp to complete the number of dependents listed on a black market card.

Mr. Bah returned from his "go and see" visit confident that he could restart his business and share lodging with El Hadj and his family. Although he had been selling clothes before the war in his shop, Mr. Bah recognized that people did not have the disposable income to buy higher priced luxury items. He reasoned that cigarettes were a quick turnover item with a high profit margin and could be easily transported. He decided to buy cigarettes in Guinea and take them on the convoy with his family (free transport to Sierra Leone with the added bonus of not having to pay bribes on the border). He had already calculated his profit from the first trip. Mr. Bah then planned to continue this cross-border trade in cigarettes until he saved enough money to restart his store-based business.

By the time I reached Koidu, three months after Mr. Bah had returned, he had already made good on his predictions. He took me first to his small shop, located just across from the lorry park. Mr. Bah shared the rent with a partner in order to sell small items smuggled from Guinea. The one-room store front was cleanly whitewashed, with four shelves on each wall containing a small assortment of rice, sugar, cigarettes, candy, and medicine. He only put out a limited quantity of goods to prevent attracting the attention of customs officials. He was also in business with four other men at a large store at the main crossroads in town. There he was involved in money-changing as well as selling clothes, rice,

cigarettes, and small merchandise. Mr. Bah was well aware of the established and flexible trade routes. He took advantage of how goods, such as cigarettes, move through everyday markets and across borders without relying on government-controlled institutions. Mr. Bah's businesses ventures are part of what Nordstrom describes as the "shadow economy" (Nordstrom 2004).

Mr. Bah's well-developed network of social relations within and outside the camp is not surprising, given that he, like most Fulas in Sembakounya, had been in and out of refugee camps since the early 1990s. Although the cross-border attacks of 2000 re-dislocated refugees from the camps and towns in which they had been living, most people transferred to Sembakounya camp without losing members of their family during the flight. Most Fula refugees had already re-established crucial relationships and friendships by the time they reached Sembakounya in 2001. Rather than depending completely on international aid, men and women were obtaining regular information and accessing resources through people visiting the camp, by returning to Sierra Leone or Liberia to check for themselves, or through networks as to the whereabouts and condition of their children, spouses, parents, siblings, and friends. Mr. Bah's experience illustrates how previous connections and new relationships form the basis of refugees' livelihood strategies.

GENDERED LIVELIHOODS: CREATIVE KINSHIP AND CHILD FOSTERING

Relationships can be seen in the highly pressured refugee situation as strategies writ large: not just for food or money, but for cultural survival and the continuation of a family group. Kinship becomes the idiom through which economic, political, and religious values and activities are expressed: kinship not only describes the reproduction of human beings, but the *relations* between human beings (Holy 1996: 152). Depending on family position and gender, refugees may be organizing other peoples' movement and coordinating family members' residence, work, schooling, and marriages. They must also keep up to date with important family events and return with gifts or there is great shame involved.

Fula refugees maintain geographically dispersed ties through marriage, remittances, fostering, and visits for funerals and other important ceremonies. A refugee family registered in the camp may have some members present while others are dispersed among Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea in order to best capitalize on camp resources (food, shelter, education) as well as resources elsewhere (trade, religious education, family members). While some refugee families have separated, others create new relationships in the camp to improve their living situations.

"Created" kin are of great importance, as trust is discussed and demonstrated through kinship references. These relationships are forged and maintained through an endless stream of social obligations – thereby cementing existing family alliances and/or creating new advantageous connections. These obligations included material assistance such as lending money, clothes, and food; assisting with weddings, funerals, or baptisms; and sharing food supply (Gale 2005). The relative strength of one's patron-client relationships is also measured in the use of

kin terms as seen by references to a “big brother” or “uncle” whose connection becomes increasingly vague when asked for a genealogical map. This jockeying of relationships, rearranging of the relative importance of the biological and social, and the simultaneous strengthening and neglecting of ties is of constant discussion. These links are refugees’ social security system. Child fostering and domestic relationships offer culturally-sanctioned opportunities to women in the camp.

Certain aspects of human and social capital, or what Garey terms “resources constellations,” interact with the camp identity to create different opportunities and constraints.⁵ These resources refer not only to standard social capital assets, but also to family size and ages, relationships status, ethnic privilege, transportation access, and physical health as well as the economic, social and political structures that produce, maintain, and reproduce these resources (Garey 1999). These resource constellations have shifted during the war and are being reformed using traditional and innovative means of support. Gender, generation, social class, and education combine to create differential access to social networks and translocal opportunities.

Men and women used different means to access resources and pursue livelihood activities, actively navigating the opportunities and constraints of their social worlds. While migration is accepted as part of the life-course for Fula women when they marry and move to their husband’s compound, independent movement has been seen to be the provenance of men and questionable for women. Mobility among women has been assumed to be occur among ‘tied movers’; women who move only with their husbands – a view criticized by academics who study gendered migration processes (Chant 1992, Grieco and Boyd 1998, Pedraza 1991). This view obscures the ways in which refugee women use mobility – as seen through fostering of children, visits to relatives outside the camp, and relationships that allow for multiple residences – to further their life plans. For some women these lasting ties offer opportunities in trade and commerce. Other women are creating new relationships with men and fostering their children as a different type of livelihood strategy.

Women are considered to be particularly vulnerable in the camp, as their husbands, fathers, brothers, or protectors have been killed in the war, are combatants, or have been kidnapped by the rebel groups. To qualify for assistance, women are often pushed to take on identities such as “single mothers” or “war widows”. In reality, women’s statuses might be more ambiguous, as their spouses might be missing or living in another location with the knowledge of the woman. (Hyndman 2003: 6). A single woman in the camp who fits in the vulnerable category might have a husband in Sierra Leone who supports the family or resides with some of her children; a spouse or temporary partner who lives in a different house in the camp yet contributes; a grown child overseas sending her money; or she might have five children with her in the camp without any apparent means of income. In each case the woman would be termed “vulnerable”, but her situation would clearly vary depending on her resource constellation. Therefore, externally created categories of need such as “vulnerability” do not necessarily correspond with indigenous coping strategies. One such livelihood strategy for women is to enter into partnerships with men which are called “bulgur marriages” by other camp residents.

Although instrumental in accessing aid, bulgur marriage is denigrated by other refugees for its seemingly transparent economic basis: the sharing of bulgur wheat that is distributed each month by the United Nations World Food Program (UNWFP). Women enter into these relationships for protection, company, and support as on their own they have fewer resources to keep them afloat. Oftentimes the bulgur marriage is not the only relationship in which they are involved; many already have a husband in their country of origin who connects them to another set of family ties and obligations. These are the connections that Jane Guyer calls “lateral” kin: relationships with lovers and ex-spouses which give a woman a network of people to call upon (Guyer 1994).

At the heart of these lateral strategies are children. A woman can press her demands on a man, whether or not they call their relationship a marriage, with far greater leverage if she has a child with him and sends her children from previous relationships to be fostered elsewhere. The pattern in Sembakounya was for women in bulgur marriages to send their children from former unions to live with their grandmother or the father’s family outside the camp. Rather than the camp being a haven for children, my survey enumerating the Fula population in the camp found that 40% of the children reported were “missing” from the camp. There were a number of explanations for this absence. The children were with a non-camp parent, being fostered by a family member or friend, or in the case of young women, had been married to a man outside the camp. There were also a number of children in residence in the camp who, although related to camp residents, were not official refugees. Oftentimes they came to live in the camp from nearby towns to enjoy services such as education and medical, while assisting family members in the camp.

The fostering of children is employed as a blanket term for a variety of social arrangements and is an integral aspect of the fabric of society in West Africa (Goody 1982). Whether in the refugee camp context or in the course of “normal” life events, the fostering of children in West African countries has long provided the basis for relationships that link home and host communities. Communication about the care and support of children connects scattered family members and encourages the acculturation of children into proper social mores and expectations for the future. For women in the camp, children’s residence provides insight into previous relationships and current relationships. Mariama’s story illustrates the role of bulgur relationships in the opportunity structure of refugee life.

Mariama Jalloh: bulgur marriage and translocal parenting

I met Mariama Jalloh at the Mambiya transit camp in Guinea. She had received a message from her husband in Sierra Leone demanding that she carry their two children to their grandmother – his mother – to continue school. She traveled to Port Loko, Sierra Leone on the UNHCR-sponsored repatriation convoy and left the children. Her plan was to return to Sembakounya camp, but during her return trip she was robbed and could not finish the journey. She approached me to ask for money for the trip home and little by little revealed why she was returning to the camp.

Mariama married her husband, Jarome Yanguba, in 1980 when she was 15 years old. She had 5 children with Jarome while they lived in Sierra Leone, whose ages range from 10 to 20 years of age. She fled with her family to Guinea in 1997, but then separated from her husband after the 2000 attack. She left three children in Sierra Leone with Jarome's mother in 2001 before she transferred to Sembakounya camp. It was in Sembakounya she met Mohamed Camara, a man from the Temne ethnic group. Camara worked for an agricultural NGO distributing rice seed, a prestigious job in the camp. Mariama decided to enter into a bulgur marriage with Camara because "I did not have someone to help me". She and Camara have a son together, Joseph Jackson, born in November 2002. She said that because Camara was seeking resettlement, she would stay with him for some time.

Mariama only talked about her first husband with reluctance, finally disclosing that they were in fact still married and in contact. "My first marriage was traditional but for this one I am having a friend but it is not a legal marriage...I have plans to get back together with my first husband if I go back to Sierra Leone". For women such as Mariama, bulgur marriage is a strategy which does not necessarily involve normative Islamic marital negotiations or allegiance to a new family group. This temporary arrangement is flexible, yet also offers considerable risk. Bulgur marriages take advantage of benefits offered by life in the refugee camp while keeping other options open.

These bulgur marriages illustrate the adaptations refugees have made to maximize the assistance in the camp and at the same time raise the problem inherent in the international assistance framework: creating and perpetuating unequal power relationships and access to resources. Despite the horrors and pressures of the refugee experience, people still look to family and kinship as a way forward; whether they are demonstrating "traditional" views of kinship and marriage or are struggling with the same goals without the familial support. Women are struggling to balance pressures of education, occupation and fertility while men struggle to achieve with what marks success in the refugee camp context: a strong asylum case and successful trade.

The ways in which Fula refugees are creatively resuscitating kinship, family and parenthood are edifying for a number of reasons: they provide a window into the human condition and the ways in which kinship and family, despite chaos and danger, remain central aspects of the human condition and are the life goals around which all else turns. As descriptions of material life in the camp, domestic relationships, and parenting demonstrate, there is a space for the creative presentation of self in order to gain the maximum influence over the different forms of aid offered, such as housing, food, ration cards, and in particular, repatriation benefits. This presentation of self is anchored in the real differences of status, education, age, gender, and ethnicity (among others) that exist within the homogenous "refugee" category. Fula refugees' long experience of migration predisposes them to be adept during crisis at taking advantage of and nurturing informal social networks created through marriage, partnering, and the fostering of children.

CONCLUSION

From the long distance trade of the 17th century to the more recent labor migration and flight from political persecution, expectations for the responsibilities and roles of Fula men and women have adapted to new forms of income generation, resource landscapes, and long-distance relationships. The assumption that camp residents are in limbo until restored to normalcy obscures the reality of life in a refugee camp: family and economic projects continue and new social connections are forged that redefine future goals and expectations. Refugees learn to adapt to a system that is rarely sensitive to local understandings of family, home, and kinship.

As a result, the Fula have come to define home not strictly in spatial terms, but as a conceptual and affective space in which community, identity, and political and cultural membership intersect. "These are strategies which engage and connect rather than distinguish and distance people of different locations – social, political, cultural, or otherwise..." (Hyndman 1998: 257). In order to understand livelihood strategies of a geographically diffuse, translocal population such as the Fula, research must address not only the experiences of camp-based refugees, but also the host population, self-settled refugees, and those who remain *in situ* despite conflict. Including all these groups widens the focus from refugees to the entire conflict-affected population and broadens the resource map to include alternatives to humanitarian assistance.

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Notes

- ¹ Fula is a term used in parts of Guinea, Sierra Leone, Gambia, and Senegal to describe the ethnic group who speaks Pulaar. They are known variously as Fulbe (Pullo sing.) in the Fouta Jallon region of Guinea and elsewhere as Fulani (in Anglophone Africa), Peul (in Francophone Africa), Woodaabe, Mbororo, Toucouleur, and Haalpulaaren (those who speak Pular) (Derman 1973: 1; Regis 2003:2).
- ² J. Davis in his 1992 article, "The Anthropology of Suffering", makes the point that conflict and suffering are not exceptional events but part of social experience and embedded in social life.
- ³ Fulbright-Hayes, the Population Council, the Watson Foundation at Brown University, the Mellon Foundation, the Population Studies and Training Center (PSTC) at Brown University, and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) provided financial and logistical support for my research in Guinea and Sierra Leone.
- ⁴ For the purposes of this article I concentrate on camp-based refugees. This is not to ignore the situation of conflict-affected communities: the internally displaced, those who self-settle or identify as "returnees", and those who are unable or unwilling to avail themselves of UNHCR refugee camp benefits. For an in-depth discussion of the refugee category see Malkki 1992, 1995, 1996 and Andrews 2003.