BECOMING A PERSON: CONSEQUENCES AND CONTRADICTIONS OF DOMESTIC SERVITUDE IN MALI

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ABSTRACT

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This ethnographic study explored the practice of domestic servitude and the type of relationships afforded to women and girls in this trade in an urban setting in Mali. The Mande belief system does not support the necessity of the domestic servant, yet many families now require the use of one or are in destitute situations and must place their own children into this type of work. While the traditional practices of child fostering and domestic servitude fulfill similar roles in Mali, the contradictions between the fostering system and the modern practice of domestic servitude have become intensified as the relationship between domestic servants and their employers attempt to adhere to traditional Mande beliefs. This study explored the relationship between the servant and her employer as they navigate evolving societal norms while still holding on to their Mande beliefs. This qualitative ethnographic study of 16 women in Mali, found that women who hire domestic servants and girls who are enrolled in school both benefit from this practice; yet, both were at risk of losing their personhood status as they shifted from their traditional female roles into independent selves. Domestic servants who were not enrolled in school had less to gain from this practice and were at an increased risk of losing their personhood. Domestic servants provided opportunities for the working woman to achieve autonomy, assisting the woman in maintaining her personhood status while simultaneously putting the domestic servant in danger of losing her status.
"N Se"

“I am able. I get my power from myself.”

(A female’s response to any communication in Mali.)
Dedicated to the women and girls of Mali.

Thank you for teaching me how to become a person.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Throughout West Africa, debates between the virtues of child work versus the detriments of child labor have taken place for several decades (Omokhodion, Omokhodion & Odusote, 2005). In much of West Africa, the fostering practice has paved the way for girls to enter into domestic servitude as a form of employment (Jacquemin, 2004, 2006). Traditional Mande culture encourages parents to place their adolescent daughters into the homes of extended relatives to conduct household work in exchange for education, training, or a bridal chest (Bøås & Hatløy, 2008). These fostering relationships are intended to strengthen familial bonds while providing appropriate training for girls as they prepare for marriage (Ajayi & Torimiro, 2004). The placement of girls can begin in early childhood and occurs in both urban and rural settings. The placement of children often results in rural farming families supplying grain or cattle to urban families, and urban families providing manufactured items and cash as an even exchange for the children placed in their respective care.

Mande society places important significance on social networks, especially among women (Brand, 2001). Because the Mande people are spread across five countries in West Africa, this practice has influenced the entire geographic region. In this case, girls who enter into domestic work, and the female employers who hire them, become part of a social network. Increasing the size of one’s network has proved to be a powerful tool in Mande society to increase status, economic opportunities and marriage (Brand, 2001). Traditional fostering served to expand families’ social networks and domestic servitude thrives on a similar notion (Human Rights Watch, 2007; Okafor, 2009).
Social networks increase opportunities for girls and women to achieve full personhood in Mande society (Brand, 2001). Achieving full personhood requires one to extend gracious hospitality, attend social events and engage strangers in friendly conversation (Grosz-Ngate, 1989; Brand, 2001). Engaging in domestic servitude or being in a position to hire a domestic servant can either hinder or assist the process of achieving full personhood. The blurred line between domestic servitude and child fostering or child fostering and child labor becomes more blurred when including Mande cultural thought surrounding personhood (Grosz-Ngate, 1989; Brand, 2001; Jacquemin, 2006;).

West Africa’s rapid urban development has increased the need for adolescent girls to migrate from their rural villages to fulfill demanding positions as domestic servants in private homes. Expanding employment opportunities outside of the home for urban women has resulted in the expansion of the position of domestic servant as a paid employee (Jacquemin, 2004). Rather than send their daughters to work for an extended relative without securing a set fee, parents and adolescents alike see the opportunity to work for a non-relative as a way to pursue the training necessary to survive in a West African context while also receiving a salary and a place to live (Human Rights Watch, 2007). In the 1990’s, this traditional fostering system emerged as a lucrative way to obtain an income for parents, intermediaries and adolescent girls if children are placed in non-relative homes and work as domestic servants (Dottridge, 2002).

**Background of the Study**

Historically, the Mande have employed traditional fostering or placement of children as a way to maintain kinship connections across communities and nations (Conrad, 1981). Traditional fostering has been used as a way to transmit cultural knowledge, vocational training, education or gender roles from one generation to the next (Conrad, 1981; Jacquemin, 2004;
Traditional fostering of girls has slowly moved into wage work in domestic servitude since the 1990s (Dottridge, 2002). Although several categories exist for domestic servants (fostered girls, day wage workers and live-in maids), people in each of the categories perform the work of a domestic servant (Jacquemin, 2004). As a result, the lines have become blurred between child labor and domestic servitude, as children are often placed in homes of extended relatives, or placed by their own parents into the homes of friends or acquaintances (Jacquemin, 2004; Okafor, 2009).

These blurred lines between domestic servitude and child fostering will be examined in this study from the perspective of the worker as well as the female employer, while using the lens of Mande culture. Exploring the transition of fostering into domestic servitude through an ethnographic study of domestic servants living or working in and around a small suburb in Mali will contribute to an understanding of this particular practice.

Justification for the Study

Heavily influenced by non-governmental agencies, human rights organizations and child labor activists, much of the current research on domestic servitude focuses on child labor and takes an action research approach seeking to ban this practice (Dottridge, 2002; Jacquemin, 2006; Blagbrough, 2008). However, girls continue to pursue this type of work and parents continue to offer their daughters to other families in ways that mimick the traditional fostering system (Bourdillon, 2009). Action researchers who attempt to regulate this practice in Mali would benefit from gaining an understanding of the role Mande culture plays in determining the relationships afforded to both women and girls in the process of obtaining a servant and becoming a person. Entering this research from a perspective of understanding the positions and motivations of families when pursuing this type of employment for their daughters may bring a
new outlook on this practice. Expanding the knowledge of this practice to include the motivations of adolescent girls in Mande culture who pursue this work and the type of relationship that exists between employers and their employees may further the work of activists to engage in their work in a culturally sensitive manner.

**Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the internal motivations associated with domestic servants, the resulting relationships that form between employer and servant, the comparisons between traditional fostering and domestic servitude and the particular influence that Mande culture has on the practice. This study takes a qualitative ethnographic approach and uses Mande philosophy to gain insight into the domestic service practices used in one particular community in Mali. Findings from this study may assist policy makers, child labor activists and human rights activists in using culturally sensitive practices when engaging in their work. Understanding the employer-employee relationship may provide some insight on how to better regulate this type of employment in the future. The main questions to be addressed in this study include:

1. Knowing the potential challenges associated with domestic servitude, what are the motivations for girls and young women to participate in this activity?
2. What is the nature of the relationship between domestic servants and their employers?
3. How does domestic work influence the social networks of servants?
4. How is the nature of domestic servitude distinctly influenced by Mande society?
5. How does domestic servitude compare to traditional fostering, which is set up to provide training, education and socialization for girls?
This manuscript is divided into six chapters. Following the introduction, chapter two reviews the literature relevant to the study. Of particular importance is the need to examine the place of women in Mande culture and the ideas of “personhood” within this society through the use of research conducted by Grosz-Ngate (1989), Brand (2001), Freeman (2007) and Keita (2008). Also essential to this review is the reporting of qualitative research investigating the practices of child fostering and domestic servitude in West Africa.

Chapter three describes the realist ethnographic research methods used to conduct this study which involves in-depth observations in the home or workplace of the participants, one-on-one interviews and informal interaction and conversation within the location of the research site (Creswell, 2007; O’Reilly, 2009). The participant selection process and the resulting participants in this study are described in addition to participant-observation techniques used before and during this study. A full description of the data collection and analysis is available in chapter three.

The findings of this study are reported in chapter four with the telling and description of three themes which emerged through qualitative inquiry and include: (1) power and independence through domestic servitude; (2) relationships and the domestic servant; and (3) learning to become a servant. Each of these findings is illustrated using the participants’ own words as recorded during their one-on-one interviews.

Chapter five draws together the literature and findings through a discussion. This chapter answers the research questions by connecting the findings and literature. This chapter identifies the constraints Mande culture places on domestic servants and employers as they attempt to further their independence while simultaneously endeavoring to achieve full personhood. Chapter six concludes the study by recognizing that the blurred line between domestic service,
child labor and traditional fostering becomes even more blurred when ideas of personhood in Mande society are factored into these practices.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature Review

A Brief History of Mali

Mali, a landlocked country in the heart of West Africa became independent in 1960, after more than 60 years of French colonial rule (Imperato & Imperato, 2008). The Mande people make up 50% of Mali’s population, with Peul, Voltaic, Songhai, Tuareg, Moor and other smaller groups comprising the other half (World Factbook, 2011). French is the official language of the country, yet it is spoken by only 10% of Malians, while 80% speak Bambara, a Mande language (Sanou & Aikman, 2004; World Factbook, 2011).

World Factbook (2011) states that Mali is considered one of the 25 poorest countries in the world with 80% of the population surviving on agricultural activities centering on corn, peanuts, cotton, millet and cattle. With a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of $1200, more than 30% of Malians are living below the poverty line. More than 47% of the inhabitants are age 14 or under and are often found participating in income-generating activities (World Factbook, 2011).

Polygamy is a common practice in Mali where 90% of the population observes Islam (World Factbook, 2011). This custom creates large families, especially in rural settings, where children contribute to the household by participating in farming practices (Keita, 2008). Households in Mali typically consist of a male head, his wife or wives, his sons and their wife or wives and other children and grandchildren. In this patriarchal society, land and possessions are transferred to the sons, with women holding few inheritance rights to land, cattle or material possessions from their fathers or husbands (Brand, 2001).
Gender roles are clearly defined in this nation, with women taking on the roles of child rearing and running the household, while men own the land and provide food for the family and make most family decisions (Brand, 2001; Freeman, 2007; Keita, 2008). Literacy is still under 50% in Mali, with women and girls making up less than 40% of the literate population (World Factbook, 2011). Distinct differences are particularly seen in rural areas where schooling and other options for women outside the home are limited. Urban settings include examples of women working outside the home as teachers, in market sales or as secretaries performing administrative work (Dottridge, 2002; Okafor, 2009). In 2008, the total population living in urban settings was 32% with a yearly increase of 4.8% as a result of rural populations migrating to cities in search of work, training or education (World Factbook, 2011).

Mande Philosophy

Mande philosophy regarding relationships and personhood will be used as a framework to guide this study. The five major components of the philosophy used for this study include: badenya, senenkunya, mogo te and personhood. The Mande cultural group spreads throughout West Africa and is divided into numerous ethnicities across Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Ivory Coast and Niger. Three distinct social societies make up the Mande cultural group: free nobility, craftsmen, and slaves (Brand, 2001). Attachment to a specific group determines employment opportunities and appropriate behavior to be expressed during social situations (Grosz-Ngate, 1989; Brand, 2001). The horonw group, or free nobility, are often farmers or hunters (Brand, 2011). The nyamakalaw is divided into three separate groups, the jeliw, or griots, the numuw, blacksmiths and potters and the garankew, leather workers (Hoffman, 2000). Although slavery has been outlawed, the jonw, slaves, make up the third caste and are considered to be former horonw who were captured during conflict (Hoffman, 2000). A person’s
membership in a group is determined by the last name of their father and connection to a particular group takes precedence over gender, employment and socioeconomic status (Brand, 2001). It is through this link to the cultural group that an individual identity begins to form as defined in Mande philosophy.

In Mande society, the isolated self has no social significance. It is only through social relations that people in this culture can gain status, economic power and resources (Grosz-Ngate, 1989; Brand, 2001). One principle of Mande philosophy is that only through social relations can one achieve status. The Mande have a name for people who do not adhere to these norms which require the recognition of identity in relation to others: mogo te (Brand, 2001). This literally means “not a person.” When an individual does not increase one’s social network, one obtains the status of a mogo te. This person has not achieved full personhood, therefore has no identity within the Mande philosophy (Brand, 2001). To achieve full personhood, one must also exhibit and adhere to traditional gender roles. While it is impossible for a Mande person to change lineage or to move from a slave caste into nobility, through adhering to group norms and achieving social status through relationships, one is able to develop a socially acceptable identity.

Those in the slave caste are not required to adhere to definitions of personhood (Grosz-Ngate, 1989). Rather, they are free to conduct their life in any way they see fit. The free nobility, on the other hand, attempt to rid themselves of any possibilities of bringing shame on themselves or their families and becoming malobaliya, or shameless (Grosz-Ngate, 1989). While slaves are never able to achieve full personhood, it is possible for children to be called “shameless” and then progress from their shameless identity into their birthright in the nobility.
caste. This exemplifies how children are the responsibility of their families and can be called as the parents see fit, encouraging them to seek a life without shame.

In this cultural context, children belong to their families, occupying a specific role and status (Keita, 2008). The role of the child varies by age, sex and birth order (Keita, 2008). Each child has a specific role to fulfill, and if not fulfilled, will be subject to punishment (Keita, 2008). Age groups within the Mande culture place together individuals who have been circumcised together or born at the same time (Keita, 2008). These age groups “are horizontal social structures gathering children from different families and social conditions” (Keita, 2008, p. 353). Each age group, or *kari*, establishes its own rules within the *kari*, but can also be subject to assigned tasks by elders or other community members (Keita, 2008).

For girls, the continuum into adulthood involves a required marriage once she becomes a *sunkurun*, marriage-eligible after reaching puberty, where virgin status then changes into *muso*, woman or wife (Brand, 2001). At this point she becomes a part of her husband’s family, and the lowest status member in his family (Freeman, 2007). Her role as a mother demands the highest respect from her own children, as well as any other children in her charge (Brand, 2001). As she ages and enters into the post-menopausal stage, she becomes a *muso-koroba*, an old lady, and her status reaches the highest point for women in Mande society (Freeman, 2007).

In addition to fulfilling the age groups and age statuses, harmony is another important aspect of Mande society. The desire of people in the Mande culture to create harmony derives from the word, *badenya*, which means “mother childhood” (Brand, 2001, p. 29), or siblings from the same mother. *Badenya* is associated with submission to authority and cooperation, all aspects of Mande philosophical beliefs about how to achieve harmony (Bird & Kendall, 1980). Therefore, relationships should be sought after as one would seek a relationship with their own
sibling and attempt to cooperate and revere their elders. Establishing a sibling type of relationship with others presents women with economic opportunities outside of the home by providing a population with which to trade services, therefore increasing the need for a domestic servant to perform work inside the home (Brand, 2001). As a result, obtaining a domestic servant demonstrates having obtained a certain level of status in Mande culture (Dottridge, 2002).

Maintaining household harmony and unity requires all members to perform their gender in order to achieve full personhood (Grosz-Ngate, 1989). Adherence to gender roles minimizes the risk for shame to be brought upon the family while increasing the odds that harmony will exist in the household (Grosz-Ngate, 1989). Not only does exhibiting behaviors outside of one’s gender bring shame upon the family, but performing tasks outside of one’s caste also brings shame and can alter one’s ability to achieve personhood. Domestic servants are at risk of performing the work of a slave, thus risking their family’s noble status and presenting an opportunity for shame to be brought upon herself or her family.

A peculiar tradition in Mande culture and an extension of Mande philosophy of badenya is senenkunya, the joking relationship that exists between certain families (Launay, 1977). This “joking cousin” relationship is established immediately after family names are shared during a greeting. Senenkunya relationships are void of any forced respect, as bonya (respect) is not required (Brand, 2001). It is impossible to become distressed by one’s joking cousin, and one may not refuse any request from the joking cousin. This relationship of hurling insults affords immediate protection when outside the family home and is accompanied by much laughter from observing parties (Launay, 1977). Common jokes include calling someone a slave or telling them they eat beans.
Fostering in Mande Culture

The Mande encourage the use of a traditional fostering system, placing children in other’s homes for extended periods of time as a way to maintain connections to extended relatives. This ethnic group maintains that “relations exist prior to the person: it is only by means of social ties that one can achieve personhood” (Brand, 2001, p. 16). Through social networks, women develop their sense of self and achieve an identity. By obtaining large social networks, a woman can increase her status and enhance her ability to obtain employment or other income-generating activities (Turrittin, 1988). Gaining income allows a woman to purchase clothes and accessories that mirror the middle- or upper- classes. Brand (2001) reports that for women, even the illusion of wealth can serve to include more affluent people in a social network which can be achieved by wearing fine clothes, even in extreme poverty. Important social relationships lead to increased income allowing a woman to afford a wardrobe indicating an improved financial status, which then leads to a larger and more affluent social network (Brand, 2001). As an example, a poor family living in a rural setting preserves the connection to their wealthy cousin by placing their daughter in the home of the cousin (Human Rights Watch, 2007). The daughter will do housework and childcare and serve as a connection from rural to urban lifestyle, and impoverished to wealthy (Nieuwenhuys, 1996). This connection may lead to an improved social status for the adolescent girl and her family (Nieuwenhuys, 1996).

In West Africa, girls are considered to be best suited for domestic work (Dottridge, 2002). Through this belief, girls frequently participate in the fostering system. In this fostering system, adolescent girls are often placed in homes directly by their parents or other immediate family members and often with kin on the mother’s side of the family (Conrad, 1981; Okafor, 2009). Placing a daughter under the care of a related female provides training to assure her an
improved future for marriage (Ajayi & Torimiro, 2004). Placed daughters tend to perform household tasks such as sweeping, washing dishes, washing clothes, cooking meals, and providing child care for their relatives in the hopes of receiving training, education, or gifts such as fabric, cookware or dishes to fill their bridal *trousseau* (Bøås & Hatløy, 2008). The custom of leaving the home is not unusual for girls, as they often leave their families and community when they get married and families are accustomed to this practice (Dottridge, 2002). Being considered as more desirable for conducting household work coupled with eventually leaving their father’s home to become a part of their husband’s household, discourages parents to invest in formal schooling for daughters or foster extensive nuclear familial bonds (Dottridge, 2002).

**Informal Education, Training and Socialization**

In comparison with other Sub-Saharan African regions, traditional apprenticeship training is most widely used in West Africa (Johanson & Adams, 2004). The fostering system in Mali has been implemented to provide training to young girls who are not eligible for alternative apprenticeship training (Joahnson & Adams, 2004). This practice is generally geared toward the male population learning skills and trades such as masonry, auto mechanics, woodworking or blacksmithing (Johanson & Adams, 2004). This practice often excludes girls due to a lack of literacy skills and lower educational achievement and places them in lower-skilled apprenticeships such as hairdressing, hotel work and secretarial positions (Johanson & Adams, 2004). However, in Mali “large socioeconomic inequalities exist in access to training” (Johanson & Adams, 2004, p. 69), as a result of the large percentage of families living in rural areas and the location of apprenticeships in urban centers.

With limited apprenticeship opportunities for girls, fostering options are supported in Mande communities based on the notion that the healthy and moral upbringing of a child
involves engaging in child work (Oloko, 1993). A Mande man described the role of an educator of a domestic servant: “If I am the mother of that child, and I come and I see my child in the household doing nothing, I will be angry and take the child away. The child has to learn to work properly” (Puchner, 2001, p. 247). Providing work and training to adolescents is seen as the responsibility of elders in the community. Assigning particular tasks to children with the expectation that they will accomplish these tasks is an important part of “the growth of the child in view of their future role as adults” (Keita, 2008, p. 352). Keita (2008) asserts that in the traditional Malian society, it is the responsibility of families and communities to instill the complete process of socialization of children.

The interpretation of work as a form of education is common for the entire West African region where Togunde and Carter (2009) have found that one third of West African adolescents viewed their work as important training that prepares them for their future. With reinforcement from their elders, adolescent girls find domestic servitude as a culturally appropriate way to secure an income.

In research conducted with domestic servants in Abidjan, Jacquemin (2004) asked why domestic servants accepted this form of employment. The girls responded that “becoming a maid is the only way to ‘do something’” (Jacquemin, 2004, p. 389). Becoming a domestic servant provides adolescent girls with an opportunity for traditional training and visibility by prospective husbands in a more lucrative environment. Domestic servants “accept life as a maid as their only opportunity” (Jacquemin, 2004, p. 395). Jacquemin (2004) further explains that domestic workers “hope, at the very least, to be respected as a human being, to be recognized as workers and to be given training” (Jacquemin, 2004, p. 395). If formal schooling is not an option, then training becomes an integral part of an adolescent’s education. Parents often view
the training received as a domestic servant equivalent to formal schooling, since opportunities for adolescent girls to move into the formal sector are slight, and the goal for daughters is to secure successful marriages and become caregivers to aging family members (Dottridge, 2002). Ajayi and Tormiro report that in West Africa, work can be “perceived as an essential part of children’s education and a means of transmitting vital skills from parent to offspring” (p. 183).

**Formal Education for Girls in Mali**

The Ministry of Education controls the centralized education system in Mali following the agrarian cycle with schooling occurring between October and June (Garnier & Schafer, 2006). Compulsory education has been established with no formal fees attached, yet parents are required to pay informal fees to teachers and school directors in addition to purchasing books and supplies (Birdsall & Orivel, 1996). Often, informal fees have been attached to bribes parents will pay to assure that their child continues onto secondary education regardless of ability (Kone, 2010). A UNICEF (2009) report found that primary school attendance for girls was reported at just 33%, yet compulsory education has been established in Mali for more than a decade.

After attaining a primary education, students are required to take a national exam, the *D’étude Fondamentale*. Passing this exam provides entrance into secondary school but often involves children migrating to urban centers to complete their secondary education, as few secondary schools exist in rural communities. This places a financial burden on families and necessitates the need for large social networks, as students will need to secure housing in an urban center to continue their education. The Ministry of Education (2011) reports that during the 2007-2008 school year, 70% of girls passed the first cycle of school and only 34% passed the secondary cycle. The initial enrollment of children in school shows gender-related discrepancies
with the enrollment of boys more than double that of girls in both primary and secondary education with similar results in both urban and rural settings (Ministry of Education, 2011).

Increased commitments to enrolling girls in school as a means to fight child labor practices have been instituted in almost all African countries (Keita, 2008). Yet numerous barriers exist when families are making decisions to send their daughters to school, including vulnerability to attacks on long walks to school; parents’ fears of their daughters becoming pregnant; parents’ desires for daughters to marry at an early age; the belief that girls need to be sheltered at home; and the division of household labor and gender roles insists that girls maintain the household water supply (Sanou & Aikman, 2005). The curriculum also reinforces these gender roles, placing images of women in traditional female tasks (Sanou & Aikman, 2005). While reforms to education are in place at the national level, gender-inequalities in the curriculum are not being questioned (Sanou & Aikman, 2005).

**From Fostering to Domestic Servitude**

Poverty, gender role expectations and rapid urbanization have led to the increase of domestic servitude in West Africa. Domestic servitude should follow the traditional model of fostering leading to an educational process including role models who serve to train adolescent girls how to be wives and mothers while providing opportunities for socialization (Jacquemin, 2004). Timelines vary, with some studies indicating the shift from fostering to domestic servitude starting as early as the 1970s (Jacquemin, 2006). Dottridge (2002) suggests that it was in the late 1990s “it was clear that there was a regional market for child labour, with demand highest in relatively well-off areas” (p. 39). The rapidly changing urban settings drove the demand for domestic servants in West Africa, creating a business with middlemen and other intermediaries recruiting adolescent girls and their families to shun the foster system and choose
a wage profession (Okafor, 2009). Coupled with poverty, the traditional expectation for girls to receive training to prepare them for marriage and elder care has encouraged parents to support the transition from unpaid to paid labor for the training of their daughters (Okafor, 2009). As Jacquemin (2004) notes in her study of domestic servants in Abidjan, “Domestic help in an atmosphere of mutual exchange between families, in which the young girl undergoes a process of education and socialization, has gradually moved to the current state of affairs where the girls are put to work to earn money” (p. 385).

This transition has changed the motivations for domestic servitude. The line between child labor and child training has become blurred, and it is difficult for parents and children to distinguish (Dottridge, 2002; Jacquemin, 2004). In Malian government, “the communiqué of the Council of Ministers makes it clear that ‘a distinction should be made between the socialization of children by making them work in the family context, which forms part of our customs and social habits, and the employment of children for merely commercial ends and without any educational purpose”’ (Keita, 2008, p. 368). Uncles, aunts, and cousins serve as intermediaries or guardians in the commercial process of placing daughters in the homes of strangers to become domestic servants (Jacquemin, 2006; Okafor, 2009). Women in urban centers often look at hiring domestic servants as a way to “help” rural girls, and intermediaries step in, acting as guardians, taking some or all of the worker’s pay (Jacquemin, 2006). However, often problematic are payment methods, whereas in the traditional fostering system, the worker will receive her trousseau at the end of her service, around the age of 15 (Boås & Hatløy, 2008). This traditional practice makes it easier for intermediaries and bosses to withhold payment from domestic workers for several months or years, only to provide them with a small portion of their earnings when they leave domestic work (Jacquemin, 2004, 2006).
Servitude as a Result of Poverty and a Response to Formal Schooling

Poverty related to large family size, lack of employment opportunities, and lack of finances to support compulsory formal schooling all contribute to the desire for families to accept domestic servitude as an employment pursuit for their daughters (Okafor, 2009). A study conducted by Togunde and Carter (2009) of parents of adolescent laborers found that nine out of ten parents stated that poverty was the main reason for placing their children in wage-earning work. Placing daughters in affluent homes can sometimes afford increased opportunities for marriage into a wealthier family, thus lessening the financial burden on the adolescent girl’s family (De Haan, Brock & Coulibaly, 2002).

While some adolescents indicate that they are earning money to support their parents, others state that they are earning money to continue their formal education (Omokhodion et al., 2006). Compulsory primary education has placed an undue burden on families to pay informal school fees to teachers, for books and supplies for their daughters to attend school (Birdsall & Orivel, 1996). The high cost of school coupled with the requirement for appropriate school attire has left poor children with a desire to engage in domestic work (Niewwnhuys, 1996). Becoming a domestic servant rather than a “placed daughter” allows an adolescent girl to earn this money on her own, without relying on her parents to pay for her education (Bourdillon, 2009). Adolescent girls desire to support their formal education for hopes of a better life, and will take any employment available to fulfill that goal (Bourdillon, 2009).

Adolescent girls are often lured into domestic servitude by the promise of pay for work they do for free at home, receiving the advantages that a modern, urban setting can offer (Dottridge, 2002). They are enticed by stories of freedom and other experiences guaranteed in urban centers by the intermediaries who recruit girls to become domestic servants (Manzo,
Formal schooling for domestic servants is also likely to continue for adolescent girls if they migrate to an urban setting where quality schools are located. If servitude is temporary, occurring only during school breaks, domestic servitude increases family income to pay for school fees, clothing and supplies needed to continue education in their home villages (Bourdillon, 2009). In 1997, at the international conference on Urban Childhoods in Trondheim, a 13-year-old girl from Senegal stated that “Because of doing this work, I have been able to go to school (which my parents in the village could not afford)” (Bourdillon, 2009, p. 6).

**Domestic Servitude and Child Labor**

In Mali, children are considered the property of their parents with authority to use any goods owned by their children (Keita, 2008). Working at home providing care for younger siblings, conducting agricultural activities or assisting in industrial endeavors of their parents, children are regularly engaged in work (Keita, 2008). This work is seen as necessary to the family’s survival and is considered necessary to the child’s development and socialization (Keita, 2008). Understanding the blurred line of what is considered child labor versus traditional child work is complicated by the roles children play in their own households. While numerous forms of child labor exist, domestic servitude closely resembles work performed by girls in their biological family’s homes.

Employing domestic servants “is a widespread practice involving almost every family in the urban area of Bamako” (Keita, 2008, p. 366). Domestic labor is the largest form of employment with exception to agriculture, where girls comprise the majority (Gokah, 2006). Mali child labor laws include domestic servants under protection, yet to receive protection, hiring letters, an employment contract and established working hours must have been filed at the labor inspectorate (Keita, 2008). Keita (2008) reports that most employers “behave contrary to
the law” (p. 367). As a result, deciphering between traditional fostering and domestic servitude becomes unclear when children are placed in a wealthier distant relative’s home, yet performing domestic tasks (Nieuwenhuys, 1996). The International Labor Organization (ILO) appears to have difficulty distinguishing that line as well. According to an ILO report “We have no problem with the little girl who helps her mother with the housework or cooking” (Nieuwenhuys, 1996, p. 239).

Domestic servants often work 16 hour days in private homes with little or no outside interaction (Jacquemin, 2004; Keita, 2008). Girls are often not allowed to leave the house, thus creating a dependence on the employer and fear of not knowing their surroundings (Jacquemin, 2004; Human Rights Watch, 2007). Domestic workers spend their day fetching water, sweeping the inside and outside of the home, washing clothes, washing dishes, caring for young children and performing any other household tasks (Okafor, 2009). In many countries in West Africa, girls are protected under child labor laws as domestic servants, but must have reached a specific age to receive the benefits of those laws (Jacquemin, 2004; Human Rights Watch, 2007). Some girls begin this work as young as five years of age, and therefore are not protected by child labor laws (Jacquemin, 2004, 2006). Domestic servants are often integrated into the family at a young age and thus do not see what they do as “child labor” but rather helping the family (Jacquemin, 2004; Human Rights Watch, 2007; Keita, 2008). This vague line between domestic servitude, child labor, and fostering has made it difficult for clear laws to be established in regards to child work (Jacquemin, 2004; Human Rights Watch, 2007; Keita, 2008).

Social Status for Women

The Mande patriarchal system places women’s value and social status in the ability to achieve wifehood and motherhood (Brand, 2001). The work of marriage is extremely
demanding on young women who enter into their husbands’ families and conduct all the basic household chores (Freeman, 2007). Instilling a strong work ethic and learning to “suppress their individual desires for the common good” (Freeman, 2007, p. 84) is necessary for young girls to eventually engage in the challenging tasks of raising children and caring for a husband and his family. During early marriage, a woman has few, if any allies. Women enter as strangers into their husbands’ household, with status being imparted upon her only as new women are introduced into the home (Grosz-Ngate, 1989). Maintaining their father’s last name but separated from their families, when women create relationships with other women it provides them with a safeguard from their dependency on their husbands and their permanent status as outsiders (Koenig, 1997).

While lacking socio-political power, women are not completely powerless as “Women’s power derives from men’s dependence on their child-bearing capacity and their services as domestic workers” (Turrittin, 1988, p. 585). By excelling in her gendered work, a woman can achieve her full status and be recognized as a full person (Graz-Ngate, 1989). In order for women to gain economic power outside the home while still maintaining their social status as wives and mothers, they employ domestic servants to assist with child care and other tasks within the home, allowing them to pursue work outside the home (Okafor, 2009). This permits women to have several children while still being afforded the time to leave their compound and maintain a large social network and gain a source of income. The economic power of women thus trickles down and provides an economic opportunity for adolescent girls to become domestic servants (Dottridge, 2002).

As more women enter the workforce, communities with very little infrastructure increase the demand for domestic servants. Dottridge (2002) found that “The employment by women of
other women or girls to carry out domestic chores is a sign of women’s economic power” (p. 39). Hauling water, collecting firewood, and cooking meals are laborious tasks that preclude women from participating in income-generating activities necessary to support their households (Jacquemin, 2004). Domestic servants provide a means for women to pursue work, interests, and hobbies outside of the family home (Jacquemin, 2004). Domestic servants are also a status symbol and assist a woman in climbing her social ladder and increasing her social network (Niewenhuys, 1996). A wife who is not required to do household duties is afforded more time to travel throughout her community and connect with others to increase her social network and visibility in the community, and thus her status and personhood (Brand, 2001).

**Belonging to the Family**

While domestic servitude provides status for individuals in the relationship, it also brings with it social and psychological challenges. Domestic servants are particularly vulnerable to psychological abuse while living under the care of their employer (Bourdillon, 2005). They are often insulted publicly, beaten physically, and deprived of food (Bourdillon, 2005). As a result of constant denigration, “domestic workers have notoriously low self-esteem” (Bourdillon, 2005, p. 3). Treatment during domestic servitude determines the social network a domestic servant is able to create (Jacquemin, 2004; Okafor, 2009). “Domestics tend to grow up in an environment where their sole value is their ability to satisfy the needs of others, and where their own needs, let alone their preferences, matter to nobody” (Kielland & Tovo, 2006, p. 96). For a domestic servant, work is the central focus of their being, and social interaction is only afforded to her through activities directly related to her employment (Jacquemin, 2004). The emotional impact of domestic servitude can be devastating if the child is placed far away from her natural home (Bourdillon, 2005).
A sense of belonging and connectedness to the employer’s family becomes difficult when workers move from one employer to another in a short period of time. While constant movement between families can expand the social network of a domestic servant, relocation does not permit an adolescent to feel a sense of belonging to a particular family (Jacquemin, 2004). Jacquemin’s (2004) study of domestic servants in Abidjan found that girls, whether they were participants of the traditional fostering system or employed in non-relative homes, viewed their work favorably if they were treated as a member of the family. When working in a relative’s home, she found that domestic servants did not describe what they did as ‘work.’ “It is enough for the girl to feel that she is generally accepted as a member of the household, even when the reality of her condition is a reminder of her inferior station” (Jacquemin, 2004, p. 393). Around the age of 15, domestic servants are dismissed from their work due to an inability to be controlled by their boss (Kielland & Tovo, 2006). Employers become particularly jealous and suspicious of domestic servants who have achieved puberty and often fire them from employment out of fear of losing their husband’s affections and money to the worker (Kielland & Tovo, 2004). Since domestic work is considered “child’s work,” a girl eventually becomes too old to continue in this field (Human Rights Watch, 2007). The removal from the household at this age follows the traditional model of preparing a girl for marriage, but indicates to the worker that she is not a part of the family.

The literature used in this study has summarized the domestic service industry and traditional fostering in West Africa, in addition to the role of formal and informal education for females in this region. In order to provide an analysis of domestic servitude, it has contextualized the status of women, the family and social status within Mande philosophy. While domestic servants in several countries in West Africa have been studied, the literature
review has also revealed that there is limited research on the influence of domestic servitude on women in Mali.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Methodology

The purpose of this ethnographic qualitative study is to explore the internal motivations associated with domestic servants, the resulting relationships that form between employer and servant, the comparisons between traditional fostering and domestic servitude and the particular influence that Mande culture has on the practice. Conducting research with girls in private domestic settings will provide for rich data exposing the blurred line of domestic servitude, child labor, traditional fostering and how traditional cultural practices have helped to blur this line. In order to understand this issue thoroughly, the questions to be addressed in this study include:

1. Knowing the potential challenges associated with domestic servitude, what are the motivations for girls and young women to participate in this activity?
2. What is the nature of the relationship between domestic servants and their employers?
3. How does domestic work influence the social networks of servants?
4. How is the nature of domestic servitude distinctly influenced by Mande society?
5. How does domestic servitude compare to traditional fostering, which is set up to provide training, education and socialization for girls?

Researcher Perspective

In order to situate myself within this research, it is important to reveal that I am a Caucasian, American female, currently in my thirties. As a young child, I was exposed to various cultures through direct interaction with people in my parents’ social community. Through these experiences, I learned that the best opportunities to understand another culture involved participating in that culture through celebrations, social interactions and by eating food associated with the people of a particular culture. Exposed to numerous cultures using this
technique, I found that I had a strong desire to live in West Africa from the age of seven. Discovering that through Peace Corps service I would be afforded the opportunity to completely integrate into a community, learn the language and customs of a specific ethnic group and engage in development work at the same time, led me to begin the application process to become a volunteer.

After being accepted into the Peace Corps, I moved to Mali in 2003 and was placed in a rural village about 80km from the capital city, Bamako. During more than two years of service, I became integrated into village life learning the Mande languages, Bambara and Malinke, as well as the customs of the Mande people. Participating in the traditional female role, I planted, harvested and processed a peanut field alongside the women of the community. As a participant-observer, I was able to develop a deeper understanding of women’s work in Mande culture. While in this community, I observed that girls would disappear from the village every year without notice. When asked where they had gone, it was discovered that they had either gone to “find money” by becoming a domestic servant or were being “fostered” by a distant relative in Bamako. Women wanted their daughters to have more opportunities than were afforded to them in their small village.

In 2005, I married a Malian citizen and returned to the United States. Continuing to speak Bambara as the main language in the home, I maintained my language skills. Returning to Mali in 2008, my husband and I purchased land and began building a house a few miles from Kulubadugu (pseudonym for the community used for the research site). During this time, I hired a domestic servant to assist with feeding the construction crew. She was the sister of a former neighbor of mine and was offered to me by her father. Her father was a member of our new community and she slept in his home but worked in my home during the day. While she worked,
I took the opportunity to ask her about domestic servants and also fostered children attempting to understand the two practices.

I became a part of this community, making friends with women at the market, and achieved an appropriate social status. This status was not achieved solely by marrying a Malian citizen, but rather by my willingness to take on the traditional female role. Language, agricultural and homemaking skills indicated to the women in the community that I was “just like them.” People began to refer to me as being “more Malian” than other Malian women in the community. With this status, I now had the appropriate background to begin researching a practice that is often concealed inside the home.

**Ethnographic Research**

Skills and abilities I acquired between the years 2003 and 2010 in Mali provided entrée into the households of traditional Malian women. This access allowed for an ethnographic approach, as I was able to become both a participant and observer and gain access into private homes for this research. Specifically, this study employs a realist ethnographic approach, which takes a non-biased look at a particular culture-sharing group without attempting to advocate for that group (Creswell, 2007). Realist ethnography suggests that “things exist in the social world that are independent of thought or perceptions” (O’Reilly, 2009). While I recognized my role as a researcher and understood that as much as I tried not to disrupt the daily activities of the participants, I did play a role in this study and my interpretations are discussed in Chapter Five. Because this type of ethnography attempts to take an objective look at a culture-sharing group in order to describe the group (Creswell, 2007), it appeared to be the best method with which to describe the practice of domestic servitude for a small group of people.
This study aims to examine the culture-sharing group of domestic servants. While culture is a broad term and its definition is not absolute (Wolcott, 1999), it is applied to the domestic service trade in that each of these participants engaged in this work and experienced life in the same community. Domestic servants can be considered a culture-sharing group based on several factors: they migrate from rural villages to urban centers, they are generally between the ages of 8-16, they are paid a monthly salary, and they live in their employer’s home. While there are exceptions to the rule, most domestic servants adhere to this model and can therefore be considered as subjects for an ethnographic study (Jacquemin, 2004, 2006).

This study examined the relationships that exist between employers and domestic servants in traditional Mande culture. Using an ethnographic approach, interviews and observations were conducted where the participants worked and lived and caused little disruption in the daily activities (Creswell, 2007). My understanding of life in a traditional Malian compound allowed me to conduct the research without causing much disturbance, and observation occurred in the domestic servants’ everyday environment which is essential to ethnography (Creswell, 2007). Direct observation of domestic servants, former domestic servants and employers occurred in the home or workplace while participants were conducting their daily activities. As a result of my residence in close proximity to the research site, frequent contact with participants during regular activity within the community also provided for informal observation of the participants in a natural setting. Therefore, ethnography appeared to be the best qualitative approach to this study.

**Setting**

The setting for this particular study will be called Kulubadugu as a pseudonym as to assure confidentiality for all participants. Kulubadugu is a crossroads connecting Guinea from
the south, Kita from the west and Segou from the east. It is only a few short miles to the center of Bamako, and is along the only road connecting Bamako to Conakry. Kulubadugu is an established community and several participants reported settling there in the 1950s. While it is within the city limits of Bamako, it is outside the city center. It has become a resettlement location for former subsistence farmers and their families, and many community members have family ties to villages along the road to Guinea or to the west toward Senegal. This community contains a large open-air market just inside the city limits as well as full structure shops and businesses along the main road. The type of housing available symbolizes the range in socioeconomic status of the area as it varies from mud structures with tin roofs to two story structures equipped with satellite televisions and air conditioning. Compounds have one major entryway into a courtyard with one or two-room structures surrounding the courtyard. Each structure is considered to be a house, but is mainly used for sleeping and storing belongings. Houses are often no more than 4 meters by 4 meters and may often sleep five or more individuals in some compounds. Those who own their own property live in 20m by 20m compounds while others rent one house in a compound for approximately $15US per month. Compounds include the male head of the household, his wife or wives, their sons, their daughter-in-laws and grandchildren. Households often include renters, extended relatives from the maternal side of the family, children who are being fostered and paid domestic workers. As a result, some compounds may house more than 30 individuals.

The town consists of families from a range of socioeconomic levels, including those living below the poverty line to middle-class families providing their children with a private education. As a result, Kulubadugu serves as an appropriate site for this study because it embodies traditional cultural expectations of the poor and lower economic classes, in addition to
the middle class, which is moving swiftly towards Western ideals in child rearing and employment practices. It is essential to include a community in this study with different levels of socioeconomic status, as domestic servants will be employed by families in both the middle and lower economic classes.

**Participant Selection**

After obtaining clearance from the Human Subjects Review Board in the late spring of 2010 at Bowling Green State University (see Appendix C), I began recruiting participants for this study. This qualitative study employed a deliberate snowball sampling method for the selection of participants. Snowball sampling provides the researcher with people who know other people who may become willing participants and who already meet the participant criteria (Creswell, 2007). This type of recruitment was only possible as a result of my long-standing connection to several communities within the Kulubadugu area which provided me access to culturally appropriate participants.

While individual consent is necessary to participate in research, in traditional societies in Mali, the consent of elders in the community is fundamental to gain access into a community (Diallo, Koumbo, Plowe, Wellems, Emmanuel & Hurst, 2005). In order to gain access to this site, I first made contact with members of the small community where I served as a volunteer. After explaining the purpose of the research to the elders of this community, I was connected to a village elder who settled in Kulubadugu more than 20 years prior. Because the sense of *badenya*, family relationships, is essential to Malians, initial connections were made through this trusted common contact. The village elder was the initial trusted contact for initiating the snowball process in Kulubadugu. Once he understood the nature of the study and the content of the interview questions and human subjects review forms, he discussed the research with other
elders, neighbors and government employees in the community, familiarizing them with the nature of the study and my own personal background. This successfully resulted in a snowball sample of willing and informed domestic servants, employers and other participants. Once the initial connections were made, three starting points for snowball sampling ensued. The first connection led to five employers and four domestic servants, the second led to one employer and one former domestic servant and the third led to three former domestic servants, one fostered child and one current domestic servant.

Recruitment began in Summer 2010 in and around the Kulubadugu area. Potential participants were each given an information sheet describing the project in both English and French (see Appendix). This form was then read to potential participants in Bambara, either by the researcher or by a native Malian who served as the researcher’s assistant. Participants chose their preferred method to understand the consent form. Once participants agreed to participate, they were asked to make a mark (if they were unable to write their name) or sign their name on the consent form. Participants under the age of 18 required their parent/guardian’s signature and/or their employer’s signature on the consent form as a result of customary guardianship policies. Traditionally, domestic servants are first given to an intermediary who holds informal guardianship until an employer takes possession of the child and becomes the guardian of that child until the intermediary requests guardianship or the term of employment has ended (Jacquemin, 2004; Manzo, 2005; Jacquemin, 2006; Okafor, 2009). Many employers identified themselves as the guardian of the domestic servants and the domestic servants also identified their boss as the authority to sign for them.

In the end, 16 participants were selected for the study, including: five domestic servants, four former domestic servants, six employers and one fostered child. This range of participants
provided a sufficient amount of qualitative data for the study (Creswell, 2007). The sample varied in socioeconomic level, ages and educational level. Each participant had either worked or lived in Kulubadugu or a surrounding neighborhood along the same road.

**Domestic Servants.**

The first group of participants utilized in this study for interviews and observations included currently working domestic servants. Four of the participants in the study who fell into this category were presently domestic servants who were currently living and working in the same household as their employers. An additional domestic servant was currently employed, but was visiting family members at the time of the study. Participants were females between the ages of 12-30, and all had migrated from rural communities to Kulubadugu (See Table 1). All domestic servants referred to themselves as “domestic servants” and not as “fostered” children.

**Former Domestic Servants.**

Four participants in the study were classified as former domestic servants because they had at sometime in the past worked at least a portion of their time in the Kulubadugu area. Three members of this group had worked as a domestic servant from June through October, when school is not in session. The fourth former domestic servant served as a full-time worker with no formal education. Participants ranged in age from 16-22 (See Table 1).

**Employers.**

Six employers of domestic servants were recruited via access to elders in the community and through snowball sampling. Employers were recruited along the socioeconomic spectrum to provide a wide range of living and working situations for domestic servants. Participants were all over the age of 30, married or widowed and were female, as women are predominantly the employers of domestic servants (See Table 1).
**Fostered child.**

One fostered child entered into this study. Although I was not looking for fostered children initially, her interview provided sufficient data to explain the blurred line between domestic servitude and fostering. This participant presented herself to be 17 and fostered in Kulubadugu (See Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age*</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aminata</td>
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<td>Servant</td>
<td>First Grade</td>
<td>Domestic Servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Servant</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Domestic Servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oumou</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Servant</td>
<td>Sixth Grade</td>
<td>Domestic Servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rokia</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Servant</td>
<td>Fourth Grade</td>
<td>Domestic Servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aissata</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Servant</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Domestic Servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Eighth Grade, still attending</td>
<td>Former Servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kotou</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Former Servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nana</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Market Sales</td>
<td>Eighth grade</td>
<td>Former Servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenjabah</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Market Sales</td>
<td>Tenth Grade</td>
<td>Former Servant</td>
</tr>
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<td>Retired Schoolteacher</td>
<td>Teacher Training</td>
<td>Employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saran</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Schoolteacher/Home Sales</td>
<td>Teacher Training</td>
<td>Employer</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Homemaker</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadjo</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Market Sales</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Fostered Child</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*While the girls stated their ages, they did not possess birth certificates or other identifiers to verify their ages. These are their assumptions, and while some appeared older or younger than the ages stated, I used the ages the girls reported.*
Data Collection

Data collection took place during the summer of 2010. A protocol including a script for semi-structured interviews was utilized for discussions with each of the participants (see Appendix A for schedule). Although an interview schedule was used during the interviews, discussions often veered from the schedule as participants engaged in conversation, thus changing the flow of the interview. Interviews were recorded with written notes and audio taping. These procedures assisted with the reliability of data accuracy by capturing each word the participants used during their interviews with audio recording. Handwritten notes to were also taken to document the physical environment and body language observed during interviews and other interactions with the participants. This provided for rich description of the participants and their daily activities. Casual conversation with household members, neighbors and other community members also provided verification of the statements made by participants during the interviews.

Procedures

After receiving consent, interviews, observations and informal conversations took place in the Bambara language within the home, community or workplace of the participants (see Appendix B for consent letter). At the request of the participants, a research assistant, a native Malian born and raised in a similar environment to the domestic servants, sat in on the first four interviews. Once the participants felt comfortable with the interviews, the remaining 12 conversations were conducted solely by the author. Nonetheless, the inclusion of the local Malian allowed for snowball sampling to occur, as a level of confidence and familiarity with the participants was established.
Interviews.

Participants were asked to participate in an audio-recorded 60-minute interview and be available for a follow-up conversation, if requested by the author. Interviews took place according the participants’ wishes, in either their home or workplace, or another community location. Through this process, the girls and women felt at ease to take part in the interview process. However, because participants felt less comfortable with the audio recording process, the interviews were only recorded for 10-30 minutes, with additional information recorded in notes. The interviews established a basic understanding of domestic servitude and provided insight into relationships with peers and employers. Additional informal conversations within the role of participant-observer also took place. These, together with the filed notes, provided the essential information for this study.

Participant-observation and informal conversation.

As part of the data collection process, all participants were observed in their homes or workplaces for a period of two to four hours. Intensive observation occurred with a portion of the participants who either were uncomfortable with the interview process, or requested that I return for additional conversations. All four domestic servants agreed to be observed during a typical day. The observation of domestic servants included social interactions with peers, activities conducted during a normal work day, interactions with their employers and interactions with their guardians. Three of the employers agreed to allow observation in their homes during a typical day. Three of the former domestic servants permitted observation on multiple days throughout the duration of the study. These sessions, based on participant-observations provided me with additional information about the socioeconomic status of the employer and domestic
servant, the communication used to instruct the domestic servant, the former servant’s role as a single woman or housewife and the typical activities conducted during a normal day.

The daily practice of participant-observation for employers and domestic servants began at 7am, just as the family was starting their breakfast. After eating the morning meal with the domestic servant, I then followed her during all of her activities throughout the day. While I did not do her work for her, I often participated in the activities through assisting with small chores such as carrying dishes or moving items or objects out of her path. I returned on a second day to sit with the employers to drink tea, eat lunch and socialize. These experiences proved to be very valuable in data collection, but mainly in developing rapport with the families, establishing a connection as a fellow community member and permitting future interviews.

For observation with former domestic servants, the day often started with the women stopping by my house asking me to accompany them to the market. I then returned to their home to observe the meal preparations, child care and daily interactions with community members. Informal observations in their homes provided extensive information on the roles of women in the Kulubadugu area, women’s relationships within their households and the economic status of each participant.

**Data Analysis**

Analyzing the data was a lengthy process involving several steps. First, I listened to the audio tapes with the research assistant to assure that I understood the Bambara completely. Several participants spoke Bambara as a second language or used a regional dialect unfamiliar to me. Second, I transcribed the audio recordings translating from Bambara to English. After the translations were complete, I listened to the recordings while reading the transcribed and translated document, looking for errors or omissions. It is important to note that punctuation in
the transcripts derive from Bambara words. *De* is used for exclamation and *wa* is used to denote a question. As a result, any exclamation points or question marks used in the transcriptions were specifically spoken by the participants.

Following the transcription process, I began to code the data. Looking for common words or phrases throughout all 16 interviews, I used an open coding method (O’Reilly, 2009). As I was open to discovering surprises within the data, using inductive analysis was an appropriate method to allow themes to naturally emerge from the data (O’Reilly, 2009). Once the codes had been identified, I grouped them into 12 different categories, using a focused coding method to develop the themes (O’Reilly, 2009). After identifying the themes, clean copies of the transcriptions were printed, and using highlighters, the themes were categorized by color. Once the themes had been distinguished, the participants’ interviews were then grouped by category (domestic servant, former domestic servant, and employer) to find common trends in the specific groups using a color identification method. Then, five themes were created based on this analysis, later shortened to three major themes with multiple sub-themes.

Field notes were reviewed and organized according to participant. The themes were applied to the field notes looking for contradictions to statements made based on body language or informal conversations. The field notes assisted with describing the participants and answering the research questions in cases where a participant’s interview was cut short due to being uncomfortable with the recording device.

**Credibility**

My role as both a participant and observer in the domestic service trade and Kulubadugu can open many questions to the credibility and reliability of this study. I have included a personal history to the research site and personal history as an employer of a domestic servant
and constant reflection on my personal biases occurred throughout the data collection and analysis phases (Maxwell, 2005). I have followed several of the procedures to develop credibility in this study by disclosing my biases, using prolonged observation and discussing the findings with peers (Merrick, 1999). Credibility has also been established through triangulation of methodology, including interviews, participant observation, and peer review to assure that data was being informed by the statements and actions of the participants rather than researcher biases.

While member checking was not an option, as the participants could not read, I made frequent contact with them during the data collection phase. I engaged in casual conversations with family members, neighbors and coworkers of the participants to gauge the information shared in the research. Throughout the analysis portion, Malian nationals were interviewed to assure that statements were recorded and translated accurately. During this phase, I relied heavily on authors who have documented Mande culture and philosophy to assure that translations were true to the nature of the heavily-laden proverb communication style of Malians.

Finally, an academic colleague reviewed the codes, themes and each step of the analysis process. This action provided valuable insight, as the colleague did not have a personal investment in the research, nor was she familiar with Malian culture or philosophy.

**Limitations**

As a result of the complicated qualitative nature of the study, there are several limitations to this study. Most participants were unable to read or write and thus unable to assist in the member-checking process. Some of the participants spoke Bambara as a second language and may have been unable to fully express themselves in the interviews. Domestic servants currently working were often interviewed in close proximity to their employer, either by request of the
employer or the servant. The reason is unclear as to why domestic servants were unable to provide negative responses to their work, while their former domestic servant counterparts did. It is possible that the domestic servants were currently working and therefore unable to reflect on all aspects of their employment, or out of fear their employer would hear their statements.

While I have gained Malian citizenship, full acceptance into the community will never be attained. A Malian proverb explains this idea: “No matter how long a log stays in the water, it will never become a crocodile.” Therefore, my American roots and white skin will never allow me to fully become a participant in Malian life. Observer will always be added to my status, as I can never fully engage as a true Malian. As a result, while participants appeared to connect during the interviews and observations, some information may have been omitted from their responses.
CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Findings

The rich and abundant qualitative data resulting from interviews and participant observations produced three major themes with sub-topics also surfacing within each theme. This chapter will describe in detail the themes that emerged from the data: (1) power and independence through domestic servitude; (2) relationships and the domestic servant; and (3) learning to become a servant. While each theme was prevalent throughout all three categories of participants (domestic servants, former domestic servants and employers) some sub-themes emerged in the data that were relevant to only one or two of these groups.

Power and Independence through Domestic Servitude

The results from the interviews overwhelmingly indicated that the chief motivating factor for young girls to enter into domestic servitude is poverty. The current and former domestic servants described hardships their families faced and a desire to help their families and help themselves. All participants expressed that their families lacked financial means to support their formal schooling. Participants who wanted a formal education said that girls enter into this work to make their own money to pay for primary or secondary schooling. Others, who have not been successful in school, or were never afforded the opportunity to attend school, enter into this work to provide for their futures by earning money to purchase items for their bridal chests. The girls articulated numerous ways that they were afforded independence and glimpses of power as a result of their employment through educational or economic gains.

My money, my choice.

A surprising aspect of domestic servitude was the girls’ admissions that they were able to make choices about how to spend the money they earned. While those in school opted to spend
it on school supplies and clothes, those who worked year round decided to spend their money building up their collections of dishes in preparation for marriage. When a girl becomes married, she moves into her husband’s household, maintaining her last name and acquiring a low status within the household. Acquiring dishes and other tools necessary to conduct the work she will be doing in her new home makes for a smoother transition. Kotou, a former domestic servant who worked year round and had never been to school, expressed with pure elation her joy in receiving her salary:

Because, if you make money, you don’t have to share it. Nobody can say, “give me money.” You worked hard to make this money. You had the nerve to do it, all the difficulties, you had the courage to work. When you get the money, if you like, you can spend it on clothes. If you like, you can save it. If you like, you can send it to your mom.

This was the only area where the girls conveyed a sense of choice in their lives. Many of the participants spoke of their future arranged marriages, having little or no choice in the decision-making of finding their future spouse. Choosing to enter into this work, and then choosing how to spend the earned income suggested independence and power for this particular group of girls.

A sense of independence was also gained by learning the value of money. The participants had few previous experiences working for money, and few had the luxury of carrying or using large sums of cash. If a girl needed something, she would ask her father or mother to purchase it for her. Working provided the girls with the power to understand how money is made, spent and saved. Kenjabah explains this newfound independence:

Ever since I started working, I didn’t bother anybody about money. Because I know how money is made. I don’t tell people, do this. I didn’t even ask my father for anything. Because the way you make it, it’s made with difficulty. Me, myself, I didn’t know.
It’s better than…

Although employment choices are limited for girls, alternative options for obtaining money are available in the rural areas where the girls were raised. Picking cotton and other agricultural activities exist in the rural areas and participants shared their experiences in that field. The girls described domestic servitude as being “better than” stealing, running around or sitting at home. While some depicted the work as having several benefits, it was often in comparison to another job or activity. Kenjabah believed that domestic servitude was a respectful position for a young girl:

If you do domestic servitude, it is of high importance. Selling things, when you’re a virgin selling things, nobody respects you. Running around selling things, nobody respects you. But if you work in a compound, you don’t go around anywhere, you’re at your boss’ house working, it is of high importance. People respect you more than if you were selling. Domestic servitude really is great! It’s better than running around. It’s better than running around and selling, it’s better than running around and doing bad things.

Kenjabah had worked in agriculture, domestic servitude and also in street sales, carrying a tray of fruit on her head at train stations and in the market. She compared the two positions and felt that the security of living in a compound provided a young girl with a higher opinion from others rather than being a private entrepreneur. Rokia expressed:

It’s better than stealing. You’re sitting there, you see your peers. They have things. You have nothing. Eventually, you’ll steal because you have a craving for things. How will your things be purchased? The truth--you’ll steal. Stealing is bad. You also can work, you can get the same. That’s what’s good.
Employers also illustrated domestic servitude as being “better than” other options for the girls. Saran, a long-time employer of domestic servants also added, “Domestic servitude, no problem. It’s better than stealing! You came to get money. When you get your money, you’ll buy the things you need and leave. Isn’t that it?”

These examples illustrate that alternatives to domestic servitude are limited for young girls, and as a job, it appears to be better than the other few options. The participants were only able to list two other positions a girl could obtain: selling things in the market and working in agriculture. Neither of those professions provided a consistent salary, food or lodging. As a result, domestic servitude offered most of the girls those additional advantages.

Providing for the family.

All of the participants stated that they would choose to use a portion of their money to give to their parents, or purchase gifts for their parents and younger siblings. They saw their work as an opportunity to contribute to the family, to become valued children and servants. For instance, Rokia, a current domestic servant who entered into the trade after failing the fourth grade and was motivated to help her ill mother, stated:

You can work, help yourself. Because if you work, you help your mother, you help yourself….I went to work. I also helped her. When, at the end of the month, if I had made money, I’d go give it to the landlord…..But, your mother is poor, you just sit there and look at your mother? That’s bad! That’s why I went to work. Work is good. It’s great!

While rare to find an active domestic servant already married with children, Aissata was found working in the home of a schoolteacher in Kulubadugu. She entered into this work because her husband had lost his job. Aissata viewed her employment as a temporary situation to care for her
family when she said, “I won’t do another year here. I have children. My husband’s problem put me to work. When my husband finds work, I’ll take my children with me to do my selling.” She was separated from her husband and children during her year as a domestic servant. She indicated that she would not have been able to make the same amount of money selling sauce products in the market. This type of employment presented her with a safe place to live, food to eat and a decent salary to support her children and family who were living in her husband’s compound.

**Paying for school.**

The girls who went to school described a sense of independence they gained from domestic servitude and the power they felt by being able to provide for themselves. They were able to purchase items such as protractors, notebooks, pens and school clothes to ensure continued education with hopes of securing more lucrative and respectful employment in the future. Without proper attire or supplies, girls would be refused entrance into their school. Nana, a 21 year old former domestic servant who is currently married, described why she entered into domestic servitude:

*When the rainy season came, I would come to find the money to buy my vacation things. Like, notebooks and pens and clothes. I would come to buy those things and then go home, for three months.*

While not all servants described paying for school as a motivating factor, three of the participants viewed domestic servitude as a summer job and used the money to purchase items necessary for returning to school in the fall. Options for employment are limited for girls who are interested in pursuing formal education. For these girls who did not have parents willing to invest in their
daughter’s education, it became the responsibility for the girls to earn their own money. Kenjabah, a former domestic servant and mother of two boys, described a similar experience:

No! Nobody helped me go into this because I was in school. When school would start, I wouldn’t have the school supplies I needed. I went into work, when school would start up again, I’d get my school supplies. If I didn’t go into this work, if I said that I would pick cotton, they would pay people 300 F CFA (0.60US).

Kenjabah went on to pass the national exam and entered into secondary education, which she credited to her summers as a domestic servant. Djenebah, a former domestic servant and still enrolled in secondary education, had hopes of obtaining employment in the future and understood the value of formal schooling. When asked what jobs would be available to her now that she has completed her work as a domestic servant she replied, “They are available, but they’re hard to find. If you’re educated, you can find them, but if you’re not, you can’t find them.”

**Domestic servitude as an agent of informal education.**

Informal education was an important part of the experience for both domestic servants and their employers. Domestic servants affirmed that they had received an adequate education during their employment, while employers agreed that part of their responsibility to the servant was to teach her valuable skills. Both servants currently employed and former servants expressed learning various aspects of maintaining a household. Cooking, cleaning and buying items at the market were all lessons for these young girls. Since the girls came from rural areas, where soap and potable water are scarce, their expectations of cleanliness were much lower before arriving in Kulubadugu. The girls were raised in communities where food grown locally was prepared for the daily meals. In Kulubadugu, fresh vegetables, meats and spices are
purchased daily in the market to prepare the family meals. This difference in food preparation techniques provided the domestic servants with opportunities to learn recipes of the middle class, increasing their knowledge in preparing varied cuisines.

Employers viewed themselves as educators, benefactors and guardians of their domestic servants and took great pride in providing education opportunities for their servants. Mariam described the difference between herself, raised in an urban setting, and her domestic servants who were raised in a rural setting:

*They come from the bush. They don’t know what they’re going to do. My domestic servants, they’ll lie in the house, eat peanuts, and then put the shells in the drawer of their bed. Who would do that?...If you’re dirty, I’m not okay with that.*

While they often looked down upon the girls, discrediting skills beneficial to living in a rural community, they felt as though they were bestowing important information to assist the girls in their futures. Saran describes educating her 30-year-old servant:

*She learned to do so many things here! She spent 9 months here, this is the 10th month. She said she’s learned how to do so many things here. She said she’s learned so many things here!! The things she learned here, she wasn’t able to do before.*

When asked how long it takes to train a domestic servant, Nantenin replied, “*One month, two months, three months. Everybody doesn’t learn the same.*” Mah described a hands-on approach to educating her domestic servants:

*If she knows how to cook, she can do the cooking. If she doesn’t know how to cook, you sit next to her and show her how it’s done. Soon, she’ll know how. That’s what you do. When she is able to do it, you trust that she can do it.*
Maimouna was more confident as an educator if her students were young as she would be embarrassed to ask a girl who is beyond puberty to conduct her menial tasks:

*Younger children learn better than older ones. They’ll do what you tell them to do.*

*Right now, if you take an older person, you ask them to do some work, you’ll be ashamed to ask them. Young children, you and young children can understand each other. You don’t even have to tell them what to do! They know what they’re supposed to do. The domestic servants I have, I don’t tell them what to do. When the morning comes, they do all their work until they’re done.*

Domestic servants also viewed their employer’s homes as practical learning environments gaining skills for their future roles in homemaking upon marriage. Aminata stated that she learned how to wash dishes and clothes since becoming a domestic servant. Kenjabah also learned valuable skills:

*I learned to cook, to wash clothes until they were clean. That’s what I learned as a domestic servant. Even to wash dishes until they were clean. I learned that as a domestic servant. To sweep the yard. I learned it all as a domestic servant.*

Rokia revealed how her employer helped her to learn a beneficial skill for a Malian woman:

*I went to work at another place. I cooked one time. They wouldn’t eat it. They said it was bad. Too much salt. The next day, she [employer] helped me. I learned how much salt to put in. I would add it to the sauce. Until now... I haven’t arrived at cooking, but I’m still learning.*

When asked if there were any benefits in working as a domestic servant, Nana replied:
When you’ve become experienced in all the work, when you understand it all, when you go to your husband’s house, you’re not tired, you can do all your work, you don’t need a domestic servant. You can do some and even show others who don’t know how to do it.

Nana worked only in the summers, with a focus on formal education. Nana did not pass 9th grade, therefore an early marriage was inevitable. Nana now uses the skills she learned as a domestic servant to run her own household and can often be seen sharing recipes with other women during her daily trips to the market.

**Relationships and the Domestic Servant**

Domestic servants reported being primarily confined to the compound of their boss during their employment. Trips to the grinding mill or market may occur daily, but the extent of the work in the compound is often so great, that the girls must rush home from these outside excursions. Domestic servants, former domestic servants and employers all highlighted the conflicting relationships that occur within the household as a major component to the domestic service trade. While they are not members of the family, they eat, sleep and work in the home of their employer every day of the week for months or years. Only one former domestic servant did not live in the compound where she worked. All the others often shared a room with an elderly woman in the compound or another domestic servant from the same or a neighboring compound.

**Basic needs being met as an indicator of a good relationship.**

Domestic servants and former domestic servants described relationships with their employers as being contingent on the provision of basic needs: food and shelter. When food and lodging was granted to the domestic servant and equivalent to that which was provided to the employer’s biological children, the servant had a positive perception of employment. Without these basic necessities being offered, girls often left their employment or chose to sleep at the
home of a relative in the area. To describe a positive relationship with her servant, Maimouna stated, “The domestic servants I have, they sleep here, they eat here. What I eat, they eat. The water I bathe with, they also bathe with.”

Providing basic needs was prevalent during the interviews with each of the participants throughout the study. During an observation in the home of a domestic servant and her employer, the employer made a point to invite me to lunch to see that everyone in the family eats together, including the domestic servant. When asking Naba, a current domestic servant planning to spend three years at her employer’s, about her work day, as she discussed all the work she conducts for the family, she indicated “When dinner is ready in the evening, I’ll put out the food and call in the people. We’ll all get together to eat.” Naba went on to say that her boss did nice things for her, “Because I sleep on her bed. I don’t sleep outside. She and all the kids, we sleep together.” Naba also explained that even if a worker makes a respectable salary, she may not have a family relationship with her employer, “There are some whose salary is high, but they don’t eat at their boss’ house. They take food and sit by themselves to eat. That’s what they’ll do.”

However, not all had a positive experience. Lack of food and proper shelter resulted in Nana leaving her employment before the summer months ended. During her interview, she indicated that she and her employer had a bad relationship:

They weren’t willing to give me food. When they served the food, they would put my portion in the lid of the bowl to give to me. When they’d give me mine in the lid of the bowl, I’d eat it and sit and cry. I would just eat mine like that. When I was done eating, I’d go and lay down. They would show me where to sleep, and I’d go and lay down.
there. The house they showed me was bad. Nobody could sleep there. But I’d sleep there by myself. Every day.

Because of the blatant segregation from the family and little effort on the employer’s part to incorporate traditional Malian values in the relationship with Nana, she decided to sleep at a relative’s home before finally leaving this employer.

All methods of qualitative investigation clearly indicated that eating together as a family is an important aspect of Malian culture and therefore contextualizes the significance of Nana’s position. If a stranger walks by and one is eating, a cultural requirement is to call out “come and eat.” Eating alone or being served food of a lesser quality than the food the employer eats indicates that the servant is not a part of the family and is somehow less valuable than the other members of the household. As an example, while conducting observations during filed research, most families insisted that I return to eat with the family, and planned for me to visit during meal times, to assure that I was fed properly. In Mali, children, especially girls, are expected to sleep indoors with adults. As a result, placed alone in a room was a sign to Nana that she was not welcome in the household and not worthy of a respectable sleeping place for a child. Nana worked for three different employers. Her favorite place of employment involved having her basic needs met and her employer providing additional assistance for her schooling:

I’d eat until I was full. I’d eat breakfast, I’d eat lunch until I was full. At the end, she paid me a lot of money, and also paid my salary, and also bought clothes for me. She also bought shoes for me. Everything! And notebooks and pens, she bought it all to give to me.

Kotou reflected on a positive relationship with one of her bosses stating, “if I was hungry she’d give me food…if I had a craving for something outside, she’d give me money to go buy it
and eat it.” Saran, a long-time employer of domestic servants portrayed her close relationship with her current servant stating, “Me and my domestic servant, we eat together, I don’t separate her. We eat together, we drink water together. My domestic servant, you’d say she’s one of my relatives.”

Not only providing food to the servant, but including her in the family meal and allowing her to eat the same portions as the other family members indicated to the servant that the relationship between servant and employer was a positive one.

The blurred line of family relations.

The previous examples describing patterns of eating and sleeping also illustrates another essential characteristic in the employer-employee relationship. Employers and servants both pointed to the importance of treating each other like family. While all participants recognized this need to conduct themselves according to Mande philosophy, it was exceptional to find this actually occurring in the households. Rarely is the integration into the employer’s family complete. Only one participant experienced the effects of being truly treated like a child of her employer. Eating and sleeping in the same household created a blurred line separating the roles of employee/employer and child/mother for the participants. Several of the girls entered into work at the age of ten and desired to create a family bond in their place of employment. Several employers felt that they were surrogate mothers for the girls and needed to act accordingly.

Aissata describes her expectations of entering into domestic servitude:

When you come from your family’s house, the people who taught you how to work, you know what work looks like...when you come to the big city, a boss hires you...the work you did for your mother and father, you also need to do that for your boss. Your boss and your mother are the same.
Several participants used this analogy of treating the boss as though she was their mother. The employers also felt like they should treat the employees like their daughters. Mariam, a retired schoolteacher stated, “You take care of them, like your own child.” Nantenin, an employer in market sales, said, “If you take good care of your domestic servant, it is easy to find one.” Mah, a third wife and employer of the household’s sole domestic servant agreed and suggested that even if the servant did not regard her as a mother, she would still regard the servant as her child:

*But if you have them, you take care of them like your child. That’s what God wants. You take care of them like your child. They look at you like that, they don’t look at you like that—you take care of them like your child. You can’t do anything mean to them.*

Participants indicated that if the employer cared for them like a mother, the relationship was good and the work was good. One participant crossed over the blurred line and became the daughter of her employer. After working for her employer for several years, Rokia became so integrated into the family, the children of her employer were uncomfortable with any other caregiver, including their birth mother. Rokia described how their relationship transformed:

*But, the woman I worked for last, she told me that I can’t tell anyone that I am working as a domestic servant anymore. She said I’m not a domestic servant anymore. She would give me money, but I wasn’t working for her. She treated me like her child.*

Later during the interview, Rokia reflected on returning to “work” for this woman, Fatim, who was not a part of this study:

*They [employer and her husband] don’t want me to work anymore. Since we came to Bamako, they don’t want me to work. Everyone in town will say ‘Fatim’s child, there she is, there she is.’ When really, I’m not her child.*
Rokia was the only participant who felt that she had crossed that line from employee to child of her employer. The other participants clearly distinguished themselves as employees in a household. While they believed themselves to be domestic servants, they still pined for the mother-child relationship. The youngest participant, Aminata, when asked about her future plans, stated, “I’ll come back here!” Aminata regarded her employer as an aunt or mother figure, and her employer was very affectionate and protective of her during observations.

Oumou, a current domestic servant with a sixth-grade education, had a pseudo-authentic family relationship with her employer. Her employer stated that Oumou was a family member, although the relationship was so distant it is impossible to determine if there really was a blood connection. Regardless of her employer’s statements about their common ancestry, Oumou was referred to as a domestic servant, not as a fostered child. Oumou also recognized herself as a domestic servant. Unlike the other servants, Oumou’s work was limited to processing a specific Malian spice and selling it in the market. She conducted no other household work. Oumou simply worked for her “relative” assisting her with market sales. This potential family relationship may have contributed to Oumou’s lightened work load.

**Fostering.**

While Oumou’s experience as being a possible relative of her employer might explain the difference in relationship with her employer, she still identified as a domestic servant. The sole participant, Sadjo, who presented as being a fostered child and not a domestic servant, explained how she came to engage in this practice. Her older sister had been given to a distant relative in Kulubadugu to be fostered. Her sister spent her entire childhood with this woman. When her sister got married, Sadjo was sent to the woman’s house to replace her. Sadjo reported that the
woman had no children of her own, and her mother had several daughters. She was sent to assist this woman with her work, and be a daughter to her. Sadjo describes her work:

*Sometimes I would cook. Sometimes I would wash clothes. Sometimes I would sell things. We would go together. When we were done selling, we would go home and do the housework.*

While her work experiences were identical to the domestic servants in the study, Sadjo was not being paid a wage and was not considered a worker. Sadjo was identified as the daughter of this distant relative and stayed with her until her parents requested her return. At the beginning of the interview, Sadjo said, “I wasn’t a domestic servant! No!” She said that she was given to the relative, just as her sister had been given to this relative. She called her “mother” as did her sister. Although the work she performed was identical to that of a domestic servant, her identification of herself as a child as opposed to a servant influenced her own perception of the work. She saw herself as “helping” the relative rather than “working” for the relative.

**Exchangeable girls.**

While employers described the relationship between the servant and themselves as being similar to a family relationship or a mother-child relationship, they also specified that a servant could be easily replaced with a better servant, one who had a better personality or was more subservient. The servants also recognized this pattern of being both a part of the family and also easily replaceable. Despite the fact that employers expressed difficulty in finding new servants when former servants would leave for marriage or school, the employers were quick to respond that they would fire a servant if she did not meet their standards.
Employers expressed their desire for their servants to stay for several years, as Nantenin describes, “If I could find a domestic servant to stay for ten years, that would make me happy.” But the reality is that servants rarely stay for longer than three years, with many girls working only during the rainy season, when school is not in session. Each of the domestic servants in the study migrated from small villages and most returned to those villages, planned to return or moved on to other employers where they earned a higher wage. Mah illustrates a main feature of domestic servants when she described them as “Leaving people, leaving people they are!”

Mamou, an employer in food sales, indicated that the physical stature of a servant does not determine her ability to work, and without the proper skills, a servant will be left unemployed. When asked what type of servant she chooses, Mamou replied “The ones who know how to work. You’re big, you’re small. [laughing] If you don’t know how, I’ll get rid of you.” Likewise, Maimouna likened the servants as individuals where, “They’ll come. When they’re families need them, they’ll go. When they go, they’ll give me another one.” The notion that the girls are effortlessly replaceable, can be substituted by another girl within days or weeks of leaving their employers, further develops the blurred relationship of being both needed and replaceable at the same time. While attempting to treat the servants like their children, employers are also fully aware that servants are not held by contract and can leave at any time. Employers, like Mariam, recognize the importance of maintaining the same servant in their household. She stated, “If I find a domestic servant, I would like for her to stay. I don’t like getting a new person. Because, if you get a new person, each time, you have to develop a relationship.” Establishing close relationships are important in laying a foundation of trust in the worker and her abilities to work. But the reality is that the servants will leave at some point and
therefore employers must establish a line between child and servant in order to prepare for the inevitable disappearance of their child/servant.

**Puberty and the changing relationship.**

Interviews with employers and former servants clearly indicated that the relationship that existed between employer and servant changed radically as the servant developmentally aged. Reaching puberty significantly changed the relationship from a mother-child association into a woman-woman relationship. In Mali, once a girl achieves puberty, she is considered biologically capable of becoming pregnant, and therefore ready for marriage. This change bestowed an important responsibility on the employer to protect their servant from becoming pregnant, creating problems for a future marriage. Further complicating the relationship, the wife and employer must now guard her home and assure that her husband does not become interested in this worker as a concubine or as a future wife. While polygamous marriages are common in this Muslim society, women are still hopeful that they will remain the first and only wife in their husband’s home.

The current domestic servants in the study did not make any mention of a changing relationship with their employer or any concerns about their sexuality. However, the former domestic servants each described the moment their relationship changed with their employer, and how that affected their employment. For example, Kenjabah described in detail the third summer that she returned to her employer’s home:

*Ehh! Sometimes it would wear me out! She knew that her husband was interested in me.*

*Inside her house, she wouldn’t let me in again. She used to send me into her house to get things. Ever since she knew her husband wanted me, she wouldn’t let me in again. She wouldn’t let me in her house. When she would send me to go to the store, she would give*
me the change, but then she started taking it all. She wouldn’t give me anything. If I broke something, she would yell at me and degrade me. Sometimes, she’d even hit me. At her house…she would do all of that to me. It was because her husband was looking at me. I was exhausted at that time, my God! That year, when he was interested in me, she didn’t give me anything again! Even her old clothes, she didn’t give me. She only gave me my salary. She didn’t give me anything.

Likewise, Kotou lost her last job at the age of 15 when the husband of her employer became interested in her:

You see, I was cleaning the bathroom. Her husband came in after me. I came outside. Her husband came outside, too. I went back inside to the bathroom, her husband also came back inside. She fought with me about the bathroom, but it was really her husband she was mad at. If I’d go inside, the husband would run in after me…he was interested in me. We fought only about that.

This interaction resulted in a physical argument between Kotou and her employer and she was let go from her employment. This situation also caused concern from her biological family. She was now unemployed and in need of a marriage to protect her from being raped or becoming pregnant before marriage. Nana recalls being afraid of her employer’s husband during her third and final summer of employment:

One day the husband said that he would drop me off in Kulubadugu. I wasn’t willing. He said to come to his place. I wasn’t willing. I hid from him. He came on his motorcycle to wait for me. I wasn’t willing. I ran across the road. He also drove across the road where I was. I wasn’t willing to stop.
The fear of sexual assault on the servant or infidelity in the marriage caused concern for the employer as both a guardian of the servant and as a wife of the potential assailant or adulterer. Whether they occurred from within or outside the home, all sexual assaults created fear for both employers and employees. The employers agreed that they did not like their servants “running around at night” for fear of the “trouble” they might encounter. The younger domestic servants who were currently employed agreed that they would not leave the compound at night. Employers also stated that they would not hire or maintain a worker who had a baby. The cost of maintaining the servant and her child outweighed the benefits of employing a domestic servant. Saran stated, “The truth, the ones who have babies bother us too much.” For that reason, employers are cautious of their servants’ maturing sexuality if for no other reason than to preserve the harmony in the household.

Making friends.

When asked about contact with friends or fellow domestic servants, the body language of the girls immediately changed. They smiled and often paused appearing to reflect on their companions during their domestic service. Current workers identified girls they came with to seek work, or girls with whom they shared the same ethnic identity and first language as friends. During an interview, Kotou showed me a picture of her and her friend in their finest outfits standing in front of their employer’s television. As personal photographs are rare to find in households due to their high cost, it was evident that the relationship between Kotou and her friend was important and warranted the investment of her personal finances. Kotou fondly remembers her friend:
We’d go to market together, we’d come home, we’d start our fires together, make the food, sweep and clean the house...when we finished with our work, we’d sit together and talk.

The companionship described by the participants often centered on the work they were hired to complete and brought comfort while in a community unlike their native villages. While accompanying her on a trip to the grinding mill, Aminata, the youngest participant, a domestic servant who speaks Dogon as a first language, remarked with a smile that there were numerous Dogon people in Kulubadugu and that her older sister was also in the community.

Nana, a Muslim, remembers making her first Christian friend, Rebekah:

We would go together every day, when she’d go to the market, she’d call to me and say, ‘Are you finished?’ I’d say, ‘yes.’ We’d go to the market together. We’d go together, we’d sleep at the same person’s house together. Every day.

Nana and Rebekah did not work in the same compound, but were placed in the same neighbor’s home to sleep. Their relationship developed through this close connection as domestic servants and as roommates. It has been more than four years since Nana left employment, and without a telephone has managed to maintain contact with Rebekah, who is still working as a domestic servant. This closeness of this relationship may have held some importance in Nana’s life, that she has rejected her family’s wishes and is now married to a Christian man.

Finding work: “Who you know”.

Relationships also influenced a girl’s ability to obtain employment. Entering into domestic servitude or hiring a domestic servant relied heavily on character and personal contacts. The common contact is essential to obtaining employment and all but one employer required a mutual connection before hiring a domestic servant. Domestic servants each highlighted the
original biological connection in beginning their journey into the domestic service industry. These relatives or acquaintances served as “intermediaries” in the domestic service trade. Without the proper “management,” employers were reluctant to hire servants, and servants were less likely to seek out or obtain employment.

Mah explains the hiring process:

*If you want to find a domestic servant, you tell your neighbors. You tell them about it.*

*They’ll tell people they know. They’ll bring people from their village to come and give to you. You trust them, they trust their people. That’s how a domestic servant is found.*

Nantenin included the familial connection in locating a domestic servant, using her native community, “My family comes from Segou. I went to get a lot of domestic servants from there.” Oumou was described by her boss as being “from our family...she’s from our family.” Her boss, Maimouna stressed the importance of knowing the origin of her domestic servants:

*So, when we take a domestic servant, we want to know who they came from really well. The ones who know their family, where they’re from. We don’t take domestic servants who walk around asking to work. We take domestic servants whose families we know.*

*That’s who we take. But the ones who walk around looking for work, I won’t take them.*

Mah reiterated the importance of refusing to hire workers who are not connected to a mutual contact:

*My girlfriend came with one from Kandadjiguila to give us. We don’t take one who walks around and asks for work! You don’t know their family. Our daughter brought her here from her husband’s place. She gave her to my daughter-in-law. Otherwise, if you see one walking around the neighborhood, don’t take her! Oh-ho! You tell someone you can truly trust. That person will look for the perfect, kind one to give you. That way,
there’s no trouble, none at all. *If you trust the person, they trust her. That’s how it’s done.*

Domestic servants described their connections to their employers often first through a family member who connected them to a second person. In some cases, this second person connected them to a third and so on. Because each connection was traced back through another connection, this process develops a level of trust and security for both the worker and employer. It also ensures the biological family that the child will be properly cared for by the employer. Aminata, not even twelve years old, traveled more than 300 miles with other girls from her village, was dropped off at a woman’s home who is from her area and this woman connected her to an employer. The intermediary located in Kulubadugu has placed numerous girls into compounds in the area, hence has built a reputation as a trustworthy contact in the domestic service trade. Also, due to the distance between their village and Kulubadugu, the girls placed by this intermediary often stay for periods of two to three years, which the employers appreciate.

Rokia was placed in the home of her mother’s good friend’s daughter. This direct relational connection assured the safety of Rokia in addition to the likelihood that Rokia would respect the family and have good character. Kotou found work through immediate relatives who had contacts in Kulubadugu:

*My uncle helped me the first time. The very first time, my uncle called me in the village and said to come to the city. He’d found someone, he’s going to put me to work. He called me and I came to go to the people’s house. I spent about one year and a little more there. My uncle found the work and gave it to me. I finished there and left…they paid me 4,000 F CFA [$8US] per month. The second time I came, my grandmother’s sister found work for me. It was 5,000 F CFA [$10US] per month. I worked there and*
then returned home. The third time, my uncle found work for me again. I worked there for 6,000 F CFA [$12US].

The soul.

Only one employer suggested hiring girls who solicit their work by going door to door. Mariam stated that “Domestic servants walk around asking if they’re needed. I find domestic servants that way.” Yet, Mariam relied on the ni, the soul, to determine a servant’s eligibility to work in her home:

It depends on the person’s nature. Education doesn’t make your nature. If God says you’re good, you’re good. Right?....You see that I say this, it’s because if somebody has nothing, they can still be a good person. Some are millionaires, but not nice people.

You’re getting a lesson here. You’re young, but you’re listening. Trust the old lady.

Mah also relied on the soul to depict a perfect domestic servant when she said, “A good domestic servant, a really good one? They’re available. Children, when you take them, to find the soul inside them…nothing is added to that, nothing is taken from that.”

In addition to employers recognizing the soul as a major component of a person’s character, domestic servants also recognized that even with the common contact, the ni of the employers is equally as important. Rokia said, “Because with anyone, there are good people, there are bad people. Bad people, I don’t like them.” Employers and servants regarded each other as either “good” or “bad.” There was not a gray area when making this distinction. People were either born with good souls or without them. Familiar connections to trustworthy neighbors could not determine the genuine nature of an employer or a servant, only time spent together could reveal the true soul of the worker or employer.
Learning to Become a Servant

To be successful in this industry, domestic servants learned to become subservient to their bosses and rid themselves of any pride. Employers were adamant that servants came to do their work and only their work. Domestic servants discussed getting rid of their pride, “taking a bit off of their heart.” Hopes of being integrated into the family vanished once domestic servants realized that they must become subservient. This theme was prevalent in the former domestic servants’ interviews as well as employer’s interviews. Domestic servants currently employed reflected on this aspect of domestic servitude only when they were asked to describe how they would prepare a future domestic servant to enter into employment. Saran described her expectations of a domestic servant entering her home:

> When I get a new domestic servant, I tell her, ‘you came from your father’s house to find money. Get rid of your pride. You came to get money. You won’t stay here! When you get your money, you’ll go!’

Mah expected her servants to be fully subservient, “If you’re able to get along and she does what she’s told, you take care of her. If she’s not willing to work with you, you get rid of her.

[laughing] That’s it.”

Expectations to do the work exactly as the employer instructed the servant was a common theme that developed when the participants were asked how they would inform a potential worker about the domestic service trade. Current and former servants replied that “she should do what the boss says.” Kotou elaborated on the idea of becoming submissive to the boss:

> If you go into domestic servitude, if your boss tells you to do something, you do it. If she puts you down, don’t say anything. If she degrades you, don’t speak. Just do your work only. When she gives you your money, save it well.
Aissata gave her advice for future workers when she said, “When your boss tells you to do something, you do it. If she says don’t do something, you leave it alone.”

Employers were well aware of the pride that must be diminished when becoming a domestic servant. When asked if she had ever been a domestic servant, Mah replied:

*Mmm-mmmm!! In our village, no children ever came to work here in Bamako. We’re originally from Bamako. We have too much pride to work for someone else. We’re too prideful for that. We aren’t willing to do that! Our people aren’t willing to do that. Never!*

Only one of the employers had previously worked as a domestic servant. She regarded domestic servitude as an opportunity for girls to earn money in a safe and respectable way while the other employers regarded the servants as destitute and dependent on the employers. The expectation for girls to do exactly as they’re told developed from the employer’s desire to maintain an efficient household. Employers desired to eventually have their servants work without being reminded or monitored.

**Learning when to be fearful or trusting in domestic servitude.**

While fear and trust are prevalent in the previous findings, because of the consistency of this topic within the interviews, this topic necessitates its own section in order to give voice to this aspect of domestic servitude. The employers were unable to fully trust their workers until they had spent several months or years with the family while the servants were in constant fear of losing their employment, and were reminded of the power the employer held over them frequently. Trust issues between the servant and her biological or village family also were uncovered during her employment.
Former domestic servants disclosed fear of losing their employment, while current
servants did not discuss this fear. Servants reflecting on their years of employment shared
feelings of fear in either their first position, or their favorite position. In the first position, the
servant had very little information about the type of work she would endure or the type of
relationship that would exist between her and her employer. Also, first positions often engaged
the girls at a very young age when they had very little agency. Fear of losing their job while in
the favorite position stemmed from being afraid that all the luxuries and integration into the
family would somehow disappear.

Kotou was the only participant who recalled this fear in all three places of employment.
Her first job started when she was ten, and she continued to work for new employers every 12-18
months. Kotou said:

*Mmmhhmm. If you know that you did some work that wasn’t good, or you did some
work, you don’t believe that your boss will come home and say it is clean. She’ll come
home in the afternoon and see where you’ve swept and mopped and wonder if it’s clean.
I would worry. I’d think, if she comes back and says that the house isn’t clean, she’s
going to tell me to quit my job. That’s what I would worry about…..All the time I’d
worry about it. I didn’t know if they would fire me from my job or send me away. All the
time I’d think about that.*

Nana describes her final year of employment as her favorite position, the one where she had the
highest salary, ate well and had all of her needs met. Her fear of losing this job included the fear
of leaving employment where she was treated well and all her basic needs were met. She stated,
“*I did her work well, I was happy with it. I thought maybe she could fire me from my job.”*

Employers suggested that new servants could not be trusted until they had spent several
months with the family. The importance of watching the servant and working with the servant were identified as important steps in the trust relationship. Mariam described the caution one must take with a new servant:

*If you take a new servant, you don’t trust her! Because you don’t know her. Well, if you’re totally trusting of her, she could steal all of your things and disappear. If you take a new domestic servant, you take her, but you be careful with her.*

Maimouna explained that the development of trust can take several months. When asked how long it might take to trust a new worker she replied:

*Within three months, you don’t know. If they want to do something bad to you, they’ll do everything for you, stay close to you, you’ll show them everything, leave all the work to them. The one day you’re out of the house, they’ll take your things and take off. Domestic servants do that.*

Employers felt at risk inviting strangers into their home, and explained away their lack of Malian hospitality to a lengthy employment “probation period.” Each of the employers recalled stories of neighbors, friends or co-workers who had lost all their jewelry or money because they trusted a domestic servant too soon. They also explained that trusting a domestic servant to do all the housework without being monitored put the employer’s family at risk of depleting resources in the household due to the servant’s lack of respect or diligence in her work.

Domestic servants were dependent on both their employers and their intermediaries during their service. Current and former domestic servants shared times when they or a fellow servant had not been paid for services rendered. Some had given money to their intermediary, only to complete employment and find that the trusted family member had spent their money and
now the servant must return home penniless after years of working. Employers were quick to
tell horror stories of evil employers, like Mariam’s story:

*There was a family near me in Lafiabougou, what they would do, they would hire a
domestic servant, when she had worked for two weeks, they would say, “Go, go!” So she
would leave. Not even a penny would be given to her. They’ll take another one. When
she’d put in some time…Always they had a domestic servant! But, never did they pay any
money.*

Kotou was paid in full by each of her employers, but she never received the payment.
Her uncle, who served as her intermediary, was entrusted to hold her money for her until she
completed her employment. After more than two years of service, earning $12US per month, her
wages would have been almost $600US. When asked what happened to her money, she replied:

*He didn’t give it. Every month my boss would give me my money. I would go to
Sebenikoro to give it to my uncle. Every month. At the end of the month, when the first of
the month came, she’d give me my money and I’d give it to my uncle.*

This situation caused strife in her family, resulting in Kotou permanently leaving the domestic
service trade, and her uncle moving outside of the family home. Kotou no longer trusts her
family members to hold her money for her, a common trend in Mali, and has bitter memories of
her service, as she lacks any wedding materials for her future marriage.

The interviews and observations provided a significant amount of data to answer the
research questions. Chapter five will answer each of those questions by connecting the findings
with the literature.
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Discussion

With traditional fostering already in place as the model to fulfill the Mande belief that increased social networks permit one to achieve personhood, domestic servitude seems like a natural response to increase income-generating opportunities for girls and women. Attaining *badenya*, harmony through developing a sibling-like relationship with others, suggests that through domestic servitude, one could have a similar experience to a fostered child. Adhering to this belief system, domestic servitude is pushing the boundaries of Mande thought to incorporate work relationships into private homes. Incorporating Western thought of hard work and superficial relationships between employers and their employees has made domestic servitude a tricky trade for both servants and employers. Employers must fill the role of parent, educator and boss while domestic servants must be children, students and employees. The blurred line between traditional and modern practices causes a strained relationship between domestic servants and their employees and also challenges traditional Mande beliefs about the nature of relationships between women and girls. Incorporating findings from the literature review and this current research project, this chapter will identify the relationship between the domestic servant and her employer, while answering each of the following research questions:

1. Knowing the potential challenges associated with domestic servitude, what are the motivations for girls and young women to participate in this activity?
2. What is the nature of the relationship between domestic servants and their employers?
3. How does domestic work influence the social networks of servants?
4. How is the nature of domestic servitude distinctly influenced by Mande society?
5. How does domestic servitude compare to traditional fostering, which is set up to provide training, education and socialization for girls?

**Motivating Factors for Entering into Domestic Servitude**

Poverty is the main motivating factor for girls to enter into domestic servitude (Togunde & Carter, 2009; Okafor, 2009). Girls who participated in this study agreed that they would not be in this industry if their families had sufficient funds to provide for their futures. They indicated that without this employment, formal schooling would not have been an option because their families could not afford the school fees and supplies. These results support the evidence from Birdsall & Orivel (1996) who found that compulsory education has encumbered large, rural families to pay extensive school fees and purchase school supplies for all of their children, especially girls. While families often manage to pay education costs for boys, girls are often left to their own devices because, unlike their brothers, they will not be contributing to the future of their parents’ families as boys will. However, through marriage, they will eventually become a part of their husbands’ families. Supporting this notion, employers also agreed that domestic service is a position for those whose families were destitute.

The girls in this study were aware that transitioning into the homes of their future husbands means entering with the lowest status and highest workload. This low status for new wives in the compound has been documented by Freeman (2007). Entering into domestic service provided the participants with opportunities to earn money to purchase items needed to stock their future homes in order to perform the work expected of them in a Malian household. Girls used their earnings to purchase pots, dishes, utensils, bedding, soap and clothing to ease with the transition. Proper supplies provided ease in conducting the massive amount of work required.
While poverty encourages girls to take on roles as domestic servants, traditional Mande culture is at the root of the desire for young girls to begin earning money. In the Mande culture, a girl belongs to her family and upon marriage is given to her husband’s family where she enters his home as a stranger, symbolically keeping her last name. This inevitable act of being separated from her family necessitates young girls to begin thinking about being independent and caring for themselves at an early age. Mothers are in charge of the rearing of their daughters, while fathers look after their sons. Mothers in rural communities rarely have a substantial income to provide the *trousseau* for their daughters or to pay for formal schooling. Mande culture requires a young girl to independently provide for herself beginning in childhood.

The economic independence earned at such a young age provided domestic servants with a sense of power and agency. Now that they were able to make their own decisions about how to spend their income, domestic servants recognized the power they hold in their futures. This was best exemplified by Kotou, who described her newfound economic independence:

*Because, if you make money, you don’t have to share it. Nobody can say, ‘give me money.’ You worked hard to make this money. You had the nerve to do it, all the difficulties. You had the courage to work. When you get the money, if you like, you can spend it on clothes. If you like, you can save it. If you like, you can send it to your mom.*

**Social Networks in Mali**

Across all participating groups in this study, it was clear that social networks are important to surviving in Mande culture. In order to become a person, one must adhere to social norms and achieve large social networks (Brand, 2001). Without observance of this cultural requirement, one becomes *mogo te*, which literally translated, means not a person. Domestic servants were afforded little to no opportunity to increase their social networks while working.
Nonetheless, the one relationship girls were able to cultivate to increase their network was with other domestic servants. Nana recalls meeting her first Christian friend, Rebekah, in a country where 90% of the people practice Islam (World Factbook, 2011). Kotou and Rokia made friends from different ethnicities who came from the northern and western regions of Mali. These girls expanded their social networks to include a wider range of ethnicities and religious backgrounds. While Nana maintained her friendship with Rebekah, the transient nature of domestic servants leaves for few opportunities to remain in contact and further increase the network.

The girls in this study supported the findings of previous research which has found that domestic servants work 16 hour days and are rarely permitted to leave the house for activities not related to the work (Jacquemin, 2004; Keita 2008). Yet, without access to the outside, domestic servants were unable to create large social networks. Their networks consisted of the household members in their employer’s home and possibly a few neighbors. Several participants recalled spending time with extended family members of their employers, but were given no freedom to choose how those relationships could be defined. In these situations, the domestic servant’s personality and character is told through the eyes of her employer; therefore even if she is permitted to leave the house, the neighbors have already made a decision regarding the servant’s ability to become a person or not, which determined the servant’s ability to increase her social network.

However, this study found that when women employed a domestic servant, this resulted in an increase in their own social networking. The process of locating and hiring a domestic servant required the employer to have a decent social network with status in the community. Without a trustworthy status and several connections, intermediaries were reluctant to place children in the women’s homes. Once a domestic servant was placed in the home, the employer
had more freedom to leave the home, pursue income-generating activities outside the home and be relieved of conducting menial tasks. This gave her the freedom to dress in her finest clothes throughout the day and be seen sitting in her household rather than stooped over performing manual labor. The illusion of emancipation from traditional child’s work provided her with respect from the community and further opportunities to increase her social network.

**Mogo te and the soul.**

According to Mande philosophy, achieving full personhood is of utmost importance. When I first came to Mali, I was referred to as a *mogo te*, not a person. Not understanding the importance of creating large social networks, exhibiting participation in traditional gender roles and having a good soul, I made numerous enemies in my first year. Community members were warned by the town griot, the town crier, to stay away from me because I was a *mogo te*. I didn’t extend traditional hospitality to strangers and invested little in developing sibling-like relationships with others in my community. This label affected my abilities to conduct my work, find employment and acquire material items while in Mali. This personal lesson on the importance of personhood in Mande culture was also prevalent in the interviews with domestic servants and their employers.

If one becomes a *mogo te* they are considered to have a bad soul. Since soul was described by the participants as something one is born with, it appeared that one could not move from being a *mogo te* to a full person. However, similar to Grosz-Ngate’s (1989) research, this was unfounded. While children are often called *mogo te*, they have the ability to move out of that status and acquire the label of having a good soul and being considered a person. The soul and the *mogo te* label were closely related but through one’s actions, the labels could be
reversed. One could have a good soul, and then become a *mogo te*, or have a bad soul and then achieve full personhood.

For these domestic servants, the movement into full personhood was dependent on the employer’s descriptions of the servant. If the employer appreciated the servant and trusted her, the servant could be a person. On the other hand, if employers caught their servants stealing or betraying them in some way, they could easily be identified as *mogo te*, or accused of having a bad soul. Becoming a *mogo te* had the potential to affect every aspect of the servant’s life.

On the other hand, an employer could also receive the label of *mogo te* if her soul was considered damaged. This label would be given to employers who had in some way betrayed the trust of their servant by refusing to pay her salary, accusing her of sleeping with the employer’s husband or withholding food or sleeping arrangements from the worker. While domestic servants could make these claims, assertions from employers were more likely believed due to their superior status in the communities. Therefore, while the *mogo te* title could be given to both servants or employers, the large social networks afforded to employers could be detrimental to the servant’s status in that their communications about the servant would be more likely believed by the community.

**The Relationship**

The domestic servants and the employers in this study appear to have a strained relationship with each other, made even more difficult when attempting to increase their social networks and obtain full personhood in accordance with Mande philosophy. Attempting to adhere to the traditional fostering system, the contradictions within the relationship between employer and servant are difficult to define in domestic servitude. The work is similar, sometimes identical, to that of fostering but the distinction of being a fostered child versus a paid
laborer made an apparent difference in the type of relationships created between the employers and employees in this study.

Achieving *badenya* in the household.

While attempting to employ traditional Mande philosophy of *badenya*, employers were at a distinct disadvantage to fulfill their roles because the employers in this study all had employment outside the home. Diverting from the traditional female role of remaining inside the home required these women to hire girls to do their work. Therefore, the employers in this study relied on their domestic servant to assist them in running their households with ease and efficiency. This created an illusion that the women were still fulfilling their role, when in actuality the domestic servant was conducting the day to day operations of the home.

To create harmony in the home, all activities must be carried out according to specification set by the males of the household whose mothers and wives have been managing the cleanliness and food preparation for generations. The employer must train the servant to do exactly as she asks, and not deviate from these instructions, lest the harmony of the household be disrupted. The servant would ultimately blend in with the background and become a body doing work rather than a human that required a relationship in order to thrive. If the employer spends a great deal of time monitoring and training her servant, her own social status and economic independence could be threatened.

A contradiction in the employers’ statements about conducting the work according to the household rules to achieve *badenya* were the responses by the domestic servants. These domestic servants viewed the demands of doing exactly as they were told to be demeaning and disrespectful. However, diverging from the employer’s instructions could result in harsh punishments including denigration, beating or being fired. Harmony in the household described
by the domestic servants comprised of mutual respect and familial relationships with the
employer and her family. In this case, both definitions of harmony in the household are
consistent with Mande philosophy, yet the working woman had more to lose if her definition was
not followed. The domestic servants in this study were free to leave, seek other employment or
return to her father’s home. The employers were bound to their husband’s homes, and if the
personhood of an employer was at risk of being diminished, she would lose her status in the
household and have a greater potential of becoming a co-wife rather than the sole wife.

Employers indicated the need for the servant to establish a familial relationship by
treating her like a mother or grandmother but struggled in returning the equivalent to the worker.
The Mande expectation that all children must revere all women as their own mother (Brand,
2001) was stated by several of the employers and their servants. Yet, mothers are also expected
to treat all children as if they were their own. Adhering to these traditional Mande values created
a blurred line in defining the role of the domestic servant and the role of the employer.

Although Brand (2001) found that a Mande mother is expected to care for her child,
invest in her future and assist her in all activities, former domestic servants in this study reported
that their former employers refused to feed them, refused to provide them with an appropriate
place to sleep, or forced the servants to begin work before dawn and end after dusk. Employers
would not have subjected their own daughters to this type of treatment and therefore were not
treating domestic servants like their own children. Servants recognized this blurred line between
being a child and being a paid employee. Consistent with the findings of Jacquemin’s (2004)
study of domestic servants in Abidjan, when the servants in this study saw themselves being
treated equally to the other children in the household, they viewed their work as being positive.
Observations in this study in the households of currently working domestic servants and their
employers revealed that the daughters in the home were attending school, had fine clothing and always had their hair braided. The servants, on the other hand were often wearing faded and worn clothing, rarely had braids in their hair and were not attending school. These differences were obvious to the observer, and perhaps to the servant. However, if the servant was invited to eat with the family and sleep in the household with other girls her age, she considered her employer kind and worthy of the respect bestowed upon a mother.

**The role of employer as educator.**

Child work is considered a healthy part of a child’s upbringing in Mali and a relevant component of their education (Keita, 2008). In this capacity, training girls how to run a household and prepare meals worthy of being served in a wealthier home is an important step along their road to womanhood. Developing these skills allowed several of the girls to enter into marriages with men from a higher social status. Many of the girls never returned to their small villages, instead they adopted a city lifestyle using the training they acquired while working as a domestic servant. Most of the girls felt that the training process was intense and they either proved their worthiness to the employer by learning skills quickly or were unable to follow instruction and were let go from their employment. When asked about the benefits of domestic servitude, all the participants recalled learning valuable skills that they are now using in their personal lives.

Mande culture encourages employers and employees to assume the roles of educators and students respectively in the training and education process traditionally in place in the fostering practice for girls. In this role, employers succeeded in fulfilling both traditional and employment expectations. Viewing the servants as students often created a strong bond between the servant and her employer. The employer gained satisfaction that she was passing on relevant knowledge
as well as demonstrating her expertise in a subject, while servants felt that the employer cared about their acquisition of skills and their futures. Nana recalled receiving satisfaction that she was now able to pass these competencies on to other girls and women in her community. The role of educator also more closely related to the role of mother that many of the girls were searching for in their employers.

Employers viewed themselves as educators both in the work they were teaching the girls to conduct as well as how life is conducted in an urban setting. Derogatory comments made by the employers about the rural communities where the girls came from indicated a need for the employers to educate the girls on how to live in a city. One domestic servant reported that she had never seen a bathroom before arriving in Kulubadugu. An employer recalled arguing with her servants about their ignorance in cleanliness and that she had to teach them how urban families conducted themselves. As several of the employers were raised in urban settings or resettled in the city, it appeared that they felt it was part of their role to provide appropriate education and socialization for girls from rural areas in order to conduct themselves properly while in the city.

**Fear as a necessary component of the relationship.**

It was clear from interviews with all groups of participants that the relationship between domestic servant and employer is one riddled with fear. Employers are fearful that their domestic servants will steal their belongings, bring shame on the family or become intimate with their spouses. This fear plays out in creating the blurred line separating mother/employer and child/servant. If an employer becomes too comfortable with a domestic servant, she must remember that the domestic servant will eventually leave and is not her child. However, defining a clear line in the relationship between servant and employer has its consequences. If
she does not treat her like a child, the servant is more likely to be disrespectful to the employer and may be prone to enter into a relationship with the employer’s husband or steal the employer’s belongings.

In this fearful relationship, it is complicated for both servants and employers to know when to begin trusting each other. When asked if the employers trusted their servants, most stated that they did completely. But when asked if the servant was allowed inside their dwelling, they replied that they had their own children for that task. Again, employers slightly developed that line between child and servant and indicated to the domestic servant that they are still in fear that the servant will not respect their household or their belongings.

For the domestic servants, fear began before even arriving at the employer’s home. They often had never been outside their communities, and definitely not to Bamako, the capital city of Mali. Similar to Jacquemin’s (2004) findings, the domestic servants had few if any relatives or friends in the community where they were placed and became ultimately dependent on their employers. Needy for food, shelter and affection, the domestic servant became fearful that these basic requirements may not be provided or that what has been provided may end abruptly. The domestic servants in the study shared feelings of being afraid they would lose their jobs if they didn’t clean or cook properly in the home. Kotou, a former domestic servant, described this constant fear of losing her employment:

_I’d think, if she comes back and says that the house isn’t clean, she’s going to tell me to quit my job. That’s what I would worry about.....All the time I’d worry about it. I didn’t know if they would fire me from my job or send me away. All the time I’d think about that._
Because engaging in household work is considered an important part of a young girl’s education, the domestic servants were afraid that if they were fired, their parents would believe that they didn’t like to work, and were therefore incapable of learning. The servants were fearful that one slight mistake could bump them down from trusted servant and child to waged employee and outsider.

Fear was also the underlying factor in the changing relationship when domestic servants began to go through puberty. The role of employer as parent shifted to a role as a female competitor with her domestic servant. Achieving her sunkurun, marriage-eligible status, the domestic servant became a threat in her employer’s household. The danger of losing her husband’s affections if he became interested in this young girl also put the employer’s personhood status at risk. The men in the household now viewed the domestic servant on her path to womanhood, carrying out the duties of a woman by cooking for the family. The former domestic servants in the study each identified their last year of employment, when they were each 15, as the year that they became fearful of their boss and fearful of their boss’ husband.

Their path to personhood, preparing for a future marriage, led the girls engaged in domestic work to oppose the traditional outward displays of their path towards womanhood. Observations within the community suggested that once becoming a sunkurun, a young girl was bestowed with jewelry, fine fabrics, henna on her feet and beautiful hairstyles to signify her availability as a potential bride. In the cases of the domestic servants, they recalled being given work that would make their hands dry and their feet crack, wear their clothes down to threads and have little or no time to braid their hair. In doing so, employers assured that their servants would not be attractive to potential suitors in their homes, particularly their husbands. In becoming a person, the domestic servants were limited in this transition from child to sunkurun.
status. Fear appeared to be a necessary feeling for both employers and domestic servants while they attempted to maintain their employment or their status as wives in their homes.

**Swallowing your pride.**

Observations during the research found Malians defending their family names with pride to both strangers and friends. Rounds of laughter and discussion about which family names are those of free nobility versus those of slaves were heard echoing through city streets, on public transportation and even in political debates. Participating in this long-held tradition provided me with access to families for this study and participation in the Kulubadugu community. The women in this study, both former domestic servants and employers, all maintained their family names even when entering into a marriage and defended this name in their husband’s home. Brand’s (2001) work with women in Mali found that pride is of utmost importance in Mande culture. To rid oneself of pride involves renouncing the family name and all the status it might provide.

As Grosz-Ngate (1989) found in her field work in Mali, keeping the family shame-free and acting in a noble manner, were of extreme significance to achieving personhood. By becoming shameless, or a *mogo-malobali*, one exhibits the actions of a slave, the lowest caste in Mande culture. Conducting the work of the slave caste lowers the status of both men and women into that of a slave. For domestic servants in this study, swallowing your pride meant that they had to resist the temptation to act as free and noble people and must accept the lower status their employers bestowed on them.

The girls in this study were considered to be members of the caste of free nobility, based on their last names. Entering into domestic servitude demanded the young girls, born into a free and noble caste, to take on the role of someone in the *jonw* or slave caste. *Senenkunya*, joking
cousins, is a difficult game to play when working as a servant. Common jokes include telling your joking cousin, “You’re my slave. I’m the free and noble one.” As a domestic servant, this can be a sensitive subject to approach. How can a girl defend her free and noble status when she is working in the home as a servant? Senenkunya, typically used to break the ice when meeting new people has now become all too real for the domestic servant. Joking between the servant and her employer was not observed during the course of this study, yet these same girls were observed participating in this practice in their neighborhoods. Fostered children, on the other hand, were seen joking with their elders within their own compounds in the Kulubadugu community. Mariam, an employer, identified that she and her family would never become domestic servants, as they had too much pride to enter into that type of work. Swallowing your pride meant not only becoming humble in the work, but for the domestic servants, it meant renouncing a long-held tradition in Mali.

**Traditional Fostering and Domestic Servitude**

This research supported the notion that domestic servants always described themselves as servants, not as fostered children. Several of the participants had been fostered children at some point and made distinct divisions in their work versus their training. Work was seen as “finding money” while fostering was seen as “helping” a friend or family member. In several of the homes where I conducted interviews and observations, in addition to the domestic servant, several fostered children were also living in these homes. I observed them conducting similar work to that of the domestic servant, but they were often better dressed and usually attending formal school.

Fostering a child does not necessarily require a child to be destitute, as one expects with a domestic servant. Rather, fostering a child can increase the social status of both the fostered
child’s family and the family fostering the child (Niewenhuys, 1996). This traditional system provides a connection from a rural community to an urban community while offering opportunities for a young girl to be exposed to potential suitors in more affluent communities. Employers did not encourage social interaction between domestic servants and males in the community while families who were fostering were open to the idea of their fostered child finding a potential mate in their community. This was evidenced at the point where the young girls became *sunkurun*, and fostered girls were given accessories to make them appear more attractive to male suitors, while domestic servants were not afforded this luxury.

I was introduced to a young woman who I believed to have been a domestic servant several years prior. The work she described was identical to the work of a domestic servant. She indicated that she cleaned, cooked, washed clothes and dishes and helped her employer sell things in the market. However, when I used the term “domestic servant” her eyes widened and she adamantly said that, no she had not been a domestic servant. While her duties were the same and she entered into the work in the same manner, because she was placed with a family friend under the guise of “helping her,” she did not consider herself a domestic servant and was not earning a wage. At the end of her fostering, she did receive clothing and other items with which to return home and provide to her family, yet she did not earn a monthly salary like a domestic servant. When domestic servants described their favorite employers, they often indicated that they received clothing, school supplies or other gifts on top of their salary. While they were gaining a salary they still attempted to gain the relationship status of a fostered child who receives gifts at the end of her work rather than a salary. If domestic servants received only their salary, they indicated that the work was bad and the relationship with their employer was not
good. This desire to be considered a fostered child, a part of the family, was exemplified through the giving of gifts similar to what a fostered child would receive.

While fostering appears to assist a young girl on her path to personhood, domestic servitude seems to hinder the transition from child to *sunkurun* and eventually to marriage. The fostered child receives gifts and items to add to her *trousseau*, an important part of the marriage rituals. Receiving only a salary, the domestic servants in this study were reminded of their working status rather than as a member of the family, preparing to enter into her husband’s household.

**Mande culture and the working woman.**

Traditionally the working woman would be in market sales and use the help of her daughter or fostered child in this work. Compulsory education has increased the enrollment of girls in school, and working women are more likely to enter their daughters into formal schooling. This leaves no females in the home to conduct the daily duties of cooking, cleaning and fetching water. Hiring a domestic servant allowed employers to maintain their assigned duties of cooking and cleaning and performing “woman’s work” while absent from the home. She relied on the domestic servant to increase her status and maintain her personhood by conducting the work expected of the married woman in the home.

The women in this study leave their households early in the morning Monday through Friday and don’t return until late in the afternoon. They work in market sales, as teachers or in food production. When Mariam and Mah were asked why they needed domestic servants, the response was “how will my family eat?” Even in settings where the man of the family was unemployed or worked from home, the cooking and cleaning responsibilities still fell on the woman. In order to preserve her status as a woman in the Mande culture and within her home,
she must continue the illusion that she is caring for her family. The domestic servant assisted the
working woman in achieving this status, and provided her with opportunities to sustain income-
generating activities outside the home.

The Blurred Line of Domestic Servitude within Mande Culture

Fulfilling *badenya* under the traditional fostering system provided opportunities for
increased social networks and training for girls and women. However, the participants in this
study revealed that the relatively new practice of domestic servitude challenges the old practice
of child fostering and has placed the focus on earning money rather than on learning skills or
socialization. Creating harmony in households was traditionally fulfilled by including extended
family and maintaining relationships with distant relatives. This new practice reduces the size of
rural households and places girls into manual labor rather than into relationship-building
opportunities.

The blurred line can be applied to the roles the servant and employer play, the slight
separation of fostering and domestic servitude and the fine line between what is considered child
labor and what is considered child work. Fostered children see the work they do as “helping the
family” rather than as work. Domestic servants, while they may see their income as helping their
biological families, do not view their work as “helping” their boss, but rather “working” for their
boss. Employers must view the servants as workers, but through adherence to traditional cultural
values, also take them in as children in need of training. Servants must respect their employers
as they would a mother, but not create a strong familial bond, less they become too relaxed in
their work. Rather than develop a deep line to separate each of these thoughts and practices,
blurring that line as a result of maintaining strong cultural ties to their communities, employers
and domestic servants have attempted to create a new type of relationship that both fulfills cultural expectations and results in advancing the status of women.

Since training and instruction of the domestic servant falls heavily on one or more women in the household, others outside the household have little understanding of this relationship and whether a servant is being harmed or supported in her work. While safety measures are in place in Mali to protect domestic servants, most servants do not meet the requirements of protection. To receive protection under the law, a contract must be in place between the employer and the servant, and in many cases, the servant must be at least 15 years of age (Jacuqemin, 2004; Keita, 2008). However, each of the domestic servants in the study began working when they were between the ages of 10-13 and not one participant had entered into a written contract with their employer. Therefore, in the event that their work was actually a form of child labor, they would receive no protection from the law. Girls are the property of their parents, surrendering their work and personal belongings, until they marry and become the responsibility of their husband’s family (Keita, 2008).

This study also found that contradictions exist between Malian traditional practices and the law with definitions of child labor not clearly characterized. Keeping this line blurred, the emphasis on bonya, respect of elders in the Mande community, and maintaining hadenya in the family, leaves little room for parents or children to demand a contract or better working conditions. The families of the girls had little to no knowledge of where their children were, or in what type of work they were engaging. Intermediaries, temporary guardians of the girls, were invested in the girls’ work either by taking a portion of their salary or being paid by parents or employers to find servants. Two of the girls in this study reported having their incomes altered or taken in whole by their intermediaries. Therefore, if intermediaries, often relatives of the
girls, are aware of child labor occurring in the homes, they are reluctant to report it or advocate for changes in the practice.

The blurred line between fostering and domestic servitude, or these practices and child labor, also exists in relation to achieving full personhood in Mande culture and establishing a work relationship between the employer and her employee. Without recognition of the role that traditional Mande thought plays in all relationships in this culture, understanding the strained interactions between employers and domestic servants becomes impossible to examine. With research in place identifying the blurred line between the traditional fostering practices and its movement into child labor practices through the form of domestic servitude (Jacquemin, 2004; Keita, 2008; Bourdillon, 2009), understanding the influence of Mande philosophy within these practices adds an additional element. The utmost respect in Mande culture involves achieving full personhood. Acting or performing in the role of employer or domestic servant can either hinder or help one’s movement into full personhood. This blurred line in becoming a person or being a mogo te requires one to look at both the labor practices in this trade and also the constraints put upon the women and girls by traditional expectations.
CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

Conclusion

This study confirms previous research in identifying the terms of employment, motivations for entering domestic servitude and the treatment of girls in this trade. While Bourdillon (2009) found that domestic servants may use their income to pay for formal schooling, limited evidence emerged during his study referring to domestic servitude as “summer employment.” This finding is valuable information for policy-makers and the Ministry of Education to understand the direct correlation of informal school fees for girls and the necessity to enter into domestic servitude in order to pay for their education.

The blurred line between fostering and domestic servitude has been well-documented along with the line defining these practices in relation to what constitutes child labor. Child work is prevalent throughout Mali and begins as soon as a child learns to walk. Determining damaging child labor practices within a culture which places importance on the enhancement of a child’s education through work activities, requires taking a closer look at the Mande belief system. As a result, attempting to reform domestic servitude, as many humanitarian organizations would like, becomes a tricky endeavor when examining these practices through the lens of Mande philosophy.

To end the practice of domestic servitude in Mali would necessitate changing the Mande belief system altogether or would put a stop to women’s independence in Mali. Women only achieve personhood through acquiring large social networks and performing the traditional female role. For a woman to obtain a large social network, she must have the ability to leave her home in order to greet her neighbors and spend time with other women. The demands of her workload, while performing the female role, leave little to no time for her to venture outside the
home to foster new or existing relationships. If she simply leaves with no plan in place to run the household in her absence, she risks losing her status as a woman, or becoming a mogo te.

An employer’s activities outside of the home provide her with income-generating opportunities and access to information and support from community members. Her economic endeavors provide her with a safety net for herself, but also for her daughters. She now has the means necessary to enroll her daughters in school, which often results in a reasonable excuse to refuse an early marriage for her daughters as well. The women benefit from the freedom that the domestic servant provides, and the benefits trickle down to the next generation of women. Assuming the employer does not lose her role as the “woman” when the domestic servant reaches puberty, the women with means to hire a domestic servant reap many benefits from the work provided to them.

For the domestic servant, the story is a bit different. Only when the domestic servant is paying for her education does she receive benefits leading to increased status, mobility and personhood. When supporting her education, the young girl is not seen as a burden to the family and is looked upon favorably when marriages are being arranged. Her education skills will assist her in managing a household and teaching her husband’s future children. The domestic servant who achieves an education is more likely to enter into work outside the home and follow the path of her former employer, securing her economic independence from her husband.

In this study, domestic servants who worked year round tended to come from homes suffering from extreme hardship, whose parents have put few, if any, of their children into formal schooling. Those working year round were subject to more abuse and fear, were separated from their families at an early age and were more likely to be scammed by their intermediaries. Operating from Mande culture, these girls were relying on the creed that their
employers would treat them like daughters and they would receive appropriate training and education while helping their families. Those working year round were afforded little to no opportunity to increase their social networks and were at an increased risk of becoming a *mogo te*.

This study has demonstrated that for these domestic servants, the labor practice brings with it contradictions which the girls must learn to resolve. If they left their employment before their scheduled time, they would be considered by their families as refusing to work and refusing training. If they stayed in abusive households, they further risked any opportunities for marriage by being seen in their communities as someone taking the role of the slave caste. Furthermore, domestic servants working year round were at a higher risk of never achieving their personhood than those who used this work as a means to pay for formal schooling. Servants are in a double-bind as they were at risk of becoming a *mogo te* whether or not they engaged in the work. If they do not participate in domestic servitude, these girls are not willing to fulfill their traditional roles of engaging in child work in preparation for marriage. Yet, if they take on the domestic servant position, they may be considered as a female with few skills, extreme poverty and willing to take on the role of the slave caste.

The ramifications of the requirements of Mande culture on achieving personhood by creating social networks and performing appropriate gender roles can be exceptionally harsh for women. As being both independent outsiders in their family’s homes and their husband’s homes, women are also subject to rules and restrictions placed on them by others. Social networks and personhood status does provide women with a bit of freedom to independently fulfill their emotional, social and economic needs. The consequences associated with the domestic service industry in Mali speak to the contradictions associated with the autonomy
women experience as they achieve independence while concurrently oppressing young girls. Yet, while this research is about Malian women and girls in a specific Mande context, the complexities of the relationship between employers and their servants may be relevant in other regions of the world. The cultural complexities must be explored when conducting further research on the connection between oppression and progress for women and girls and would be important for policy makers and aid workers when making decisions that affect girls and women.
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APPENDIX A

Instrument

**Domestic Servants**

1. How did you become a domestic worker?
2. Has anyone helped you become a worker?
3. Who takes care of you if you are sick?
4. What is the relationship like with the family that you serve?
5. Tell me about a typical day at work.
6. How much money will you make?
7. What do you hope to do with the money you will earn?
8. Tell me the most difficult thing your current or former boss has asked you to do.
9. Do you know any other workers who have been asked to do tasks more difficult than what you’ve been asked to do?
10. Describe the perfect domestic servant.
11. Describe the perfect boss.
12. If a girl from your village wanted to become a domestic worker, what would you tell her about the life of a domestic servant?
13. If I came back when you were 20, what would I find you doing?

**Former Domestic Servants**

1. Tell me about how you became a domestic worker.
2. Are there specific ages for girls to work as domestic servants?
3. Did someone assist you in locating your employment and negotiating your salary?

4. Tell me about that experience.

5. What was your relationship like with your boss?

6. Tell me about the relationship with the other members of your boss’ household.

7. Were you ever concerned about losing your job?

8. What factors would lead to a domestic worker losing her job?

9. Tell me about your relationships with other domestic workers.

10. What types of jobs did other workers take after leaving domestic servitude?

11. If a your daughter wanted to become a domestic worker, what would you tell her about the life of a domestic servant?

**Employers**

1. Tell me about finding a domestic worker to live in your house.

2. How much are you required to pay your worker.

3. In what ways does your domestic servant help you?

4. What is something you wish domestic servants would do, but often don’t?

5. Do you prefer to have a worker for a long time, or to change workers every year? Why?

6. Do you know any bosses who have had difficulties with their workers? What types of difficulties?

7. Between what ages do you expect a worker to be?

8. Do you trust your workers?

9. Describe the perfect domestic servant.

10. Have you ever worked as a domestic servant in a non-relative’s home?
APPENDIX B

Consent Forms

Employee Consent Form (English)

April 20, 2010

Dear Employee Participant,

You are invited to be part of a research project that is studying ways to help understand the needs of domestic workers and their employers. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no financial cost to participate in this study. Your decision to participate or not will have no influence on your relationship with your employer or other members of your community.

Your name will not be connected to any information gathered. You will be given a number and the information collected about you will be connected to that number, not your name. All of the information provided by you and about you will remain confidential. Your responses will not be connected to any identifying information and your employer will not have access to your responses. Therefore, there are no risks to you for participating in this study.

The final reports written with this information will provide communities opportunities to create the best working environments for girls and women. This study will serve to provide information to benefit employees on how to locate the best working environment and maintain employment.

If you wish to participate in this study, please sign the consent form on the following page. If you are under age 18, your parent/guardian will also be required to sign the consent form, as well as your employer. You will be required to participate in a 60-minute audio recorded interview. You will be required to participate in a one to three hour observation while performing your duties as a domestic servant. You may also be asked to participate in a follow-up interview via telephone. You may stop the interview at any time, or skip any questions you choose not to answer. You may withdraw from the study at any time. Therefore, there is no risk to you if you decide to participate in this interview.
If you have any questions or comments about this study, you can contact A’ame Kone, at 7-442-4092 or e-mail at akone@bgsu.edu or my advisor, Dr. Margaret Booth at 001-419-372-9950 or boothmz@bgsu.edu. Also, if you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of Bowling Green State University’s Human Subjects Review Board at 001-419-372-7716, or hsrb@bgnet.bgsu.edu.

Sincerely,

A’ame Kone
Master’s Student in Cross-cultural and International Education
Bowling Green State University

I have read the previous consent form and agree to participate in:

One 60-minute audio-taped interview.

A one to three hour observation while performing your duties as a domestic servant.

A follow-up telephone interview.

____________________________________
Participant Signature         Date

____________________________________
Parent/Guardian Signature   Date

____________________________________
Employer Signature         Date
Employee Consent Form (French)

Le 20 avril 2010

Cher employé participant,

Vous êtes invité à participer dans un projet de recherche qui étudie les moyens pour mieux comprendre les besoins des ouvriers domestiques et leurs employeurs. Votre participation dans cette étude est complètement volontaire. Il n’y a pas de frais pour participer dans cette étude. Votre décision de participer ou de ne pas participer n’aura aucune influence sur vos relations avec votre employeur ou avec d’autres membres de votre communauté.

Votre nom ne sera pas connecté de quelque manière que ce soit aux informations recueillies. Vous recevrez un numéro et les informations recueillies de vous seront connectées à ce numéro, et non pas à votre nom. Toutes les informations que vous fournirez et qui vous concernent resteront confidentielles. Vos réponses ne seront connectées à aucune information personnelle identifiante et votre employeur n’aura pas accès à vos réponses. Donc, il n’y a pas de risque pour vous de participer dans cette étude.

Les rapports finaux écrits avec ces informations fourniront des communautés avec les opportunités de créer les meilleurs environnements de travail pour les filles et les femmes. Cette étude servira à fournir des informations pour bénéficier les employés à localiser le meilleur environnement de travail et à maintenir un emploi.

Si vous souhaitez participer dans cette étude, s’il vous plaît signez le formulaire de consentement sur la page suivante. Si vous avez moins de 18 ans, votre parent ou tuteur doit aussi signer le formulaire de consentement, ainsi que votre employeur. Vous serez demandé de participer dans un entretien de 60 minutes qui sera enregistré avec un appareil audio. Vous serez demandé de participer dans une observation d’une à trois heures pendant que vous accomplissez vos fonctions comme domestique. Vous pourriez être demandé également à participer dans un entretien de suivi via téléphone. Vous pouvez arrêter l’entretien en tout temps, ou sauter les questions auxquelles vous souhaitez ne pas répondre. Vous pouvez vous retirer de cette étude en tout temps. Donc, il n’y a pas de risque pour vous si vous décidez de participer dans cet entretien.
Si vous avez des questions ou des commentaires à faire à propos de cette étude, vous pouvez contacter A’ame Kone, à 7-442-4092 ou par courriel à akone@bgsu.edu ou mon conseillère, Dr. Margaret Booth à 001-419-372-9950 ou boothmz@bgsu.edu. Aussi, si vous avez des questions à propos des procédés de cette étude ou vos droits comme participant de recherche, veuillez contacter la chaire du Human Subjects Review Board de Bowling Green State University à 001-419-372-7716, ou hsr@bgnet.bgsu.edu.

Sincèrement,

A’ame Kone
Étudiante Master dans Cross-cultural and International Education
Bowling Green State University

J’ai lu le formulaire de consentement précédent et j’accepte de participer dans :

Un entretien de 60 minutes, enregistré par un appareil audio.

Une observation d’une à trois heures pendant que vous accomplissez vos fonctions comme domestique.

Un entretien de suivi par téléphone.

______________________________
Signature du Participant       Date

______________________________
Signature du Parent/Tuteur     Date

______________________________
Signature de l’Employeur       Date
Former Employee Consent Form (English)

April 20, 2010

Dear Former Domestic Servant Participant,

You are invited to be part of a research project that is studying ways to help understand the needs of domestic workers and their employers. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no financial cost to participate in this study. Your decision to participate or not will have no influence on your relationship with your former employer or other members of your community.

Your name will not be connected to any information gathered. You will be given a number and the information collected about you will be connected to that number, not your name. All of the information provided by you and about you will remain confidential. Your responses will not be connected to any identifying information and your former employer will not have access to your responses. Therefore, there are no risks to you for participating in this study.

The final reports written with this information will provide communities opportunities to create the best working environments for girls and women. This study will serve to provide information to benefit future employees on how to locate the best working environment and maintain employment.

If you wish to participate in this study, please sign the consent form on the following page. If you are under age 18, your parent/guardian will also be required to sign the consent form. You will be required to participate in a 60-minute audio recorded interview. You may also be asked to participate in a follow-up interview via telephone. You may stop the interview at any time, or skip any questions you choose not to answer. You may withdraw from the study at any time. Therefore, there is no risk to you if you decide to participate in this interview.

If you have any questions or comments about this study, you can contact A’ame Kone, at 7-442-4092 or e-mail at akone@bgsu.edu or my advisor, Dr. Margaret Booth at 001-419-372-9950 or boothmz@bgsu.edu. Also, if you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your
rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of Bowling Green State University’s Human Subjects Review Board at 001-419-372-7716, or hsrb@bgnet.bgsu.edu.

Sincerely,

A’ame Kone
Master’s Student in Cross-cultural and International Education
Bowling Green State University

I have read the previous consent form and agree to participate in:

One 60-minute audio-taped interview.

A follow-up telephone interview.

__________________________________
Participant Signature         Date

__________________________________
Parent/Guardian Signature   Date
Former Employee Consent Form (French)

Le 15 avril 2010

Cher Ancien Domestique Participant,

Vous êtes invité à participer dans un projet de recherche qui étudie les moyens pour mieux comprendre les besoins des ouvriers domestiques et leurs employeurs. Votre participation dans cette étude est complètement volontaire. Il n’y a pas de frais pour participer dans cette étude. Votre décision de participer ou de ne pas participer n’aura aucune influence sur vos relations avec votre ancien employeur ou avec d’autres membres de votre communauté.

Votre nom ne sera pas connecté de quelque manière que ce soit aux informations recueillies. Vous recevrez un numéro et les informations recueillies de vous seront connectées à ce numéro, et non pas à votre nom. Toutes les informations que vous fournirez et qui vous concernent resteront confidentielles. Vos réponses ne seront connectées à aucune information personnelle identifiante et votre ancien employeur n’aura pas accès à vos réponses. Donc, il n’y a pas de risque pour vous de participer dans cette étude.

Les rapports finaux écrits avec ces informations fourniront des communautés avec les opportunités de créer les meilleurs environnements de travail pour les filles et les femmes. Cette étude servira à fournir des informations pour bénéficier les futurs employés à localiser le meilleur environnement de travail et à maintenir un emploi.

Si vous souhaitez participer dans cette étude, s’il vous plaît signez le formulaire de consentement sur la page suivante. Si vous avez moins de 18 ans, votre parent ou tuteur doit aussi signer le formulaire de consentement. Vous serez demandé de participer dans un entretien de 60 minutes qui sera enregistré avec un appareil audio. Vous pourriez être demandé également à participer dans un entretien de suivi via téléphone. Vous pouvez arrêter l’entretien en tout temps, ou sauter les questions auxquelles vous souhaitez ne pas répondre. Vous pouvez vous retirer de cette étude en tout temps. Donc, il n’y a pas de risque pour vous si vous décidez de participer dans cet entretien.
Si vous avez des questions ou des commentaires à faire à propos de cette étude, vous pouvez contacter A’ame Kone, à 7-442-4092 ou par courriel à akone@bgsu.edu ou mon conseillère, Dr. Margaret Booth à 001-419-372-9950 ou boothmz@bgsu.edu. Aussi, si vous avez des questions à propos des procédés de cette étude ou vos droits comme participant de recherche, veuillez contacter la chaire du Human Subjects Review Board de Bowling Green State University à 001-419-372-7716, ou hsrb@bgnet.bgsu.edu.

Sincèrement,

A’ame Kone
Étudiante Master dans Cross-cultural and International Education
Bowling Green State University

J’ai lu le formulaire de consentement précédent et j’accepte de participer dans :

Un entretien de 60 minutes, enregistré par un appareil audio.

Un entretien de suivi par téléphone.

____________________________________
Signature du Participant       Date

____________________________________
Signature de Parent/Tuteur     Date
Employer Consent Form (English)

April 20, 2010

Dear Employer Participant,

You are invited to be part of a research project that is studying ways to help understand the needs of domestic workers and their employers. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no financial cost to participate in this study. Your decision to participate or not will have no influence on your relationship with your worker or other members of your community.

Your name will not be connected to any information gathered. You will be given a number and the information collected about you will be connected to that number, not your name. All of the information provided by you and about you will remain confidential. Your responses will not be connected to any identifying information and your employee will not have access to your responses. Therefore, there are no risks to you for participating in this study.

The final reports written with this information will provide communities opportunities to create the best working environments for girls and women. This study will serve to provide information to benefit employers on how to best recruit domestic servants and retain them in their homes.

If you wish to participate in this study, please sign the consent form on the following page. You will be required to participate in a 60-minute audio recorded interview. You may also be asked to participate in a follow-up interview via telephone. You may stop the interview at any time, or skip any questions you choose not to answer. Therefore, there is no risk to participating in this interview.

If you have any questions or comments about this study, you can contact A’ame Kone, at 7-442-4092 or e-mail at akone@bgsu.edu or my advisor, Dr. Margaret Booth at 001-419-372-9950 or boothmz@bgsu.edu. Also, if you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your
rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of Bowling Green State University’s Human Subjects Review Board at 001-419-372-7716, or hsrb@bgnet.bgsu.edu.

Sincerely,

A’ame Kone
Master’s Student in Cross-cultural and International Education
Bowling Green State University

I have read the previous consent form and agree to participate in:

One 60-minute audio-taped interview.

A follow-up telephone interview.

__________________________________
Participant Signature        Date
Le 20 avril 2010

Cher Employeur Participant,

Vous êtes invité à participer dans un projet de recherche qui étudie les moyens pour mieux comprendre les besoins des ouvriers domestiques et leurs employeurs. Votre participation dans cette étude est complètement volontaire. Il n’y a pas de frais pour participer dans cette étude. Votre décision de participer ou de ne pas participer n’aura aucune influence sur vos relations avec votre employé ou avec d’autres membres de votre communauté.

Votre nom ne sera pas connecté de quelque manière que ce soit aux informations recueillies. Vous recevrez un numéro et les informations recueillies de vous seront connectées à ce numéro, et non pas à votre nom. Toutes les informations que vous fournirez et qui vous concernent resteront confidentielles. Vos réponses ne seront connectées à aucune information personnelle identifiante et votre employé n’aura pas accès à vos réponses. Donc, il n’y a pas de risque pour vous de participer dans cette étude.

Les rapports finaux écrits avec ces informations fourniront des communautés avec les opportunités de créer les meilleurs environnements de travail pour les filles et les femmes. Cette étude servira à fournir des informations pour bénéficier les employeurs avec les meilleurs méthodes de recruter des domestiques et de les retenir à leurs maisons.

Si vous souhaitez participer dans cette étude, s’il vous plaît signez le formulaire de consentement sur la page suivante. Vous serez demandé de participer dans un entretien de 60 minutes qui sera enregistré avec un appareil audio. Vous pourriez être demandé également à participer dans un entretien de suivi via téléphone. Vous pouvez arrêter l’entretien en tout temps, ou sauter les questions auxquelles vous souhaitez ne pas répondre. Donc, il n’y a pas de risque pour vous si vous décidez de participer dans cet entretien.

Si vous avez des questions ou des commentaires à faire à propos de cette étude, vous pouvez contacter A’ame Kone, à 7-442-4092 ou par courriel à akone@bgsu.edu ou mon conseillère, Dr.
Margaret Booth à 001-419-372-9950 ou boothmz@bgsu.edu. Aussi, si vous avez des questions à propos des procédés de cette étude ou vos droits comme participant de recherche, veuillez contacter la chaire du Human Subjects Review Board de Bowling Green State University à 001-419-372-7716, ou hsrb@bgnet.bgsu.edu.

Sincèrement,

A’ame Kone
Étudiante Master dans Cross-cultural and International Education
Bowling Green State University

J’ai lu le formulaire de consentement précédent et j’accepte de participer dans :

Un entretien de 60 minutes, enregistré par un appareil audio.

Un entretien de suivi par téléphone.

_______________________________________
Signature du Participant     Date
APPENDIX C

Human Subjects Review Board Approval

April 27, 2010

TO: A’ame Kone
MACIE

FROM: Hillary Harms, Ph.D.
HSRB Administrator

RE: HSRB Project No.: H10T266GFB

TITLE: Finding Money: Adolescent Work as a Form of Education in Mali

You have met the conditions for approval for your project involving human subjects. As of April 23, 2010, your project has been granted final approval by the Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB). This approval expires on April 6, 2011. You may proceed with subject recruitment and data collection.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is attached. Consistent with federal OHRP guidance to IRBs, the consent document(s) bearing the HSRB approval/expiration date stamp is the only valid version and you must use copies of the date-stamped document(s) in obtaining consent from research subjects.

You are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the HSRB and to use only approved forms. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures (including increases in the number of participants), please send a request for modifications immediately to the HSRB via this office. Please notify me, in writing (fax: 372-6916 or email: hsrb@bgsu.edu) upon completion of your project.

Good luck with your work. Let me know if this office or the HSRB can be of assistance as your project proceeds.

Comments/Modifications:
Stamped consent documents are coming to you via campus mail.

c: Dr. Margaret Booth

Research Category: FULL BOARD REVIEW