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From Silence to Affirmation:

Domestic Workers in Uganda from Fieldwork to Empirical Agenda:  
An Intersection of Class, Gender, and Ethnicity

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## ABSTRACT

### I

The system on migrant domestic workers in post-industrialist countries has been widely researched, and extensive material exists on migrant domestic service from the Philippines and Eastern Europe. However, the system on domestic work performed by local women other than housewives or nonmembers of the family in the household (nonkinship) has rarely caught the attention of mainstream research communities. This study explores domestic labour in developing countries with a particular focus on Uganda. Neoliberal economic policies in Uganda cater to urban middle-class households. In these households, middle-class women have become consumers of labour provided by local women, while teenage girls and children perform domestic work in local women's households. The study explored the blurred relationship between pseudo-family members and their employers, with a focus on middle-class women and their relationship with their live-in domestic workers. I conducted fieldwork from February 9 to March 10, 2010. The purpose of the fieldwork was to understand the employer/employee dynamic and to establish what constitutes paid and unpaid labour in the urban middle-class household. Secondary data were collected to establish an understanding of how to conduct fieldwork, using feminist methodology as a reference. Primary data showed that the influence of social strata is strong. An analysis involving an intersection of gender, class, ethnicity, and age was used to uncover the hidden power relations among the different segments of society. The theoretical framework was based on analysis using feminist sociological perspectives and is viewed through an intersectional lens to analyse the interview materials.

Keywords: Gender, Domestic work, Ethnicity, Neoliberal, Uganda

## RÉSUMÉ

### II

Les recherches sur les travailleurs domestiques migrants dans les pays post-industriels sont largement documentées. On trouve un matériel de recherche approfondi concernant le service domestique migrant des Philippines et d'Europe de l'Est. Le débat sur le travail domestique exécuté au sein du ménage par les femmes locales, autres que les femmes au foyer ou ne faisant pas partie de la famille (sans lien de parenté), a rarement retenu l'attention des communautés de recherche traditionnelles.

Cette étude explore le travail domestique dans les pays en développement avec un intérêt particulier pour l'Ouganda. Les politiques néo-libérales menées en Ouganda depuis profitent aux foyers urbains de classe moyenne au sein desquels les femmes deviennent consommatrices de main-d'œuvre féminine locale, tandis qu'adolescentes et enfants effectuent les tâches domestiques dans leur propre maison.

Cette étude explore les relations floues existant entre les membres de la pseudo famille et leurs employés, en mettant l'accent sur les femmes de classe moyenne et leur relation avec leurs domestiques vivant sous un même toit. J'ai mené une enquête de terrain du 9 février au 10 mars 2010. Le but de ce travail a été de comprendre la dynamique employeur-employé et d'établir ce qui est payé ou ce qui ne l'est pas dans le foyer urbain de classe moyenne.

Les données secondaires ont été recueillies pour comprendre la façon dont est menée une recherche utilisant la méthodologie féministe comme référence. Le cadre théorique de cette étude est basé sur une analyse ayant pour approche la sociologie féministe vue à travers l'objectif intersectionnel permettant l'analyse des témoignages collectés. Les perspectives intersectionnelles du féminisme sociologique démontrent comment le sexe, la classe et l'ethnicité se recoupent sur le marché du travail où inégalités de salaire, travail des enfants et pauvreté rurale s'entremêlent dans le foyer urbain ougandais de classe moyenne.

Mots-clés: Genre, Travailleur domestique, Ethnicité, Néo-libéral, Ouganda

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## **CHAPTER 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

*Women live like bats and owls, labour like beasts and die like worms.*

(Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle, CE 1660, cited in Woolf, 1974, p. 93)

Globalisation is leading the number of domestic workers in Uganda to increase rapidly. Most increases in the workforce in the late twentieth century were among entry-level, middle-class women, which changed the structure of domestic labour at the beginning of the twenty-first century (Mattingley, 1996; Radcliffe, 1990). Society and government have often overlooked domestic work and do not consider it to be real work, because unpaid domestic labour is not considered an economic activity.

This study explores the conflict among women from different classes as reflected in the division of labour and the execution of household tasks in the domestic labour sector, which includes but is not limited to raising children and taking care of the elderly or sick. Although the work performed by domestic workers is invaluable to the household's survival, there have not been any clear indications of pay increases. The majority of local and migrant domestic labourers is female and is characterised as unpaid and undervalued. The system of domestic labour consists of two groups of women: one group that needs jobs and one group that needs help. Domestic workers are usually denied recognition as an integral part of the workforce. For example, standard labour laws do not protect their rights. Most significantly, because their work is confined to the household, instances of exploitation, harassment, and abuse are common and largely ignored.

In this paper, I will argue that if these women were given a voice, recognised as 'paid workers', or considered to be a valuable and contributing part of the workforce, then fewer women would be facing conditions of poverty. This would therefore put women in a less vulnerable socioeconomic position.

### **1.2 Problem Statement of the Research Objective**

The purpose of this paper is to explore the interconnections between domestic workers (pseudo-household members) and their female employers from the middle class. More specifically, the goal of this paper is to analyse the experiential pluralities of unpaid live-in female domestic workers in the hopes of giving them a voice by expanding the discourse on the relationship between domestic workers and women of different classes.

In general, the study of domestic workers in Uganda has not yet earned significant scholarly attention. If Uganda is mentioned at all, the research is generalised to other African countries. The primary focus of gender studies has been focused on Ugandan women's

sexuality, the societal role of sex, and grassroots and developmental issues, particularly relating to HIV/AIDS. However, research on the division of labour by gender and the role of middle-class women has received scant attention from the scientific communities. The primary focus by mainstream media and the academic research communities is on the plights of poverty, human trafficking, marginalisation, and prostitution, rather than the situation of domestic workers in Uganda. The study of the domestic worker in Uganda is significant because it explores unpaid female workers who are caught between issues of gender, class, and ethnicity among contemporary middle-class women in Uganda.

### **1.3 Definition of the Term**

In Uganda, the term ‘domestic worker’ does not exist in the local context. A domestic worker is referred to as ‘house girl’ or ‘house boy’. In Uganda, like elsewhere, domestic work is hardly recognised in the labour statistics. An average of as little as 6,000 Ush (about \$3.40) per month is earned by domestic workers, with the highest wage at most 12,000 Ush (about \$6.80) per month (Platform for Labour Action, 2007).

The domestic workers’ rights and needs are excluded from existing national policies. For instance, a report on adult domestic workers by the Platform for Labour Action, which attempts to highlight issues regarding domestic workers’ wages, largely depended on information collected from employers (Platform for Labour Action, 2008). Domestic work is one of the oldest occupations, yet its definition remains relatively vague. According to the 2010 International Labour Conference, the terms ‘domestic work’ and ‘domestic workers’ have changed over time, depending on geographical and cultural environments. Terms like ‘maid’ and ‘servant’ are used interchangeably. As a result, one is unable to determine whether the term refers to unpaid or paid workers. The International Labour Organisation further claims that in some parts of the world, the vocabulary of ‘domesticity’ has been removed because of its pejorative connotation and sublimed reference to undervalued care work.

On the other hand, the conference report claims that some have opted to retain the concept of ‘domestic work’, and it is used widely in the language of international relations. For the purposes of this paper, the term ‘domestic worker’ will refer to those who provide services including cleaning, doing laundry, ironing, shopping, cooking, and caring for the household’s children and elderly. At its 301st session in March 2008, the International Labour Organisation governing body adopted the term ‘domestic worker’ to give the occupation dignity, status, and respect. The shift in attitudes by some employers was started by the empowerment of domestic workers and the battle for fair working conditions as domestic workers are becoming valuable as employees and as human beings.

## 1.4 Research Questions

The domestic work systems position women's unpaid household work at the centre of the accumulation process. The debates bring to the forefront both the arrangement and the conditions of paid live-in and live-out domestic workers at national and international levels.

Domestic work systems mention two categories. The first category is the unpaid domestic worker who is a family member such as wives, husbands, children, and extended family (kinship). The second category consists of paid domestic workers, who are nonfamily members, including both migrant live-in and live-out domestic workers. This second category can be seen in two distinct ways, where local domestic workers and migrant workers both fall under the same umbrella definition of 'paid domestic workers'.

This paper's main goal is to explore a third category: domestic workers who are unpaid, nonfamily, and nonkin members of the household. These domestic workers labour in informal settings, which are arranged by the biological families or relatives of the domestic workers themselves. These workers are often young girls who have been deprived of a basic education. They usually come from rural areas and are unable to negotiate reasonable wages if they are employed. These young girls migrate from rural households to urban middle-class families to perform labour. Thus, the research questions intended to identify the unpaid transfer of labour from the rural household to the urban middle-class family. Furthermore, the question intended to explore how unpaid labour is made visible since it mostly concerns vulnerable women. It was proposed that such an approach would unveil the socioeconomic and political/cultural ramifications that accompany the relationships. Generally, the relationships between employers and domestic workers in such circumstances are blurred because of the informal arrangements established between pseudo-family members and their middle-class employers.

The structure of domestic work in Uganda and the main goal of this thesis lead to the formulation of the main research question: What kind of relationship do pseudo-household members (domestic workers) and real household members have?

The subquestions are as follows:

- How do domestic workers describe their contributions to the household?
- How do domestic workers describe their life with their pseudo-family?
- Why do domestic workers prefer to work as live-in domestic workers?
- How do employers describe the primary duties and responsibilities of a live-in domestic worker?
- How do employers compare and contrast paid and unpaid domestic work?

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

In the late twentieth century, there was a sudden surge of middle-class women obtaining employment in urban areas. This trend created an imbalance in the household labour force. Thus, middle-class women in the cities or urban centres began to recruit poor women (especially young girls) as domestic workers. Kampala was no exception. The escalating poverty and poor living conditions in rural areas led to a constant stream of young girls to the city. The main reason for this trend in migration was the sharp increase in employment for middle-class women. Middle-class women shifted their household workload to the poor young girls or women they employed as their 'maids'.

Thus, the increase in the number of middle-class women entering the workforce increased the need for household labour. This trend divided domestic work more clearly into two categories: paid and unpaid. However, paid household labour is always visible, whereas unpaid work is more hidden. A 1991 United Nations report based on women's work patterns, provides a summary of women's devotion of time to both paid and unpaid economic activity. The United Nations report indicated that in all developed and developing regions except North America and Australia women spend more time engaged in working than men. In developing countries, women spend more time in the labour force than they do with their household work. Men spend less time working in the labour force than previously in all developed regions, but they spend an increased amount of time in the household in North America, Australia, and Western Europe. In Africa, Asia, and the Pacific, women work an average of twelve to thirteen hours more per week than men.

In Uganda and other developing countries, men perform fewer household chores than men do who reside in developed regions. Women in almost every part of the world have total responsibility for maintaining the house, including women who are employed outside the home. Moreover, the husband does not contribute substantially to the family unit, regardless of his wife's employment status (Kammaeyer, 1987). It is also important to understand that status is not necessarily interconnected with class. Therefore, this paper does not consider the concept of class as a fixed position. Instead, it finds class to be an adjustable position, either a high or a low status according to economic status or to how women and men inform their own positions.

## **1.6 Previous Research**

In this section, I will explain the feminist thought of how domestic labour is centred by providing literature support relative to class and gender. I will show how various women's experiences enlighten the understanding of the complexities of gender, class, and ethnicity. I will also show the impact of these roles. For example, more middle-class women in the labour force has created an adverse conditions for young girls in poor households and raised the

issue of the unpaid/paid female labour force. The unpaid housewives and unpaid domestic workers constitute the two main groups in the domestic labour debates.

Historically, employing a servant was linked to class and status, characteristics found in Great Britain during the Victorian era. The United States also had an extensive history of domestic work. In the nineteenth century, many young working-class women considered domestic work to be a social custom. Such a woman would work during the period in her life before she found a husband, cared for her own home, or moved on to a better job (Katzman, 1978). However, in the Southern United States, such domestic servants largely consisted of Black women (Katzman, 1978). Since the profession was associated with slavery, Southern White women were not included, as they were of perceived higher status (Rollins, 1985).

On the other hand, in Northern cities, native-born white women, immigrant women, and black women all worked as domestic help. In small towns and in the countryside, native-born women continued to work as domestic help despite the immigrants and black women who were seeking the profession in cities. Throughout the nineteenth century, native-born white women still worked as domestic hired help. The occupation was seen as a starting point for working-class women on their way to better jobs or married life. In particular, foreign-born white women saw domestic work as a way to learn English and to integrate into society. For these women, working as a domestic servant was a means to an end, and they sought better occupations as soon as they had the opportunity to do so (Katzman, 1978). This gave rise to considerable debates in publications and research on the status of servants among housewives at the end of the nineteenth century. Then the rate of immigrants started to decline, and the number of servants was reduced (Katzman, 1978).

However, in recent studies on domestic workers and servants the international migration of women labourers has often been the focus. For example, in Bridget Anderson's study of the experience of domestic workers in Europe, she analyses the context of women's rights and makes the migrant domestic worker visible throughout the world (Anderson, 2000). The availability of cheap migrant labour interacts with the challenge faced by the middle class to reunite reproductive and productive labour (Anderson, 2000).

Feminist historians have strongly debated the absence of women from recorded history. In many countries, gendered roles have been strictly delineated through centuries of tradition, culture, and circumstance. Therefore, taking into account colonial history, the tradition of class-based work, and slavery, issues pertaining to women's labour were reflected in the field of gender and class. However, the exact nature of women's labour in the domestic sector or public domain, such as workers' contributions to the household income or the overall economy, is still unclear, and the available literature fails to analyse the reasons for and ramifications of the absence of domestic work from the public eye. This lack of previous research on the subject of women's labour prompted me to pursue my research.

Studies of public-sector workers versus domestic workers have been conducted in countries with histories of racial inequality and heavy immigration, such as the United States and Britain (Milkman et al., 1998), as well as in countries with histories of colonial settlements, such as South Africa and Zimbabwe (Romero, 1992). Sociologist Walby (1997), in 'Gender Transformations', explains the underlying transformation between the sexes as follows:

*The system of gender relation is changing, from one, which was based on the women, being largely confined to the domestic sphere, to one in which women are present in the public sphere but frequently segregated into unequal positions. The patterns of inequality between women and men have changed as a result, but are still frequently segregated into unequal positions. The patterns of inequality between women and men have changed as a result, but in complex ways not simple, for better or for worse. (p. 1)*

Indeed, in this case, Walby argues that the changes that have taken place between the sexes are, to a certain degree, visible, complex, and not at all ambivalent; rather, they are clearly distinguished. There have been clear indications that women worldwide are becoming increasingly well educated and achieving better-paying, higher-status jobs. Despite these strides toward greater gender equality, there are still many areas of concern, such as increases in the poverty rate among women with children, older women, and men, because of social inequalities in both the northern and southern hemispheres. The crucial point of Walby's argument is that although more women are entering the labour market and more women are becoming educated, this is not necessarily a strong indication that all women are gaining equal status in society. On the other hand, women entering the workforce and furthering their education facilitates the creation of cultural clashes with and differences between women who prefer to fulfil more traditional gender roles and women who want to have equal rights with men. Although women have continued to be subordinated even as they make social progress, only some men face marginalisation as a consequence of women's economic progress (Walby, 1997).

Recent studies of working trends in Uganda have tended to focus on the construction of dichotomies, such as paid versus unpaid work and productive versus reproductive activities (Barya, 1998; Namara, 2001). However, domestic workers as a distinctive category do not neatly fit into these conceptual categories. The reason is largely that domestic work takes place outside the organised labour market/institutions. These cases are common in many African nations, such as Nigeria and South Africa, that have the same colonial history as Uganda. In all such countries, middle-class people have historically utilised domestic servants as an accepted societal practice. Therefore, domestic servitude patterns, as revealed by the literature on black female domestic workers in South Africa, remain a living historical legacy. In fact, in contemporary South Africa, domestic work has virtually become recognised as just another form of employment.

From the literature, we begin to see that domestic work is still a growing field in Uganda. And when the country adopted neoliberal policies—that is, espoused a free-market economy and a very minimal state role—more women in the middle class entered the workforce. Since the approach treats all human activity as a commodity, which is best organised through a market, all labour was subject to market forces. Hence, while some activities were already recognised as commodities in the form of waged labour, others such as domestic work were then incorporated as income-bearing activities. In that way, domestic work began to flourish, and it is still ingrained in Uganda’s middle-class households, just as unpaid domestic labour was not discarded entirely. In addition, much of the scholarship on neoliberalism and these new forms of labour supply has tended to look at paid labour and has not thoroughly scrutinised unpaid household labour. Therefore, this study intended to fill the gap by focusing on unpaid domestic labour, which is rarely discussed in the sociological or developmental literature. The study further explored the invisibility of unpaid live-in domestic workers who migrate from rural areas, a group mainly comprised of females coming from poor backgrounds to enter the field of domestic work. The study argues that the invisibility of domestic workers reflects and perpetuates the unequal status of women in Ugandan culture (Barya, 1998).

## CHAPTER 2

### **The Socioeconomic and Historical Background of Ugandan Society**

Uganda is in the East African region, and covers a total surface area of 241,038 km. Uganda is considered a landlocked country. The economy is primarily agrarian with over eighty percent of the population engaged in the agricultural industry. The Ugandan population in 2005 was 26.8 million people and there was a high growth rate as compared to sub-Saharan Africa and low-income countries (The Uganda National Household Survey, 2002/03).

The majority of the people living in the rural area are involved in agriculture and live in poverty. Poverty refers not only to lack of income but also to lack of means to satisfy basic social needs and break out of the cycle of poverty and personal and property insecurity. Poverty is mainly a rural phenomenon: forty-eight percent of the rural population is below poverty, in comparison with sixteen percent of urban dwellers. The dimensions of poverty include gender, livelihood location, and seasonality (The Uganda National Household Survey, 2002/03).

The name Uganda, the Swahili term for Buganda, was adopted by the British in 1894. Buganda is the kingdom of the people known as Baganda (singular form Muganda). Buganda is the traditional kingdom in present-day Uganda, where Uganda's capital Kampala is located. When the first Europeans arrived in East Africa, the Kingdom of Buganda had a well-developed centralised government with a political stronghold on other regional kingdoms in the area. Originally, the early organisation of society in Buganda was based on the possession of land resting in the hands of the leadership of various clans (Sathyamurthy, 1986).

Historically speaking, women in Uganda have had access to the land via usufruct rights to clan land. In Buganda, the colonial system of government has legalized gender disparities relative to land rights by allowing certain groups to become landowners by decree of the king (Mamdani, 1984). This practice limited women's autonomy and their role in agriculture production under the imposed monetary economy, which involved restrictions on cash crop production at the expense of subsistence food, leading to even further marginalisation.

In 2009, no fewer than fifty-two recognised clans made up the Kingdom of Buganda (Kyazze, 2006). The family is a microcosm of the kingdom, whereby the father is obeyed as the head of the family; his decisions are not questioned. In keeping with the male-centred culture, those with whom he has established a patron/client relationship determine his social status. Young Baganda children are sent away to live in the homes of their social superiors. This is a symbol of loyalty among parents because of the patron/client relationship, and it provides a place for social mobility for their children (Kiyimba, 2005). In contemporary

Ugandan society, the Luganda language is widely spoken, and the second language in Uganda is English.

Uganda adopted neoliberal economic policies in 1987, starting with the continuation of the structural adjustment policies (SAPs). Uganda is known as the first African country to fully adopt extensive neoliberal reforms. The neoliberal policies called for a free market and a very minimal role for the state. These policies were mainly driven by Western capitalists in search of global market advertisement investment opportunities.

The National Resistance Movement (NRM) that came to power in 1986 was initially a left-wing-cum-socialist ideology, but by 1989 the regime had move towards the right. That is why it supports SAP economic reforms. The movement also espoused privatisation policies that led to the denial of social and economic rights. The economic reformation has affected not only the market itself but also other areas, such as the education, health, and public administration sectors, according to neoliberal prescriptions. The neoliberal business culture altered both the political economy and other aspects of society, including the moral order of the local market communities and the country as a whole. The politics and societal influence of moral restructuring are driven according to interest norms, practices, and projects by both the domestic power elite and foreign donors, organisations, and corporations. This in turn shapes the particular setting and the situation in Uganda in the broader context of neoliberal economic process (Wiegratz, 2010).

## **2.1 The Gender Dimension of Poverty in Uganda**

Although poverty afflicts both women and men, they often experience poverty differently. Conventional poverty studies do not sufficiently recognize these gender differences. In Uganda, gender issues are captured under all aspects of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) and commitments of the Programme of Action. Ugandan officials recognise that generational gender inequalities continue the state of poverty of families, communities, and nations. Gender inequalities affect the growth and performance of a nation, and have both direct and indirect costs on poverty levels and the reduction of poverty. Gender inequalities mediate the relationship between macroeconomic and trade policies, on the one hand, and the outcomes of these policies, on the other (The Uganda National Agriculture Report, n.d., pp. 1-2).

Generally, women have not benefited as men have from the decreases in poverty, although gender issues arise under the PEAP 2004/2005–2007/2008 and the Programme of Action. The main reason is that women have not benefited as much as men in the PEAP in recent years, and women do not have as many opportunities for social and economic development, particularly in rural areas. The division of agricultural labour in Uganda's rural society in complex, as food production is the domain of women.

However, men in general focus on livestock and cash crops, which have bigger potential for income generation. Therefore, women have little control of resources or the money realised from the sales of these products (The Uganda National Agriculture Report, n.d.). In general, women are also left behind men in education levels and income earnings. In addition, they also face barriers in participating in community development activities because of a lack of mobilisation, lack of time, and the failure to see the benefits in participating. Women may also face discrimination concerning land and other production factors (The Uganda National Agriculture Report, n.d.). Women are involved in the production of crops for income, but they are not beneficiaries of intrahousehold sharing of this income. Women do not own land based on the social system; however producing food is a responsibility assigned to them. Thus, the reduction of household poverty must involve the participation of women in economic activities in areas where they can have control (The Uganda National Agriculture Report, n.d.).

## **2.2 Labour Policies**

Major labour laws within Uganda include the Workers Compensation Act 2000, the Minimum Wages Act 2000, the Employment Act 2006, the Labour Union Arbitration and Settlement Act 2006, and the Occupational Safety Act 2006. Uganda governing officials state the conditions of employment in the Employment Act 2006. Covered in this act include contract of service; termination of contract; termination notices; protection of wages; hours of work, rest, and holidays; employment of women; employment of children; and care of employees (Barya, 2007).

Sections 29 and 37, addresses the protection of wages and provides workers the right to their salary or wage pay. The failure of an employer to pay can result in the termination of a recruitment permit. Section 41 purports that all wages shall be paid in legal tender. Section 43 emphasises the mode of payment. All the act emphasises is that an employee must be paid in legal tender and in a certain manner. The question of the amount to be paid was left to the person offering the employment, since the Uganda Employment Act has no provision for a minimum wage.

In light of the above, the position of domestic workers or household help in the labour market is difficult. In Uganda, the job of the domestic worker stands out as the most unnoticed risky form of employment. Both the literature and the field data indicate that domestic workers suffer from all forms of abuse, including physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual harassment, delayed payments, low pay, and unpaid wages. In most cases, these domestic workers are viewed as third-class family members. Any benefit they get from the family by reason of their employment is viewed as a form of payment taken in exchange for their labour. This includes, for example, housing, meals, and even healthcare. Given that most

people take on such employment for survival, the lack of a minimum wage means that domestic workers end up having neither gainful employment nor a minimum wage.

## CHAPTER 3

### Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Method-Methodological Feminist Epistemology Issues in Fieldwork

The nonpositivist conceptual debates on methodologies create mutual connections among feminists. Nonpositivist methodologies are central while exploring, understanding, and defining human development, human poverty, and vulnerabilities are subdebates. Julie Nelson, a feminist economist stated in her article 'Economic Methodology and Feminist Critiques' (2001, p. 96),:

*Feminist scholars in the 1980s, like Keller (1985), Harding (1986), pointed out how objectivity, separation, logical consistency, individual accomplishment, mathematics abstraction, lack of emotion and science itself have long been culturally associated with rigor, hardness – and masculinity.*

*At the same time, subjectivity, connection, intuitive understanding, cooperation, qualitative analysis, concreteness, emotion and nature have often been associated with weakness, softness. And femininity. Applied to economics, it is clear that a masculinist gender bias has also been behind the choice of topics, methods, and key assumptions used to define mainstream economics.*

Nelson's writings deal with dichotomy between the feminist way of thinking and the accumulation of knowledge out of what is called science. Meanwhile, Sandra Harding ponders and questions what is knowledge and scientific knowledge, and also whether science can be value-free (Harding, 1987).

One can question whether there is a feminist method. In academia, it has been debated whether feminism uses specific feminist *methods* or whether it can be seen as a certain *approach* to scientific studies and fieldwork (Gibson-Graham, 1994; Harding, 1987; McDowell, 1992). The concept outlined by Harding explains that a research method is a technique for gathering evidence, a methodology is a theory or analysis of how research should be conducted, and an epistemology is a theory of knowledge (Harding, 1987; Moss, 2002). Therefore, feminist researchers agree that the feminist method is more of an approach to research and fieldwork. The concept of 'method' here does not stand for certain 'techniques' in particular. The feminist method should be seen as a guide to how research should be carried out and what can be evaluated as legitimate and valid knowledge. Harding emphasised the necessity of giving up the search for the feminist method, but she prioritised the question of knowledge and how to approach the acquisition and legitimacy of knowledge. The specific methods used by feminist scholars come from fieldwork techniques derived from the social sciences. Qualitative methods, such as in-depth or semistructured interviews, life-story interviews, group interviews, and participant observation are utilised. John Eyles

(1993), a geographer, explains, ‘There are few, if any, differences with respect to method that both feminists and interpretive scientists search for sensitive techniques for gathering evidence’ (p. 52). Therefore, one could argue that there is no specific contribution of feminism to the fieldwork method.

However, Eyles asserts, ‘Feminism has taken a lead role in sensitizing us all to our responsibilities in our use of method and in exposing research procedure and knowledge acquisition for our critical gaze’ (1993, p. 52). Therefore, one could see feminism as a critical approach for addressing knowledge, production, legitimacy, and validity. In terms of methodology and epistemology, the feminist methodology is predominant.

Donna Haraway’s (1988) notion of partial and situated knowledge has been a major breakthrough in feminist methodological debates within geography and other social sciences. Her approach has been widely accepted within academia and has been applied by feminists to emphasise that the omniscient, detached observer stance is not possible within any kind of scholarly research (Gibson-Graham, 1994; Moss, 2002). The concept of *situated knowledge* means acknowledging that there is no one truth to be uncovered and that all knowledge is partial and connected to the context in which it is created. Researchers can use the notion of situated knowledge when questioning the partiality of knowledge through mixed-method research design. Harding’s understanding of scientific knowledge provided me with insight regarding my interviews during my fieldwork in Kampala. I realise that socioeconomic research must be conducted with conscience, ethics regarding knowledge accumulation, and emotion, particularly in the study of the production/reproduction of societies.

Therefore, the feminist methodology I apply encourages me to question scientific knowledge as well as to reflect upon my moral obligation in presenting ‘the truth’ of these women while dealing with fieldwork outside my own reality. I was driven to observe and try to record their voices as accurately as possible from my place as an outsider. I prioritised the participants’ time and space, allowing the participants to speak freely without any interruption unless it was crucial. Therefore, the empirical evidence is structured so that the oral narratives occupy the central position in this research. I have not let the analytical process cut up what they actually said in pieces and force them into a matrix created for the sole purpose of analysis, but I have stayed true to their narrative. This process allowed me to remain as true as possible to the authentic voices of the women.

### **3.2 Entering the Field**

My interest in rural/urban migration studies in Kampala, Uganda, stems from my experience studying at Lund University in Sweden with the Faculty of Development Studies & Centre for Gender Studies, where I am currently a student.

I got my inspiration for this fieldwork during a Nordic exchange programme between Lund University and the University of Bergen in Norway. During my stay in Norway, I came

into contact with Senior Lecturer Tabitha Mulyampiti from the Women and Gender Studies department at Makerere University in Uganda and also with Dr. Asimwe B. Godfrey, the department head of the same university's History and Development Studies department. Both were doing their research at the University of Bergen and the Christian Michelesen Institute, where I attended their research presentations. It was through these researchers that I came into contact with the leader of the St. Stephen Church of Uganda, Mrs. Aidah Bisasse. When I got to Uganda, Aidah arranged a meeting, and this is where I met my respondents. I was also assigned a local translator since I was unable to communicate in the local language, Luganda. She translated Luganda into English for me. The research was carried out in Kampala City, which consists of five divisions: Kawempe, Nakawa, Makindye, Rubaga, and Central.

This study is based on qualitative research. However, the choice of whether to use a qualitative or quantitative method depends upon the researcher's time, topic, and available financial resources. I chose to do qualitative research because it is an approach that allows for a more in-depth understanding of the respondents' life stories. The qualitative research consists of interviews, observations, and oral histories (Gilbert, 2001; Rocheleau, 1995). According to Moss (2002), because of the rich detailed data, in-depth interviewing and other qualitative methods are preferred almost exclusively by feminist geographers. Feminist geographer, Dianne Rocheleau (1995), pointed out the advantages of mixing methods and focuses on the value of triangulating different types of material, such as observations, in-depth interviews, and semistructured interviews. That way, the results produce a narrative that captures gendered differences regarding access to, control over, and knowledge of resources.

I began this study by analysing previous research—in other words, by obtaining secondary data and information, which I extracted mainly from Lund University's databases of academic journals and books. In addition to these sources, I collected primary data by interviewing domestic workers as well as experts on Uganda's labour policy.

### **3.3 Sampling of the Informants**

The method consists of interpreting empirical evidence, the life stories of live-in domestic workers, and their relationships with their pseudo-families, to whom they are not related. The informants consisted of two groups of women: middle-class women and domestic workers. The interviews with the middle-class women were conducted in English, while the interviews with the domestic workers were conducted in the local language, Luganda, with assistance from the translator.

This study involved conducting personal interviews with domestic workers and middle-class women who are either employers or pseudo-family members. Previous studies and literature on domestic workers in Uganda were used to analyse my findings. The interviews were based on a semistructured model, which contains open questions followed by several specific questions to provide follow-up for in-depth interviews. The semistructured

interview model allowed me to reconstruct the question to fit the conversation. Although the semistructured interview model has many benefits, one must consider the risks: it allows a good deal of flexibility and, depending on the participant's response, the direction of the thesis could be totally changed. Another advantage of open interviews is that they avoid the possibility of misinterpretation, because the interviewer is looking not for a specific kind of answer but for a wider answer for interpretation. All the informants I chose to interview were from Kampala.

The research was carried out in Kampala City. It is the largest city in Uganda, and the rural-migrant population in the city is high. Of its five divisions, Kawempe and Rubaga are the most densely populated. My informants were selected from two groups: middle-class women and domestic workers. They were chosen on the basis of age, education, and occupation. However, these two groups of women and girls did not come from the same household. I consciously made selections so as not to conduct interviews where both groups of women (employers and employees) come from the same household. I wanted to avoid unnecessary emotional implication between these two women and with my own position, and I wanted to ensure the authenticity of the oral narrative.

To find informants, I used the snowball sampling process, where an active member of the church put me into contact with other members, since women from both of these groups are regular churchgoers. The leader of the church, Mrs. Aidah Bisasse, who is the head of the Christian Women's Fellowship in Mpererwe, Kawempe, as a key informant. She was instrumental in putting me in contact with various women in Kawempe and Rubaga. I chose her as a key informant for two reasons. Firstly, she was introduced to me by two close contacts, Senior Lecturer Tabitha Mulyampiti and Dr. Asiimwe B. Godfrey, who collaborated on research at the University of Bergen and Makerere University while I did my exchange project in Norway. Secondly, she is a resident at the Mpererwe Christian Women's Fellowship. In line with her role at the church, she acts as a liaison between these two groups of women.

The women I interviewed are representative of the women of Uganda because they come from diverse backgrounds. They ranged in age from seventeen to fifty-five years of age. Some of the domestic workers were below the age of eighteen. Therefore I needed to ask the permission of their pseudo-family to interview them. The lowest level of education completed was half primary, and the highest level of education completed was a master's degree. Their ethnicity backgrounds are Baganda (Muganda, singular form; Buganda, plural form), Ugandan Indians (Indians who are born in Uganda), and other Ugandans. They had various occupations, such as civil servants and private entrepreneurs.

Although the theoretical framework of this study was written prior to the collection of the interview materials as an analytic tool to facilitate the understanding of the nature of the interview, there have been many barriers to analysing the interview material in the form of

tight jacket theory. It has been difficult to fit all of my findings neatly into the research study. In my research, I encountered many problems where I needed to utilise different ways of approaching and analysing interview materials in order to fulfil the theoretical framework. However, the research is not meant to act as a completely fitted theory.

### **3.4 Use and Conservation of Content**

All the interviews were conducted with a tape recorder and scripts. The interviews were conducted in both English and Luganda so that the participants were able to use the language of their choice to express themselves freely and feel comfortable sharing their experiences from the past and present. All the female employers (pseudo-family members) chose to speak in English; however, all the domestic workers chose to speak the local language of Luganda. The employers' choice to speak English was a reflection of their higher level of education and also their catering to my inability to speak Luganda. Since I was unable to speak the local language, my translator was present at all times during my research.

I conducted interviews from February 10, 2010 to March 9, 2010, which is approximately a month. The questionnaires I used were semistructured and were followed up with in-depth sections that requested information on personal background, employment, age, level of education, division of labour, skill, relation to the employer, social network, wages, and assets. The interviews with the domestic workers and their employers took approximately one and a half hours.

Prior to the interview, I introduced myself. I shared my age, education, type of degree, and origin with the help of my translator. I also shared my current location, the research subject, and from which university I am conducting the research. I also informed the respondents that their personal information, such as their names, would not be revealed in the research without their permission. I strictly explained that the participants/respondents would not benefit economically in exchange for their stories. Therefore, the interviews were based on their voluntary participation and willingness to share their life histories. In this setting, I consider myself a powerless outsider because of my inability to converse in the local language. I am at the mercy of their (domestic workers') time and their narratives, and I rely on the help of a translator to conduct the interviews. In addition to this, during my fieldwork I was staying in the household where domestic workers were employed, and this also reflected my own position as a young woman from a middle-class background with a Swedish nationality. My status as a foreigner from a culture and socioeconomic background that were completely different from those of my interviewees marked me as an outsider. My student status and my age differentiated me from both employees and employers.

Participation in this research was entirely voluntary. All the participants had the option to refuse to participate in giving their life stories or even to change their minds during the research after giving verbal consent during the interview process.

### **3.5 Confidentiality**

The respondents who were domestic workers were in the age bracket of seventeen to twenty-three, and they were female. Some of them attended church with their employers, and some were not dependent on their workload. I asked for the employers' permission to conduct the interviews, because five of the domestic workers were under age eighteen. During the interview process, each domestic worker was asked if she was willing to share her life story before and after becoming a domestic worker (commonly referred to as a 'house girl'). In total, I interviewed five underage girls (below age eighteen) and eight adult women. The domestic workers and the employers in this study are not from the same household. This was done consciously for two reasons: to ensure that their stories are authentic, and to consider the well-being of the domestic workers with their employers so that the interview does not cause friction between them.

The respondents who are employers were churchgoing (Protestant church) women who ranged in age from forty-three to fifty-five, were currently married, and had at least one graduate (bachelor's) degree. These women were employed in various government offices, and some worked in the private sector, but most of the middle-class women worked in the public sector. A total of ten female respondents constituted this group. In total, twenty-three respondents shared their personal stories during the interview process, which made this research possible.

### **3.6 Participant Observation**

The significant part of the information focused specifically on the relationship between pseudo-family members and the activities of the household's domestic worker. Since I could not speak or understand Luganda, the observations were mainly made while I was interacting with the middle-class women who spoke English. I kept notes on almost everything that was overheard and observed, as long as it related to the activities going on in the house. Participant observation techniques were particularly useful when compared to the interview results.

### **3.7 Limitation of the Scope**

This study is not free from limitations, because the data on which this paper is based rely on the informants' memory recall and willingness to provide information. In addition, because most of the female domestic workers come from the rural areas and are largely illiterate or unable to articulate their conditions, information may not easily be conveyed.

## CHAPTER 4

### **Theoretical Framework: Intersection of Class, Gender, and Ethnicity on the Basis of the Feminist Sociologist**

#### **4.1 The Concept of Intersectionality**

The theory of intersectionality is used to analyse how social and cultural categories interlock. Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) first introduced the concept of intersectionality, but the concept gained momentum in the 1990s when sociologist Patricia Hills Collins revisited the idea as part of her framework on Black feminism. In this setting, the relationships between gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, class, and nationality are examined (Collins, 2000). Both Crenshaw and Collins asserted that cultural patterns are related and are interlocked by the intersectional system. I am using the concept of intersectionality to examine how class, gender, and ethnicity intersect with one another in the form of domestic labour.

Most feminists, like Collins, argue for the importance of intersectionality in order to gain political and social equality in the democratic system. I chose to use the intersections of class and gender primarily because most of the domestic labour literature addresses only those issues having to do with the family household as a site of production. However, I decided to include ethnicity in my research because women I have interviewed come from different ethnic backgrounds. Therefore, it is vital to see how it informs other social categories. Gender and class are two different social differentiations. Even in the intersectionality research, the concept of class is overlooked in comparison to gender, ethnicity, and sexuality.

Through this framework, I hope to contribute to the discussion of how gender and class intersect and create tension but also come together and shape the lives of the women I have interviewed. I use the notion of intersectionality mainly from a feminist sociologist perspective. One of the primary reasons for using intersectionality as my main perspective is to analyse and criticise the existing system of power and privilege in society as reflected in social class.

#### **4.2 Intersection of Gender and Class**

In the article 'Sacred Cows. Is Feminism Relevant to the New Millennium' (1992), sociologist Rosalind Coward delivered several arguments regarding feminist thought. Coward turned the debates into opposing viewpoints critiquing women's and gender studies in general. She tended to favour gender relations as an uncomplicated and unambiguous relation of power, where it is assumed that men per definition are given the strongest position. She stated:

*The picture at the moment is much muddled and uneven. Men are often the*

*beneficiaries of how gender works in this society, but women sometimes as well.*  
(1999, p. 212)

In this context, she claimed that equality between sexes has increased at the expense of working-class men. While women have gained more rights in society, men's dominating role has been challenged. Coward continued to argue later that:

*The combination of feminism and the changes in the economy have shattered the easy way in which men could assume that their masculinity entitled them to a superior position. Now we have to acknowledge that gender is only one among many divisions in truly uneven and heterogeneous society. Working-class men especially are scapegoats of the society no longer at ease with masculinity.*  
(1999, pp. 211-212)

Coward departed from the classic feminist view that men still have power over women. Coward's above statement is embedded in the formation of gender and class in our contemporary society. Therefore, the notion of intersectionality is especially useful, since it unpacks the complexities of women's and men's lives by examining the way gender influences social class and vice versa. In these settings, intersectionality links to the larger historical context that shaped lived experiences of marginality, oppression, hierarchies, and constituted dichotomies. Gender is understood as socially constructed but not as a category, while government policies interpret gender as natural, a binary category of male and female, public and private. On the other hand, one finds new differences, such as gender and class differences, that are about to be constructed, while old differences, now reconstituted, are anticipating new modes. I find the concept of intersectionality helpful in enabling us to capture the complexity of socio-economic systems.

In most research, gender and class concepts are critically analysed as separate debates. This is due to the classic sociological discussion that clashes with the concept of class and gender. It is rooted in the ideological but us also gleaned from different disciplines. The classic discussion of class analysis, based on both Marxian and Weberian theories, prioritised class, which was viewed as significantly more important than gender, while feminism claims otherwise (Vogel, 2000). Current academic research no longer engages with the debate that one category should prevail over the other. Rather, it endeavours to determine how gender and class respond to each other in a complex setting. Women and men live in a different way; therefore, the notion of intersectionality arises. Previous discussions surrounding class from other feminist sociologist scholars (e.g., Acker, 1983, 1990, 2003, 2006a, 2006b; Crompton, 2001; McCall, 2005; Wright, 2001) have been critically analysed through a new lens, which argues that the concept of class and other social categories still remains 'unexamined' and is the marginalised position within women's status and gender studies. Sociologist Joan Acker claims that:

*Feminist scholars in the U.S. now agree that gender, race and class domination are intrinsically connected.* (2003, p. 49)

Acker explains that the idea of intersectionality cannot occur or be explained without bringing in the class dimension, but mainstream discussion tends to divert its focus from the class category, even debates around intersectionality. Acker also suggested that class-related inequalities can be explained, observed, and measured through class-related social divisions, and that radicalising and gendering order can be excavated:

*This conceptual move suggests a shift in terminology—we are enmeshed in class relations, not located in class structures.* (2006b, p. 47)

*In the context[...] class relations are reproduced in the ongoing procedures and practices of the organization where people eat, sleep, work, study are governed.* (1983, p. 5)

Therefore, one could look at the concept of class in the same way as gender, which organises social structures or structures class in several ways. One must find new ways of thinking about and questioning the complexities between gender and class in the intersectionality research agenda.

The next section of the thesis will elaborate briefly upon the class concept as treated by sociologists and feminist scholars who choose to depart from class. But this framework is not explicitly for the purpose of reviewing the meaning of the class concept.

#### **4.3 Discussion of Class Concept Linking to History**

Towards the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, feminists argued that class theory failed to include or acknowledge women. Therefore, the class concept was excluded from feminist theory. According to feminists, men determine class positions by ignoring women's paid work as determinants of their class location. The intention was to arrive at a sound theory in order to study gender and class or explore patriarchy and capitalism as two separate entities. Feminists condemn patriarchy, as women face inequalities, and claim that the class concept originated from a male connection between social class and women's inferior status. Meanwhile, class theorists claim that major inequalities come from societal structure, which is perpetuated in the form of capitalism. They claim that there is economic equality for everyone who works hard, but as a result they fail to see exploitation and subordination of women in comparison to men who share a separate class location based on gender.

In his article, 'The Continuing Necessity of Class in Feminist Thinking' (Acker, 2003) explains that from the 1990s until now, feminist scholars have continued to engage in the class debate but pay less attention to the genealogy of terms without reflecting upon earlier debates. She finds this trend alarming and even questionable. Consequently, intersectionality seems to have problems incorporating the concept of class, and the discussion reverts to the same old ideas while the problem remains unsolved. Says Acker:

*Attempts to re-conceptualize class to include women more adequately were not completely successful and interest in class theory among feminists declined. When scholars in the U.S. began to call for an understanding of the intersections between class, gender and race/ethnicity, only the reformulated idea of class was available.* (2003, p. 49).

Acker suggested that debates surrounding intersectionality would restrain gender/class tension and even proposed a new way of thinking and writing about class. Despite these problem-solving ideas, research on intersectionality still faces challenges regarding the class concept. Acker explains that class relating to social division can be measured and observed by norms, lifestyle, status display, and consumption habits (2006b, p. 47).

Although feminist theory does not completely ignore the class concept, few feminists, such as Rosemary Crompton, are still engaging and revisiting the class concept by employing different lenses within feminist theory and gender research. Crompton seems to agree that gender/class tension cannot be resolved merely through theoretical discussion. However, she has emphasised the importance of using the qualitative method to understand the lived experience of gender and class and has asserted that class and gender consist of 'blurring boundaries' (2001, p. 39). Thus, Erik Olin Wright (2001), a sociologist in the same setting as Crompton, revisited the question of gender and class and explains in his article that gender and class are separate categories, however empirically interrelated. Wright concludes that the interconnection of gender and class can be determined through class analysis.

In the following section, I shall briefly introduce the sociology of Floya Anthias (2001a, 2001b). Her perspectives are interesting relative to an intersectional analysis based on class, gender, and ethnicity, because her framework contributes to an understanding of this intersection and also serves as theoretical anchoring.

#### **4.4 Symbolism and Material**

Anthias uses the concept of social division based on gender, class, and ethnicity. Often, research based on social differentiation and the stratification of gender and ethnicity seems to expand to include the symbolic and cultural sphere, while class is seen as limited to the idea of material inequality. However, both material and symbolic elements exist among all the social categories. Anthias, known as a stratification theorist, explores gender, class, and ethnicity and, in the process, explains the need for using both the material and the symbolic to gain a broader understanding of these three concepts (2001a, 2001b). She points out that while class has been understood as material inequality, gender and ethnicity are viewed as cultural and symbolic, based on such qualities as identity and difference. However, class theorists have stressed that class, ethnicity, and gender all consist of both material and symbolic value. She further argues that the interplay between the symbolic and the material must be explored without giving priority to one or the other.

Although stratification theory was originally based upon the notion that class is universal while gender and ethnicity are specific, Anthias's framework has challenged the traditional concept of class. She has suggested that the concept of class occurs in nature, that it is shifting, and that categories derive from symbolic culture and material processes that change according to social actors. As a result, Anthias's work provides an alternative understanding of how class relates to other social categories by incorporating the material and symbolism within each and by limiting class as the primary determinant of subjectivity.

One of Anthias's main arguments is that the effects of inequality are produced through a dynamic interplay among different social structures. It is clear why questions regarding social differentiation and stratification must be studied from the very premise of the assumption of complex multiple causal relations. To add to this, Anthias stresses how gender and class can be detached:

*A significant difference between class and other categories is that in the case of class, there is no natural reproduction posited, although individuals may be seen to inherit characteristics from their parents, which means that they may be regarded as fated to be members of a particular class. But movement in or out is seen as a product of individual capacities. In the case of race/ethnicity and gender, there can be no movement in and out in terms of capacity. (2001a, p. 278)*

However, Anthias (2001b) points out that gender and class should not be seen as intertwined, and she proposes a 'frame' for outlining social identities and division. But the frame includes positioning social division at the core to ensure that it has equal weight in analyses. She claims that gender, ethnicity, and class are primary social divisions and that other categories might be included as well, such as age, health, religion, lifestyle, and so on. The term 'social division' is very broad, and it is possible to include all types of differences within it.

#### **4.5 Discussion of Lack of Theoretical Anchoring**

According to Mohanty (1991), a major drawback of feminism is assuming that women are:

*an already constituted, coherent group with identical interests and desires regardless of class, ethnic, or racial location or conditions. (p. 55)*

Thus, when women speak on behalf of all women, they assume shared femininity, which is known for having privileged positions. The women who have historically spoken for all women have been those in privileged positions. Often they are white women from high socioeconomic backgrounds. In the past, feminist women would write and speak out to reveal the power that was disguised within the established and primarily male-centred research.

#### **4.6 Closing Theoretical Comment**

In this framework, I have narrowed down the discussion of intersectionality and concentrated on three dimensions. Firstly, I have discussed how the concept of intersectionality arose in feminist research. Secondly, I have highlighted the intersection of gender and class and explicitly shown what class is today. I have used a feminist sociologist framework to critique and question the intersectionality research agenda, as the class concept has assumed a marginalised position and, as a result, remains unexamined. Finally, I have reflected on the negative effects of intersectionality regarding theoretical anchoring. I embrace Anthias's sociology on social division as well as other feminist sociological research, which are useful in analysing class, ethnicity, and gender relations in the household.

## CHAPTER 5

### Analysis of the Interview Materials

#### 5.1 The Role of Gender/Class and Ethnicity Analysis of Intersectionality from Feminist Sociologist Frameworks

The theoretical framework for this study was written prior to the collection of the interview materials. It served as an analytic tool for the study to facilitate better understanding of the context during the interviews. As a result, a lot of barriers were met when I tried to analyse the interview material. These problems came in the form of tight jacket theory. I found it difficult to neatly fit all my findings into the already-prepared framework of the study. Thus, I needed to utilise different ways of approaching and analysing my interview materials.

#### 5.2 Uganda's Domestic Workers Living within the Margins

The theme of this section focuses on how domestic workers experience life on the margins of society and how this marginalised status exists within the intersectionality paradigm of gender, class, and ethnicity. The disadvantaged class position influences the lived experience of domestic workers, especially in how they negotiate and renegotiate the various stages of their lives. The present narratives portray Uganda's domestic workers as disenfranchised. As a result of their gender, class, and ethnicity, they are denied access to many opportunities, such as education and assets. Issues of gender, class, age, and poverty have limited their ability to live full, enriching lives.

From previous research, we can examine the background of the domestic workers known as maids and servants. They had historical precedents, and they have gained rights in post-industrialist capitalist countries. The majority of the middle-class women participating in this research have had the experience of having a live-in domestic worker ('house girl' or 'house boy') during their childhood.

In the following sections, I will describe the interviews of two groups of women: the employers who make decisions in various family contexts and the live-in domestic workers (DWs), including their duties and their relationship with their employers.

DW1 (age seventeen), from the Mpererwe in Kawempe, became a domestic worker because her parents could not afford to raise her and send her to school. This is her life story prior to and after becoming a domestic worker.

*DW1: I came to this family when I was thirteen years old, and I went to school up to half primary school. My mother studied up to secondary one and my father studied up to secondary two; two of my older brothers finished their secondary school. I had to stop schooling because my parents could not afford to pay the*

*school fees for all of us because we are farmers. After I stopped schooling, I helped my parents by working on the land while my two brothers continued their studies. I visit my biological family once a year even though I live forty km away from there. I do not have a close relationship with my biological family, but I do send money to my parents in the village. I don't send it every month. Madam gives me 20,000 Ush [90 kr] per month.<sup>1</sup> Since I did not finish my school and I cannot read or write, it is very difficult for me to get a job in a factory or restaurant. Working as a household girl, you do not need any kind of skills except cooking and cleaning.*

*Interviewer: But who taught you these activities?*

*DW1: My mother.*

*Interviewer: Please continue.*

*DW1: My uncle, who is a family friend to the Madam's family, brought me to this household. I have been working with the family for the past six years, and I'm very attached to them. Both the Madam and the Sir, whom I consider as my parents, are very good to me.*

*Interviewer: Can you describe your life with the family, and what are your contributions in this household?*

*DW1: House girl means you are available twenty-four hours a day for the family members. Often the Madam and Sir go for visiting at 11:00 p.m. Then I must take care of the children in the house, because Madam and Sir return late, maybe around 12:00 a.m. I wake up at 6:00 a.m., and I clean the house, which includes cleaning the toilets and the bathrooms both upstairs and downstairs and wiping the floor every day.*

*Since the Madam and Sir work and both of them leave the house at 7:00 a.m., I make sure the breakfasts are served on the table after that. When two of the children wake up, I bathe them, give them milk, then maybe around 10:00 a.m. I will take my breakfast. Before leaving the house, the Madam will tell me what I should prepare for dinner. Later in the afternoon, I will wash all the clothes of the family. While waiting for it to dry, I will sweep the compound of the house. And of course this is not easy, because the children always cry, and I need to attend to them and keep doing the work. I take my lunch perhaps around 4:00 p.m.*

*Both Madam and Sir return at about 6:00 p.m. or 7:00 p.m. At around 8:00 p.m. then I will have finished my cooking. Then I will serve the dinner on the table. I don't eat meals at the same table with the family; usually I eat in the kitchen.*

*Interviewer: Don't you take any break or rest time hours?*

*DW1: Madam decides what time I should take a break and my sleeping time. I don't have a break on Saturdays or Sundays. But when I'm sick, like getting malaria, then I cannot do any work. Madam buys medicine, and the next day I have to work because she must return to work.*

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<sup>1</sup> 1 USh = 0.00344942 kr. So 20,000.00 USh = 80.483 kr.

*Interviewer: Do you have a close relationship with the family members?*

*DW1: Yes, with the Madam and also the children. I take care of them like my own siblings.*

The following domestic worker, DW3 (age 20), from the Mpigi district, has a similar family background to DW1. However, she differs from DW1 in that she is currently an adult, she finished the first half of secondary school, and her first experience as a domestic worker was different as well. The following is her life story:

*DW3: I became a domestic worker when I was thirteen years old and finished with my first half of secondary school. I could not continue, as my parents couldn't support me to go to school because we are poor. Then my uncle, who works as a driver with another American family, introduced me to the first family with whom I worked. The family had been living in Kampala for many years. Since I'm able to speak a bit of English, my uncle thought it would suit me; and besides, the American family could speak Luganda, as they're running a business here. I only worked a year with the American family, because they would show me to their other American guests. Sometimes I did not understand any words because they spoke in American accents. But I thought they were talking about me...what I do. Before the employer took me to work, the employers asked me to stretch out my hands and looked at my eyes, asked if I had any sickness and all that. I left the American employer because I needed to wash three of their cars every day early in the morning. Then the woman and man of the house would check whether the cars were clean. If not I had to rewash all the cars again.*

*Interviewer: Don't you eat your meals with the family at the same table?*

*DW3: No...and I don't want to eat with them, either.*

*Interviewer: How much in wages did you receive from the American employer?*

*DW3: I received 20,000 per month, but you always think working with nonlocal employers, such as Europeans, Americans, or Japanese, would give you better wages, but it's not like that. They're much stingier than the local employers. A few of my friends experienced the same problems. Sometimes they think you're stupid because you cannot speak good English. I started to work with currently family since I stopped working with the American employers, but I'm more happy here and feel like a family compared to the first employer (American). Madam and Sir are much closer to me compared to the previous employer that I had worked.*

None of the 13 domestic workers I interviewed expected to sit with their employers during a meal. They eat neither at the same table nor in the same room as their employers. This is confirmed in Acker's framework on class. Class can be observed and measured relative to social division, which is made up of norms, lifestyle, status display, and consumption habits (2006b). Acker emphasised that we can observe and relate to how social divisions are perpetuated.

Indeed, Anthias's concept of social division as observed through class analysis incorporates social stratification theory. She states that material inequality resulting from life conditions, life chances, and solidarity processes is enforced by claims and struggles over resources of different types, undertaken in terms of gender, ethnicity/race, and class. The domestic worker above made a stark comparison between her ex-American employers and her current Ugandan employer by addressing them differently. The ex-American employer she refers to as 'employer', while her current Ugandan employer she refers to as 'Madam' and 'Sir' and also as 'family' (Acker, 2006b; Anthias, 2001a, 2001b). My conversation with DW6 (age nineteen) from Wakiso district reflects this social division. Here is what she said:

*DW6: Although I have been living with this family for five years, I've never liked the idea of eating with Madam, Sir, and the family. I come from a very poor family, and it's really strange for me to sit and eat with Madam and Sir. I always sit in the kitchen after they have finished eating their meals. You eat what is the leftover by the family members. At times the food that was on the table would be finished, and you'd end up with food which is much lower quality.*

These domestic workers (DW1, DW3, and DW6) clearly observed and experienced the class difference between themselves and their employers. The following is a statement from DW2 (age seventeen) that reinforces the felt class difference between the domestic worker and her employer:

*DW2: Ever since I was a little girl, I wanted to have a good education and thought one day I was going to leave the village and move to the city. Since I stopped school in primary one, I was left with no choice or future back in the village. I come from a poor family. If my parents would have given me the same education as my other cousins, perhaps I wouldn't have to live here. My uncle is living like royalty, and his children are well educated. He has two maids looking after his big village house, and he also has a chauffeur driving him and his wife. During my primary school days, I used to visit him, and he always asked his maids to serve fresh juice for my mother and me. I think only those who are poor and lack education would want to work as a house girl. My Ma'am (employer), she never does any kind of dirty work like washing, cleaning, or sweeping like I do. You know only poor people clean house. Why you want to clean if you money and educations? You see, my employers' children goes to private school, and the family with good education send to their private school. You don't have choice, if you don't have to study, you just clean, but my mother work in the farm. She also didn't go to school.*

From the above statement, we understand that having a chauffeur, a big village house, and a servant to serve fresh orange juice to his guests symbolises her uncle's high social status. These symbols of class confirm Acker's explanations of how class can be understood symbolically through actions and language (Acker, 2006). For example, all the domestic workers in the interviews use terms such as 'madam' (*nyabo*) and 'sir' (*ssebo*), and some refer to their employers as 'master' and 'mistress', though these latter terms originally referred to royalty.

All the domestic workers I interviewed explained the preparation and consumption of food and their duties. These daily work routines and rituals had symbolic meaning and differentiated the class relations between the domestic workers and the employers. The enactment of these differences in class produces social inequalities. DW2 also described how the employers address their domestic workers by their nicknames. The employers' children also address the domestic workers by their nicknames, despite the age difference.

The fact that children address domestic workers this way reflects the domestic workers' lower, less-respected social status. Normally it would be considered impolite for a child to address an older person so casually. Ugandan society has a strong social strata system in which people are grouped in different classes based on the intersectionality of their genders, work backgrounds, and ethnicities.

The above statement contrasts with Anthias's concept of material and symbolic value in her framework, which explains that when work is viewed as feminised or feminine, it becomes less materially valued. For example, women and girls generally do domestic work. This work is neither paid nor valued or rewarded monetarily because it is not defined as 'real work', which refers to masculine and male-centred labour. The fact that male-dominated fields are treated as part of the economic sector while female-dominated domestic work is not perpetuates sexism in Ugandan society. The societal view of domestic workers' work as low-regarded and little-valued affects the self-identity of the individual who performs the work. For example, the domestic worker above refers to domestic work as 'dirty' because it involves cleaning, which historically has been done by people from lower social strata or the working class. This also confirms Anthias's analogy regarding working relations within society: society considers some jobs to be 'clean' and others 'dirty'. This affects the self-image of the individual who performs the job, who often internalises these societal judgments. For example, wages earned from domestic work are considered 'dirty money', which means it comes from manual labour or not earned from a recognised form of employment. Anthias says:

*This notion is also found in a different sense in the idea of clean money gained through legitimate means and dirty money. (2001a, p. 381)*

In some cases, the relationship between employers and domestic workers is challenged. As societal groups change, often class boundaries are encroached upon. Some of the employers I interviewed in the privileged class feel threatened when their class identity is challenged. One of the employers stated the following:

*Employer 1 (age fifty-three): My house girl is twenty-three years old, and she has been living under my roof for the past thirteen years. Two years ago, I got her married off with an arranged marriage. Her husband works as a driver; since we have a small servant house at the back, we offered them to live with us, because my house girl is very close to me and also has a child of a year. But*

*what I feel uncomfortable about is that her husband would drink evening tea and read his newspaper behind our house; this is not appropriate.*

The above statement by Employer 1 explains that what annoyed her was the crossing of the class boundaries between the employer and employee. The domestic worker's husband was not obliged to act subordinately in or around her house because she did not employ him. The symbolic meaning of the husband drinking tea and reading the newspaper behind her house annoyed her because he crossed the class boundaries. The domestic worker and her husband are members of the working class and are not considered equal or treated equally in the social strata. According to social mores, they are not entitled to live a middle-class lifestyle.

DW7 (age seventeen) stated the following, which reinforced the social class reflected in the relations between domestic workers and their employers:

*DW7: I came here when I was thirteen years old. That is when I moved in with this family. There are four children, excluding the Madam and Sir. My father knows the family, and, as I could not finish school and I didn't want to get married, this gave me no options but to move away as my parents told me. I would like very much to continue my school, but I do not see how it is possible. Sometimes when you're born poor you're fated to die poor, too. The Madam buys new clothes for me once a year, and most of the time I wear clothes that were worn by her daughters, and she gives them to me. Sometimes they travel south to another village house, but I'm not allowed to go, as I need to look after the house. I do not see any other opportunities in finding a new job other than being a house girl, without any education. I do not receive any salary, because my food and lodging and medical care are provided to me. Sometimes I receive a small amount of money to cut my hair and so on.*

This statement confirms what Anthias outlined as symbolic and material values and the interconnection of one into the other without giving primacy to either (2001a, p. 377). Here, the notion of 'material' is not restricted to economic resources alone but also to other forms of resources, such as education. For example, having a good education gives people the job skills they need to gain material value, which leads to higher social status for some; overall, having symbolic and material values improves people's life condition. Those who have access to education are able to use it very resourcefully. For example, having a job within a bureaucratic department would provide the authority and power to control utilities allocation for a particular group of people. Therefore, a good education and skills increase individual capacities, which act as determinants of market value. However, without the resources needed to obtain a good education, one has limited access to life's opportunities.

### **5.3 Women, Family, Reproduction, and Inequalities**

Domestic workers who come from rural areas and migrate to the city expressed that their low status is rooted in the social strata of the family system, which is patrilineal and

patriarchal in nature. Traditionally deprived of the means of production and the right to the land, the female worker has her personal individuality submerged by male authority, whether that of her father, brother, or other male family members. The following are the narratives of more domestic workers and employers. First is the story of DW10 (age twenty-one):

*DW10: My biological family has their own land, house, and some cows. When I came back from school, I helped my parents by working on the land. During the summer, the sun is so strong, you won't be able to see the sun but you can feel the heat of the sun. My brothers only help during the school holidays, but I and my other sister have to help them every day after school, and I also have to help my parents doing the housework. I stopped studying because my parents didn't have enough money to pay for the school fee, so I stopped studying. My uncle found this family, and I've been working here since I stopped my primary one. Sometimes it's not nice to say I'm working as a 'house girl'; people do tend to look down on you. You know?*

DW10 indicates her own class position and her consciousness of the low status stigma attached to domestic workers, as well as her awareness of the class differences in her own life.

All thirteen domestic workers attributed their departure from their biological families to economical need and to the fact that male family members are prioritised in the field of education. Most domestic workers are young boys and girls who are sent away from the villages and forced to sustain themselves through reproductive work. The lack of education, along with being deprived of the means of production and the right to land, pushes unpaid domestic workers even further into marginalisation. The causes of their marginalisation are poverty, vulnerability of young-adult girls, rural/urban migration, and the informality of domestic labour.

As a result, working-class and middle-class women are constantly involved in a power struggle. Evidently, urban middle-class women are able to control their households in terms of decision making. The above narrative confirms Acker's (p. 4) explanation of how gender organises or structures class. To confirm Acker's argument, we can compare and contrast the above narrative and the following narratives from employers, beginning with one from Employer 5 (age fifty-two; lawyer).

*Employer 5: I don't know what I'll do without the house girl; both of us are lawyers. We have three children, and all of them attend private schools. After work, my husband would pick up the children; if he were busy with a meeting then I'd pick up the children at school. My house girl cooks, cleans, does the ironing, does the laundry, and she's also responsible for waking the children up in the morning, making breakfast for the children, and, in the evening, she's responsible to see them to bed. My husband does not do any housework. Not only my husband but all Ugandan men would not step inside the kitchen. My husband would leave all the responsibility to me, including managing our household budget, including the budget of my children's school fees. So not only do I have to work outside, but also I need to keep the house running. I'm also an active member of the church, and we organise regular meetings twice a week, and we're both politically active, too.*

The narrative confirms that gender organises or structures class in several different ways. Employer 5's narrative reveals that although women are as educated as men, women continue to be the managers, planners, organisers, and supervisors for the household and all child-related activities. This account and others like it help to confirm the gender-segregated nature of domestic work. Here is another narrative, from Employer 8 (age forty-five; public servant):

*Employer 8: Sometimes my house girl falls sick. Then I have to do all the housework, even though I work outside, too. My husband would not help me in the kitchen, nor does he care to do anything that includes housework. My house girl does all the housework. In fact, she's like one of the family members; she's a very obedient and good house girl. At times, she's sent to take care of my mother-in-law whenever there's a need, because I'm working fulltime, and I have three children, and my husband is not much help. I usually plan, organise how house chores should be for every week. Since she's been living with me for the past seven years, she knows the routine of the house pretty well. My house girl is like one of the family members, but naturally she's not like one of my own children, because she does not socialise among our circle of friends, nor does she follow us for any vacation, like my children. I do not give any fixed amount of wages to her every month, because her food, clothes, lodging, and medical care are all taken care of. I do give her a small allowance when she visits her biological parents.*

The above narratives of both the domestic worker and the employers show the female playing the main role in a household. This also confirms what Acker (1983) explained:

*Class relations are produced in the ongoing procedures and practices of the organisations where people eat, sleep, work, study and carry out other activities.*  
(p. 5)

Both of the employers position their class status by giving their occupation, and they describe their class status by mentioning terms such as 'private school', 'politically active', and 'our circle of friends'. This confirms Acker's assertion that class relations are produced in the ongoing procedures and practices of society. Anthias has a similar argument and states that gender, class, and ethnicity are the main drivers of social inequalities.

#### **5.4 Domestic Workers' View on Personalised Relations with the Employers-Unpaid**

Anthias sees gender and ethnicity as symbolic and cultural spheres, while the class concept is seen as limited to material inequality. She explains that gender has a symbolic value and uses the analogy of the labour market, where the marketplace requires sexual attributes or physical traits, for sexual services such as prostitution, and aligns gendered characteristics with education and even technical skills. These are the resources individuals can bring to the marketplace and use to determine their opportunities in life. Gender affects skills. Female-dominated jobs such as domestic work are less valuable than male-dominated jobs. However, to confirm Anthias's arguments, below are narratives from employers and

domestic workers for the sake of comparison and contrast, beginning with DW4 (age twenty-two):

*DW4: I didn't finish my primary school; neither do I have any skills like sewing. I wanted to take hair braiding, but I don't have any time for it, because the housework takes a lot of time, and my Ma'am (employer), she works, and the children (employer's children) needed to be cared for. Both of them come almost near to dinnertime; they're like my own 'family', and they treat me well like a family. What could I possibly do with very little education? I can leave the family and find another job working in the restaurant in town, but you need to be 'fluent' in English. A friend from the village works in the restaurant as a waitress, and she finished her half secondary, which will give you 40,000 Ush (180 kr) a month. If you don't finish your primary school and you are poor, then being a house girl is the only choice you have if you don't want to get married. I feel lucky because the family (employer) treats me well, and I have my own room and food; sometimes I can go out to see some of my friends if she's in a good mood, but that is not often, perhaps once a month.*

There are a few ways to interpret this narrative. Language skills play an important role: fluency in English caters to another form of the labour market in the public sphere, despite the fact that English is the official language in Uganda. Therefore, having language skills enables a person to access better economic positions, because wages affect living conditions. However, wages are gendered as well: jobs that are predominately done by females are less well paid, as they are considered of less value. For example, a domestic worker said that her friend was able to enter the job market because of her language skills, which she obtained by completing a certain level of education, and that this also affected her friend's earning capacity in comparison to her.

But one could also consider the symbolic relation that Anthias explained regarding gender and ethnicity. That is, symbolic values include differentiating factors. Some jobs are clean and some are dirty, and differences exist between white-collar and blue-collar workers and nonmanual and manual workers. Language skills (for instance, being able to speak English) are marketable. The most important question is what is marketable and who possesses the skill, regardless of gender. In this setting, what is marketable in domestic work is that which is performed by young-adult females and female children who come from a rural area and who have limited education and skills. Another symbolic aspect of work relations is how the work caters to different kinds of consumers. In this study, domestic labour caters to middle-class women.

All the domestic workers I interviewed do manual work, which consists of cooking, cleaning (floor and toilet), ironing, washing dirty clothes and plates, throwing away garbage, bathing children, changing napkins, serving food (morning and evening), and washing cars. Some of the employers sent their workers to their relatives, such as to their mothers-in-law or their own mothers, most likely to do a manual job or household chores.

Ten out of the thirteen domestic workers I interviewed are not paid for the household work they perform. Evidently, most of the domestic workers are convinced that they are paid for their labour through food and lodging, though sometimes these domestic workers do receive a small amount of money. Three of the domestic workers received 20,000 Ush (90 kr per month), which is very much below minimum wage according to Uganda standards (40,000 Ush =180 kr).<sup>2</sup> The following are narratives from DW13 (age twenty) and DW12 (age twenty-two), who responded to my question concerning whether they spend leisure time with other domestic workers from the neighbourhood:

*DW13: Yes, I meet some of my other friends that work as house girls but not often, perhaps once a month, sometimes maybe every six months. I send money back to my family if I get some allowance; my lodging, food, and medical care are taken care of, and receiving like 20,000 Ush is alright. So if some of my friends are returning to the village, I'll send the money through them to my mother.*

*DW12: You don't always get free time, because you're living with the Madam and Sir; and since they're working all the time and leave the children behind, you need to be at home. When you feel like a family, staying with them for many years, it's simply difficult. House chores take plenty of time, and you hardly find time even to sit; where do you really have time to visit your friends? I wake up at 6:00 a.m. and go to bed at midnight, but this would be delayed if Madam and Sir were having a guest for dinner.*

The above narratives explain that live-in domestic workers spend most of their time inside the household, and they are disadvantaged regarding their working hours. Add to this the fact that they likely have few opportunities to meet other domestic workers with whom they can exchange information and create their own networks. Live-in domestic workers become easy targets for labour exploitation, including both psychological and physical abuse, which has been described in the previous sections.

The following is a narrative from Employer 9 (age forty-three; public servant), who explains the domestic worker's free time:

*My husband and I both work, and our children go to school. Most of the time my house girl is free; she does not do anything at home. She's free to choose to have her own free time; there is no one there to supervise her regarding her work. She's like one of the family members.*

A follow-up question was presented to the same employer, which asked her to compare and contrast the duties and responsibilities versus the free time of her domestic worker to establish what could be understood as paid and unpaid free time. The employer continues:

*My house girl's duties start when the children wake up to go to school, from preparing the breakfast for them, including dressing the children for school, cleaning, cooking, laundry, and ironing. When I spend time in the countryside*

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<sup>2</sup> According to one employer, that's the amount paid to a male house boy.

*with the family, she is often responsible for taking care of the house. It means she has some free time, as she's not doing so much work in the house. She's not half of my age, so we get along pretty well; sometimes we are good friends, but I'm aware not to cross the boundaries, as she could take advantage of the situation, like neglecting her responsibilities and also going out without my permission.*

It is crucial to note that the phrase 'like a family' was used by all the employers and domestic workers, and it can be interpreted as a means of extracting further unpaid physical labour. This resonates with Acker's claim that one should not approach class relations from an abstract point of view; it is more valuable to focus on class practices. Acker mentioned all those activities that organise and control production and distribution (2006b, p. 50). Acker presents an example of class practice that included paying wages and maintaining supervisory oversight (2006a, p. 453). This includes everything from low-paying and low-status jobs to the class dimension. For example, class control comes from maintaining power, as employers or the middle-class women in this study do. They instruct their domestic workers to carry out their duties and responsibilities and get the workers to accept the system of inequality (Acker, 2006a, p. 454). Here is another narrative, from Employer 2 (age forty-seven; physician):

*My house girl is part of the family, but, of course, we don't share everything because of our social difference. My mother-in-law stays with us, and she's very traditional, while I'm educated, so I don't mistreat my house girl. Sometimes I allow her to sit and have the same meal with me and the family, but my mother-in-law dislikes this attitude of mine. I respect her and her traditions, and we choose those who are educated to respect, live in the city, accommodate, and respect our traditions.*

The employers in this study are not in any way related to their domestic workers, but their use of phrases such as 'like my family' and their selection of domestic workers from the same ethnicity creates a fictitious kinship relationship between employers and domestic workers. However, this does not necessarily mean that domestic workers are treated like actual family members. In fact, most of the time they are not treated as family members because of the material imbalances between the employers and the domestic workers. Therefore, I argue that this kind of pseudo-family relationship is highly exploitative, a means of extracting labour from domestic workers. It seems they are working for their 'family', and so employers think they do not have to pay appropriate dues. During the interviews, employers were asked to describe unpaid/paid work performed by their domestic workers. Some of the employers were annoyed with my question. The responses from Employer 3 (age forty-two; public servant) are as follows:

*Employer 3: Giving a gift to my domestic worker, in exchange of kindness without paying in money, would mean doing an unpaid job. But you have to understand, it does not work the same way as from where you come from. We give a roof to these house girls, food, clothing, medical bills, sometimes we even need to worry about them getting into a bad circle of friends and getting pregnant. You can have house boys, but it's not very easy to get them these days;*

*besides, they would cost you more, and if you have a young daughter at home, then it's more likely everyone would prefer to have house girl. But there's always a risk having young girls working for you, because you're responsible to explain to her parents. Supposing we're not going to take care of girls from form of social situation; where would they turn without education in the city?*

Employer 10 (age forty-eight, entrepreneur) stated:

*Employer 10: All my domestic workers are local Ugandan girls; as you can see, I'm Indian Ugandan, born here, but here you can't find Indian Ugandan domestic workers, because they're well educated here. I'm not like the local Uganda employers; they like the girls to clean, cook, sweep, take care of the whole house without paying them. My domestic workers are paid 60,000 Ush per month (300 kr), and she lives in the house. I also pay all her medical bills, excluding her salary. I'm educated, and I know these girls are less fortunate; she does her work, and I pay her, and that's all. If one domestic worker stopped, I'll get another one, but it doesn't happen, because with me they're well paid.*

From the narrative of Employer 10, one can glean the racialisation faced by the local domestic worker, not only because of race but also because of education and class. Most domestic workers enter their employers' household when they are as young as thirteen years old. Their entry is negotiated in an informal way; the girl-child's labour is a commodity to the pseudo-family.

One must understand that the household unit caters to a specific power relation, firstly because it is gendered, and secondly because the question of class is rooted in how individuals organise their material lives. This could be explained by the fact that specific groups of people have easier access to resources. For example, middle-class Ugandan women have better access to education and other facilities than do working-class women. Other domestic workers in this study are those who migrate from rural areas, having not benefited at all from Uganda's PEAP. Even affirmative-action programmes have benefited only already-better-educated middle-class women, those who have more resources than working-class women. Therefore, one must acknowledge that gender and class cannot be ignored. They affect women, men, and children differently because of their age, gender, and ethnicity/race. For instance, I asked Employer 4 (age forty-eight; administrator), 'How do you find a domestic worker?' She responded:

*Employer 4: We don't call them domestic workers as the West does; we call them house girl or house boy. I got mine from the village, when I had a caesarean with my first-born; I wouldn't know how I would manage without her. Since then she's stopped schooling, because her parents can't afford to send her to school. My family owns a village house, and her father looks after the village house now she's part of our family. I stayed home for three months and later returned to work, and she takes care of the baby.*

The girls are not prioritised as boys are in this setting; poverty affects females in terms of education and property rights. There are two ways of making the argument. Firstly,

female domestic workers face double oppression due to their gender. Secondly, what I explained in the previous introductory section is that the social strata in Uganda, which is rooted in a patrilineal tradition and which is patriarchal in nature, also influences the relationship between domestic workers and employers, who have different class statuses and socioeconomic differences. From the narrative of the domestic worker, I interpreted that young girls are considered temporary members of the biological family, because they have been sent away at a very young age. And as I have mentioned, their education is not prioritised compared to boys', because a girl's labour is not valued. After all, girls will leave the biological family eventually. Therefore, investing time and economy into educating a female child is not beneficial.

All the biological parents of the domestic workers I interviewed were farmers, and all the domestic workers' narratives show the significance of children's labour, particularly girls' contributions to family income in poorer households. For example, some of the domestic workers' narratives explain that some of them send money home. This may explain how gender disparities factor into preventing the domestic workers from continuing their education. Female children's labour cannot contribute to the family's income in a poorer household, particularly in the rural areas. Therefore, one also could correlate the lower level of girls' education in the rural areas with a lower level of household income.

The domestic workers and employers I interviewed in this study are not from the same households. However, from their narratives I understood that each employer feels most comfortable having a house girl from the same ethnicity. This leads to mutual trust between the workers and the employers. Also, it may be difficult to have a stranger enter one's private household. Therefore, having a domestic worker who comes from the same village, speaks the same language, and shares the same ethnicity as the employer can be beneficial, because it can potentially provide tools for networking between the employer and the worker. In other words, it is an informal contract.

Therefore, ethnicity works as a vehicle for networking or organising but could also be seen as a drawback, because it limits the girls to entering domestic service, which operates in a formal way. But because of their limited education, they use informal networking to gain employment as domestic workers and also to secure their socioeconomic positions. One domestic worker expressed her reservations about working for an employer who is from another ethnicity:

*You always think Americans, Europeans, or Japanese pay better than the local employers, but it's not always the case; most of the time the local employers treat you better, because word goes around; if I started to saying bad things about my Madam or Sir, all the circle of my friends will know, and none of 'us' will work for them when I stop working. For example, I heard from my friends that the Indian Ugandans are really bad too; they abuse and beat you when they're unhappy with the housework. You can't see Indian Ugandans as house girls.*

'Indian Ugandan' is a term used to describe Indians who are born in Uganda. Here, we can understand that Indian Ugandans are using local girls, whose ethnicity is different, because cultural mores prevent girls from an Indian Ugandan background from doing the job. Previous research explains that even in the Indian culture, which is socially stratified, that would not be possible. This further strengthens Anthias's theory on social stratification and supports Acker's ideas on class.

Therefore, in the above narrative, ethnicity has a symbolic relation to the work, such as who is performing the work. One could even argue that ethnicity creates inequalities and social division because it affects the person performing the work and her life conditions. This domestic worker also says 'us', differentiating ethnicity within her work and creating a collective solidarity of her friends versus 'the other' or 'them', who, in this case, is the employer, who happens to be of a different ethnic background than the domestic worker and her friends. To paraphrase Anthias's social division framework, in this setting, ethnicity can be seen as giving symbolic meaning to solidarity.

Secondly, ethnicity has another symbolic relation when domestic workers come into contact with their employers in an informal setting. All the employers and the domestic workers are Baganda by ethnicity except one (Employer 10). This is due to the geographical location of the capital city of Kampala and its surrounding districts, which are populated with Baganda. However, it is difficult to conclude that the Baganda ethnic group is divided into peasant, middle class, upper-middle class, and elites. The empirical evidence does not allow me to make such an interpretation, which would lead to reductionism. In order to make this claim, I would need to obtain a national statistic of all the ethnicities in Uganda, and this is not the main purpose of this study. However, ethnicity's contributions of symbolic value in this study are described, as most of the domestic workers and the employers feel most comfortable when both groups are from the same ethnicity. This is because a household is often seen as private, and bringing an intruder or stranger into the household would effectively turn a private sphere into a public sphere. Thus, most of the employers and domestic workers use ethnicity as a vehicle for establishing trust, which is informal; gender, age, and education serve only to influence the relationship.

Two of the domestic workers I interviewed recounted their experiences of racism while working with different racial groups, such as Americans and Indian Ugandans. They explained their preference for working with employers from their own ethnicity by saying they wanted to be like a 'family'. However, I see the danger when employer/employee relations cross these boundaries. It can be highly risky, and the live-in domestic worker faces a few drawbacks, as described in the following exchange with this domestic worker (age twenty-one):

*Interviewer: Do you have any close relations with the members of the family?*

*DW: I'm very close with Madam. She's like my own mother, and I hate my mother for sending me away.*

All the narratives from the employers and live-in domestic workers exposed the fact that the domestic workers often work as unpaid labourers because they are like one of the family. The workers become emotionally involved in the private home, falling into a sort of mutual friendship with their employers. In addition, their relationship with their pseudo-parents grows stronger because most of the workers enter the household as very young girl-children. Gender affects the girls' experience at that young age, and it also enables the employers to be exploitative due to the power relations between the employer and the domestic worker. As I have noted from some of the interviews, the young women and girl-children migrate from rural areas and continue to have fewer years of education than boys. None of the employers provided any kind of literacy courses for the domestic workers to take in their free time.

The interview material shows a strong correlation between rural poverty and women's access to resources. This conflicts with household priorities associated with girls who have lower education and often the girls who substitute for her mother in the domestic labour sector. Young women and girl-children are vulnerable because of rural poverty. Interventions force them to intermingle with urban middle-class households, which sometimes results in exploitation when employers use their class positions and false pretences of charity to secure unpaid domestic work.

## CHAPTER 6

### Concluding Analysis

#### 6.1 Conclusions: The Lived Experience of Women's Labour

This study shows that women family members do not necessarily perform domestic work. The study shows that in urban middle-class households, women do not perform household tasks. Instead, they employ young girls to help with reproductive household labour. At the same time, poor and rural households with several children who need more opportunities for success and better living conditions always seek such employment opportunities in urban households. By tracing young girls' lives prior to and after becoming domestic workers in urban middle-class households, we are able to understand the interconnection among rural poverty, child labour, and unpaid domestic work in urban middle-class households in Uganda.

The intersection of gender, class, ethnicity, and age unlocks the hidden power relation between middle-class women and domestic workers. The interview materials show that, out of the thirteen domestic workers interviewed, twelve were not paid within urban middle-class households. Therefore, one could reasonably argue that unpaid domestic labour is reproduced in households in general. The data prove that Uganda, like many other developing countries, is still influenced by social strata. From the study, we observe a clear-cut gender division of labour within the household. The study findings show that middle-class Ugandan men do not participate in domestic work. Rather, the women are largely responsible for running the household. Therefore, middle-class women are not excluded from taking primary responsibility for caring for the family. However, because of their class position in relation to their husbands', they are compelled to engage unpaid labour. Thus, they substitute their own position as unpaid labourers in the household with another unpaid female domestic worker, a role usually assumed by a nonfamily member.

The study's findings also reveal that unpaid domestic workers in Uganda are usually female. Their narratives show that they enter the households as children. These children come from rural areas, have poor living conditions, are often impoverished, and have few chances for success. Their life conditions are marginalised because they are not employed with legally binding contracts. Rather, they are committed to a mutual, socially driven verbal agreement. Live-in domestic workers work from 6:00 a.m. until 12:00 a.m., seven days a week, a total of thirteen hours per day. Since the labour law in Uganda does not explicitly address the issue of minimum wage, employees' conditions are even worse. Domestic workers are not at all protected by the Ugandan labour law, despite the fact that their employers are well-educated women with good knowledge of the law. Unfortunately, none of these employers take into

account that 'kindness' is not synonymous with 'wages'. Using a gender-based lens, we can argue that maternalism, as embodied in the relationship with the pseudo-parents, reproduces the inequality in a class/gender structure. Regarding domestic workers' relationship with the middle-class women, the subordination of their gender represents the nonlucrative nature of domestic work in which young, poor girls find themselves engaged.

The study also points to the escalating poverty among women in rural areas, which is linked to the economic dynamics of rural households. For instance, in the introductory section, I explained how the economics of the SAPs and the privatisation initiatives led to the denial of social and economic rights without providing protection for the poor and vulnerable. Such a scenario leads to the fragmentation of the labour movement due to the rise of the informal sectors. It also creates a flexible labour force that includes the use of young female labourers.

The study also reviewed various National Household Survey Reports, all of which emphasise the vulnerability of the rural population, specifically highlighting the escalating poverty. In both the available literature and the testimonies of several informants, there is evidence that poverty is the main problem in rural areas. But the reviewed literature falls short of showing the gendered division of labour within rural households. Furthermore, the literature does not examine the impact of gendered labour divisions on women and children in terms of life conditions in post-household contexts. The literature also fails to show the impact of rural-migrant poverty on urban household dynamics. For instance, whereas the National Household Surveys report that the PEAP for 2004-05 has not improved the situations of even twenty percent of the population, the informants reveal that their situations have actually worsened in the last five years.

The study and the interview materials show that the status of women in rural households in Uganda is highly vulnerable to poverty and that this, in return, has a huge impact on women's roles in agriculture production and within the household economy. The findings attribute such discrepancies to gender stratification. For example, most of the young girls interviewed were forced to stop their education at the primary-school level to fulfil or take over their mothers' role in the household. And, whereas women are likely to make more decisions in their homes, the overall problem of social inequality poses greater difficulties for them if they attempt to advance their human capital. Most of the domestic workers interviewed had received some formal education, at least up to primary level, but they could not complete it due to pressing family needs. This explains the marginal position of young girls in education and their vulnerability in rural areas.

The study employed a feminist sociological approach intersecting gender with class and ethnicity/race to reframe the question of class through the perspective of domestic labour

in the household. Such an approach resonated with Anthias's social stratification framework, in which she explains how ethnicity creates variations in the gendered division of the labour framework. But the present thesis moves beyond her position, to elaborate on how the social organisation of family labour contributes to the formation of other critical relationships like ethnicity itself. The study explains how ethnicity is constructed and re-enacted within the household. Whereas Anthias uses ethnicity to explain external factors such as social solidarity, this study provides a clear preconstructed conceptual tool for analysing the domestic workers' narratives by using the core categories of class, gender, and ethnicity.

In addition, using the lens of intersectionality enabled the study to critically analyse all the gendered aspects of labour provision, including the available economic policies in Uganda. For instance, the study shows that unpaid nonfamily and nonkin labourers in urban middle-class households usually come from rural areas and are unable to negotiate reasonable wages when they obtain employment. The available laws and policies do not address these forms of transactions, and, in general, the relationships between employers and domestic workers in such circumstances are indistinct.

## **6.2 Future Research**

As a novel approach to studying domestic workers in Uganda in relation to wages, this study attempted to use a forward-looking approach to examine the biological relations and the pseudo-family transformation that occurs after domestic workers form their own households. This will track the futures of the young girls who migrate from rural areas to urban settings to form their own households. It would be interesting to explore whether these young girls are able to claim any assets from their biological families, as well as whether they are able to benefit from their rural, biological, agricultural activities in contrast to their male siblings.

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## Appendix 1: Interview Guide Questions in Luganda

Questions in Luganda that have been translated from English into Luganda.

Interview with domestic workers in Luganda Idiom: utilises a semistructured model, which contains open questions followed by several specific questions that provide follow-up for in-depth interviews.

Ebibuuzo okulaga endowooza zo muntu akola emirimu gyawaka. Erinya lyomuntu, emyaka, ekikula kye, olunaku lweyazalibwa ne kifo.

### EBIMUKWATAKO

Olunaku .....

Ekifo .....

Erinnya eryekika .....

Amannya amalala .....

Emyaka .....

Ekikula kye .....

Gyebakuzaala .....

### Ebyobuyigirize

(a) Makati ga pulayimale .....

(b) Pulayimale ejjudde .....

(c) Amakati ga sekendale .....

(d) Sekendale ejjudde .....

(e) Amatendekero agawaggulu .....

(f) Amasomo gokuyigiriza .....

1. Olina bukugu ki .....

2. (a) Abazadde abakuzaala babeerawa ?.....

(b) Mukubalirira kilometer nga meka okuva wano?.....

3. Abazadde abakuzaala balamu ye ..... Nedda .....

4. Olina baasoma kyenkana wa?

(a) Maama .....

(b) Taata .....

5. Bakola /baalibakola mulimu ki?

(a) Maama .....

(b) Taata .....

6. Owereza ssente oba ebirabo byonna eri bazadde bo oba abenganda zo ?

Ye ..... Nedda ..... Oyinza o ku nyunyula?

7. Amaka gamwegalina ebyobuggagga okugeza nga Ettaka, Ennyumba, Ebisolo Oyinza o ku nyunyula?

8. Wafuuka ddi member we nnyuma eno (eyayita)? Oyinza o ku nyunyula?
9. Lwaki watandika okubeera na maka gano? Oyinza o ku nyunyula?
10. Waliwo eyakuleeta ku mulundi ogwasooka? ..... Oyinza o ku nyunyula?
11. Wekiba nti, ani eyakuleeta mweyo ennyumba? Oyinza o ku nyunyula?
12. Olina yo empuliziganya ne bazadde bo abakuzaala? Oyinza o ku nyunyula?
13. Okyalira ku ba famire yo? Oyinza o ku nyunyula?
14. Bazadde bo oba bakamaabo munyumba empya, bakolera bweru wamaka  
Oyinza o ku nyunyula?
15. Oyagala okusigala ne famire eno ? Oyinza o ku nyunyula? Oyinza o ku nyunyula?
- 16 Bwekiba nti ye, lwaki ..... okukoma ddi.....
- b) Bwekiba nedda, lwaki? .....  
Oli musanyufu okubeera ne famire eno ye ..... Nedda ..... Oyinza o ku  
nyunyula?
17. Osobola okweyogerako obulamu bwo mufamire?
18. Omudemwa gwo guli gutya mu nnyumba eno?
19. Olina yo emikisa emirala bwoba osazeewo okuva mu nnyumba eno?  
(a) Ye ..... (b) Nedda .....
20. Osalawo ki ngavudde mu maka amapya?
21. Watandika ddi okukola emirimu gyawaka?
22. Osobola okunyonyola obumanniyirivu bwolina mu mirimu gyewaka?  
(a) Olongosa, Ye ..... Nedda .....  
(b) Ofumba, Ye ..... Nedda .....  
(c) Olima, Ye ..... Nedda .....  
(d) Ogula ebyawaka, Ye ..... Nedda .....  
(e) Ogolola, Ye ..... Nedda .....  
(f) Okulabirira Baana, Ye ..... Nedda .....
- Ani yakusomesa emirimu gyino ? .....
23. Ofuna omusaala gwona oba oganyulwa sente, meka omwezi ? Oyinza o ku nyunyula?
24. Oyinza okumbuulira kulunaku lwo nga bwelubeera; Olya ddi ebijjulo byo, Enkola yo eri  
etya, Webaka ssaawa meka..... Owumulamu ko?  
..... Ani yakusalirawo kussaawa zo ezokuwumula, Okuzukuka nesaawa  
ezokwebaka, okuwumula? Oyinza o ku nyunyula?
25. Kye ekibaawo bwolwala nga wetaaga kulabirirwa ? Oyinza o ku nyunyula?
26. Webaka nga wa?.....

27. Walyanga ebijjulo byo nabantu abomunju kumezza emu? Oyinza o ku nyunyula?

28. Walina nga enkolagana nabantu abo abomunyumba? Oyinza o ku nyunyula?

## Appendix 2: Interview Guide Questions in English

### English

Questions to domestic workers: the format is an open-ended unstructured interview.

Guidelines to follow for domestic workers: participant name, age, sex, date of birth, and place.

#### BACKGROUND

Date.....  
Place.....  
Surname.....  
Other Names.....  
Age.....  
Sex.....  
Place of Birth.....

#### Education Level

- (a) Half Primary School.....
- (b) Full Primary School.....
- (c) Half Secondary School.....
- (d) Full Secondary School.....
- (e) Tertiary Education.....
- (f) Literacy courses.....

1. What type of skill do you have?.....
2. (a) Where does your biological family live? .....  
(b) Approximately how many km from here.....
3. Can you describe if your biological parents are living?
4. Describe what is your parents' educational status?  
(a) Mother.....  
(b) Father.....
5. What is/were parents' occupation?  
(a) Mother.....  
(b) Father.....
6. Do you send money or any kind of presents to your biological family?  
Yes..... No..... or can you describe?
7. Does your biological family own assets such as land, house, and farm animals? Can you describe?
8. Describe when did you arrive to become a member of the current household?  
.....
9. Describe why you left your biological family and start to live with the current family?
10. Describe who bring you for the first time.

11. Describe who brought you to this household?
12. Do you have any communication or contact with your biological family? Describe.
13. Do you visit your family? Describe.
14. Do your Madam and Sir or employer work outside home? Describe.
15. Do you want to stay with this current family? Describe.
16. Can you describe your life situation with the family?
17. Describe what is your contribution in this household?
18. Did you have other opportunities if you decided to leave for a better employment? Describe.
19. What were the alternatives if you had left the new employment? Describe.
20. Describe when did you first start to do housework?
21. Can you explain your work experience with the current household?
  - (a) Do you do cleaning? Yes..... No
  - (b) Cooking? Yes..... No...
  - (c) Gardening? Yes..... No
  - (d) Shopping? Yes..... No
  - (e) Ironing? Yes..... No
  - (f) Childcare? Yes..... No
 Describe who taught you these activities.
22. Do you get any kind of payment in terms of money? Describe how much per month? Describe.
23. Can you describe your day, such as when do you wake up, what is the routine, when do you go to bed, when do you eat your meals, did you take any breaks? Describe which person decided about your rest hours, wake up and sleep time, breaks?
24. Describe what happens when you got sick and need personal care? Like medical care?
25. Where did you sleep? Describe.
26. Do you eat or share your meals with the family at the same table? Describe.
27. Do you have close relations with the members of the family? How close? Can you describe, and with whom you are close?

### **Appendix 3: Interview Guide Questions in English with Employers**

The interview is conducted in English with the employers.

Participant name, age, sex, date of birth, ethnicity, and employment.

1. Describe the reason you prefer live-in domestic worker?
2. Do you work fulltime outside home? Does your husband share the chores?
3. Describe what type of work does the domestic worker do in your household?
4. Describe the type of work doesn't the domestic worker do in your household?
5. Describe how you are able to find a live-in domestic worker?
6. Can you describe and compare paid and unpaid domestic work?
7. Does the domestic worker join family events, sharing the meal at the same table?