

PSYCHOLOGICAL AGENCY IN A NEIGHBOURHOOD ON THE URBAN FRINGE
OF BAMAKO

*Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy*

BY

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OCTOBER, 2013

ABSTRACT

This thesis is about psychological constructions underpinning intentional action to improve well-being by people in a neighbourhood on the urban fringe of Bamako, Mali. There is a large deficit in the theorisation of psychological elements of agency and empowerment in the development literature. Instead empowerment is generally defined as a favourable opportunity structure, as choice or as the distribution of power. Further still, the examination of the psychological literature reveals a lack of empirical research related to non-Western contexts and development policy. In view of this, I present the results of an empirical study using the inductive mixed methods to examine the central factors contributing to initiatives people undertake to improve personal and collective well-being. Informants articulated that the psychological concepts of *dusu* (internal motivation) and *ka da I yèrè la* (self-efficacy) were most important to their purposeful agency. The empirical analysis is divided into three parts and based primarily on qualitative data, enriched by quantitative analysis. Firstly I will examine the concepts of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, which are characterised as having an instrumental and intrinsic significance to people's purposeful agency. They were also characterised as important factors in supporting local social development initiatives. Secondly, I will show how these psychological concepts were not related to the agent's socio-economic characteristics or decision making ability, rendering both variables weak proxies for measuring psychological agency. Instead I found that measures of intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy are more viable for evaluating psychological agency. Thirdly, however, whilst *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* are important to people's agency and the social development of the neighbourhood, they cannot be viewed as a silver bullet to social development in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. Specifically, in the examination of collective purposeful agency in group work (associations), the functioning of groups is impacted by the internal dynamics within the group, causing sometimes breakdown of the group. Further still, gender and age norms as well as capability deprivation and conflicting world views all thwart the ability of associations to achieve their goals. I underline that agents cannot always succeed in the pursuit of their well-being goals, even though they demonstrate high levels of psychological agency unless structural inequality at the micro, meso and macro levels of Malian society are addressed. Through this empirical study, this thesis will contribute the closing of the gap between psychological and development literatures as well as work towards developing measures of psychological agency.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writing of this thesis has been as much of a personal journey as an academic one. A journey only made possible for the many others I am lucky enough to have had support.

To my supervisors, Dr Sabina Alkire and Dr Alessandra Giuffrida, thank you both for your belief, guidance and care over the years. Your activism and wisdom in all you do has inspired me to make the academic pursuit mean something in the world. You are two incredible women who have empowered me to bring the following 100,000 words into existence.

To Dr Proochista Ariana and Dr Solava Ibrahim, two remarkable scholars whose work has inspired my own. Thank you for you accepting to examine my thesis but more for making the examination process one of great insight and learning. You both have added to the substance of the work and your care and grace within the examination process is something I will always be grateful for.

To my family and friends holding me from home, thank you for loving me from afar, for supporting me in this adventure and not forgetting me each time I would disappear across the oceans. Thank you to mum and dad in making this whole pursuit of the illustrious Dphil possible.

To the loft family, are there words? You all have made me a better person. I feel so much gratitude that I have got to share these years with you – you have been the greatest gift in this place and I look forward to much more goodness to come. The world is truly a better place because of you.

To Western Rd, thank you for keeping me grounded and sane. I could not have asked for a better bunch of people to share a home with. What fun and adventures we have had together.

To the Mali Initiative team, thank you for giving me the time and support to complete this research. I hope it enriches the already great work you do.

To my informants, thank you for your time and trust in me in sharing your stories and lives. They stay with me in each step I take. I hope these words do justice to your day to day heroic pursuits in such an unjust world. To Moctar, I am so proud of you, and grateful that our paths crossed that day. Thank you for believing in this project and helping me all the way. You are a gift to Mali and to me.

To Jim, Jazzy and Sparky, I miss you each day and I still cannot believe you are gone. I am sorry I never got to say goodbye... these words are for you, and for believing in me when I didn't myself. Who would of thought hey?

To CC, thank you for loving me the way you do, it has made this thesis and so much else possible. You make me a better person. I love you.

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GLOSSARY OF BAMBARA TERMS

Dembaya ka hère – Personal well-being

Djè bara – collective worldview (Djè is Bambara for collective, together, bara is Bambara for work. So Djè bara is work together).

Dusu – internal motivation

Fugani - The opposite of *ka da I yère la*, *Fugani* means you do not believe in yourself and you are lazy.

Hami – an aspiration (singular)

Hamiw – aspirations (plural)

Hère – well-being

Gnegoya – negative jealousy

Gnongondan – friendly competition

Ka da I yère la – belief in one's ability to achieve capabilities (*Ka da* = to believe, *I yère la* = yourself).

Kelen bara – Individualistic worldview (Kelen is Bambara for the number one, meaning, single person, bara is Bambara for work. So, *kelen bara* is work for one person.)

Nakili The mentality of the agent, the psychological site of the agent

Nèkè – Positive jealousy or envy that generates *dusu*

Sako - Choice

Sigida ka hère – Community well-being

Sogoma - Morning

Su - Evening

Ton – Association used in the traditional and historical sense, associations in Kalabankoro Nerekoro were referred to as *une association* (French)

Toubabou – white or western person

Wula - Afternoon

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

AQUIM – Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb

ATT - Amadou Toumani Touré

CAFO – Coordination des associations et ONG Femminines

CDA – Critical Discourse Analysis

CUREC - Central University Research Ethics Committee

IMF – International Monetary Fund

MNLA - Mouvement National de l’Azawad

MPI – Multi Dimensional Poverty Index

NGO – Non Governmental Organisation

OPHI – Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative

PDSEC - Plans de Développement Social, Economique, et Culturel

PRSP – Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

RAI – Relative Autonomy Index

RDIC - Réseau de Développement et d’Appui aux Initiatives Communautaires

SDT – Self Determination Theory

SAP – Structural Adjustment Program

WB – World Bank

WDR – World Development Report

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

This thesis is about psychological constructions underpinning intentional action to improve well-being for people in a neighbourhood on the urban fringe of Bamako called Kalabankoro Nerekoro. I came to this research from working for over eight years in Mali on community development projects. Between 2005 and 2010, I worked on various pilot projects implemented in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, Kalabankoro Kulaba and the rural villages Niamana Bankuma¹ and Niamana Konosso (both villages are in the region of Segou). The projects implemented included building three schools and one healthcare centre, a micro credit programme, a teacher training programme, a literacy and vocational training programme for street children and a training and mentoring programme for young social entrepreneurs.

It was from these pilot projects that I developed a curiosity about what intentional action actually meant to people in Mali. This is because all the projects were implemented extremely efficiently by any development standard, and when I enquired why this was the case, people in the intervention villages said the reason was that those projects were strongly aligned with what they most valued and cared about.

I was left wondering: What was this agency driving people? I was curious to investigate such phenomenon, so I began my thesis on purposeful agency in Kalabankoro

¹ I also carried out fieldwork in Niamana Bankuma however because I wanted to focus my thesis, I have decided not to use this data for the thesis.

Nerekoro. This may be quite an unconventional focus in comparison to other studies of the poor, which seem to focus on structures as proxies for agency and development². Yet I found that there was a great deal to learn from such analysis of agency itself because looking at the social milieu from the angle of the actors showed the myriad of ways in which agents negotiate the world around them.³

The most noticeable set of observations I made during my fieldwork in Kalabankoro Nerekoro was that every day, people act to enhance either their personal and family well-being or that of the community. People are purposeful in their actions because they are following their aspirations: to get a job, to have a house, to reap a good harvest, to have their children educated, to overcome poverty. This is not specific to Kalabankoro Nerekoro; in all societies there is a tendency for human beings, “to live on the basis of some understanding of what is a better, more desirable or worthier way of being in the

² Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can Be Done About It* (Oxford University Press, 2008). Jeffery Sachs, *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for our time* (Penguin Books, 2006). World Development Reports have also had a structural bent over the years for example World Bank, "World Development Report: Infrastructure for Development," (World Bank, 1994); World Bank, "World Development Report: Industrialization and Foreign Trade," (World Bank, 1987); World Bank, "World Development Report: Investing in Health," (World Bank, 1993); World Bank, "World Development Report: Workers in an Integrating World," (1995); World Bank, "World Development Report: From Plan to Market," (World Bank, 1996); World Bank, "World Development Report: The State in a Changing World," (World Bank, 1997); World Bank, "World Development Report: Building Institutions for Markets," (World Bank, 2002); World Bank, "World Development Report: Sustainable Development in a Dynamic World," (World Bank, 2003); World Bank, "World Development Report: Making Services Work for Poor People," (World Bank, 2004); World Bank, "World Development Report: A better investment Climate for Everyone," (World Bank, 2005). There has been a definite trend in World Development Reports over the last three decades towards structural problems of development. Specific chapters on agency and empowerment appeared in world development reports of the years 2006 and 2012 World Bank, "World Development Report: Attacking Poverty," (World Bank, 2000); World Bank, "World Development Report: Equity and Development," (World Bank, 2006). The WDR of 2000 was written specifically on empowerment but changed at the last moment to be on 'poverty' in which empowerment was one out of three sections where empowerment was defined as "facilitating empowerment by making state institutions more responsive to poor people and removing social barriers that exclude women, ethnic and racial groups" (pg 3). The other two sections were on structural policies, clouding the focus on agency.

³ Norman Long, *Development sociology: Actor perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2001).

world.”⁴ For many of the people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, the aim was working towards what they call *hèrè*⁵ in Bambara, defined as ‘well-being’ and the ‘good life.’ Agency towards the ‘good life’ can be thought of as purposeful – that is, with a target – towards the aspiration of *hèrè*.

Through my inductive study, I wanted to explore mechanisms that were central to purposeful agency. I thought that the first important step was examining and deconstructing ‘purposeful’ agency, in order to evaluate the discursive processes of power and norms that affect their agency. In the next chapter I will provide a more comprehensive treatment of the term purposeful agency, however it is different and apart from non-purposeful agency, a concept skilfully illustrated in the writings of Bourdieu’s *habitus*⁶. After spending time in the field engaging with this question of purposeful action, my central research question emerged.

The central research question with subsequent research objectives is as follows:

Central research question:

- What is psychological agency?

⁴ John C. Christopher, "Situating Psychological Well being: Exploring the cultural roots of its theory and research," *Journal of Counselling and Development* 77(1999): 141., 1999 pp 141, See also Richard Ryan and Edward Deci, "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development and Well-being," *American Psychologist* 55, no. 1 (2000).

⁵ *Hèrè* is Bambara for ‘good things,’ things not so much focused on materials, but happiness and a general sense of wellness in life. When asking about well-being, it was the word *Hèrè* that was used. People interviewed and in focus groups understood this concept, and no examples of what that could look like were used as a probe. The question was posed with using “Nièta” when talking about the improvement of *hèrè*. “Niè” means forward and “ta” means “go.”

⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge University Press, 1977).

Research objectives:

- Explore if the cultivation of psychological agency creates any change to people's lives in Kalabankoro Nerekoro.
- Understand the relevance of psychological agency at both individual and collective levels.
- Determine if psychological agency really matters to ideas of social development in Kalabankoro Nerekoro.

Specifically, this question showed up through spending time living in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. Gradually, through interviews and focus groups, two important concepts emerged as being central to intentional action: *dusu* (internal motivation) and *ka da I yèrè la* (self-efficacy). Whilst seeming perhaps a little extraordinary at first, these concepts emerged time and time again when I asked about what was necessary for people to overcome hardship in their lives. For this purpose I carried out a household survey, to quantify these concepts. An example for understanding the nature of *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* came from a woman I interviewed: talking about her life story and how she dealt with being unemployed because of dropping out of school to have children with her husband, she explained that,

“ka da I yèrè la means you cannot undertake anything if you do not believe in yourself. It means you have to love what you are

*doing, as if you do not like it first and do not believe in yourself,
you cannot do anything.”⁷*

This interviewee went on to explain how, thanks to her *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* she was able to begin an informal childcare centre in the neighbourhood: it had been her dream ever since she had children, but because she did not have a proper education, she thought it would be impossible. The woman began the childcare service by talking with friends, who encouraged her to approach mothers who would need assistance with their children whilst they tended to other chores. This thesis will explore *ka da I yèrè la*, and *dusu* in detail.

As an introduction to this thesis, I want to discuss two themes that I deem essential to set the scene and backdrop for my work, namely the agency/structure dialectic and the relational and multidimensional nature of well-being. I will also describe the subsequent chapters of the thesis.

1.1. THE AGENCY/STRUCTURE DIALECTIC

Human agency as a concept, and the motivation driving it, has long allured and intrigued scholars and practitioners. Agency is an abstract social phenomenon; like the wind, its presence is perceived from what it produces, but its actual mechanics are hard to pin down.

⁷ Female Interviewee, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 5th January 2011

Socrates, for example, made a point of teaching his students to honour their agency by “eliciting the soul’s own activity”⁸. Aristotle’s idea of *eudaimonia* - “a virtuous activity of soul of a certain kind”⁹ - has no exact translation, but relates to human flourishing, which includes elements of human agency, practical reasoning and autonomy¹⁰. Also, in Tao philosophy we find the concept of *we-wei* - understood as action by inaction (or effortless action), which speaks to an internal underpinning of human future-orientated agency¹¹. Looking at Gandhi’s philosophy of *satyagraha*, we also find references to the intrinsic motivation of the agent in human action and social relations. These concepts and others offer very different definitions of well-being, but integral to each is some form of purposeful agency.

Whilst these philosophical perspectives paint a picture of human agency as central to the human experience, mainstream popular development literature and policy have not always valued agency as such. Historically there has been a focus on structural elements of development through the focus on the implementation of good governance, infrastructure, aid, access to education, health, sanitation and continued economic growth¹². However, structures do not determine human action. Scholars such as Anthony Giddens argue that social arrangements are characterised by a dialectic

⁸ Martha Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A classical defence of reform in liberal education* (Harvard University Press, 1997). 32.

⁹ Aristotle, "The Nicomachean ethics," (Oxford University Press, 1925/1988).

¹⁰ Despina Archontaki, Gary Lewis, and Timothy Bates, "Genetic Influences on Psychological Wellbeing: A Nationally Representative Twin Study," *Journal of Personality* 2, no. 81 (2013).

¹¹ David Ellerman, "Helping People Help Themselves: From the World Bank to an alternative philosophy of development assistance," (University of Michigan Press, 2006).

¹² See note n.2

relationship between structure and human agency¹³. In his theory of structuration, Giddens (1979) defines structure as having two parts: rules and resources¹⁴. Resources are actual (for example, money, water, and land), and the dynamics of power over them impact their accessibility and distribution. They are “the media whereby transformative capacity is employed in the routine course of social interaction.”¹⁵ Rules, on the other hand, are virtual in the sense that they are not defined by time and place: “they are generalisable procedures applied in the enactment/reproduction of social life.”¹⁶ The point is that agency and structure are mere abstractions that we use to refer in language (which is always static at any moment) to a process that is always flowing¹⁷. Therefore, structure does not determine agency in that there is not just reproduction of structures through action, but also production of new structures through action¹⁸.

In addition to Giddens, Amartya Sen and other scholars using the Capability Approach have also highlighted the centrality of human agency in the social sciences.¹⁹ Within the

¹³ Anthony Giddens, *The constitution of Society: Outline of a theory of structuration* (University of California Press, 1984)., Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge University Press, 1977)., Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann *Social Construction of Reality* (1966) Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *Social Construction of Reality: a Treatise in the sociology of knowledge* (First Anchor Books, 1966)., Amartya Sen, *Development as freedom* (New Delhi ; Oxford: New Delhi ; Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1999). Karin Knorr-Cetina, "The micro-social order: towards a reconception," in *Actions and structure: research methods and social theory*, ed. Nigel G Fielding (Sage, 1988).

¹⁴ Sewell (1992) argues that the use of schemas is a better word for rules because rules carries an ambiguity and a sense of formally stated prescriptions, whereas what Giddens really meant by rules was “informal and not always conscious schemas, metaphors, or assumptions”. See William Sewell, "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency and Transformation," *The American Journal of Sociology* 98, no. 1 (1992): 8.

¹⁵ Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, structure and contradiction in social analysis* (Macmillan Education, 1979). 92.

¹⁶ Giddens, *The constitution of Society: Outline of a theory of structuration*: 21.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Kris Hardin, "The aesthetics of action: continuity and change in a West African town," (1993); Sewell, "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency and Transformation."

¹⁹ See Sen, *Development as freedom*., Solava Ibrahim and Sabina Alkire, "Empowerment and agency: A proposal for internationally-comparable indicators," *Oxford Development Studies* 35, no. 4 (2007).,

Capability Approach, social arrangements are viewed in respect of their ability to expand human freedoms on two levels, freedoms of opportunity and freedoms of process and agency²⁰. In development policy and practice, community development programs have arguably caught on to the importance of 'participatory' approaches to varying degrees²¹. Nevertheless, even the Millennium Development Goals, for example, do not explicitly include agency considerations, signalling gaps in the genuine inclusion of agency in mainstream development policy. The seriousness of the omission of agency from the Millennium Development Goals is illustrated by the observation that the goals could be achieved even if the entire world's poor were put in gaol²², which challenges the dramatic neglect of the poor's freedom. Looking past 2015 (the target date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals), it is not yet clear whether the development agenda will explicitly include the role of agency in development. The outcome document agreed at the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2013 refers to empowering girls and women, but not to participation, empowerment, purposive agency, democratic practices, or authentic self-determination more generally²³.

Martha Nussbaum, "Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach," in *Cambridge University Press* (2001)., David Crocker, *Ethics of Global Development: Agency, Capability, and Deliberative Democracy* (Cambridge University Press, 2009).,

²⁰ Amartya Sen, *Rationality and Freedom* (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002).

²¹ See Robert Chambers, *Whose reality counts? Putting the first last* (ITDG Publishing, 1997).

²² Sabina Alkire and Severine Deneulin, "The Human Development and Capability Approach," in *An Introduction to the Human Development and Capability Approach: Freedom and Agency*, ed. Severine Deneulin and Lila Shahani (Earthscan, 2006).

²³ This UNGA document made public at

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Outcome%20documentMDG.pdf> United Nations, "Special Event 25 September: Outcome Document," (2013).

Beyond popular mainstream development literature and policy, we find contributions from interdisciplinary perspectives on agency in development. Studies within social psychology, behavioural economics, human development, anthropology and sociology articulate how actors' perspectives are central to studies of social change and social development²⁴. Ignoring agency overlooks the discursive nature of individual agents negotiating their lives at psychological, collective and institutional levels²⁵.

The aim of this study is to provide an empirical examination of one aspect of human agency, specifically, psychological agency and its role in social development. It is my hope that this study will contribute towards the bridging of the gap between actor perspectives and mainstream development studies in theory and practice. This study is not the first to discuss agency at a psychological level in development studies. In the World Bank's *Moving Out of Poverty* study (2009), Deepa Narayan argued that the belief in oneself was an important factor in helping people move out of poverty²⁶.

²⁴ See for examples; Sen, *Development as freedom*. Nussbaum, "Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach.", Sabina Alkire, "Concepts and Measures of Agency," in *Arguments for a Better World: Essays in Honour of Amartya Sen; Volume 1: Ethics, Welfare and Measurement*, ed. K Basu and R Kanbur (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Naila Kabeer, "Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment," *Development and Change* 30(1999)., Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, *India: Economic Development and Social Opportunity* (Oxford University Press, 1995)., Feminist literature on agency; Srilatha Batiwala, "Taking the power out of empowerment - experiential account," *Development in Practice* 17, no. 4 (2007)., Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety* (Princeton University Press, 2005)., Deepa Narayan, *Voices of the Poor* (World Bank, 2000); Deepa Narayan, Lant Pritchett, and Soumya Kapoor, *Moving out of Poverty Volume 2: Success from the bottom up* (Copublication of Palgrave Macmillan and the World Bank, 2009)., WDR 2000/2001 on Empowerment which was replaced by a focus on poverty, Ruth Alsop, Mette Frost Bertelsen, and Jeremy Holland, "Empowerment in Practice: From Analysis to Implementation," ed. World Bank (2006). Debraj Ray, "Aspirations, Poverty and Economic Change," in *What Have We Learnt About Poverty*, ed. A. Banerjee, R. Bénabou, and D. Mookherjee (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)., Micheal Jackson and Ivan Karp, "Introduction," in *Personhood and agency: the experience of self and other in African cultures*, ed. Jackson Micheal and Karp Ivan (Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1990)., Ryan and Deci, "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development and Well-being.", Albert Bandura, *Self - Efficacy in Changing Societies* (Cambridge University Press, 2005).

²⁵ Long, *Development sociology: Actor perspectives*.

²⁶ Narayan, Pritchett, and Kapoor, *Moving out of Poverty Volume 2: Success from the bottom up*.

Whilst the *Moving Out of Poverty* study brought attention to the importance of psychological agency, its analysis was brief and focused on the instrumental value of psychological agency, leaving many questions from my own fieldwork unanswered – such as: How do the psychological constructs of *dusu* (internal motivation) and *ka da I yèrè la* (self-efficacy) form? How do people conceptualise these constructs? Does this occur just at the instrumental level? And so what? Does psychological agency really matter in the social development of the neighbourhood? Do people employ this agency at an individual or collective level, or both? My research attempts to answer such questions.

The other distinctive feature of this study is that it will be the first articulation of local conceptions of agency to be carried out in Mali. There is no literature on psychological agency in Mali, something that surprised me because in my fieldwork people living in difficult circumstances overwhelmingly spoke about the psychological energy driving them to undertake initiatives to improve their livelihoods. Instead, most analyses of livelihoods in Mali focus on power relations involving chiefs, castes, the state and other institutions such as the market²⁷. Although my thesis addresses social structures and

²⁷ For examples see; Hoffman 1995 explores the caste systems especially the role of griots, Barbara Hoffman, "Power, Structure, and the Mande jeliw " in *Status and Identity in West Africa*, ed. Conrad David and Frank Barbara (Indiana University Press: 1995). Bingen, Robinson, Staatz 2000 include an array of essays discussing various social structures impeding democracy in contemporary Mali, James Bingen, David Robinson, and John M. Staatz, *Democracy and Development in Mali* (Michigan State University Press, 2000). Soares 2005 and Brenner 1993, look at the role of Islam in Malian society and politics, Benjamin Soares, *The Prayer Economy: History and Authority in a Malian town* (University of Michigan Press, 2005). Louis Brenner, *Muslim Identity and Social Change in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Indiana University Press, 1993). De Jorio 1997 examines the role of elitism and gender in Mali, Rosa De Jorio, "Female Elites, Women's formal associations and political practices in urban Mali" (London School of Economics, 1997). Wooten 2003 looks at market relations and gender, Stephen Wooten, "Women, men and market gardens: Gender relations and income generation in rural Mali," *Human Organisation* 62, no. 2 (2003). Roy 2010 shows how the cotton market excludes peasant producers, Alexis Roy, "Peasant struggles in Mali: from defending cotton producers; interests to becoming part of the Malian power

processes of power, I also wish to analyse the aspect of power seldom studied in Mali yet central to the poor moving out of poverty and social development. This aspect of power is the formation of subjectivity, or psychological agency – the ‘power within’. Further still, by focusing the analysis on associations (which are groups of people working together to advance well-being goals), in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, I hope to evoke the desire for further study into mechanisms of individual and collective purposeful agency in other locations across the Malian cultural, political and spatial landscape. This is of crucial significance and need given the political crisis facing Mali today.

The approach I am taking is one that has been contested. Ian Greener (2002), in an examination of British welfare policy, suggests the focus on agency in the dialectic is a little too optimistic, and recommends a more structural approach such as that found in Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of ‘habitus’ – which is where the individual “has reached a point where reflexive behavior is the norm in a specific context, but they lack the right type of capital – or, indeed, any capital at all – to make any impact upon the field.”²⁸ Barbara Cruikshank (1999) shares the skepticism of the potential in agents, where empowering citizens through associations and everyday practices is more a measure of subjection to state power than of real emancipatory power²⁹. The dialectic between structure and agency undoubtedly stirs proponents viewing strengths from both sides. I

structures," *Review of African Political Economy* 37, no. 125 (2010). Meillassoux 1970 examines the historical roots of class within the Malian bureaucracy, Claude Meillassoux, "A class analysis of the Bureaucratic Process in Mali," *The Journal of Development Studies* 6(1970). & Djire 2004 illustrates how chief relations impact local governance, Moussa Djire, "The myths and realities of local governance in Sanankoroba, Mali," (International Institute for Environment and Development, 2004).

²⁸ Ian Greener, "Agency, social theory and social policy," *Critical Social Policy* 22(2002): 694.

²⁹ Barbara Cruikshank, *The will to empower: democratic citizens and other subjects* (Cornell University Press, 1999); *ibid.*

think the key is not to dismiss either but to research both. For example Mustafa Emirbazyer and Ann Mische (1998) take a temporal view of agency, where agency can be both iterative and focused on the past (such as found in Bourdieu's concept of habitus) or focused on the future (purposeful and aspirational). Emirbazyer and Mische (1998) warn us not to be just focused only on the habitual elements of agency as they argue that Bourdieu only concedes a, "low level of reflectivity do[es] not show us how such schemas can be challenged, reconsidered, and reformulated. By contrast, we maintain that human actors do not merely repeat past routines; they are also the inventors of new possibilities for thought and action."³⁰ The aim of this study is not to ignore the structural element in shaping agency outcomes, nor overlook habitual agency, let alone suggest that agency is enough when considering issues of development, reducing inequality and advancing human freedom. This study instead is a contribution to rebalance the dialectic and a reminder of the impact agency has in social development and people's lives. Agency is a complex phenomenon and one that cannot be reduced to structural proxies or iterative action. I follow Paulo Freire in his theory of conscientisation (1970), where there is a belief that a critical consciousness can be achieved in agents to then use these capabilities to contest and shift oppression³¹. E. Summerson Carr (2003) argues that conscientisation is a process that makes it possible for an agent to become aware of the habitual, thus rendering it possible to act against oppression. Conscientisation is a "discovery in which one begins to see one's position and move towards other possible positions. In this sense, conscientisation is not just a

³⁰ Mustafa Emirbazyer and Anne Mische, "What is Agency?," *American Journal of Sociology* 103(1998): 983-84.

³¹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Penguin Books, 1970).

process of discovering the hidden, but is instead an active strategy.”³² Thus, balancing our research to see the possibility and not just the oppression in the agency/structure dialectic is an important contribution in the fight for human freedom and justice.

1.2. EMPIRICAL CONCEPTS PUSHING BEYOND THEORETICAL

DEFINITIONS

This thesis will introduce concepts embedded within the Bambara language that emerged as central to people’s agency in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. As an introduction, I would like to provide a very brief description of these concepts and in the next chapter, I will show how these concepts take us beyond current theoretical boundaries these concepts relate to in both development and social psychology literature.

As an introduction to these concepts which will be elaborated on further throughout the thesis, I will firstly introduce the two psychological concepts of *dusu* (internal motivation) and *ka da I yèrè la* (self-efficacy) that emerged from the inductive qualitative methods employed in my fieldwork. Secondly, I will make some brief comments on why these two concepts are different from other theoretical concepts currently in the literature, a discussion to be taken up further in the thesis.

Dusu and *ka da yèrè la* have a dyadic value to people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. These concepts have an instrumental value to people whereby they are inherent in the dominant narrative of change which eludes that if you have *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*

³² E. Summerson Carr, "Rethinking Empowerment Theory Using a Feminist Lens: The Importance of Process," *Affilia* 18, no. 1 (2003): 15.

then you can achieve your *hami* (aspirations) even without means (financial). Internal motivation and self-efficacy also have an *intrinsic value* to informants where it was argued that pursuing aspirations one cared about was an end and valuable to the agent in itself.

Dusu refers to **an internal motivation experienced by agents that drives purposeful action**. *Dusu* is described as not just a trait for individualistic action, but also fundamental for an individual to contribute towards the collective. Beyond the instrumental element, *dusu* contained an intrinsic element where informants described the concept also as undertaking action for the love of it. Thus undertaking the action driven by *dusu* was an end in itself because it was valued. *Dusu* is closely related to Self Determination's Theory (SDT) definition of autonomy, where autonomy is self-regulation of one's actions according to one's values also forming the base of internal motivation³³. Whilst this thesis will explore the cross over of SDT's definition of autonomy and *dusu*, including the testing of the use of measures of autonomy to account for *dusu*, we cannot assume these two concepts are the same. For example one problematic area with SDT's concept of autonomy that this thesis cannot reconcile is the biologically deterministic nature of Self Determination Theory as discussed in Chapter 2.

Closely linked to the concept of *dusu*, is *ka I da yèrè la*. *Ka I da yèrè la* can be defined as **the belief in one's ability to initiate action**. Like *dusu*, *ka da I yèrè la* had an

³³ Ryan and Deci, "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development and Well-being."

instrumental and intrinsic importance to my informants. The instrumental value of *ka da I yèrè la* was seen in the belief by informants that without *ka da I yèrè la* one cannot do or achieve anything. *Ka da I yèrè la* was also described during my interviews as having clarity in your mind about what you want to do, where not hesitating will lead to an outcome. Self-efficacy theory from social psychology has similarities with *ka da I yèrè la*. Here, efficacy is a belief in the ability to achieve desired outcomes relating to feelings of confidence and control³⁴. There are strong parallels between *ka da I yèrè la* and the belief in ability of the self. Bandura (1997) maintains, “Beliefs of personal efficacy constitute the key factor of human agency.”³⁵ Yet whilst the belief in ability link *ka I da yèrè la* with efficacy, for informants in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, *ka da I yèrè la* is intrinsically important. The intrinsic importance of *ka da I yèrè la* was explained as a built-in element of morality (something self-efficacy theory does not account for). My informants understood that people who act with *ka da I yèrè la* are also people not doing any dirty work, not lying to people, and not betraying anyone’s trust. This intrinsic element will be taken up further in Chapter (section 5.5).

So whilst this thesis will suggest there is merit in including social psychology concepts to aid the discussion and position of the relevance of the psychological constructs of *ka I da yèrè la* and *dusu*, we cannot restrict the definitions of *ka I da yèrè la* and *dusu* as mere abstractions. By parking *ka I da yèrè la* and *dusu* under the umbrellas of Western research misses the potential improvements to such theories. Instead, we must see that *ka I da yèrè la* and *dusu* offer much in the way of bringing together both literatures on

³⁴ Bandura, "Self - efficacy: the exercise of control".

³⁵ Bandura, "Self - efficacy: the exercise of control" 3.

social psychology and development studies with potential to create a new field of enquiry within both.

1.3. ASPIRING TO WELL-BEING

Another important theme for this thesis is the aspiration to have *hèrè* for agents in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. *Hèrè* is also another central Bambara concept used in this thesis and most closely relates (although not the same) as the Western concept of well-being. The reason for bringing attention to *hèrè* is very simple: the first question I asked when entering the field and talking to people was exactly why they were doing what they were doing. In response, after a bewildered look from my informants as if my question was totally obvious, I got many similar answers: “to get out of poverty,” “to get a job,” “to help my family,” “to be happy,” “to help my community,” and so on. All of these aspirations were in pursuit of an umbrella concept, referred to in Bambara as *hèrè* or well-being. As well-being is the closest English word we could find to translate *hèrè*, however I recognise like others, well-being is also a contested concept³⁶. I would like now discuss two specific areas from the literature on well-being that relates to the concept of *hèrè*. This includes Amartya Sen’s theory on Capability Expansion and various theories showing well-being as relational. Whilst these theories help us understand the importance of *hèrè*, neither captures completely what my informants meant by *hèrè*. Thus, whilst the following discussion helps demarcate the potential

³⁶. See Proochista Ariana, "Challenging Our Understanding of Health: Indigenous Perspectives from the Highlands of Chiapas, Mexico," *Oxford Development Studies* 40, no. 3 (2012). Thus I will define *hèrè* further below to make it clearer on how I am using the term in this study.

importance of *hèrè*, we can understand the concept as an addition to current theoretical views bringing together both capability expansion and relational standpoints.

Firstly, to my informants who experienced deprivation in various dimensions of their life such as health, access to education, income and safety, *hèrè* was aspirational. Thus, to my respondents, development was not about economic growth (although having some financial capacity was definitely desired). Rather, to my informants, development had a much broader meaning and was about enhancing *hèrè* – the concept was multidimensional and relational. It included not just material attributes but also happiness, health and altruism. This concept of *hèrè* is similar to Sen's "capability expansion" in his Capability Approach. The Capability Approach emerged after Sen (1979) showed how contemporary political and moral philosophy writings on equality did not sufficiently answer the fundamental question "inequality of what?"; Sen argued that any theory of social arrangements "that has stood the test of time seems to demand equality of something – something that is regarded as particularly important in that theory"³⁷. Sen engages works from contemporary political and moral philosophy to argue that writings on equality in resources fail to understand and critically examine the relevance of such resources to well-being. Sen thus examines the work of John Rawls - where equality is seen as equal liberty and equality in the distribution of primary goods³⁸; of Ronald Dworkin - where equality is seen as the treatment as equals and equality of resources³⁹; and of others, such as Thomas Nagel⁴⁰ and Thomas Scanlon⁴¹.

³⁷ Amartya Sen, *Inequality Re-examined* (Oxford University Press, 1992). 12.

³⁸ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, US: Harvard University Press, 1971).

³⁹ Ronald Dworkin, " 'What is Equality? Part 1: Equality of Welfare', and 'What is Equality? Part 2: Equality of Resources', " *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 10(1981).

Sen's argument is that any focus on resources overlooks the heterogeneity of people and the many different ways in which equality can be judged; also, by just focusing on particular resources (e.g. liberty or economic resources) it is not clear that different persons have different abilities to convert such resources into gain⁴². Thus, "the heterogeneity of people leads to the divergences in the assessment of quality in terms of different variables. This adds significance to the central question: equality of what?"⁴³ Sen proposed as his central thesis that equality should be assessed as human freedoms, where human freedoms are not just the *achievement* of functionings people value or have reason to value but also the *ability* of people to pursue them in the first place. Thus we can understand functionings as actual beings and doings (e.g. being nourished, riding a bike, being educated and being healthy). The capability is the real *ability* to achieve sets of functionings (e.g. the ability to be nourished, the ability to be educated, the ability to be healthy). The opportunity aspect of Sen's notion of freedom is complemented by a focus on agency freedoms and achievements, as mentioned at the start of this chapter and expanded upon in the next. The concept of *hèrè* referred to by my informants also shows the heterogeneity of people's concepts of the 'good life', and the multidimensionality of the functionings and capabilities they aspire to realise.

Secondly, and beyond its multi-dimensional value, the gaining of *hèrè* was conceptualised by my informants not as an achievement of the isolated 'self' but rather as a relational process that takes place in connection with other social actors. As the

⁴⁰ Thomas Nagel, *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

⁴¹ Thomas Scanlon, "Notes on Equality," (mimeographed, Harvard University.1988).

⁴² Sen, *Inequality Re-examined*.

⁴³ Ibid., 2.

traditional chief of Kalabankoro Nerekoro explained to me, “you have *hèrè* when everyone has *hèrè*.⁴⁴” The work of the anthropologist Paul Riesman (1974) with the Fulani ethnic group in Burkina Faso found a similar sentiment regarding the construction of personality in Jelgobe society: “personality is not entirely localized in the body and mind of a person, but that it also includes the people with whom he has relations. Without the others, a man lacks a part of himself; this is not simply a poetic way of seeing things, but an objective statement of fact”⁴⁵. Other similarities can be found in Sarah White’s work (2009), where the author describes the connection between the self and the others regarding well-being for rural farmers in Malawi. She argues that “well-being is a process between the individual and the collective”⁴⁶. The same relational approach can be found in South African writings on ‘ubuntu’⁴⁷, which is the short form for *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*. The concept of ‘ubuntu’, which can be translated as “a person is a person through others,” or “I am because we are”⁴⁸, focuses on relationships and the responsibility people have to the other in our actions and perceptions of self⁴⁹. *Hèrè* thus challenges conceptions that well-being is something that belongs to the individual and is separate from the individual’s social relations. The pursuit of personal and collective well-being could also contribute towards social development if development is understood as increasing capabilities.

⁴⁴ Male Interview, 28th December 2010, Kalabankoro Nerekoro

⁴⁵ Paul Riesman, "Freedom in Fulani Social Life: An Introspective Ethnography," (University of Chicago Press, 1998), 167.

⁴⁶ Sarah White, "Bringing Wellbeing into Development Practice," *Wellbeing in Developing Countries Research Group Working Paper* 50, no. 09 (2009): 11.

⁴⁷ See Munyaradzi Ramose, *African philosophy through Ubuntu* (Harare, Zimbabwe: Mond Books, 1999); G. M. Nkondo, "Ubuntu as a public policy in South Africa: a conceptual framework.," *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies* 2, no. 1 (2007).

⁴⁸ Sabina Alkire, "Wellbeing, happiness and public policy," *OPHI Research in Progress Series* (2013).

⁴⁹ Thad. Metz, "Human Dignity, Capital Punishment and an African Moral Theory: Towards a New Philosophy of Human Rights," *Journal of Human Rights* 9, no. 1 (2010).

From this discussion of *hèrè*, we can see that there are levels of abstraction of agency including the ‘self,’ the ‘family,’ and the ‘community.’ Whilst this thesis predominately looks at psychological agency and the construction of the ‘self,’ I will examine the ‘self’ in relation to the levels of the family and associations as no ‘self’ apart from sociality. Further still, even if extremely important to purposeful agency, the *ka da I yèrè* and *dusu* of people living in Kalabankoro Nerekoro are not some quick fix to enhancing complete *hèrè* for actors. Agents are constantly challenged by unsupportive social relations and institutional failures – the focus of Chapter 7 – and thus psychological agency will be identified as one dimension of the complex process of enhancing individual and collective *hèrè*.

1.4. THESIS OUTLINE

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. After this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 explores the theoretical components and presents a framework for analysing the psychological concepts of *dusu* (internal motivation) and *ka da I yèrè la* (self-efficacy). I raise the deficits in three distinct bodies of literature and in bringing them together, hope to strengthen each. Firstly, regarding the literature on development and empowerment, I suggest that empowerment and agency should have a deeper theorisation at the psychological level. Secondly, I consider the literature of psychological agency found in social psychology and suggest a better contextualisation of such theories in poor communities such as Kalabankoro Nerekoro. Thirdly, whilst measures of empowerment are much better at integrating contextual elements in their

theories, they still tend to measure empowerment through proxies of either decision-making ability or opportunity structure and I suggest the provision of psychological agency as well. This discussion and subsequent identification of a theoretical framework will help guide my empirical findings.

Chapter 3 explores in-depth my inductive approach using mixed methods chosen specifically for the interdisciplinary nature of the research. Here I also describe the array of qualitative and quantitative methods employed in the ‘field’ as well as drawing attention to considerations of the research methodology.

Chapter 4 examines the study site of the research. I do this firstly through describing the geographic and historical elements of the study site and providing a description of the Malian state. Secondly, I introduce the categories of analysis I use within this thesis that emerged from my fieldwork as being related to conditioning, not determining purposeful agency in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. These categories were socio-economic in nature including education level, gender, age and deprivation level. The categories of analysis emerged from my fieldwork, specifically through observations, focus groups and mini-life story interviews. Deprivation is measured as multidimensional poverty (an index which includes measures of health, education and living standards) and as income deprivation within the population of Kalabankoro Nerekoro.

In Chapter 5, I use qualitative data especially from life histories and focus groups to describe the Bambara concepts of *dusu* (internal motivation) and *ka da I yèrè la* (self-

efficacy), and to show how their cultivation enables people to become empowered agents. This chapter also points to both the instrumental and intrinsic importance of *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*. I also show that whilst the analytical categories of gender, age, education and deprivation levels of agents, (categories of analysis introduced in Chapter 4, Section 4.6), all condition purposeful agency in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, they do not determine it. I also show the intrinsic importance of valuing what one does, rendering decision-making ability another poor proxy for agency. This is because I also find that the concepts of *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* are conditioned through processes relating to watching others achieve and encouragement.

Chapter 6 provides quantitative analysis to contribute towards the qualitative claims made in Chapter 5. I do this by correlating traditional measures of empowerment such as decision-making ability and socio-economic characteristics with a proposed proxy from Self Determination Theory. I conclude that *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* must be measured not through decision making ability and socio-economic proxies, and suggest, although imperfect, using measures that capture the nature of *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* better, such as autonomy and self-efficacy.

Whilst the first two chapters predominantly focus on the construction of the ‘self’ and individual agency, people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro rarely act alone. Instead most people act in groups called associations aimed at achieving their personal and collective aspirations. Thus whilst *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* are important to people at an individual level, in Chapter 7, I seek to understand what becomes of this dynamic at the

collective level. Examining group work and associations in Kalabankoro Nerekoro also helps us understand the relational aspect of *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* further, specifically in earlier chapters I make the assertion that of *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* are relational being constituted by watching people succeed, encouragement and positive envy which are require interaction with other agents. It is interesting now to examine how these processes work within specific groups environments, or associations as they are called in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. Further still, whilst associations aspire to improve *hèrè* for their members, the community at large or both, this goal is not always realised. Dynamics within and around associations can both enable and disable collective agency. Specifically I will argue that conflict within groups and economic stratification, access to education, gender and age norms all condition the outcomes of associations within the social landscape of Kalabankoro Nerekoro. Thus I will conclude that whilst *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* are important to agents and their actions towards improvement to personal and community *hèrè*, *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* should never be the only aspects of social development considered.

Chapter 8 concludes, showing how the dominant development narrative systematically overlooks – and hence undervalues – the tremendous and potent influence of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*. The chapter calls for the inclusion of the psychological domain in studies of purposeful agency and development more widely.

1.5. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have introduced the focus of my inductive study and described how I arrived at the central research question. I have also explored three themes that are

important backdrops to my study: the structure/agency dialectic, definitional issues and individual and collective *hèrè*. I have also presented the chapter layout of my work, to show how my thesis will evolve in the following pages.

To conclude my introduction I want to make some remarks about the current political and humanitarian turmoil in Mali. My research took place before the current political and humanitarian crisis (my fieldwork period ended in November 2011) and so the context I offer is focused on the situation pre-crisis. This does not mean though that my research has no relevance to the contemporary crisis and what can be done about it. I believe that within the pages of this thesis, there are some significant contributions not just to the literature on agency but specifically to the agency of Malians working towards peace and future development of a unified Mali. In a reflection on what is required for Malian society to overcome the injuries of such a conflict, the Malian scholar Sekou Berte (2012) argues “Mali and its many peoples much be the prime movers in this process. Alas, this has yet to be the case.”⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Sekou Berte, "Mali: A hub of working disagreements or a democratic state that has yet to be?," <http://production.culanth.org/fieldsights/313-mali-a-hub-of-working-disagreements-or-a-democratic-state-that-has-yet-to-be>.

CHAPTER 2:

FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

This chapter surveys several distinct disciplinary literatures in order to uncover the central factors enabling intentional action or what I am calling purposeful agency. Specifically this chapter identifies a lack of attention to the internal or psychological drivers of purposeful agency, and to its formulation, in development studies (which uses proxies for psychological concepts). The psychological literature which does address these topics directly – for example, as autonomy or efficacy – is at present not connected to development policy. To explain how this literature survey identifies a vital ‘gap’ in the literature this thesis will address, I begin by sketching the topics of empirical chapters.

In my inductive study, my informants explained that the psychological concepts of *dusu* (internal motivation) and *ka da I yèrè la* (self-efficacy) were central to their purposeful agency and social development in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, a neighbourhood on the urban fringe of Bamako. I use the term ‘purposeful agency,’ **where action is taken towards a goal**. This definition has come from the analysis of data where my informants articulated agency as undertaking initiatives to improve *hèrè* (loosely translated as well-being). In my empirical chapters, I will relate how psychological concepts of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* have instrumental and intrinsic significance to

people's purposeful agency. For example, a lady I interviewed in Kalabankoro Nerekoro living in a poor compound spoke of the problems faced by people each day because of their poverty. She said the only things to help were *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*. Specifically she commented on their instrumental significance, "To get *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* is the start of everything. If you do not have this kind of thinking everything you undertake will collapse – it will not have success."⁵¹ Another woman living in Kalabankoro Nerekoro explained the intrinsic importance of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* and 'loving' the initiative one undertakes: "If you love what you do, then you can do it and implement these things."⁵² The psychological concepts were important to the purposeful agency of my informants. Because of the intrinsic value associated with purposeful agency, I argue that decision-making ability, whilst important, is not a suitable proxy for *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*. This is because decision-making ability does not account for the depth of meaning and value in the decision to the agent. In my empirical chapters I will also show how an agent's socio-economic characteristics (such as gender, deprivation level, age and education levels) are not an adequate proxy for *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* either – because other factors such as encouragement and watching other people succeed are central to the production of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*.

Further still, later chapters make the case that personal development through the realisation of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* is an overlooked yet a significant factor in wider social development in the neighbourhood – it supports agents to achieve well-being outcomes and contributes towards greater *hèrè* and psychological well-being. However,

⁵¹ Female Interview, 22nd December 2010, Kalabankoro Nerekoro

⁵² Female interview, 5th January 2011, Kalabankoro Nerekoro

whilst *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* are important intrinsically and instrumentally, they cannot be viewed as a silver bullet for social development in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. I will show this when I consider purposeful agency in group work (associations) and how agents cannot succeed in the pursuit of their *hèrè* without addressing structural inequality within micro, meso and macro levels of Malian society.

Whilst there is a gap in the literature firstly in development literature, which lacks a focus on psychological agency, and secondly in psychological literature, which lacks studies outside the Western focused psychological paradigm, there are some promising exceptions to this trend exist. They include the World Bank's *Moving Out of Poverty*⁵³, which showed the importance of self-belief for the poor to move out of poverty, and Jo Rowlands' term '*power from within*' – referring to the internal or psychological drive of agents to create change in their lives⁵⁴. This study follows in their footsteps to add to the literature on psychological agency in development studies.

2.1. BEYOND PROXIES: LOCATING PSYCHOLOGICAL AGENCY

Human agency is a contested concept in the social sciences⁵⁵. It is contested for its temporal focus⁵⁶, its level of analysis⁵⁷, its instrumental and intrinsic properties⁵⁸, its

⁵³ Narayan, Pritchett, and Kapoor, *Moving out of Poverty Volume 2: Success from the bottom up*.

⁵⁴ Jo Rowlands, "Empowerment Examined," *Development in Practice* 5, no. 2 (1995): 102.

⁵⁵ Long, *Development sociology: Actor perspectives*.

⁵⁶ Emirbayer and Mische, "What is Agency?."

⁵⁷ Frances Stewart, "Groups and Capabilities," *Journal of Human Development* 6, no. 2 (2005); Solava Ibrahim, "From Individual to Collective Capabilities: The Capability Approach as a Conceptual Framework for Self-help," *Journal of Human Development* 7, no. 4 (2006).

⁵⁸ Amartya Sen and Jean Dreze, *India: Development and Participation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Sabina Alkire, "Measuring Agency: Issues and Possibilities," *Indian Journal of Human Development* 1, no. 1 (2007).

paradoxical oppressive and emancipatory capability⁵⁹ and, as already discussed in the introduction chapter, its dialectic relationship with structure⁶⁰. This analysis begins with intentional action or what I am calling purposeful agency. Goal directed behaviour is an aspect of agency as a broader concept, specifically regarding how imagined possibilities motivate action in the immediate short term⁶¹. Purposeful agency is also distinctive from non-purposeful agency such found in the writings of Bourdieu's theory of Habitus⁶². Emirbayer and Mische (1998) argue the importance of the purposeful component of agency, "an imaginative engagement of the future is also a crucial component of the effort of human actors. As they respond to the challenges and uncertainties of social life, actors are capable of distancing themselves (at least in partial exploratory ways) from the schemas, habits, and traditions that constrain social identities and institutions⁶³". Solava Ibrahim (2006) also has an emancipatory view and suggests that agents undertake purposeful action after a period of self-scrutiny and reflection to achieve an act in accordance to their aspirations and values. Similarly, Sen in his work on the Capability Approach has defined the term 'agency' as purposeful agency⁶⁴, and argued for agency to be at the heart of all processes of development and social change. Within the Capability Approach, Sen explains the usefulness of

⁵⁹ Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4 (1982); Judith Butler, *The psychic life of power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford University Press, 1997); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The birth of the prison* (London: Allen Lane, 1977).

⁶⁰ Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, structure and contradiction in social analysis*; Sewell, "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency and Transformation."; Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*.

⁶¹ Hazel Markus and Paula Nurius, "Possible selves," *American Psychologist* 41, no. 9 (1986): 954.

⁶² Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*

⁶³ Emirbayer and Mische, "What is Agency?," 984.

⁶⁴ Sen relates agency as purposeful in using terms such as struggle, or impatience to inflame the need for action towards a particular change in sociality. For example in his introduction to *Development as Freedom*, he calls for 'constructive impatience' (pg.11) when discussing free and sustainable agency. Again, in the last chapter of *the Idea of Justice*, Sen states, "What tends to inflame the minds of suffering humanity cannot but be of immediate interest both to policy-making and to the diagnosis of injustice"(p. 388) .

expanding human freedoms not just through opportunities or the ‘substantive freedoms’⁶⁵ that the members of a society enjoy, but also through empowerment and agency, which Sen calls ‘process freedoms’⁶⁶. Specifically, process freedoms “enhance the ability of people to help themselves and also to influence the world, these matters are central to the process of development”⁶⁷. Sen considers empowerment, agency and systemic process freedoms such as democratic practices, civil and political liberties to be central to creating social change, where the process of achieving such freedoms has intrinsic importance, independently of the outcome. Sen places agency at the centre of his Capability Approach, where “the people have to be seen... as being actively involved – given the opportunity – in shaping their own destiny, and not just as passive recipients of the fruits of cunning development programs.”⁶⁸ Agency is the ability to act on values, or as Sen puts it, “what a person is free to do and achieve in pursuit of whatever goals or values he or she regards as important.”⁶⁹ Whilst Sen does not explicitly use the word ‘aspiration’ in his definition of agency, his idea of agency is aspirational, as it is towards an action or responding to what he calls ‘constructive impatience’.⁷⁰ Ibrahim (2011) has proposed an explicit discussion of aspirations within the Capability Approach, because it is what people reach for, and what they imagine, strive and hope for, even against all odds, that affects their actions as agents.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Sen, *Development as freedom*: 3.

⁶⁶ Sen, *Rationality and Freedom*: 625.

⁶⁷ Sen, *Development as freedom*: 18.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁶⁹ Sen 1985, cited in Ibrahim and Alkire, "Empowerment and agency: A proposal for internationally-comparable indicators," 384.

⁷⁰ Sen, *Development as freedom*: 11.

⁷¹ Solava Ibrahim, "Poverty, aspirations and wellbeing: afraid to aspire and unable to reach a better life – voices from Egypt. ." *Brooks World Poverty Institute BWPI Working Paper* 141(2011): 10.

Whilst Sen conceives of agency as having both instrumental and intrinsic dimensions, and being important towards social development goals, he does not give us much of a hint as to how we can understand the construction and development of agency, especially at a psychological level. So what I am terming psychological agency is a component of purposeful agency; specifically at the psychological level. I also found a deficit in the theorisation of the psychological level within with the literature on empowerment even though empowerment has featured as a buzzword in many approaches of development⁷², and relates to people's abilities to act. The exceptions to this assertion are Rowlands (1995, 1997) and Narayan (2005), who both have argued the importance of psychological agency, although neither has defined at length the mechanics of what specifically constitutes psychological agency, or discussed its intrinsic significance. Nonetheless, other definitions of empowerment vary quite a bit. For example, a study by Alsop et al. (2005) showed 15 different definitions of empowerment and another 15 different definitions were again presented in a study by Ibrahim and Alkire (2007). By my readings, these definitions broadly fall into three categories: firstly empowerment as a favourable opportunity structure⁷³, secondly empowerment as choice and decision-making ability⁷⁴, and thirdly empowerment as the

⁷² Andrea Cornwall and Karen Brock, "Beyond Buzzwords: "Poverty Reduction", "Participation" and "Empowerment" in Development Policy " *United Nations Research Institute for Social Development*, Overarching Concerns Programme Paper Number 10(2005).

⁷³ Alsop, Bertelsen, and Holland, "Empowerment in Practise: From Analysis to Implementation.", Deepa Narayan-Parker, *Measuring empowerment : cross-disciplinary perspectives* (Washington, DC : World Bank, c2005: Washington, DC : World Bank, c2005., 2005).

⁷⁴ Naila Kabeer, *Gender Mainstreaming in Poverty Eradication and the Millennium Development Goals: A handbook for policy- makers and other stakeholders* (Commonwealth Secretariat, the International development Research Council and the Canadian International Development Agency, 2003); Marjorie Olney and Paul Salomone, "Empowerment and choice in supported employment: Helping people to help themselves," *Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counselling* 23, no. 3 (1992); Kabeer, "Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment."

distribution of power⁷⁵. Whilst these elements of the concept of empowerment are important and it is neither my goal nor intention to say they are not, I would like to show how there is room to enhance each the definition of empowerment by also including a provision for psychological agency. The importance of this is two-fold: firstly at the conceptual level in terms of how empowerment is defined, as well as at the level of measurement, which informs further research and policy. I will now discuss each of the main areas in which empowerment is defined and raise some possibilities in how these definitions can be furthered to include psychological agency.

Firstly, Alsop et al. (2006) draw on Sen to frame empowerment as a process comprising both agency and a favourable opportunity structure that constantly interact with each other, having some instrumental value to development⁷⁶. Emma Samman and Maria Emma Santos (2009) define opportunity structure as “the broader institutional, social, and political context of formal and informal rules and norms within which actors pursue their interests.”⁷⁷ Alsop et al. (2006), in a World Bank Policy Publication, show how the degree of empowerment is directly related to agency and opportunity structure, which are in turn shaped by each other. This would suggest that agency can influence opportunity structure and opportunity structure can influence agency, which in turn results in degrees of empowerment or disempowerment. A possible issue with defining empowerment just in this way is that the process by which structure and agency come together to create empowerment is complex, and this agency can be overlooked when

⁷⁵ V Wee et al., "Women empowering themselves: A framework that interrogates and transforms," in *The Research Programme Consortium on Women's Empowerment in Muslim Contexts*, ed. University of Hong Kong (2008); Batiwala, "Taking the power out of empowerment - experiential account."

⁷⁶ Alsop, Bertelsen, and Holland, "Empowerment in Practise: From Analysis to Implementation."

⁷⁷ Emma Samman and Maria Emma Santos, "Agency and Empowerment: A review of concepts, indicators and empirical evidence," ed. Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (2009), 3.

broadly stating that opportunity structure influences levels of empowerment without articulating what elements and processes of agency or structure one is referring to for specific contexts. Thus there is an inherent risk that opportunity structure will be defined as the socio-economic characteristics of the agent – at both the conceptual level and in measurement, leaving limited room for psychological ‘power from within.’ For example, in the Malian Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) 2013–14, empowerment is defined (only in respect to women), as “strengthening women’s economic capacity by recognizing their contribution to economic development by introducing them into productive circuits and guaranteeing equal access to economic employment opportunities and production factors.”⁷⁸ Whilst it may be partially the case that manipulating an agent’s structural environment, such as by increasing one’s education, providing better access to markets (like micro credit) and increasing assets, does increase levels of empowerment for many people, viewing empowerment solely through proxies can be problematic as it assumes that resources automatically translate into purposeful agency, which in the findings of my research is certainly not the case⁷⁹. Nonetheless, Narayan et al. (2009) have expanded on Alsop’s work in the World Bank *Moving Out of Poverty* study which she directed – a research project that included over 5,000 people from 15 different countries – to argue that the poor made explicit the importance of self-belief in moving out of poverty, thus suggesting that opportunity structure is not a solely responsible for empowerment, and psychological agency should be considered. Whilst theirs is a powerful contribution, in the *Moving Out of Poverty*

⁷⁸ International Monetary Fund, "Plan for the Sustainable Recovery of Mali 2013-2014," in *Mali: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper* (International Monetary Fund, 2013), 28.

⁷⁹ See; Sen, *Inequality Re-examined*; Alkire, "Concepts and Measures of Agency."; Randall Collins, "Situational Stratification: A micro-Macro Theory of Inequality," *Sociological Theory* 18, no. 1 (2000).

study, Narayan et al. purposefully focus on the ways in which empowerment is instrumental to overcoming poverty. While they recognize empowerment has wider values, these are not the focus of concern for that study⁸⁰, leaving room for further theorisation on intrinsic dimension, which I will take up further in this chapter.

Secondly, in the literature empowerment is defined as choice and decision-making ability. As Naila Kabeer (2003) argues, this definition of choice implies that there are other options that the agent can choose, which may or may not be the case, not to mention that agents may be unaware of the existence of other choices⁸¹. Specifically, an illiterate person would have a very different realm of choices available than an educated person. In addition, choice removes the value component of the choice itself⁸². For example, a person might not make decisions about minor household purposes because she and her husband have decided that this year she will focus fully on her career, and her husband will look after domestic matters, which she does not value doing anyway. In this fuller context, not having the choice of whether to buy beans or spinach makes her more, rather than less, empowered. Whilst Kabeer (1999), who defines empowerment by choice, may qualify these points in her detailed discussions of empowerment, when it comes to operationalising the definition in a set of measures, again we come into trouble with the very one-dimensional view of choice, measured through decision-making ability, which can overlook the consideration of intrinsic value

⁸⁰ Deepa Narayan and Patti Petesch, *Moving Out of Poverty*, Volume 1: Cross Disciplinary Perspectives on Mobility (Palgrave MacMillan and the World Bank, 2007).

⁸¹ Kabeer, "Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment."

⁸² Sabina Alkire and Severine Deneulin, "The Human Development and Capability Approach," in *An Introduction to the Human Development and Capability Approach: Freedom and Agency* (EarthScan, 2009).

and how some choices align with one's deeper values and others do not. This is a point I will return to later in Chapter 6 (Section 6.6).

Another set of authors - including those writing in the feminist literature - conceive of empowerment as the distribution of power towards those who historically have had none. Wee et al. (2008) argue that any enquiry into empowerment "should entail some analysis of the power dynamics that are implicitly in all social, economic, cultural, and political relations"⁸³. Kabeer (2003), a prominent writer on this topic, argues that empowerment is a process of change, and "refers to the processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such ability."⁸⁴ Discourse Theory scholars working on power also show the depth of oppression at a more subjective level, and how the control of knowledge conditions agents' aspirations and how they see themselves⁸⁵. In *Discursive Struggles Within Social Welfare: Restaging Teen Motherhood*, Iara Lessa (2006) helpfully elucidates how the impact of oppression and hegemony condition and restrict human agency⁸⁶. Whilst the examination of oppression through power is an extremely important element of empowerment (or the lack of it), it can infer that power is just about oppression, thus overlooking the very emancipatory element of power – indeed the element that constitutes agency. A promising area of study relating to Michel Foucault's later writings challenged the dominant conception that power is just about oppression. To Foucault in his later work, power was present in

⁸³ Wee et al., "Women empowering themselves: A framework that interrogates and transforms," 18.

⁸⁴ Kabeer, *Gender Mainstreaming in Poverty Eradication and the Millennium Development Goals: A handbook for policy-makers and other stakeholders*: 170.

⁸⁵ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other writings, 1972-1977* (Random House Incorporated, 1980).

⁸⁶ Iara Lessa, "Discursive struggles within social welfare: Restaging teen motherhood," *British Journal of Social Work* 36, no. 2 (2006): 285.

all human relations, social structures and the creations of subjectivity. The formation of subjectivity and becoming a subject is part of the human experience and not just about oppression. For example, as humans, we are subjected to power from our parents from the moment we are born⁸⁷. Subjectivity was not just about being dominated or oppressed, as power was what drove agency to influence such oppression. This is what Foucault described as a paradox of subjectivity⁸⁸. In her book *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, Judith Butler (1997) draws upon Foucault's paradox of subjectivity to create a theory of subjection, expanding further on how power and structure do not just dominate agency but also enable it. Butler finds Foucault's conception of the subject inadequate because he reduces the formation of the subject to social power but does not account for the unconscious and psychic power⁸⁹. Butler argues that there is indeed a difference between the subject and the psyche where the subject is constituted just by social power yet the psyche is constituted through subjection (social power) but also includes the unconscious which is not necessarily constituted solely by social power. The unconscious is an important element of the psyche as argued by Lois McNay (1999), creativity comes from the unconscious, "Creativity is needed not only in order to realise norms and values in concrete practices; the existence of values also presupposes a creative process by which values are

⁸⁷ See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti -Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd, New Edition (2004), 1972). This is a project analysing ways in which the human is subjected to power, drawing from Freud's analysis of the complex relationship between parents and child through to the power of capitalism and the impact on the human psyche.

⁸⁸ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The birth of the prison*.

⁸⁹ Veronica Vasterling, "The psyche and the social: Judith Butler's politicizing of psychoanalytical theory," In *Sexuality and Psychoanalysis: Philosophical Criticisms*, edited by Jens de Vleminck, Eran Dorfman, Leuven University Press, (2010), 171-182

fashioned and transmitted.⁹⁰ Butler argues it is because of the unconscious element of the psyche that agency isn't determined by structure and so there is a difference between psychic power and social power. Butler maintains that not "all agency remains tethered to those conditions and that those conditions remain the same in every operation of agency"⁹¹. Butler explains, "A power *exerted on* a subject, subjection is nevertheless a power *assumed by* the subject, an assumption that constitutes the instrument of that subject's becoming."⁹² Thus, Butler argues that through the process of subjectivity, power shifts from its status as a condition of agency to the subjects' own agency⁹³ or the "power within" as found in the writings of Rowlands⁹⁴.

At a general level the discussion of value formation in Butler's arguments is helpful in directing how we can understand power as emancipatory; however Butler, stops short of defining and conceptualising the actual mechanics of psychological agency and what exactly constitutes the trope in terms of shifting subjectivities to create social change. Lois McNay (1999), drawing on Alain Touraine (1977), states, "self production is a complex process involving value clashes between groups, changes in consciousness, social protests and repression based on force."⁹⁵ McNay thus calls for the emergence of empirical studies on Butler's conception of agency to explore how social relations

⁹⁰ Lois McNay, "Subject, Psyche and Agency: The work of Judith Butler," *Theory, Culture and Society* 16, no. 2 (1999): 189.

⁹¹ Butler, *The psychic life of power: Theories in subjection*: 13. Original punctuation included

⁹² Butler, *The psychic life of power: Theories in subjection*: 11. (Author's original punctuation included)

⁹³ Janet Borgerson, "Judith Butler: On organising subjectivities," *The Sociological Review* 53, no. Supplement s1 (2008): 66.

⁹⁴ See Rowlands, "Empowerment Examined." Jo Rowlands, *Questioning Empowerment: Working with Women in Honduras* (Oxfam, 1997).

⁹⁵ Lois McNay, "Subject, Psyche and Agency: The work of Judith Butler," *Theory, Culture and Society* 16, no. 2 (1999): 189.

between individuals can create subjectivities of change, specifically “how creative or innovative action detaches itself from its original conditions of enactment and may give rise to a set of new values which become resources for further action.”⁹⁶

To summarise this chapter so far, I have argued that definitions of purposeful agency and empowerment found in development, feminist, and discourse literatures generally fall short of conceptualising purposeful agency and empowerment at the psychological level. Writings on power show potential in the discussion of the construction of the subject – one such example is the theorising of subjection by Butler where she shows the deep analysis of processes of power and the formation of the psyche. However, this theory lacks empirical studies and the articulation of specific mechanics by which we can understand the psychological within agents of change. For the articulation of mechanics of psychological agency, I will turn to such theories found in social psychology. Like Butler, these theories in social psychology adopt the premise that agency is conditioned within sociality, where “The self must be socially constructed through transactional experiences with the environment.”⁹⁷ Whilst these social psychological theories provide a deeper conceptualisation of psychological agency, they are challenged by another set of problems surrounding the tendency for psychological theories to be universalised from studies and concepts arising from Western research, and to lack substantial research regarding their relevance in other cultural contexts⁹⁸.

⁹⁶ *ibid*, 189.

⁹⁷ Albert Bandura, "Self - efficacy: the exercise of control," Worth Publishers.

⁹⁸ James Stigler, Richard Schweder, and Gilbert Herdt, *Cultural Psychology: Essays on Comparative Human Development* (Cambridge University Press, 1990).

2.2. PSYCHOLOGICAL AGENCY: INSTRUMENTAL AND INTRINSIC VALUE

Scholars of psychology have long argued that cognitive and subjective experiences are important for driving personal and social change⁹⁹ as well as contributing towards subjective well-being¹⁰⁰. This instrumental capacity of psychological agency has been what the World Bank's *Moving Out of Poverty* study also showed, where it argued that self-belief is a fundamental component in people's mobility out of poverty¹⁰¹. Rowlands in her exploration of power as the 'power within' also conceived of agency as having an instrumental role in "undoing negative social constructions, so that the people affected come to see themselves as having the capacity and the right to act and have influence"¹⁰². To Rowlands, this power from within then drives the agency to achieve specific desired outcomes, giving agents an instrumentally important capacity. These assertions are similar to what Albert Bandura (2005) describes in his Self-Efficacy Theory, where agency is "gained through development of personal efficacy that enables people to take advantage of opportunities and to remove environmental constraints guarded by those whose interests are served by them."¹⁰³ Bandura argues that efficacy beliefs have an instrumental importance for the agent – instrumental because self-efficacy leads to outcomes of human action¹⁰⁴. Efficacy can relate to different levels of human action. For example, collective efficacy refers to the belief of a group in its ability (which is not necessarily the sum of individual members' efficacy as a group

⁹⁹ Albert Bandura, "Self-Efficacy Mechanism in Human Agency," *American Psychologist* 37, no. 2 (1982).

¹⁰⁰ Ryan and Deci, "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development and Well-being."

¹⁰¹ Narayan, Pritchett, and Kapoor, *Moving out of Poverty Volume 2: Success from the bottom up*.

¹⁰² Rowlands, *Questioning Empowerment: Working with Women in Honduras*: 14.

¹⁰³ Bandura, "Self - efficacy: the exercise of control" 477.

¹⁰⁴ Albert Bandura and Dale Schunk, "Cultivating competence, self-efficacy and intrinsic interest through proximal self-motivation," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 41, no. 3 (1981).

creates its own dynamic¹⁰⁵) and social efficacy refers to the individuals' belief that they can create change within their community or society¹⁰⁶.

Bandura (1982) suggests four favourable conditions where one's self-efficacy and social efficacy can be influenced and increased (I have left collective efficacy out as I will return to this later). These favourable conditions include *enactive attainments* that are developed through mastery of successful tasks and *vicarious experiences* when one sees another person, who one identifies with, succeed. *Verbal persuasion* and positive affirmation help people believe in their abilities. The *psychological state* of the person and whether someone is stressed and vulnerable or happy and positive will influence their self-efficacy¹⁰⁷. Origins of efficacy are, Bandura argues, relative to the person and not totally determined by socio-economic characteristics. This is a particularly important point considering my earlier remarks regarding the risk of elements of an agent's opportunity being reduced to structural characteristics as proxies for psychological agency. Structural elements are not the only elements contributing to human agency - there are other elements such as relations with other actors that impact agency. Therefore we can never expect the perceived effects, constraints and advantages of one person's efficacy and autonomy to be constant for all people. Whilst subjective perception is deeply embedded and developed through lived experiences directly related

¹⁰⁵ Albert Bandura, "Guide For Constructing Self-Efficacy Scales," in *Self Efficacy Beliefs of Adolescents*, ed. Frank Pajares and Tim Urdan (Information Age Publishing, 2006).

¹⁰⁶ Rocio Fernandez-Ballesteros et al., "Determinants and Structural Relation of Personal Efficacy to Collective Efficacy," *Applied Psychology: An International Review* 51, no. 1 (2002); Viktor Gecas, "The Social Psychology of Self-Efficacy," *Annual Review of Sociology* 15(1989).

¹⁰⁷ Bandura, "Self-Efficacy Mechanism in Human Agency."

to power within the opportunity structure¹⁰⁸, I argue, drawing on Bandura (1995), that the instrumental capacity of internal judgements that the agent has in regard to their opportunity structure can prove to be a much stronger force than what is objectively the case. Where one person could believe that a situation is hopeless, another person with the same socio-economic characteristics may believe the situation is full of opportunities to change.

Bandura has been criticised for not distinguishing between actions that have value or not have value to the agent, thus agents with efficacy alone may still be at risk of feeling coerced or compelled into undertaking actions that they do not value, even if they feel efficacious at it¹⁰⁹. This intrinsic element of psychological agency was something neither Narayan et al. nor Rowlands extended their analysis to include. Scholars such as Sen and Sabina Alkire have used the term ‘intrinsic’ in the sense that the exercise of agency is valued in part as an end itself¹¹⁰. The intrinsic element of psychological agency is articulated in social psychology, showing how acting according to the self’s

¹⁰⁸ There is a deep literature on the biological component to psychological agency, see See; D Franks, "Some convergences and divergences between neurosciences and symbolic interaction," in *Mind, Brain and Society: Toward a neurosociology of Emotion, Social Perspectives on Emotions*, ed. D Franks and T Smith (JAI Press, 1999); Erika Summers - Effler, "A theory of the self, emotion and culture," in *Theory and Research on Human Emotions: Advances in Group Processes*, ed. Jonathan Turner (Elsevier, 2004). Archontaki, Lewis, and Bates, "Genetic Influences on Psychological Wellbeing: A Nationally Representative Twin Study."

¹⁰⁹ Richard Ryan and Edward Deci, "Self-regulation and the problem of human autonomy: Does psychology need choice, self-determination, and will?," *Journal of Personality* 74(2006); Sabina Alkire, "Subjective Quantitative Studies of Human Agency," *Social Indicators Research* 74(2005).

¹¹⁰ See; Sen, *Development as freedom.*, Ryan and Deci, "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development and Well-being."; Sabina Alkire and Severine Deneulin, "Individual Motivation, its Nature, Determinants, and Consequences for Within-Group Behaviour," in *Group Behaviour and Development: Is the Market Destroying Cooperation?*, ed. Judith Heyer, Frances Stewart, and Rosemary Thorp (Oxford University Press, 2002).

deeper values is essential to psychological well-being and human flourishing¹¹¹. Thus the process of acting according to one's values is to be appreciated independently of the outcome of the agency.¹¹² Also, the exercise of agency that is intrinsically valued by the agent is associated with experiences of increased hope¹¹³, psychological well-being¹¹⁴, motivation¹¹⁵, creativity¹¹⁶ and satisfaction in relationships¹¹⁷. Self-Determination Theory (SDT), championed by Ryan and Deci (2000), argues that all human beings are biologically wired towards growth "for their self-motivation and personality integration, as well as for the conditions that foster those positive processes."¹¹⁸ Whilst this existence of a biological element towards the regulation of self-motivation is apparent, SDT argues there is a need for agents to grow in a supportive environment for people to flourish – the requirements that SDT has articulated for such psychological well-being are relatedness, competence and autonomy¹¹⁹. Autonomy is a major factor in internal motivation, yet Ryan and Deci

¹¹¹ See Alkire, "Subjective Quantitative Studies of Human Agency.", Dreze and Sen, *India: Economic Development and Social Opportunity*.

¹¹² Dreze and Sen, *India: Economic Development and Social Opportunity*: 106.

¹¹³ See Ditte Enen ark Solbeck, "'Love and the heart': romantic love among young mothers in Mali," *Culture, Health and Sexuality: An International Journal for Research, Intervention and Care* 12, no. 4 (2010); Vincent Crapanzano, "Reflections on hope as a category of social and psychological analysis," *Cultural Anthropology* 18, no. 1 (2003); William Jankowiak and Edward Fischer, "A cross - cultural perspective on romantic love," *Ethnology* 31, no. 2 (1992).

¹¹⁴ Ryan and Deci, "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development and Well-being.", Richard Ryan and Edward Deci, "On happiness and human potentials: a review of research on hedonic and eudemonic well-being," *Annual Review of Psychology* 52(2001).

¹¹⁵ Ryan and Deci, "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development and Well-being."; Albert Bandura and Dale Schunk, "Cultivating Competence, Self Efficacy, and Intrinsic Interest Through Proximal Self - Motivation," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 41, no. 3 (1981)., Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton University Press, 1968).

¹¹⁶ Teresa Amabile, *The social psychology of creativity* (Springer Books, 1983)., Christopher Utman, "Performance effects of motivational state: a meta-analysis," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 1(1997).

¹¹⁷ Raymond Knee et al., "Self-determination and conflict in romantic relationships," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 88, no. 6 (2005).

¹¹⁸ Ryan and Deci, "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development and Well-being," 68.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

argue that many have mistakenly defined autonomy as either independence or individualism relating to liberal political theory¹²⁰. In SDT, autonomy is true self-regulation, where the behaviour one exhibits is in accord with abiding to one's values and interests. In this sense, the opposite of autonomy is not dependence (if it was defined as independence or individualism), but heteronomy¹²¹, where "one's actions are experienced as controlled by forces that are phenomenally alien to the self or that compel one to behave in specific ways regardless of one's values or interest."¹²² SDT is not the only theory that argues for the reinterpretation of autonomy¹²³. Feminist scholars such as Marilyn Freidman, Catriona Mackenzie, Natalie Stoljar and Jennifer Nedelsky also show how the idea of autonomy as acting by one's values is complementary to social relatedness, and challenges standard definitions of autonomy prominent in liberal

¹²⁰ Valery Chirkov et al., "Differentiating Autonomy From Individualism and Independence: A Self - Determination Theory Perspective on Internalisation of Cultural Orientations and Well-Being," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 84, no. 1 (2003).

¹²¹ Immanuel Kant, drawing on Jean-Jacques Rousseau also defined heteronomy as the opposite to autonomy. See; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract, A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, and A Discourse on Political Economy* (New York: Classic Books International., 1754-1762 [2010]).

¹²² Chirkov et al., "Differentiating Autonomy From Individualism and Independence: A Self - Determination Theory Perspective on Internalisation of Cultural Orientations and Well-Being," 98.

¹²³ Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar (2000), set out a framework for autonomy that they call relational autonomy. Firstly they discuss autonomy as both substantive and procedural. The substantive theories of autonomy concern themselves with the moral element of the action and the capacity of the agent towards morality of their actions – to know the difference between right and wrong. Procedural analysis of autonomy is concerned not with the content of the action (thus content neutral), or the morality of the action, but with whether critical reflection was present in the formation of autonomy. Scholars are divided on how this critical reflection comes about. Some think the focus should be on the historical and structural processes forming critical reflection, others argue critical reflection is secured through the competency of a repertoire of skills and capacities that enable self-realization including the competencies of self-belief, self-direction and self-discovery (Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar, 2000). In taking into account both procedural and substantive accounts of autonomy, we can form a 'relational' account of autonomy which is not in conflict with ideas of community and collective. Autonomy is relational on three accounts. Like Self Determination Theory's account of autonomy, relational autonomy involves rejecting the individualist idea of autonomy and, "conceptualizing agents as emotional, embodied, desiring, creative and feeling, as well as rational creatures (Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar, 2000, 21)." Secondly, relational autonomy calls for the recognition that, human beings are inherently social and that knowing oneself to be autonomous can only be experienced in a social context. This is not to reject the notion of the individual right, but instead reconceptualise that "agents are both physically internally differentiated and socially differentiated (Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar, 2000)." To help in this reconceptualization, the development of critical reflection and self-realisation within the agent is helpful and can come about through the achievement of self-belief, self –direction and self -discovery capabilities.

political theory¹²⁴. Autonomy, according to SDT, leads towards authentic motivation, creating “more interest, excitement, and confidence, which in turn is manifest both as enhanced performance, persistence, and creativity.”¹²⁵ Hence autonomy has a crucial role in driving people to use their agency and change their circumstances, and has both an intrinsic and instrumental value.

Whilst SDT argues that people have an inherent biological tendency towards self-motivation, humans are continually internalising social norms; “children (as well as adolescents and adults) progressively integrate societal values and prescriptions into a coherent sense of self.”¹²⁶ The internalisation of social norms either supports self-motivation or thwarts it. For example, the internalisation of social norms that work against motivation and agency, such as oppression or lack of freedom to self-regulate, would be considered by SDT as social norms that thwart this innate capacity of human agency. In contrast, the internalisation of the norm of having supportive relationships would support autonomy. So the major difference between SDT and the postmodern stance that while humans are conforming only to functions of power is that SDT argues that humans have a biologically based coherent self-organisation that chooses, moderates or influences action¹²⁷. Processes of power thwart or support the biological element that tends towards agency. This is not necessarily in tension with Butler’s

¹²⁴ Joan Miller, "Is Community Compatible with Autonomy? Cultural Ideas Versus Empirical Realities," in *Morality in Context*, ed. W. Edelstein and G. Nunner-Winkler (Elsevier B.V., 2005).

¹²⁵ Ryan and Deci, "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development and Well-being," 69.

¹²⁶ Wendy Grolnick, Edward Deci, and Richard Ryan, "Internalization within the Family: the self-determination theory perspective," in *Parenting and Children's Internalization of Values: A handbook of Contemporary Theory*, ed. Joan Grusec and Leon Kuczynski (John Wiley and Sons, 1997), 136.

¹²⁷ Ryan and Deci, "Self-regulation and the problem of human autonomy: Does psychology need choice, self-determination, and will?."

account of subjection, although there are grounds to argue against the biological determinism prevalent in SDT where the unconscious is changing and not a constant central processing mechanism¹²⁸. Nonetheless, Butler herself has accepted the existence of an ego attached to bodily function¹²⁹ from the writings of Freud¹³⁰, however has heavily criticized specifically the gendering and sexualizing of the ego particularly apparent in Freud's Oedipus Complex and the use of the static language of norms in his writings which have materialised as natural¹³¹. I would expect a similar approach of Butler to the idea of self-regulation, where particular interest would be focused on the naturalising normative claims that constitute the thwarting/ or supporting of regulation. Differently, psychologist Kenneth Gergen (1991), argues for an explicit constructivist account rejecting the ability of the self to regulate towards self-motivation; thus humans are continually being challenged towards a state of immense saturation by our social environments.

In the ability to self-regulate, humans can adapt to diverse environments. Agents in adverse conditions may change their aspirations in trying to self-regulate towards an equilibrium of psychological well-being or increase their aspirations in prosperous

¹²⁸ Piaget, Jean. "The Role of Imitation in the Development of Representational Thought." in: Voyat, G. (Ed.): *The World of Henri Wallon*. New York (Jason Aronson, 1984), 105–114. Omar Lizardo, "The Cognitive Origins of Bourdieu's *Habitus*". *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 34: 375–401 (2004).

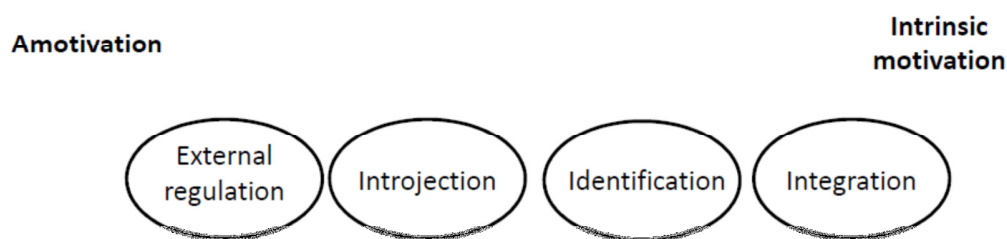
¹²⁹ Freud was a neuro-anatomist who turned into a clinical neurologist who theorised linkages between the brain's neuro-functioning and subjective expression. See Mark Solms and Oliver Turnbull, *The Brain and the Inner World: An Introduction to the Neuroscience of the subjective experience* (ITC Bookman, 2002).

¹³⁰ Butler, *The psychic life of power: Theories in subjection*; Kirsten Campbell, "The Plague of the Subject: Psychoanalysis and Judith Butler's psychic Life of Power," *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies* 6, no. 1-2 (2001).

¹³¹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (Routledge, 1990); Butler, *The psychic life of power: Theories in subjection*.

environments¹³². We can understand adaptation as “thoughts and behaviours that either shape or distort a person’s reality.”¹³³ However, according to SDT, goals that are adapted are situated along a spectrum of how they relate to self-motivation. Autonomy, then, is not conceived as absolute, in that action is either completely autonomous or not. Rather, actions are more or less autonomous. Indeed, we can imagine autonomous behaviour along a spectrum between the values that are the most autonomous and integrated and the most heteronomous or external ones, as seen in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1 – THE SELF-DETERMINATION SCALE OF AUTONOMY



*TAKEN FROM RYAN (2012)*¹³⁴

So at the lower end of ‘amotivational’ end of the spectrum is *external regulation*, where a person is acting to procure external rewards, or to escape punishment. Following this is *introjected regulation*, where one acts for approval from others or seeks to avoid feelings of guilt deriving from others. Then there is *identified regulation*, which

¹³² Mozaffar Qizilbash, "The adaptation problem, evolution and normative economics," in *Arguments for a better world*, ed. K. Basu and R. Kanbur (Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹³³ Carol Graham, "Adaptation amidst prosperity and adversity: Insights from happiness studies from around the world," *The World Bank Research Observer* 26, no. 1 (2010): 106.

¹³⁴ Richard Ryan, "Autonomy and Basic Psychological Needs and Wellbeing across Cultures: Research from Self-Determination Theory. Conference Paper Presentation Notes," in *Does Wellbeing Travel Symposium* (University of Bath 2012).

includes everyday behaviours that have personal significance and/or importance. The most autonomous and intrinsically motivated level along the spectrum is *integrated regulation*, where the agent's actions are aligned to their core values and interests¹³⁵. It is important to note that autonomy is not just about effective control, as an individual can still be autonomous when they follow an external influence instead of controlling it themselves, if the agent is aligned and identified with that external influence. Whilst there are similarities with autonomy, choice and decision-making ability cannot be used as proxies for autonomy¹³⁶, as I show in Chapter 6 (Section 6.6). Choice and decision-making ability do not necessarily capture the intrinsic value of agency. Whilst someone may make a choice or decision to buy a particular brand of cooking oil, this choice is not necessarily intrinsically valuable to the agent. Thus, we need to measure autonomy directly and not just assume decision-making ability is a proxy.

Whilst theories of both autonomy and self-efficacy articulate ways of understanding psychological agency, they were born from empirical studies of Western origin and are arguably in their infancy in understanding their relevance in other societies¹³⁷. Dharm Sinha and R.C. Tripathi (1994) argue there is considerable variation within cultural

¹³⁵ Chirkov et al., "Differentiating Autonomy From Individualism and Independence: A Self - Determination Theory Perspective on Internalisation of Cultural Orientations and Well-Being."

¹³⁶ Alkire, "Concepts and Measures of Agency."

¹³⁷ KristineN Marbell and WendyS Grolnick, "Correlates of parental control and autonomy support in an interdependent culture: A look at Ghana," *Motivation and Emotion* 37, no. 1 (2013); *ibid.*; Joan Miller, Rekha Das, and Sharmista Charkravathy, "Culture and the Role of Choice in Agency," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 101, no. 1 (2011); Miller, "Is Community Compatible with Autonomy? Cultural Ideas Versus Empirical Realities."; Kennon Sheldon et al., "Self-concordance and subjective well-being in four cultures," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 35(2004); Richard Ryan et al., "On the interpersonal regulation of emotions. Emotional reliance across gender, relationships and culture," *Personal Relationships* 12(2005).

groups, and even within individuals, according to changing settings¹³⁸, and Harry C. Triandis (1990, 2001) argues that there are differences between collectivist and individualistic societies and these different worldviews impact the psychology of the agents. Scholars have attempted to fill this gap in cross-cultural psychology studies of efficacy and autonomy. For example, Chirkov et al. (2003) studied how the SDT concept of autonomy is relevant in both collectivist and individualistic cultures (US, Russia, Turkey and Korea), Chirkov et al. (2005) examined autonomy in Canada and Brazil, and again Chirkov (2009) examined autonomy education across different cultural contexts. Robert Klassen (2005) analysed more than 20 efficacy studies and found that efficacy beliefs to be less significant for collectivist cultural groups, but “when some form of calibration was included, in almost all cases the efficacy beliefs of the non- Western groups were more predictive of subsequent performance.”¹³⁹ While such studies are important, they need to go further in understanding the relevance of the very construction they are testing using critical qualitative methods to understand the key concepts of agency and subjection, and not assume its universal applicability or presume a constant central processing mechanism. This requires going further than just being open to the concept’s relevance at differing degrees¹⁴⁰. Such critical research may be a challenge to the psychological paradigm which Nick Mansfield (2000) has described as viewing the human psyche as an entity that can be known and explained in its entirety. Opposed to this are theories of psychological postmodernism¹⁴¹ that argue

¹³⁸ Dharm Sinha and R.C. Tripathi, "Individualism in a collectivist culture: A case of coexistence of opposites," in *Individualism and collectivism*, ed. U. Kim, et al. (Thousand Oaks, Sage, 1994).

¹³⁹ Robert Klassen, "Optimism and realism: a review of self-efficacy from a cross-cultural perspective," *Journal of Psychology* 39, no. 3 (2004): 225.

¹⁴⁰ Stigler, Schweder, and Herdt, *Cultural Psychology: Essays on Comparative Human Development*.

¹⁴¹ See Kenneth Gergen, *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of identity in contemporary life* (New York: Basic Books, 1991).

for no fixed structure but instead the much more fluid ‘techniques of the self’ to respond to power and oppression¹⁴². But as we have seen in the discussion of autonomy, people are not chameleon-like conformists to contexts, and have the capacity to self-regulate, moderate, and influence action¹⁴³. The challenge is to find a balance where empirical studies aiming to understand psychological agency, do so through an inductive methodology and critical qualitative analysis, in order to be open to deconstructing the very constructs of psychological theory and not to assume one universally stimulated and constant processing mechanism. This is a challenge I have taken up in this study.

Through empirical analysis, this study will show how psychological constructs actually expand definitions of empowerment used in development literature. This ‘power within’ is an overlooked and undervalued dimension of the empowerment process having intrinsic and instrumental importance to agents making change.

2.3. BEYOND THE SELF: COLLECTIVE PURPOSEFUL AGENCY

Although I have argued that psychological agency is a viable site for scholarly inquiry, the self is not an independent entity and we must recognise the vital roles of groups, movements and social institutions in the production of autonomy, self-efficacy and agency, and for the advancement of well-being and capabilities more broadly¹⁴⁴.

¹⁴² Michel Foucault, "About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self: Two Lectures at Dartmouth," *Political Theory* 21, no. 2 (1993): 203.

¹⁴³ Ryan and Deci, "Self-regulation and the problem of human autonomy: Does psychology need choice, self-determination, and will?."

¹⁴⁴ Tom De Herdt and Séverine Deneulin, "Guest Editors' Introduction," *Journal of Human Development* 8, no. 2 (2007); Jérôme Ballet, Jean-Luc Dubois, and François-Régis Mahieu, "Responsibility for Each Other's Freedom: Agency as the Source of Collective Capability," *Journal of Human Development* 8, no. 2 (2007); Pinar Uyan-Semerici, "A Relational Account of Nussbaum's List of Capabilities," *Journal of*

Specifically, as I have described, autonomy and efficacy are inherently relational¹⁴⁵ and so the group environment is an important site of the cultivation of confidence, self-belief¹⁴⁶ and collective efficacy¹⁴⁷. Yet psychological agency is no silver bullet for social development. Whilst agents may be driven by psychological agency, agents are exposed to difficulties in the social landscape. In this study I examine specifically membership in groups or associations. Here purposeful agency can be thwarted on two very different levels: firstly through the breakdown of groups¹⁴⁸, and secondly, even when the association is functioning well, institutional failures and capability deprivation can continue to thwart agency¹⁴⁹.

2.4. COLLECTIVE AGENCY AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

My reading of the literature of associations and collective groups operating in Mali and beyond showed how groups can further individual purposeful agency and this has great importance to the poor and marginalised¹⁵⁰. Firstly, collective agency is not just the sum of the agency of individual members in a group, but through the collaboration of

Human Development 8, no. 2 (2007); Ibrahim, "From Individual to Collective Capabilities: The Capability Approach as a Conceptual Framework for Self-help." Severine Deneulin, *Wellbeing, Justice and Development Ethics*, Human Development and Capability Debates Series (Routledge, 2014 Forthcoming); Amartya Sen, "Response to commentaries," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 37, no. 2 (2002); Peter Evans, "Collective capabilities, culture and Amartya Sen's Development as Freedom," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 37, no. 2 (2002).

¹⁴⁵ Bandura, "Self - efficacy: the exercise of control"; Ryan and Deci, "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development and Well-being."

¹⁴⁶ Rosemary Thorp, Frances Stewart, and Amrik Heyer, "When and how far is group formation a route out of chronic poverty?," *World Development* 33, no. 6 (2005): 913.

¹⁴⁷ Fernandez-Ballesteros et al., "Determinants and Structural Relation of Personal Efficacy to Collective Efficacy."; Bandura, "Self - efficacy: the exercise of control".

¹⁴⁸ Ibrahim, "From Individual to Collective Capabilities: The Capability Approach as a Conceptual Framework for Self-help."; Stewart, "Groups and Capabilities."; Thorp, Stewart, and Heyer, "When and how far is group formation a route out of chronic poverty?."

¹⁴⁹ Ibrahim, "From Individual to Collective Capabilities: The Capability Approach as a Conceptual Framework for Self-help."

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

individual agents, collective agency takes on a form of its own¹⁵¹. Ibrahim (2006) argues that collective agency is important because firstly, individual agency is impacted by collective social values and norms and secondly, agents themselves are constituted by these values, norms and social structures. According to Ibrahim (2006), collective agency is defined as “not only instrumentally valuable for generating new capabilities, but also intrinsically important in shaping and pursuing the individual’s perception of the good¹⁵²”.

We can see the instrumental value of collective agency being operationalised in the rise of the micro credit industry across Mali, which has involved small loans being granted to groups of women and other vulnerable people by commercial and non-governmental institutions. International NGOs such as Oxfam Mali and Save the Children Mali operate ‘small income generating activity’ programmes that operate using deviations of the micro credit model. The Researching Women's Collective Action project researches ways to link marginalised women living in rural areas of Mali to markets through collective action¹⁵³.

In an interesting strand of research, Markelova et al. (2009) argue that for smallholder rural farmers, collective action can fix some market imperfections by providing opportunities related to missing credit markets, lowering transaction fees and also

¹⁵¹ Ibid. Alkire and Deneulin, "Individual Motivation, its Nature, Determinants, and Consequences for Within-Group Behaviour."

¹⁵² Ibrahim, "From Individual to Collective Capabilities: The Capability Approach as a Conceptual Framework for Self-help," 405.

¹⁵³ Researching Collective Action Initiative is a research project administered and run by Oxfam researching how women’s collective action <http://womenscollectiveaction.com/Home>.

supporting farmers through access to information, quality standards, and pooling of labour and financial resources¹⁵⁴. In addition, Pandolfelli et al. (2005) argue that collective action plays a vital role in many aspects of human interaction, including income generation, risk reduction, and public service provision. In their research, Pandolfelli et al. (2005) show how the benefits of collective action are acquired, not just through access to the market and financial capital, but also through social capital like relationships and networks and cultural capital such as information as well as the livelihoods and well-being of the farmers¹⁵⁵.

Collective action is also considered to be essential for broader political change. Sakiko Fukuda-Parr (2003), in her work on collective action and gender equality, asserts, "Collective action is an important force that can pressure change in policies and bring about political change."¹⁵⁶ But what forges this power? Thorp et al. (2005) and others are the few development scholars who articulate the psychological element of collective agency and how the group environment cultivates psychological agency and belief¹⁵⁷. Efficacy does not just have individual effects. Bandura (1997) defines collective efficacy as a "group's shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute

¹⁵⁴ Helen Markelova et al., "Collective action for smallholder market access," *Food Policy*, no. 34 (2009): 6.

¹⁵⁵ For more normative arguments about the benefits of collective groups to well-being Sen, *Development as freedom*; Ibrahim, "From Individual to Collective Capabilities: The Capability Approach as a Conceptual Framework for Self-help."; Frances Stewart, "Groups and capabilities," *Journal of Human Development* 6, no. 2 (2005).

Sen, *Development as freedom*.

¹⁵⁶ Sakiko Fukuda - Parr, "The human development paradigm: operationalising Sen's ideas on capabilities," *Feminist Economics* 9, no. 2/3 (2003): 309.

¹⁵⁷ See also Stewart, "Groups and Capabilities."; Nandini Gooptu, "Sex workers in Calcutta and the dynamics of collective action: political activism, community identity and group behaviour," in *Group behaviour and development: is the market destroying cooperation*, ed. Judith Heyer, Frances Stewart, and Rosemary Thorp (Oxford University Press, 2002). where both cite the generation of self-respect from group work.

the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainments.”¹⁵⁸ He sees collective efficacy as more than just the sum of individual efficacy; it creates its own property, which is generally more than the sum of individual capabilities. This is because of the mixture of knowledge and competencies plus the mutual reinforcing dynamic that instils the efficacy of members¹⁵⁹. Nonetheless, a group’s capabilities to perform as a whole vary under different blends of dynamics between the members and the external environments, affecting group outcomes. We can see from these examples of collective action research that the forming of a group with a common goal can advance the well-being of an individual more effectively than the individual acting alone.

Whilst the pursuit of such well-being goals in collective groups is widely valued in my survey of the literature, it is not always realised because of the breakdown in relations between members of associations¹⁶⁰. In the interesting analyses of groups of Heyer et al. (2002), the authors argue that groups are sites of contestation, negotiation and action¹⁶¹. Because of the dynamism between actors, there are various interactive effects that can influence group dynamics. These include differences in knowledge and competencies of group members, commonality of the goal¹⁶², how the group is structured¹⁶³ and its

¹⁵⁸ Bandura, "Self - efficacy: the exercise of control" 477.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Douglas D. Heckathorn, "The Dynamics and Dilemmas of Collective Action," *American Sociological Review* 61, no. 2 (1996).

¹⁶¹ Judith Heyer et al., "Group behaviour and development," in *Group behaviour and development: Is the market destroying cooperation*, ed. Judith Heyer, Frances Stewart, and Rosemary Thorpe (Oxford University Press, 2002).

¹⁶² Ibrahim, "From Individual to Collective Capabilities: The Capability Approach as a Conceptual Framework for Self-help."

¹⁶³ Trond Vedeld, "Village Politics: Heterogeneity, Leadership and Collective Action," *The Journal of Development Studies* 36, no. 5 (2000).

activities are coordinated¹⁶⁴, how well it is led¹⁶⁵, the strategies it attempts and whether members interact with one another in mutually facilitatory or undermining ways¹⁶⁶. Bandura argues that the success of collective agency is also influenced by the beliefs of individual group members in the efficacy or ability of the group as a whole. Processes that shared efficacy beliefs activate include the type of future group member sought, how members manage their resources, the plans and strategies they construct, how much effort members put into the group's aim, their staying power when collective efforts fail to produce quick results or encounter forcible opposition and their vulnerability to discouragement¹⁶⁷. Ibrahim (2006) also reminds us that groups that include the poor have a higher chance at not accessing all of these attributes, as the chance of breakdown could be higher.

Even when the internal dynamics of groups are functioning, this does not guarantee success in achieving well-being goals. This is what Ibrahim (2006) refers to as institutional failure. Institutions are various in form and can be found at all levels of analysis (family, community, state): as Douglas North (1990) demarcates, the term 'institution' refers to "the framework within which human interaction takes place. [...Institutions] consist of formal written rules as well as typically unwritten codes of conduct that underlie and supplement formal rules."¹⁶⁸ To return to Sen and the

¹⁶⁴ J.P. Platteau and J. M. Baland, "Does Heterogeneity Hinder Collective Action," in *Cahiers de la Faculte des Science Economiques Sociales*, ed. Faculte des Science Economoques et Sociales (Facultes Universitaires Notre-Dame de la Paix 1995).

¹⁶⁵ Elinor Ostrom, "Community and the Endogenous Solution of Commons Problems," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 4, no. 3 (1992).

¹⁶⁶ Bandura, *Self - Efficacy in Changing Societies*.

¹⁶⁷ Bandura, "Self - efficacy: the exercise of control" 478.

¹⁶⁸ Douglass North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (Cambridge University Press, 1990). 4.

Capability Approach, development should be focused on expanding people's freedoms on two levels, actual opportunities and process. In this chapter, I have argued for a more robust theory of agency, specifically at the psychological level. However, given the initial framing of social arrangements as including opportunity and process, we cannot underestimate the impact of capability deprivation and inequality on the outcomes pursued by purposeful agency. After all, agency is in a dialectic relationship with structure.

2.5. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have laid out the theoretical framework for analysis of my thesis. Specifically, this chapter identifies a lack of attention to the internal or psychological drivers of purposeful agency, and to its development, in development studies (so it uses proxies for psychological concepts). The psychological literature which does address these topics directly – for example, as autonomy or efficacy – is at present not connected to development policy. Starting with the conceptualisation of purposeful agency as agency primed towards the achievement of well-being aspirations, I have examined this idea in relation to theories of empowerment and have proposed that the literature on empowerment and purposeful agency would benefit from the inclusion of the concepts being theorised at the psychological level.

I have also argued for self-efficacy and autonomy as important theories to explore psychological agency if methods use critical analysis, challenge the construction of such concepts and question their relevance.

Whilst psychological agency is important, the motivated agent has to contend with a variety of challenges that may thwart efforts towards personal and collective well-being. This is firstly because the agent seldom acts in isolation and in the case of Kalabankoro Nerekoro, agents work in associations. Group work is prone to group breakdown and this can thwart individual purposeful agency. In addition, the functioning of groups' collective agency can be thwarted by institutional failures operating in the social milieu.

CHAPTER 3:

METHODS OF THE RESEARCH

Doonin-doonin, kononin – “Little by little, the bird builds its nest”¹⁶⁹

This thesis has been designed inductively to achieve the goal of understanding factors important to purposeful agency. In this chapter, I will reflect on how I set about attempting to achieve this goal, how the central research question and objectives emerged from the field and how data was gathered and triangulated to support my findings. Specifically,

Central research question:

- What is psychological agency?

Research objectives:

- Explore if the cultivation of psychological agency creates any change to people’s lives in Kalabankoro Nerekoro.
- Understand the relevance of psychological agency at both individual and collective levels.
- Determine if psychological agency really matters to ideas of social development in Kalabankoro Nerekoro?

¹⁶⁹ Bambara proverb.

From my theoretical discussions detailed in Chapter 2, I have shown how other scholars have set about researching purposeful agency. The use of proxies, like decision-making ability, access to resources or socio-economic characteristics, has been one such method for studying agency. Yet I have argued against using proxies for studies of agency. Instead I suggest, like Norman Long (2001), a much more nuanced methodology where the dialectic between agency and social structures can be examined in detail. Another way in which researchers have examined expressions of agency has been through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). A critical analysis of discourse, defined as “systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of actions, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak,”¹⁷⁰ contributes to an understanding of how subjectivities and related agencies are formed. Norman Fairclough (1995) argues the point of CDA is to involve the examination of the “use of language as a form of social practice, and discourse analysis of how texts work within sociocultural practice.”¹⁷¹ Whilst CDA has proven to be very helpful in social sciences, one caution I find with discourse analysis, drawing on Y. Maley (1994), is that CDA is concerned with what Antonio Gramsci defined as cultural hegemony¹⁷² and oppression¹⁷³. Specifically, as Wodak and Meyer (2001) argue, “...critical discourse analysis [CDA] research combines what perhaps somewhat pompously used to be called ‘solidarity with the oppressed’ with an attitude of opposition and dissent against those who abuse text and talk in order to establish, confirm or legitimate their abuse of power.

¹⁷⁰ Iara Lessa (2006). "Discursive struggles within social welfare: Restaging teen motherhood". *British Journal of Social Work* 36 (2): 283–298. Pg 285

¹⁷¹ Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (New York: Longman, 1995). 7.

¹⁷² See Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks: Selections* (International Publications, 1971).

¹⁷³ Y. Maley, "The language of the law," in *Language and the law*, ed. J. Gibbons (Harlow: Longman, 1994).

Unlike much other scholarship, CDA does not deny but explicitly defines and defends its own socio-political position, that is CDA is biased – and proud of it.”¹⁷⁴ Whilst this standpoint obviously is important as we do live in a world of oppression, the issue I find with using only the CDA methodology to analyse purposeful agency is that by focusing on power as oppressive, it can potentially undermine the ways in which power can be emancipatory¹⁷⁵ and used towards positive social production¹⁷⁶. So not to reject CDA, but instead to expand on it to ensure my methods reflect the multidimensional nature of agency, I have found the mixed methods approach most useful not only to suffice for the task of the thesis, also but in developing arguments and insights about purposeful human agency further.

Despite working periodically in the study sites since 2005, for my official ‘fieldwork’ I was in Mali for a total of seven months split among three trips. The first trip was a scoping and relationship building mission for one month (December 2009), the second trip involved data collection for five months (November 2010 – March 2011) and then the third trip reviewed initial results for one month (November 2011) as a ‘double-checking exercise.’ The double-checking exercise including meeting with people in the initial data collection and other people, to discuss the significance of the results and clarify definitions of concepts that had emerged.

¹⁷⁴ Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (Sage Publishing 2001). 96.

¹⁷⁵ Butler, *The psychic life of power: Theories in subjection*.

¹⁷⁶ Rowlands, *Questioning Empowerment: Working with Women in Honduras*; Batiwala, "Taking the power out of empowerment - experiential account."

This chapter examines the methodology and methods used to gather the data used for this research. I will first discuss the ontological and epistemological framing of the mixed methods research and its relevance to studies of agency. Then I will describe my historic involvement in the ‘field’ and previous work I had undertaken in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. I will then describe the mixed qualitative and quantitative methods used in the research, and finally introduce some research considerations that will be further expanded on in my empirical chapters.

3.1. METHODOLOGY

In terms of the long-standing divide between the post-positivist and constructivist/interpretivist research method paradigms, it has now widely been accepted that each paradigm has legitimate ways of knowing¹⁷⁷ and understanding social phenomena¹⁷⁸. The mixed methods paradigm has aimed to bridge the divide and focuses on integrating the strengths of both paradigms to generate deeper and broader insights into social phenomena¹⁷⁹. Focusing on the realm of agency, this is particularly important as human action is multidimensional¹⁸⁰ and complex¹⁸¹. For example, in her study of human incest in America, P. Phelan (1987) defends the use of her mixed

¹⁷⁷ Jennifer Greene, "Is Mixed Methods Social Inquiry a Distinctive Methodology?," *Journal of Mixed Methods* 2, no. 7 (2008); Jennifer Greene and Valerie Caracelli, "Defining and describing the Paradigm issue in Mixed Method Evaluation," *New Directions for Evaluation* 74, no. Summer (1997); R. Johnson and Anthony Onwuegbuzie, "Mixed Methods Research: A research paradigm whose time has come," *Educational Researcher* 33, no. 14 (2004).

¹⁷⁸ Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, ed. Oxford University Press (2008). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, "Mixed Methods Research: A research paradigm whose time has come."; Greene, "Is Mixed Methods Social Inquiry a Distinctive Methodology?."; Greene and Caracelli, "Defining and describing the Paradigm issue in Mixed Method Evaluation."

¹⁷⁹ Robert Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (Sage, 2009).

¹⁸⁰ Sabina Alkire, "Concepts and measures of agency " in *Arguments for a better world: essays in honor of Amartya Sen*, ed. K Basu and R Kanbur (Oxford University Press., 2009).

¹⁸¹ Long, *Development sociology: Actor perspectives*.

methods approach in understanding this dimension of human action, since “This is not a case of simply supplementing one methodology with another, but rather an example of having to move back and forth in order to begin to understand a sensitive area of human behaviour.”¹⁸²

There are two major perspectives on why the mixed methods approach is helpful in social science research: the pragmatic perspective and the dialectic perspective. Pragmatists argue that because traditional paradigms are logically independent, they then can be mixed and matched in various combinations¹⁸³. The limitation of this approach is that it can overlook the depth of traditional research in the name of shaping practical inquiry¹⁸⁴. I thus prefer the second perspective, the dialectic perspective. Here, the dialectic perspective is synergistic insofar mixed methods used are “shaped by both interpretivist and post positivist paradigms in an integrative manner to generate more comprehensive, insightful and logical results than either paradigm could obtain alone.”¹⁸⁵ The dialectic approach draws from concepts such as Giddens’s “double hermeneutics”¹⁸⁶ and Geertz’s “dialectic tackling”¹⁸⁷ - all concepts that comment on the weaving back and forth or shifting of frame of reference to capture complex social phenomena¹⁸⁸. The benefit of such an approach to a study on agency is that generally

¹⁸² P. Phelan, "Compatibility of Qualitative and Quantitative Methods: Studying Child Sexual Abuse in America," *Education and Urban Society* 20, no. 1 (1987): 41.

¹⁸³ Micheal Patton, *Qualitative research and evaluative methods*, ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 3 ed. (2002).

¹⁸⁴ Greene and Caracelli, "Defining and describing the Paradigm issue in Mixed Method Evaluation."

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁸⁶ Anthony Giddens, *New Rules of Sociological Method* (Basic Books, 1976).

¹⁸⁷ Clifford Geertz, *From the Native's Point of view: On the Nature of Anthropological Understand*, ed. P. Rabinow and W. Sullivan, Interpretive Social Science (University of California Press, 1979).

¹⁸⁸ Joseph Maxwell and Diane Loomis, *Mixed methods design: An alternative approach*, ed. A. Tashakkori and C. Teddlie, Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioural research (2003); Greene and Caracelli, "Defining and describing the Paradigm issue in Mixed Method Evaluation."

the concept of agency is studied through one paradigm or another, and seldom through mixed methods despite literature signalling that this is preferential¹⁸⁹. What mixed methods can add to the analysis of purposeful agency is an opportunity to layer and build on the different analyses of both paradigms. One thing that I will acknowledge right from the outset is that epistemology and methods are not synonymous¹⁹⁰. Qualitative methods are not synonymous with constructivism, nor are quantitative methods synonymous with post-positivism. Thus whilst I have embraced the dialectic of epistemologies in the research I am not inferring that these paradigms are congruent with a particular method. Thus, as I claim in the methods and data analysis sections, the dialectic of epistemologies may enhance both the qualitative and quantitative methods I have used for the study of purposeful agency.

Despite the benefits of a mixed methods approach to my research there are several critiques at the level of implementation and logic that I have integrated into my analysis and formation of the thesis arguments. The contention lies in when and how the mixing of methods is undertaken through stages of the research¹⁹¹. While there is not a set formula to do this and it is hotly debated in the mixed methods literature, some authors have laid out a simplistic framework indicating that researchers should consider questions of mixing at the stages of defining the research objective, collecting the data

¹⁸⁹ Chirkov et al., "Differentiating Autonomy From Individualism and Independence: A Self - Determination Theory Perspective on Internalisation of Cultural Orientations and Well-Being." Ibrahim and Alkire, "Empowerment and agency: A proposal for internationally-comparable indicators."; Ruth Alsop and Nina Heinsohn, "Measuring Empowerment in Practice: Structuring Analysis and Framing Indicators," in *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper* (World Bank, 2005).

¹⁹⁰ Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, "Mixed Methods Research: A research paradigm whose time has come."

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

and analysing and interpreting the data¹⁹². For this study I have used the framework set out by Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2004), in which they argue that the following considerations should be thought through by mixed methods researchers (if not all researchers) to account for validity in the research; 1) selecting the research question, and 2) understanding if a research question was appropriate, 3) designing the mixed methods research 4) collecting the data, 5) analysing the data, and 6) interpreting the data. Each of these stages have specific implications for a mixed methods approach. I will address these implications below as I describe the specific methods.

Validity is also a tricky topic to broach in mixed methods as the term implies some sort of truth which goes against the ontology of the qualitative paradigm within¹⁹³. C. Teddlie and A. Tashakkori (2003) suggest the use of *legitimation* of the research instead. A framework that legitimises mixed methods is still a work in progress¹⁹⁴ and may not be possible given the almost endless variations of mixing methods¹⁹⁵. However, Anthony Onwuegbuzie and R. Johnson (2006) lay out a helpful framework for examining the legitimacy of mixed methods studies. I will return to the matter of triangulation later in the chapter. In this thesis, one of the methodological strengths is how triangulation is embedded throughout the research process.

¹⁹² See R. Johnson and B. Christensen, *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches* (Allyn and Bacon, 2004).

¹⁹³ C. Teddlie and A. Tashakkori, "A general typology of research design featuring mixed methods," *Research in Schools* 13, no. 1 (2006).

¹⁹⁴ Anthony Onwuegbuzie and R. Johnson, "The Validity Issue in Mixed Research," *Research in Schools* 13, no. 1 (2006).

¹⁹⁵ Maxwell and Loomis, *Mixed methods design: An alternative approach*.

3.1.1. MIXED METHODS IN THE USE OF THE CASE STUDY

So far in this chapter, I have explained the rationale for choosing a mixed methods design for my research question - it was clear from its breadth that neither quantitative nor qualitative research methods on their own would be enough to develop further insights into the phenomenon of agency. I now want to discuss the way in which I used these methods – which was to spatially narrow my analysis within a case study approach. Yin (2009) argues that case study designs can be a useful tool to case mixed methods¹⁹⁶. Further still, the case study approach sets a site to examine complex social systems such as purposeful agency and psychological agency to ensure that purposeful agency is examined within (and not apart from) the social landscape. Specifically, Robert Yin (2009) explains the case study approach as being useful for “investigating a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.”¹⁹⁷ The way in which I am situating purposeful agency within the wider social context differentiates my research from psychological research, which generally takes place in a laboratory. Jean Hartley (2004) expands, arguing that the point of case study research is that “The phenomenon is not isolated from its context (as in, say, laboratory research) but is of interest precisely because of the aim to understand how behaviour and / processes are influenced by and influence context.”¹⁹⁸ By focusing spatially on one study site, I have been able to map the interconnections of purposeful agency at the psychological level onto structures and processes in Kalabankoro Nerekoro.

¹⁹⁶ See Yin (2009) who shows that case studies can case mixed methods approaches to explore social phenomenon in the case study. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 13.

¹⁹⁸ Jean Hartley, "Case Study Research," in *Essential Guide to qualitative methods in organizational research*, ed. Catherine Cassell and Gillan Symon (Sage, 2004), 323.

3.2. SELECTING THE RESEARCH SITE

I decided to focus my research on the case study of the neighbourhood of Kalabankoro Nerekoro. Specifically, the case study of Kalabankoro Nerekoro was chosen for two reasons. Firstly, Kalabankoro Nerekoro has a mixture of many social processes and is alive with contradiction and contestation. I felt there was rich data available to generate interesting research where I could contribute to the literature on purposeful agency. The dynamism of Kalabankoro Nerekoro will be further shown in Chapter 4, where I discuss the landscape, history, structures and social relations that make the neighbourhood a strong primary site of analysis of purposeful agency. Secondly, I would be insincere to deny the practical element of researching Kalabankoro Nerekoro. As I discuss below, I had been working in the neighbourhood and surrounding parts for over eight years before I started my research. I already had networks that allowed me access to carry out my research. I also had cultural knowledge of respectable ways to behave in the study site and the trust of many people living there. Because of this historical element of my relationship with the study site, my positionality as a researcher comes into question. I deal with this important matter later in the chapter.

3.3. SEQUENCING OF MIXED METHODS

Within the case study of Kalabankoro Nerekoro, I used an inductive exploratory sequential mixed methods design primarily focused on qualitative methods to illuminate and reveal relevant concepts and processes. Data drawn from the qualitative phase of my research informs the conclusions of the thesis. Quantitative methods, through the

use of a household survey, were then used to enrich, triangulate and further develop these conclusions. I will explain now what I did to use each of these methods.

3.4. QUALITATIVE METHODS

The qualitative methods comprised of the majority of my fieldwork. For triangulation, I employed a number of qualitative methods that were carried out in stages. Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (1994) argue that “triangulation reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question... Triangulation adds rigor, breadth and depth to any investigation.”¹⁹⁹ It was too risky just to rely just on one method to extract data and triangulation of methods could provide depth to the data collected through the surfacing of similarities in themes and responses²⁰⁰. The qualitative methods used included general participant observation (through living in Kalabankoro Nerekoro for six months) and language training (of the researcher in Bambara), key informant interviews, focus groups and life history interviews with people in the study site. Selection of informants varied depending on each qualitative method. This is described in the text below. After language training my language proficiency in Bambara was not sufficient to hold full conversations and so my research assistants Mrs Fanta Traore and Mr Abdulye Maiga accompanied me²⁰¹ to all interviews, focus groups and most informal interactions. After each interaction or interview, my research assistant and I would debrief to discuss any nuances missed. I was able to pick up both general and specific phrases which I clarified in these debriefings to help ensure data was not missed. Specifically, in Kalabankoro Nerekoro,

¹⁹⁹ Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln, *The Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Sage, 1994). 2.

²⁰⁰ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*.

²⁰¹ The schedule of involvement between these two research assistants is discussed later in this chapter.

25 people gave their life histories, four focus groups were held (one each with men, women, male youth and female youth), 20 interviews were held with key informants and another 25 interviews were conducted when I returned to Mali.

3.4.1. PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Many more informal group conversations were held during my day-to-day interactions living in Kalabankoro Nerekoro with people who I interacted with including at the local shop, in the marketplace, during night chats with youth, in community meetings of various associations and at the Kalabankoro town hall. These day-to-day interactions also allowed me to observe life in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. According to Stephen Bogdewic (1992), participant observation offers the opportunity to witness events that outsiders would not be invited to attend and to access situations that might be hidden from the public, such as illegal or socially stigmatised activities, or activities that groups use to maintain a special identity²⁰². This was particularly important given the nature of my research looking at purposeful agency and understanding actions and activities within the social landscape of Kalabankoro Nerekoro. Living within the neighbourhood and being seen daily by people built rapport for when I began interviews and focus groups. Also what helped build rapport was the constant use of traditional greetings.

3.4.1.1. GREETINGS

The first thing that was told to me when I first came to Mali in 2005 was how to greet people in Bambara. Living in Kalabankoro Nerekoro for my fieldwork, these skills

²⁰² Stephen Bogdewic, "Participant observation.," in *Doing qualitative research*, ed. Benjamin Crabtree and William Miller (Sage, 1992).

proved incredibly important, as greetings are a fundamental part of daily life. Greetings are used as a form of acknowledgement of people you pass in the street, even if you do not have a point of interaction with them. To not greet people before you undertake any interviewing, conversation or business would be culturally very insensitive. Even walking past people on the street, one must greet them. I observed the reproduction of social stratification walking on the streets of Kalabankoro Nerekoro in this manner, when wealthy people did not greet or very brashly greeted people of lower strata.

The formal greeting is generally given in Bambara, even if people are not Bambara themselves. Sometimes words from other languages are injected including the Arabic and French. Arabic is used as a statement of Islamic faith and is used by the religious elite²⁰³. French is used by the elite in formal situations such as professional meetings. The greetings are started by whoever is approaching, and those who answer always respond with *tor te*, 'all is fine'. This is a specific point because the greetings do not have an information finding purpose - where people really tell you how they are; instead, greetings are a point of relation building. Thus even when you ask 'how is your father', *Ika fa ka kene wa?*, the answer will be *tore te*, 'he is fine', even if he is dead or sick. More intimate greetings with friends and acquaintances you are about to converse with involve touch, where you would shake their hands. In addition, there is a temporal element to the greetings in that there is no delay when replying. Even when in

²⁰³ The religious elite were wealthy individuals wanting to show their faith as a symbol of legitimacy. They some also used it to show they had travelled to Mecca. This group did not always include Imams of mosques, as the three Imams that I met used Bambara to greet me. Thus the religious elite instead of saying *tore te* would respond in Arabic "al-Hamdulillāh."

conversation with someone, if another person approaches, it is expected that the conversation will be dropped so as to greet the person approaching.

In Kalabankoro Nerekoro, the greetings generally encountered are a variation of the following:

*A: Ini Sogoma*²⁰⁴

B: Ini Sogoma

A: Ika ka kene wa? – How are you?

B: Torete – I am fine

A: Ika somogo ka kene wa? – How are the people in your house?

B: Tore tula – They are fine

A: Ika fa ka kene wa? – How is your father?

B: Tore ta la – He is fine

A: Ika ba ka kene wa? – How is your mother?

B: tore ta la – She is fine

A: Ika denw kene wa? - How are your children?

B: Tora tu la – They are fine

A: Ika che/musso ka kene wa? – How is your husband/wife?

B: Tore ta la – He/she is fine

²⁰⁴ Sogoma is the word for morning, but depending on time of day this can be replaced by tile (middle of the day), wula (afternoon) and su (evening).

Greetings are a ritual of relation building throughout West Africa because they reinforce the expectation to acknowledge people and build rapport²⁰⁵. In Kalabankoro Nerekoro greetings served the same purpose for my fieldwork, constantly reinforcing my will to connect with people around me. I noticed people would take joy in approaching me to greet me daily, building relations that ended up being beneficial for the data collection as people felt comfortable sharing intimate information with me.

3.4.2. MINI-LIFE HISTORIES

Mini-life histories were semi-structured personal discussions of roughly an hour over one visit. The term ‘life history’ has various definitions in my reading of the literature. Life histories are retrospective,²⁰⁶ biographical,²⁰⁷ and prompted by another person²⁰⁸, but can also include a person’s analysis of the historical, social, economic and cultural aspects of their life²⁰⁹. The life histories I used were aimed at prompting retrospective accounts of key moments in the informant’s life. Thus, they were ‘mini’ in the sense they were a lot shorter than perhaps conventional life histories can be. The interview opened with participants describing daily activities, then key moments of their life from birth until the present that the informant thought were formative. If people raised moments of change in their life, these moments were probed further to ask how the person surmounted them and what factors they thought were fundamental in this

²⁰⁵ Anthropologist Paul Riesman (1998), in his extended ethnography living with Fulani in Burkina Faso, argues that greetings reinforce how important other people are to society through the upkeep of frequent interactions. He argues “Each person is aware of the fragility of the ties between people, on the one hand, and of the necessity of living together, on the other” Riesman, "Freedom in Fulani Social Life: An Introspective Ethnography," 175.

²⁰⁶ Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln, *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* (Sage, 2013).

²⁰⁷ Thomas Schwant, *Qualitative inquiry: a dictionary of terms* (Sage Publications, 1997).

²⁰⁸ Lawrence Watson and Maria Barbara Watson-Franke, *Interpreting Life Histories: and Anthropological Inquiry* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1985).

²⁰⁹ Amos Hatch and Richard Winiewski, *Life History and Narrative* (Falmer Press, 1995).

change. If psychological agency was expressed by the informant, their definition, meaning and beliefs about how one has *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè* were probed. In the interviews I also discussed with informants their views on social development, working in associations and barriers to individual and collective purposeful agency. For a full schedule of the kinds of questions that were asked in these interviews, please refer to Appendix A. I had 25 life histories in total because I wanted to have people representing a range of analytical categories. These categories included people who were income and multi-dimensionally poor and non- poor, people who had gone to school and had not gone to school, both men and woman and people of different age groups. (The categories emerged from my research and will be discussed further in Chapter 4 (section 4.6). People who gave their life histories were selected based on who would talk to us whilst walking through Kalabankoro Nerekoro with my research assistants Fanta Traore and Abdulye Maiga. People seemed happy to do this as very few people declined to be interviewed. As we did not know exactly who we would find in each household we approached, we kept interviewing until I felt I had included people from most of the analytical categories (age, gender, education level and deprivation level) and no new data emerged on the questions we were asking, indicating a saturation point²¹⁰. Four of the life story interviews were set up through connections – these were elite people and an introduction through a friend was needed.

²¹⁰ James Coleman, "Relational Analysis: The Study of Social Organizations with Survey Methods," *Human Organization* 17, no. 4 (1958); Greg Guest, Arwen Bunce, and Laura Johnson, "How Many Interviews Are Enough?: An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability," *Field Methods* 18, no. 1 (2006).

3.4.3. FOCUS GROUPS

Jenny Kitzinger (1994) in her review of focus groups defined them as “organized to explore a specific set[s] of issues such as people’s views and experiences ... [focus groups] are distinguished from the broader category of group interviews by the explicit use of the group interaction as research data.”²¹¹ I employed focus groups as a method only after specific factors were raised in mini-life story interviews related to purposeful agency – the initial intention was to use the focus groups to define factors and processes specific to purposeful agency arising from observations and interviews, including *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*. I wanted to use focus groups to bring together people living in Kalabankoro Nerekoro to help define these concepts but also talk about their significance (if any) in people’s lives, as well as understand where their concepts come from, all while examining the dynamic between actors in the focus group to get an idea of the social relations around these concepts (if people felt comfortable speaking about them, if there was a social hierarchy in who was allowed to speak about these concepts). The focus groups were semi-structured and lasted around two hours each. They began with introductions, then participants were asked to describe their day-to-day activities and how people could improve their lives in Kalabankoro. This question would expose barriers within the community that impeded daily life. Here I could ask for examples of challenges, and then the discussion would probe responses to the challenges, and what they thought ‘helped’ to overcome these challenges. As different factors (education, relationships, financial means and agency) were mentioned by participants, the definition of each of these was probed. If not mentioned by focus group participants

²¹¹ Jenny Kitzinger, "The methodology of Focus Groups: the importance of interaction between research participants," *Sociology of health and illness* 16, no. 1 (1994): 103.

themselves, I also introduced other concepts that had been mentioned in interviews for discussion. I then also asked for specific definitions of any concepts that had not already been raised. For a full schedule of the kinds of questions that were asked in these focus groups, please refer to Appendix A.

Also interesting in the focus groups beyond the content of discussion was the subtext or the social interaction of participants. Here I would watch who spoke and who did not. On several occasions I followed up later with participants to hear about their experience taking part in the focus group – giving further insight into the social dynamic of the group situation. These dynamics particularly informed my data on social norms around gender and age.

The adult focus groups were set up through the traditional chief²¹² of the neighbourhood and he selected the participants. Although there was considerable bias related to this (in who was asked to attend and who was not), it was necessary to go through the chief out of respect and to ensure I obtained permission to continue my research within Kalabankoro Nerekoro. By triangulating my methods with interviews, observations, key informant interviews and a household questionnaire aiming to include all households in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, I feel I balanced this sampling bias as the selection of participants for other research methods was more random (For example, mini-story interviews and interviews when I returned a year later for ‘double checking’). Further

²¹² The traditional chief has very limited influence in formal circles of Kalabankoro Nerekoro as he is often overlooked by the local officials from the town hall and the elite. However his role is still substantial to the poor who consult him on many issues including registering their associations, organizing meetings and family matters.

still, information regarding definitions and insights gained from these focus groups was again triangulated when I returned to Mali a year later to double check the conclusions I was drawing with other informants not originally part of the focus groups. Interestingly, there was little disagreement with the original definitions given by those in the focus groups. Based on this, I do not believe that the selection bias has misled my results and analysis. The participants the chief selected for both the men's and women's focus groups were all members of associations. There were five people in the men's focus group and seven people in the women's focus group. The two youth focus groups were set up through my research assistant Abdulye Maiga, who lives in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. Abdulye told different friendship and kinship groups in Kalabankoro Nerekoro about the focus groups and so people came by word of mouth. There were five people in the female youth focus group and nine people in the male youth focus group. The people who came to the male youth focus group were a mix of the unemployed, migrants from rural Mali working in Kalabankoro Nerekoro and students from the Universite de Bamako. The people who came to the female youth focus group were students from local private and public schools and young housewives. Whilst youth participants were a mix of different backgrounds in terms of employment and gender, I believe those that answered the call to attend via word of mouth were those interested or engaged in the development of Kalabankoro Nerekoro to give up their evening to attend the discussion. Because of this, it could be possible that the views expressed were a little more informed than the general youth of Kalabankoro Nerekoro, although I did see the views coming from the focus groups triangulated with other youth respondents in randomly selected sections of my quantitative research (such as mini-life

story interviews and ‘double checking’ interviews). Thus I again, do not think that the selection bias has misled my results and analysis.

3.4.4. KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Key informant interviews were carried out with 20 people with particular experience regarding the central themes of enquiry. All of these interviews were unstructured, as I would explain my field of enquiry and they would comment with their insights. All people were approached via email and chosen because of the prominence of their institutions in the development of Mali. Thus I approached them because I wanted their specific views on particular topics. People I approached either came to my attention through past work in Mali, through word of mouth and introductions, or through desk based research I did before entering the field. All interviews were carried out in interviewees’ offices, which were situated within Bamako. I met with senior policy makers in the Malian government who worked on gender to gain a deeper understanding of the wider challenges faced by Malian society in their eyes. I also met with senior international NGO workers and one official of a multilateral agency, who gave me insight into the challenges of their work and their perceived problems with using participation techniques and working with associations. I also met with senior managers working in local NGOs who informed me about the challenges of their work and Malian society and how they impede change. I also met with a senior Imam from the largest mosque in Kalabankoro Nerekoro to understand how he explained religion and agency. Finally, I met with prominent Malian academics who gave their personal perspectives and support towards my research questions and the focus of my research.

3.4.5. INTERVIEWS AND GROUP BIAS

I will discuss at length below the impact my presence possibly could have had during my time in the field and in the collection of my data. It is also likely that social dynamics within focus groups, interviews, and observations were impacted by other actors present in the research²¹³. For example, the impact of my translators' presence in my interviews, the dynamics within the groups of those participating in the focus groups, or whether other 'onlookers' were present in for interviews all may have impacted how informants responded. Like Alan Bryman (2008), I argue that knowing the extent of these inferences is impossible as they differ from one exchange to another, depending on the people present, their relationship and the social context of the exchange. Wives being interviewed with their husbands watching may have been more limited in their responses. I witnessed this in some of the life history interviews; for example, one woman I was interviewing was very free flowing and opinionated but as soon as her husband's friend came she became noticeably cautious and uncomfortable in continuing the interview. In all situations, collection bias was recorded when noticeable and was taken note of when analysing the interview later. The 'onlooker' bias was not present in most interviews as we made a concerted effort to visit households when the husband was not home or if there were friends or others around at the time, asked them if it was okay to conduct the interviews in private.

²¹³ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*.

The group bias within focus groups and informal group discussions was also present, although this was something actively embraced to enrich data²¹⁴. Who spoke and who did not became a fascinating feature of these discussions and became data in themselves²¹⁵. After each group discussion, my interpreter and I would compare notes on these particular dynamics to discuss why they were the case. This data has been integrated into my analysis, specifically informing my understanding of social norms such as gender and age but also the belief in the importance of unity and the ‘collective’ for people. I discuss these further in the empirical chapters.

The bias that may have been brought in with having a translator present and how the interviewee reacted with them is something we again could not control²¹⁶. We did try to mitigate the effect by spending considerable time building rapport with the interviewee before we began the official interview. We did this by asking about their family, helping to prepare food, and playing with the interviewee’s children before the interview. I do feel this helped make people feel comfortable and to see that the presence of both my translator and I was honest. Nonetheless, the impact of this interaction was obvious in some cases, whereby the gender of Fanta or Abdulye either made it harder or easier to build rapport, as did their class – where Fanta was perceived as being educated and well-to-do, so she had to make an effort to come across as approachable in poor households by using slang Bambara language. In rich households she was more

²¹⁴ Kitzinger, "The methodology of Focus Groups: the importance of interaction between research participants."

²¹⁵ Anna Gibbs, "Social Research Update," (Department of Sociology, University of Surrey, 1997).

²¹⁶ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*.

welcomed than when I had Abdulye as a translator, as he was sometimes perceived as poor and young and so we had to work harder to build rapport.

Finally, whilst there are limitations to the qualitative methods I have used, it is the triangulation of all the methods used in this thesis that gives it its strength. I have used observation, mini-life story interviews, focus groups and key informant interviews to identify and triangulate key factors and processes underpinning purposeful agency for people living in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. Also arising from this data were the definitions and processes of production of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*. I was also able to collect a lot of data from these methods regarding analytical categories important to purposeful agency such as gender, age, poverty and access to education as well as data around collective agency in associations and challenges collective agency faces in the study site. I used all of this data to inform the development of the household questionnaire.

3.5. QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

This stage consisted of undertaking a household questionnaire to collect data on household deprivation levels and responses quantifying where possible processes and concepts raised in the qualitative data that related to purposeful agency. This triangulation is a feature of the exploratory sequential mixed methods design I have used where quantitative methods back up and expand upon the initial qualitative results. According to Abbas Tashakkori and Charles Teddlie (2003), exploratory sequential mixed methods are, “useful to a researcher who wants to explore a phenomenon but also

wants to expand on the qualitative findings.²¹⁷” In my case the qualitative element supported the qualitative finding by quantifying initial claims and exploring the breadth of the phenomena studied within the population of Kalabankoro Nerekoro. The household questionnaire had three parts to it. The first section contained general questions drawn from the qualitative phase of the research, aiming to quantify responses, the second component featured questions from the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) Empowerment Module and the third section included questions relating to deprivation and multidimensional poverty. I will explain each of these parts of the questionnaire after I define what I mean by the ‘household’.

3.5.1. DEFINING THE HOUSEHOLD

Before discussing the household survey, I want to make some comments on how I defined the household. In this research, I follow the view of John Strauss and Duncan Thomas (1995) that the household and the family are two different analytical units²¹⁸. For example, the anthropologist Junko Yanagisako (1979) asserts the difference, where “the logical distinction is apparent because the referent of the family is kinship, while the referent of the household is geographical propinquity or common residence.”²¹⁹ In this research I have thus defined the family by kinship and the household as an economic unit. This reflects that within any household included in my fieldwork, there were many variations of family arrangements including small ‘nuclear’ families, large

²¹⁷ Abbas Tashakkori, Charles Teddlie, *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research*, (Sage Publications, 2003): 228.

²¹⁸ John Strauss and Duncan Thomas, "Human Resources: Empirical modelling of household and family decisions," in *Handbook of Development Economics*, ed. J. Behrman Srinivasan and T.N (Elsevier Science, 1995).

²¹⁹ Junko Yanagisako, "Family and Household: The Analysis of Domestic Groups," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 8(1979): 162.

kinship groups (for example, two brothers with their respective wives and children, as well as aunts and others staying all in the same household), and polygamous and monogamous families. To capture what informants defined as their household, we used 'those eating from the common bowl.' This is a term used in Kalabankoro Nerekoro to describe the collective eating habits at meal times, where those within the one economic unit shares the main meal together hence the 'common bowl.' The common bowl is an economic construct consisting of primarily consumption and production activities such as labour where a wife/wives cook, children assist and husband/s provide finance for consumption for all those within the household. Those not regarded as eating from the common bowl were not regarded as part of the household.

3.5.2. COMPONENTS OF THE HOUSEHOLD QUESTIONNAIRE

It was clear from my qualitative research that local conceptions of purposeful agency, specifically *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, were very important. Thus, I wanted to survey households with questions that directly related to people's lived reality of purposeful agency so I could deepen my understanding of these concepts. These 'general questions' were drawn directly from the qualitative data. For this component of the questionnaire, I followed the method of developing ethnographic questionnaires of Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte (1999). In their text on ethnographic methods, these authors suggest that ethnographic questionnaires should articulate cultural domains that are then translated to variables in the questionnaire. I thus revisited all the data I had already collected to find domains and variables, and then formulate appropriate questions for each. Most of the questions in this general section of the questionnaire had

a particular focus on *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* and other structural factors related to initiatives people undertook to achieve *hèrè* at individual and collective levels. The development of the questions in this general section of the questionnaire took me about two weeks to complete whilst I was still in the field. As my research constantly evolved in the period after my survey, some of the questions asked in the household survey are not as tight and direct as I would have liked. For example, I have no definite question that captured who is in an association and who is not. As I will show in Chapter 7 (section 7.1.1.), the definition of associations is different for different people; thus instead of the one question I asked about whether a respondent was in an association, a series of questions reflecting the complexity of definitions would have helped considerably.

The second section of the household survey was designed to embed and compare the understandings of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* developed through my qualitative research and the first component of the household survey (general questions) with theoretical understandings of psychological agency such as in SDT. These questions also measured the informant's decision-making ability. After realising from my qualitative data that *dusu* is very similar to the concept of autonomy in SDT, I included the OPHI questionnaire on empowerment as these questions focused on measuring autonomy as defined in SDT. The questions measuring autonomy have been developed by OPHI and are collectively called the Relative Autonomy Index (RAI)²²⁰.

²²⁰ Ibrahim and Alkire, "Empowerment and agency: A proposal for internationally-comparable indicators."

The third section analysed household deprivation as well as additional demographic data such as place of birth and years attending Qur'anic school and formal school. I used three measures of household deprivation. This was to account for the substantial amount of literature coming from the school of human development that argues that using just monetary measures of poverty is inadequate²²¹. The 'objective' measure entailed that the interviewer at the time of the household survey commented on whether they thought this household was poor or not. The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) was based on the poverty measures of Alkire and Foster (2011) and Alkire and Santos (2010), which include indicators from the three categories of health, education and living standards²²². The monetary income measure was calculated from the yearly household income based on the poverty line level of below US\$1.25/day. Bratton et al. (2002) also discussed deprivation as multidimensional in Mali and collected data through the Afrobarometer survey, which includes three types of deprivations: income deprivation, subjective deprivation and if basic needs are met (water, schooling, food, medical treatment, electricity and cash income)²²³. Whilst the measurement schedule used by Bratton et al. is helpful, I felt the MPI was more suited as it expanded on measures used by Bratton et al. as the MPI also included measures of infant mortality and a deeper analysis of standards of living. To measure multidimensional poverty I

²²¹ Caterina Ruggeri Laderchi, Ruhi Saith, and Frances Stewart, "Does it Matter that we do not Agree on the Definition of Poverty? A Comparison of Four Approaches," *Oxford Development Studies* 31, no. 3 (2003); Gustav Ranis, Frances Stewart, and Emma Samman, "Human Development: Beyond the Human Development Index," *Journal of Human Development* 7, no. 3 (2006). Sen, *Inequality Re-examined*.

²²² Sabina Alkire and James Foster, "Counting and Multidimensional Poverty Measurement" *Journal of Public Economics* 95, no. 7 (2011). Sabina Alkire and Maria Emma Santos, "Acute Multidimensional Poverty: A New Index for Developing Countries," *Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative Working Paper* 38(2010).

²²³ M Bratton, M Coulibaly, and F Machado, "Popular Views of the legitimacy of the state in Mali," *Canadian journal of African Studies* 36, no. 2 (2002).

used the OPHI Multidimensional Household Deprivation Questionnaire²²⁴. These questions analysed people's multidimensional poverty through ten indicators of health, education and standards of living. The OPHI multidimensional household survey derived from the Alkire and Foster (2011) multidimensional poverty measure uses ten indicators in three domains²²⁵. The indicators used with their specified weightings are shown in the table below:

²²⁴ The household questionnaire is included in Appendix C

²²⁵ Alkire and Foster, "Counting and Multidimensional Poverty Measurement".

TABLE 1 – THE INDICATORS, POVERTY CUT-OFFS AND WEIGHTINGS OF THE DEPRIVATION MEASURE USED IN THE HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

Dimension	Indicator/Vari- able	Poverty cut-off	Weight according to Alkire & Foster (2011)	Measure used in the current study?	Weight used in my analysis
1. Standard of Living	TV, radio, telephone, fridge, motorcycle, car, truck	Poor: can own 1 of TV/radio/telephone/fridge /motorcycle but not more. If owns car/truck is not poor.	1/6	Yes	1/6
	Floor	Poor: dirt/natural floor.	1/6	Yes	1/6
	Electricity	Poor: no electricity.	1/6	Yes	1/6
	Cooking fuel	Poor: wood, dung, charcoal.	1/6	Yes	1/6
	Toilet	Poor: no improved private toilet ²²⁶ .	1/6	Yes	1/6
	Water	Poor: no drinking water ²²⁷ .	1/6	Yes	1/6
2. Education	Years schooling	Poor: no person in the household has finished primary school.	½	Yes	1
	School enrolment	Poor: any school-aged child up to 14 is not enrolled in school.	½	No ²²⁸	-
3. Health	U5 child mortality	Poor: if a child under 5yrs of a woman living in the house has died.	½	Yes	½
	Nutrition	Poor: if any adult or child in the household is malnourished.	½	Yes	½

(SOURCE OPHI - ADAPTED)

²²⁶ If the toilet is flush or is a pit latrine with a slab, then it is improved'. Otherwise it is not.

²²⁷ If the water is piped into the house/compound, or comes from a protected well, then the household is non-poor. Otherwise it is not.

²²⁸ This question was hard to collect exact data for as a lot of the informants did not know how many children lived in the house. Therefore we decided to exclude this question and only have one indicator for the education domain.

To be considered poor, a household needs to be evaluated as deprived of at least 1/3 of the weighted indicators. The weightings of the MPI are split between the three domains equally; however, because the domains have a different number of measures, the weightings are different for each indicator – each indicator being equally split within each domain²²⁹. This is also shown in Table 1. As I have measured deprivation at the household level, I initially represented multidimensional poverty as a percentage of households. However, I could also weight the households according to their size and to get a sense of individual MPI deprivation. Nonetheless, this did not account for actual inequality within the household; for example, a household rich in material goods is considered a non-deprived household even if husbands are taking these goods for themselves and not sharing them with their wives²³⁰. So we should not interpret the results at the household level as reflective of everyone in the household, only really for the person who answered the questionnaire (one person/household).

Along with the MPI measure, I initially included a household income measure in my household survey. I constructed this measure based on the universal poverty line cut-off of US\$1.25/day. I took each household's yearly income and divided it by 365 to get the amount of income by day²³¹. From here I could calculate if the household was income deprived. Yet as I critically assessed this income measure further, I realised household

²²⁹ The weighted average of the deprivations is through a 'nested weight structure' where equal weight across dimension and equal weight for each indicator within dimensions. See Sabina Alkire and Maria-Emma Santos, "Acute Multidimensional Poverty: A new Index for Developing Countries," (Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, 2010).

²³⁰ Martin Ravallion, "Issues in Measuring and Modelling Poverty," in *Policy Research Working Paper 1615* (World Bank, 1996). Lawrence Haddad and Ravi Kanbur, "How Serious is the Neglect of Intra-Household Inequality?," *The Economic Journal* 100, no. 402 (1990).

²³¹ Calculated on the 15th of June 2011 1 US\$ = 463CFA <http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/>

income was better reflected through using the standards of living in the MPI measure²³². Specifically I decided to use the standards of living measure in the MPI instead of income. This decision can be further explained through my readings of the literature, where the income poverty measure is notoriously difficult to substantiate, for three main reasons. Firstly, household income measures themselves are problematic for various reasons, as they generally do not capture the complex reality of people's poverty²³³. For example, Sen (2005) argues that income measures overlook people's differing 'conversion factors' between income and functioning; Alkire and Santos (2009) show how income measures assume markets exist for all goods, and ignore the existence of public goods and access to non-market items and gift exchange²³⁴; and Angus Deaton (2001) shows how the purchasing power parity (PPP) based on exchange rates differs with currency fluctuations and global prices, making universal income measures difficult to predict²³⁵. Forster, Greer and Thorbecke (1984) argued that before their FGT measure, some poverty lines did not account for how far individuals are from the poverty line cut-off – making no difference between those just under the poverty cut off

²³² Others have also argued that assets and standards of living are a better measure than income poverty, see. David. Sahn and David. Stifel, "Exploring alternative measures of welfare in the absence of expenditure data," *Review of Income and Wealth* 49, no. 4 (2003). David Sahn and David Stifel, "Urban-Rural Inequality in Living Standards in Africa," *World Institute for Development Economics Research* Research Paper No. 2004/4(2004); Yele Maweke Batana, "Multidimensional Measurement of Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative Working Paper* 13(2008).

²³³ Amartya Sen, "The Standard of Living; The Tanner Lectures," (Clare Hall, University of Cambridge 1985).

²³⁴ Sabina Alkire and Maria Emma Santos, "Poverty and Inequality Measurement," in *An introduction to the human development and capability approach: freedom and agency*, ed. Séverine Deneulin and Lila Shahani (Earthscan, 2009).

²³⁵ See Angus Deaton, "Counting the Worlds Poor: problems and possible solutions," *World Bank Research Observer* 13 no. 2 (2001). Ravallion, "Issues in Measuring and Modelling Poverty."; Angus (1997) Deaton, *The Analysis of Household Surveys: A Microeconomic Approach to Development Policy*, Johns Hopkins University Press, World Bank, Washington D.C., , *The Analysis of Household Surveys: A Microeconomic Approach to Development Policy* (Johns Hopkins University Press, World Bank, 1997).

line and those far below it²³⁶. Secondly, another reason that I will use the MPI measure for deprivation and not household income is that household income in Mali is supplemented by remittances²³⁷ - data my household survey did not collect very well. Thirdly, the standards of living component in the MPI measure covers any inferences I could make about household income and also takes into account conversion factors such as not just assuming a particular level of income means having a particular living standard such as a fridge, hygienic toilet or clean drinking water, but instead measuring actually if a household has such an item. Alkire and Santos (2009) have argued that the conversion of income into specific attributes is ambiguous because income does not necessarily convert to a particular resource due to differing needs and preferences of individuals, for example a woman may have a high income level but chooses to live a life of modesty because of her religious beliefs. In addition, not all households can use income in the same way, a high income household with 50 people will be able to afford much less in the way of assets than a household with the same income but with 3 people living within. Thus, for the analysis I will define deprivation as MPI deprivation, including a provision for living standards, health and education. I will discuss the importance of each of these factors in Kalabankoro Nerekoro in Chapter 4 (section 4.6.1.).

²³⁶ James Foster, Joel Greer, and Erik Thorbecke, "A class of decomposable poverty measures," *Econometrica* 81, no. 2 (1984).

²³⁷ Fiore Gubert, "Do migrants insure those who stay behind? Evidence from the Kayes Area (Western Mali)," *Oxford Development Studies* 30, no. 3 (2002); Awudu Abdulai and Anna CroleRees, "Determinants of income diversification amongst rural households in Southern Mali," *Food Policy* 26, no. 4 (2001). Jean-Paul Azam and Flore Gubert, "Migrants' Remittances and the Household in Africa: A review of Evidence," *Journal of African Economics* 15, no. 2 (2006).

Once the questionnaire was developed it was then translated into Bambara and French. My research assistants and I then tested the questions with a group of ten households in Kalabankoro Nerekoro to pilot the household questionnaire tool. Minor adjustments were needed and subsequently included.

To administer the questionnaire in Kalabankoro Nerekoro I trained a team of 12 local research students from the Universite de Bamako who spoke both French and Bambara. I trained them over three 3-hour sessions in research data collection and error reduction. These students were then grouped into pairs so we had six research teams. We then mapped the neighbourhood and split it into six parts, in which each team would question every household in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. My research assistant Mr Abdulye Maiga oversaw all six teams and accompanied them at different times as a measure of quality control. The questionnaire teams visited households at varying times of the day. This was because it is culturally appropriate for the head of the household to answer such requests, and the head of the household is predominately a male. As males are generally out during the day, leaving their wives or youth to look after the home, visiting during the daytime generally found women and youth informants and visiting during the evening found male heads of households. Further still, informants were asked to complete the questionnaire without the presence of others; however, this was not always possible. The sample size of the questionnaire was the whole neighbourhood of 423 households. We were able to approach all households because before undertaking the questionnaire we drew a map of the whole neighbourhood including every household. Then every household was approached on foot by the teams administering

the questionnaire. Of the 423 households, 99 either refused to be included in the questionnaire or were not home at the time of the team visiting (the exact number of who refused compared to who was not home was not recorded, however my research team said more people refused than just were not home). A further 17 respondents declined the survey after the introduction leaving the sample to 307. It appears that these 116 were from different analytical categories meaning these missing responses do not bias the overall results significantly, (interview teams were asked to give their impression if the household was poor or not for the household who refused/ were not home). In addition, even though the sample size of the household survey was 307, for many questions, not everyone answered them and left them blank. Thus the *n* value for each individual analysis varies significantly in my empirical chapters. I will discuss the implications of each in the proceeding chapters. Clearly the refusals decrease the power from a complete household census; however, the questionnaire still presents quasi-randomised results that reflect some realities in Kalabankoro Nerekoro.

3.5.3. HOUSEHOLD QUESTIONNAIRE AND STABILITY RETESTING

The arguments of my thesis do not rely solely on the results of the household questionnaire because other methods such as focus groups, interviews, key informant interviews and observation provided much richer information. The results of the questionnaire acted as markers for further analysis and as a check on conclusions I was drawing from the qualitative data. Nonetheless, one feature of the household questionnaire was that it included a stability retest to see how stable and accurate the

questionnaire tool was over different periods of time²³⁸. Two weeks after the initial questionnaire was implemented in households across Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 12.2%²³⁹ of the same people in the household who had responded to the first questionnaire re-answered the questionnaire. These people's responses were compared to their initial responses, thus testing the stability and accuracy, of the questionnaire. It was my research assistant who carried out this questionnaire (not the five interviewing teams that did so the first round), and thus it provided some interesting insights into problems arising with the results of the questionnaire in general – these are all discussed in Chapter 6 (section 6.2) when examining the quantitative results. Overall, however, the household questionnaire was revealed to be moderately stable which helped in interpreting the validity of the results.

3.6. RETURNING TO MALI – ‘DOUBLE-CHECKING’ OF RESULTS

I returned to Mali almost 12 months after the main five-month long data collection stage with an initial analysis of results. Over this one-month period, I met with around 30 people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro to discuss these results, which served as a ‘double-checking’ exercise. These people were approached in their households on foot at different times of the day; we found that some had been included in mini-life interviews and focus groups held in the initial data collection phase, whilst others had not. The 30 people we visited were from different analytical categories including men and women, members and non-members of associations, people of different age groups, and those of

²³⁸ M. Feder, *Test-Retest Reliability. Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods*. Sage Publications, Inc (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications).

²³⁹ We aimed for 10% of households but we were working on an estimate number of households at this time, thus a few more households were included.

differing deprivation and education levels. The number of 30 interviews was not initially set, we aimed to ensure we reached a saturation point; gaining no new insights and had a representation of different socio-economic groups such as education level, age, gender and deprivation level. In these unstructured discussions, I presented results on the importance of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* to improve *hèrè* and then asked for people's opinions and thoughts on the results. I also used this time to confirm definitions people had given of particular concepts and expand on how these concepts were formed, as well as comments on the question "so what if *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* are important, how does one operationalise this?" I also met with more members of associations to understand further how they operationalised aspirations for improving *hèrè* and challenges involved. I spoke with local government members from the Kalabankoro town hall to understand how they believed that *hèrè* of people living in the area was achieved. I also asked them to comment on initial results and asked for examples of policies (if any) that reflected such results. The data from this one-month period has been integrated into the arguments in my empirical chapters.

3.7. DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of my data was carried out through a variety of methods and over a 12-month period from March 2011 – March 2012.

To analyse my qualitative data, firstly I transcribed all interviews and focus group dialogues and then added this into NVivo. All qualitative data was sorted and assigned

to nodes²⁴⁰ based on themes emerging through initial fieldwork notes. Such themes included statements around gender, age, poverty, working in associations, bad governance, *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, education, family dynamics, aspirations, community breakdown and social development. These themes were the initial themes analysed during fieldwork and evolved as I became more familiar with the data.

After the initial processing of qualitative data, all interviews and focus group dialogue was listened to repeatedly over a space of three months. This systematic listening helped me become more familiar with the data and evolved the research themes. Also, notes made from the field every day were re-read. I listened and read through each dialogue, alternating between emic (native) and etic (outsider) perspectives. As this was quite difficult, to keep a check on myself through such a process, I used H. Russell Bernard (2006) as a guide. Bernard suggested looking for inconsistencies and consistencies in the data, paying particular attention to any negative data that ‘disproved’ any arguments that were developing. These negative pieces of data helped me think through alternative arguments to the ones I was building and so I have included them in discussion in the empirical chapters. Descriptive statistics from the household questionnaire also helped in making sense of the data. Processing the data in this way helped develop a deeper analysis of the data. During the one month re-visit to Mali further insights were added. These new interviews and dialogue were again added into the existing data and analysed again. As the thesis became more focused, the

²⁴⁰ Nodes are a specific tool available in Nvivo to be able to group quotes from qualitative data in specific themes.

analysis too became more focused. This has meant the continual re-noding of data through NVivo.

Regarding the questionnaire, data was first cleaned then added to SPSS. All data input was checked twice (first by my research assistant and then by myself). The data in SPSS was analysed based on categories of analysis observed in fieldwork, providing some interesting insights in areas such as gender, education level, deprivation level²⁴¹ and age. A limited number of variables that had responses that ended in words needed to be coded into numbers such as gender, people's aspirations, and whether they were poor or not. I also constructed indexes from the data for analysis, using the MPI and RAI. I will explain these now.

The MPI is an internationally comparable measure used to discuss multidimensional poverty (poverty beyond income measures). The MPI for my data was constructed by following the method of Alkire and Foster (2011) and Alkire and Santos (2010). For each of the deprivation indicators, households were deemed deprived or not as specified in the poverty cut-offs for each indicator in Table 1. The overall poverty cut-off for each household was 1/3 of weighted indicators.

The MPI is calculated by multiplying the incidence of poverty by the average intensity across the poor ($H \times A$) where (H) is the headcount ratio and (A) is the average intensity of each household's poverty (the average proportion of indicators in which poor people

²⁴¹ I used both a financial deprivation category (living below US\$1.25/day) and a multi-dimensional deprivation measure (assets, education and health indicators) because very rarely did the analysis match up showing very little cross over between the two measures.

are deprived)²⁴². The MPI is then used to discuss household deprivation beyond income. Because the MPI has also been worked out by OPHI for the whole of Mali, as well as the region of Bamako, I was able to discuss household deprivation against national and regional deprivation as found in Chapter 4 (section 4.6.1.).

The RAI was then incorporated based on Ryan and Deci's Autonomy Scales by creating a weighted sum of the scores of each of the autonomy levels for each domain. So for each domain the formula was $(-2)[\text{external pressure response}] + (-1)[\text{introjected response}] + (3)[\text{integrated response}]$ ²⁴³. These values were also correlated with values of each domain to test the validity of the measure, then assessed with other variables from the household survey to understand the relationship of autonomy with analytical categories such as gender, age, education and deprivation level as well as decision-making ability. This discussion is featured in Chapter 6 (section 6.5).

3.8. FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Whilst I employed a variety of methods to triangulate results, there were some broad challenges I would like to outline which are relevant to the results of the thesis. Firstly, within the mixed methods paradigm, Onweuguzie and Johnson (2006) outline a framework of thinking about legitimisation of mixed methods research, and thus cross-

²⁴² Sabina Alkire, Adriana Conconi, and Jose Manual Roche, "Multidimensional Poverty Index 2013: Brief Methodological Note and Results," ed. Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (Oxford2013).

²⁴³ "Technical Notes on the Use of the Empowerment Module," ed. Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (http://www.ophi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Missing_Dimensions_Technical_Notes_Empowerment_Module.pdf?cda6c1 March 2013 [date accessed]).

checking the rigour of the methods used. I will address each of their criteria now. Firstly, what Onweuguzie and Johnson (2006) refer to as insider/outsider legitimisation relates to how well I analysed data with both emic and etic perspectives. This consideration has already been addressed above. Secondly, weakness minimisation legitimisation is about how well the research has been triangulated, which has also been discussed above. Thirdly, sequential legitimisation refers to how well the results I present here would still be presented if the sequential ordering of methods in my research were reversed (I used quantitative research which informed the qualitative research). Whilst this is difficult to predict, I will say that my arguments presented in this thesis would still be quite similar if the sequential ordering were reversed. The reversal would however lessen the detail and depth of my empirical work. This is because the qualitative work was essential in understanding the emic perspectives of purposeful agency and social processes affecting it. Fourthly, conversion legitimacy refers to how well quantitative and qualitative conversation techniques were employed, leading to interpretable data. On this point, I argue that my methods in interpreting my data, where I went back and forth between the quantitative and qualitative data to build on my arguments, were very helpful. This stopped me from getting too engulfed in both particular narratives and counts of occurrences²⁴⁴. Fifthly, paradigmatic legitimisation was addressed at the start of this chapter, where I explicitly stated the paradigmatic assumptions involved in the research and the nature of dialectic paradigms in mixed methods. Lastly, the multiple validities legitimisation, where all possible research realities are utilised, is inherently addressed within the mixed methods design, where I draw on strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods.

²⁴⁴ Onwuegbuzie and Johnson, "The Validity Issue in Mixed Research."

Further to these research considerations tied to the mixed methods paradigm, there are some other research considerations I would also like to explore. These include researcher positionality and reflexivity, language, latency of agency as a concept, informant bias, temporality of the study and the household survey.

3.8.1. RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY AND REFLEXIVITY

My embroilment in the field due to my past work there, coupled with being an ‘outsider’/ ‘insider’²⁴⁵ researching the site, meant that it was impossible for me to claim any form of separateness from the study site. I want to describe in more detail the nature of how I entered the field aided by my past work connections, but also how through the trajectory of my fieldwork these connections broke down. This freed me from a somewhat paternalistic ‘minder’ situation with those I was working with, leading to a situation where I could connect and interview many people beyond their influence.

My past work in Mali meant I had established networks I could utilise within Kalabankoro Nerekoro through the NGO Réseau de Développement et d’Appui aux Initiatives Communautaires (RDIC). This NGO was founded by a local elite man named Moussa Diarra²⁴⁶. He lived in Kalabankoro Kulaba (near Kalabankoro Nerekoro) but ran a private school in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. This private school was partially funded through an Australian NGO that I founded in 2004. Over the period of my research, Moussa’s positionality within the neighbourhood of Kalabankoro Nerekoro, and how

²⁴⁵ I was always different in the study site, but because people knew me as I had history of contributing to the neighbourhood, people also saw me as an outsider/insider.

²⁴⁶ Names have been changed to protect identities of those involved.

political and elite his work and role in the neighbourhood were, became clearer. He was a *courtier en développement*²⁴⁷, a development broker, using his positionality to field strategic support from my NGO for his own aspirations and personal *hèrè*, and in the process, excluding others, in many cases poorer and less well connected groups and individuals. These realisations forged the beginnings of the breakdown in the relationship between myself and Moussa, starting in the fieldwork and resulting in complete disintegration at the time of writing up my thesis. What this meant for the data I collected in the fieldwork had multiple facets. Initially my introductions to the research site were through his networks and into elite circles and narratives of development. As the relationship breakdown commenced, I departed from such circles to a more independent mode of research of making new connections with people in the neighbourhood. I was not seen with Moussa and his elite connections. Instead I drank tea with marginalised groups, took on a Malian name, travelled by foot, greeted people in Bambara, and changed my translator from an employee of the NGO RDIC to a young man, Abdulye Maiga, who was from a very poor household and trusted amongst many of the marginalised households. Whilst this experience was personally quite difficult, it allowed me to experience first-hand the power of elites in Kalabankoro Nerekoro and their role in brokerage between associations and international actors. I do not suggest that my mobility between experiences was smooth, where I moved immediately from one situation to the other. Instead I see the whole experience as shaping and emerging my own role as an actor within the research site. Therefore, claims of objectivity are

²⁴⁷ Chauveau, Olivier de Sardan, 2000 editors of the book *Courtiers en développement* which is a series of papers examining the different functions of brokers of development. Thomas Bierschenk, Jean-Pierre Chauveau, and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, *Courtiers en développement. Les villages africains en quête de projets* (Paris: APAD, 2000).

redundant. As Clifford Geertz (1973) says, “what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to.”²⁴⁸ Being part of the research landscape meant it was impossible to escape my personal embroilment and thus I used the whole experience as further data for my thesis.

Because of the background of previously working in Kalabankoro Nerekoro and because of the nature of being a *toubabou*²⁴⁹, as a researcher I entered the ‘field’ in differing roles in the eyes of the people I was working with. These roles included: an NGO worker in Mali, a woman, a young woman (28 years at the time of fieldwork), a coloniser, a white ‘European’ (although I am Australian) and a non-Muslim. The ambiguity of these roles and what this means to those being ‘researched’ cannot be assumed. My relationships varied in their impact – some aided my research and some did not, but this can be expected as “In general, relationships with the researched may be reciprocal, asymmetrical, or potentially exploitative; and the researcher can adopt a stance of intimidation, ingratiation, self-promotion, or supplication.”²⁵⁰ Thus I argue that these roles will have influenced the data and my role and the field can never be divorced. How this embroilment has influenced my data collection has worked in my favour in some aspects. This includes access to the study sites as I had worked there for the past five years and in this time built relationships with people sufficient for them to trust me to tell me their life stories and related feelings regarding membership in

²⁴⁸ Geertz, *From the Native's Point of view: On the Nature of Anthropological Understand*: 9.

²⁴⁹ Name given to describe white western people

²⁵⁰ Kim England, "Getting Personal: Reflexivity, Positionality, and Feminist Research," *The professional geographer* 46, no. 1 (1994): 243.,

associations and associated problems. Nonetheless, there was the potential that some of the responses were given to be ‘right’ in my eyes, more than reflecting what people actually felt. For example, Martin Bulmer and Donald Warwick (1993) argue that interviews are social situations in themselves and responses given are sometimes aimed to influence the interviewer. In an attempt to reduce this impact, my data collection included getting teams of researchers to do the household questionnaire instead of myself, providing options in the questionnaire so there was no particular option favoured and also undertaking a stability test for the household questionnaire. Whilst having the questionnaire team do the household survey instead of myself did not reduce the overall possibility that informants were influencing the interview team, I feel it was lessened by the interviewer not being me, as my ‘role’ (discussed earlier as a *toubabou*, NGO worker, white woman) in relation to the informants was more likely to create systematic influence than that of the survey teams²⁵¹. Also, in terms of validation of the results, returning to Mali a year after initial results were recorded to discuss the findings with the same and new people in the study sites also deepened the reliability of results through showing consistency in responses and also allowing myself time to analyse initial data and assumptions away from the field.

Specifically, being known as Moussa’s NGO partner had implications for my initial phases of fieldwork. On the one hand it provided me access to some people in the Kalabankoro Nerekoro neighbourhood that I just would not have had access to. The community development work in the area – not only being behind the development of

²⁵¹ See Martin Bulmer and Donald Warwick, *Social research in developing countries: survey and censuses in the Third World*. (University College London Press, 1993). Who have also argued the mitigating role of questionnaire teams.

the private school, but also starting various micro credit initiatives in the area for women and youth, in addition to a healthcare centre and a literacy training program for street children – gave me various roles. I was seen as an opportunity for some, a possibility of accessing funds. I was also someone to trust in that some *toubabous* are seen to extract from Mali, without ever giving back – because of my work, I was different. I had been introduced as Moussa's partner to many people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro but not everyone. The extent of what people knew about me before our conversations, I will never completely know.

Only after detaching myself from Moussa, and engaging in the community on my own terms, actively being seen in situations he would not be seen in, did I feel my identity shift. People became a lot more relaxed with me, inviting me to social activities and casually conversing with me on the streets. Still, the fact of being a white person or *toubabou* meant I was always seen differently. The proverb “A piece of wood can sit in the water many years, but it will not become a crocodile”²⁵² is very relevant in this case.

Nonetheless, I do not believe people said just what they thought I wanted to hear. I purposely built in some questions in my interviews and focus groups to see if informants were just agreeing to appease me. I did this by stating something ridiculous, against the line of discussion I was following. Every time, these comments were picked up and disagreed with. Also, on my return to Mali for a month in December 2011, when I asked people what they thought of the initial results I showed them, people had no

²⁵² Yiri be se ka sigi ji kono san chaman, nka a te se ka be ke bama ye. This is often used to describe Peace Corps Volunteers. They can stay in Mali a long time, but they will not become Malian. The same sentiment I felt was applied to me.

problem pointing out any faults or anything they disagreed with. For example, one woman from a visibly poor household I interviewed in my ‘double-checking’ fieldwork mission, after being shown the results of the household survey where people had said *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* were important, said “I agree with these people but they should have put in the first position: health. For, before doing anything, we have to make sure we are healthy. *Dusu* and the others are very important but they come after health. And anything depends on Allah’s will, because you may have *dusu* to do something, but you may be unhealthy and if God did not give you the luck to do it, you would not get what you want.”²⁵³

3.8.2. DEMARCATING AREAS FOR POSSIBLE DEFINITIONS AND LANGUAGE

Whilst I spent significant time before and during my fieldwork to improve my French and Bambara language skills, neither was good enough to interview and conduct the wider focus of my research alone. I therefore had an interpreter with me at all times during my interviews, focus groups, attendance at events, and informal conversations with people as I went about my day-to-day activities living in the neighbourhood. Without speaking the language fluently, I can never expect to understand the full context of the terms and processes I am studying. However, lacking such context also gives me an etic perspective in the analysis of the data; my analysis still includes a degree of scepticism, as well as removal of the personal and potentially biased anecdotes of growing up within a culture²⁵⁴.

²⁵³ Female Interview 1, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 17th November 2011

²⁵⁴ See John Monaghan and Peter Just, *Social and Cultural Anthropology: a very short introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2000); Matthew Miles and Micheal Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis* (Sage, 1994).

Further still, it is quite within reason that absolute meanings could have been lost in translation where I have tried to articulate the inductive definitions of terms that have emerged in my research. To not fall into a trap of colonising intricate meanings from the Kalabankoro Nerekoro landscape, I am not claiming any absolute definition of any term I use in this research. Nor is it the purpose of this thesis to do so. Instead I am only carving out a space in which the actual definition would be situated. Like a road sign, I am pointing to a space to where one would find the absolute definition if desired. However, even if losing meaning in translation was not an issue, I would caution against the pursuit of absolute definitions. I argue, like Lacan²⁵⁵, that the quest to find an absolute definition would possibly be an infinite task as exact meanings of terms vary between people and always will as language, like all structures, changes through time and space. Nonetheless, demarcating a space whilst acknowledging the inherent vagueness is better than being precise and wrong. As Sen argues, “if an underlying idea has an essential ambiguity, a precise formulation of that idea must try to capture that ambiguity rather than attempt to lose it...In social investigation and measurement, it is undoubtedly more important to be vaguely right than to be precisely wrong.”²⁵⁶ Interestingly, when I relaxed the desire for absoluteness, there emerged some uniformity – a baseline at least of understanding among people within Kalabankoro Nerekoro of concepts central to this research. I present the synthesis of the concepts of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* in Chapter 5, not in a bid to eliminate contestation, but to first present them as they are unique. In the chapters that follow I will then discuss the nuances.

²⁵⁵ Jacques Lacan, "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason Since Freud. ," in *Écrits: a Selection*. (Tavistock, 1977).

²⁵⁶ Amartya Sen, "Development as capability expansion," in *Readings in Human Development*, ed. Fukada-Parr S and Kumar A (Oxford University Press, 2003), 5-6.

Interviews, focus groups and informal discussions were carried out in both Bambara and French with the preference left to the interviewee. Often conversations were a mix of the two. Nonetheless, when conversations and interviews began to focus on personal lives or factors relating to people's agency such as *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, people preferred to talk in Bambara. As one male school teacher from Kalabankoro Nerekoro articulated in his interview, "The person speaking Bambara could be more accurate than the person speaking in French. Because such words [we were talking about *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* at this point of the interview] have accurate meaning in Bambara, but when you want to talk about them in French, it is a little bit vague."²⁵⁷ When I pushed this man to see if he was willing to talk about such concepts in French, his reply signalled his closeness to and preference for the Bambara language concepts. "I can use them in French, but Bambara is the best, because we could talk more accurately in Bambara than in French. For most of my friends can speak Bambara very well but cannot speak French the same. And Bambara is our national language and it is a language we will better understand each other in."²⁵⁸ Because of the familiarity and comfort people felt using the Bambara language when discussing concepts of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, I chose to describe them in my thesis under their Bambara names. Only very rarely were they talked about with the use of the French language.

²⁵⁷ Male Interviewee 2, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 18th November 2011

²⁵⁸ Male Interviewee 2, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 18th November 2011

3.8.3. *DUSU* AND *KA DA I YÈRÈ LA* AS LATENT CONCEPTS

Agency is also difficult to research because of its latent nature in day-to-day life. There are various occasions in my empirical chapters, especially in Chapter 5, where I comment that the difficulty of engaging in conversations around *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* was not due to them being irrelevant to people's lives; in fact it is the opposite. It is precisely because of the centrality of agency in the day-to-day lives that informants sometimes found the concepts hard to acknowledge. For example, one male interviewee said to me at the end of one of our sessions "I am very happy for your visit today because it has helped me to express what I always think."²⁵⁹ Drawing on Alfred Shutz, the social anthropologist Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan (1992) argues a similar point regarding African magic and mysterious realms. Here Olivier de Sardan (1992) shows how societies have a 'natural attitude' towards specific concepts, interpretations and discourse that exist on a level of 'what goes without saying'; they are integral to daily life. Opposed to this 'natural attitude' are finite provinces of meaning,' which are, according to Shutz, "interposed in the routine flow of the natural attitude and, to some extent, act in opposition to it"²⁶⁰. Olivier de Sardan (1992) argues that it is within these 'provinces of meaning' that magic and the mysterious realm in African anthropology lie. He argues that this placement in the anthropologist's analysis does not represent the reality of where magic and the mysterious are located in the natural attitudes of people's lives²⁶¹. In a similar vein I argue that psychological agency is part of the natural attitude and thus can sometimes appear invisible, hidden or even irrelevant, but it is because it is

²⁵⁹ Male Interview, 13th February 2011, Kalabankoro Nerekoro

²⁶⁰ Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, "The exoticizing of magic from Durkheim to 'postmodern' anthropology," *Critique of Anthropology* 12, no. 1 (1992): 11.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

part of the day-to-day that this is the case, not because it is an interposed concept alien to people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro.

3.8.4. TEMPORALITY AND AGENCY SNAPSHOTS

Agency has a temporal element where it is informed by the past, oriented toward the future and in the present²⁶². Agency is a process and in any given moment is changing between that moment and the next. Thus, as this study is looking at purposeful agency at one particular moment in time, conclusions can only be taken as a snapshot. Further research would benefit my research by providing rigour to my findings. It would provide a further examination of purposeful agency in different time periods. Nonetheless, my return to the study site a year after initial data collection and the stability test of the household questionnaire help triangulate the snapshot I am presenting in this thesis across time.

3.8.5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Before entering the field, my research plans were approved by Oxford's Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC). Nonetheless, the very nature of field research requires an explanation of ethics involved. I was asking for people to give not only their time to my work but also their personal stories and thoughts towards my research. People felt like the life interviews and focus groups the questions were very inspiring and gave them a lot to think about – that the research process was in a way building efficacy itself. For example, a powerful sentiment expressed in the girls' focus group showed how this was the case: "Such talks [like this] are really important for us

²⁶² Emirbabyer and Mische, "What is Agency?," 963.

because it helps us to not forget some stuff. We are really grateful for today.”²⁶³ Also, a wealthy male interviewee I visited who gave me his life story commented, “I am very happy for your visit today because it has helped me to express what I always think. Where ever I go I always teach this lesson to people [the importance of *ka da I yèrè la*]. When I go to the village I sit with the farmers. I eat with them, joke with them, we chat, we sit down together.”²⁶⁴

Verbal consent was sought at the beginning of every interview, focus group, key informant interview and household survey. Specifically, the purpose of the statement was clarified and I always allowed time for questions and discussion before the formality of the interaction began. If the interview/focus group was recorded, this was done with the permission of all of those involved. The line between informed consent became blurry regarding participant observation where my day-to-day life with people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro became a part of my data collection²⁶⁵. It was not always explicit to people who I interacted with that I was always collecting data, even though they knew I was a researcher. K. Wilson (1992) argues there are different spaces in which one can carry out participant observation²⁶⁶ – the difference between public and private space is a particularly important point to acknowledge. Those I interacted with in the private space, i.e. within homes, all knew I was in the neighbourhood doing research. An example is how in the evening when I would visit households to discuss the day’s events, the topics would shift between what they thought I should include in

²⁶³ Young women’s Focus Group, Kalabankoro Nerekoro 24th January 2011

²⁶⁴ Male Interviewee, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 13th February 2011

²⁶⁵ Robert Emerson, Racheal Fretz, and Linda Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (The University of Chicago Press, 1995).

²⁶⁶ K. Wilson, "Thinking out ethics in Fieldwork," in *Fieldwork in developing countries*, ed. Stephen Devereux and John Hoddinott (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992).

my research, then switch back to their personal events, where they would again draw out from that what I should include in my write-up. As argued by Abby Hargrove (2012) in her research with ex-combatants in Liberia, reporting on actions in the public space seems to raise fewer ethical concerns²⁶⁷. Although people would not all know I was there as a researcher and recording data, I felt that because they were acting publicly, in that others would always see them, no significant ethical concern could be drawn from such observations. All individuals quoted in this research have had their names changed for anonymity.

I also found it important to give back to Kalabankoro Nerekoro and Mali for being part of my fieldwork. After all my fieldwork was complete, I was able to mobilise support to grant some women in an association I interviewed small loans to begin income-generating activities. I also mobilised support for my research assistant to start his honours course in Development Studies at Rhodes University in South Africa. Before he left for his studies, he was given a job at RDIC, where he was able to voice and operationalise development issues and projects he had previously been unable to. Both of these initiatives were actioned well after I completed my second trip to Mali in late 2011, making sure they did not distort my research²⁶⁸.

²⁶⁷ Abby Hargrove, "Life after Guns: The Life Chances and Trajectories of Ex-Combatant and other Post-War Youth in Monrovia, Liberia" (University of Oxford, 2012).

²⁶⁸ Specifically, funds for women's income generating activities were granted in mid 2012. Abdulye my research assistant was employed by RDIC early 2012 and went to Rhodes University for his honours degree February 2013- November 2013.

3.9. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have argued for the importance of a mixed methods approach to studying purposeful agency in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. I then described the methods used in the fieldwork of the thesis – split over three time periods totalling seven months. I employed both qualitative and quantitative methods to extract the data for my fieldwork. This included 25 mini-life interviews, four focus groups, 20 key informant interviews, observation and a sample of 307 households. After completing an analysis of my initial fieldwork, I returned to Mali for additional fieldwork and double-checking of my initial results.

The second part of the chapter discussed challenges of the research methods, which included reflexivity of the researcher, the nature of studying agency, language considerations, ethical considerations and a discussion regarding the use of the household questionnaire.

No research methods are perfect, but the triangulation of mixed methods is the strength of the thesis.

CHAPTER 4:

THE STUDY SITE OF KALABANKORO NEREKORO

Kokoro te ko tijne, kokura be ko tinj – “The old ways do not spoil anything, while the new products spoil everything”²⁶⁹

Every day people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro act to enhance their personal, family and/or community *hèrè*. This was the most noticeable set of observations I made during my fieldwork in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. People are purposeful in their actions because they are following their aspirations: to get a job, to have a house, to get a good harvest, to have a healthy family, to have their children educated. As Arjun Appadurai argued in 2004, capacity to aspire is essential to people, especially the poor. As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, aspirations feed into the grander vision of the ‘good life’ or *hèrè* in Bambara. This thesis aims to analyse elements central to purposeful agency for people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro.

As a site of major urbanisation, Kalabankoro Nerekoro is of particular interest for studying purposeful agency as social processes are dynamic. Kenneth Little (1972) furthers this point in his analysis of associations in the context of the expanding urbanisation across West Africa, arguing “Many major changes occurring in West

²⁶⁹ Bambara Proverb

Africa can be most readily understood in terms of the urbanization process.”²⁷⁰ Little describes urbanisation as having an impact on the lives of people because of “the appearance of the embryonic class system, based mainly on socio-economic differences. Ethnic and kinship ties and loyalties still have considerable significance; but political position, occupation, income and education are, nowadays, all very relevant criteria in the determination of individual status.”²⁷¹ My aim here is not to take up the analysis of urbanisation further as this thesis is not one about the dynamics of the state, market and other macro institutions and how these processes affect the urban fringe. Nonetheless, I mention Little’s observations as his remarks create an important backdrop when thinking about the significance of a study site on the urban fringe; a dynamic social space being constantly shaped by myriad factors at macro, meso and micro levels. The scope of this thesis includes an analysis of the micro level of social processes relating to the self, but not beyond; I only draw on meso and macro factors to show their impact on micro social processes.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the study site of Kalabankoro Nerekoro. I do this firstly through describing the geographic and historical elements of the study site. Secondly, I give a description of the local economy of Kalabankoro Nerekoro. Thirdly, I discuss the categories of analysis I use within this thesis that emerged from my fieldwork as being related to individual purposeful agency in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. These categories are socio-economic in nature and include education level, gender, age and deprivation level – where deprivation is measured as multidimensional poverty (an

²⁷⁰ Kenneth Little, "Voluntary Associations and social mobility among West African Women," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 6, no. 2 (1972): 275.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

index which includes measures of health, education and living standards) within the population of Kalabankoro Nerekoro. Whilst these socio-economic categories condition purposeful agency, they did not determine it, which is the major difference between these categories and *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*.

However, I will begin with a description of the Malian state, including the two national policies of structural adjustment and decentralisation, which provide a backdrop to processes effecting opportunities available to agents in Kalabankoro Nerekoro today.

4.1. THE MALIAN STATE

The modern Malian state obtained its independence from French colonial rule in 1960. The newly independent nation, led by the popular Modibo Keita, tried to build a positive national identity. With the help of the French, Keita was overthrown by the dictator Moussa Traore in 1968. Mali suffered greatly under the long reign of Moussa Traore and social development all but ceased. It was not until 1991 that Lt-Colonel Amadou Toumani Toure (ATT) staged a coup d'état with the support of the national military and arrested Moussa Traore, initiating the process of democratisation. This movement included ATT overseeing the democratic election of Alpha Oumar Konare as president in 1998. Then, in 2002, ATT found himself back in office, this time being democratically elected in the national elections; from that moment, ATT stayed in office until the coup d'état of 21 March 2012. Two important and contentious policies implemented since the 1980s are significant as part of the backdrop to my research,

namely structural adjustment policies (SAPs) and decentralisation²⁷². The impact of decentralisation and legacy of SAPs have arguably contributed to Mali being a more unequal and stratified society, as well as impacting the outcomes of individual and collective purposeful agency in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. Specifically, SAP's fostered the economic enhancement of the middle class and elite around Bamako enabling upwards economic mobility. Many of these strata moved to Kalabankoro Nerekoro in search of a better life and away from the dust and pollution of Bamako. While at the same time, SAP's disadvantaged rural farming communities forcing them to move to the urban fringe of Bamako in search of informal labour (I interviewed such people) – these processes fostered under SAP were cited in my qualitative data as contributing to the stratification observed in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. Also cited in my qualitative data was how decentralisation has cut Kalabankoro Nerekoro off administratively from Bamako. Yet Kalabankoro Nerekoro still has thick economic and social ties to Bamako. This makes an uneasy disconnect between imposed governance and management structures and the reality of the intertwined economic and social existence. Further still decentralisation has added extra management levels in the handing down of State funds for community development projects (generally carried out by associations). Because of the nepotism at all levels of administration, and the stratification of associations in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, very little gets to those at the end of the chain, which are generally the most vulnerable (explored more in Chapter 7 section 7.4).

²⁷² My fieldwork was carried out before the March 2012 coup d'état. With the gift of hindsight, one could argue that the State policies implemented denying Tuareg political independence also are an important backdrop to studies of Mali. However at the time of fieldwork, the events that followed March 2012 were impossible to predict, and thus, this study will focus on what was evident at the time of fieldwork. I will make some remarks in my concluding chapter about the implications of my research for the fragile State Mali has now become in 2013 and beyond.

Whilst I would not claim that decentralisation and SAPs are the only State policies implemented by the state effecting purposeful agency, they were the most cited by informants in my mini-life story interviews, focus groups and key informant interviews as State policies indirectly and directly impacting purposeful agency. I will discuss both of these policies now.

4.1.1. STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT

The neoliberal policies of structural adjustment imposed on Mali in the 1980s under the instructions of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were crippling not just for the economy but for the social development of the country²⁷³. Specifically, Mohamed Marouani and Marc Raffinot (2004) recorded 48 different policies implemented by the IMF and World Bank in Mali between 1982 and 1996, promoting a focus on fiscal deficit, monetary policy, trade liberalisation and privatisation of state assets²⁷⁴. The legacies of these policies continued to the time of my fieldwork in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, when it was still evident how they added to the growing unemployment and rising inequality experienced by people, especially the poor²⁷⁵.

²⁷³ Bratton, Coulibaly, and Machado, "Popular Views of the legitimacy of the state in Mali," John Nellis and Sunita Kikeri, "Public enterprise reform: Privatization and the World Bank," *World Development* 17, no. 5 (1989); William Easterly, "What did structural adjustment adjust?: The association of policies and growth with repeated IMF and World Bank adjustment loans," *Journal of Development Economics* 76, no. 1 (2005); J. Brunet-Jailly, "L'djustement macroéconomique Mali et le secteur de la santé au Mali," in *Environnement Mactro-economique et santé: avec etudes de cas dans les pays les plus demunis*, ed. World Health Organisation (1992); Jeffrey Herbst, "The structural adjustment of politics in Africa," *World Development* 18, no. 7 (1990).

²⁷⁴ Mohamed Marouani and Marc Raffinot, "Perspectives on growth and poverty reduction in Mali," in *Document de travail*, ed. Unite de Recherché CIPRE (Institute de recherché pour le développement, Paris, 2004).

²⁷⁵ William Moseley, Judith Carney, and Laurence Becker, "Neoliberal policy, rural livelihoods, and urban food security in West Africa: A comparative study of The Gambia, Cote D'Ivoire and Mali," *PNAS* 107, no. 13 (2010).

Specifically, since the 1980s, with the introduction of the initial SAPs primarily focused on fiscal deficit, the market as an institution continued to widely fail the majority of Mali's population because it was not supplemented by appropriate social investments and policies²⁷⁶. Instead, these policies included multiple government reforms, meant to encourage Mali to move toward a more "liberal" economy with market-oriented economic policies, more efficient use of prices, and greater openness to international trade²⁷⁷. Structural adjustment not only sought to develop private-sector markets; it also recklessly dismantled the social policies of the state, which had been put in place at the initiative of the post-independence socialist government of Modibo Keita²⁷⁸. Specifically, John Nellis (1986) argues that, because of the SAPs implemented in Mali, cumulative public enterprise losses were a significant proportion of the economy by the mid-1980s²⁷⁹. The impact of these policies on the state intensified, as high levels of taxation on profits and government requirements to transfer a large portion of post-tax profits to its budget led to reduced funds for reinvestment.

Further still, Claudia Buchmann (1996) found that SAPs severely impacted the social development of the marginalised in Mali. For example, women experienced reduced access to education, healthcare, and income-generating activities and an increase in their

²⁷⁶ Ismail Ahmed and Michael Lipton, "Impact of Structural Adjustment on Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: A review of literature," *IDS Working Paper* 62(1997); Marouani and Raffinot, "Perspectives on growth and poverty reduction in Mali."

²⁷⁷ Dolores Koenig and Tieman Diarra, "The Environmental Effects of Policy Change in the West African Savannah: Resettlement, Structural Adjustment and Conservation in Western Mali," *Journal of Political Economy* 5(1998)., Easterly, "What did structural adjustment adjust?: The association of policies and growth with repeated IMF and World Bank adjustment loans."

²⁷⁸ Herbst, "The structural adjustment of politics in Africa."

²⁷⁹ John Nellis, "Public Enterprises in Sub Saharan Africa," ed. World Bank Discussion Paper (1986).

children's mortality rates²⁸⁰. Although international aid from predominantly Western countries (although also China and India) has tried to right the wrongs of structural adjustment, social and economic inequality remains. Mali is still one of the poorest countries in the world with extremely low literacy rates and life expectancy, high infant mortality rates and low economic growth. Whilst we cannot assign all the blame on inequality in Mali to the SAPs, we can understand that these policies have changed the wiring of the Malian economy dramatically, and destabilising production and labour in the process²⁸¹. The penetration of the modern market economy erodes social relations regarding production and exchange²⁸². Closer to Bamako, the impact of the 'opening up of Mali to the global economy' can be seen in the deepening gap of inequality between the middle class around cities and rural Mali. The inequality can be seen starkly on the urban fringes like Kalabankoro Nerekoro.

4.1.2. DECENTRALISATION

The policies of decentralisation were another set of initiatives that had big promises for Mali and yet arguably provided little return²⁸³. Decentralisation was a significant undertaking from its inception, as it marked a break "with a legacy of hierarchical and centralised governance inherited from ancient kingdoms, French colonial administration

²⁸⁰ Claudia Buchmann, "The Debt Crisis, Structural Adjustment and Women's Education: Implications for status and social development," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 37, no. 1 (1996).

²⁸¹ Moseley, Carney, and Becker, "Neoliberal policy, rural livelihoods, and urban food security in West Africa: A comparative study of The Gambia, Cote D'Ivoire and Mali." Koenig and Diarra, "The Environmental Effects of Policy Change in the West African Savannah: Resettlement, Structural Adjustment and Conservation in Western Mali.",

²⁸² Rajni Bakshi, *Bazaars, conversations and freedom: for a market culture beyond greed and fear* (Penguin books, 2009). Maurice Bloch and Jonny Parry, *Money and the morality of exchange* (Cambridge University Press, 1989).

²⁸³ In the case of Mali, this means the local administration level of the commune and sub-district level.

and, after independent in 1960, military and one-party regimes.”²⁸⁴ Indeed, with the population recovering from the dictatorship of Moussa Traore, there was an expectation this heralded a significant step towards a ‘pluralist democracy’²⁸⁵.

The policies of decentralisation were put in motion primarily to ensure the “attribution of powers to other public bodies beyond the centralised state.”²⁸⁶ Despite having a straightforward definition (although decentralisation can be confused with concentration where powers are still exercised by the central state but geographically dispersed²⁸⁷), there are many areas in which decentralisation has not been so straightforward and has been detrimental to development and social relations. For example, Brehima Kassibo (1997) shows how local elected representatives struggle with governance expectations because of their low literacy in democracy processes. The difficulty is not just language but also how central and donor authorities expect democracy to be administered at a local level, thus accentuating the dominant power of bureaucratic elites²⁸⁸. Moussa Djire (2004) argues that local authorities’ efforts are hampered also because of the lack of access to funds to consolidate legitimacy through implementing development initiatives. Djire also shows through empirical research in the village of Sanankoroba, south of Bamako, how decentralisation through the validation of administration over customary institutions upset the balance of power at a local level, especially regarding land rights. At a more general level, Amadi Coulibaly and Thea Hilhorst (2004) show how the

²⁸⁴ Bratton, Coulibaly, and Machado, "Popular Views of the legitimacy of the state in Mali," 198.

²⁸⁵ Brehima Kassibo, "Decentralisation in Mali: Taking stock," Bulletin of the APAD, <http://apad.revues.org/579>.

²⁸⁶ Karin Nijenhuis, "Does Decentralisation Serve Everyone? The struggle for power in a Malian Village," *The European Journal of Development Research* 15, no. 2 (2003): 67.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Kassibo, "Decentralisation in Mali: Taking stock".

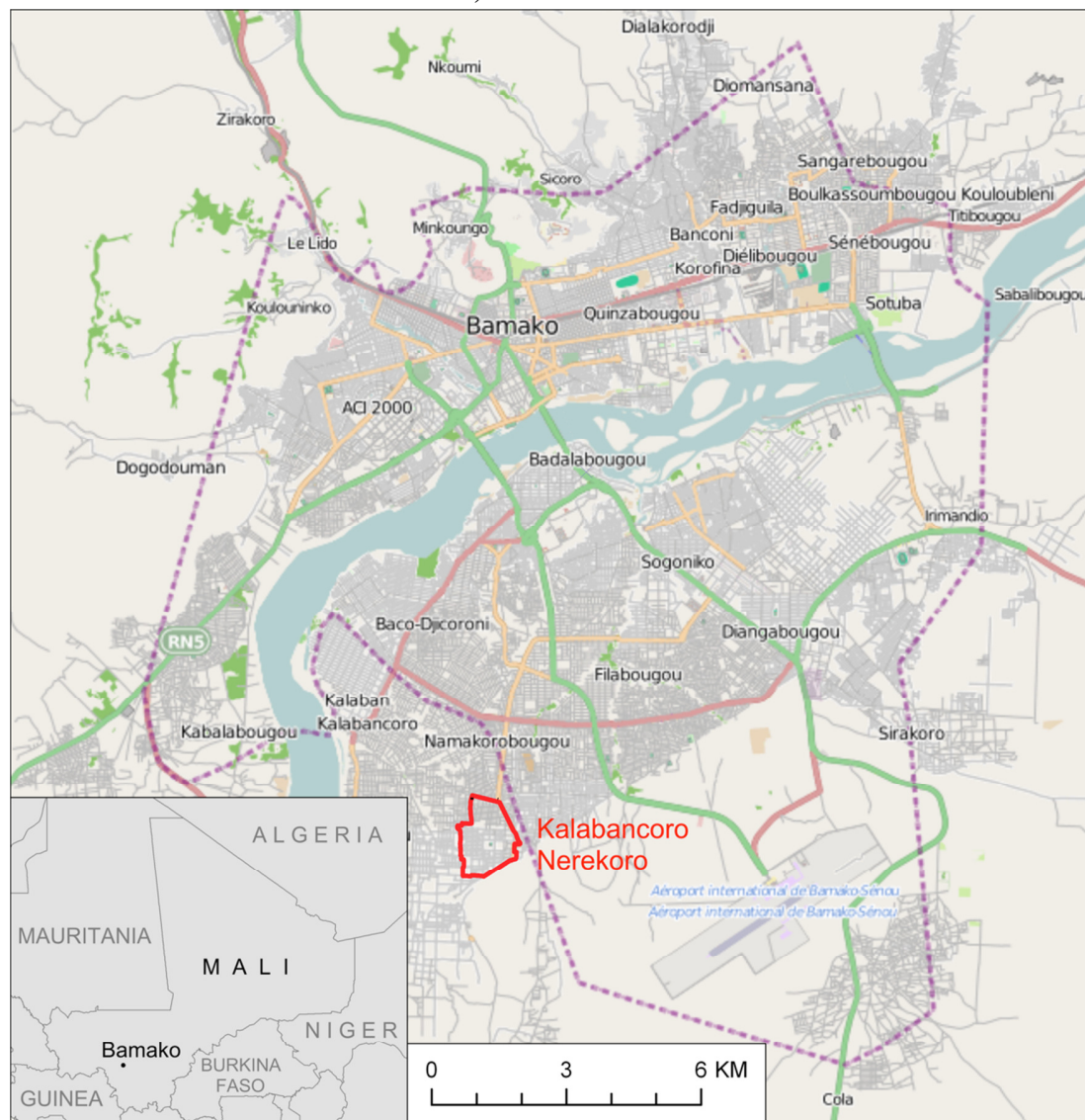
pressure exercised on local authorities under decentralisation eroded traditional authority, causing tension between the two forms of local power²⁸⁹. I found evidence of these effects of decentralisation in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, especially administration disconnect (discussed below) and a lack of access to funds to implement development initiatives by local government and community groups, something I explore further in relation to the thwarting the purposeful agency of poor members and poor associations in Chapter 7 (section 7.4).

4.2. THE STUDY SITE – KALABANKORO NEREKORO

Kalabankoro Nerekoro is situated on the urban fringe of Bamako – that is, approximately 10km away (see Map 1). The proximity to the capital city means that social and economic relations in Kalabankoro Nerekoro are permeable and interlinked with those of Bamako.

²⁸⁹ Amadi Coulibaly and Thea Hilorst, "Implementing decentralisation in Mali: The experiences of two rural municipalities in southern Mali," (International Institute for Environment and Development, 2004).

MAP 1 – KALABANKORO NEREKORO IN RELATION TO BAMAKO AND MALI AS A WHOLE (SOURCE, AUTHOR’S RECREATION OF IMAGE AVAILABLE ON GOOGLE MAPS ACCESSED 13TH AUGUST 2013)



In Map 1, the purple dotted line shows the administration line of the city Bamako. This line was drawn from the introduction of decentralisation policies, which cuts Kalabankoro Nerekoro and the whole commune of Kalabankoro off from being administratively linked to Bamako, despite its close proximity. The administration of the neighbourhood falls under the administration of Kati – a rural town several

kilometres north of the central city of Bamako. This means Kalabankoro Nerekoro is still treated as a rural *cercle*, meaning jurisdiction is related to the regional body of Koulikoro and not the city of Bamako, with which it is more aligned politically, socially and economically²⁹⁰. This creates an uneasy disconnect between imposed governance and management structures and the reality of the intertwined economic and social existence of Kalabankoro Nerekoro with the city of Bamako. Secondly, and related to the previous point, the decentralisation away from Bamako means people and associations in Kalabankoro Nerekoro can be subject to the same insufficiency of bureaucracy of other rural regions of Mali, where funds promised for social projects never make it to local levels. In my fieldwork, I found through the attendance of meetings at the town hall and key informant interviews that the small amount of funds available for ‘civil society’, of which associations are a part, was only made available to ‘formal associations.’ Formal associations, by definition, are representative of the non-marginalised groups because of the requirement for capital and connections to register and thus formalise an association. This creates great difficulty for poorer associations to access opportunities and thus potentially thwart efforts of their purposeful agency. Both of these points will be discussed further in Chapter 7 (section 7.1.1.); however, it is important to outline the institutional failures of decentralisation as a background to the hardship faced by individual and collective agents in Kalabankoro Nerekoro.

²⁹⁰ Mali is divided into 8 *régions* and one capital district (Bamako); each of the 8 *régions* are subdivided into 49 *cercles*. A *cercle* is thus the second level administrative unit in Mali and Kalabankoro Nerekoro falls under the Kati *cercle* of the region of Koulikoro.

Kalabankoro Nerekoro, with a size of 1,665 square km, is characterised as a complex neighbourhood of 423 households, at least 2,576 people²⁹¹, with many different actors and diverse economic opportunities. From Table 2, we can see descriptive statistics of socio-economic characteristics (each to be further expanded upon later in this chapter) of people taking part in my household survey (one informant per household). This is the most comprehensive set of descriptive statistics I can present as I could not locate any census data for the whole population of Kalabankoro Nerekoro.

TABLE 2 – DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF INFORMANTS

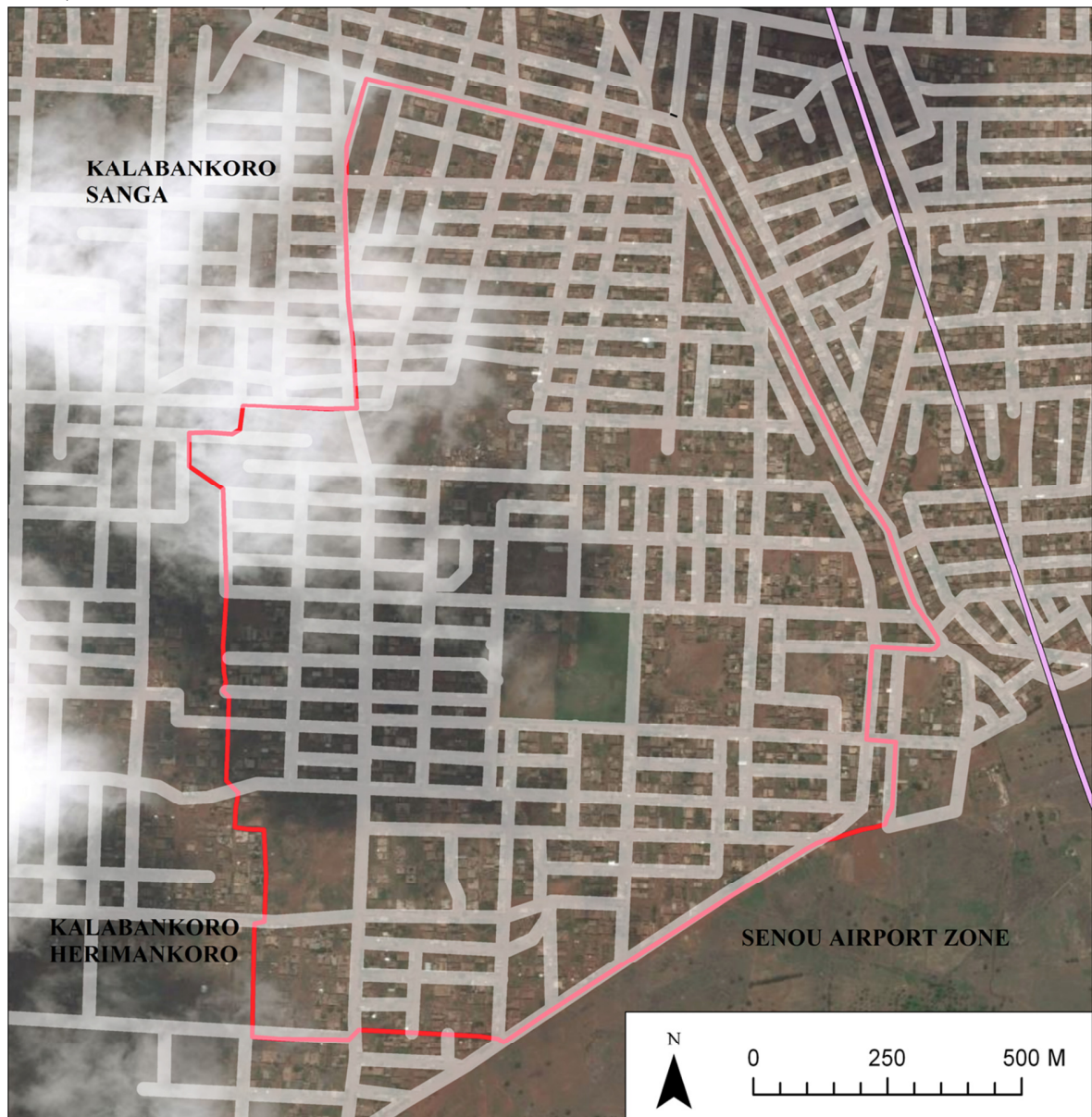
Data	Full neighbourhood
Total sample size	307/423 ²⁹²
Male informants	55%
Female informants	46%
MPI Poor households	71%
Income poor households	73%
Informant have 5 or less years of schooling	70%
Mean Age (years)	40.91
Age Range (years)	15-74

²⁹¹ This number is a conservative estimate. In the household survey I asked the respondent, how many people lived in the household. 2,543 people were the sum of these responses. However 33 respondents did not record a number of occupants and so I added an extra 33 (at least) to the total.

²⁹² 423 households in total in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 99 refused to be surveyed and another 17 informants stopped the interview after the introduction, leaving the sample size to 307 households.

Kalabankoro Nerekoro is neighboured by Kalabankoro Sanga to the north/west and Kalabankoro Herimankoro to the west. To the southeast is the airport zone that the state has restricted building in to buffer the Bamako Senou airport from the urban sprawl. Nonetheless the buffer zone is informally used as a makeshift rubbish dump and also a place where herdsmen from Kalabankoro Nerekoro and other areas graze their animals.

MAP 2 – EXACT STUDY AREA OF KALABANKORO NEREKORO (SOURCE, AUTHOR’S RECREATION OF IMAGE AVAILABLE ON GOOGLE MAPS ACCESSED 13TH AUGUST 2013)



Map 2 shows the area of Kalabankoro Nerekoro used in this study superimposed over a satellite image of the area. The white lines in this map are actual roads that transverse the neighbourhood. To locate the exact boundaries of the neighbourhood, I first created a map on foot whilst walking along the borders. On each road is a sign bearing the name of the neighbourhood and this is how I could distinguish Kalabankoro Nerekoro from

other neighbourhoods of Kalabankoro. For some parts of the exercise there was no road sign and so I walked in a straight line between my last certain point to the next. For this reason, the exact area I have demarcated as Kalabankoro Nerekoro may be different from official maps (if there are any). This is particularly true for the northern boundary as the road signs were more sporadic here than anywhere else along the boundaries. I did try to locate official maps from the Kalabankoro town hall; however, the mayor informed me that maps were limited and showed me what the town hall had – mine seemed a little more exact and more current.

4.3. A BRIEF HISTORY OF KALABANKORO NEREKORO

For two-and-a-half centuries before French colonisation, in the area of Kalabankoro (in which Kalabankoro Nerekoro is a neighbourhood), the Bambara clan of the Traore thrived. Most of these village people were found not in the current site of Kalabankoro Nerekoro but closer to the river near the village of Chibani. Kalabankoro Nerekoro thus was the ‘bush’ used for sporadic farming and hunting. Occasionally merchants of other groups would pass through and the rulers of the area would impose a tax on these merchants²⁹³. In 1883, French colonists took over Bamako and made use of the existing power structures to rule over indigenous populations. Traditional chiefs thus became *chefs de cantons* in the colonial administration. When certain traditional chiefs were reluctant to assist the colonial administration, these individuals were replaced with more willing individuals, aiding the expansion of the colonial empire. The assimilation style

²⁹³ Yacouba Konate, "Household income and agricultural strategies in the peri-urban zone of Bamako, Mali" (State University of New York at Binghamton, 1994).

of French colonisation assisted the administration in furthering French interests and power over local populations²⁹⁴.

Kalabankoro Nerekoro began to change form from 'bush' to the urban fringe it is today from around 1980. This was when the Malian government parcelled fields of land out to ex-government officials and military. This was a hugely controversial activity as it marked the change of land ownership systems, from communal land to private lots, signified by the transition from traditional management to state intervention²⁹⁵. This beginning of urbanisation is well remembered by those in Kalabankoro who have seen the growth of the area. The traditional chief of Kalabankoro Kulaba²⁹⁶, the only chief of all the neighbourhoods including Kalabankoro Nerekoro who has traditional authority to speak about the history of the area²⁹⁷, recalls:

When we moved to the area in 1981 there were only three families here. There were only bush between me and where the big market is now. At this moment, I was getting more food. At this moment I could get more than 100 bags of millet and maize and the land was really good. There were no markets here, nothing. Where the marketplace is now there was only one man who was selling small tables, with sugar and tea and cigarettes. It was the same guy who made the bricks for my house here.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Kalabankoro Kulaba is a neighbourhood of Kalabankoro to the south of Kalabankoro Nerekoro. It does not border with Kalabankoro Nerekoro as the small neighbourhood Kalabankoro Sanga lies between.

²⁹⁷ The chief of Kalabankoro Kulaba is the only chief authorised as he is the only chief related by blood to kinship lines. All the other traditional chiefs were asked to become chiefs when there was no individual from the traditional lineage of chiefs. Therefore the Kalabankoro Kulaba chief is the only one authorized to speak. I was sent to him by the chief of Kalabankoro Nerekoro.

*There was a small village here with just a very few families. No Nerekoro, no Sanga, no Kulaba, so all of this came recently.*²⁹⁸

When describing the sparse farming villages, the chief talks about *soforo*, meaning ‘home fields.’ As shown by Amadou Konare (1994), these home fields were remote and basic villages set up to service fields far from the village centre. Farmers and their families would stay for periods of time to cultivate these lands and then return to the main village. In the 1980s under the SAP framework, these fields began to be transformed into house lots. This was a period of state repression of the people of Kalabankoro as they were farming people; however, with the transformation of land into smaller lots, they lost a lot of their productive means. What followed was an intensification of farming in Kalabankoro Nerekoro and the wider Kalabankoro, with the use of fertilisers and variation of crops to ensure there was produce grown all year round. However, as the urban expansion continued, most farming households turned to other sources of income. Animal rearing became difficult also because of the land shortage and vegetation depletion. Most people could not afford to supplement their animals’ diets and livestock ownership became an enterprise for civil servants and entrepreneurs. The size of households in the area also began to decrease during this time as large households were hard to maintain without means of production and so they split into smaller male headed²⁹⁹ households in order to sustain themselves.

²⁹⁸ Male Interview, Kalabankoro Kulaba, 11th February 2011

²⁹⁹ Larger households would have a chief of the family, usually a male, however as there were other men in the household (usually brothers or cousins of the chief with their own wives and children), these groups would split from the chief and form their own household for financial independence.

In this period of the 1980s, it was not only migrants from Bamako who settled in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. Labourers from rural villages in other regions of Mali also came to the area looking for seasonal work. Konare (1994) suggests a useful categorisation of the migrant population. The first category is made up of the migrant households headed by males or females who spent their initial years outside of Kalabankoro and then joined the settlement. These include civil servants and ex-military personnel who were given plots by the state, but also others including families moving from other regions of Mali to be closer to Bamako on a permanent basis. The second group consists of labour migrants, who were the people who travelled to the area for a limited amount of time to earn cash and then return to their villages. These two groups are not static as labour migrants have the potential to become non-labour migrants if they decide to stay in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. Certainly a lot of my life story interviews showed how people had come to Kalabankoro Nerekoro for seasonal work but had decided to stay.

4.4. THE LOCAL ECONOMY OF KALABANKORO NEREKORO

I now want to paint a picture of the local economy of Kalabankoro Nerekoro as it will help in the following analysis by illustrating the inequality and stratification embedded within the social landscape of actors. The close proximity to Bamako means the local economy of Kalabankoro Nerekoro is inherently connected not just to the city of Bamako but also to the other 11 neighbourhoods of Kalabankoro. The urban sprawl that characterises Kalabankoro makes demarcations between the neighbourhoods and city space unclear in parts and residents regularly move between these spaces for economic and social reasons. The following description comes from observations while living in

the neighbourhood, as well as from life stories and key informant interviews. I have included pictures in the below description to further depict the neighbourhood.

Primary production is limited in Nerekoro and synonymous with poor households. A small number of people raise animals and are generally Fulani, who have a small group of cattle, sheep and goats they herd throughout the neighbourhood, grazing on patches of fodder and in the airport zone. Image 1 shows cattle being led back to their pens after a day grazing in the airport zone.

IMAGE 1 – CATTLE GRAZING IN THE AIRPORT ZONE ON THE FRINGE OF KALABANKORO NEREKORO



Photo Taken by the Author (2011)

Some women do market gardening and sell their produce themselves in the markets of Kalabankoro Nerekoro, the markets of other neighbourhoods such as Kalabankoro Kulaba or the Kalabankoro main market. Image 2 shows a woman buying goods from other women selling in the main market of Kalabankoro. This main market is the biggest in the whole Kalabankoro area, where buyers and traders come from all the surrounding neighbourhoods, including Nerekoro. Other women sell their produce to traders who will then sell the produce for an inflated price at stalls along the main roads and in the city centre.

IMAGE 2 – A WOMAN SELLING AND BUYING IN THE KALABANKORO MAIN MARKET



Photo Taken by the Author (2011)

These markets serve not just as a space for buying and selling commodities; they also form a key role in social relations. The marketplace is a space for interaction and relationship building; it is also a space for conversation, sharing of ideas and dispersion of new information - generally dissemination of news affecting ordinary lives across Mali. This is also evident in Rajni Bakshi's study (2009) of changing social relations in the globalising market place. Bakshi argues that personalised exchanges in local markets are inherent in building social relations.

Whilst primary production is limited in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, informal labour is abundant although not reliable as a main source of income. Poor households with limited or no means of production sell their labour informally to rich households in Kalabankoro Nerekoro and other neighbourhoods. Image 3 shows a photo of a boy with his donkey cart finishing his day delivering water to households in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. Other informal labour cited in my fieldwork included work as builders, maids, house cleaners, clothes washers, water carriers, drivers and household security workers.

IMAGE 3 – A BOY FINISHING FOR THE DAY AFTER DELIVERING WATER IN KALABANKORO NEREKORO



Photo Taken by the Author (2011)

A number of traders from Nerekoro source stock from wholesalers in other parts of Mali to mark up prices and sell. For example, traders go into Bamako and buy fruit, vegetables and grains, as well as consumables (clothes and other produce made cheaply in Asia), to resell in the Nerekoro market, other surrounding Kalabankoro markets, Bamako, corner shops, and roadside stalls, or as mobile sellers selling food stock on a plate which they carry around. The woman in the photo below (Image 4) made the juices she was selling herself, and set up her basic ‘stall’ on the side of a road in the middle of Kalabankoro Nerekoro. She would sell her juices to people walking by.

IMAGE 4 – A WOMAN SELLING HOMEMADE JUICES ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD IN KALABANKORO NEREKORO



Photo Taken by Author (2011)

Between Nerekoro and Bamako is a grid of small businesses selling produce and services for various industries in shop fronts and informally on the side of the road. These include bakeries, building supply shops, tailor shops, hairdressers, restaurants, and supermarkets; people from Nerekoro may work in these. The two main tar roads leading to Nerekoro have quite a few vendors and small shop boutiques trading along it.

4.5. INEQUALITY IN KALABANKORO NEREKORO

Kalabankoro Nerekoro is an extremely unequal neighbourhood. Whilst a definitive line is hard to draw between the population and different strata, using Sen's examination of inequality as capability deprivation³⁰⁰, and observations and interviews from my fieldwork, we can think of the elite and upper strata in Kalabankoro Nerekoro as people with many capabilities especially a mixture of accumulated capital, high education, access to healthcare and influential social ties (in Bamako and abroad). The elite and upper-strata are connected to Bamako, the economic and political capital of Mali, giving further economic opportunity as the Malian economy further integrates with the world economy. Further still, the elite generally have an individualistic worldview and live in big houses behind walls scattered around the neighbourhood. The middle strata have a mix of capabilities and suffer from some capability deprivation, although generally they have a moderately secure income, are reasonably educated, and some economic or political influential ties – including relatives living abroad. The poor are hard to characterize as one clear group, however they suffer from multi-dimensional capability deprivation, generally have minimal or no influential social relations (connections to elite or influential political or economic groups), and have a worldview of collectivity.

Capability deprivation is particularly entrenched for the poor in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. One young male from the neighbourhood I interviewed gave a very good description of why this entrenched stratification occurs in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. He came from a poor rural village in the Sikasso region and moved to Kalabankoro Nerekoro to study at

³⁰⁰ Sen, *Inequality Re-examined*.

university, where his parents struggled to support him. He was lucky to be given a Fulbright scholarship to study in the US but returned to teach in a school in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. He openly says that he was lucky in the opportunities he was given because for many Malian society is difficult. He explains that an added complication to the inequality and a reason why it is so hard for the marginalised to have access to opportunities is because of the stagnation of opportunities because of the importance of connection in Malian society. Such opportunities lie the hands of the elite and because of the lack of mobility for the marginalised to penetrate such groups as the elite look after their own, opportunities remain out of reach. Specifically, he argues that because there is an emphasis on the importance of family and kin in Malian society, this creates the obligation (and potential excuse) for one to protect their family above doing what is right by others outside such relations:

Just say you are inside your family and like your parent, or family member or just someone connected to your wife has a problem, and you even know the person is not right, you have the responsibility to help that person. Even if that person is being sued to justice, you have an important position to get them out of trouble. He will just call you and you have to do it. And if you do not do it, then it will have a very negative impact not only between you and that person but many other people. Society will not understand if you do not support them. People will just see the connection that he is connected to you and therefore you have to protect him. So they do not care whether the person is

*right or whether the person is wrong, they only care about the connection.*³⁰¹

What this quote suggests is that there is a stagnation of opportunity being concentrated around the elite and upper strata means the ability for lower strata to penetrate it is experienced as luck. Stagnation can be explained by the protection of relationships generally based on kinship relations. It has been a long-held argument that patron-client relationships based on kin and friends are important in Malian society³⁰². Vaa et al. (1989) show how kin and friends become a means to survive when other economic activities are sparse³⁰³. However, protection of those in one's social networks has consequences. This is particularly paralysing for the poor in Kalabankoro Nerekoro being kept out of privileged groups who access capital and power. The protection of social relationships results in keeping Mali and Kalabankoro Nerekoro an incredibly stratified society.

In addition, both structural adjustment and decentralisation policies implemented at a national and local level are perceived to have had an impact on the purposeful agency of people living in Kalabankoro Nerekoro³⁰⁴. Specifically both of these policies are perceived as having a role in the economic stratification of populations. Capability deprivation is influenced by many factors in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, but some blame is

³⁰¹ Male interview, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 31st November 2010

³⁰² Claude Meillassoux, *Urbanisation of an African community: Voluntary Associations in Bamako* (University of Washington Press, 1968). Agnes Lambert de Frondeville, "Une alliance tumultueuse, les commercantes maliennes du Dakar-Niger et les agents de l'Etat," *Cashiers de l'ORSTOM* 2(1987).

³⁰³ Mariken Vaa, Sally Findley, and Assistan Diallo, "The Gift Economy: a Study of Women Migrants' Survival strategies in a Low-Income Bamako Neighbourhood," *Labour, Capital and Society* 22, no. 2 (1989).

³⁰⁴ Amadou Konare, "Perspectives on History and Culture: The Case of Mali," in *Democracy and Development in Mali*, ed. Bingen J (Michigan State University, 1998).

apportioned to state institutional failure underpinned by decentralisation and SAPs. It was believed by my informants that these policies contributed to failures in healthcare and education and generally increased their poverty. I will now introduce the categories of analysis by which I explore further the stratification of Kalabankoro Nerekoro in general. These categories of analysis are particularly significant with respect to purposeful agency.

4.6. CATEGORIES OF ANALYSIS: MULTIDIMENSIONAL DEPRIVATION, EDUCATION, AGE AND GENDER

In the remainder of this chapter I discuss categories of analysis that emerged as impacting agents' efforts (individually and in associations) in trying to improve their *hèrè* through purposeful agency. I use the term 'categories of analysis' to show socio-economic characteristics of people living in Kalabankoro Nerekoro that stratify the population. The categories of analysis emerged from my fieldwork, specifically through observations, focus groups and mini-life story interviews. As discussed in Chapter 3 (Section 3.7), the process of including these categories came first through their emergence in my initial analysis of categories while I was still in the field developing my household survey and secondly, their importance was further cemented as I later refined my analysis by listening and re-listening to interviews and focus group dialogue back in Oxford. The categories of analysis include multidimensional deprivation, education level (years of formal schooling), age and gender. Whilst these socio-economic categories condition purposeful agency, they did not determine it, which is the major difference between these categories and *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* in regards to

purposeful agency. Qualitative data identified these categories as important to daily life in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, my quantitative household survey helped me analyse their relationships with *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*.

4.6.1. POVERTY AND DEPRIVATION

In Kalabankoro Nerekoro, deprivation was an obvious difficulty in people's lives. This observation was confirmed through interviews and focus groups where people would talk about the hardship of their lives and their poverty. To people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, poverty was about lack of opportunity – inability to send children to school, find a job, cover medical expenses, and have secure housing. Poverty of the mind which meant the lack of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* was also cited. Some interviewees explained a narrative of change, where despite material deprivation, the only things the poor have are *dusu* (internal motivation) and *ka da I yèrè la* (self-efficacy). So even if someone has no economic means, they can have the agency to make developing these means possible. But without activating *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, the person is really poor.

4.6.2. DEPRIVATION AS AN ANALYTICAL CATEGORY

Defining poverty has been a central issue in development debates. In his essay presented in the Tanner Lecture at Stanford University in 1979, called 'Equality of what?', Sen challenged the assumption that poverty was only related to income deprivation³⁰⁵. Sen then expanded upon this argument and also rejected utility as a

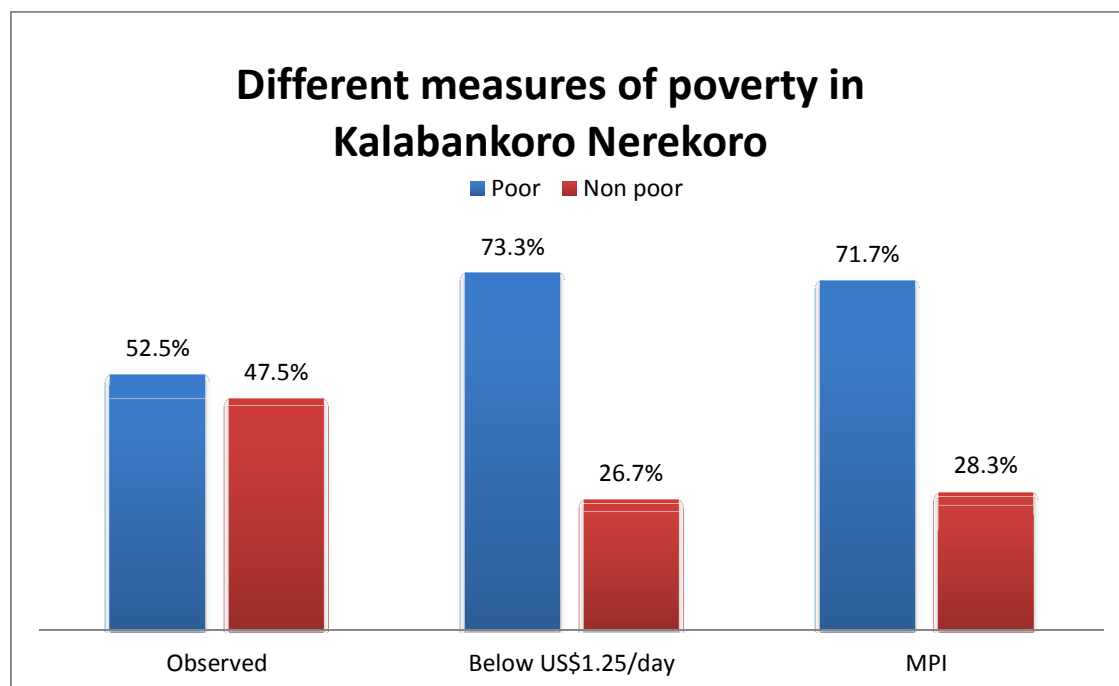
³⁰⁵ Amartya Sen, "Equality of What?," in *Tanner Lecture on Human Value* (Stanford University 1979).

suitable measure of poverty³⁰⁶. Instead, Sen suggested that poverty was capability deprivation – where capabilities are the ability to achieve functions one values or has reason to value. Initially in my household survey, I included measures of poverty both as capability deprivation (using the MPI, a measure to reflect capabilities) and income deprivation (calculated from the yearly household income based on the poverty line level of below US\$1.25/day) within the household survey. I also used an ‘observed’ measure where the interviewer made a note if they thought the interviewee was ‘poor.’

As expected from my qualitative data using methods such as observation, life stories and focus groups, I found that deprivation levels varied across individual households and measures used. Figure 2 shows the variation in levels of poverty at the household level for all households in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. Here we can see that the observed measures of the interviewers show almost half the households are poor and half are non-poor; however, far more are poor in monetary (73.3%) and multidimensional (71.1%) senses.

³⁰⁶ See Sen, *Inequality Re-examined*; Amartya Sen, "Wellbeing, Agency and Freedom. The Dewey Lectures," *The Journal of Philosophy* 82, no. 4 (1985).

FIGURE 2 – HOUSEHOLD DEPRIVATION LEVELS OF ALL HOUSEHOLDS IN KALABANKORO NEREKORO USING THREE VERY DIFFERENT MEASURES – OBSERVATION OF THE INTERVIEWER, THE MONETARY MEASURE AND THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY MEASURE.



(N=307).

As discussed in detail in my methods chapter (section 3.5.3.), in the analysis of my results, I realised the problems surrounding using the income measure (formulation of the measure and justification of its use), so I have decided to use the MPI is based on the Alkire and Foster (2011) method (see Alkire and Santos (2010)) to measure deprivation. To recap on what is already covered in the method, the MPI comprises ten indicators from three dimensions including health, education and standards of living³⁰⁷. A person is identified as MPI poor if the weights of the deprivations that they experience add up to 33% or more. The MPI measure of poverty seemed to be a more suitable measure given my qualitative data and how people described their deprivations

³⁰⁷ Alkire and Foster, "Counting and Multidimensional Poverty Measurement ".

for two reasons. Firstly, most people seemed not to be after income for income's sake (although some people articulated their aspiration as being 'rich'); most wanted income to provide access to other capabilities like being educated, having enough food, affording healthcare and achieving a basic standard of living. The MPI domain of standard of living included electricity, access to clean drinking water, sanitation, assets, dirt floor and type of cooking fuel used – all standards that people seemed to think were important to their standard of living (except cooking fuel, as even some wealthy households also used coal). Secondly, having income did not translate into actual opportunities for people³⁰⁸. Instead, measuring actual standards of people's living accounted for this 'conversion' factor better; for example, instead of using income to assume a household could/could not afford electricity based on their level of income, I determined whether the household actually had electricity).

When I examined the multidimensional poverty results, I found variations in the deprivations by specific deprivation indicator. For example, 69.7% of the households in Kalabankoro Nerekoro are deprived in the dimension of education (if anyone in the house had over five years of formal schooling), for the indicators of health; 32.2% of the households had had a child die³⁰⁹ and 12.7% were nutritionally poor (anyone in the house was malnourished). Regarding the living standards indicators, 16% of households were deprived in electricity, 20.8% were deprived in sanitation, 19.5% were deprived in

³⁰⁸ Sen, *Inequality Re-examined*; Sen, "The Standard of Living; The Tanner Lectures."

³⁰⁹ 40.3% of households (N=298) had at least one child who had died. Miscarriage was also included in this number; 4% of the 40.3% who had lost at least one child (or 5 out of the 120 households) reported miscarriage, the rest were children that had died. 9% of the 40.3% of households who had lost at least one child (or 11 out of 120 households) had lost more than one child with one household having 6 children die.

drinking water, 42.0% lacked suitable flooring for their homes, 69.4% used solid cooking fuel and 4.2% were deprived in assets.

From these descriptive statistics on multi dimensional poverty we can see how some aspects of household deprivation differ to other aspects. For example a decent percentage of households lacked adequate flooring (42.0%), yet a smaller number of households were deprived in sanitation (20.8%) and drinking water (19.5%). This shows the multi dimensionality of deprivation in households. As mentioned earlier, the relatively large number of household using coal as cooking fuel is more of a cultural factor and cannot be attributed to deprivation as from interviews and observations it was clear that women preferred using coal than western style cooking methods. For example some wealthier households I visited even though they had a complete Western style kitchen complete with an electric or gas cooking stove, used their outdoor coal kitchen instead.

It is interesting to view these MPI deprivation results of Kalabankoro Nerekoro against the National average and Bamako average as seen in Table 3.

TABLE 3 – MULTIDIMENSIONAL DEPRIVATION LEVELS OF KALABANKORO NEREKORO, BAMAKO AND MALI

	Education			Health		Living Standards						
	MPI	MPI Poor Headcount (H)	Years of Schooling	Child School Attendance	Child Mortality	Nutrition	Electricity	Improved Sanitation	Drinking Water	Flooring	Cooking Fuel	Asset Ownership
		% Population	% Population	% Population	% Population	% Population	% Population	% Population	% Population	% Population	% Population	% Population
Mali National	0.56	86.6	60.7	54.8	51.5	36.1	78.6	79.5	43.7	71.2	86.5	35.4
Bamako Average	0.23	48.8	19.7	24.5	26.8	22.0	21.6	38.2	5.7	12.4	48.4	10.3
KBK Nerekoro	0.40	71.7	69.7	-	32.2	12.7	16.0	20.8	19.5	42.0	69.4	4.2

THE DEPRIVATION LEVELS OF HOUSEHOLDS IN KALABANKORO NEREKORO AGAINST THE NATIONAL AVERAGE AND THE AVERAGE OF THE REGION OF BAMAKO AS REPORTED BY THE MPI IN 2006 (SOURCE OPHI – ADAPTED)

Table 3 shows the multidimensional poverty deprivations of Kalabankoro Nerekoro against the national average of Mali as a whole and of the region of Bamako. This measure uses data from the Demographic and Health Survey for Mali in 2006, earlier than the fieldwork. As the majority of Mali's population is rural and rely on subsistence living (around 70%), we would expect the national average to be higher in deprivation than Bamako. Which is what we see in all indicators except education. For example, we can see that in Kalabankoro Nerekoro deprivation levels of all indicators are lower than the national average in 2006 except for years of schooling. This is particularly significant because we would expect that those living on the urban fringe would have better education opportunities than rural populations for example. As the household survey I completed only had one indicator for the education dimension, it is weighted differently, which could explain some variance to expectations informed qualitatively. The variation could also be because of the high rural-to-urban migration rates of those interviewed, their low number of years at school could reflect the reality of those in rural areas. From Table 3, we can also see the deprivation levels of Kalabankoro Nerekoro are all higher in the deprivation indicators of infant mortality, drinking water, flooring and cooking fuel than the average in Bamako. Interestingly, however, the deprivation levels of nutrition, electricity, sanitation, and asset ownership are lower than the Bamako average. This mixture of deprivation levels indicates the diversity of people living in Kalabankoro Nerekoro and is typical of a peri-rural setting³¹⁰. It could also suggest a very small group of elite in Bamako and a high level of poor migrants living in deprivation. Considering my data, both explanations could be true.

³¹⁰ Little, "Voluntary Associations and social mobility among West African Women."

As I have measured poverty at the household level, I have thus far represented multidimensional poverty as a percentage of households. However, it is important to note that this does not account for the inequality within houses, such as controlling husbands or unrealistic expectations of youth in the household - both discussed below. Nor does it account for the number of people living within the household, which ranged from 1 to 40 people. However, the MPI measure gives us a sense of the multidimensional poverty households face triangulated with my qualitative data.

4.6.3. EDUCATION LEVEL

Education has a broad meaning in Kalabankoro Nerekoro and does not always just involve attendance in mainstream school³¹¹. One could acquire education through a variety of avenues including going to formal ‘*toubabou* school’³¹² but also Qur’anic schools and literacy training were understood as ‘being educated.’ Those from higher social strata or that that had been to a mainstream school defined being educated as such, reflecting the inequality inherent in access to formal education in Mali³¹³. However, people who were poorer defined being educated in much more varied ways. These varied ways of being educated included acquiring education through conversations and advice, listening to the radio, travelling, learning practical skills and watching other people succeed. The focus on education of such people was more about social roles, as indicated in the following sentiment raised in the men’s focus group:

“Education means many different things and you can be educated in many different

³¹¹ Joshua A. Muskin, "Including Local Priorities to Assess School Quality: The Case of Save the Children Community Schools in Mali," *Comparative Education Review* 43, no. 1 (1999).

³¹² Referring to the National education system of grades 1- 12 following the National curriculum set out by the Malian government.

³¹³ Lois Weis, "Education and the Reproduction of Inequality: The Case of Ghana," *Comparative Education Review* 23, no. 1 (1979).

ways. The most important thing when you are educated, you know how you are, where you came from and where you are going. This is very important in life this means you are very useful for society.”³¹⁴

Yet whilst informants defined education in a variety of ways, people I interviewed believed that formal education gave agents better access to opportunities by providing tools to understand the abstract world rapidly developing around them³¹⁵. As one woman interviewed in Kalabankoro Nerekoro explains when discussing the importance of education: “Because if you are not educated these days it is like the doors of the world is shut to you – you cannot access it.”³¹⁶ This access was believed to help agents be more effective in the undertaking of initiatives to help the *hèrè* of the family and community.

Counting the actual number of formal schools, Qur’anic schools and literacy trainings in Kalabankoro Nerekoro was beyond the scope of my study. This is partly because a lot of these schools were run informally. For example, the mainstream school system is split into three models: public schools (which the government funds), private schools (founded and run by private individuals) and community schools which the community funds (found in rural villages). Kalabankoro Nerekoro was home predominately to private schools, which varied in size from the large three-story ‘Ecole Privée Youchaou’ to smaller one-room schools with a single teacher, often in rooms of residential

³¹⁴ Men’s focus group, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 30th December 2011

³¹⁵ See Vera L. Zolberg, "National Goals, Social Mobility and Personal Aspirations: Students in Mali," *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines* 10, no. 1 (1976).

³¹⁶ Female Interviewee, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 24th December 2010*

buildings. There were no public schools in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, although many of the students travelled to the nearby neighbourhood of Kalabankoro Kulaba where the public school of Kalabankoro was situated.

In addition, Qur'anic schools boarded young male students from around the country to learn about the Qur'an. Qur'anic schools differed in structure and were operated by private individuals (they are not functions of the state). Some Qur'anic schools were formalised buildings where students' learning and sleeping quarters were separate and quite well established. Others were private homes and very basic, where the students would sleep outside on mats in deprived conditions. In some of the schools, there was an element of work where students were requested to beg on the street. Whatever the students were able to be given, the teacher would take. When I asked about this practice of sending children to live off the streets, there were several responses that justified why children were sent to beg on the streets; the first was that it teaches the children the lesson of humility, and the second it is a source of income for the teachers.

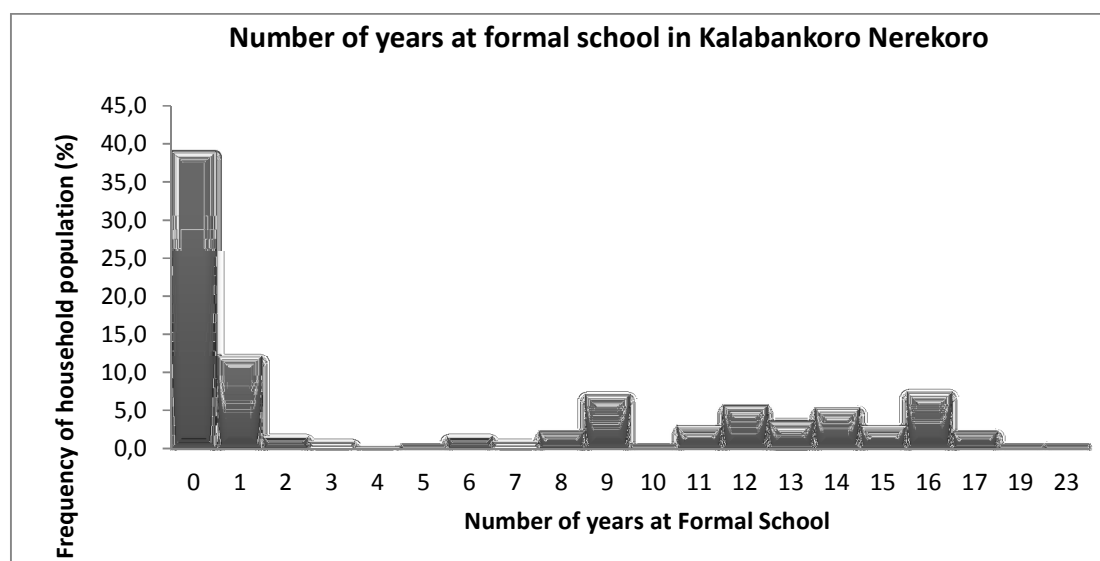
Literacy trainings also differed in style and structure. Generally the trainings were an activity organised and provided through associations. These trainings were seldom formal, and included a teacher helping a group of predominantly women learn to read and write Bambara or French. This teaching could be provided in someone's backyard, in a spare room in a compound or sometimes even on the side of the street.

4.6.4. EDUCATION LEVEL AS A CATEGORY OF ANALYSIS

Whilst the domain of education is included in the MPI measure for deprivation (a household is not deprived if anyone in the household has more than five years of schooling), I am supplementing my analysis with a separate measure of education, years of formal school attendance. As explained above, formal schooling had a normative value in my interviews. So whilst there were other ways in which people defined education, most people felt that formal schooling gave people access to influential economic and social spheres³¹⁷. Years at school further enrich the MPI measure because this indicator takes into account the number of years people had spent at school (not just if they had either over or under five years of school). In addition, a bivariate correlation between the variable of MPI and years at school confirmed a weak relationship between the two ($p = -.242^{**}$, $N=296$). As we can see from Figure 3, the majority of people had never had formal schooling. Smaller groups of people had significant years at school. The mean number of years at school where $N=296$ was 5.90 years (standard deviation 6.517), 53.1% of informants had 5 years or under at formal school, and 46.9% had 6 years or over at formal school³¹⁸. Of the 11 values missing, 9 were poor, 5 were women, 6 were men and 5 had 5 and under years at school. As discussed in the section on multidimensional poverty, the education rate in Kalabankoro Nerekoro is lower than the national average.

³¹⁷ Dominique Simon, Alayne Adams, and Sangeetha Madhavan, "Women's Social Power, Child Nutrition and Poverty in Mali," *Journal of Biosocial Science* 34(2002); J. Cleland and J. Van Ginneken, "Maternal education and child survival in developing countries: the search for pathways of influence," *Social Sci. Med.* 27, no. 12 (1988).

³¹⁸ The sample size of the household was 307 and so for this question there were 11 missing values. This mean number was calculated from each informant taking part in the household survey (one response/household). I did not filter the results through an age range.

FIGURE 3 – NUMBER OF YEARS OF FORMAL SCHOOLING

FREQUENCY OF INFORMANTS IN THE HOUSEHOLD SURVEY WITH THE NUMBER OF YEARS THEY ATTENDED FORMAL SCHOOL (N=296)

Whilst I am measuring education level based on the number of years of schooling, we cannot assume that the education one person receives is equal to that of the next person. The inequality inherent in the Malian education system causes the quality of instruction schools provide to vary greatly³¹⁹. So just because someone has 12 years of schooling does not mean that it was of the same quality as someone with nine years of schooling. Nonetheless, there are national standard exams at levels 6, 9 and 12 across the whole of Mali and so we can suggest that those who have at least six but fewer than nine years of schooling are less educated than those with over nine years of schooling, and so on. In addition, because most of the population of Kalabankoro Nerekoro has had no schooling

³¹⁹ J. R. Hough, " Inefficiency in Education—the case of Mali," *Comparative Education* 25, no. 1 (1989); Addie Fuhriman et al., "Meaningful learning? Gendered experiences with an NGO-sponsored literacy program in rural Mali," *Ethnography and Education* 1, no. 1 (2006).

whatsoever, we can suggest that those with over five years of schooling are more educated than those with no years of schooling.

4.6.5. AGE RELATIONS

Age relations are another important dimension in daily life in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. Age relations are hierarchical in the sense that inequality is inherent in beliefs underpinning age relations³²⁰. The concept of age carries with it certain beliefs about appropriate activities for people to undertake. For example, marriage typically signifies from when a youth turns into an adult, which means economic and family responsibility. The age of marriage varies from household to household, but according to my interviews and focus groups, youth in Kalabankoro Nerekoro mostly marry between the 20 to 30 years old where females married earlier in this range, and males later. Culturally, youth can marry earlier but because of the because of failing macroeconomic structures impacting life in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, youth experienced tension between these age expectations and actual opportunities. For example, many young males I interviewed experienced difficulty in finding employment, which meant they did not have the means to get married. Because these youth were at the age when culturally they could be starting their own household, they experienced a tension. Thus, continuing living in their father's home was depressing, especially for young males. The difficulty of balancing traditional expectations and the challenges of contemporary society has been also explored by other scholars. Charlotte Joy (2011) shows how young male youths living in the ancient city of Djenne, in central Mali, are also faced

³²⁰ Saskia Brand, *Mediating means and fate: a socio-political analysis of fertility and demographic change in Bamako, Mali* (Brill, 2001).

with the dilemma of balancing expectations of a traditional life and their aspirations to thrive in a modern world³²¹.

Age relations in Kalabankoro Nerekoro are linked to the practice of *sinankuna*, or joking relations between different age groups (*sinankuna* is also evident between kin and ethnic groups). The *sinankuna* practice involves using humour to deal with serious historical divisions; it is a method to bring people of many different backgrounds together³²². Specifically, there are three principles of *sunankuna*: the first, *sinankuw* is not allow to take offence at anything their fellow *sinankuw* says; second, you can never harm your fellow *sinankuw* in any way; and third, you cannot refuse anything of your fellow *sinankuw*³²³. So whilst we can understand age relations as hierarchical, youth are allowed to joke with their grandparents and actually demand social and material allowances from them. For example, one time when I was interviewing the chief of Kalabankoro Nerekoro, his grandchild of about six years of age came up to him in the middle of the interview and farted on the chief. Of course the child did not get reprimanded; the action was within the law of *sunankuna*, and the child's rights.

³²¹ Charlotte Joy, "Negotiating material identities: young men and modernity in Djenne," *Journal of Material Culture* 16, no. 4 (2011); Zolberg, "National Goals, Social Mobility and Personal Aspirations: Students in Mali."

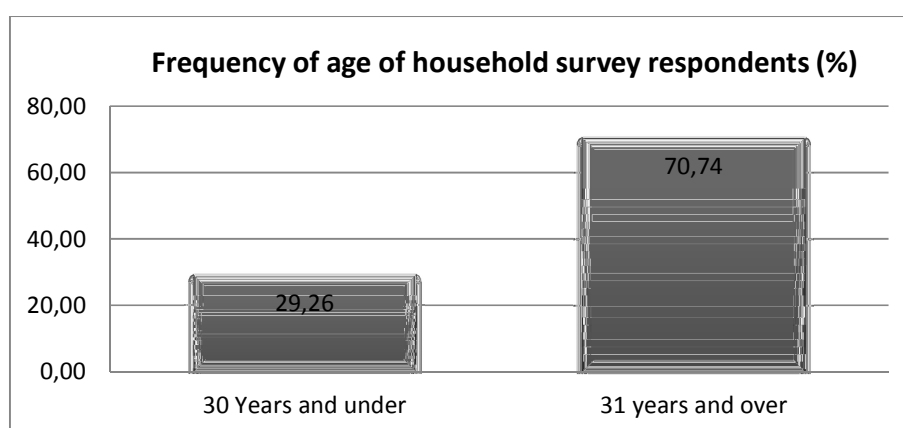
³²² In the time of the Malian empire the famous warrior Sunjata Keita (who is famous still in Malian storytelling), birthed the idea of *sinankuna* by authoring and signing the Charter of Kurukan Fuga (Rachel Jones, "'You Eat Beans!': Kin-based Joking Relationships, Obligations, and Identity in Urban Mali" (Macalester College, US, 2007); *ibid.* It was at this time in the Malian empire that many different ethnic clans were fighting, so Sunjata in a bid for peace, institutionalised the joking relations where people were obliged to joke with their enemies instead of act violently against them.

³²³ *Ibid.*

4.6.6. AGE AS AN ANALYTICAL CATEGORY

I used 30 years of age as the cut-off between age groups in the age analytical category. So my analysis examines the population either as 30 years and younger or as 31 years and over. This cut-off is not perfect, as some people, especially women would bear ‘adult’ responsibilities if they had gotten married earlier.

FIGURE 4 – AGE DISTRIBUTION OF INFORMANTS IN THE HOUSEHOLD SURVEY



N=188. THE LOW N VALUE IS A RESULT OF MANY RESPONDENTS DID NOT KNOW THEIR AGE, AS IT WAS NOT RECORDED UPON THEIR BIRTH.

On a more broad level, of those who responded in the household survey, the mean age was 40.91 years old ($N=188$), with a standard deviation of 13.73. The low N value is because many people just did not know their age as it was never recorded when they were born. Of the 119 missing values, 98 were MPI poor, 64 were female, 55 were male and 70 had 5 or under years at school. The youngest respondent was 15 years old, the oldest 74 years old. As shown in Figure 4, there were considerably more people responding to the household survey over 30 years old than under.

4.6.7. GENDER AND ASSOCIATED RELATIONS

Gender is a central factor in the social relations of Kalabankoro Nerekoro. As a moderate Islamic society, in Kalabankoro Nerekoro gender relations are underpinned by Islam³²⁴. I will first make some general remarks about the nature of Islam in Kalabankoro Nerekoro and then discuss how the gendering of roles of men and women, embedded in Islamic discourse, impacts purposeful agency.

Islam is the dominant religion in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. However, this dominance was not always the case throughout Malian history. Historically, the power of the dominant religion fluctuated between Animism and Islam and, much like most of Mali's history before the twentieth century,³²⁵ developing along the lines of the trans-Saharan trade.³²⁶ The historic fluctuation between Islam and Animism created the highly variable and constantly changing definition of Islam which is present in Kalabankoro Nerekoro today.³²⁷ Most people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro describe themselves as 'ordinary Muslims' - which is actually a group of people diverse in their religious beliefs but relating broadly to Sufism (although not affiliated with any formal Sufi order), in that they believe in the magical or mystic elements of Islam as well as subscribing to the five pillars of Islam including praying five times a day. Amongst the population of Nerekoro, there was also a scattering of Sunnis locally referred to as Wahhabis who practice the literal teachings of the Qur'an. Because of the diversity in different

³²⁴ The prominence of Islam defining gendered roles is also noted in Rosa De Jorio, "Between dialogue and contestation: Gender, Islam, and the challenges of a Malian public sphere," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (2009).

³²⁵ Benjamin Soares, "Islam and public piety in Mali," in *Public Islam and the Common Good*, ed. Armando Salvatore and Eickelma Dale (Koninklijke Brill NV, 2004).

³²⁶ Richard Warm, "Merchants, Muslims, and Whhabiyia: The elaboration of Islamic Identity in Sikasso, Mali," *Canadian journal of African Studies* 26, no. 3 (1992).

³²⁷ Brenner, *Muslim Identity and Social Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*.

subscriptions to Islam, there was no consensus as to what it means to practise Islam in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, although I did find convergence regarding roles of men and women and in the belief that 'extreme' Islam was something attributed to Muslims in the Middle East and not possible in Mali.³²⁸ Islam is not just a spiritual theory to people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. It gives people an identity which can be used for political purposes and personal gain. For example, Benjamin Soares (2005) documents how although the Malian state is secular, leaders dress in Islamic clothing to assert themselves publicly. This is also the case in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, where the wealthy strata are seen dressed in expensive Islamic clothing as a way of asserting themselves and exercising legitimacy³²⁹.

Islam underpins social norms and roles of men and women. The role of the man as the head of the family (the dominant male role) "according to Islam," as most people would state, is to be the chief of the family. The chief of the family is to be expected to provide for the family including food, clothes and shelter, and if family members are sick he has a responsibility to source medical help. The chief of the family is also to "sensitise" family members. Sensitisation is a kind of education, teaching members how to be courteous in the society, how to behave with neighbours, and not to be violent or do bad things. The duty of women, specifically wives, is to care for the family, especially children, and to submit to their husbands. One woman I interviewed from the Kalabankoro Nerekoro middle class explains her conception of her role as a wife, "If your husband wants you to do this, then you must do this, you must not raise your voice

³²⁸ I wonder if this belief has changed given the conflict that erupted after I finished my fieldwork in which Islamic extremism was a component

³²⁹ Benjamin Soares, "Islam in Mali in the Neoliberal era," *African affairs* 418, no. 105 (2005).

beyond his voice.”³³⁰ However, whilst Islam has a strong role in defining roles of men and women, it cannot be assumed to determine it all as there are variations in how these roles have been interpreted, where judgements are also affected by traditional ideas, development interventions and other factors³³¹.

Marriage and the character of the partner a woman becomes married to is a crucial factor in the life trajectory of a woman. Male hegemonic power dictates a lot of what is possible for women. Marriage is important social capital as a ‘good husband’ is essential for many aspects of a woman’s life in Mali³³². For example, one woman I interviewed who was quite a successful businesswoman who had started a juice-making business said it was because of her husband’s help that it had grown so rapidly. She explains how he helped her: “For me, my husband has always been supportive of me. Even if I have a financial problem when I come to him he will just give me money. Even if it is the last penny in the family for condiments he gives it to me and we can get something afterwards. All the time he tells me to go and see that person, go and knock on that door. He has been really helpful.”³³³ From my interviews with women and with the woman’s focus group, the influence of the husband was the major factor that held a woman’s agency back. Agency is thwarted “if her husband is not for development”,³³⁴ meaning that the husband does not like his wife being outside the household and in the community doing activities such as income-generating activities. The same woman as

³³⁰ Female interviewee, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 5th January 2011*

³³¹ Valentine Moghadam, *Modernizing women: Gender and social change in the Middle East* (Boulder, 1993).

³³² Kenneth Little (1972), documents the importance of the ‘good husband’ for women’s economic and social viability and mobility.

³³³ Female interview, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 13th February 2011

³³⁴ Female Interviewee, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 24th December 2010*

above specified this: “women here face great difficulty because most of the time they are not supported by their husbands. Or sometimes they pretend to help them but in the dark they throw a stick in the wheels, because they do not want them to work or succeed in life. This was not the case for me.”³³⁵ I was assured this was never really the case, especially if the husband is someone open or educated. Many times when interviewing women, and just through observation, it was obvious that for a married woman to be able to join an association and to undertake many activities, including visiting friends, travelling and finding a job, her husband must give his blessing. So the impact of a husband’s involvement in the woman’s life is critical to her purposeful agency – he could either support her purposeful agency by granting her freedom to undertake initiatives she liked and even financially support her such as the case for the interviewee above. A husband could also thwart his wife’s purposeful agency by forbidding her to undertake initiatives she preferenced, or by making it hard for her in other ways such as increasing her workload within the household and unfortunately cited in my interviews, through verbal and physical abuse. Few households in Kalabankoro Nerekoro had a male with more than one wife.

The gendering of women’s roles becomes starker in poor households where there is an expectation that women need to pay all or most of the costs associated with their children’s upbringing. Dealing with the expectation to provide becomes a major reason for women to join associations. The chief of the household is expected to provide for his family, but when his income is not enough to cover expenses, or he uses this income for

³³⁵ Female interview, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 13th February 2011

something else, then the burden of providing is held by the women³³⁶. Expenses to be covered include condiments³³⁷ for cooking, school fees and health related expenses. To cope with this pressure, wives undertake additional economic activities to fulfil their responsibility as the primary caregiver of children. The burden can be shared amongst wives within the household (although households with more than one wife are rare in Kalabankoro Nerekoro) or with other women in the neighbourhood, where they pool their resources together, especially around food³³⁸. In these situations, the idea of the collective and the association is an important way to deal with the burden of being a woman.

Despite the traditionally articulated roles of women and men, not all women saw themselves as restricted by the division of the genders. Instead of directly challenging the bias of their roles, women spoke more about how they carried out initiatives to enhance *hèrè* within their role, suggesting the internalisation of both gendered social norms and the natural state of such norms.

³³⁶ Vaa, Findley & Diallo (1989) document the burden of women in urban as well as rural communities in Mali to look after the well-being of their families arguing that, "Women, both as wives and daughters, must bear many of the responsibilities for the economic well-being of their families. Wage work opportunities being few, they have to rely on their own resources, friends and kin to find activities that may create income." (Vaa, Findley, and Diallo, "The Gift Economy: a Study of Women Migrants' Survival strategies in a Low-Income Bamako Neighbourhood," 235.)

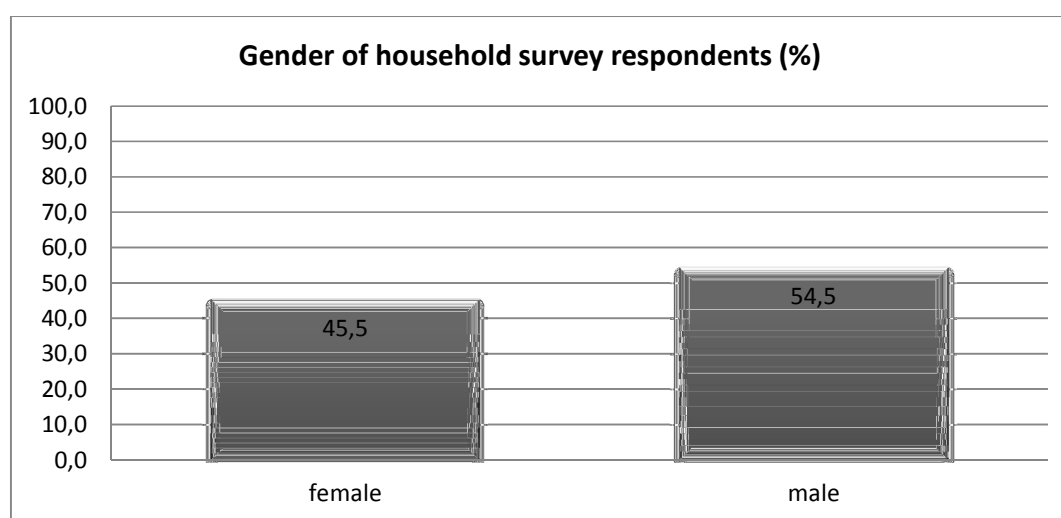
³³⁷ A condiment is the term used for everything a woman is expected to cook with besides the staple ingredients (rice, maize, millet or soghyen). It can include salt, pepper, oil, peanuts, and meat and vegetables.

³³⁸ An ethnography by Camilla Toulmin (1992) in a rural village in the Region of Segou argued that women pool their resources together to deal with the burdens of their responsibilities. Camilla Toulmin, *Cattle, Women and Wells: Managing Household Survival in the Sahel* (Clarendon Press, 1992).

4.6.8. GENDER AS AN ANALYTICAL CATEGORY

The discussion above shows the importance of gender in people's lives in Kalabankoro Nerekoro and as an analytical category of this study. Figure 5 shows the breakdown of household survey respondents by gender. N = 286, there were 21 missing values; 9 had 5 and under years at school, 2 were under 30 years of age and 14 were poor.

FIGURE 5 – GENDER BREAKDOWN OF INFORMANTS OF THE HOUSEHOLD SURVEY



N=286

As discussed in the methods chapter (section 3.5), for the household survey we tried to visit households to conduct interviews at different times of the day to ensure we collected responses from both men and women. The figure above shows that this exercise was quite successful. Nonetheless, considering the relations of men and women in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, two specific points may have influenced the survey data. Firstly, the individuals administering the survey were all male – this may have made

some women informants uncomfortable with answering some questions³³⁹. Secondly, if other members of the household were at home listening in on the interviews, both male and female informants may have been influenced by this dynamic³⁴⁰. Regarding the first point of the survey administrators being male, as will be discussed in Chapter 6 (section 6.2) when commenting on the stability of the survey, it was clear that some survey teams were able to build substantial rapport with both male and female informants to get very stable results, suggesting that the ‘male factor’ did not always impact the results. So, to counter this issue, survey administrators had to work hard to build rapport with female informants – some did a great job at this, others not as well. On the second point, survey teams tried to hold the interviews away from other household members, but if this was not possible, survey administrators were asked to make a note if the interviewee looked uncomfortable with any question in the survey document – this was the case for only a few households.

4.7. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I firstly discussed the two major policies of structural adjustment and decentralisation that provide an important backdrop to the Malian state and Kalabankoro Nerekoro. I then described the key spatial elements within the study site of Kalabankoro Nerekoro as well as giving a brief history of the area and description of the local economy, characterising it as a recent and expanding site of urban settlement, stratification and institutional failure. I have also discussed the significance of the analytical categories this thesis uses to examine agency within the study site of

³³⁹ Janet Finch, "It is great to have someone to talk to: Ethics and politics of interviewing women," in *Social Research: Philosophy Politics and Practice*, ed. Martyn Hammersley (Sage Publications, 1993).

³⁴⁰ Stephen Schensul, Jean Schensul, and Margaret Lecompte, *Essential ethnographic methods: observations, interviews and questionnaires* (Rowman Altamira, 1999).

Kalabankoro Nerekoro. These categories all emerged from fieldwork as important to initiatives people undertake to improve their livelihoods, and include multidimensional deprivation, years at school, age and gender.

As an introduction to my next chapter, whilst these analytical categories of multidimensional deprivation, years at school, age and gender were important to people's daily lives and their purposeful agency, informants in my fieldwork made it overwhelmingly clear that these categories were not the determining factors of purposeful agency or the outcome of their lives. Another dimension, one in the psychological domain of purposeful agency, was articulated as being extremely important – that involving the two concepts of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*.

CHAPTER 5:

PURPOSEFUL AGENCY COMES FROM WITHIN: CONCEPTS OF *DUSU* AND *KA DA I YÈRÈ LA* IN KALABANKORO NEREKORO

*Ni Djaman ma da ila, o bi fasa, Nkan, Ni ma da I yèrè la, o bi fa - "If others do not believe in you, you will lose weight, if you do not believe in yourself then you will die"*³⁴¹

In Chapter 2 (section 2.1), I presented how empowerment and agency are often analysed as if they are functions of external structures such as gender, education, or wealth or as if decision-making ability is a proxy for them. For example, a study by Paule Simard (2010) defined women's empowerment in a rural village of Mali as control over resources and production activities. Specifically, control was defined as the decision-making ability relating to women's work³⁴². Whilst these elements are no doubt important, interestingly, in my research, the data I collected showed that the psychological dimension of purposeful agency and people's empowerment was a legitimate enabler of action, and *dusu* (internal motivation) and *ka da I yèrè la* (self-efficacy) are not necessarily functions of external structures and decision-making ability. Specifically, when I further probed people's understandings of purposeful agency in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, a fascinating feature emerged: people spoke clearly

³⁴¹ Bambara Proverb

³⁴² Paule Simard, "Assessing autonomy among Sahelian women: An analytical framework for women's production work," *Development in Practice* 8, no. 2 (2010).

and carefully about wellsprings of agency that come from within. It became clear, through repeated conversations with persons of different deprivation levels, ages, genders and educational levels, that two characteristics – internal motivation and self-belief – underlay expressions of purposeful agency.

In this chapter I use qualitative data, especially from life histories and focus groups, to describe the Bambara concepts of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, and to show how people described their cultivation as enabling people to become empowered agents. I also share descriptive empirical results regarding autonomy and agency achievement from the household survey to expand on my findings. Specifically, I show processes that condition these concepts and also illustrate the instrumental (narrative of change) and intrinsic importance *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* have to purposeful agency and social development. As I have articulated in Chapter 2 (section 2.2), I use the term ‘intrinsic’ in the sense that something is valued for its own sake, and aligned with the agent’s important values.

The point of this chapter is to synthesise, as accurately as possible, the main threads from my unique data which contributes to the gaps in literatures discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.1.). I recognise that *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* are contested concepts. But because this is an ‘unsung story’ I am first going to present them as clearly I can, and in later chapters I will add nuances.

5.1. *DUSU* AND *KA DA I YÈRÈ LA* IN PEOPLE'S LIVES

I begin with the two stories of Adama and Asa, who both live in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. These stories illustrate how *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* are central to purposeful agency and the achievement of *hèrè* in Kalabankoro Nerekoro.

Adama comes from the western region of Kayes. He was born into a family that in his words was “very very poor,” quite different from his obvious wealth now. His father was a railroad worker and was away over long periods of time, which left his mother to look after him and his brother. Their mother struggled to provide enough food to feed her sons, so Adama and his brother had to work. This income eventually enabled Adama to go to school.

Whilst Adama was in his early school years, the president of Mali at the time, Modibo Keita, visited Kayes with the presidents of Senegal and Mauritania. Local authorities asked students in the area to come and welcome the presidents and Adama was among these students. He explained to me the impact this moment had on his life:

Because this was the first time we had seen an airplane in our lives, to see presidents in our lives, we were very curious to touch the plane. They allowed us to approach the plane and to touch it. At this time I saw the pilots, they were nicely dressed with nice pants and a cap. So when I went back home I told my mum, “Mum I saw a plane and some people were driving them and they were so nicely dressed and good at landing and taking off. So wonderful are these people, I want to become one of them.” And so my mum said “You? How can you

become a pilot? You come from a very poor family, your mum is poor and your dad is poor, you can never become a pilot. But if this is what you wish then I will pray to my God to help you become a pilot.”

Growing up with this aspiration, after he passed his 12th grade exam (after failing once before because he was too hungry to concentrate on the lessons), Adama applied for a traineeship in the air force, and he was accepted. When he first flew a plane by himself, he took a picture of his then deceased mother with him. It was important she was there with him doing what she never thought possible.

On telling his story, Adama’s only explanation of how he was able to achieve such things when his structural environment was stacked against him was because of *dusu* (internal motivation) and *ka da I yèrè la* (self-efficacy). Specifically, Adama said, “For people to improve their *hèrè*, I only have one word to explain this. Self-belief. People must believe in themselves and their potential; if they do this they can succeed”.

In a similar vein, in telling her life story Asa, also from Kalabankoro Nerekoro, attributed her life outcomes to *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*. Asa grew up in Cote d’Ivoire and when she was ten her mother died. She lived with her grandmother in Mali until she was 15 years old, when she was married to her husband. They moved to Kalabankoro Nerekoro in search of masonry work for her husband. Asa joined a women’s association in order to supplement the income. The association was a group of women who pooled small amounts of money in a *tauntin* (revolving loan fund) every week. The pooled money was lent in turn to each woman to begin a small business. When it was Asa’s

turn she used the money to start a business of selling shoes. She said this business was very successful and she paid back her loan to the association. However, one night, someone stole all of her shoes and she was left with nothing, with her business destroyed. Asa referred to that moment as being one of the most devastating in her life. She said the only way she was able to get through such a hard time and find other ways to support her family was her *ka I da yèrè la* and *dusu*: “I lost all my stuff, but if I did not lose my self-belief. That is why I could undertake other activities such as washing for people and other things that I love. My belief was that one day I would have saved enough money to restart again my selling.” Asa explained that it was seeing the other women in the association having success that helped her have something to imitate to keep going after such a difficult situation. The stories of Adama and Asa are quite significant because they show the central role of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* to informants’ purposeful agency.

Also, these stories are representative of many others that I heard in my fieldwork of how finding internal power or ‘being empowered’ was fundamental to exerting purposeful agency in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. This was through the concepts in Bambara of *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*. For the population of Kalabankoro Nerekoro, *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* were seen not only as fundamental to being a human, and as necessities to be able to make changes in one’s life, but also as intrinsic to being a human, because the pursuit of undertaking agency that was deeply valued was part of *hèrè* in itself.

The concepts of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* articulated in my research have been only sporadically alluded to in the empowerment literature, as the policy-orientated development literature suggests that empowerment is reached through an increase in either resources or decision-making ability, or else the distribution of power. As I mentioned in Chapter 2 (section 2.1.), exceptions include Rowlands (1995), who defined empowerment not just as power ‘over’ people and resources but as a power coming from within, “undoing negative social constructions, so that people affected come to see themselves as having the capacity and the right to act and have influence.”³⁴³ The World Bank’s *Moving Out of Poverty* study also found that internal belief was a factor in the poor’s ability to transition out of poverty³⁴⁴. This thesis makes the case that scholars of agency and social development need not just to value *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* for their instrumental role, but also to understand these concepts as having intrinsic value as well.

In the next section I would like to expand on the two concepts of *dusu* (internal motivation) and *ka da I yèrè* (self-efficacy) drawing from interviews and life histories.

5.2. DEFINITIONS OF *DUSU* AND *KA DA I YÈRÈ LA*

Both *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* are psychological constructs, in the sense that they are related to the person’s self-understanding or *nakali*³⁴⁵ rather than being dictated by structures or opportunities in the agent’s environment. These concepts emerged

³⁴³Rowlands, "Empowerment Examined," 103.

³⁴⁴Narayan, Pritchett, and Kapoor, *Moving out of Poverty Volume 2: Success from the bottom up*.

³⁴⁵*Nakili* is the Bambara word to describe the mentality or psychological space of the agent

originally from life story interviews. As also shown in Adama and Asa's stories, when people spoke about hardship in their lives and overcoming such situations, they were asked about what helped them get through it. In that moment of the interview process they overwhelmingly referred to the importance of *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* as being a core capability. *Ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* were then further discussed and defined in focus groups³⁴⁶.

Dusu and *ka da yèrè la* have a dyadic value to people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. These concepts have an instrumental value to people whereby they are inherent in the dominant narrative of change; if you have *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* then you can achieve your *hami* (aspirations) even without means (financial). Internal motivation and self-efficacy also have an intrinsic value to informants where it was argued that pursuing aspirations one cared about was an end and valuable to the agent in itself.

For the purpose of my analysis, I will first define both *dusu* and *ka da yèrè la* by drawing together the many interviews and focus groups. Then I will explain the narrative of change in which these two concepts are instrumentalised by agents, followed by a discussion of the apparent intrinsic value to agents.

³⁴⁶ While the concepts of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* emerged in qualitative discussions in this broad aspiration of "improvement of personal and community *hèrè*," in my observations there were certain domains that featured as being important to this goal. Through the use of quantitative analysis, in the next Chapter I will narrow the analysis further to examine *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* in the domains such as healthcare, following Islam, paid work and unpaid household work to further examine *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* and its multidimensional nature Alkire, "Concepts and Measures of Agency."

5.2.1. *DUSU*

*Dusu*³⁴⁷ refers to **an internal motivation experienced by agents that drives purposeful action**. Applied definitions of *dusu* varied depending on people's circumstances, but it was accepted as important for all. As one male interviewee said, "Everybody has got *dusu*, whether you be black or white, African or Westerner. But here in Malian society, we say somebody has *dusu* when he's got the will, the internal force to make change."³⁴⁸ Those living with material deprivation in Kalabankoro Nerekoro used *dusu* in the context of changing their life circumstances through undertaking a project or an initiative that would help move them out of their deprived state. However, *dusu* was not just relevant for people with material deprivation. People with no material deprivation in Kalabankoro Nerekoro also described *dusu* as fundamental in executing any initiative for their livelihoods. To summarise, *dusu* is the internal force and motivation driving purposeful action.

Dusu is described as not just a trait for individualistic action, but also fundamental for an individual to contribute towards the collective. In fact, *dusu* is also fundamental in a narrative of change where *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* are essential in undertaking any initiative to help the *hèrè* of the family and the collective.

Despite being acknowledged as central to their agency, in interviews, I noticed some informants in Kalabankoro Nerekoro were less inclined to speak of *dusu* at first. This is because *dusu* is something not many people are willing to discuss in public, because it

³⁴⁷ The exact Bambara definition of *Dusu* is internal power, strength, courage. The opposite to *dusu* is *dusutan*, literally meaning no *dusu*.

³⁴⁸ Male interview, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, December 2011*

is a private matter. Nonetheless, people still believed *dusu* was important in their own narratives of change, and the matter became clear after investing some time in building closer rapport with them, in order to investigate their feelings in greater depth³⁴⁹.

Beyond the instrumental element, *dusu* contained an intrinsic element where informants described it also as undertaking action for the love of it, since “it comes from the heart.”³⁵⁰ Thus undertaking the action was an end in itself because it was valued. I will take up the idea of this intrinsic element later in this Chapter.

Dusu is closely related to SDT’s definition of autonomy, where autonomy is self-regulation of one’s actions according to one’s values³⁵¹. According to SDT, autonomy, in this sense of the word, is the main element of human motivation.

5.2.2. KA DA I YÈRÈ LA

*Ka I da yèrè la*³⁵² can be defined as **the belief in one’s ability to initiate action**. Like *dusu*, *ka da I yèrè la* had an instrumental and intrinsic importance to my informants. Applied definitions of *ka da I yèrè la* included trusting your ability to undertake initiatives – as without *ka da I yèrè la* you cannot do or achieve anything. *Ka da I yèrè*

³⁴⁹ When I built rapport with these people, they did discuss the importance of *dusu* to their own lives. I think the way in which *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* are not spoken about in day-to-day life or public is a very normal social phenomenon. In most people’s lives self-efficacy and internal matters of motivation are not openly discussed because they are constructed as private domains and are also sites of vulnerability for those who are featured in the discussion. These things matter to people and so public discussions are exposing and not safe always, hence why they would remain hidden. I found the hidden nature of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* not just regarding wealthy strata, but also the poor. It was through building rapports with my informants that I could ask about drivers behind aspects of change in their lives. Then these terms emerged overwhelmingly.

³⁵⁰ Female Focus group, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 29th December 2010

³⁵¹ Ryan and Deci, "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development and Well-being."

³⁵² *Ka da I yèrè la* in Bambara is to believe in yourself (*Ka da* = to believe, *I yèrè la* = yourself). The opposite of *ka da I yèrè la* is *Fugani* – which means you do not believe in yourself and you are lazy.

la was also described during my interviews as having clarity in your mind about what you want to do, where not hesitating will lead to an outcome. *Ka da I yèrè la* along with *dusu* was described as the beginning of all action. So in the narrative of change, even if one does not have means (financial or material means), but has a strong *ka da I yèrè la*, one is able to start pursuing one's goals anyway, finding the means during the process. On top of this, people expressed that the level of financial means and/or the access to education were not proportional to how much *ka da I yèrè la* a person has. They pointed out that one could be materially poor but still have a lot of *ka da I yèrè la* and vice versa.

Self-efficacy theory from social psychology has similarities with *ka da I yèrè la*. Here, efficacy is a belief in the ability to achieve desired outcomes³⁵³. There are strong parallels between *ka da I yèrè la* and the belief in ability of the self. Bandura and Schunk (1981) have argued that an intrinsic component is inherent in self-efficacy and agency, as self-efficacy is a capability that is inherent in social beings³⁵⁴. Bandura (1997) maintains, "Beliefs of personal efficacy constitute the key factor of human agency."³⁵⁵ Yet for informants in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, *ka da I yèrè la* is intrinsically important not just for its central position in human functioning but also for its built-in element of morality. My informants understood that people who act with *ka da I yèrè la* are also people not doing any dirty work, not lying to people, and not betraying

³⁵³ Bandura, "Self - efficacy: the exercise of control".

³⁵⁴ Bandura and Schunk, "Cultivating Competence, Self Efficacy, and Intrinsic Interest Through Proximal Self - Motivation."

³⁵⁵ Bandura, "Self - efficacy: the exercise of control" 3.

anyone's trust. This intrinsic element will be taken up further later in the chapter (section 5.5).

As it emerged in my interviews and focus groups, *ka da I yèrè la* is closely related to *dusu* and people tended to talk about the two phenomena as going together, especially within the narrative of change. I will come to this narrative later in the chapter (section 5.4), but first, I want to describe some of the processes that constructed *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*.

5.3. GENERATION OF *DUSU* AND *KA DA I YÈRÈ LA*

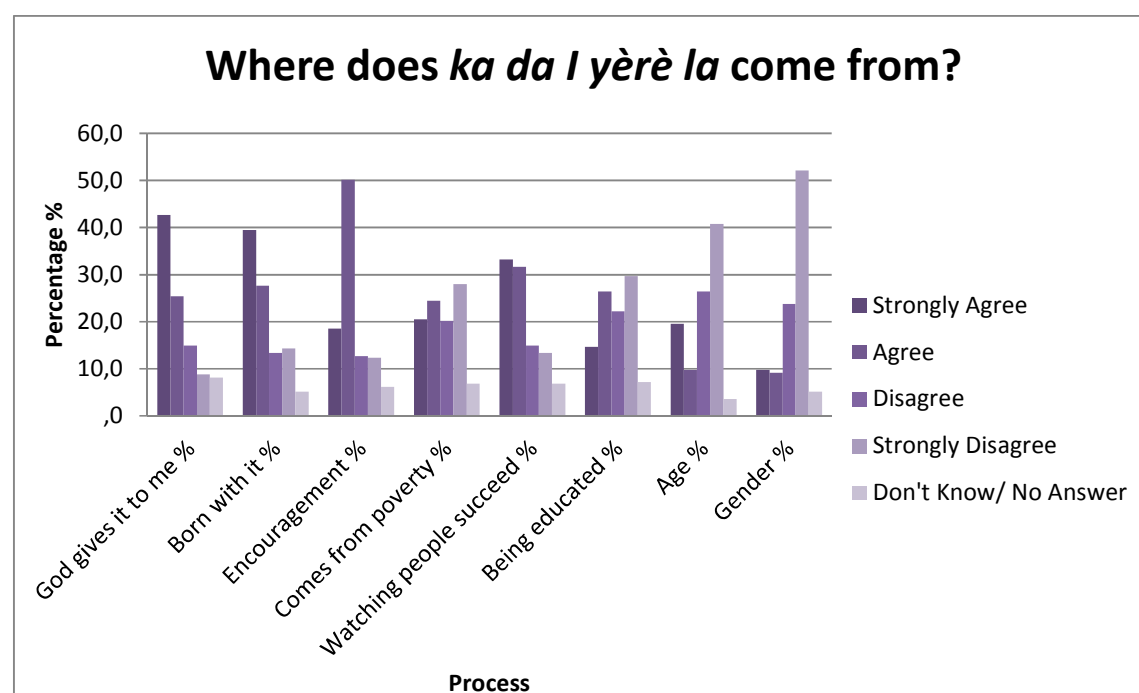
So what gives someone *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*? In this section, I examine the specific processes by which these qualities and associated skills are developed. In my fieldwork, I interviewed people either one-to-one or in focus groups about their perceptions of the origins of *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*. I then incorporated these responses with a list of others, into the household survey to gauge the commonality of these perceptions.

As my informants helped me understand in interviews and focus groups, *ka da I yèrè la* mainly came from encouragement from others, and from watching others succeed. *Dusu* came from watching other people succeed, which generated was what described as 'positive envy'. Very few informants agreed that *dusu* also came from being told by peers to have *dusu*. Interestingly, in my interviews and focus groups, informants said that the level of formal education, gender, deprivation level and age do not have an impact on the generation of *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*. I included these options in the

household questionnaire nonetheless to triangulate the qualitative responses. Some people did agree with these responses in the household survey, but as shown in the figures below, most respondents disagreed that socio-economic characteristics impacted their *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*. Instead, *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* were more shaped by processes such as encouragement and watching other people succeed.

The figures below show the results of the analysis on the roots of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*: my interviewees were asked to provide their feedback (strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D), or strongly disagree (SD)) from the list of possibilities.

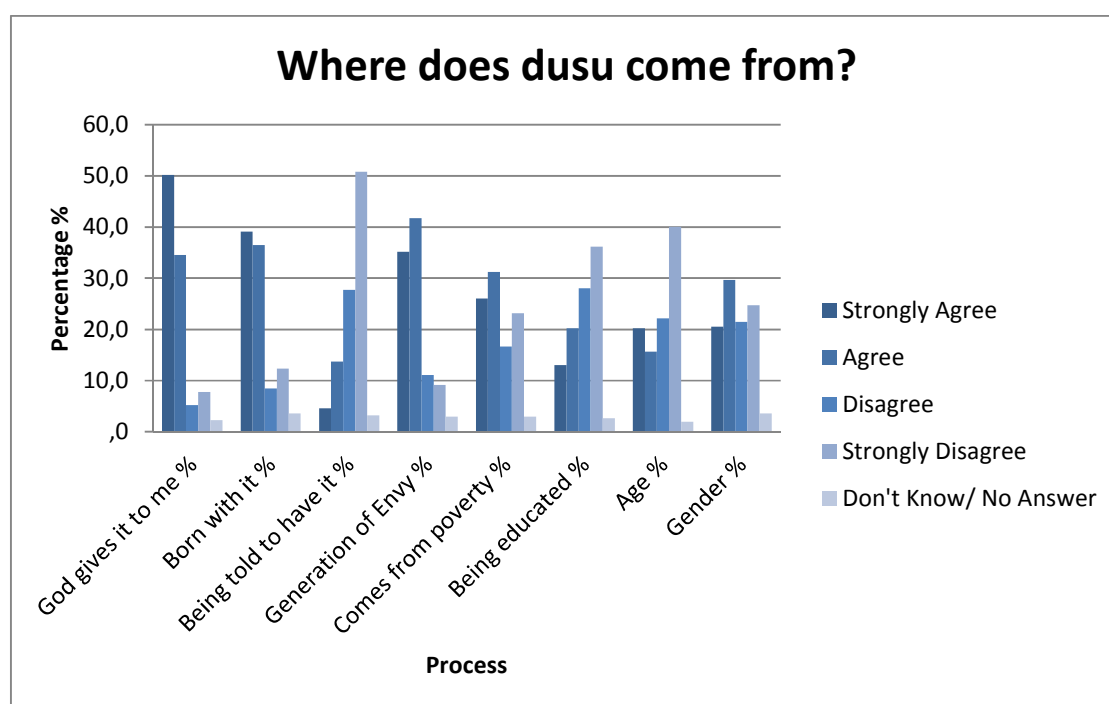
FIGURE 6 – GENERATION OF KA DA I YÈRÈ LA



THE ORIGINS BY PERCENTAGE OF KA DA I YÈRÈ LA COMMONLY CITED BY HOUSEHOLD REPRESENTATIVES IN KALABANKORO NEREKORO (N=307)

In Figure 6 we can see that the main factors my informants agreed as being central to generating *ka da I yèrè la* were “God” (SA=47.7%, A=25.4%, D=15%, SD=8.8%), “Being born with it” (SA=39.4%, A=27.7%, D=14.3%, SD=5.2%), “Encouragement from others” (SA=18.6%, A=50.2%, D=12.7%, SD=12.4%), and “Watching others succeed” (SA=33.2%, A=31.6%, D=15.0%, SD=13.4%). Less important to respondents were the socio-economic characteristics such as “Gender” (SA=9.8%, A=9.1%, D=23.8%, SD=52.1%), “Age” (SA=19.5%, A=9.8%, D=26.4%, SD=40.7%), “Being educated” (SA=14.7%, A=26.4%, D=22.1%, SD=29.6%), and “Comes from Poverty” (SA=20.5%, A=24.4%, D=20.2%, SD=28.0%).

FIGURE 7 – GENERATION OF *DUSU*



THE ORIGINS BY PERCENTAGE OF DUSU COMMONLY CITED BY HOUSEHOLD REPRESENTATIVES IN KALABANKORO NEREKORO (N=307)

In Figure 7, the data leads to the same findings as above, but in this case in respect of *dusu*; in this case the most relevant factors that emerged in my interviews were “God” (SA=50.2%, A=34.5%, D=5.2%, SD=7.8%), “Being born with it” (SA=39.1%, A=36.5%, D=8.5%, SD=12.4%), and “Generation of envy” (SA=35.2%, A=41.7%, D=11.1%, SD=9.1%). Less important to respondents were the socio-economic characteristics such as “Gender” (SA=20.5%, A=29.6%, D=21.5%, SD=24.8%), “Age” (SA=20.2%, A=15.6%, D=22.1%, SD=40.1%), “Being educated” (SA=13.0%, A=20.2%, D=28.0%, SD=36.2%), and “Comes from Poverty” (SA=26.1%, A=31.3%, D=16.6%, SD=23.1%). Also less important was “Being told by peers to have it” (SA=4.6%, A=13.7%, D=27.2%, SD=50.8%).

It is important to note that informants do not conceptualise these processes as mutually exclusive of each another. For example, it was believed that people were born with *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, and these were given to them by God. So Allah bestowed *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* to a person only as a capacity, but it was believed that people had to activate such capacity. The relations among religion, *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, and more generally between religion and *hèrè*, were among the more interesting outcomes of my interviews, as they showed a very intimate side of my respondents’ beliefs. Whilst there is no ‘ultimate or single Islamic knowledge’ in Mali³⁵⁶, it was believed by most of my informants (who all claimed to be Muslim,) that *hèrè* was an aspirational state in the here and now. The afterlife is the domain of Allah. However, Allah also controlled the here and now, but this knowledge was not something that fed fatalism in Kalabankoro

³⁵⁶ Soares, "Islam in Mali in the Neoliberal era."

Nerekoro³⁵⁷. It was believed that working hard towards one's *hèrè* with what one had been given by Allah (the agent's material reality) was crucial, as it showed Allah you deserved the best in the afterlife. For example, one man I interviewed in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, who was a devout Muslim and had spent his whole childhood under the instruction of a Qur'anic teacher from the region of Timbuktu, explains the importance of making the most of whatever Allah gives you: "All things are given by God. So if God decides to give you something it is either bad or good; you have to receive it with open hands and find a solution to this thing if it is negative. After this, then you need to think about how to stand up and continue with life."³⁵⁸ Those who had more moderate views of the role of Allah in their lives explained *hèrè* with more liberal insinuation, with less of an emphasis on the impact of Allah on one's material reality. Everyone I spoke to believed that *hèrè* was the responsibility of the mortal, not that of Allah, although of course Allah could make it easier for some more than others (poverty and inequality were cited as examples). Explaining poverty in terms of Allah's control leaves the ordinary person to think that poverty is a natural state and it is not because of any structural injustice, only Allah's will. Yet people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro did not think life was completely determined by Allah's will; human agency driven by *ka da I*

³⁵⁷ These beliefs could be explained by adaptive preferences, a theory of economics amongst others that explains the changing of aspirations, outlooks, world views and agency based on the opportunities present for the agent to pursue (Mozaffar Qizilbash. "The adaptation problem, Evolution and Normative Economics." In *Arguments for a Better World*, edited by K. Basu and R. Kanbur. Oxford University Press). Adaptive preferences are not necessarily bad in themselves, as argued by Solava Ibrahim (2011) "One cannot deny that poor people adjust their aspirations to feasible options and that they are subject to different kinds of social conditioning, for example through religious and cultural norms; nevertheless, this does not mean that they are unable to make informed judgments" (p.13). In the case of people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, if these beliefs are examples of adaptive preferences, they have not necessarily been bad for people's lives, but instead provided a narrative of change beyond difficult realities.

³⁵⁸ Male Interviewee, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 5th January 2011

yèrè and *dusu* are the only way to negotiate *hèrè* despite structural inequality. My informants believed that everyone must activate *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*; otherwise it will lie dormant. When I asked the women's focus group what role God played in the initiatives they undertook in order to help the *hèrè* of their family and community, their answer was "The initiatives we take on, there is not connection with the initiatives we take on and God. The initiatives we take on come from our hearts."³⁵⁹ People felt that human agency driven by *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* were the only way to negotiate structural inequality. My informants believed that everyone must activate *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* otherwise it will lie dormant. Yet, this can be quite marginalising for those that are perceived as not being able to create relative change in their lives. Generally these people are said to have 'little *dusu*,' that they are lazy and are 'sucking on the collective'. People who were accused of being lazy were not judged on material goods in comparison to others, but instead lack of initiative to keep trying for change. In the case of *dusu*, these are people that either do not do things that they love (or care about) or in the case of *ka da I yèrè la* do not trust themselves to undertake certain actions towards their aspirations.

Below, I first present a synthesis of the qualitative data around the main processes for the activation of *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*, as also shown in the figures above (encouragement, generation of positive envy and watching others succeed). Then, through the perspective of my informants, I show how we can interpret the socio-economic characteristics in relation to psychological agency.

³⁵⁹ Women's Focus Group Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 29th December 2010

5.3.1. ENCOURAGEMENT

Encouragement by peers is important especially in generating *ka da I yèrè la*. It was described in two ways: firstly as advice or an indication that people need to refer to as a sort of education useful to ‘map out’ ideas leading to the realisation of purposeful agency. People seek this kind of advice or mentorship through embarking on an initiative with someone generally more experienced and older or else referring to examples of success from others. They draw their encouragement from the belief that their mentor has in them for undertaking the initiative. Debraj Ray (2006), draws on similar experiences to show how positive role models in people’s lives can increase agent’s ‘aspiration window,’ where through support, increases the agents perspective on what is possible for their lives. For the people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, it is the others’ belief in the mentee which gradually shows her how to activate her own self-efficacy and adjustment to what is possible. Secondly, encouragement took the form of acquisition of knowledge and information on how the world works which gives people belief in themselves. This knowledge is not necessarily connected to formal education, but other more fluid forms of education such as life experience. For example, after stating that formal education did not matter in the generation of *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*, in a men’s focus group in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, one of the participants argued that, “...when you are educated you know how you are, where you came from and where you are going. This is very important in life and it means you are very useful for society. You know who you are, where you are, then you will be confident in yourself; this means you are more likely to undertake something to be useful for yourself, for your family, for your relatives and even for the country.”

5.3.2. POSITIVE ENVY

An important factor generating *dusu* is watching people succeed. This creates a ‘positive envy’ or *neke* that motivates people to also pursue aspirations individually or as part of the association. It occurs when an individual sees the successes of another and the reaction evoked by such witnessing creates a positive jealousy – a form of inspiration to achieve the same. As one male interviewee described it, “The motivation for what you want to do comes from something you have inside, eating your intestines. You become eager to do this thing, you are really motivated to do it.”³⁶⁰ This positive envy driving *dusu* also helps develop aspirations, creating desire for achievement of aspirations. Positive envy does not create harm like negative jealousy or *gnegoya*, and should not be mistaken as a derivative of competition; it is purely about evoking motivation to drive action. Interestingly, there is no word in Bambara for competition. The only word that comes close to it is *gnongondan*, which is used to describe a friendly competition in a game of football. Anything beyond this is described as a misunderstanding between people or conflict.

5.3.3. WATCHING OTHER PEOPLE SUCCEED

Watching other people succeed also helps increase people’s levels of *ka da I yèrè la* but in this case not through the generation of positive envy, rather through feelings of solidarity in seeing people in similar life situations achieving a particular target. Seeing other successful people helps others to believe they can undertake similar initiatives

³⁶⁰ Male interview, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, December 2010*

themselves. For example, one female informant in the women's focus group explained where she found her *ka da I yèrè la*:

*What gives us self-belief and heart to undertake something is by seeing other people. For instance, you are sitting here doing nothing but you can see your friend doing something, like selling, and getting some money for herself; when you look at her you think: why not me? This is how you get that power and courage to start undertaking an initiative... you may go and talk to that person and ask them – 'hey you are doing this activity, can you tell me what your solution is, why you are getting successful in this?' And then by getting ideas and advice from her then I can start something. Or just by looking I can also learn and begin to undertake the activity.*³⁶¹

In other words, the success of others becomes an example of what people can do themselves, instilling self-efficacy. Watching other people succeed is different to encouragement where encouragement was about belief in oneself garnered from personal relationships (mentors) and their belief in the agent, which is communicated to the agent. Watching other people succeed is different to encouragement as it is more passive where that the agent witnesses others achieving, whom they may or may not know, or communicate with. *Ka da I yèrè la* comes from the witnessing of success not being communicated with.

5.3.4. PSYCHOLOGICAL AGENCY: BEYOND SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROXIES

³⁶¹ Women's focus group, Kalabankoro Nerekoro 29th December 2010

In my interviews and focus groups, when asking informants where their *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* came from, people said that formal education, gender, deprivation level and age were not so relevant. Informants said that people can have *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* irrespective of their socio-economic characteristics. So whether someone is old or young, male or female or educated or illiterate is not necessarily relevant to the processes of watching others like oneself achieve, encouragement and the generation of positive jealousy. This is not to say that socio-economic characteristics do not condition experiences in people's lives; for example, the life experiences of Adama and Asa are very different because of their genders, education levels and changing ages throughout their life trajectories. I think this is the reason why socio-economic characteristics also registered in the household survey – because they do impact the experiences people have. However we can see that for these socio-economic variables, most people disagreed than agreed with them signalling their conditioning not determining impact on purposeful agency. What is most interesting is how my data suggests that *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*, are primarily conditioned by transactional and nuanced experiences that may or may not be caused by their socio-economic characteristics. Having encouragement is not based on whether you are rich or poor, nor is seeing someone like yourself achieve change entirely based on your age or gender. This data shows an important element missing in the theorisation of empowerment as opportunity structure and decision-making – it also shows the need to consider the nuanced and intricate elements of the construction of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* and not structural proxies. Bandura (1982) argues a similar point in his theory of self-efficacy when articulating conditions in which self-efficacy is constructed. These conditions are very similar to the processes

articulated from informants in Kalabankoro Nerekoro; specifically, *enactive attainments* that are developed through mastery of successful tasks, *vicarious experiences* when one sees another who one identifies with succeed, and *verbal persuasion* and positive affirmation that help people believe in their abilities³⁶². What my analysis shows is that processes of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* formation are relative to the person and not to be coupled with absolute circumstances of their socio-economic characteristics. Therefore we can never expect the perceived effects, constraints and advantages of opportunity structure on a person's *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* to be constant for all people. One person may believe an oppressive government is the end of the world, whilst another of the same socio-economic characteristics may believe it is an opportunity for the country to change. Interestingly, Bandura (1995) argues that the subjective judgements that the agent has in regards to their opportunity structure are a much stronger force than what is objectively the case: "People's level of motivation, affective states, and actions are based more on what they believe than on what is objectively the case."³⁶³

What these results here suggest is that whilst power and the agent's opportunity structure are important to *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, no single structural approach to understanding *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* will suffice. Instead we need a deeper understanding of the role of cognitive functions and social relations in the formation of the subjectivity of the agent. I will return to this point and examine it further with qualitative data in Chapter 6 (sections 6.5 and 6.6). For the remainder of this chapter, I

³⁶² Bandura, 1982.

³⁶³ Bandura, 1995, pp 2

want to further illustrate the instrumental and intrinsic nature of the concepts of *dusu* and *ka I da yèrè la* on people's lives in Kalabankoro Nerekoro.

5.4. INSTRUMENTAL VALUE OF *DUSU* AND *KA DA I YÈRÈ LA* - THE NARRATIVE OF CHANGE

The concepts of *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* at an instrumental level feed into what I am calling the narrative of change. The general narrative goes that as long as you have *ka da I yèrè la*, *dusu* and means (defined as financial, educational and/or material), then you can achieve your aspirations or *hami* towards and *hèrè*. Another variation of this narrative is that even without means, as long as the agent has *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, then they can draw on these capabilities to locate pathways to find the means required for the agent to achieve their aspiration. For example, the life stories of Adama and Asa I introduced in this chapter illustrate the narrative of change and how *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* can help towards change in one's life.

The narrative of change is a pathway. It provides not only hope but also an actual framework for people to use in their daily lives and negotiate hardship. Within this narrative, the focus is on *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* and not just on means. For a large proportion of people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro actual opportunities for generating means are relatively limited. But focusing on *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* two capabilities it is believed that everyone has nascent within them, opens up a 'way forward' for people to achieve *hèrè*. Further still, the narrative is not just a myth for people. It is operationalised where people muster *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè* to make actual changes in

their life. And they see each other doing so, and learn how. This is the crossing over – the way that psychological capabilities are mobilised to generate real outcomes towards the agent achieving their aspirations.

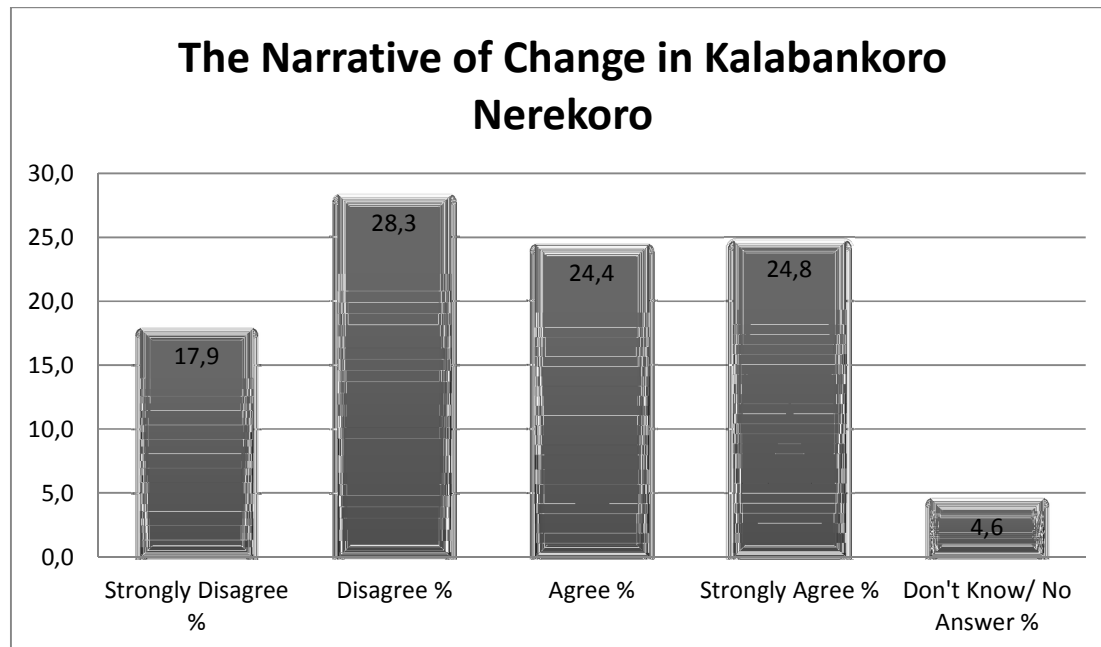
Whilst I was conducting my fieldwork, I noted a small number of NGOs using the concepts of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* in their interventions, possibly signalling the acknowledgement of the narrative of change. For example, an American NGO called Population Media Center aired 74 episodes of a radio drama called *ikJigi ma tignè* (Hope is Allowed) across all regions of Mali in 2009. By using characters with archetypes commonly found in the ordinary Malian's life, their aim was for their audiences to connect to the characters in order to deal with serious issues such as disabilities, female genital cutting and women's empowerment. I met and spoke at length with Population Media Center's project manager and project officer in Mali, who explained how their approach was located within the narrative of change. They wanted to inspire their audiences to believe in the potential of their agency to make change around such serious issues. Therefore, by using characters the audience could relate to, the audience would see how the character was able to negotiate a pathway of change in their apparent opportunity structure, and then the audience could too.

5.4.1. THE NARRATIVE OF CHANGE AND AGENT'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

The narrative of change is a narrative not defined by any one particular analytical category of age, gender, deprivation level or years at school. In the household survey

carried out in Kalabankoro Nerekoro I asked people whether, even if they did not have means, they could achieve their aspirations (in that they would have to rely on their *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*). This question is the more extreme version of the narrative of change encountered in my fieldwork. The other variation was milder, in that if you had *dusu*, *ka da I yèrè la* AND means you could achieve your aspirations. Figure 8 shows responses to the question about the extreme narrative of change. 49.2% of informants in the Kalabankoro Nerekoro study agreed or strongly agreed that even without enough resources, you can still achieve your aspirations, whilst 46.2% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement; 4.6% of informants either did not know or did not answer.

FIGURE 8 – DISTRIBUTION OF THE NARRATIVE OF CHANGE



YES RESPONSE RATE (%) TO THE STATEMENT "EVEN IF I DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH MEANS I CAN REACH MY ASPIRATIONS" IN KALABANKORO NEREKORO (N=307)

A bivariate correlation of the narrative of change with socio economic characteristics from the neighbourhood of Kalabankoro Nerekoro shows no or weak correlations between the narrative of change and socio economic groups.

TABLE 4 – BIVARIATE ANALYSIS OF THE NARRATIVE OF CHANGE WITH SOCIO – ECONOMIC GROUPS

	Age	Gender	MPI Deprivation (hh)	Years at school
Narrative of Change	.217**	.260**	.036	.161**
	N= 188	N = 286	N = 307	N= 296

**** CORRELATION IS SIGNIFICANT AT THE 0.01 LEVEL (2-TAILED). *CORRELATION IS SIGNIFICANT AT THE 0.05 LEVEL (2-TAILED). THE HIGHER THE VALUE, THE MORE MPI DEPRIVED YET AGREEING WITH THE NARRATIVE OF CHANGE**

To analyse the strength of correlations, I am using the Ranis et al (2006) correlations ranking system (in all the bivariate analyses of this thesis). In this study surveying the relationships between possible human development categories beyond those used for the Human Development Index (HDI) they, “define[d] the rank-order correlation as being ‘very high’ when the correlation coefficient is above 0.8; ‘high’ when the correlation coefficient is 0.6 and over, and below 0.8; ‘moderate’ when it is 0.3 and over, and below 0.6; and low when it is below 0.3³⁶⁴”. As we can see from Table 4 there were very weak correlations for the categories of age, gender and education level and no relationship with MPI. These results suggest that there is no relationship between these socio-economic groups and who agreed with the MPI, suggesting the narrative of change was related to no particular analytical category.

³⁶⁴ Ranis, Stewart, and Samman, "Human Development: Beyond the Human Development Index."

5.4.2. NARRATIVE OF CHANGE AND INDIVIDUALISTIC DISCOURSE

The narrative of change on first examination can appear very liberal as an extreme project of individualism and one would have grounds to suspect it is deeply rooted in the neoliberal encroachment Mali has experienced since the 1980s³⁶⁵. One could even wonder if the narrative of change is a result of not just neoliberalism but also liberalism introduced through the colonial project and well before. Whilst the narrative of change is a narrative of the ‘self’ it is not necessarily an expression of individualism. So whilst the narrative of change could be used to advance the neoliberal project, the narrative of change does not necessarily have roots in liberal political philosophy. I make this assertion on two accounts. Firstly, many people in my interviews had very collective worldviews and used the narrative of change to further the *hèrè* of others and other altruistic goals. Secondly, the narrative of change is not necessarily individualistic in the liberal political theory sense, because its constituting elements are the concepts of *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*, which are relational as they are constituted by relational processes such as watching other people succeed, encouragement and positive envy. This also alludes to the fact that purposeful agency is also relational and thus people being around environments plentiful in encouragement and watching other people succeed supports purposeful agency. The data from my analysis strongly suggests we can think of autonomy as relational as it is related to *dusu* – a relational concept and not a concept that constitutes individualism in the liberal political philosophy. My informants acknowledged the relatedness and the importance of the collective in which it is constructed – from interaction with other social actors through the generation of

³⁶⁵ Moseley, Carney, and Becker, "Neoliberal policy, rural livelihoods, and urban food security in West Africa: A comparative study of The Gambia, Cote D'Ivoire and Mali."; *ibid.*; Bratton, Coulibaly, and Machado, "Popular Views of the legitimacy of the state in Mali."

positive envy from watching others succeed. A further illustration of the inherent relatedness with others in my informants' understanding showed up in the concept of *hèrè*. To my informants from Kalabankoro Nerekoro, *hèrè* was defined at two levels, *hèrè* relating to the self and family (personal *hèrè*) and *hèrè* relating to the community. In interviews and focus groups, when asking about *hèrè*, people would always asked if the focus was *hèrè* relating to the family (*dembaya ka hèrè*) or to community (*sigida ka hèrè*).

Specifically, my informants defined community *hèrè* or *sigida ka hèrè* as having a cohesive and unified community. Personal *hèrè* or *dembaya ka hèrè* (in Bambara) was defined by my informants as not just having enough means (social, financial and material) and *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* to provide and look after the needs of one's family, but also good social relations with others and living in a developed community (as this reflected individual lives). Further still, in the concept of *dembaya ka hèrè*, the 'self' and 'family' were closely linked. This closeness was particularly problematic for many informants, specifically women and youth who, because of unfavourable structural norms, forgo their personal *hèrè* for the sake of their families (discussed further in Chapter 4, section 4.6). This information on *hèrè* further shows how personal *hèrè* is situated in and developed through the collective and not born in isolation. Interestingly, in my household survey, 91.6%³⁶⁶ of informants agreed that the idea of community in Kalabankoro Nerekoro was important to their *hèrè*, again showing the inherent value of the collective in the lives of my informants.

³⁶⁶ *N* = 307

Dusu can be related to the idea of autonomy, if autonomy is defined as relational and not historically independent from other agent's. Instead of the belief coming from the liberal political theory that autonomy rejects the collective, my theory of autonomy, strongly backed up by the results of my analysis, follows in the footsteps of others³⁶⁷, suggesting that human freedom and *hèrè* do not necessarily conflict with human relatedness³⁶⁸. This definition of relational autonomy that I use in my thesis is similar to Nedelsky's (1989) account of the feminist reclamation of the word 'autonomy' from liberal political theory. Autonomy has always been one of the foundations of liberal theory; however, Nedelsky negotiates the problem of combining inherent social relations with the value of self-determination, and argues:

*Autonomy is the law of one's own in the deepest sense, but not made by the individual; the individual develops it, but in connection with others; it is not chosen, but recognized... The vision I am sketching comes from the insistence, first, that the capacity to find one's own law can develop only in the context of relations with others (both intimate and more broadly social) that nurture this capacity, and second, that the content of one's own law is comprehensible only with reference to shared social norms, values and concepts.*³⁶⁹

³⁶⁷ See Jennifer Nedelsky, "Re-conceiving Autonomy: Sources, thoughts and possibilities," *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism* 1, no. 7 (1989); Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar, "Introduction: Autonomy Refigured," in *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self*, ed. Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar (Oxford University Press, 1999).

³⁶⁸ Mackenzie and Stoljar, "Introduction: Autonomy Refigured."; Friedman Marilyn, "Autonomy, Social Disruption and Women," in *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self*, ed. Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar (Oxford University Press, 1999); Nedelsky, "Re-conceiving Autonomy: Sources, thoughts and possibilities."

³⁶⁹ Nedelsky, "Re-conceiving Autonomy: Sources, thoughts and possibilities," 10-11.,

Thus, calling the narrative of change solely individualistic and a product for the neoliberal project is misleading. Whilst this is the case, it is not to say that the narrative of change could not be used to pursue neoliberal goals.

Along with the instrumental value of *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*, these concepts also have an intrinsic value to informants in my study site. That is, the very pursuit of purposeful agency can be an end in itself, as I discuss in the next section of this chapter.

5.5. INTRINSIC VALUE OF *DUSU* AND *KA DA I YÈRÈ LA* – LOVE AND MORALITY

In my review of the literature, in the rare moments when psychological elements of purposeful agency are taken into account, it is because of the instrumental value *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* may bring to the project of ‘development’. The risk of just focusing on the instrumental element of purposeful agency is that it is then considered valuable and promoted only as a means to development ends, which are generally seen as growth and modernisation; in this way very little consideration is given to how ‘development’ is defined and valued by populations it is imposed on.

This was the case, for example, of a few development projects I witnessed being implemented in villages in Mali during my stay, just because experts said they were what the population needed. Nevertheless, the projects were not actually valued by agents living in the intervention site (specific projects included sensitisation programmes to use specific type of fertilisers and transplanting various types of wells

and machines for production capability). Broadening this consideration, we can apply this argument to the very project of development which is trying to modernise Mali, questioning if this type of development is valued by the population.

What is important to consider in such cases is the intrinsic dimension to *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, meaning the aligning of action with the deep values of the agent. Alternative models of development, specifically Sen's Capability Approach, include the intrinsic dimension of purposeful agency. In his approach, Sen argues that development is an increase in capabilities that agents value and have reason to value³⁷⁰. So a component of the purpose of development is to articulate democratically the capabilities and the lives people aspire towards. These aspirations are fed by values agents feel intrinsically aligned with, ensuring people are active in and satisfied with the trajectory of their futures. Thus the Capability Approach understands purposeful agency as having both instrumental and intrinsic value - where undertaking actions that are valuable to the agent are in fact valuable to *hèrè* as well as the outcome of their agency.

Drawing on interviews, observations and focus groups people from Kalabankoro Nerekoro, purposeful agency was pursued not just as a necessity for improvement to personal and collective *hèrè*, but also a way in which people experienced *hèrè* – when action undertaken was aligned with values. Interestingly, this experience of *hèrè* is not some pursuit of individualistic hedonism, but also understood alongside *ka da I yèrè la*, which involves morality within the calculation of *hèrè*.

³⁷⁰ Sen, *Development as freedom*.

5.5.1. *DUSU* AND UNDERTAKING INITIATIVES FOR THE LOVE OF IT

Investigating the intrinsic value of *dusu*, my informants described it as a way of doing things not just for the outcome, but also because one loved and valued it – the action itself is an end. As one middle stratum woman said when I asked her how she carried out initiatives to help her family and others, “it will depend on your heart. Your heart should be full of *dusu* in order to go out and seek things for your family.”³⁷¹ Because of the value component of the action, psychological agency is different than choice and decision-making, which does not necessarily qualify its importance. For example, one can make a choice to choose a particular brand of fertilizer, but this choice does not account for *dusu*, as the choice of fertilizer may evoke no *dusu* from the person making the choice, as the choice of fertilizer is just not intrinsically important to them.

The women’s focus group, which included seven women who were part of an association and who were all from poor households, explained to me that there was a scale *dusu* could be experienced along. At the first extreme of this scale there is “Doing things because you are forced to,”³⁷² whilst at the other end is “Doing things because you love them”³⁷³. The men’s focus group confirmed this sentiment, similarly distinguishing initiatives undertaken because you personally value them from those ones initiated out of mere obligation. “There is a Bambara saying, ‘it runs’ - that if you undertake an initiative from someone else then it does not go anywhere, it will fall short. It should come from yourself,”³⁷⁴ one member of the focus group said, referring to

³⁷¹ Woman interview 4, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 17th November 2011

³⁷² Women Focus Group, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 29th December 2010

³⁷³ Women Focus Group, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 29th December 2010

³⁷⁴ Male Focus Group, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 30th December 2010

the endurance of motivation when actions pursued were valued. I later clarified this point with an employee of a local NGO working in the area who explained that one needs *dusu* to do most activities; however, if one is forced into doing something, one will run out of *dusu* quickly and so one's stores of *dusu* for the future will be greatly impacted in undertaking other initiatives. By contrast, if one does things for the love of it, one can do it forever.

What is particularly interesting is that engaging in agency that 'comes from the heart' is not a luxury of the rich, but also of the poor. Despite most being multi-dimensionally poor, my interviewees said that they still could do things for the love of it – the pursuit of purposeful agency had a deeper intrinsic importance.

Thus purposeful agency (that is intentional action is different from non purposeful action which can be explained as habitual), is driven by *dusu* and internal motivation is an end in itself. The intrinsic importance of *dusu* is echoed in SDT's definition of autonomy.³⁷⁵ Autonomy in SDT is about acting according to things you 'love' and intrinsically value³⁷⁶. Chirkov et al. (2003) argue that by doing so, purposeful agency in both individualistic and collectivist cultures contributes towards psychological well-being³⁷⁷. Like *dusu*, autonomy is understood along a continuum. At one end of the autonomy continuum is the autonomous intrinsically motivated self and at the other, a

³⁷⁶ Ryan and Deci, "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development and Well-being."

³⁷⁷ Chirkov et al., "Differentiating Autonomy From Individualism and Independence: A Self - Determination Theory Perspective on Internalisation of Cultural Orientations and Well-Being."

person who is extrinsically motivated. I will examine this relationship in the next chapter using quantitative analysis of autonomy with my *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* data.

Just because one person values a specific action does not mean it is necessarily valuable to the collective. For example, if someone gets gratification out of oppressing one ethnic group of Mali surely we cannot give preference to these values despite their being driven by an internal motivation of *dusu*. Thus, as in Sen's alternative model for development and the expansion of capabilities, preference should be given not just to capabilities that one values, but also to those capabilities that one has reason to value³⁷⁸. It was really interesting to notice how many of my informants in interviews and focus groups were confirming this point, by saying that *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* should go together, because *ka da I yèrè la* has an inherent component of morality to check to make sure actions pursued were not against the social good.

5.5.2. KA DA I YÈRÈ LA AND MORALITY

Ka da I yèrè la, or self-efficacy, is also intrinsically important to informants in Kalabankoro Nerekoro as it relates to the idea of not doing any immoral activities, not lying to people and not betraying anyone's trust. This component built into the definition of *ka da I yèrè la* evokes a moral understanding of what is an acceptable action and what is not.

One of the first pieces of evidence in this perspective came from Adama, the interviewee introduced above; he acknowledged the morality of *ka da I yèrè la* in his

³⁷⁸ Sen, *Development as freedom*.

interviews by saying “When you lie you cannot be confident because you cannot look in the eyes of people. Wherever I go I can look into the eyes of people because I never lied to them, I never ate their money, I never cheated. So even if I go back to that place again I can look in the eyes of everybody,”³⁷⁹ Adama’s sense of self is derived from his relations with others – he cannot believe in himself without considering himself within his social setting.

A similar story is the one of a male youth I met in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, who had had an acute aspiration to join the military for as long as he could remember. Whilst I was conducting fieldwork I witnessed the unfolding of the element of morality in his self-belief in making a decision. When I met him, he was considering joining a rebel movement in the north of Mali because the inscription into the Malian military was corrupt and it was impossible for someone like him who had no connections to enter it. Which exact rebel movement he wanted to join was never articulated, although he did worry about being part of a group that kidnapped Western people (meaning he possibly wanted to join a group associated with the Islamic Movement in the Maghreb (AQIM), notorious for kidnappings). This youth knew that the rebels paid well, and a good income for the household was something his family needed: his little brother was about to have his leg amputated as his family could not afford basic treatment for an infection. Yet over the course of my fieldwork, I witnessed this youth rethink his idea in consultation with other youths in his association as well as with some older men, some who were ex-military themselves. The decision to give up his idea was made because of the impact he thought the rebel group could have on society. The young man concluded

³⁷⁹ Interview male, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 13th February 2011

that even though it would be fulfilling his dream to fight in the military, he would not be able to continue to believe in himself knowing he was bringing harm to other people. He also said that his *ka da I yèrè la* was strong enough to find something else he could do. Thus, the strength of his morality and self-belief stopped him.

Ka da I yèrè la and the act of trusting oneself evoke an intrinsic moral response for agents because the self is understood as interconnected to the social. To undertake action by believing in oneself is viewed as deeply related to not doing anything harming others. Some feminist theories of autonomy argue that the presence of self-efficacy is a fundamental element in ensuring agents in oppressive environments have the belief and trust in themselves to challenge such oppression³⁸⁰.

All this said, given that Kalabankoro Nerekoro is a very stratified and oppressive society (especially for women and the poor), we cannot conclude that the pursuit of morality in *ka da I yèrè la* is so effective, or that it always dominates action. In fact, every day people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro overlook others' *hèrè* for their own, as I will further elaborate in Chapter 7 (section 7.4).

In addition, we must not underestimate the impact of hegemony and what is considered 'moral' within the social setting and the challenge of unhelpful norms and structures that must always be pursued. In Kalabankoro Nerekoro, the status of women is a case in

³⁸⁰ Robin Dillon, "Toward a feminist conception of self-respect," *Hypatia* 7, no. 1 (1992); Trudy Govier, "Self-Trust, Autonomy and Self-esteem," *Hypatia* 8, no. 1 (1993).

point, since many men and women believe it is normal that women have a subordinate role and thus it is moral to treat them as such.

In the last section of this chapter, I will situate the relevance of psychological agency in the social development of Kalabankoro Nerekoro.

5.6. *DUSU AND KA DA I YÈRÈ LA* IN PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

So what does the realisation of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* mean for the social development of Kalabankoro Nerekoro? From my interviews, focus groups, and observations the realisation of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* suggested psychological agency led to personal change and expanding capabilities. If we took the view that capability expansion was central in issues of social development³⁸¹ then there are three possible avenues in which *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* are relevant – specifically the instrumental, intrinsic and constructive. However personal change is not synonymous with social development, as personal change whilst being beneficial to one individual or group, may not be beneficial to the social setting. The rise of the Malian middle class at the expense and further marginalisation of the poor is a case in point.

Firstly, acting with *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* helped people achieve beyond their socio-economic characteristics. The instrumental value of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* was articulated constantly within my fieldwork through the examples of agents who, even when the structural environment appeared to make any change objectively impossible,

³⁸¹ See amongst others, Sen, *Development as freedom*; Amartya Sen, *The idea of Justice* (Allen Lane of Penguin Books, 2009).

were able to use *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* to negotiate processes of power and make their aspirations possible. For instance, one young man I interviewed, when he was describing the spider web of elite connections governing the political and economic relations of Bamako, explained how the only way in which these relations could be broken down was through tenacity of never giving up until one found a place from which one could penetrate the monolith. At the core of this tenacity was *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*. The instrumental element of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* also provides agents with a sense of further hope and belief in future initiatives, by watching others succeed as well as seeing themselves make small progress towards *hèrè* goals. Hope is important in the sense of Ernst Bloch (1986), where a vision of the ‘not-yet-become’ or aspiration contains future possibilities of a world better than the current one³⁸². *Dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* are elements in a psychological processes that helps agents instil hope and aspiration towards their lives. For agents in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, who can see themselves and others being able to shift towards achievement of *hèrè*, hope is an important function for continued purposeful agency.

Secondly, the pursuit of intrinsically valuable actions can bring *hèrè* to informants’ lives. “Doing what you love” was important to people, even living in desperate situations. Whilst some of my informants acted out of necessity or coercion, they spoke of it not being desirable and not bringing feelings of *hèrè* to informants. What did bring *hèrè* to people was doing things because they came from the heart, and because they were in line with their values. It was not possible for everyone all the time to do things because they ‘loved’ them – most of the people lived in desperation in Kalabankoro

³⁸² Ernst Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia* (Stanford University Press, 1986). 129.

Nerekoro and so sometimes they did things just to get by. But even when people lived in difficult circumstances, they found ways of undertaking actions that were intrinsically valuable to them to bring *hèrè* such as pursuing projects in associations that helped themselves or the neighbourhood. Thus the intrinsic element and elements of psychological well-being were not luxuries of those with more favourable socio-economic characteristics such as being poor, illiterate, a woman or young.

Thirdly, purposeful agency driven by *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* seems to have the ability to create the conditions to shift unhelpful social norms such as the restrictive role of women in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. In other words *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* have a constructive component; **where through the pursuit of aspirations, actors (generally unintentionally) can shift social norms and unhelpful structures oppressing them**³⁸³. Agency resulting in the constructive element did not seem initially intended, and generally was the by-product of other action at a discursive level. As the social space is not static, and as discussed in the discussion of the structure/ agency dialectic in Chapter 1, production of new structures and norms is always underway and possible, and so consequences of purposeful agency can put in motion other constructive outcomes³⁸⁴. For example, one poor women's association I met with was saving money to pay for a Qur'anic teacher to teach them the Qur'an so that they could learn the scripts and integrate these teachings more fully into their lives. As a result, these women actually become more influential in the community because their literacy gave them a

³⁸³ Sen (1999) described democracy as having a constructive element where through public deliberation, new values, priorities and norms for society are formed. See Amartya Sen, "Democracy as a University Value," *Journal of Democracy* 10, no. 3 (1999).

³⁸⁴ Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, structure and contradiction in social analysis*.

sort of credibility that legitimated these women to others. This credibility helped these women have access to networks such as Coordination des associations et ONG Feminines (CAFO), which works towards poor women's rights and access to resources. The constructive element was observed by Saba Mahmood (2005) in her work on the women's mosque movement in Egypt. She argues that women who use their agency to further produce orthodox Islamic practices such as the feminine ideal of modesty should not be viewed as revealing the oppression of hegemonic power. Instead, the act of becoming 'modest' is an example of how women who are subjects of the piety utilise their agency to make changes within the piety movement. In becoming subject to social norms and gendered hierarchy, women in Kalabankoro Nerekoro create change from within the discourse, whilst changing the discourse at the same time. Driving such initiatives is the belief in their *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*. However it is important to note that outcomes of agency at a constructive level do not always lead to positive outcomes. Agency can be used to construct unhealthy social norms and values, for example further deepening the oppressive roles of women.

Overall, we can understand the 'power within' of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* and the narrative of change as contributions to social development. The wellsprings of *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* that Asa, Adama and many other informants in Kalabankoro Nerekoro invoked are legitimate elements that contribute towards not just personal development and change but also social development. Specifically, the *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* driving purposeful agency can support the development of capabilities. For example, Adama was able to acquire the ability to be educated and to fly a plane, something he

credits his *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* with. Asa, also credits her capability expansion of the ability to undertake income generating activities from her *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*. Further still, these findings of the importance of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* underpinning purposeful agency are in line with Sen's alternative models of development as capability expansion. Purposeful agency is at the centre of this approach to human flourishing and so understanding important elements of agency is crucial. We need to see purposeful agency not just as the expansion of resources, the distribution of power or the enlargement of decision-making ability, but also as the psychological power within that drives agents above and beyond their own socio-economic characteristics, to make positive changes for their own lives and the community around them.

5.7. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have described the importance of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* for agents in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. *Ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* underlay informant's conceptions of purposeful agency and were fundamental to people to improve their personal and collective *hèrè*.

I have also analysed the processes involved in the creation of *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*. For example, *dusu* came from watching others succeed, which generated positive envy to help pursue initiatives that people valued. *Ka da I yèrè la* came from encouragement and watching other people succeed, which instilled a self-belief. Gender, age, formal education level and deprivation were cited much less by informants as being conditions of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, suggesting these concepts cannot be reduced to agents'

socio-economic characteristics. I will come back to this point in the next chapter (section 6.5) when I use quantitative analysis to examine this claim further.

Dusu and *ka da I yèrè la* had both an instrumental and intrinsic value to respondents. *Dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, through the narrative of change, drove people to achieve instrumental personal and community change. Through interviews and life histories as well as observations and general conversations documented through my time in the field, I heard of many individuals and groups overcoming insurmountable odds to improve *hèrè* using such a narrative. Through a discussion of the inherent relationality embedded in the narrative of change and the concepts of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, I rejected that the narrative of change as an expression of political liberalism and individualism. However, this is not to say that the narrative of change could not be used to pursue neoliberal goals.

Ka da I yèrè la and *dusu* are intrinsically important to informants because the very pursuit of purposeful agency can be an end in itself. *Dusu* was described as doing things not just for the outcome, but also because you love it – the action itself is an end. Like the concept of autonomy in SDT, *dusu* has a continuum where at one end was doing things because you love it and it comes from the heart, whilst at the other end is doing things because of force or coercion. *Ka da I yèrè la*, or self-efficacy, is also intrinsically important to informants in Kalabankoro Nerekoro where it is related to people not doing any dirty work, not lying to people and not betraying anyone's trust. This moral

component built into the definition of *ka da I yèrè la* evoked a moral direction related to what is acceptable action and what is not.

Dusu and *ka da I yèrè la* both have significance to the social development of Kalabankoro Nerekoro on three levels, firstly through the instrumental achievement of aspirations pursued by the agency, and secondly through the *hèrè* experienced by the agent undertaking initiatives intrinsically valuable to the agent. Thirdly, the constructive component is significant where through the pursuit of aspirations, actors can potentially shift social norms and unhelpful structures oppressing them (although this is not always intentional). Thus the psychological concepts of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* are legitimate elements in purposeful agency and social development.

Finally, whilst *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* have instrumental and intrinsic importance for people's lives in helping them actualise initiatives to enhance or achieve some *hèrè*, it is not the point of this thesis to ever assume that *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* is sufficient for making positive changes in people's lives. As I will show in Chapter 7, when people activate their *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, normally through associations, there are other factors that thwart their agency and this needs to be addressed.

CHAPTER 6:

LOCATING *DUSU* AND *KA DA I YÈRÈ LA*:

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Bomochi bla ni kolochi ta ti ma kè alimami ye – “A long beard and a rosary will not make you a priest”³⁸⁵

So far in my thesis, I have argued that the two concepts of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* are significant for purposeful agency of people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. These concepts are valuable at both intrinsic and instrumental levels. I have also argued that these two concepts of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* are conditioned through processes relating to watching others achieve and to encouragement, and so socio-economic characteristics of gender, age, deprivation level and education level are weak proxies for *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*. This chapter aims to test another measure of *dusu*; autonomy from Self Determination theory, using quantitative analysis from my household survey. I will also draw on life story interview data to situate the results. Firstly, I will define the relationship between the empirical concept of *dusu* and the theoretical concept of autonomy from SDT to test a potential proxy for *dusu* from social psychology. Secondly, I will use the RAI constructed from SDT to measure levels of autonomy in various domains important to the lives of people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. Situating the concept of *dusu* using the RAI measure an interesting exercise as empowerment is

³⁸⁵ Bambara Proverb

measured as a function of the agent's opportunity structure and the resources the agent has, through the distribution of power, or through decision-making ability³⁸⁶. As I have argued in Chapter 2 (section 2.1), these common measures are quite inefficient as they miss the psychological element of purposeful agency. As Martha Nussbaum (2002) puts it, "anything worth measuring in human quality of life is difficult to measure. Resource – based approaches simply substitute something easy to measure for what really ought to be measured, a heap of stuff for the richness of human functioning."³⁸⁷ My contribution is the use of the RAI to test for a more useful and related proxy for *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*, however it is a proxy nonetheless. Whilst using the RAI, I also show that there is a weak correlation between decision-making ability and socio-economic characteristics with the RAI, possibly adding the claims already related in this research that decision-making ability and socio-economic characteristics (age gender, deprivation and education level) should also not be used as a proxy for *dusu*.

6.1. USING THE RAI TO MEASURE *DUSU* AND *KA DA I YÈRÈ LA*

In this chapter I will present quantitative analysis from my household survey of the whole of Kalabankoro Nerekoro. I included the RAI in my household survey, by introducing questions formulated from SDT methodology and suggested by Ibrahim and Alkire (2007) in their Empowerment Questionnaire³⁸⁸ (see Chapter 3 on Methods for a full description of the methodology of this survey, section 3.5.2). I am using autonomy as a proxy for *dusu* because there is significant relatedness between the two constructs

³⁸⁶ Alkire, "Concepts and Measures of Agency."

³⁸⁷ Martha Nussbaum, "Capabilities and Social Justice," *International Studies Review* 4, no. 2 (2002): 135.

³⁸⁸ Ibrahim and Alkire, "Empowerment and agency: A proposal for internationally-comparable indicators."

although caution must be exercised as *dusu* and autonomy cannot be mistaken as the same constructs. Alkire (2009) argues that the RAI is a robust measure for the concept of autonomy defined in SDT; such an index can also be used as a tool for measuring psychological agency³⁸⁹. In addition to using autonomy from SDT, Alkire (2009) makes the case for using Bandura's self-efficacy scales to measure psychological agency – which would link to *ka da I yèrè la*.³⁹⁰ The implementation of such efficacy scales was beyond the logistical capacity of my study due the large number of the questions needed to follow this methodology for each domain that from analysis of my qualitative data especially observations and life stories, were central to the agent's life (minor household purchases, Islam, healthcare and work at a minimum). These central domains were important to people's purposeful agency as they were the sections or areas of people lives articulated where most personal change came about through the activation of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*. For example, in Asa's life story in the last chapter, she articulated feeling closer to *hèrè* when she had success in the domains of household expenses (related to her being able to look after her family), and work (income generating activities). Many domains of Malian life were not articulated as central to my informant's purposeful agency, such as crime prevention, performance (singing and dance) and political involvement and thus were left out. I did include a general question about the informants' overall self-efficacy and social efficacy, however these questions

³⁸⁹ Alkire, "Concepts and measures of agency"; Alkire, "Measuring Agency: Issues and Possibilities."; Sabina Alkire et al., "The Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index," *Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative Working Paper 58*(2013).

³⁹⁰ See Bandura, "Self - efficacy: the exercise of control"; Bandura, "Guide For Constructing Self-Efficacy Scales.". These scales are domain specific where through qualitative analysis, a good understanding for the functioning of efficacy of activities in a domain is developed specifically relating to the multifaceted ways in which efficacy beliefs operate within the selected activity domain. Then, questions relating to the knowledge of the activity domain are listed – these lists are exhaustive. Each question is then related to a response scale in which are constructed for the informant to place their perceived efficacy along.

are not ideal as efficacy is domain-specific and not universal³⁹¹. Thus I opted not to use them in the final analysis. For this reason in this chapter I measure the concept of *dusu* through the RAI methodology, but I could not measure *ka da I yèrè la* as I could not implement the self-efficacy measurement. Because of the inherent relatedness between *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, it could be the case that by measuring *dusu* we are measuring *ka da I yèrè la* as well; however, I cannot claim this with confidence.

Specifically there are four points to show the linkages between *dusu* and autonomy from Self Determination Theory:

Firstly, autonomy and *dusu* are intrinsic motivation – coming from within to drive people’s agency and change their circumstances. For example one woman explained, “Dusu is the fact of undertaking initiatives to help your family and community, and it helps you do it. It is the most important because it also makes you move toward your ambition³⁹².” Also, another female interviewee said of *dusu*, “*dusu* is to muster something deep inside you to get something³⁹³”. Secondly autonomy and *dusu* contribute to *hèrè*. One woman interviewee, who was part of an association, was MPI poor but had also just began a literacy classes so she could read and write described the importance of doing things you lived, “*Dusu* in an energy you mustered in seeking things you love³⁹⁴”. Thirdly, autonomy and *dusu* are relational and needs supportive environments for people to be able to undertake agency that is intrinsically motivated.

³⁹¹ Bandura argues that efficacy measures should ideal be domain specific and not universal, however he does say that an overall measure can give a sense of one’s efficacy as it is true that efficacy in one domain can enhance efficacy in another domain if there is a cognitive link between the two activities to the agent Bandura, "Guide For Constructing Self-Efficacy Scales."

³⁹² Female Interviewee 2, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 16th November 2011

³⁹³ Female Interviewee 1, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 16th November 2011

³⁹⁴ Female Interviewee 3, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 16th November 2011

For example on male interviewee explained *dusu* as, “It is a deep motivation coming from within, driving people in their purposeful agency, “*Dusu* is something that pushes you to achieve your goal. It is like a kind of jealous, not exactly jealous, but like jealous in your interior from seeing other people doing things you love. If you want to do these things, you will do it perfectly and you will do it as it should be done. That is *dusu*³⁹⁵”. Fourthly, autonomy and *dusu* are not absolute – both *dusu* and autonomy in Self Determination Theory can be mapped on a scale (as shown in Chapter 2, section 2.2). For the autonomy scale, at one end is the autonomous intrinsically motivated self and at the other end, a person who is extrinsically motivated. In the *dusu* scale, at one end was doing things because the agent loves it (they come from the heart). At the other end of the scale was doing things because of force, fear, shame or punishment. Because of this rather striking relatedness between constructs, the RAI is a potential theoretical measure of *dusu*. Ryan and Deci (2000) describe the following levels of autonomy:

- *External Regulation*: Because of external pressure (to obtain rewards or avoid punishment)
- *Introjected Regulation*: Because doing so will gain approval by others or avoid guilt and shame
- *Identified Regulation*: Because the person identifies the activity to be valuable
- *Integrated Regulation*: Because activity is valuable and its pursuit is integrated with the person’s other activities

These four levels of autonomy are reflected in the RAI. For the household survey of this study, I did not include questions on identified regulation. Instead, I analysed the other

³⁹⁵ Male Interviewee, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 26th January 2011

three levels across five domains: minor household purchases, informants who had paid employment, informants who undertook unpaid household work, healthcare and Islam. The five domains emerged from the examination of people's life stories and other qualitative data such as observations. These domains were most significant to people's purposeful agency for pursuing the aspiration of 'increasing personal and/or community *hèrè*'. Ideally a sixth domain of working in associations would have contributed further to the analysis; unfortunately due to practical data constraints, I was not able to get quantitative data for measuring the RAI in associations.

As for the domain of minor household purchases, informants were asked about how they made minor household purchases such as food or other daily items, providing feedback on the following statements:

- a. I cannot make minor household purchases differently to how I do them.
- b. I make minor household purchases because my spouse, another person, society, social organisations or my community insist that I make them.
- c. I make minor household purchases according to what others expect of me or to obtain their approval. If I did not, they might blame me.
- d. I make minor household purchases according to what I personally consider important.

The expenses considered in this analysis were only the minor household purchases, in order to address gender inequality in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. This is because men decide on the major expenses, whilst both men and women decide on the minor ones. Thus by understanding if informants made decisions regarding minor household

purchases, we can obtain meaningful responses for both men and women. Note that youth are disregarded in both major and minor household purchases, so we expect their decision-making to be consistently low on this question.

For the purpose of the employment analysis, the sample has been divided into two groups: Group A, consisting of people with regular paid work, and Group B, made up of those with unpaid household work. Informants included in Group A were asked to provide the following feedback regarding their job:

- a. I do this job only because I need the money.
- b. I do this job because my spouse/partner, other people, society, social organisations or my community insist that I do.
- c. I do this job because others expect it of me or to obtain their approval. If I did not, they might blame me.
- d. I do this job because I personally consider it important.

By contrast, people included in Group B were asked to answer questions about the rationale for their unpaid household work, choosing among:

- a. I do the household tasks only because they are necessary.
- b. I do the household tasks because my spouse/partner, other people, society, social organisations or my community insist that I do.
- c. I do the household tasks because others expect it of me or to obtain their approval. If I did not, they might blame me.
- d. I do the household tasks because I personally consider it important.

There is a gender element to this question as most people doing unpaid household work are women.

As for the healthcare dimension, informants were asked to answer the question “how would you solve a serious health problem?”, choosing among

- a. I cannot face a serious health problem of my own differently from how I do.
- b. If I have a serious health problem, I do what my spouse or some other person, society or social organisations insist that I do.
- c. If I have a serious health problem, I act according to what other people expect of me or to get their approval. If I did not, they might blame me.
- d. If I have a serious health problem, I do what I personally consider is important.

The domain of healthcare was chosen above the domain of education because of its relevance to all households, whereas education would only be relevant to households that had school-aged children.

Regarding the domain of Islam, the objective of the question was to clarify whether people were practising this religion because of a deep alignment with its values, or rather because of social coercion; specifically they had to evaluate the relative accuracy of these motivations:

- a. I have to practise Islam.
- b. I practise Islam because my spouse, another person, society, social organisations or my community insist that I do.

- c. I practise Islam according to what others expect of me or to obtain their approval. If I did not, they might blame me.
- d. I practise Islam because I personally consider it important.

As we can see, in all the question sequences above, I included a ‘no control’ option (option a.) to account for the possibility that the questions were ‘not applicable’ because it is the force of circumstances rather than any particular person’s influence which drives the informant’s behaviour. The reason I did not analyse the ‘no control’ in the RAI is because it has a number of meanings in different circumstances and does not necessarily indicate lack of autonomy. For example, most people would say they had to work, because of force of circumstances as most people have not inherited wealth, this is not necessarily disempowering; because whilst it is a force of circumstance, people may also say they love what they do for work³⁹⁶.

Whilst there is a considerable connectedness between autonomy from SDT and *dusu*, we cannot deem them as the same. Nonetheless, it is an interesting exercise to examine the use of the RAI as a potentially useful proxy for *dusu* than other measures such as decision making ability and socio-economic status. The aim of the RAI tool is to analyse how autonomous agents are in domains of their day-to-day life and then compare these results with proxies for socio-economic characteristics and decision-making measures.

³⁹⁶ "Technical Notes on the Use of the Empowerment Module."

6.2. HOUSEHOLD QUESTIONNAIRE STABILITY RETEST

In order to assess the stability of my analysis, I completed a specific test (hereinafter “stability test”) by asking some volunteers from the initial sample (totalling 12.2% of the total population) to answer the same questions included in the first questionnaire two weeks later. These people’s new responses were matched with the previous ones and then compared to discuss the stability of the questionnaire. A simple crosstab on the sub-sample revealed that it was young males who responded predominantly to the second questionnaire. As young males are not completely representative of the original sample population, some caution should be used in considering the stability of this quantitative analysis – and thus conclusions I am drawing from this data are only to triangulate qualitative analysis presented in the last chapter. I will now explain the stability test results.

The first result of this test is that this study was moderately stable. In the questionnaire with over 144 questions, 70.76% were answered identically the second time. Looking at the difference between the three parts of the full questionnaire, the deprivation module was the most stable with 85.02% correct matches between the first and the second round. This is followed by the OPHI Empowerment Module (which includes the questions used in the analysis of this chapter), with 74.09% correct matches, and the general module with 63.77% matches (these questions are not used in the analysis of this chapter).

Overall, we can never expect perfect stability when measuring something like psychological agency as there is a temporal element inherent in it³⁹⁷. The temporal factor is important because people's agency and their subjective experience of it can change from moment to moment (especially in acute experiences such as arguments, loss, and hearing bad news). For example, when Asa's business shoes were stolen (as described in Chapter 5, section 5.1), she said she had a really dark period where she felt she would never be able to get back to where she was before they were stolen. Yet shortly thereafter, when her husband suggested she begin plaiting hair to start saving funds, her *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè* began to be restored. Therefore, it is important to include a temporal element when considering *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*.

Another reason for the non-perfect matching of the results of the two questionnaire rounds lies in a structural aspect of the survey itself, such as the investigation of "subjective" questions: participants were in fact asked to give very detailed and nuanced answers (not just agree/disagree, but also clarifying to which extent they agreed: strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree). It was clear from implementing the questionnaire and from discussions with the questionnaire teams that informants did not feel there was a large difference between the categories 'strongly agree' and 'agree', or between 'strongly disagree' or 'disagree.'³⁹⁸ Nevertheless, such options were kept in order to be able to calculate RAI according to the methodology specified in Chapter 3 (section 3.7). An interesting result comes from the attempt to assess the impact of such

³⁹⁷ Emirbabyer and Mische, "What is Agency?."

³⁹⁸ William Foddy, *Constructing Questions for Interviews and Questionnaires: Theory and Practise in Social Research* (Cambridge University Press, 1993); John Robinson, Phillip Shaver, and Lawrence Wrightsman, *Measures of Personality and Social Psychological Attitudes* (Elsevier, 1991). Patricia M Greenfield, "You can't take it with you: Why ability assessments don't cross cultures," *American Psychologist* 52, no. 10 (1997).

questions on the overall stability of the analysis: it appears that, considering as equivalent (just for these questions) the outcomes “strongly agree”/“agree” and “strongly disagree”/“disagree”, the overall stability of the analysis robustly increases. Table 4 shows these results: overall, the stability of the full questionnaire increases from 70.76% to 87.26%; also the percentages of correct matches in the general and OPHI modules increase rapidly as these both contained many “subjective” questions (the deprivation module included none of these questions).

TABLE 5 – STABILITY TEST BY QUESTIONNAIRE MODULE

Question	Stability Rate (%)	Stability Rate Adjusted (%)
General Module	63.77	87.91
OPHI Empowerment Module	74.09	87.36
MPI Poverty Module	85.02	-
All Questions Combined	70.76	87.26

THE NUMBER OF IDENTICAL RESPONSES IN THE TWO QUESTIONNAIRE ROUNDS – THE ADJUSTED RATE COMBINES ‘DISAGREE’/‘STRONGLY DISAGREE’ AND ‘AGREE’/‘STRONGLY AGREE’ (N = 36)

A detailed analysis of the stability test also showed that the way in which the questionnaire was implemented mattered. The first questionnaire was carried out by five different teams of interviewers, duly trained over two days by myself, and supervised by my male research assistant. Differently from this, my research assistant himself directly carried out the second questionnaire round. Due to his significant experience, my research assistant’s analysis was much more effective and reliable, because he spent a lot of time in building rapport with informants to make them feel comfortable³⁹⁹. This “human factor” and the different experience provided by the interviewers from different

³⁹⁹ Refer to research that show the importance of building rapport in administering household surveys

groups showed up in Table 6. In addition, Table 6 shows the impact of adjusting the “subjective” questions by the different groups.

TABLE 5 – STABILITY TEST BY GROUP

Questionnaire Group	Stability Rate (%)	Stability Rate <i>Adjusted</i> (%)
Group 1	74.60	77.51
Group 2	54.28	69.79
Group 3	77.31	93.06
Group 4	67.43	87.64
Group 5	80.85	95.43

THE DISTRIBUTION BETWEEN GROUPS OF THE STABILITY RATES, EXPRESSED IN PERCENTAGES OF THE CORRECT SAME RESPONSES BETWEEN THE QUESTIONNAIRE TESTED AT TIME ONE AND TIME TWO. THE TABLE ALSO SHOWS THE QUESTIONNAIRE IN FULL (AS IT WAS ADMINISTERED) AND WITH THE ‘AGREE’/‘STRONGLY AGREE’ AND ‘DISAGREE’/‘STRONGLY DISAGREE’ CATEGORIES COMBINED. (N = 36)

The higher performance achieved in terms of stability by Group 5 is further evidence of the above point about the incidence of the human factor in carrying out the questionnaires: as a matter of fact, when we visited the different groups doing the questionnaires, it was obvious that Group 5 was really careful, engaging and warm with the interviewees, very similarly to my research assistant. By contrast, Group 2 appeared quite problematic in this respect, and did not really engage well with the interviewees, often rushing through the questions.

In summary, the analysis of the stability retest suggests that any future questionnaire regarding empowerment is likely to observe that the measurement (non-sampling) error for ‘subjective questions’ is higher, and that the training of interviewers in rapport-building is critical. Particular attention should be given to those implementing the

questionnaire as it is clear that groups that were not sympathetic and rushed through such sensitive questions did not seem to garner trust with the informants, causing the questionnaire to be treated by the informants much the same way as the implementers. Whilst the questionnaire instrument was moderately stable, it should be used with awareness of the non-sampling measurement error, especially the limitations associated with the category of analysis of age (low response rate and problematic cut off). Further research and testing of the methodology of this thesis would benefit examining the possibility of unobserved variables that also could be influencing purposeful agency of informants and pave the way for potential regression analysis. In light of these limitations, inferences made from this chapter are considered with caution and only put forward if they support qualitative findings. Specifically, in this chapter I will use the quantitative results from the household questionnaire to triangulate and expand on my arguments drawing from my qualitative research from the last chapter.

In the next sections of this chapter I will firstly test the quantitative validity of the RAI measures, and secondly examine the correlations of the RAIs in each domain with each other. In the final section of this chapter I will investigate the correlation between the RAI and other alleged proxies for empowerment such as socio-economic characteristics and decision-making ability.

6.3. VALIDITY OF THE RAI SURVEY STRUCTURE

I will begin my quantitative analysis by first assessing the validity of the RAI tool for measuring autonomy and *dusu*. First of all, to test the validity of RAI as a measurement tool for autonomy, I need to analyse whether the expected patterns between the different

levels of autonomy are realised in this particular application. Specifically I would expect that external regulation (doing things for reward or to avoid punishment) and introjected regulation (avoid shame or guilt) are positively correlated, as they both are motivating factors that may or may not be in line with one's intrinsic values⁴⁰⁰. We also expect external regulation to have a negative or low correlation with integrated regulation (in line with one's values) as they are assumed to be distant from one another in the autonomy scale (scale shown in Chapter 2, section 2.2). To prove these patterns, I analysed, as shown in Table 7, the correlations between the RAIs in the different autonomy levels across each domain.

TABLE 7 – EXTERNAL, INTROJECTED AND INTEGRATED AUTONOMY CORRELATIONS ACROSS DOMAINS

Correlates	Minor Expenses Household	Paid Work	Unpaid Household Work	Healthcare	Islam
External with introjected	.239** N=296	.355** N=198	.936** N=94	.252** N=300	.549** N=300
External with integrated	.176** N=299	-.594** N=196	-.817** N=93	.129* N=302	.007 N=302
Introjected with integrated	.209** N=296	-.530** N=196	-.817** N=93	.145** N=302	-.037 N=300

**** CORRELATION IS SIGNIFICANT AT THE 0.01 LEVEL (2-TAILED). *CORRELATION IS SIGNIFICANT AT THE 0.05 LEVEL (2-TAILED).**

The results in Table 7 show that the expected patterns of the different autonomy levels are verified. Namely, at a general level, the numbers show a positive correlation between external and introjected regulation, and that both of these levels have low or

⁴⁰⁰ Ryan and Deci, "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development and Well-being."

negative correlations with integrated regulation. These results also reflect the qualitative findings of Chapter 5 that people's *dusu* is lowered when they are forced to do activities they did not like. Conversely, these results also support the qualitative findings that people's *dusu* is supported through undertaking activities they 'loved' and intrinsically valued.

At a more specific level, there were high negative correlations between external and integrated regulation for the domains of paid work and unpaid household work ($-.594$ and $-.817$, p , 0.01). As for the domains of healthcare and minor household purchases, as expected there is almost no correlation between external and integrated regulation. The domain of Islam was not statistically significant.

Regarding integrated and introjected regulation, as expected we can see that in the domains of unpaid household work and paid work they have high negative correlations ($-.530$ and $-.817$, p , 0.01). Also, in the domains of healthcare and minor household purchases there is basically no correlation (p 0.01). Once again the domain of Islam was not significant.

Table 7, also shows the n values for the RAI variables which are different for each. Of the total sample size of 307, a few respondents for each RAI questions did not answer. Specifically for the domain of Minor Expenses Household $N=296$ (11 missing), Paid Work $N=198$ /Unpaid Household Work $N=92$ / (total $N= 290$, 17 missing), Healthcare $N=300$ (7 missing) and Islam $N=295$ (12 missing). There are a few possible reasons why a people may have missed these questions, firstly because the questions made

people feel uncomfortable, they could have been difficult to answer, or because these questions were towards the end of the questionnaire and were a little timelier than other questions to answer, respondents may have felt fatigue and was easier to miss it.

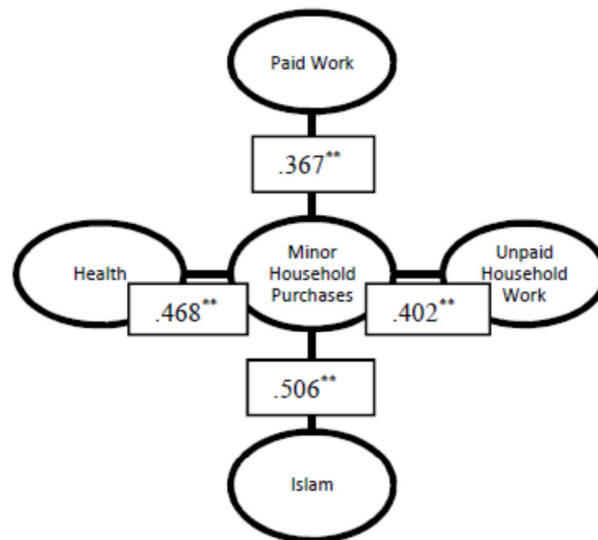
Overall, the results in Table 7 suggest that the RAI is valid for measuring the autonomy, as data are in line with what the theoretical patterns with the exception of Islam⁴⁰¹.

6.4. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN RAI DOMAINS

The RAI, which suggests the levels of autonomy people have in a particular domain, also provides the opportunity to examine autonomy across domains. I can do this by calculating the overall autonomy measure (the calculation of RAI is presented in Chapter 3, section 3.7) for each of the domains, and comparing the measures with each other. Such analysis is particularly interesting because the literature suggests that empowerment is domain-specific⁴⁰² and thus we cannot always expect person A, who is empowered in one domain (e.g. minor household purchases), to be empowered in another domain (e.g. work).

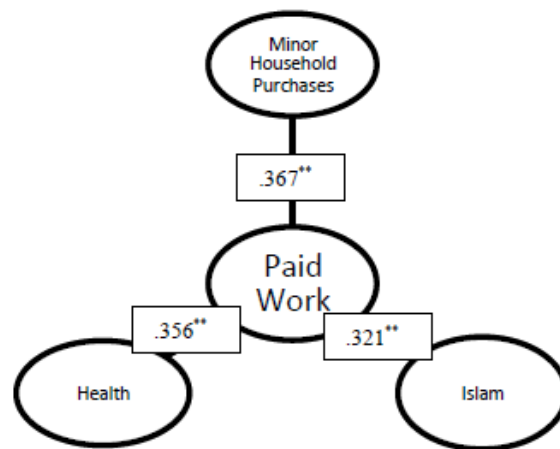
⁴⁰¹ For my statistical analysis I have used Kendall's tau_b as it is the most conservative measure and it would require further tests beyond the scope of my thesis to validate my variables as cardinal variables.

⁴⁰² Ryan and Deci, "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development and Well-being."; Alkire, "Concepts and Measures of Agency."; Ibrahim and Alkire, "Empowerment and agency: A proposal for internationally-comparable indicators."; Alkire, "Subjective Quantitative Studies of Human Agency." Bandura, "Guide For Constructing Self-Efficacy Scales."

FIGURE 9 – CORRELATIONS WITH THE DOMAIN OF MINOR HOUSEHOLD PURCHASES

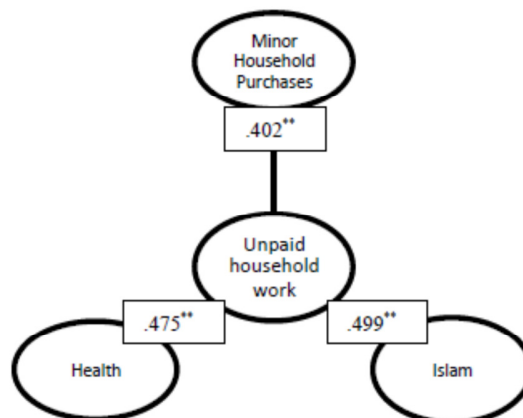
**** CORRELATION IS SIGNIFICANT AT THE 0.01 LEVEL (2-TAILED).**

Figure 9 shows that level of autonomy in the domain of minor household purchases is moderately and positively correlated with all the other domains, especially healthcare and Islam, ($p, 0.01$) – with even Islam showing a significant correlation which, at 0.5, is higher than that with paid or unpaid work.

FIGURE 10 – CORRELATIONS WITH THE DOMAIN OF PAID WORK

**** CORRELATION IS SIGNIFICANT AT THE 0.01 LEVEL (2-TAILED).**

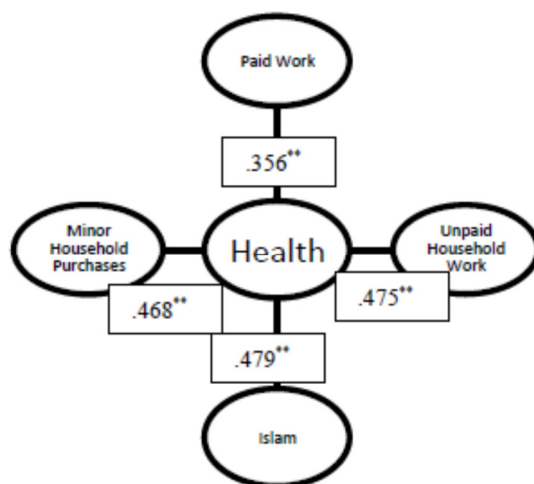
Figure 10 shows how autonomy in the domain of work is positively and moderately correlated with all other domains ($p, 0.01$), with a very low deviation (between .321 and .367).

FIGURE 11 – CORRELATIONS WITH THE DOMAIN OF UNPAID HOUSEHOLD WORK

**** CORRELATION IS SIGNIFICANT AT THE 0.01 LEVEL (2-TAILED).**

Figure 11 shows that levels of autonomy in the domain of unpaid household work are moderately and positively correlated with all the other domains ($p, 0.01$), especially with Islam and healthcare.

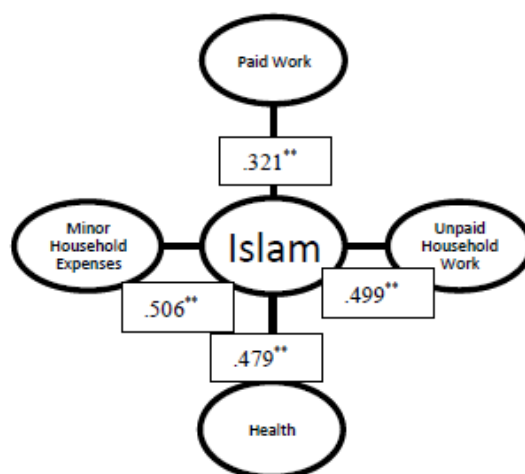
FIGURE 12 – CORRELATIONS WITH THE DOMAIN OF HEALTHCARE



**** CORRELATION IS SIGNIFICANT AT THE 0.01 LEVEL (2-TAILED).**

Figure 12 shows how autonomy in the domain of healthcare is moderately and positively correlated with all other domains ($p, 0.01$).

FIGURE 13 – CORRELATIONS WITH THE DOMAIN OF ISLAM



**** CORRELATION IS SIGNIFICANT AT THE 0.01 LEVEL (2-TAILED).**

Figure 13 shows how autonomy in the domain of Islam is moderately and positively correlated with all domains ($p, 0.01$), with a significant deviation, going from 0.321 with paid work to a significant 0.506 with minor household purchases.

By reading all the above results together, what is most striking is the way in which all domains are positively correlated with each other. Whilst the relationship between empowerment in one domain correlates with empowerment in another domain, I do not think we can infer that empowerment in one domain is a proxy for other domains of the agent's life. This is for two reasons. Firstly, the literature overwhelmingly suggests that empowerment is multidimensional⁴⁰³. Secondly, whilst all correlations but one are

⁴⁰³ Ibrahim and Alkire, "Empowerment and agency: A proposal for internationally-comparable indicators."; Alsop, Bertelsen, and Holland, "Empowerment in Practise: From Analysis to Implementation."; Narayan-Parker, *Measuring empowerment : cross-disciplinary perspectives*; Samman and Santos, "Agency and Empowerment: A review of concepts, indicators and empirical evidence."; Alkire et al., "The Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index."

significant at a p level of 0.01, they are only moderate in strength – for example, only in the correlation between the domain of Islam and minor household purchases does the coefficient exceed 0.5.

Nevertheless, an interesting finding we can deduce from this analysis is that there is a core correlation across the domains. Such correlation may be explained by the psychological elements of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, which can be thought of as skills that create a permeability across dimensions of empowerment.

6.5. SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISTRIBUTION OF RAI

I analysed the socio-economic attributes of the people who registered high and low RAI scores for each domain. To do this I found the top 30% in each crosstab and considered these people as having high RAI. The remaining 70% were considered low RAI. I chose the 30% cut-off to match the MPI value as 30% of my sample are MPI non-poor and the rest are MPI poor. Specifically I used categories of analysis including gender, MPI deprivation, years at school and age.

TABLE 8 – CROSSTABS OF LOW RAI (SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS IN RELEVANT DOMAINS)

	Minor household expenses	Paid Work	Unpaid Household work	Healthcare	Islam
Female	49,40 % (N=124)	34,68 % (N=59)	78,69 % (N=69)	49,50 % (N=129)	52,63 % (N=125)
Male	50,60 % (N=151)	65,32 % (N=123)	21,31 % (N=18)	50,50 % (N=150)	47,37 % (N=150)
MPI Poor	70,45 % (N=215)	60,29 % (N=138)	80,95 % (N=69)	72,64 % (N=214)	67,07 % (N=214)
MPI Non Poor	29,55 % (N=81)	39,71 % (N=60)	19,05 % (N=23)	27,36 % (N=86)	32,93 % (N=81)
5 and under years of education	59,78 % (N=158)	56,62 % (N=101)	73,02 % (N=60)	55,19 % (N=160)	64,63 % (N=160)
6 + years of education	40,22 % (N=138)	43,38 % (N=97)	26,98 % (N=32)	44,81 % (N=140)	35,37 % (N=135)
30 years and under	20,11 % (N=52)	19,85 % (N=34)	14,29 % (N=16)	20,28 % (N=54)	19,51 % (N=48)
31 years and over	79,89 % (N=244)	80,15 % (N=164)	85,71 % (N=76)	79,72 % (N=246)	80,49 % (N=247)

The first thing to notice about Table 8, looking at the sub-samples of analysis, is that most of the pairings have concentration limits which statistically invalidate any possible additional analysis (as we can see in the very different Ns – e.g. we cannot significantly investigate “minor household expenses” looking at the age of the respondents, as the vast majority of them were over 31 (244) compared to the under-30s (52).

The only socio-economic characteristics we can investigate (marked with a thick line) are gender, across all the domains except “paid work” and “unpaid household work”, and education, across all the domains except “unpaid household work”.

Looking at Table 8, what we can say is that, for low levels of RAI, gender does not explain any difference in autonomy in any of the domains where the analysis consistent,

since the sub-sample appears almost equally distributed between females and males. Education and years at school are slightly more discriminatory, especially when we are talking about “minor household expenses” and “Islam”, where we can observe a higher number of less educated persons. What is interesting about these results, as limited as they are, is that people with more favourable socio-economic characteristics are experiencing low RAI at about the same level as those with less favourable socio-economic characteristics, showing that it is hard to define people with less autonomy by gender or years at school (age and MPI deprivation results were not reliable for making any inferences).

TABLE 9 – CROSSTABS OF HIGH RAI (SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS IN RELEVANT DOMAINS)

	Minor household expenses	Paid Work	Unpaid Household work	Healthcare	Islam
Female	38,53% (N=124)	27,59% (N=59)	80,77% (N=69)	37,97% (N=129)	36,59% (N=125)
Male	61,47% (N=151)	72,41% (N=123)	19,23% (N=18)	62,03% (N=150)	63,41% (N=150)
MPI Poor	78,95% (N=215)	90,32% (N=138)	62,07% (N=69)	68,18% (N=214)	79,39% (N=214)
MPI Non Poor	21,05% (N=81)	9,68% (N=60)	37,93% (N=23)	31,82% (N=86)	20,61% (N=81)
5 and under years at school	43,59% (N=158)	38,71% (N=101)	48,28% (N=60)	48,86% (N=160)	41,22% (N=160)
6 + years at school	56,41% (N=138)	61,29% (N=97)	51,72% (N=32)	51,14% (N=140)	58,78% (N=135)
30 years and under	13,68% (N=52)	11,29% (N=34)	24,14% (N=16)	12,50% (N=54)	12,21% (N=48)
31 years and over	86,32% (N=244)	88,71% (N=164)	75,86% (N=76)	87,50% (N=246)	87,79% (N=247)

Table 9 shows the attributes of respondents with high levels of RAI. Again we cannot analyse most of the data because of the extremely different *N* values. In this case, whilst years at school (education) do not appear to be very significant in terms of

discriminatory power, we do see that for the domains of minor household purchases, healthcare and Islam, there is a possibility that men recorded higher RAI scores than women. However, even in these three domains, women's N values were still lower, and this could affect the marginal difference we see in percentages. Nonetheless, if it is the case that men were slightly more representative in the high RAI group, we should not be surprised that in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, men are the dominant and privileged group. As described in Chapter 4 (section 4.6.6.), women have far less freedom. What is interesting from this analysis is that many women (almost the same as men) are also experiencing high rates of autonomy given their apparent subjugation.

6.5.1. RAI RELATIONSHIPS WITH ANALYTICAL CATEGORIES

Following on from the analysis of crosstabs above and drawing on my qualitative data, this thesis has argued that whilst the opportunity structure of the agent is important and does shape people's values and aspirations, distilling opportunity structure into socio-economic characteristics is a weak proxy for autonomy and *dusu*. This is mainly because the process of producing *dusu* is much more nuanced than simply obtaining education, and includes processes of encouragement and watching other people succeed. For example one female informant who gave her life story for my research, when asked about where *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* come from, stated; "People are born with *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*. Then it revitalised by watching others and being encouraged. To take an example, this lady is breeding cattle then the I see her doing this so I think, why is she is able to do this and I am sitting here doing nothing. So self trust,

people can get it by seeing others... This does not matter if you are educated or not or have money or not⁴⁰⁴”.

In order to explore this argument further with empirical data, I have analysed the correlations between the RAIs in each of most relevant socio-economic characteristics dimensions: age, gender, years at school, and multidimensional poverty (including measures of health, education and living standards).

TABLE 10 – CORRELATIONS OF RAI DOMAINS WITH DIFFERENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUPS FOR KALABANKORO NEREKORO

	Age	Gender	Years at School	MPI Uncensored Deprivation (Household)
Minor Household Expenses	0.104 (N=183)	0.110* (N=275)	.138** (N=287)	0.01 (N=292)
Paid Work	0.094 (N=141)	0.014 (N=182)	0.064 (N=193)	.174** (N=195)
Unpaid Household Work	0.199 (N=41)	0.082 (N=87)	.185* (N=88)	-.181* (N=91)
Healthcare	.176** (N=185)	0.107* (N=279)	0.057 (N=291)	0.047 (N=296)
Islam	.225** (N=180)	0.025 (N=286)	.165** (N=286)	.124** (N=291)

THE MPI DEPRIVATION MEASURE HAS A HIGHER THE NUMBER THE MORE DEPRIVED ONE IS.

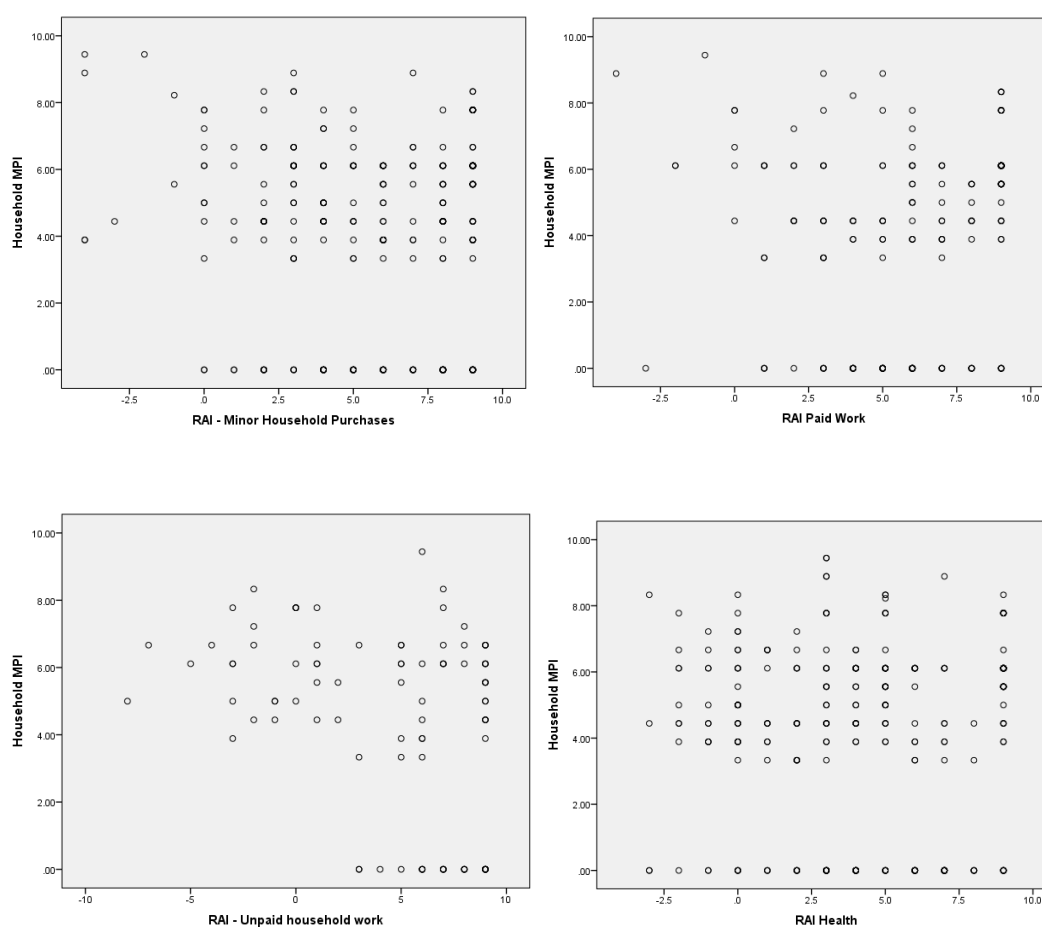
*UNCENSORED IS THE WEIGHTED MPI DEPRIVATION SCORE. ** CORRELATION IS SIGNIFICANT AT THE 0.01 LEVEL (2-TAILED). * CORRELATION IS SIGNIFICANT AT THE 0.05 LEVEL (2-TAILED).*

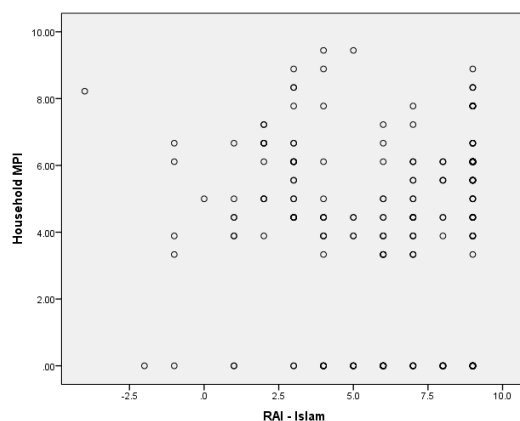
Table 10 shows that there is either low or no significant correlation between the RAIs in each domain and age, gender, years at school and MPI deprivation. The *N* values vary

⁴⁰⁴ Female Interviewee, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 28th December 2010

in the correlations because for some questions within the 307 household sample, people passed on questions, (a breakdown of the attributes of these respondents in Chapter 4 showed that mainly it was people who were MPI poor passing on questions, yet indiscriminate on gender and education). The analytical category of age has the lowest *N* value because many people never had their age recorded. The low correlation is further shown in the below scatterplots between the RAI of domains and the category of MPI deprivation.

FIGURE 14 – SCATTERPLOTS OF HOUSEHOLD RAI WITH MPI FOR ALL 5 DOMAINS FROM THE KALABANKORO NEREKORO SAMPLE





(N=307)

We can see from the scatterplots that there is no evident association between multidimensional deprivation and autonomy. This result support my qualitative conclusions, which is interesting seeing how in development practice it is assumed people who are more deprived have less agency and empowerment, whilst we are showing that when we define empowerment at the psychological level, this assertion is not necessarily the case.

So far in this chapter I have shown evidence supporting my qualitative claims that people's socio-economic characteristics of age, gender, deprivation level and years at school do not act as suitable proxies for *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*. Poor people, non-poor people (MPI deprivation), women, men, the educated and the illiterate all have *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*.

Further to my argument that socio-economic characteristics are weak proxies for *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, I have also argued that socio-economic characteristics cannot be

solely relied on is because there are other factors that contribute to *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*. In the case of *ka da I yèrè la*, the most important processes were encouragement by peers (68.8% of informants agreed or strongly agreed this was the case) and watching another succeed, which instilled belief in what was possible (64.8% of informants agreed or strongly agreed this was the case). In the case of *dusu*, the most relevant process was again watching another succeed, which created a positive envy (76.9% of informants agreed or strongly agreed this was the case).

I now want to analyse the relationship between RAI and decision-making ability in the domains of Islam, healthcare, paid work, unpaid household work and minor household purchases.

6.6. RAI AND DECISION-MAKING ABILITY

Decision-making ability is important in studies on empowerment where it is argued that consideration must be given to the process in which the agent comes about undertaking the action⁴⁰⁵. Decision-making ability becomes an important site of inquiry in empowerment because it is derived from the argument of choice. In Chapter 2 (section 2.1.), I argued that choice and decision-making ability are important, but they do not reveal how intrinsically valuable the choice or decision is to the agent⁴⁰⁶. Thus a measurement of autonomy and *dusu* is required to ensure the intrinsic dimension is captured.

⁴⁰⁵ Kabeer, "Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment."; Mackenzie and Stoljar, "Introduction: Autonomy Refigured."

⁴⁰⁶ Alkire, "Subjective Quantitative Studies of Human Agency."

In order to measure decision-making ability, in the household survey informants were asked for each domain who makes important decisions. The options were “you”, “you and your partner”, “you and someone else” (the latter two both infer autonomy when decisions are made together), “your partner”, “someone else”, and “society”. The latter three signified absence of decision-making ability only when respondents answered no to the follow-up question, ‘if you wanted to though, could you make the decision?’ This follow-up question allowed for the possibility that even if someone makes a decision for you, it could still be aligned with your values.

In Table 11, we can see that informants in my household survey had high decision-making ability in all domains.

TABLE 11 – INFORMANT DECISION-MAKING ABILITY FOR DOMAINS

				Minor	Paid and	Healthcare	Islam (%)
				Household	Unpaid	(%)	
				Purchases (%)	work (%)		
Have	Decision-Making			88.6	88.9	91.2	92.8
Ability							
Do	Not	Have	Decision-	11.4	11.1	8.8	7.2
Making	Ability						

(N=307)

In Table 11, we see that people’s perceived decision-making ability across domains is high. However, as I have said in Chapter 2 (section 2.1.) using arguments put forward by Kabeer, choice should also include a provision to understand the ability agents have

to critically engage in the construction of what is valuable to choose⁴⁰⁷ – this is also not included in these current measures. This is an important omission particularly for women and in the domain of Islam as both gendered normal and Islamic norms are naturalised in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. Further still, in my qualitative analysis I have argued that whilst decision-making ability is important, it is not a proxy for the concepts of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*. This section will further expand on this assertion.

Even when marginalised groups experience decision-making ability, there is an assumption inherent that there are choices to be made. This does not account for the fact that some ‘choices’ are hidden in the social norms within some domains. Around gender and Islam, for example, norms are so strong that few choices are possible. However, at the same time, just assuming because someone is Islamic, or a woman, that they cannot be critical of their surrounding social norms is structurally deterministic and does not account for agency. For example, in my fieldwork, I met many women in Kalabankoro Nerekoro who were aware of the oppression of being a woman, and through their membership in associations were trying to change such social norms and structures for themselves and other women. Driving these initiatives were *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, which are different from decision-making ability, as Table 11 suggests. Again the *N* values vary because of missing data for some questions within the sample.

⁴⁰⁷ Kabeer, "Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment."

TABLE 12 – CORRELATIONS BETWEEN RAI AND DECISION-MAKING ABILITY

	RAI Minor Household Expenses	RAI Paid Work	RAI Unpaid Household Work	RAI Healthcare	RAI Islam
Decision-making ability for minor household expenses	-.210** (N=296)	-0.075 (N=186)	-.375** (N=92)	-.227** (N=300)	-.293** (N=295)
Decision-making ability for Islam	-.153** (N=296)	-0.031 (N=198)	-.191* (N=92)	-.117* (N=300)	-.235** (N=295)
Decision-making ability for work (paid or unpaid)	-.216** (N=296)	-0.001 (N=198)	-.392** (N=92)	-.253** (N=300)	-.303** (N=295)
Decision-making ability for healthcare	-.233** (N=296)	-.141* (N=198)	-.392** (N=92)	-.236** (N=92)	-.338** (N=295)

*THE HIGHER THE RAI VALUE IS, THE MORE AUTONOMY THE INFORMANT HAS. IT IS THE OPPOSITE FOR DECISION-MAKING ABILITY: THE HIGHER THE VALUE, THE LESS DECISION-MAKING ABILITY THE INFORMANT HAS ** CORRELATION IS SIGNIFICANT AT THE 0.01 LEVEL (2-TAILED). * CORRELATION IS SIGNIFICANT AT THE 0.05 LEVEL (2-TAILED).*

Table 12 shows weak relationships between measures of RAI and decision-making ability. We would expect a positive relationship between RAI and decision-making in each domain – we see this in minor household expenses, work, healthcare and Islam (they are negative values because the scales are inverse for the decision-making variable). However, these coefficients are low. It is interesting that there are also positive relationships across domains between decision-making ability and RAI.

Whilst decision-making ability seems to have some association with autonomy and *dusu*, they are not the same. This is because while decision-making ability is important for people, it does not include an intrinsic element to the choice. Choice alone does not show what is deeply important to the agent. For example, a person may intrinsically value having the ability to make decisions based on their religion, but not care so much

about making decisions on minor household expenses. Further still, informants in my research believed that choice was an effect of having *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*. Thus, choice or *sako*⁴⁰⁸ comes only after one has self-efficacy and internal motivation; then they could have the ability to choose what they want⁴⁰⁹. Nonetheless, this is not to say that decision-making is not important. We should consider this aspect of purposeful agency as an attempt to account for oppressive power; however, this does not necessarily mean that informants have critical analytical tools to identify the internalisation of oppressive norms which create choices to choose from, for example gender norms. Decision-making ability is one aspect of empowerment, but a critical analysis of the social milieu is needed.

Given the conclusions from my qualitative research on the importance of understanding *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* as both instrumental and intrinsic, the use of the RAI and decision-making tools have been helpful to further strengthen findings that structural proxies or one's social positionality are not enough to measure *dusu*. This chapter also finds the RAI tool to measure autonomy and *dusu* helpful; however, it would be good to use this tool alongside measures of self-efficacy.

6.7. RAI, DECISION-MAKING ABILITY AND LIFE STORIES

The objectives of my quantitative analysis presented so far were to: firstly, demonstrate the validity of the RAI tool for measuring *dusu*; secondly, prove that the most important

⁴⁰⁸ *Sako* is Bambara for choice

⁴⁰⁹ Female Interviewee 2, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 17th November 2011

socio-economic characteristics (namely gender, years at school and MPI deprivation) do not substantially correlate with *dusu* and *ka day yèrè la*; and thirdly, investigate the low correlation between decision-making ability and RAI found in the section above.

An interesting possibility to back up and investigate such results came from a closer analysis of a set of qualitative information gathered for some of the informants included in my household survey sample. Specifically, I could analyse the survey results of four people matched with the qualitative depth from their life story interviews.

All four people profiled below declared they all had high levels of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, and also expressed how these concepts were central in their lives. The descriptions of these four people (two women and two men), for the purpose of this analysis, are mainly focused on their *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, decision-making ability, socio-economic status and RAI levels. I will introduce ‘Noe’, ‘Kane’, ‘Salimata’ and ‘Ayesha’ now.

Noe

- Male, 61 years old;
- Four years of formal schooling;
- MPI poor household in all three domains of health, education and standards of living.

Noe is the traditional chief of Kalabankoro Nerekoro. He was born in a rural village in Sikasso, the southern region of Mali. Noe joined the Malian army after dropping out of

school at a young age because his parents could not afford to send him to school any longer. Noe was reluctant to speak much of those years with me, although he did say it was a life service in the army for which he was awarded a plot of land in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. When he arrived in Kalabankoro Nerekoro with his family of over eight children, the past traditional chief had just died, and so Noe was asked to assume the role. At the time of the interview he was spending most of his days helping people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro undertake initiatives to get out of poverty. Noe spoke at length about the biggest blockage to community development in Kalabankoro Nerekoro being the lack of unity and people not working together to overcome poverty. He told many stories of how initiatives by the poor were stopped because the elite in the area did not help and act in unity with the rest of the population. Whilst he had a leadership role in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, Noe seemed to have very little power with the wealthy. In fact many of the wealthy people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro ignored tradition and so ignored Noe's traditional leadership role. Noe's family was MPI poor; of the eight people who live in their house, no one has over five years of education, children have died, and they go without food often because they cannot afford it.

TABLE 13 – NOE'S RAI AND DECISION-MAKING SCORES

Empowerment Measure	Minor Household Purchases	Paid Work	Healthcare	Islam
RAI	8	6	2	9
Decision-making ability	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

THE VALUES FROM THE HOUSEHOLD SURVEY FOR NOE REGARDING RAI AND DECISION-MAKING ABILITY IN THE DOMAINS OF MINOR HOUSEHOLD PURCHASES, PAID WORK, HEALTHCARE AND ISLAM. (RAI SCALE WENT FROM -3 – 9)

To Noe, *ka da I yèrè la* is “at the beginning of everything.”⁴¹⁰ He credited *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* as the way for poor people like himself were able to make change in their lives: “Even if you do not have the financial capacity to do something, you have to believe in yourself and so start it. If it is possible, you can seek the help of someone else to join with you so you both can do it. You must believe in yourself first.”⁴¹¹

Considering both the survey and the interview, the most relevant points about Noe are that he has high levels of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*. Noe also has a high level of RAI across all the domains except that of healthcare, where he worried about being punished or judged for making the wrong decisions, thus causing him to avoid sometimes doing what he most valued. In the RAI domain of paid work, he also mentioned sometimes undertaking initiatives to avoid judgement or to seek others’ approval. Nonetheless, Noe said he had decision-making ability regarding minor household expenses, his work, healthcare and Islam.

Kane

- Male, age unknown but apparently 35–45 years old;
- Four years of formal schooling;
- MPI poor in education and standard of living.

⁴¹⁰ Male Interviewee, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 28th December 2010

⁴¹¹ *ibid.*

When “Kane” was younger growing up in the rural village, he had aspirations of becoming a “successful rich man⁴¹²”. After dropping out of school when his parents could not afford to pay the fees, he decided to travel to Senegal, Sierra Leone and the Gambia to work in the farms and mines. He had heard from others passing through his village there was a lot of money to be made which could help his family. Unfortunately Kane returned disappointed: “This [time] was not successful for me. At this moment I found it very hard, on my return to Mali I found boys my age already had gotten married and had a family. So life got hard.”⁴¹³ Kane decided to begin a trading business to try and ‘catch up’ to others around him. He would buy wheat, sheep, milk and shea butter from farmers in the region of Kayes to bring them back to Bamako to sell. He then decided to settle in Kalabankoro Nerekoro with his family. Here he joined an informal association of artisans in the area who make traditional Malian instruments. He said he had much *dusu* for this work as it was something that he really liked doing as he was very talented at it. At the time of the interview, that was Kane’s main source of income.

TABLE 14 – KANE’S RAI AND DECISION-MAKING SCORES

Empowerment Measure	Minor Household Purchases	Paid Work	Healthcare	Islam
RAI	8	9	9	9
Decision-making ability	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

THE VALUES FROM THE HOUSEHOLD SURVEY FOR KANE REGARDING RAI AND DECISION-MAKING ABILITY IN THE DOMAINS OF MINOR HOUSEHOLD PURCHASES, PAID WORK, HEALTHCARE AND ISLAM. (RAI SCALE WENT FROM -3 – 9).

⁴¹² Male interviewee, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 4th January 2011

⁴¹³ Male interviewee, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 4th January 2011

Considering both the survey and the interview, the most relevant points about Kane were firstly that he reported high levels of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* and secondly, despite being MPI poor and having low education, he showed high decision-making ability and RAI in all domains of his life. He did say that in the RAI domain of minor household purchases, because it was more the domain of his wife, he sometimes did things for her approval and not just for himself.

Salimata

- Female, age unknown although apparently 25–40 years old;
- Four years at school;
- MPI poor in education and standards of living.

I first met “Salimata” playing with her kids in front of her makeshift abode on a deserted working site in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. She and her family were MPI poor. In the interview about her life, Salimata spoke of hardship during her whole life growing up in a poor rural village in the region of Mopti. Both her parents had died and so her grandmother raised her. At a very young age Salimata moved to Kalabankoro Nerekoro with her husband for marriage. She never went to formal school, but attended Qur’anic school for a few years just to “know how to pray⁴¹⁴.” Salimata told me her day-to-day life was about trying to find money to keep her children fed and healthy. She said she did this through informal work of washing clothes for rich houses in the area. She also was part of an informal association with other women in the area, and together they

⁴¹⁴ Female interviewee, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 24th December 2010

would pool funds and help each other begin small income-generating activities like selling consumables in the local market.

TABLE 15 – SALIMATA’S RAI AND DECISION-MAKING SCORES

Empowerment Measure	Minor Household Purchases	Unpaid Household Work	Healthcare	Islam
RAI	n/a	n/a	9	9
Decision-making ability	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

THE VALUES FROM THE HOUSEHOLD SURVEY FOR SALIMATA REGARDING RAI AND DECISION-MAKING ABILITY IN THE DOMAINS OF MINOR HOUSEHOLD PURCHASES, UNPAID HOUSEHOLD WORK, HEALTHCARE AND ISLAM. (RAI SCALE WENT FROM -3 – 9)

Given both the survey and the interview, the most relevant points about Salimata were firstly that again she rated her *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* as very high and secondly that Salimata showed a very high level of RAI (although she did not give answers about two domains in the household survey). She also showed decision-making ability in all domains except unpaid household work, which was because her husband made these decisions (this aspect could even have something to do with why Salimata did not answer the RAI questions in that domain – to avoid disclosure).

Ayesha

- Female, 32 years;
- Four years at formal school;
- MPI poor household in education and standard of living.

“Ayesha” is a young mother (32 years old) I interviewed in her rented home in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. Her family was MPI poor. Her aspirations for her family were for them to be healthy, to have food and to be wealthy. Ayesha dropped out of school after four years when she fell pregnant. Now she has sporadic work cooking for expatriates in Bamako. Whilst Ayesha had a job when I spoke to her, she told me of times where she had no employment and it was difficult because she struggled to feed her family and to get them treatment when they were sick. When questioned about the things she deemed most significant in one’s life she answered “if you have financial means, and good health-mentality [*neke*] and body health, everything will work for you”. In response I asked, “What do you mean by healthy mentality (*neke*)?”, to which she replied, “I mean *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*,”⁴¹⁵ showing once again their centrality in informants’ lives (also she affirmed she had a high level of *neke*, helping her out through hardship and poverty she faced).

TABLE 16 – AYESHA’S RAI AND DECISION-MAKING SCORES

Empowerment Measure	Minor Household Purchases	Paid Work	Healthcare	Islam
RAI	7	9	4	9
Decision-making ability	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

THE VALUES FROM THE HOUSEHOLD SURVEY FOR AYESHA REGARDING RAI AND DECISION-MAKING ABILITY IN THE DOMAINS OF MINOR HOUSEHOLD PURCHASES, PAID WORK, HEALTHCARE AND ISLAM. (RAI SCALE WENT FROM -3 – 9)

Reviewing both the survey and the interview, the most relevant points about Ayesha was that she had high levels of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*. Ayesha had a high RAI score in

⁴¹⁵ Female Interview, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 22nd of December 2010.

all domains except healthcare, where decisions were sometimes taken with the objective of avoiding the judgement of others. Ayesha expressed decision-making ability in all domains.

The examples of Noe, Kane, Salimata and Ayesha support three main conclusions. Firstly, RAI is a good way of measuring *dusu*, as in all the four cases high levels of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* correspond to high levels of RAI.

Secondly, there is no evidence of a clear logical correlation between RAI and socio-economic characteristics as, for example, despite all four people being MPI poor and having low formal education, they still evinced high levels of psychological agency; also, gender is not discriminatory from this perspective, since two of the people were male and two female, but still with no difference in the level of RAI. What is not exactly clear from the examples of Noe, Kane, Salimata and Ayesha is how age impacts autonomy as only Ayesha knew her age; the others had never had their age recorded.

Finally, given the high levels of RAI and decision-making ability, there could be some sort of relationship between the two. However, a conclusion is too hard to draw given the previous correlations showing a statistically significant weak relationship. It would have been good to compare the stories of Noe, Salimata, Kane and Ayesha with others who expressed high MPI deprivation and at least over 6 years at formal school; however, I did not have such data.

In addition, the sobering reality of all four people's lives should not be overlooked as *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* are not enough. All four suffer from MPI deprivation, and so even though they may be psychologically empowered, when social norms and processes restrict agency, having the most *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* will not be enough. In Salimata's case, her husband does not allow her to express her decision-making ability in the domain of minor household expenses – a domain characteristically of women in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. This therefore points to the idea that whilst decision-making ability and socio-economic characteristics are weak proxies for *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, they are nonetheless important to the overall purposeful agency of the agent and not to be disregarded. I will explore this more in the next chapter.

6.8. CONCLUSION

This chapter has used the RAI measure to test a more suitable measure for *dusu*. The use of the RAI measure adds support towards the triangulate the qualitative findings that *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* are fundamental to purposeful agency for agents in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. The RAI measure also shows a weak relationship with decision-making ability and socio-economic characteristics and thus as there are some relatedness between RAI and *dusu*, it could further support my claim that decision-making ability and socio-economic characteristics are weak proxies for psychological agency. I have shown this firstly through validating the instrument of the RAI for the domains of minor household purchases, paid work, unpaid household work, healthcare and Islam. I then correlated the total RAI of domains with each other, and there emerged an interesting finding that all RAI domains are positively correlated with each other. This result does not challenge conceptions that empowerment is

multidimensional, as the correlations are low. However it could point to a permeability across the domains and perhaps the association of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*.

I then analysed the relationship between RAI domains and analytical categories, showing that socio-economic characteristics (MPI deprivation, age and years at school) were not suitable proxies for RAI, and nor was decision-making in each domain. This builds upon my qualitative findings that *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* are experienced by people from all walks of life – marginalised and deprived or not – and that encouragement and watching people succeed are also important in the formation of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*. Thus *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* should be measured without the use of socio-economic characteristics or decision-making ability as proxies. Further still, through the analysis of the life stories of Noe, Salimata, Ayesha and Kane, I again showed the centrality of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* and their high RAI scores in each domain. *Ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* as concepts underlying purposeful agency are fundamental for individuals to improve the *hèrè* of members and the community as a whole.

Nonetheless, as the last section of this chapter was alluding to with discussions of decision-making ability, limited opportunity structure and the processes of power beyond the self, *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* alone are not enough for social development in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. The next chapter analyses this assertion and calls for the support of agents to expand their capabilities.

CHAPTER 7:

COLLECTIVE AGENCY: *KA DA I YÈRÈ LA*, *DUSU* AND ASSOCIATIONS

Bolokanin den kelen te bele ta – “One finger cannot lift a stone”⁴¹⁶

In all previous chapters I have argued that *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* are important aspects to people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro who try to improve their *hèrè* and the community *hèrè*. However, people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro rarely act alone – instead most people act in groups called associations to achieve their personal and collective aspirations. It is believed by my informants, as expressed in the Bambara proverb above, that a group is more effective in carrying out initiatives to improve *hèrè* than an individual alone. I use the example of group dynamics in and around associations to show that whilst *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* are important to people at an individual level, we must ask the question: What happens to *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* when people collaborate in groups? Are *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* still so central to people’s lives or are there other elements that also play a role in people’s purposeful agency?

⁴¹⁶ Bambara Proverb

Examining group work and associations in Kalabankoro Nerekoro informs our understanding of the dynamics between individual and collective agency. It also helps us understand the relational aspect of *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* further, specifically in earlier chapters I have made the assertion that of *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* are relational being constituted by watching people succeed, encouragement and positive envy which require interaction with other agents. It furthers initial arguments made in this thesis to examine how these processes work within specific groups environments, or associations as they are called in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. For example, it is interesting to see how *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* are effected in negative dynamics within the group.

The aim of associations in Kalabankoro Nerekoro is purposeful – they aspire to improve *hèrè* for their members, the community at large, or both. Whilst this is a noble goal, it is not always realised. Dynamics within and around associations both enable and disable collective agency. To address the questions of the previous paragraph, this chapter is split into two parts. In the first part of the chapter, I define what I mean by an ‘association,’ discuss various ways in which associations try to realise their goals in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, and analyse the relevance of *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* to collective action. In the second part of the chapter, I examine other processes within and around associations that may impact collective purposeful agency. In my fieldwork I found that even when members of associations have *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*, the effectiveness of collective agency can be thwarted by specific processes in the social landscape of Kalabankoro Nerekoro and by dynamics between actors within the association. Specifically, I will argue that conflicts within groups, economic

stratification, access to education, gender and age norms all condition the outcomes of associations within the social landscape of Kalabankoro Nerekoro. Thus I will conclude that whilst *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* are important to agents and their actions to improve personal and community *hèrè*, *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* should not be the only aspects of social development considered. This analysis draws on data that emerged from my fieldwork, especially through key informant interviews and life stories of people who had been part of associations and their comments on how their involvement impacted their life. Another part of the analysis was made up of conversations with association members and leaders about the history of the formation of the associations. General observation and living in the Kalabankoro area also contributed to my analysis.

7.1. ACHIEVING THE ASPIRATION OF *HÈRÈ*: INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE PURPOSEFUL AGENCY IN KALABANKORO NEREKORO

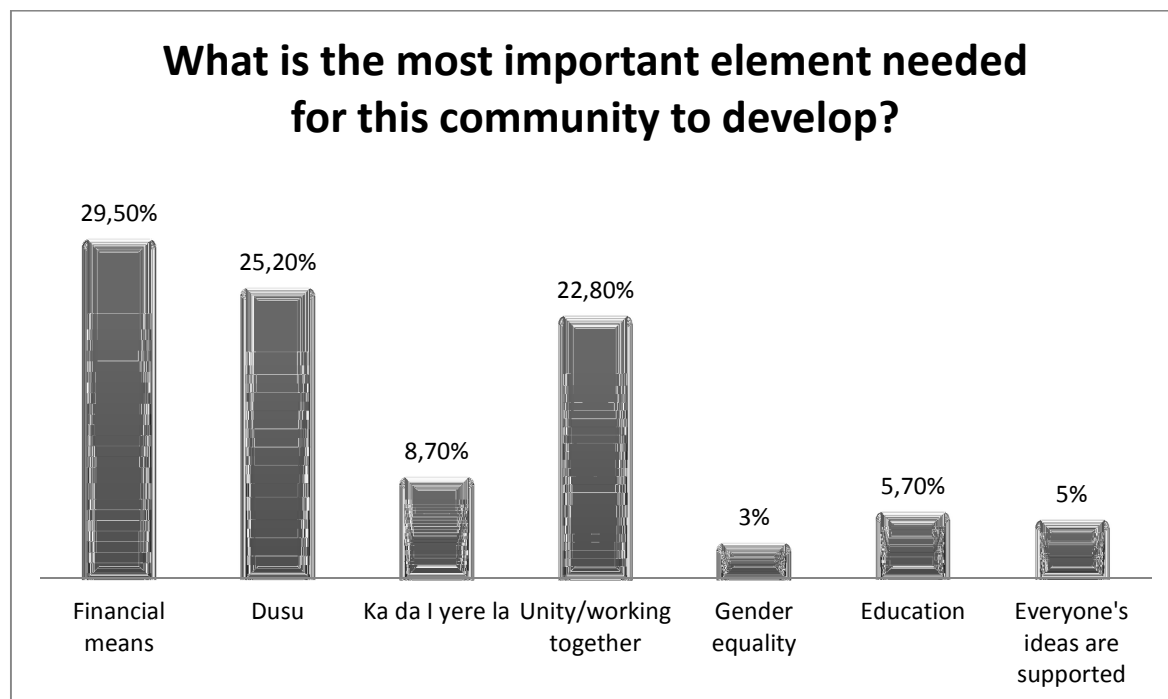
Most informants in my research used their *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* to advance aspirations or *hèrè* through collective agency in associations. For example, when asked how someone can overcome hardship in their lives, the women's focus group in Kalabankoro Nerekoro comprising seven women coming from poor households said, "We encourage them to stand up with their *dusu* and do something. We invite them to join this association or another association as there are many associations to do something."⁴¹⁷ This is not to say other avenues and strategies such as engaging the market, seeking education, and migration were not also helpful or acknowledged.

⁴¹⁷ Women's Focus Group, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 24th January 2011

Overwhelmingly, however, informants cited associations as the best way to improve personal and collective *hèrè*.

Even the names of associations in Kalabankoro Nerekoro are aspirational, alluding to the purpose of collective agency to improve members' and the community's *hèrè*. For example, one small association of 20 members helping women through collective activities to generate income is called *Faba*: it is a Songhai word that means 'help'. Another association youth focusing on sensitisation by bringing specialists in certain fields to lecture the youth on issues concerning development calls itself Association for the Development of Nerekoro. Another aimed at helping with immunisations in the neighbourhood and cleaning of mosques is called *Aide Toi* (help yourself). These names are aspirational as they speak to the imagination of those in associations about grander visions for their members and the development of the neighbourhood of Kalabankoro Nerekoro.

FIGURE 15 – SURVEY RESPONDENTS’ VIEWS ON THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS FOR KALABANKORO NEREKORO TO DEVELOP



(N=298).

Associations are seen as a catalyst for improved *hèrè*, and a way for Kalabankoro Nerekoro to develop. From Figure 15 above, we can follow this line of informants' rationale. When asked what the most important aspects are for Kalabankoro Nerekoro to develop, unity, *dusu* and means (financial) were cited as the most important. It was believed that when members have *dusu* (self-efficacy) and the means by which to create the narrative of change, then the community will develop, if residents work with unity for this common purpose. This is one reason that people join associations. With these associations, people feel they can tackle other problems such as increasing access to education, childcare, healthcare, and livelihoods, and tackling issues of inequality.

7.1.1. DEFINING ASSOCIATIONS IN KALABANKORO NEREKORO

The categorisation of associations is contested, and definitive lines are difficult to draw⁴¹⁸. Most associations in Kalabankoro Nerekoro do not take on a formal institutional form (registered with the local town hall⁴¹⁹) and those that do are generally representative of privileged sectors of what the Malian state refers to as ‘civil society’. To ensure I included a broad selection of actors in Kalabankoro Nerekoro and not just the privileged, I broadly define ‘association’ as **a group of agents working together to improve personal or community *hèrè***, rather than focusing on a specific forms of formal institutions. The definition of associations as agents working together follows the research of Tostensten et al. (2001), where they surveyed urban associations across Africa and argued that analysis of associations defined by legality and administrative structures is restrictive. This is because these formal institutional structures are enacted by the state and hence can be seen to represent the state’s interest in controlling associations or at least setting their form to streamline their administration in relation to the state⁴²⁰. Furthermore, many associations in Kalabankoro Nerekoro without formal registration undertake the same activities in the study site as registered associations, and

⁴¹⁸ The difficulty in categorising associations was also a common finding in the literature. For example Judith Tandler (1982), surveyed associations in Africa concluding that evaluation of them is difficult because of their heterogeneity. Tostensten, Tvedten and Vaa (2001) also arguing a complete typology of African associations is difficult as most definitions are too narrow and exclude closely linked networks that act like conventional associations, providing crucial networks to support an increase well-being. Arne Tostensen, Inge Tvedten, and Mariken Vaa, *Associational Life in African Cities: Popular Responses to the Urban Crisis* (Stockholm: Nardiska Afrikainstitutet, 2001); Judith Tandler, "Turning private voluntary organizations into development agencies: questions for evaluation," in *USAID Program Evaluation Discussion Paper* (1982).

⁴¹⁹ Anyone can register an association in the study site. However those wanting to register an association must show there is community support upon registration and also needs to pay a yearly subscription fee to keep up the registration, therefore requiring a continual source of income. Evidence of support is generally by the way of getting a blessing from the traditional chief, which requires the group to fit his definition. The traditional chief did comment how the upperclass and elite are known to bypass approaching him for a blessing and go straight to the town hall to register

⁴²⁰ Tostensten, Tvedten, and Vaa, *Associational Life in African Cities: Popular Responses to the Urban Crisis*.

they should not be excluded from analysis just because of their lack of legality. The narrow definition of associations as institutions also fails to include informal networks such as friendships, neighbours and kin, which form the actual base and nature of associations in Kalabankoro Nerekoro more than the legality of institutions.⁴²¹ My conceptualisation of associations as agents working together does not exclude the registered institutions from my analysis, but does cast a wider net to include agents working together in either formal or informal groups as well. This definition reflects better the reality of Kalabankoro Nerekoro.

The exact number of associations in Kalabankoro Nerekoro was difficult to obtain because of the differences in definitions used for associations. The town hall counted 20 registered associations working in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, but overlooked informal associations. Only a few of the informants in my fieldwork only regarded formal associations as ‘associations.’ Nonetheless, because of the difficulty in defining what an association was or was not, obtaining an exact number was not possible. However, through the analysis of my data as well as observation while carrying out fieldwork, it was clear that working in associations towards improving *hèrè* was something most people did. I will now describe the types of work associations carried out.

⁴²¹ Ibid., 15.

7.2. ASSOCIATIONS AND PURPOSEFUL AGENCY IN KALABANKORO NEREKORO

Informants articulated a variety of methods in which an association could bring about a greater sense of *hèrè* and *hami*. In my interviews and focus groups, people thought an association could help overcome hardship and poverty through accessing financial means. Informants also thought groups increased *hèrè* by providing networks and opportunity for upwards mobility, and that their work towards collective *hèrè* would result in and increase individual *hèrè*, provide solidarity, and support the development of members' *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*.

Associations in Kalabankoro Nerekoro are focused on improving the *hèrè* of the members (self-help) and/or the *hèrè* of the community (community-focused associations)⁴²². The line between the two is a little blurry because many people would say their self-help activities, whilst helping themselves primarily, also helped the community. For example, one lady said that by selling shoes in Kalabankoro Nerekoro she helped the community because people did not have to go to the city anymore to find shoes. Ibrahim (2006) anticipates the difficulty in separating community-focused and self-focused groups in her definition of self-help groups, containing groups promoting both individual and communal objectives. However, I want to separate them in this discussion to explain some very distinct patterns in activities associations undertake. In

⁴²² For an analysis of general literature to why people join associations please see Yanagisako, "Family and Household: The Analysis of Domestic Groups."; Markelova et al., "Collective action for smallholder market access."; Carola Lentz, "'Unity for Development' youth associations in north-western Ghana," *Africa* 65, no. 3 (1995); Ostrom, "Community and the Endogenous Solution of Commons Problems."

addition, associations can be used for political purposes. I will now give some examples of activities associations undertake to help realise aspirations of their members.

7.2.1. ASSOCIATIONS FOCUSED ON SELF-HELP

Self-help associations save money and generate small loans to members through *tauntins*. *Tauntin* is a method where small amounts of money are pooled and then lent out to one member at a time to start a small business and act like an informal banking system⁴²³. Self-help associations can also organise trainings and co-operative market gardens. Scattered around Kalabankoro Nerekoro were small green plots in the red dirt where women together grew small amounts of lettuce and carrots to sell in the marketplace. I met other women who wanted to be literate, and so they pooled funds together to save funds to pay for a teacher to teach them to read and write French.

7.2.2. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATIONS

Other associations focus on the wider development of neighbourhoods. They raise funds to support infrastructure projects such as schools and healthcare centres as well as undertaking projects to educate the population on particular issues such as sanitation. For example, when I spoke to the councillor at the town hall, he cited several community projects (two community healthcare centres) completed by men's associations raising more than 53 million FCFA (£69,804⁴²⁴) with the help of an Italian NGO. Associations also undertook active community work such as tree planting, sweeping streets and collecting rubbish. One young man I interviewed volunteered his

⁴²³ Brand, *Mediating means and fate: a socio-political analysis of fertility and demographic change in Bamako, Mali*.

⁴²⁴ Exchange rate £1 = 759CFA as on the 7th February 2013.

time to start an association helping students in Kalabankoro Nerekoro pass their exams. At the time of my fieldwork, the Université de Bamako was closed down for the third year in a row. Thus, three generations of university students had their studies put on hold. At the time of my last stint of fieldwork in December 2011, the university was reopening and informed the students they would sit their exams for subjects they had taken 18 months before. This young man, who had no problems describing himself as poor but very smart, brought together many of the other students in Kalabankoro Nerekoro to revise and prepare for the examinations. The motto of the association? “Mutual help, sharing of knowledge, culture of excellency.”

7.2.3. POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS

Associations can also be political and raise support for particular political purposes. Generally, political organisations in Kalabankoro Nerekoro are not referred to in a positive light. This is because the whole pursuit of ‘politics’ is deemed disconnected from the reality of most Malians and a game for the elite. As one young male interviewee coming from a poor household said:

These people [politicians] are wealthy, and are using the poor to seek bigger advantages under the guise of someone who integrates the low class - to appear as someone caring about issues concerning the poor. Let me take some of the people as an example, like my mum. They have used her during political campaigns, because mum is very active on issues concerning the improvement of the conditions of people like us, the poor people in Nerekoro. And when mum

*discovered this, she broke with them and retired home [pretending it was] due to her health.*⁴²⁵

Research into associations in Kano, Nigeria by John Lucas (1994) found similar a sentiment, where elites “use associations to pursue a variety of goals including class formation, regional development and personal enrichment.”⁴²⁶

7.2.4. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STRATIFICATION OF ASSOCIATIONS

The types of associations such as self-help, community development or political associations listed above are further divided by gender, age and deprivation levels. Very rarely were there associations, formal or informal, that had both men and women working together. If associations had men and women as members, they worked in two separate groups towards a common aim. There were associations for youth (those normally not married or just married), which separated the ‘youth’ from the rest of the population. In addition, very rarely in Kalabankoro Nerekoro did I find associations that have a mix of people from different economic strata.⁴²⁷ When this was the case, it was an association that focused on politics, where the majority of members were from the lower strata and led by a few from the elite stratum. These elites had an interest in political gain and used the association to obtain power, often keeping members involved through promises of patronage and gifts of money or food. The same is also true for youth associations, where politicians funded activities, therefore becoming a ‘patron’ and automatically recruiting followers.

⁴²⁵ Male interview, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 2nd March 2011

⁴²⁶ John Lucas, "The State, Civil Society and Regional Elites: A Study of Three Associations in Kano, Nigeria," *African Affairs* 93, no. 370 (1994): 21..

⁴²⁷ Meillassoux, "A class analysis of the Bureaucratic Process in Mali."

Self-help associations were further stratified by the financial capacity of members because of the contribution to the financial pool expected each week by members. In the case of more elite associations, there was an expectation of high amounts of money to be contributed regularly, automatically excluding others with lower economic means. Associations with a *tauntin* initiative excluded and stratified people who did not have the means to constantly contribute to the pool when the contribution was a higher amount than they could afford. I found this particularly in the case of formal registered associations, where the contribution expectation restricted many financially poor from joining. Many of these poor formed their own informal associations.

Making matters worse, those who cannot afford the regular contributions and do not have social networks in the area to begin an informal association are further isolated. For example, one of the women I interviewed was new to the area and thus did not have informal connections to begin an association herself. This woman said she could not be part of the association because her work of washing clothes for wealthier households was not consistent enough for her to be able to join one of the formal women's associations in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. She expressed that she very much would like to be part of an association, yet her limited financial means and limited personal networks in Kalabankoro Nerekoro meant she could not join one. As a result she felt more isolated and believed her path to help her family's *hèrè* was made harder because of the exclusion. "In [the rural village] people know each other so it is easy, so they do favours to help people they already know. That is if relationships already exist between you and people. But it is not the case here in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. People are in a collective

only if you can contribute or know someone. So if you do not have the means to contribute, then access to the association will not be easy for you”. Herein lies a potential contradiction of associations; the majority are set up with the belief that they are helping the collective, and that the means of development is collective action. Yet an apparatus (the *tauntin* model) which is used to help actually excludes the most vulnerable, who either do not have personal networks or capital to join in the first place, further stratifying the population.

There were a small number of informants did not want to be in an association. There were two main reasons for this. Firstly, a few informants chose temporarily not to be in an association because they wanted to be sure about the reputations of people they would potentially work with as to be involved with people who have bad social reputations has implications. As one interviewee who had just moved to the area said, “Once you mix with the wrong people, you are scarred by that forever.”⁴²⁸ Secondly, some informants did not believe in the usefulness of collective agency altogether, a belief embedded in the differing worldviews of collectivism and individualism to be discussed below.

7.3. *KA DA I YÈRÈ LA*, *DUSU* AND ASSOCIATIONS

Most people in my interviews and focus groups believed that having *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* oneself was a prerequisite to being a member in an association. Like one female

⁴²⁸ Female interview 1, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 5th January 2011

interview said, “You must trust yourself before you can trust others.”⁴²⁹ Further still, while individuals believed that *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* were central to their agency, purposeful agency was thought to be best operationalised through associations. But does membership in associations affect *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*? And if so, how? As *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* are relational, and constituted by watching other people succeed, encouragement and positive envy, it can be expected that dynamics within associations either support or thwart purposeful agency outcomes. The following stories of Maiga and Kadiatou are representative of many informants in life story interviews (also Asa’s in the previous chapter), showing how associations are not just the site to operationalise purposeful agency, but also a site of cultivation of *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*.

I first met Maiga living in a makeshift, one-bedroom raffia hut in Kalabankoro Nerekoro with his four children, wife and his wife’s mother. They lived across the road from an elite private school called *Ecole Privée Youchaou* to which one of his daughters had a scholarship. Maiga tried to find work in Kalabankoro Nerekoro and adjoining neighbourhoods. Whilst he explains his life as being extremely difficult, he says he has only been able to keep providing for his family is because of *ka da I yèrè la*, “for me I am relying on courage and *ka da I yèrè la*.”⁴³⁰ Nonetheless, when I asked Maiga what he does with his *ka da I yèrè la*, he said he uses it to work in a collective. Specifically, he meets every Saturday with other men who he describes as “other heads of households in a similar position to me.”⁴³¹ At these meetings they each talk through their challenges and help each other with some advice. They also contribute FCFA 200⁴³² (£0.26) per

⁴²⁹ Male interview, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 4th January 2011

⁴³⁰ Male interview, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 22nd December 2010

⁴³¹ Male interview, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 22nd December 2010

⁴³² Exchange rate £1 = 759CFA as on the 7th February 2013

person each Saturday. These funds are saved in case one of the members has a problem they need financial help with. Maiga explains, “The money in our association is used for problems we might have. For example, housing problems as the houses we are living in are not for us, they are construction sites for someone else and if the person needs their house back we will leave. So it is help like this, and also health and family problems.”⁴³³ Maiga then explained how these meetings became a source of *ka da I yèrè la* because of the solidarity and support he felt from the other members.

Kadiatou is a Fulani woman who also lives in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. She lives in room of a rented house shared with other families. Kadiatou has three children and her husband is struggling finding work as a mason around Kalabankoro. Kadiatou supports her family by painting henna on women, an important bodily decoration for celebrations such as weddings. She tells me stories of when she lived in Timbuktu, before her arranged marriage, and how she was the smartest woman in the village. She was forced to drop out of school by her husband’s family, which was a huge disappointment for her. Even so, Kadiatou says she is able to help look after her family as she started a small henna-painting business from which she earns some money. Underpinning the success of this, she says, are *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*: “For me *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* are the best. It is why I can do my henna for people and make money for my family. For me, if you have such conviction by heart, everything you do by heart will be something good. I get satisfaction from it and people who I do it for will also get satisfaction from it and it will spread around our living area. For me *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* are a

⁴³³ Male interview, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 22nd December 2010

whole.”⁴³⁴ Whilst she was able to begin her small business outside of an association, Kadiatou believes that because of the harsh reality of many people’s lives in Mali, people must try to look after the community. Kadiatou also is part of a small association with her friends that each week sweeps the roads and pick up the rubbish around Kalabankoro Nerekoro. This is voluntary, but she and her friends feel it is important. The association helps her feel like she is looking after the *hèrè* of the community. The time spent doing these community activities is a great joy to Kadiatou, who spoke about how the women together would use the time to also talk about their businesses and families and give each other advice to help. Thus Kadiatou also noted that being with her friends, having such advice and witnessing other women’s successes continued to strengthen her *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*.

From these two stories we can notice how associations are a site of further enhancement of *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* through the positive affirmation of interaction, including encouragement, advice and seeing other people achieve. This point was echoed through all of my qualitative data where informants believed that dynamics within associations are enabling for the development of their *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*. For example, one young interviewee, when asked about the impact of her involvement with her association, said “[Being in an association] is very important for my *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, because I am not the only one who is poor and try to cope with [my poverty] like others you see. It is very important.”⁴³⁵ This interviewee signals the solidarity she

⁴³⁴ Female interview 1, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 28th December 2010

⁴³⁵ Female interview 4, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 18th November 2011

feels but also being able to see what initiatives other people living with similar challenges implement.

Another female interviewee, part of another women's association with 20 members in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, signaled the positive impact the group environment had, saying "being part of my association only has great positive impact for my *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*. For you learn many things you do not know."⁴³⁶ Associations do not just help in the development of individual *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*; an association also has its own collective belief about how efficacious it is in creating change as a group. In associations that worked best together, there was a shared value or set of values members were trying to pursue which activated their *dusu*, for example building a school, having better health for their family, having financial income, and not being reliant on husbands. Psychological agency here is not the sum of members' *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, but instead a unique and specific mixture in each association⁴³⁷. This unique and specific mix exceeds the experience of the individual member outside of the association as reported by members who felt more powerful in associations than outside of it. In dysfunctional associations, the collective *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* were low. The collective *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* are what make an association and the collective more effective than the individual. Nonetheless, my qualitative data suggests that processes that affect degrees of *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* at a collective level were similar to what affected *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* at an individual level. Specifically, being told to have *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*, encouragement, positive jealousy, watching

⁴³⁶ Female interview 2, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 18th November 2011

⁴³⁷ Bandura, "Self - efficacy: the exercise of control".

people succeed and believing in your own abilities due to being part of a group helped achieve a particular aspiration; all contributed to *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* within the association.

As my informants spoke of conflicts arising within associations, I wondered if these conflicts had an effect on the *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* of members. In answering my question on whether conflict within associations had an impact on *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*, one male interviewee who was part of a community development association described to me generally the potential effect (although he said this was not the case for him), “Associations can upset your *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* when there is disagreement. This is when people leave.”⁴³⁸ The main form of conflict reported was when people did or said things to each other that discredited people. For example in my fieldwork, I met Fatou. She founded an association for women in Kalabankoro. Having experienced hardship herself, growing up in Dogon country in East Mali, she was sympathetic to the burden women have as she saw her own mother bearing it. However, to begin the association, Fatou said she had to work hard to prove to women that she was not politically involved. Associations can be ‘hijacked’ by people with political interests, thus corrupting the focus of the association away from *hèrè* to more political objectives. The effect of this betrayal on the women is quite profound according to Fatou: “The problem for many of the women is that they have been misled by other associations who have taken their money on purpose and have not helped them so they dropped their projects. So women that have had this happen to them have had their *ka da I yèrè la*

⁴³⁸ Male interview 1, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 19th November 2011

lowered because they will think they will be harmed again.”⁴³⁹ Fatou does not just describe the breakdown of communal trust, but the effects of the deceit having had on the women’s *ka da I yèrè la*. The women’s belief in themselves was lowered because the deceit and subsequent failure of the project seem to be linked to their own feelings of self, and belief in their abilities undertaking initiatives, despite it being the fault of those politically interested. This raises potentially an interesting area for further research regarding the impact of deceit on people’s psychological agency. This point needs further research as, no one I met said that their actual *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* were affected by conflict – the examples given by Fatou and the male interviewee discussed above comprised the only data that suggested group dynamics lowered *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*, and neither of these claims was backed up by the people both informants were talking about. Thus to ascertain further the depth of negative dynamics in the group affect levels of *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*, more research would be needed. I also inquired about the impact on *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* in the absence of encouragement and watching other people succeed. The absence of these processes in associations either had no reported effect on people’s *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* or in the case when these processes were reversed negatively, specifically when people were discouraged by other group members, people would leave the group.

Whilst important drivers and motivators of members’ agency, *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* did not cancel out other factors that contributed to the effectiveness of associations and collective agency. Specifically, tension and conflict within associations affected the effectiveness of groups – sometimes even breaking the association up. Further still,

⁴³⁹ Female interview, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 1st March 2011

even when the group dynamic was functioning well and members felt happy with their peers, there were other elements in the social landscape of Kalabankoro Nerekoro that thwarted collective agency.

7.4. THWARTING OF COLLECTIVE AGENCY OUTCOMES

This section of this chapter focuses on specific processes occurring within and around associations that thwart collective agency in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. Regarding processes occurring within associations, conflict is the main reason for the breakdown of associations. Major areas of conflict and breakdown between members in associations range from family disagreements over the way the association works to historical feuds or just personal differences.

Even when associations were functioning with a unified membership, economic stratification, access to education, gender norms and the conflict of worldviews affected access to opportunities and resources. These factors all emerged from my qualitative methods (specifically life story interviews, focus groups and key informant interviews,) as being central to associations succeeding in their goals. I will first analyse the impact of conflict within associations and then show how economic stratification, access to education, and gender and age norms all affect the day-to-day running and outcomes of associations.

7.4.1. CONFLICT WITHIN ASSOCIATIONS

Groups and thus associations are made up of individuals. This is not to say that the group's overall ability is the aggregate or even average of individual capabilities of people within the group. F. Comin and W. Kuklys (2002, cited in Ibrahim (2006)) argue that this is not the case and that a group not only includes the capabilities of its members but with the mixing together, the group creates its own distinct capabilities. Nonetheless, the differing beliefs, values and capabilities of individuals in groups contribute to not only the group's overall capability but also the potential for disconnection, disagreement and conflict. In my interviews and focus groups, informants shared stories of conflict which resulted in the breakdown of unity. Specifically, one female interviewee who was part of an association but unhappy at the tension between different worldviews within it explained, "The association here does not work due to lack of money. It also collapses due to members not having the same vision."⁴⁴⁰ According to Sen (2002), individuals of a collective group share multiple identities and affiliations, therefore creating the potential for complex interactions within the group, which do not necessarily align with the group's overall objective. The different identities, affiliations and beliefs of group members are central to the effectiveness of the association but conflict and disagreement between members can risk the overall functioning of the association. Whilst there are many different themes and content members can disagree on, most commonly cited in my qualitative fieldwork was conflict between worldviews and the form of agency that would follow. For example, one woman I interviewed in Kalabankoro Nerekoro expressed why she was reluctant to join an association: "When you work in a collective, there may be

⁴⁴⁰ Female interview, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 24th December 2010

individualistic people and collectivist people in it. And if you have been unlucky to have many individualistic people in a group, they will just worsen your situation.”⁴⁴¹

The worldviews of individualism (*kelen bara*⁴⁴²) and collectivism (*djè ka bara*⁴⁴³) are central to how people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro conceptualise their apparent worlds and their agency within these⁴⁴⁴. I use ‘worldview’ here in the Weberian sense of *weltanschauung*, which refers to a relative framework to understand social action based on specific cultural contexts instead of a generalised theory of the world underpinning social action⁴⁴⁵. The worldviews form a framework for beliefs about how purposeful agency should be executed, namely as collective agency or individual agency. The two worldview concepts - *kelen bara* (individualism) and *djè bara* (collectivism) - are the site of tension in associations of Kalabankoro Nerekoro. Unity is the ideal state for associations, and so when disagreement arises that rocks this unity, people reason that these people are too individualistic and not for collectivity⁴⁴⁶.

Let us take the example of Mariam, who cites the conflict between worldviews as the reason for the breakdown of her association. Mariam started an association in

⁴⁴¹ Women interviewee, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 22nd December 2010

⁴⁴² Kelen is Bambara for the number one, meaning, single person, bara is Bambara for work. So, *kelen bara* is work for one person.

⁴⁴³ Djè is Bambara for collective, together, bara is Bambara for work. So Djè bara is work together.

⁴⁴⁴ The worldviews of *djè bara* (collectivism) and *kelen bara* (individualism) became central to the research when I enquired about what were important factors impacting informant’s actions that they took to improve their *hèrè*. As most people acted within associations, people argued that the worldviews were impacted the work of associations.

⁴⁴⁵ Weber, 1948

⁴⁴⁶ Harry Triandis (1999) has documented tension between the worldviews of individualism and collectivism at a global level generalising across different cultures and regions. I have chosen to be more specific in my thesis, using data collected in Kalabankoro Nerekoro to indicate what individualism and collectivism mean to people in the study site. Harry Triandis, "Cross- Cultural Psychology," *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 2(1999).

Kalabankoro Nerekoro for women to collect rubbish as it was making children in the area sick. The association ran into trouble when the rest of the women disagreed with Mariam's way of organising and so they returned their start-up funds to Mariam and said they did not want to work with her anymore. Mariam said this was because these women were not of the collective mind and wanted the association for themselves. It also could have been the case that the women thought Mariam was too individualistic. This example shows how disagreement between members of associations can occur from differences in opinions on matters relating to individuals' interests, beliefs and values around individual or collective agency.

However, the ideal of collectivity and unity does not benefit all people wanting to work in groups. For some people I interviewed, unity appears as a hegemonic expectation where social cohesion held above all other needs. For the sake of unity and social harmony, individual preferences are sometimes foregone (consciously or unconsciously). For example, one woman I interviewed was part of an association that sometimes was solicited by political groups for support. These wealthier politicians brought extra resources to the association in exchange for political support. The woman did not agree with this; however, she did not want to upset the collective group by objecting and to risk being ousted, as her membership in the association was her main source of hope for being able to increase her family's *hèrè* and income. The idealism the collective of what Peter Demerath (2003) calls 'imagined communities,' sometimes creates a situation where people have to 'hide' their aspirations, which becomes more difficult for agents as Kalabankoro Nerekoro continues to modernise.

Whilst differing worldviews can cause disagreements between members within associations, they can also condition the effectiveness of associations trying to achieve outcomes in Kalabankoro Nerekoro as well. I will now discuss the impact of the tension between worldviews, but not before also showing how the stratification of gender, financial means, education and age all affect the agency of associations in Kalabankoro Nerekoro.

7. 4.2. INEQUALITY AND THE THWARTING OF COLLECTIVE AGENCY

In Chapter 4 (section 4.5.) I described Kalabankoro Nerekoro as a very stratified and unequal society. Inequality affecting individuals and groups is extremely noticeable and conditions both individual and collective agency. The focus of my thesis is not to analyse the sources of inequality, but I would like to complement other studies that show how macro level processes do affect individual and collective agency⁴⁴⁷. The specific impact of inequality in Kalabankoro Nerekoro conditions the formation of associations (as discussed above), along with the ability for associations to be effective in their activities within Kalabankoro Nerekoro and beyond⁴⁴⁸. This conditioning of collective purposeful agency is heightened by the impact of some powerful and wealthy individuals in the neighbourhood who do not believe in the idea of collectivity, and thus repel associations on the basis of their worldviews, further restricting the poor's access

⁴⁴⁷ Knorr-Cetina, "The micro-social order: towards a reconception."

⁴⁴⁸ Some associations with members who live in Kalabankoro Nerekoro can undertake initiatives in neighbourhoods outside of Kalabankoro Nerekoro. For example women's associations may trade collectively made soaps in the large market of Kalabankoro.

to resources and opportunity. I will first describe the difficulties associations face on the basis of economic stratification, education, gender, age and worldviews.

7.4.2.1. ECONOMIC STRATIFICATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF ASSOCIATIONS

I use the term economic stratification to include firstly, the different strata with specific economic access (or lack of access) discussed in Chapter 4 (section 4.5), secondly the use of term stratification also eludes to the stagnation of strata described in earlier chapters, where upwards mobility difficult for those with access to limited economic opportunities. The same is true for associations, where as described earlier in this chapter, associations are linked to specific strata. To put it crudely, the rich have their associations, and the poor are left have theirs and mixing is seldom between. To explain further, economic stratification impacts the agency of associations in the study site through what activities the group undertakes. Economic stratification also influences the effectiveness of the group operating in the Kalabankoro Nerekoro neighbourhood and beyond. Every association is characterised by members' economic strata and this influences opportunities available. Associations that consist of the poor have difficulties in mobilising sufficient resources for their initiatives. The traditional chief of the neighbourhood who also is part of a men's association of poor males explains,

Well frankly speaking we have wealthy people here in this area but to tell the truth they do not support or help at all ... we were always running trying to gather people to seek assistance from anybody here in the community. Only poor people like us, you can see us, are the only

*ones that do the initiatives. If you call the rich people they will never respond to us. Because they do not send their children here in this area, they send them to Bamako. Their children when they are sick they send them downtown to be treated by good hospitals and they do not have any connection to us. Their doors are always closed. So we do not get any assistance from them.*⁴⁴⁹

In Kalabankoro Nerekoro, when it comes to economic and social opportunities, poor associations are excluded. Because Kalabankoro Nerekoro is in such close proximity to Bamako, the economic and political capital of Mali, many of the links and networks people have in the neighbourhood extend to Bamako. This gap between opportunities is further cemented and maintained through kin relations and by the notion of relationships being among the most important elements of one's life to protect. It is believed by some that it is impossible to succeed unless you know someone who can help you. "So there is always someone, a relative that can come up and save that person from trouble. If he does not do it, it will just be like he killed somebody, it is like you do not care about that relationship, that connection. Connection is something in Mali more important than anything – connection."⁴⁵⁰ Not only are associations outside this elite 'web' excluded from specific opportunities and access for their associations, as also individuals are excluded from employment opportunities, good schooling and healthcare⁴⁵¹.

⁴⁴⁹ Male Interviewee, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 28th December 2010

⁴⁵⁰ Male interviewee, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 31st November 2010

⁴⁵¹ In his article in post-independence in Mali, Wallerstein (1965) argued that the formation of elite class in post independent Mali was due to effects of colonisation and privileging some groups over others. He also predicted that through the expansion of capitalism which would continue privilege of social classes

A further example of the economic stratification of some associations over others can be seen in the registration of associations with the state. As discussed in the first section of this chapter, associations in Kalabankoro Nerekoro are either formally registered or not registered. The institutionalisation of the association impacts its legitimacy and resources it has access to, which in turn impacts the activities associations undertake. Economic stratification of associations occurs on two levels. Firstly, those wanting to formally register an association must pay a yearly subscription fee to keep up the registration, therefore requiring a continual source of income. Secondly, associations registered with the town hall have access to resources of the state. The mayor converses with the leaders regularly, sharing selected information and initiatives. Registered associations are thus seen to provide a 'voice of civil society,' and are assumed to be representative and in the 'know' about what is most affecting 'ordinary people' in Kalabankoro Nerekoro.

In my fieldwork, I was able to attend one of these gatherings where the mayor would consult with leaders of registered associations, asking them their opinions regarding specific policy matters (the meeting I attended discussed the lack of funding available for associations for projects of education, health and sanitation). From the meeting and from what I observed more generally, the formally registered associations labelled part

and increase inequality. Immanuel Wallerstein, "Elites in French - speaking West Africa: The Social Basis of Ideas," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 9, no. 1 (1965).

of ‘civil society’ were out of touch with local realities and initiatives⁴⁵². This does not mean that these organisations are not playing any role in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, “but their emphasis on targeting specific populations, identities, sectors or themes often means that they cannot extend themselves to work among other actors or relate to different processes.”⁴⁵³ In Kalabankoro Nerekoro, the formality of associations works as a way of privileging and legitimising some associations over the non-registered ones. Because generally it is the economic ability of associations that makes it possible for them to register or because activities of the association may be against the normalised operation of the town hall, non-registered associations are marginalised and thus not included in consultation with the state as part of civil society despite their centrality to life in Kalabankoro Nerekoro.

7.4.2.2. ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ASSOCIATIONS

Formal education is one route that provides a certain logic to enable access to resources allocated for local development by actors such as NGOs and the state⁴⁵⁴. Very few NGOs fund associations in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, but those that get funded are professional looking, savvy, and meet specific requirements to approve funding including providing budgets, project objectives and a project plan. Most associations of the poor in Kalabankoro Nerekoro have members who are mainly illiterate or have low levels of education, making it extremely hard to meet requirements of accessing such

⁴⁵² AbdouMaliq Simone, "Between Ghetto and Globe: Remaking Urban Life in Africa," in *Associational Life in African cities: popular responses to urban crisis*, ed. Arne Tostensen, Inge Tvedten, and Mariken Vaa (Nardiska Afrikainstitutet, 2001), 48.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, "Peasant logics and development project logics " *Sociologia Ruralis* 28, no. 2-3 (1988); Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, "Anthropology and Development: Understanding Contemporary Social Change," (Zed Books, 2005).

funds, let alone knowing they exist. For example, one man with over 15 years of education who I interviewed, whose association had been supported by an international NGO, proudly explained, when asked how he got such support, that international people and the government always want to work with him because he understands their requirements and what they need⁴⁵⁵. Formal education provides not just literacy and numeracy, but also teaches a particular logic of working and communicating⁴⁵⁶. This is not just in the sense of how one speaks, but also in regard to systems of management, organisation and how community development is conceptualised and actioned by international actors, and more importantly, those controlling aid⁴⁵⁷. Because of this, what I saw happening was associations without a level of education access opportunities, are exposed to the ability, or inability of securing educated members (or brokers (see below) to help.

For example, the development of project proposals, monitoring and evaluation, reporting formats, and organisational accountability all requires education. Illiterate people are isolated from these opportunities and rely on the educated to access the donor world. A person who can and is willing to negotiate the two different views becomes very valuable to poor associations in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. Oliver de Sardan (2005), in his fieldwork based in West Africa, calls such individuals who can straddle both worlds *development brokers*. Such individuals are able to garner funds and external support for their associations. For example, Konare is the president of an association

⁴⁵⁵ Male interviewee, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 2nd March 2011

⁴⁵⁶ Sutton shows the disconnectedness between knowledges in Native Title Land rights cases between the Australian State and indigenous Australia. Peter Sutton, *Native Title in Australia: Ethnographic Perspectives* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁴⁵⁷ Sardan, "Peasant logics and development project logics ".

that receives funding from an international NGO. He was from the upper stratum of Kalabankoro Nerekoro and had secured funding because he understood not just the focus of the NGO, which was sanitation, but also what was expected organisationally of the association. He was able to report how the implementation of his association was carried out, which is in line with the expectations of the international NGO. Konare describes the effect of this funding on the growth of his association: “at the beginning we were 16 members, but thanks to the support of the international NGO, the association grew larger and reached 118 members”. To be able to work within the international development discourse in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, an association must be able to speak the same language as the international NGO, or else rely on a development broker. As the members of poorer associations have less education and do not have the ability to communicate as required, they appear to not be organised or to be trusted with money. The result is that they get overlooked unless they can access a broker to support their work. Therefore NGOs and government funds going to associations favour associations with development brokers, forcing the poor to be at the mercy of development brokers, because they can communicate and operationalise requirements, and not necessarily because they understand the needs of the marginalised⁴⁵⁸.

7.4.2.3. GENDER AND THE SHAPING OF ASSOCIATION ACTIVITIES

In Chapter 4 (section 4.6.6.) I discussed the overpowering influence of gender norms in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. This is particularly important as male hegemonic power dictates

⁴⁵⁸ Tendler, "Turning private voluntary organizations into development agencies: questions for evaluation."

a lot of what is possible for women. Marriage is important social capital as a ‘good husband’ is essential for many aspects of a woman’s lives in Kalabankoro Nerekoro⁴⁵⁹. For example, for a married woman to be able to join an association and to be an active member, her husband must give his blessing. However, because of the burden of finding enough resources to cover household and family expenses, women are expected to contribute to the household financially. Because of pressure to cover household costs, I found that most husbands would allow their wives to join associations. Even when women are in associations, they are still subjected to certain social norms in which males are not. Some of these norms women are aware of, such as the burden to look after children with little financial access. And some they are not aware of, such as how these norms influence their aspirations and what is in the ‘realm of possibility’ for a woman to aspire to, such as for a wife who is a subject of her husband, which is seldom to be challenged.

Activities undertaken by associations are also gendered because social norms condition what are acceptable activities for men and women⁴⁶⁰. Most associations with poor members generally focused on supporting the deficit in household income through *tauntins*. The activities they would undertake within the *tauntin* model differed, as women’s and men’s associations have particular socially prescribed activities that would be appropriate to undertake. For example, women’s associations in Kalabankoro Nerekoro would make shea butter products, grow vegetables to sell at the local markets, and sell condiments in the market, as well as tie-dyed material and homemade juices.

⁴⁵⁹ Kenneth Little (1972), surveys the importance of the ‘good husband’ for women’s economic and social viability and mobility in in Lagos and Accra.

⁴⁶⁰ Wooten, "Women, men and market gardens: Gender relations and income generation in rural Mali."

The women in the associations, working together, carried out all of these activities. In men's associations, initiatives would be more individual than those of the women, consisting of smallholder farming and providing labour on building sites. This money would then be pooled as part of the *tauntin*. I encountered a belief from both men and women that women, because of their suffering and extreme hardship compared to men, had more of a collective mind and worked together more readily⁴⁶¹. There was also a belief that women were more trustworthy in repaying collective loans. The observation echoes an inherent belief running through micro credit lenders that mark women as posing a lower loan risk than men in Mali.

Regarding activities undertaken to help the community *hèrè*, it was normally the men's or mixed associations (which are seldom led by women members) that aimed for larger community projects such as building schools or community healthcare centres. Women's associations normally had smaller community activities such as picking up rubbish, sweeping the streets and looking after neighbourhood children. There are two major points I found that condition this division in activities undertaken. Firstly, it is less accepted that women have a role within the community; women are heads of households (looking after the children and household), and men are the ones to act in the public domain⁴⁶². Women who push against this norm have to deal with judgements of other actors who may make it harder for them by controlling resources and support, especially husbands. Secondly, larger community works can be more time consuming

⁴⁶¹ Fierlbeck (1995) pushes back on this belief and argues that if women acted individually, they may be more effective because their perception that group work is more beneficial perhaps is a reflection of internalised norms of how a woman should be. K. Fierlbeck, "Getting representation right for women in development: accountability and the articulation of women's interests," *ID S Bulletin* 26, no. 3 (1995).

⁴⁶² Toulmin, *Cattle, Women and Wells: Managing Household Survival in the Sahel*.

and when women are expected to cook and look after the children, they have certain practical restraints they have to contend with.

So whilst I have made the argument that gender does not necessarily reduce agents' *ka da I yèrè* and *dusu*, gendered norms impact the way in which women and men are able to effect the kind of change and breadth of change for their own lives and others' in the community.

7.4.3.3. AGE AND YOUTH ASSOCIATIONS

Young men and women form associations to undertake initiatives to help improve their personal *hèrè* and also enhance the *hèrè* of other youth and the community at large. Their status as a youth carries norms and beliefs that stratify their actions. Older members in Kalabankoro Nerekoro perceived the youth as naive and often lacked appreciation for the challenges the youth face. There is also an expectation that youth should serve their elders and not refuse requests for assistance. Yet as discussed previously, youth in Kalabankoro Nerekoro face large challenges with the pressure to create a better life than their parents had, high aspirations from exposure to the world economy through popular media, and the reality of high unemployment and chronic poverty through failing economic, state and social institutions⁴⁶³.

Even though these youth face adult problems, it was not culturally appropriate for youth to be involved in associations with older people. Without resources and support youth

⁴⁶³ Joy, "Negotiating material identities: young men and modernity in Djenne."; Bratton, Coulibaly, and Machado, "Popular Views of the legitimacy of the state in Mali."

are somewhat disconnected from avenues which legitimise their agency. Nonetheless, youth associations in Kalabankoro Nerekoro organise a variety of activities within the neighbourhood, trying to change what they can, and to instil a sense of hope and belief within other youth. These events and activities are impressive, but are stunted in their reach because of limited access to resources and support. In my research I found youth associations undertaking activities like soccer tournaments, sensitisation campaigns (like use of condoms), tree planting and ‘greening of Kalabankoro Nerekoro’ projects, and study groups for better exam results.

Because youth groups have little access to resources but with big ambitions, they are prime targets to be exploited by politicians needing support. This was the case for one such association in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, which involved a wealthy individual with political aspirations paying for the soccer tournament organised by the youth association, to garner supporters and exposure. After the political campaign was over, the politician deserted the association and did not follow through fully on the financial promises to the association that had initially garnered its support.

7.4.2.4. WORLDVIEWS AND EXCLUSION OF MARGINALISED ASSOCIATIONS

The rejection of the worldview of *djè bara* (collectivism) in Kalabankoro Nerekoro by elite individuals (who have an individualistic belief about agency described as *kelen bara*) makes effectiveness of marginalised associations even more difficult. In Kalabankoro Nerekoro, the elites and the upper stratum are quite adamant that collective action holds people back because it stops people from accumulating wealth

and looking after their own needs. The wealthy feel development and improvements to livelihoods should be more of a liberal pursuit underpinned by a belief in the privatisation of wealth and that each person must work hard for themselves and family. This contrasts with the poor, who believe that collectivity, through altruism, mutual help and working together, is the way to improving livelihoods and the development of Mali. In my interviews and focus groups, those who pushed for working collectively would define their purposeful agency with respect to the agency of the group. As one materially poor older male interviewee stated, “We all walk in the same door together, so we walk out the same door together.”⁴⁶⁴ The elite with more individualistic views of agency claimed that achievement of *hèrè* entailed individually specific expressions of self-sufficiency and individualisation where benefits from action should belong to the individual and not be distributed across the community. They believed that if people looked after themselves, the community would develop. Collectivist agency, in contrast, argued that when everyone contributes to the project the benefits of the project are spread to the whole community. To those of the collectivist view, individualistic agency typically ‘did not have a development mind’ because it aimed to advance *hèrè* for one person, not the group.

Here we see poor people’s ideas about community development involving working collectively - colliding with the individualistic worldview of *kelen bara*. The poor are seen as ‘traditional’ and sometimes ‘backwards’ and so their agency is not taken seriously. They are fighting against sentiments such as “these people have no idea what it takes to develop, they are not educated, they are backwards and stuck in a traditional

⁴⁶⁴ Male interviewee, Kalabankoro Nerekoro 28th December 2010

way,”⁴⁶⁵ which was what one quite wealthy male interviewee said when asking why he does not work with associations of poor people. The politics of worldviews are important to the agency of associations because *kelen bara* is the dominant and privileged worldview in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. This dominance exists not because it is more populous, but because those with the power, belonging to the upper and middle strata, are individualistic in their agency. The people in these strata are people with links to Bamako – the centre of the country’s economy and political power and a hub for connection to capitalism and the West. With the control over resources, they limit the access of poorer associations to opportunities to support their collective purposeful agency simply because they do not believe in it.

7.5. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have shown that one way in which people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro actively seek to realise their aspirations is being part of associations. I have rejected the definition of associations as formal institutions registered with the Malian state. This is because it excludes informal institutions whose function in Kalabankoro Nerekoro is the same as that of registered associations, yet are excluded because of processes of legitimisation by the state. Instead I use a broader definition of associations as groups of agents working together to improve personal or collective *hèrè*. In Kalabankoro Nerekoro, associations are varied in the types of activities they undertake and fall into one of three groups: self-help, community development or political associations. The formation of associations is further divided by gender, age and deprivation levels.

⁴⁶⁵ Male interviewee, Kalabankoro Nerekoro, 2nd March 2011

Associations, and working with other people towards a common aspiration, become an important site for *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*. Informants believed that to contribute to an association one must have *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* as a prerequisite to being a member. Further still, associations were the site of further enhancement of *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* through the positive affirmation of interaction including encouragement from peers, advice, seeing other people achieve and being told to overcome hardship. The achievement of tasks as part of an association also increased people's *ka da I yèrè la* as it instilled a belief in what the member and group were capable of. More research is needed to understand if the inverse of the processes of encouragement and advice-giving actually lowered *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* in associations of Kalabankoro Nerekoro.

However, whilst it was believed by informants that *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* were important to their collective purposeful agency, they were not the only factors important to the success of groups. Specifically, conflicts between members of associations affected the ability of the association to effectively exercise its agency, often resulting in a breakdown of the association.

Further still, even when the dynamic within associations was overall positive for members, specific processes within the social landscape in Kalabankoro Nerekoro also thwarted efforts of associations. These processes included economic stratification, limited access to education, gender and age norms. Economic stratification restricted

access to resources and material means of associations, making it harder for poorer associations to effect change. Education proved important for members in associations to access NGO and state resources to support associations. Without literacy in development logic, associations had to surrender to the will of development brokers. Social norms relating to age and gender condition the types of activities men, women and youth undertake and the freedom women and youth have in their agency to do so. Further still, marginalised associations are further marginalised by the rejection by some elites of the collective mentality, illustrated by the tension between worldviews and the privileging of the individualistic worldview.

Whilst *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* are important to both individual and collective agency, it cannot be argued *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* is substantial enough to ensure social development in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. *Ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* are important instrumentally for agents but also intrinsically as the pursuit of valued aspirations is a means in itself. However, this chapter has shown that when people operationalise their purposeful agency, with all good intentions, it is not always enough. Other processes of power and social norms can thwart efforts of the poor to overcome their hardship. Nonetheless, agents have a good go at it, and development interventions should not only place people's purposeful agency at the centre of the intervention, but also work towards levelling the playing field so the efforts of people and associations are not thwarted by unjust and unequal distribution of resources and power. I will discuss these findings in the context of policies in my concluding chapter.

CHAPTER 8:

CONCLUSIONS

Chi te ban Nonon Kène nan – “Even in the freshest of milk, you will still find hairs”⁴⁶⁶”

This is a modest piece of empirical research. This thesis is about the psychological constructions of *dusu* (internal motivation) and *ka da I yèrè la* (self-efficacy) underpinning intentional action to improve *hèrè* for people in a neighbourhood on the urban fringe of Bamako. In this final chapter, I draw together the arguments I have made throughout this work and reiterate what I set out to accomplish with this research, what I found, and what implications these results have for theory, policy and future research.

8.1. WHAT I SET OUT TO DO

I identified three gaps in three different bodies of literature which I have tried to address in this thesis. I have thought of the task of this thesis as being to bring together different literatures to help patch up the deficits in each. Firstly, regarding the literature on development and empowerment, I suggest that empowerment be conceived of not just as a favourable opportunity structure, decision-making ability and the distribution of power, but also in regard to what Rowlands terms “the power within”. Inherent in this argument is the request for the theorisation of psychological agency within mainstream development prose. Secondly, I attempted to consider, through the examination of *dusu*

⁴⁶⁶ Bambara Proverb

and *ka da I yèrè la*, the literature of psychological agency found in social psychology, to contextualise poor communities such as Kalabankoro Nerekoro. Social psychology scholars have called for studies that understand local psychological constructs in non-Western communities⁴⁶⁷ and not the transplanting of universal surveys and concepts developed in the West without any understanding of the concepts important to people's agency (say in Kalabankoro Nerekoro), let alone the willingness to completely deconstruct the very assumptions they go there with⁴⁶⁸. Thirdly, whilst measures of empowerment are much better at integrating contextual elements in their theories, they still tend to measure empowerment through either decision-making ability or opportunity structure and not include psychological agency. Thus it was a hope of my thesis to contribute towards finding some suitable measures of psychological agency for the people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro.

I began my research by employing an inductive mixed methods approach split over three time periods totalling seven months in the research site of Kalabankoro Nerekoro, a neighbourhood on the urban fringe of Bamako. As a site of rapid urbanisation, Kalabankoro Nerekoro is a melting pot of economic, social and political diversity, characterised as a stratified and unequal social landscape. The purposeful agency of people living in Kalabankoro Nerekoro is conditioned most by multidimensional

⁴⁶⁷ Marc A. Zimmerman, "Psychological empowerment: Issues and illustrations,," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 23, no. 5 (1995).

⁴⁶⁸ Urte Scholz et al., "Is General Self-Efficacy a Universal Construct?," *European Journal of Psychological Assessment* 18, no. 3 (2002). Susan T. Fiske, Amy J. C. Cuddy, and Peter Glick, "Universal dimensions of social cognition: warmth and competence," *Trends in cognitive sciences* 11, no. 2 (2007); Alan Baddeley, Julie Meeks Gardner, and Sally Grantham-McGregor, "Cross-cultural cognition: Developing tests for developing countries," *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 9, no. 7 (1995).

capability deprivation (affecting 71.7% of households), limited education and the social norms of gender and age.

I first employed qualitative methods to investigate the factors important to purposeful agency for people living in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, and when the importance of the psychological element of agency emerged, I set the central research question and objectives of:

Central research question:

- What is psychological agency?

Research objectives:

- Explore if the cultivation of psychological agency creates any change to people's lives in Kalabankoro Nerekoro.
- Understand the relevance of psychological agency at both individual and collective levels.
- Determine if psychological agency really matters to ideas of social development in Kalabankoro Nerekoro?

Specifically, I further used qualitative analysis to understand how the psychological constructs of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* form, how people conceptualised these constructs and their relevance of these constructs at individual and collective levels. I then employed quantitative methods to further analyse assertions emerging from my

qualitative work as well as finally deciding to test the RAI measure for autonomy, after establishing its explicit link with the concept of *dusu*. Specifically, my mixed methods research included 25 mini-life interviews, four focus groups, 20 key informant interviews, observations and a household survey with a sample of 307 households (of which 12.2% were retested in the stability test). After completing an analysis of my initial fieldwork, I then returned to Mali for additional fieldwork, double-checking of my initial results and an additional 15 interviews. Whilst there were some limitations of the methods used in this research, the strength lies in the inherent triangulation of the methods.

8.2. WHAT I FOUND

In this inductive study, informants articulated that the psychological concepts of *dusu* (internal motivation) and *ka da I yèrè la* (self-efficacy) were important to their purposeful agency and social development in the neighbourhood. There are three main conclusions I draw from my work.

8.2.1. SIGNIFICANCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AGENCY

Firstly, *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* underlie informant's conceptions of purposeful agency. From the life stories of Asa and Adama, but also those of other interviewees backed up with household survey data, I have shown that the psychological domain is an important aspect of people's purposeful agency. Through my research, the psychological concepts of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* emerged as having both instrumental and intrinsic significance to people's lives.

Dusu and *ka da I yèrè la*, through the narrative of change, drove people to achieve instrumental personal and community change. Through interviews, life histories, observation and general conversations documented through my time in the field, I heard of many individuals and groups overcoming insurmountable odds to improve *hèrè* using such a narrative. Through a discussion of the inherent relationality embedded in the narrative of change and the concepts of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, I rejected notions that the narrative of change is a pure expression of political liberalism and individualism. However, this is not to say that the narrative of change could not be used to pursue harmful goals in general – something that the intrinsic element of these two psychological concepts perhaps can support, although never alone. We should understand the narrative of change is a legitimate element of purposeful agency, especially for the poor and marginalised when they have very little else to help them cope and deal with the hardship they face. In Kalabankoro Nerekoro, my informants explained through their life stories and focus groups how their *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* helped them to achieve their aspirations of either personal or community *hèrè*. My research adds to other findings about the instrumental significance of psychological agency. For example, Narayan (2005) in the *Moving Out of Poverty* study, comprising of mixed methods data from 15 different countries, also found the instrumental value of what she termed self-belief and confidence when the poor move out of poverty. Specifically, “[our] analyses suggest strong associations between self-rated power and mobility in several countries, even after controlling for 22 or more other community and

household variables, including education and assets.”⁴⁶⁹ Nonetheless, the risk of just focusing on the instrumental element of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* is that it is then considered valuable and promoted only as a means to development ends, which generally are seen to be growth and modernisation, with little consideration for how ‘development’ is defined and valued by populations it is imposed on. Thus the intrinsic dimension is important too.

Dusu and *ka da I yèrè la* have intrinsic significance to agents’ purposeful agency in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. *Ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* are intrinsically important to informants because the very pursuit of purposeful agency can be an end in itself. *Ka da I yèrè la*, or self-efficacy, is also intrinsically important to informants in Kalabankoro Nerekoro where it is related to people not doing any dirty work, not lying to people and not betraying anyone’s trust. This moral component built into the definition of *ka da I yèrè la* evoked a moral direction as to what is acceptable action and what is not. *Dusu* was described as doing things not just for the outcome, but also because you love it – the action itself is an end. Like the concept of autonomy in SDT, *dusu* has a continuum where at one end is doing things because you love it and it comes from the heart, whilst at the other end is doing things because of force or coercion.

8.2.2. PSYCHOLOGICAL AGENCY IS RELATIONAL

Through the analysis of the processes involved in the creation of *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu*, I have found that they are formed through the relationships with other social actors and especially in associations. For example, *dusu* came from watching others

⁴⁶⁹ Deepa Narayan, "Moving Out of Poverty Study: An Overview," (World Bank, 2009), 29.

succeed, which generated positive envy to help pursue initiatives that people valued. *Dusu*, to a much lesser extent, also came from being told by peers to have it. *Ka da I yèrè la* came from encouragement and watching other people succeed which installed a self-belief. Associations were the site of further enhancement of *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* through the positive affirmation of interaction including encouragement from peers, advice, seeing other people achieve and being told to have to overcome hardship. The achievement of tasks as part of an association also increased people's *ka da I yèrè la* as it instilled a belief in what the member and group were capable (generally more than what the member could do alone). That *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* occur in relationships with other social actors is of no surprise in the context of social psychology research.⁴⁷⁰ The contribution of this finding lies instead in more conceptual and measurement issues of empowerment used in mainstream development literature. Because of these relational processes in the production of *ka da I yèrè* and *dusu*, gender, age, formal education level and deprivation were not cited by informants as being conditions of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, suggesting these concepts cannot be reduced to agent's socio-economic characteristics – that *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* were attributes people from all demographics had. Thus an agent's socio-economic characteristics (particularly elevated socio-economic characteristics) are not adequate proxies for *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*. I also showed that decision-making ability was also not a suitable proxy for *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, as decisions made do not capture the intrinsic importance of the choice for the agent. These assertions were further triangulated

⁴⁷⁰ Ryan and Deci, "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development and Well-being."; Wendy Grolnick, Deci, and Ryan, "Internalization within the Family: the self-determination theory perspective."; Miller, Das, and Charkravarthy, "Culture and the Role of Choice in Agency."; Bandura, "Self - efficacy: the exercise of control".

through quantitative analysis of the household survey, where I showed weak correlations between autonomy and MPI, years at school, age and gender as well as a weak correlation between autonomy and decision-making ability. What this research further suggests is that psychological agency needs to be considered as another dimension of empowerment and agency – and not thought of as being covered through proxies of other dimensions such as socio-economic characteristics or decision-making ability.

8.2.3. PSYCHOLOGICAL AGENCY AND FURTHERING SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

So why are *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* important? From my interviews, focus groups, and observations the realisation of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* suggested psychological agency led to personal change and expanding capabilities. If we took the view that capability expansion was central in issues of social development⁴⁷¹ then there are three possible avenues in which *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* are relevant – specifically the instrumental, intrinsic and constructive. However personal change is not synonymous with social development, as personal change whilst being beneficial to one individual or group, may not be beneficial to the social setting.

In the empirical chapters within this thesis, I showed three specific areas in which *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* are important for social development. These are the instrumental, intrinsic and constructive elements. Firstly, the realisation of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* had an instrumental importance to the social development of Kalabankoro Nerekoro.

⁴⁷¹ See amongst others, Sen, *Development as freedom*; Amartya Sen, *The idea of Justice* (Allen Lane of Penguin Books, 2009).

Driven by *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro are carrying out initiatives every day to help improve their *hèrè* or the *hèrè* of the community. They were anything but passive, unresponsive victims of the hardship so many were faced with. This understanding of instrumental value echoes Sen's and others' sentiments found within the Capability Approach - a helpful framework for situating agency as central in social development.⁴⁷² Agency then is based on people's ability to act on what they value and have reason to value.

Secondly, *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* have intrinsic importance to people, where pursuing aspirations that are valuable to them holds some *hèrè* in their lives⁴⁷³. Whilst subjective happiness can never be the final aim of development programmes, as that could numb people to difficulties in the world, keeping us from fighting, its understanding is a contribution towards an alternative model of development where people pursue not lives based on growth and capital accumulation, but instead one of intrinsic fulfilment, moral rigour and human flourishing.

Thirdly, *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* have a constructive element where they drive agency in the generation of new structures, norms and discourse. The social landscape of structure and power is never static, it is always changing. Whilst generally the outcomes are not intended, in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, agents driven by their *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* are shifting norms. For example, women who are trying to get their daughters to go to

⁴⁷² Sen, *Development as freedom*; Amartya Sen, *The idea of Justice* (Allen Lane of Penguin Books, 2009).

⁴⁷³ Ryan and Deci, "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development and Well-being."; Chirkov et al., "Differentiating Autonomy From Individualism and Independence: A Self - Determination Theory Perspective on Internalisation of Cultural Orientations and Well-Being."

school consequently shift restrictive norms that girls do not go to school, or the few elites who support initiatives of poor associations possibly shift the mentality of their friends that keep their elite circles closed to the poor; the shifting of these structures through the drive of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* is a really important dimension in the social development of Kalabankoro Nerekoro. We can also find constructivist accounts in the theory. Giddens, like other social theorists such as Butler (1997) and Foucault (1980), maintains that agency is not solely determined by structure and that whilst the outcomes are not always intentional or planned, human agency shifts the structural environment. Giddens (1979) argues that “actors are able to offer of their conduct drawn upon in the very production and reproduction of their action.”⁴⁷⁴ Giddens here points to a moment of consideration for something beyond structural reproduction. Sewell (1992), in reflecting on Giddens’s structuration theory, argues that this theory “makes it possible to show how the ordinary operations of structures can generate transformations.”⁴⁷⁵ In addition, Butler (1997), in her theory of subjection, argues that while the psyche of an agent is created through relations of power, this is never deterministic, as not “all agency remains tethered to those conditions and that those conditions remain the same in every operation of agency.”⁴⁷⁶ Butler argues that through the process of subjectivity, power shifts from its status as a condition of agency to the subjects’ own agency or the “power within” as found in common writings on empowerment and participation. Thus agency exceeds the power by which it is enabled. *Ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* thus are fundamental for purposeful agency as these are the

⁴⁷⁴Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, structure and contradiction in social analysis*: 57.

⁴⁷⁵ Sewell, "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency and Transformation," 16.

⁴⁷⁶ Butler, *The psychic life of power: Theories in subjection*: 13.

wellsprings of possibility beyond the confines of a limited opportunity structure for many in Kalabankoro Nerekoro.

However, whilst *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* are important to both individual and collective agency, it cannot be argued *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* are substantial enough to ensure complete social development in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. In Kalabankoro Nerekoro, associations are a valuable way in which people operationalise their purposeful agency. Whilst the use of associations to realise personal and community *hèrè* goals was a popular initiative, collective agency did not always help agents reach these goals. This is because of internal conflict within groups and also because of inequality and power dynamics within the wider social landscape of Kalabankoro Nerekoro. These processes included economic stratification, limited access to education, which restricted members' ability to access state and NGO resources, and gender and age norms. Further still, marginalised associations are restricted by the rejection by some elites of the collective mentality illustrated by the tension between worldviews, and the privileging of the individualistic worldview. Thus, social development in Kalabankoro Nerekoro needs to address not just the enhancement of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, but also institutional failure to deal with inequality and stratification within Kalabankoro Nerekoro.

8.3. IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

From my findings, I suggest four possible avenues for future research. The first relates to Mali; as my research was focused on one neighbourhood in a very diverse country, more research could be carried out to understand the applicability and implications of

dusu and *ka da I yèrè la* in other social contexts (in study sites that do not have Bambara as the spoken language, the terms *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* will not be relevant and perhaps other constructs will be). I did carry out fieldwork in two other sites, specifically two rural Bambara speaking villages in Mali (data not presented in this thesis), and initial review of this data suggests that again *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* were central to agents' purposeful agency; however, the specific processes involved in the creation of these constructs and the significance of the rural village setting to agents' efforts in these cases are yet to be analysed. In addition, given the current political and humanitarian crisis, it would be very useful to investigate the role purposeful agency can play (if any) in challenges ahead. I will discuss this point further below.

Secondly, and relating to the current study in Kalabankoro Nerekoro, more research is needed to understand if the inverse of the processes of encouragement and advice (like discouragement and slander) actually lowered *ka da I yèrè la* and *dusu* of people in Kalabankoro Nerekoro. This was something I was not able to draw any conclusions on from my data. Also relating to Kalabankoro Nerekoro, whilst there was considerable empirical overlap between the concepts of *ka da I yèrè la* and self-efficacy, I was not able to use the theoretical measures of self-efficacy to quantify it like I was able to for *dusu* and the RAI. For further research, it would be interesting to test theoretical measures of self-efficacy such as what is found in the Self-Efficacy Theory to see if it is a valuable tool for measuring *ka da I yèrè la*. On this point of measurement, further development of measures to understand agents' ability to critically engage in their lives could also be beneficial alongside those of psychological agency (and decision-making and resource based evaluations).

Thirdly, the social psychology literature would benefit a great deal from more studies of local constructs important to purposeful agency. I have laid out a mixed methods approach for doing such research; however, considerable focus should be given to inductive qualitative elements of the research and willingness of researchers to deconstruct the very premise on which the Western psychological discipline. Likewise, development literature can continue to integrate the interdisciplinary approach with an inclusive frame for the psychological dimension in future studies on empowerment and agency.

Fourthly, this study is a snapshot in time. Even though I did carry out a stability test in the household survey, as well as revisit the study site and people a year after the initial research, the data would be enriched with deeper panel data and continued data collection over the course of people's lives. Psychological agency fluctuates in different temporal and spatial moments of the agent's life⁴⁷⁷. Given the conflict the political and humanitarian crisis that has since erupted in Mali, it would be interesting to see how these events, and others effect levels of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* over the course of people's lives.

⁴⁷⁷ Ryan and Deci, "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development and Well-being."; Bandura, "Self - efficacy: the exercise of control".

8.4. IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE POLICY

Whilst this modest piece of research is related to one study site, and overarching inferences to other agents in the world are unadvisable as more research needs to be carried out to understand the findings in this thesis further, I would like to raise some possible areas of policy we can consider in general.

Through documenting specific processes that are affecting *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, at an individual level and a collective level, this thesis could contribute to the articulation of psychological agency not just in Mali but also in development practice as a whole. Thus the case study of Kalabankoro Nerekoro may provide a vital key to rebalancing the development narratives on empowerment – as well as very practical avenues for action, such as mentoring, systematic encouragement and stories of success against the odds.

At the time of my research there was a severe deficit in state and local policies in Mali to consider the agency of the population. An analysis of the PRSP 2007–2011 prepared by the World Bank, IMF and the Council of Malian Ministers⁴⁷⁸, providing a blueprint for ‘development’ of the country, showed the priorities of development. Within the 224 pages, very little consideration was given to the agency of the population; the document overwhelmingly reads as if development was conceived as a technical exercise in the implementation of infrastructure. Although the PRSP gives minor space to ‘cross cutting issues of’ gender, territorial development, peace and security issues, it only

⁴⁷⁸ International Monetary Fund, "Mali Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2007-2011," <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2008/cr08121.pdf>.

makes reference to empowerment regarding women and other marginal groups' access to roles of power: "empowerment of women in public management, and the promotion of solidarity with the underprivileged social groups are conditions for equitable, harmonious and sustainable development."⁴⁷⁹ Whilst these are an important few lines, as redistributing power to people who have historically had none is crucial, the agency of women and the marginalised in this process of solidarity and taking up of leadership positions is not clear. Further still, the *Plans de Développement Social, Economique, et Culturel* (PDSEC) for Kalabankoro commune (the blueprint for development at the level of the Kalabankoro commune for 2008–2012) make no reference even to 'cross cutting issues' or empowerment and consists entirely of an infrastructure plan which will lead to development. The corresponding development narrative in such documents as the PRSP and PDSEC holds that in order to empower people, it is necessary and (implicitly) sufficient to educate them and provide access to markets, democratic space, and so on. Whilst the structural elements are important (as I have illustrated in Chapter 7 of this thesis), the danger in presenting only a structural view of development and social process systematically overlooks – and hence undervalues – the tremendous and potent influence of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* and what I have called 'psychological agency'. However, it is not all bleak, and not all policy distances the world's citizens from what makes them human beings. For example, the World Bank's study *On Norms and Agency*, involving over 4,000 women and men from 20 different countries, discussed the effects of gender differences and inequalities on their lives. This study acknowledges more work needs to be done regarding psychological agency, as "At the individual level, education, self-efficacy, and the ability to aspire emerged from the

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., 33.

focus groups as important factors with respect to the capacity to negotiate change for greater agency.”⁴⁸⁰

One potential way forward that came out of this work was the power of stories and narratives of people who coped in circumstances like others’ – how they found strength when all seemed hopeless. Such narratives could be shared on the radio, school books and television serials. Ina Conradie (2013) shows the power of members of a South African women’s group working together collectively with the help of an NGO to achieve the women’s aspirations and how the power of these stories compelled each other to do the same⁴⁸¹. Population Media Center, whose staff I met in Mali, had already tried to operationalise the importance of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* in their radio shows, but had ceased because of lack of funding. Of course these initiatives raise issues of morality. While creating a space for these kinds of reflections and encouragement, a danger of course is that we will come to ‘blame’ the poor who are depressed and disheartened. Work on psychological agency must take care not to misalign and judge those who are unable at a particular point – whether because of circumstances or past bruises – to muster the emotional resources needed for self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation. Such policies and related programs run the risk of promoting discourse through stories that is problematic. For example the reproduction of neoliberal values.

⁴⁸⁰ Ana María Muñoz Boudet, Patti Petesch, and Carolyn Turk, *On Norms and Agency: Conversations about Gender Equality with women and men in 20 countries* (World Bank, 2013). 198.

⁴⁸¹ Ina Conradie, "Can Deliberate Efforts to Realise Aspirations Increase Capabilities? A South Africa Case Study," *Oxford Development Studies* 41, no. 2 (2013).

Another observation is that conversations about unleashing agency by enabling people to do what they ‘love’ to do are far less common than policies to create jobs. Should attention to meaningful work and activities be as central to discussions of economic productivity as discussions of education and skills?

Further still, after completing fieldwork, a political and humanitarian crisis erupted throughout the country⁴⁸². The barrage of news reports and diplomatic analysis on the conflict have incorrectly explained the conflict as a war of Islamic extremism and have ignored two other interrelated sources of insecurity: Tuareg nationalism and the failure of Mali’s post-independence state. Thus we can understand the conflict not just a problem of the north but also a conflict and institutional failure of the south (where most political, economic and social resources are concentrated) and a breakdown of the relationship in between. In this post-conflict period, Robin Poulton (2013) calls for an investment in the economy of peace; however, Poulton argues that the international community’s response is characterised by continued investment in an economy of war. For example, the release of a new Malian PRSP, titled ‘Plan for the Sustainable Recovery of Mali 2013–2014,’ showed considerable attention to the possibility of future conflicts. Nonetheless, at the centre of an economy of peace is civil society comprised of individual and collective agents. This study focused on how agents negotiate life and social change in a neighbourhood on the urban fringe of Bamako. It could be that narratives of social change, development and cohesion already present in the social

⁴⁸² Whilst the fall of Qadhafi was a catalyst to the eruption of the conflict, it cannot be seen as the cause – tensions underpinning the Malian conflict were bubbling for some time. For a deeper analysis see Baz Lecocq et al., "One Hippopotamus and Eight Blind Analysts: A multivocal analysis of the 2012 political crisis in the divided Republic of Mali," (The review of African Political Economy (forthcoming), 2013); *ibid.*

milieu can play a role in the challenges ahead. I maintain that the wellsprings of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* are fundamental drivers influencing purposeful agency and could be explored further when thinking about the trajectory of peace and the future of Mali. Thus in the structural rebuilding of Mali, it is important to also support the building of aspirations in civil society and the *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* within.

conflicts.

Nonetheless, whilst there is room in policy for more consideration of purposeful agency and psychological agency in particular, this thesis also sounds a warning about policies that enhance individualistic narratives that are disconnected from a social consciousness, morality, intrinsic motivation and self-belief⁴⁸³. The purpose of this study was certainly not to promote the development and manipulation of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la* so people can be further exploited by the project of progress and GDP growth by national governments, NGOs and development agencies. Understanding the importance of *dusu* and *ka da I yèrè la*, self-efficacy and autonomy, is not an excuse for policy makers to further turn a blind eye to the structural inequalities that plague this world. Too often in policy we see ‘quick fixes’ being implemented in an attempt to not address the major challenge of our global world – capitalism and its destructive side effects of climate change, dispossession, oppression and inequality.

Instead, I hope this study feeds the already strong work being done that is working towards destabilising and replacing the growth paradigm. Further still, I hope it adds to the literature that shows the fullness of the human condition, whereby the ability to

instrumentalise creative solutions in dire situations and intrinsic freedom as a value are essential to human flourishing. Further still, as the current conflict in Mali means the task of rebuilding is just ahead, I hope it is clear that human capital within the nation absolutely has the capacity to overcome the challenges ahead. With thoughtful and reflective leadership, as well as negotiation through the terrain of social and economic stratification, capability deprivation and gender constraints, I am a believer that this is possible.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW & FOCUS GROUP SCHEDULE

1. MINI LIFE INTERVIEWS

(Questions were only a starting point – mainly to provoke conversation. These discussions generally took its own direction)

- Introduction to the research and ask for permission to record
- What is your day-to-day work/life?
- What have been some key moments in your life?
- What were your aspirations growing up?
- What are your aspirations for yourself/family/community now? If changed, why?
- Do you take initiatives to support the *hèrè* of the community?
- What helps you to undertake these initiatives? If agency was expressed ask further about what that meant.
- If relevant – what do you mean by *ka da I yèrè la? dusu?*
- What does development mean to you?
- What does *hèrè* mean to you?
- How does development happen in Kalabankoro Nerekoro?
- What thwarts social development?
- If relevant – what does individualism and collectivism mean to you?
- Do you have any other thoughts or comments you would like to add?

2. FOCUS GROUPS

(Questions were only a starting point – mainly to provoke conversation. These discussions generally took its own direction)

- Introduction to the research and ask for permission to record
- Everyone in the focus group to introduce themselves
- What actions do you undertake to help your family?
- What actions do you undertake to help your community?
- What helps achieve these initiatives?
- What kind of action is most valued within Kalabankoro Nerekoro? What action isn't valued? Individual? Collective?
- Generally the following came up already in conversations and so I sought clarification -
What are aspirations? *Ka da I yèrè la? Dusu?* Where do they come from? What affects them?
- How does action operate at the individual and collective levels? Whose agency gets supported? Whose doesn't? Why? What effect does this have on the action? What factors stop agency in Kalabankoro Nerekoro and why?
- In associations, whose visions get supported and whose doesn't? Why?
- How does Islam, Group membership, Gender, education levels and family relations effect action you take?
- What development interventions could help with supporting people's action?
- Any other comments or questions for me?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW & FOCUS GROUP LISTS

1. MINI LIFE INTERVIEWS

- 31st November 2010 – EPY – Male Interview
- 22nd December 2010 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro – Male Interview
- 22nd December 2010 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro – Female Interview
- 24th December 2010 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro – Female Interview
- 24th December 2010 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro – Female Interview
- 28th December 2010 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro – Male Interview
- 28th December 2010 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro – Female Interview
- 28th December 2010 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro – Female Interview
- 4th January 2011 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro – “Bakary”
- 4th January 2011 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro – Female Interview
- 4th January 2011 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro – Female Interview
- 5th of January 2011 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro – Female Interview
- 5th of January 2011 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro – Female Interview
- 5th of January 2011 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro – “Asa”
- 5th of January 2011 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro – Female Interview
- 5th of January 2011 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro – Male Interview

- 12th January 2011 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro - Female Interview
- 24th of January 2011 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro – Female Interview
- 26th of January 2011 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro – Male Interview
- 26th of January 2011 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro – Male Interview
- 13th February 2011 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro – Female Interview
- 13th February 2011– Kalabankoro Nerekoro – “Adama”
- 1st March 2011 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro – “Fatou”
- 2nd March 2011 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro – Male Interview
- 2nd March 2011 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro – Male Interview

2. FOCUS GROUPS

- 29th December 2010 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro – Women’s Focus Group
- 30th December 2010 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro – Men’s Focus Group
- 24th January 2011 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro – Young Men’s Focus Group
- 24th January 2011 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro – Young Women’s Focus Group

3. KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

- 23rd November 2010 – Bamako – International NGO Official
- 27th November 2010 – Town meeting at the Kalabankoro CSCOM
- 30th November 2010 – Bamako – International NGO Official
- 20th December 2010 – Bamako – Tuareg Refugees

- 25th January 2011 – Universite du Bamako – Professor (Male)
- 1st of February 2011 – Bamako – PopulationMedia Official
- 2nd of February 2011 – Bamako –General Secretary for the Ministry for the Promotion of women family and children (MPFEF)
- 4th of February 2011 – Bamako – Coordination des associations et ONG Feminines Mali (CAFO)
- 7th of February 2011 – Bamako - Coordination des associations et ONG Feminines Mali (CAFO)
- 8th February 2011 – Bamako – Local NGO Official
- 10th February 2011 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro – Kalabankoro Nerekoro Imam
- 11th February 2011 – Universite de Bamako – Professor (Male)
- 11th February 2011 – Kalabankoro Kulaba – Kulaba Traditional Chief
- 12th February 2011 – Bamako - Local NGO Official
- 14th February 2011 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro - Kalabankoro Nerekoro Imam
- 2nd March 2011 – Kalabankoro Nerekoro – Director of Private School
- 4th March 2011 – Universite de Bamako – Professor (Female)
- 4th March 2011 – Universite de Bamako – Professor (Male)
- 21st November 2011 – Bamako - UNDP Official
- 30th November 2011 – Mayor of Kalabankoro

4. DOUBLE CHECKING TRIP INTERVIEWS

- 16th November 2011 – Female Interviewee 1

- 16th November 2011 – Female Interviewee 2
- 16th November 2011 – Female Interviewee 3
- 16th November 2011 – Male Interviewee
- 17th November 2011 – Male Interviewee 1
- 17th November 2011 – Male Interviewee 2
- 17th November 2011 – Male Interviewee 3
- 17th November 2011 – Female Interviewee 1
- 17th November 2011 – Female Interviewee 2
- 17th November 2011 – Female Interviewee 3
- 17th November 2011 – Female Interviewee 4
- 18th November 2011 – Male Interviewee 1
- 18th November 2011 – Male Interviewee 2
- 18th November 2011 – Male Interviewee 3
- 18th November 2011 – Male Interviewee 4

APPENDIX C

HOUSEHOLD QUESTIONNAIRE

Please note this household questionnaire was developed and delivered in Bambara and so exact translation may be different.



MALI Survey FEBRUARY 2011

Introduction (Must be read to all persons before the interview starts):

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this survey. This survey is about finding out more about community development here in this community. It is for the Doctorate Research for Elise Klein from the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom.

The answers that you give will be used to understand better how people here are undertaking initiatives to better improve their wellbeing, their family's wellbeing and the community's wellbeing. This will then better inform donors working on community development here in Mali.

This survey will be carried out in all the households of this community. You haven't been chosen for a specific reason.

I would like to ask the questions to you as the head of the household and/or your spouse of the head of household. In the results of this survey we will not identify you or any family members by name and all of the information will be held in confidence. Some of the questions may be a bit personal and we hope this will OK with you. If, however you do not feel comfortable answering any of the questions, please feel free to say no.

Before I start, do you want to ask me anything about the survey? May I begin now?

1. Name of the household head/ person you are interviewing?
2. What is the gender of the person you are interviewing? (M/F)

PART 1: INITIATIVES FOR FAMILY WELLBEING

3. Do you undertake any initiatives to help the wellbeing of your family?

Yes/ No

4. What initiatives do you undertake to help the wellbeing of your family?

1. Farming
2. Household chores like cooking, cleaning and washing
3. Small businesses
4. Market gardening
5. Work in the nearest town or city?
6. Other, Specify _____

5. Choose the **three most important** factors that able you to undertake initiatives for your family's wellbeing;

1. To have enough financial means
2. Being educated
3. Relationships (family, friends, peers)
4. To have Hami (Aspirations)
5. To have Dusu (internal motivation)
6. To have Ka da I yere la (self-belief)
7. To have choice in what I do
99. I don't know / No answer

6. Today, if you are on a 10 step ladder, where 10 is a lot of *ka da I yèrè la* and 1 is no *ka da I yèrè la*, how much *ka da I yèrè la* do you have for you to undertake the initiatives for your family? SHOW LADDER CARD

7. Today, if you are on a 10 step ladder, where 10 is a lot of dusu and 1 is no dusu, how much dusu do you have for you to undertake the initiatives for your family? SHOW LADDER CARD

8. Do you have aspirations for your family?

Yes/No

9. List your top 3 aspirations for your family

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

People often have several reasons for doing something. In each module in this survey, we will ask you why you do certain activities or think certain things. There is no right or wrong answer and often you may have several reasons for acting as you do.

10. I will now ask you to express your level of disagreement or agreement with the following statements, where 1 is greatly disagree with the statement and 4 is strongly agree, regarding what gets in the way of your achieving aspirations for your family.

Show card	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know/No answer
a. Lack of financial means	1	2	3	4	99
b. Lack of dusu	1	2	3	4	99
c. Lack of ka da I yèrè la	1	2	3	4	99
d. Other people stopping me	1	2	3	4	99
e. My gendered role in my society	1	2	3	4	99
f. I am not educated enough	1	2	3	4	99
g. God's will stops me	1	2	3	4	99
h. Norms in our society don't support my ideas	1	2	3	4	99

PART 2: INITIATIVES FOR COMMUNITY WELLBEING

11. Do you undertake initiatives to help the wellbeing of your community?

Yes/ No

If no go to question 16

12. What initiatives do you undertake to help the wellbeing of your community?

1. I am part of a community association
2. I have a leadership role in the community
3. I help other people more disadvantaged than me

4. Implement my own community projects (ie. Schools, healthcare centers, training etc)
5. Other, Specify _____

13. How regularly do you do this/these initiative/s?

1. Every day
2. Once a week
3. Monthly
4. Yearly or more
99. I don't know / No answer

14. I want you to choose one of the initiatives you undertake to help the wellbeing of your community. With this initiative in mind, rate the following statements:

Show Card	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know/No answer
a. I do these initiatives only because it is my role and I am expected to do it.	1	2	3	4	99
b. I do these initiatives because my spouse/partner, other people, society, social organisations or my community make me do it so I comply to avoid punishment.	1	2	3	4	99
c. I do these initiatives because others expect it of me or to obtain their approval. If I didn't, they might blame me or think I was not a good person.	1	2	3	4	99
d. I do these initiatives because I personally consider it important.	1	2	3	4	99
e. I do these initiatives because I love them and I can't imagine my life without them	1	2	3	4	99

15. Choose the three most important factors that able you to undertake initiatives for your community's wellbeing; SHOW CAR

1. To have enough financial means
2. To be educated is important
3. Relationships (family, friends, peers)
4. To have Hami (Aspirations)
5. To have Dusu (internal motivation)
6. To have *ka da I yèrè la* (self belief)
7. To have choice in what I do
99. I don't know / No answer

16. Today, if you are on a 10 step ladder, where 10 is a lot of *ka da I yèrè la* and 1 is no *ka da I yèrè la*, how much *ka da I yèrè la* do you have for you to undertake the initiatives for your community? **SHOW LADDER CARD**

17. Today, if you are on a 10 step ladder, where 10 is a lot of *dusu* and 1 is no *dusu*, how much *dusu* do you have for you to undertake the initiatives for your community? **SHOW LADDER CARD**

18. Do you have aspirations for your community?

Yes/No

19. List the top 3 aspirations you have for your community

1.

2.

3.

20. I will now ask you to express your level of disagreement or agreement with the following statements, where 1 is greatly disagree with the statement and 4 is strongly agree, regarding what gets in the way of you achieving your aspirations for the community?

Show Card	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know/No answer
a. Lack of financial means	1	2	3	4	99
b. Lack of <i>dusu</i>	1	2	3	4	99
c. Lack of <i>ka da I yèrè la</i>	1	2	3	4	99
d. Other people stopping me	1	2	3	4	99
e. My gendered role in my society	1	2	3	4	99
f. I am not educated enough	1	2	3	4	99
g. Gods will	1	2	3	4	99
h. Norms in our society don't support my ideas	1	2	3	4	99
i. Lack of unity in the community	1	2	3	4	99

21. How many ideas do you have of initiatives to help the wellbeing of your family?

1. My head is full of them 2. I have quite a lot

3. A few 4. None 5. Don't Know

22. How many ideas do you have of initiatives to help the wellbeing of your community?

1. My head is full of them 2. I have quite a lot 3. A few 4. None 5. Don't Know

PART 3: *Ka da I yèrè la*

23. Where do you get your *ka da I yèrè la* from?

Show card	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know/No answer
a. I get <i>ka da I yèrè la</i> from encouragement from people around me	1	2	3	4	99
b. I don't get it from anywhere, I was born with it	1	2	3	4	99
c. I have no choice, poverty makes me get my <i>ka da I yèrè la</i>	1	2	3	4	99
d. I get it from watching other people succeed	1	2	3	4	99
e. Being educated	1	2	3	4	99
f. My social status and the importance of my position in society means I have it	1	2	3	4	99
g. My age	1	2	3	4	99
h. My gender means I have it	1	2	3	4	99
i. If the community is united I have it	1	2	3	4	99
j. God gives it to me	1	2	3	4	99

PART 4: DUSU

24. Where you get your dusu from?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know/No answer
a. I get dusu because people tell me I have to have it	1	2	3	4	99
b. I don't get it from anywhere, I was born with it	1	2	3	4	99
c. I have no choice, poverty makes me have to have dusu	1	2	3	4	99

d.	I get it from watching other people succeed and so I envy them	1	2	3	4	99
e.	Being educated	1	2	3	4	99
f.	My social status and the importance of my position in society means I have it	1	2	3	4	99
g.	My age	1	2	3	4	99
h.	If the community is united then I have it	1	2	3	4	99
i.	My gender means I have it	1	2	3	4	99
j.	God gives it to me	1	2	3	4	99

PART 5: EXTRAS

25. Please rate the following statements

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know/No answer
a.	My aspirations are important to me because they give me something to work towards	1	2	3	4	99
b.	I have enough <i>ka da I yèrè la</i> to realise these aspirations	1	2	3	4	99
c.	I have enough <i>dusu</i> to realise these aspirations	1	2	3	4	99
d.	The community is very important to me and my wellbeing	1	2	3	4	99
e.	Even if I don't have enough means, I believe I can reach my most important aspirations.	1	2	3	4	99

26. Choose the **three most important** factors that are the most important for this community to develop?

1. Everyone has enough financial means
2. Everyone has enough *dusu*
3. Everyone has enough *ka da I yèrè la* in their abilities
4. Unity

5. Gender equality
6. Everyone has enough education and information
7. Everyone's ideas are supported
99. I know/ no answer

PART 6: PERSONAL DECISIONS

27. In general, how much control do you feel you have in making personal decisions that affect your daily activities (such as dropping off the children at school, buying bread, cooking, washing up, etc.)?

1. Control over all decisions
2. Control over most decisions
3. Control over some decisions
4. No control over any decision
99. Don't know/No answer

PART 7: HOUSEHOLD DECISION MAKING

28. How much does your household spend on food in a normal week?

29. When decisions are made regarding minor household purchases such as food or other daily items, who is it that normally makes the decision?

1. You
2. You and your spouse or partner
3. You along with someone else (not your spouse/partner)
4. Your spouse/partner
5. Other (Neither you nor your spouse/partner)
6. The community / social organisation / community board

30. If you wanted to, would you be able to participate in these decisions?

1. Yes
2. No

31. I will now ask you to express your level of disagreement or agreement with the following statements, where 1 is greatly disagree with the statement and 4 is strongly agree, regarding how you make minor household purchases such as food or other daily items.

Show Card	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know/No answer

a. I can't make minor household purchases differently to how I do them.	1	2	3	4	99
b. I make minor household purchases because my spouse, another person, society, social organisations or my community insist that I make them.	1	2	3	4	99
c. I make minor household purchases according to what others expect of me or to obtain their approval. If I didn't, they might blame me.	1	2	3	4	99
d. I make minor household purchases according to what I personally consider important.	1	2	3	4	99

WORK/TASKS UNDERTAKEN IN HOME

32. When decisions are made regarding what kind of job you will do (or tasks, if you don't work away from home), who is it that normally makes the decision?

1. You
2. You and your spouse or partner
3. You and someone else (not your spouse/partner)
4. Your spouse/partner
5. Other (neither spouse/partner nor you)
6. The community/social organisation/community board

33. If you wanted to, would you be able to make these decisions alone?

1. Yes
2. No

34 a) ONLY INTERVIEWEES WHO WORK ANSWER

34 a) I will now ask you to express your level of disagreement or agreement with the following statements, where 1 is greatly disagree with the statement and 4 is strongly agree, regarding why you do the job you do.

Show Card	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know/No
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					answer
a. I do this job only because I need the money.	1	2	3	4	99
b. I do this job because my spouse/partner, other people, society, social organisations or my community insist that I do.	1	2	3	4	99
c. I do this job because others expect it of me or to obtain their approval. If I didn't, they might blame me.	1	2	3	4	99
d. I do this job because I personally consider it important.	1	2	3	4	99

34 b) ONLY INTERVIEWEES WHO DON'T WORK ANSWER

34 b) I will now ask you to express your level of disagreement or agreement with the following statements, where 1 is greatly disagree with the statement and 4 is strongly agree, regarding the tasks you carry out in your home.

Show Card	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know/No answer
a. I do the household tasks only because they're necessary.	1	2	3	4	99
b. I do the household tasks because my spouse/partner, other people, society, social organisations or my community insist that I do.	1	2	3	4	99
c. I do the household tasks because others expect it of me or to obtain their approval. If I didn't, they might blame me.	1	2	3	4	99
d. I do the household tasks because I personally consider it important.	1	2	3	4	99

SERIOUS HEALTH PROBLEM

35. Where would you go if you had a serious health problem?

1. Community Health Center (CSCOM) of this community

2. Health Care Center in the nearest regional center
3. Specialised practitioner in Bamako
4. Major hospital in the nearest city
5. Traditional healer
6. Other.
7. Don't do anything
99. Don't know/No answer

36. If you have a serious health problem, who normally decides what to do about it?

1. You
2. You and your spouse or partner
3. You along with someone else (not your spouse/partner)
4. Your spouse/partner
5. Other (Neither you nor your spouse/partner)
6. The community / social organisation / neighbourhood board

37. If you wanted to, would you be able to make these decisions alone?

1. Yes
2. No

38. I will now ask you to express your level of disagreement or agreement with the following statements, where 1 is greatly disagree with the statement and 4 is strongly agree, regarding how you would resolve a serious health problem.

Show Card	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know / No answer
a. I can't face a serious health problem of my own differently from how I do.	1	2	3	4	99
b. If I have a serious health problem, I do what my spouse or some other person, society or social organisations insist that I do.	1	2	3	4	99
c. If I have a serious health problem, I act according to what other people expect of me or to get their approval. If I didn't, they might blame me.	1	2	3	4	99
d. If I have a serious health problem, I do what I personally consider is important.	1	2	3	4	99

RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

39. Do you practice any religion?

1. Yes → **Go to 40 Which?** Specify _____
2. No → **Go to 43b)**

40. How important is religion in your life?

1. Very important
2. Somewhat important
3. Not very important
4. Not at all important
- 99 Don't Know/NA

41. Who normally makes decisions regarding whether to practice a religion and how to practice it?

1. You
2. You and your spouse or partner
3. You along with someone else (not your spouse/partner)
4. Your spouse/partner
5. Other (Neither you nor your spouse/partner)
6. The community / social organisation / neighbourhood board

42. If you wanted to, would you be able to make these decisions alone?

1. Yes
2. No

43 a) I will now ask you to express your level of disagreement or agreement with the following statements, where 1 is greatly disagree with the statement and 4 is strongly agree, regarding why you practice a religion.

Show Card					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know/No answer
a. I have to practice the religion I already practice.	1	2	3	4	99
b. I practice a religion because my spouse, another person, society, social organisations or my community insist that I do.	1	2	3	4	99
c. I practice a religion according to what others expect of me or to obtain their approval. If I didn't, they might blame me.	1	2	3	4	99
d. I practice a religion because I personally consider it important.	1	2	3	4	99

43 b) Answer only if the interviewee declares they DON'T practice a religion, EMP13=2

43 b) I will now ask you to express your level of disagreement or agreement with the following statements, where 1 is greatly disagree with the statement and 4 is strongly agree, regarding why don't you practice any religion.

Show Card					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know/No answer
a. I can't practice a religion.	1	2	3	4	99
b. I don't practice a religion because my spouse, another person, society, social organisations or my community insist that I do not.	1	2	3	4	99
c. I don't practice a religion because it's what others expect of me or to obtain their approval. If I did, they might blame me.	1	2	3	4	99
d. I don't practice a religion because I personally consider it important not to.	1	2	3	4	99

PREVENTING CRIME

44. Who usually makes decisions about how to prevent crime at home (for example, theft)?

1. You
2. You and your spouse or partner
3. You along with someone else (not your spouse/partner)
4. My spouse/partner
5. Other (Neither you nor your spouse/partner)
6. The community/social organisation/neighbourhood board

45. If you wanted to participate these decisions, would you be able to?

1. Yes
2. No

46. I will now ask you to express your level of disagreement or agreement with the following statements, where 1 is greatly disagree with the statement and 4 is strongly agree, regarding what actions you take to protect your household's security.

SHOW CARD					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know/No answer
a. I cannot do anything to prevent or reduce the risk of crime differently to what I already do.	1	2	3	4	99
b. To prevent or reduce the risk of crime I do what my spouse, another person, society, social organisations or my community insist that I do.	1	2	3	4	99
c. To prevent or reduce the risk of crime I do what others expect of me or what will obtain their approval. If I didn't, they might blame me.	1	2	3	4	99
d. To prevent or reduce the risk of crime I do what I personally consider important.	1	2	3	4	99

PART 8: MAKING CHANGE

47. Would you like to change anything in your life at this point in time?

1. Yes
2. No → Go to **46**

99. Don't know

48. At this point in time, what three thing(s) would you most like to change in your life?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

49. Who do you think will contribute most to any change in your own life?

1. You
2. Your family
3. Your community
4. The local government
5. The national government
6. God
7. Other
99. Don't know

PART 9: MAKING CHANGE COMMUNITY LEVEL

50. Do you feel that people like yourself can generally change things in your community if they want to? **Read out alternatives**

1. Yes, very easily
2. Yes, fairly easily
3. Yes, but with a little difficulty
4. Yes, but with a great deal of difficulty
5. No, not at all
6. Other
99. Don't know

PART 10: OVERALL

51. Imagine a ten step ladder, where on the bottom, the first step, stand people who are completely without free choice and control over the way their lives turn out, and on the highest step, the tenth, stand those with the most free choice and control over their lives. In this context, we ask you to answer the following questions:

- a. On which step are you today?
- b. On which step are most of your neighbours today?
- c. On which step were you five years ago?

SHOW LADDER CARD

PART 11: PROVISION LEVEL

52. How many people live in this household?

53. Where you born in this community?

1. Yes
2. No, Specify _____

54. How much income does this household have per year?

55. How much money do you get in remittances from family members or friends either in other areas in Mali or overseas?

56. Do any members of the household have more than 5 years of school education?

1. Yes
2. No

57. How many years education do you have?

1. School _____
2. Other (eg schooling like literacy training or koranic education) _____

58. How many children below the age of 15 are there in your household?

59. How many of these attend school and what age(s) are they?

(Please indicate the age of each child and whether each child attends school.)

60. Do you have a toilet that is flush or a pit latrine with a slab (i.e. toilet that is protected), which is used only by your family, or other toilet arrangements (i.e. no toilet that is used only by your family?)

1. Toilet with a flush or pit latrine with slab
2. Other type of toilet

61. Do you own a TV?

1. Yes
2. No (If no, then please confirm why you do not own this item (is it because you cannot afford it or because you prefer not to own it?))

62. Do you own a radio?

1. Yes
2. No (If no, then please confirm why you do not own this item (is it because you cannot afford it or because you prefer not to own it?))

63. Do you own a phone?

1. Yes
2. No (If no, then please confirm why you do not own this item (is it because you cannot afford it or because you prefer not to own it?))

64. Do you own a fridge?

1. Yes

2. No (If no, then please confirm why you do not own this item (is it because you cannot afford it or because you prefer not to own it?))

65. Do you own a car, truck or motorcycle?

1. Yes
2. No (If no, then please confirm why you do not own this item (is it because you cannot afford it or because you prefer not to own it?))

66. Does your home have electricity?

1. Yes
2. No (If no, then please confirm why you do not own this item (is it because you cannot afford it or because you prefer not to own it?))

67. In the last month, have you not been able to eat because you could not afford to?

1. Yes
2. No

If answered yes to the above question, then: are you often not able to eat because you cannot afford to

1. weekly,
2. monthly
3. yearly

68. What do you use for cooking?

1. Animal dung
2. Wood or
3. Charcoal, or
4. Another type of fuel? Specify _____

69. Is your drinking water:

1. piped or pumped into your house
2. Taken from a protected well
3. Taken from an open well

70. Finally, I must ask you one question which is a little sad and sensitive. Of all the women living here, has any of them had one of their children die? (Miscarriage included)

1. Yes
2. No

71. About how old was the child when it died?

END OF SURVEY

MERCI BEACOU!!

Questions for researcher to answer using observation (don't ask these of the household members)

72. Is the floor dirt/natural?

1. Yes
2. No

73. Do you think anyone in this household is malnourished?

1. Yes
2. No

74. According to your opinion, is this household poor?

1. Yes
2. No

75. According to what measure is the household poor (which measure did you use)?

(e.g. income poverty measure, participatory assessment, family is eligible for government programme, family receives conditional cash transfer, etc.)