"Supermaids": Hyper-resilient Subjects in Neoliberal Migration Governance

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"Supermaids": Hyper-resilient Subjects in Neoliberal Migration Governance

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Resilience is a concept in world politics that emerged as a way to respond to the impossibility of guaranteeing security in an era of complexity. Without a central authority to provide security, risk is devolved to the individual. Those who cannot secure themselves are enjoined to constantly adapt to the unknown. Where control over complex systems is now thought to be impossible, the path to managing risks is through self-control. This paper demonstrates how such a subject is produced, and indeed whose production, I argue, is crucial to the functioning of a global labor market that is governed "without government." Migrant domestic workers acutely instantiate the kind of human subjectivity called forth by neoliberalism—a "resilient subject." The paper describes how this ideal worker is produced through resilience training in various stages of the migration trajectory—during recruitment, training prior to deployment, and while on their overseas residency. This paper demonstrates how managing the insecurities of migrant domestic work means working on the "self" rather than addressing gaps in legal or regulatory mechanisms. In resilience training, the worker becomes the necessary component of neoliberalism as a governmental rationality, one that is enjoined to transform risk into opportunity.

If you're just thinking about the money then your mentality is just a worker, not a manager. So, you have to learn to lead yourself. Don't be a candle. If the wax runs out, you have nothing else … If you have the right mentality then you can survive.
—Pre-departure trainer, Jakarta

Introduction

His business being human capital export, Pak Surono[1] had a clear understanding of the value of the Indonesian workers he deployed to households in the Gulf. Their job is "to make people happy in that house . . . make them more health[y]." He compared them to doctors and nurses, even though their official job title was that of a "maid."[2] Interestingly, Surono also cautioned his recruits to "not become like a candle. You make other people see each other, but you burn yourself." The

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[1] Not his real name.

[2] The term "maid" is commonly used among employers, recruitment agents, and sometimes even government officials. This term is contested by activists, scholars, and migrants themselves, preferring the term "domestic worker." The latter reflects the normative call to recognize domestic work as work.

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candle metaphor was repeated by a trainer in a one-day info-session I attended, the PAP.[3] This is a mandatory info-session that Indonesian migrant workers must attend before they leave the country. As he scribbled "mental" on the whiteboard, the trainer claims that what makes the Indonesian migrant worker or TKI (*Tenaga Kerja Indonesia*) successful was her mentality. The correct mentality for surviving the whole migration trajectory was to think of oneself as a manager, and not simply a worker receiving wages. The right mentality was where one learned to lead oneself. "Don't be a candle. If the wax runs out, you have nothing else."

While the work of cooking, cleaning, and caring for dependents is certainly still performed unremunerated by many women around the world, there now exists a category of workers whose paid services are sought-after in all world regions. According to estimates of the International Labour Organization (ILO), high-income countries account for 9.1 of the estimated 11.5 million migrant domestic workers worldwide. The biggest receiving regions are Southeast Asia and the Pacific; Northern, Southern, and Western Europe; and the Arab States, respectively (ILO 2015). Because they work in private homes, and the fact that domestic work is not normally included in labor laws (Torriente 2017), stories of abuse and exploitation are common in this sector. Which was why Pak Surono thought that it was part of his job to make sure that the TKI he deployed to the Gulf had what it took to survive the whole migration cycle. Being *siap mental* or mentally ready is very clearly a desired outcome of training and pre-departure orientations prior to deployment overseas (Prusinski 2017). This mentality enjoins workers about to ship out to be resilient—ready to face the uncertainties of work overseas.

The paper describes how this ideal worker is produced through what I call "resilience training" in various stages of migration—during recruitment, training prior to deployment, and while on their overseas residency. Training consists of developing a "strong mind," professionalism, and self-esteem, all of which demonstrate how managing the insecurities of migrant domestic work means working on the "self" rather than addressing gaps in national, regional, and transnational regulatory mechanisms. There is the ILO's Convention on Domestic Work, a norm-setting instrument that entered into force in 2013. Its purview remains limited, however, having only been ratified by twenty-four states, none of which is a major destination country. This means that tens of thousands of workers, most of whom are women, work in "zones of indistinction" (Agamben 1998, 6), where the law ceases to apply. In other words, sovereign power shows its limits when it cannot or will not cross the private domain of the household and regulate activities therein. In real-world terms, this means that the conditions of a domestic worker's employment contract—for example, the observance of weekly days off or regular payment of wages—cannot or will not be enforced. This limit rests on the gendered divide that distinguishes the public from the private domain and what counts as an issue of politics (decision-making, power, and conflict resolution) or economics (value creation) (Pateman 1988; Fortunati 1996).

I argue that migrant domestic workers acutely instantiate the kind of human subjectivity called forth by neoliberalism—a "resilient subject" able to thrive in spaces where sovereign states' juridical power cedes governmental rationality to the market or the private sphere. This paper demonstrates how such a subject is produced, and indeed whose production is crucial to the functioning of a global labor market that is governed "without government" (Rosenau 1995). It contributes to an understanding of resilience as "processual," an open-ended dynamic that does not take for granted the agency of individuals and contextual specificities (Bourbeau 2018). It also illustrates that neoliberalism does not entail the complete withdrawal of the state but instead reconfigures its functions to make space for resilience to work (Krüger 2018). Making such a space entails the mobilization of neoliberal

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[3] *Pembekalan Akhir Pemberangkatan* or pre-departure briefing.

society to participate in governance. Or, as the United Nations calls it—a "whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach."

I draw from eight months of fieldwork in 2013 in major migrant origin and destination countries in Southeast Asia—notably the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. I interviewed seventy government officials, recruiters, and representatives from nongovernmental organizations. I accessed and performed participant observation in twenty-four recruitment agencies, three industry associations, and six training centers. This case is important because this market model—that of temporary, contractual domestic worker migration mediated by recruitment or placement agencies in both sending and receiving countries—originated from the region. This model has since diffused to countries in South Asia, East Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Skills and language training prior to departure is a market innovation that has also been taken up in other regions (Liang 2011; Awumbila et al. 2019).

The Resilient Subject and Neoliberal Governance

"Resilience" is a concept in world politics that emerged, in part, as a way to respond to the impossibility of guaranteeing security in an era of complexity, where sources of "threat" can no longer simply be managed at the sovereign border (Coaffee and Wood 2006; Walker and Cooper 2011). For instance, faced with *forces majeures*, those who are vulnerable to severe weather patterns must practice constant vigilance and disaster preparedness (Aradau and Van Munster 2007; Evans and Reid 2013). In sustainable development discourse, survival strategies of households demonstrate agency in response to reduction in social welfare spending (Cooper 2015, 135). Because a central authority that provides security is absent, risk is devolved to the individual, and those who cannot secure themselves are enjoined to constantly adapt to the unknown (Joseph 2013). Thus, the individual must learn to be resilient through training (O'Malley 2010; Duffield 2012; Howell 2015), to learn to bend but not break (Bourbeau 2018, 27). Here, agency is reconceived not as the capacity to control the (knowable) environment but as the capacity to internally adapt to permanent crisis (Schmidt 2015). To be resilient in neoliberal times means abandoning the old "neurotic subject" of a risk society, i.e., one that governs itself through its anxieties (Lentzos and Rose 2009, 247), in favor of a new model that embraces risk-filled environments as an opportunity to excel (O'Malley 2013, 191).

At the macro-level, resilience is also understood to be a by-product of biopolitical governance (Collier and Lakoff 2015), where the business of cultivating a productive population, understood by Foucault as a living mass of biological beings (Foucault 1997, 253), means understanding how the latter is embedded in interlinked systems that support life. Biopolitics, in this Foucauldian sense, is "characterized by a power whose function was perhaps no longer to kill, but to invest life through and through" (Foucault 1978, 139). In contradistinction to sovereign power's right to "take life" or "let live," biopolitics invests in making others live. International relations has not sufficiently attended to this procreative aspect of biopolitics, and discussions curiously omit a vital stage in human existence. While there is talk of the "biohuman" (Reid 2016, 283), the "informationalized life" of molecular and digital revolutions (Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero 2009), and how biopolitics reconfigures human security to improve lives by converting threats to risks (De Larrinaga and Doucet 2008), there is usually no mention of where biological beings come from in the first place, let alone discussing those crucial early years where every single human must be fed, bathed, and cared for in order to survive. Similarly, when ecological, life-giving systems are envisioned to be resilient to external shocks, the activities mentioned above, and the people who perform them, are not normally counted. When households and communities are expected to bounce back from calamities or civil strife, putting lives back together means relying on women's unremunerated care work (Elson 2012; Drolet et al. 2015; Krause

2018; Tanyag 2018). That the concept of resilience has migrated from psychology to governance discourse risks accepting social catastrophes as a natural feature of social life, or worse, as a technique of government (McFalls and Pandolfi 2017, 228).

The demand for migrant domestic work in all world regions is symptomatic of what has been called a crisis of social reproduction, where neoliberal policies have gutted national welfare systems and converted social safety nets into private enterprise (Bakker and Gill 2004; Fudge 2012; Kofman 2012). Households have borne the cost of this large-scale shift as the primary societal unit that attends to the well-being of people (Esping-Andersen 2000; Stenning et al. 2010; Roberts 2016; Montgomerie and Tepe-Belfrage 2017). The ILO estimates that of the 11.5 million migrant domestic workers around the world today, 80 percent are in high-income countries. Over half are in Arab states (27.4 percent), North America (5 percent), and Northern, Southern, and Western Europe (19.2 percent). The other big receiving regions are Southeast Asia and the Pacific (19.4 percent) and East Asia (9.5 percent), with smaller distributions in South, Central, and West Asia, Eastern Europe, North and Sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean (ILO 2016).

On top of aging populations and economies that increasingly require dual-income households to sustain the lives of families, neoliberal policies have created a demand for reproductive labor sourced from abroad. This demand has now created a truly global labor market, where workers, most of whom are women, travel thousands of miles to prepare meals, scrub toilets, and change nappies (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Lutz 2008; Williams 2012; Yeates 2012; Parreñas 2015). This market is deregulated in the formal sense, as market forces are supposed to determine their supply and demand. The highly insecure work conditions of this global workforce make available a hyper-flexible "reserve of low-cost suppliers of reproductive services" (Waldby and Cooper 2008, 60). Given the lack of formal mechanisms to regulate these migrations, and indeed the sheer complexity of sourcing a worker from a small village in rural Indonesia to work in a household in Dubai, for example, a certain type of worker is required.

The resilient subject is excluded from regimes of security, exempt from rights and privileges accorded by juridical and normative systems in a hierarchical, biopolitically partitioned global society. She is different from Agamben's *homo sacer* as she is enjoined to accept being in these zones of indistinction as an opportunity to excel. This subject is imagined to be able to reach her full potential when exposed to danger, what Reid calls the "biohuman" (Reid 2012). Her agency involves treating herself as an enterprise (Joseph 2013) and to be permanently adaptable (Schmidt 2015). The resilient subject is enjoined to anticipate sources of threat, to be constantly on the lookout for sources of danger. To be resilient means "putting on 'mental armor' or, alternatively, learning to help the body's natural stress-management mechanisms" (Duffield 2012, 486). Where control over complex systems is now thought to be impossible, the path to managing risks is through self-control (Walker and Cooper 2011, 147).

In the following sections, I discuss how the domestic worker is enjoined to be resilient—during recruitment screening, while undergoing pre-deployment training and orientation, and while they are serving their contract in the receiving country. Recruiters screen for workers who will most likely succeed in the migration trajectory. Success means completing the duration of the employment contract, which usually lasts two years. Apart from practical and linguistic skills, which can be learned, desirable traits are a seeming contradictory mix of superhuman endurance and malleability. Often, the former takes the form of caring responsibilities for children, parents, and relatives left behind in the home country. The responsibility manifests most concretely in enduring what may be unendurable to fulfil the strictly economic ethos of neoliberal migration—the financialization of human capital in the form of remittances. Malleability is attributed to the capacity to adjust, using

newly acquired cognitive skills that serve to underline strength—in mind and even in body.

Unlike the characterization of the neoliberal subject as a "resilient, humble, and disempowered being that lives a life of permanent ignorance and insecurity" (Chandler and Reid 2016, 3), I posit that resilience training is both productive and repressive. In other words, the same sets of practices that create the kind of subjectivity that neoliberal migration governance needs to function may also be "empowering." That is, they generate capacities that may be used for unintended purposes. The desired end result is not "docile" in the Foucauldian sense, that is, more an object to be acted upon than a willful, agentic being. The resilient subject is rather enjoined to align her dispositions and internal states, to become the constantly adjustable subject needed by neoliberal market logic. This means equipping her with the tools to make these changes. These resilience-enhancing technologies may be supplied indirectly by state apparatuses but also non-state actors—civil society organizations, apart from recruiters themselves.

How to Make a "Successful" Migrant

Resilience training aims to make domestic worker migration risk-proof, much in the same way as the money they send back home is immune to external shocks (Ratha and Sirkeci 2010). To be resilient often takes the language of "success." Nobody wants a migrant to fail, and in producing a formula for success, keeps the migrant optimistic despite being told, at nearly all stages of the migration trajectory, what a dangerous, sometimes fatal, venture she is about to embark on. Successful migrants are those who will complete their employment contract without trouble, i.e., that they do not turn into a "welfare case." This would incur costs to a number of different actors—the employer, the recruiters, and the migrant herself, if she incurred debts to be able to migrate (Eelens and Speckmann 1990; Holliday 2012). Further, becoming a welfare case incurs administrative costs to the migration bureaucracy of the sending country, but also the receiving country. In an interview, a pre-departure orientation seminar (PDOS) instructor in Manila said that the primary aim of the seminar was to make sure the worker finished her contract, without which she would not be able to pay back her creditors—either her recruitment agency or petty financiers.

Recruiters and employment agents facilitate the migration of workers in what has been called the "migration industry." These non-state actors exercise important functions in regulating worker mobilities—from control of entry, recruitment, health checks, placement, labor market segmentation, financing, training, and repatriation, among others (Holliday 2012; Lindquist, Xiang, and Yeoh 2012; Gammeltoft-Hansen and Sorensen 2013; Martin 2017; McCollum and Findlay 2018). The dominant model for domestic worker migration requires a recruiter at either end of the migration stream—one from the sending country and another in the receiving country. As businesses, they respond to forces of supply and demand, matching the needs of families that broadly comprise the cleaning and upkeep of the household, preparation of meals, and care for dependents (children or the elderly). These are usually legitimate businesses, but are known to operate in legal gray zones—especially since domestic work is invisible to many regulatory systems worldwide (Eelens and Speckmann 1990; Spaan 1994; ILO 2013). This creates an environment that allows for nonpayment of salaries, excessive recruitment fees, long work hours, no days off, and physical and/or psychological abuse (Eelens and Speckmann 1990; Spaan 1994; Andersson 2014; Kern and Müller-Böker 2015; Lim 2015).

The migration industry also plays more complex roles, especially in regard to migrant domestic work. They reproduce racial stereotypes and gender norms necessary to commodify domestic work (Loveband 2004; Tyner 2004; Lyons 2005;

England and Stiell 2008; Hing, Lun, and Phann 2011; Liang 2011; Elias and Louth 2016). Mr. Chong, a recruiter whom I met in Kuala Lumpur who sources from the Philippines, likened the relationship between employer and maid as a marriage, which was why his services included "counselling" in cases where the relationship was not working out. His formula for success was when employers were "not too finicky" with "impossible expectations." On her part, the worker had to be genuine in her dispensation of care. That is, she needed to convince her employers of the authenticity of her emotions, especially if her main job was to care for a child. In fact, proof of the authenticity of her care could guarantee that her employers would not be too suspicious, and thus less likely to be strict: "You carry a child in your arm as a maid, if you don't have the warmth, you don't have that general liking for the child—the child will sense it. The child will reject you. But if you have those qualities, no child will reject you."

Recruiters like Mr. Chong and Pak Surono play a key role in selecting for workers' durability, trainability, and marketability. This is evident from the first round of selections, where applicants are rejected for any hint of not fulfilling resilient traits. The administrator of a training center I accessed in Manila coached her student trainees that the key to success was knowing oneself and others. "You have to learn to adjust. The proper way to deal with these people, to be adjusted, is to learn first about yourself." In Indonesia, adjusting oneself to the new environment and culture, as well as the characters of the house owner and family members, is also listed as ideal traits of TKI. These are specified in a checklist by government-mandated examiners who assess TKI's suitability before deployment. To adjust means managing one's emotions, to "avoid high emotional arousal," which means being "bad-tempered, sullen, or gloomy." In an interview, a Filipino bureaucrat said "quality maids" do not make their employers lose their temper, that employers abuse workers "because they are not happy." In this regard, what is being commodified is the worker's ability to not only produce positive emotions to be consumed by those in the household, but also suppress negative emotions, especially homesickness. The latter are specifically addressed by both PDOS and PAP, as well as teachers in training centers. A trainer I met from a small center that deploys primarily to the Gulf cautioned her students—"Please don't cry in front of your employer. They will think you are homesick. Don't scare your employer by crying." To be resilient in this case meant doing "emotional labor," that is, to "induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003, 7).

The selection process weeds out those who are too prideful and may easily quit. The ultimate proof of endurance is normally tied to the worker's obligations to family left behind. This means that single women, especially young ones, are thought to be less reliable. They have no responsibilities, no mouths to feed, and no reason to stay in their job. Ms. Tuason, a big recruiter I was able to access in Manila, put here screening skills to test whenever she conducted "pre-employment orientation seminars" (PEOS). The PEOS is an addition to the suite of information sessions required by the POEA. It is targeted at prospective migrants who have not yet decided whether they truly wanted to migrate. The PEOS is different from the PDOS that happens after the training period and just before deployment overseas. Tuason said she did her best to dissuade her applicants:

> (Translated from Tagalog): Do you know the work of the domestic helper[4]? You will be the one to rise the earliest and the last to sleep. You will do everything – laundry, cooking, take care of children, wash the car, clean the house, iron, and so on. Can you do this job? You will be there for two years. You won't be going home. If you can't finish the contract, you'll pay your employer $2200. Even if you jump up and down,

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[4] Another common terminology in lieu of maid or domestic worker.

> you can't go home … so those who can't do this, don't bother to have me interview you.

Ms. Tuason said she does not like it when applicants were too proud. This generally meant they were not afraid to show that they had education, that they spoke English. She rejected applicants who were *maarte*,[5] those who made requests of where they wanted to be deployed or the kind of employer to whom they were to be assigned. She recounted a moment where she rejected an applicant for being too *pilosopo*, talking back or reasoning. She said the applicant ought to "behave herself" and that "this attitude is not permitted over there." Ms. Tuason deployed workers to the Gulf.

Mr. Chong, the Kuala Lumpur agent, similarly said that ". . . if the person is too proud, then likely she will not last long." While interviewing a potential employer about what she would require in a maid, Mr. Chong's wife and business partner made a distinction between those who were so smart, but would probably not mind being told what to do over and over, and those who would show initiative (therefore smarter), but would "feel sore" if "nagged." Another Manila recruiter said he could tell whether an applicant would be deployed or not from her attitude, "If they're scolded everyday, they might go insane. They can't handle it . . . Not everyone can be a housemaid." In other words, the emotional labor required by domestic work means not only that negative emotions (such as homesickness) are managed, but also to reinforce the unequal relation between employer and employee.

Pre-departure briefings conducted by government officials in the Philippines and Indonesia discuss common themes—the importance of their employment contract, mental toughness, planning for the future, dangers they may encounter during transit, and tips on how to cope with things as varied as possibly getting enlisted by drug traffickers, to marital stresses. Sexuality becomes not only a matter of staying faithful to partners left behind, but more importantly about not compromising the investment in one's health. "Overseas, there is a lot of AIDS." Those bound for the Middle East are told about different gender norms and what might happen when they are not followed. In a PAP, an Indonesian official told his audience—"Avoid the male boss' face. In our culture, it is good for men and women to smile at each other. In Saudi that is not good." All pre-departure briefings I observed broached the possibility of sexual assault, and what one might do to prevent it, how to defend oneself in case it did happen, and what to do after the fact. The assumption was that knowing and thinking ahead decreased the likelihood of such events from happening, in turn putting the onus on the worker to protect herself:

> (Translated from Bahasa): If your employer wants to rape you, it's better you die by trying to defend yourself rather than getting raped. When you're new to the Middle East, wear jeans under your robe because jeans are hard to take off. It's not going help if you scream. Men who do bad things are infected by their own wants and bad spirits.

The control of domestic worker sexuality relates to all kinds of "dangers" that she supposedly poses to the social fabric of the host society (Chang and Groves 2000). Financial desperation might make her vulnerable to prostitution, even trafficking (Mahdavi and Sargent 2011). Relationships with local or other migrant men risk the possibility of pregnancy, which may become grounds for dismissal, where policy explicitly prohibits such an occurrence (Ullah 2010). Apart from miscegenation, there is also the threat of the maid possibly seducing the male employer, breaking up families (Constable 1997). This is why there is concerted effort not only to hire older, married women but also to de-emphasize their sexual identities. This means having them cut their hair short and prohibiting them from wearing revealing clothes

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[5] Filipino for picky or choosy.

or makeup. Conforming to dominant gender norms, these practices seek to control female sexuality while leaving undisturbed male sexual privilege (Moukarbel 2009).

In sum, the successful migrant is one who has been pre-selected and trained to endure the working and social environment that provides little protection from hyper-exploitation, long enough to finish her contract. She has family left behind for whom to endure and send remittances. She is somehow able to produce positive emotions for consumption and repress negative feelings and pride at the same time. As such, her market value is less about performing chores as her emotional labor. While providing caring work to the family she serves, her sexuality is curtailed to ostensibly prevent social problems, including the possibility of her own pregnancy. Even as her labor here functions to invest in the life of the household and the general well-being of the host population, the domestic worker is enjoined to underwrite her own security through resilience.

Resilience Training

The death of Filipino domestic worker Flor Contemplacion in 1995 was a landmark case in Philippine migration governance, leading to legislation and regulatory reforms. She was found guilty of committing the murder of fellow Filipino Delia Maga and the latter's ward, Nicholas Wang, and was sentenced with the death penalty in host country Singapore. Her death triggered a political crisis, calling into question the legitimacy of the sitting government, and led to the resignation of the labor department secretary. Shortly after her death, the Philippines' Department of Labour and Employment required basic housework training (Guevarra 2006, 528). Training was supposed to solve what was thought to be causing tensions between workers and employers—lack of knowledge about how to use modern household appliances (Battistella 2004, 270). The "Supermaids" program, which was launched in 2006, further sought to professionalize domestic work (Guevarra 2014). An employer was acquiring not only someone who would cook and clean, but someone who could provide value-added services—such as performing first-aid treatment and effective communication, among others (Lagman 2017, 2). This would then justify the other major policy change—the minimum salary requirement of US$400.

The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) developed the curriculum Household Services NC II—which nominally detailed a 218-hour coursework. Core competencies include cleaning different parts of the house, washing and ironing, preparing meals, and providing food and beverage service. Other competencies include "soft skills"—such as managing relations with "clients and customers"—who are employers and other members of the household. TESDA has since outsourced the conduct of these classes to the private sector, creating a new cottage industry providing training courses to workers who, after completing coursework, are expected to pass a final assessment in order to acquire a national certificate (NC). TESDA has since also developed a separate course for care work—Caregiving NC II, which takes 786 hours to complete. Training centers may be owned and operated by recruitment agencies, and as stand-alone businesses. Indonesia also has a similar rationale and institutional setup as training centers in the Philippines. Prospective migrants are expected to complete training at a government-licensed *balai latihan kerja* or vocational training center. The number of hours for completion also depends on the requirements of receiving countries, with Taiwan having the longest at 600 hours. Training prior to departure is now a norm for newer domestic worker sending countries not only in Southeast Asia, but also in South Asia and Africa (SEDEC 2012; Busza et al. 2017).

I spoke with a representative from an Indonesian migration industry association who called training "insurance." Proper training was supposed to achieve a number of things, one of which was to make the worker less likely to disrupt the labor supply chain. Physical abuse was more likely due to incompetence on the part of

the worker, according to an official from TESDA. If employers were not "happy" with the worker's performance, then employers "will have a negative attitude." The worker's unwillingness to continue work, that is, failing to complete her contract, would mean the businesses that invested in her migration trajectory, most notably her recruitment agency, would not be able to get a return on their investment. This is especially so when the worker pays nothing for her training and her agency bears the costs of not only her language and skills acquisition but weeks, even months of board and lodging. This model is more the norm in Indonesia than in the Philippines where workers sometimes pay for their training up front. This is so because training centers may be stand-alone businesses that only offer such services and have no direct affiliation with the recruitment agency. To be sure, what is being insured is not the worker herself, but the smooth functioning of the intricate value chain that is created once the worker presents herself available to the demand for her labor overseas.

The training centers I visited in Manila and the suburbs of Jakarta were organized like schools, complete with an administrator, teachers, and classes to attend. Classes were broadly divided into skills and language. At the end of the training period, "students" took an exam or assessment, which certified that they successfully completed the requirement. While training centers do emphasize hierarchy and surveillance (Killias 2009), i.e., conditioning workers to the mindset of "servitude" (Chin 1998; Rudnyckyj 2004), the difference with other types of learning institutions is only a matter of degree. The same norms and practices in disciplinary institutions, not only schools but also military barracks, may be observed. The day is regimented and structured, with set times for classes, having meals, and rest. In the big training centers in Indonesia, students were given T-shirt uniforms to wear. These ones also required that their students stay in dormitories within the compound. That meant that they were subjected to this training regime for the length of their stay, the longest of which is officially 600 hours or roughly three months for those bound for Taiwan. A Kuala Lumpur agent described to me the difference between training centers in the Philippines and Indonesia thus:

> Oh, the good thing we found out with Indonesia, unlike [the] Philippines is, you can lock the girls up, you know, which makes investment in training a better thing … So there is no running away, no changing of mind, no backing out. And this is good you know, because you can't afford to invest in training … You can do many things. That's why they are able to finance them one hundred percent. But in the Philippines, you can't even keep them for twenty-four hours. Can you imagine? They will file a complaint with the POEA that you refused to let them out.

All the Indonesian training centers I visited had a visitation policy for family members. But since many of the trainees hailed from far-away provinces, it was not always easy to come visit. The centers were in compounds with high walls and guards at the gates. The biggest of them could house a maximum of 1,500 trainees at a time. The smallest, the one that deployed to the Gulf, only had a padlocked gate to keep people in (or out). The training centers I visited in the Philippines were much smaller operations with only a few dozen trainees at a time. These were administered like schools as well, although trainees were able to come and go freely. This is probably because these trainees paid their fees up front, unlike their Indonesian counterparts, who, if they changed their mind midway through training, would mean a loss of invested money on the part of the recruiter, and a loss of future income.

One TKI I met in Indonesia had been in the training center for seven months, which far exceeded the maximum three months (or 600 hours for those bound for Taiwan). For some reason, she could not be matched with an employer in any of the target receiving countries. That meant of course that she had already incurred seven months' worth of debt in board and lodging. These conditions test the legal fiction of modern employment contracts today—that the worker

freely enters the exchange as an independent entity. This is why migrant domestic work has been characterized as "modern slavery" (Mantouvalou 2015) or "contract slavery" (Jureidini and Moukarbel 2004), with workers categorized as "unfree labor" (Strauss and McGrath 2017). Periods of involuntary immobility, that is, of not being able to leave a specific space, may also be experienced.

Apart from knowing what kind of vegetables go into the preparation of a Taiwanese *popiah*, some basic Cantonese vocabulary, or understanding the gender norms of Arab society, the period of training helps shape the right kind of subjectivity or understanding of the self that would allow one to function in the host country, often under extreme duress. This would include what can be a contradictory mix of submission, resistance, and even martyrdom (Groves and Chang 1999; Rudnyckyj 2004; Killias 2009; Ueno 2009; Bautista 2015; Awumbila et al. 2019). In the Philippine case, for example, Julius Bautista argues that the Philippines' overseas Filipino workers are encouraged to draw from the suffering Christ as a way to perform patriotism and piousness. In concrete terms, this means understanding that good employees do not complain, and are self-effacing and humble (Bautista 2015, 431).

Being tasked with the title *bagong bayani* (new hero) means sending remittances home to save the nation (Encinas-Franco 2013). In Indonesia, TKI are also constructed as *pahlawan devisa negara* or national remittance heroines (Killias 2018, 118). Remittance-sending for migrant domestic workers is a gendered process. Evidence suggests that most of it is spent on the education, health, housing, and the upkeep of the dependents left behind (Semyonov and Gorodzeisky 2008; Rahman and Lian 2009; Nguyen and Purnamasari 2011; Ternandez 2011).

In a training center in Jakarta, a teacher told her students, about a dozen women bound for Saudi Arabia, to think positively: "Working [elsewhere] is not easy. But we see the bright side. We see the result. The result is for your child, your family." The PDOS and PAP sessions I attended, whether given by a government agency or nongovernmental organization, emphasized the importance of making money, saving, and, if possible, investing. A session administered by a nongovernmental organization in Manila even had a representative from a local bank to facilitate opening an account tailored specifically for Filipino overseas workers. Whiteboards in the classrooms of one of the bigger training centers I accessed in Jakarta stated the name and business motto of their donor: "Xpress Money: *Pengiriman uang mudah, cepat dan aman*" (Easy, fast and safe money transfer).

It is clear that the worker's capacity to manage her internal states is an important skill to acquire all throughout the migration trajectory (Rodriguez and Schwenken 2013; Lan 2016; Deshingkar et al. 2019). Training matters in desired outcomes—for example, between worker identities in Taiwan and Japan (Lan 2016). The "end products" for the Taiwanese market are "deferential surrogates," reflecting the demand for daughters' filial piety to the household. Japan, on the other hand, requires training for "professional others." Meanwhile, the administrator of a training center in Manila taught her students that there was dignity in "care work":

> (Translated from Tagalog) I don't want to hear the word *lang* (only) … labour is honour. When you are interviewed don't say you're only a maid in Taiwan. No. Remove the word only. That's demeaning. You can be a caretaker with dignity. Why? That's one reason you are here. You will be trained to become an efficient and dignified caretaker. "Ma'am they look down on us." That's why we will raise your status.

Another emphasized the importance of being valued:

> There has to be a measure of respect for your work. You can only be respected if you know what your work is. Your competence comes there, your training. They have to be able to identify you with something. They have to get to know you, your background. Why are you valuable in their lives?

In Kuala Lumpur, Mr. Chong's training center taught a module on professionalism and on student trainees' self-esteem. He said one was less likely to be abused if one had good self-esteem. There is then a deep ambivalence between what predeparture briefings caution workers to do and the kind of ideal domestic worker demanded by markets. On the one hand, they are enjoined to mentally prepare themselves to respond to the challenges ahead, and to believe themselves capable of making it all the way through the migration trajectory. On the other hand, training requires passivity and fatalism, inculcating attitudes that "effectively reduced their autonomy and capacity to resist" (Killias 2009, 166). This ambivalence may be the intended effect anyway: a capable worker equipped with mental tools to internally adapt to external stresses, but unable to address the latter's causes.

Training ends in being able to successfully pass the examination or assessment, and workers are given a certificate. As such, completion of training is understood to be an achievement. A "quality" domestic worker receives the stamp of approval from relevant government bureaus of the migrant-sending country, usually after completion of training courses and before deployment. The Philippines' TESDA does so through its accreditation system of training centers, trainers, and assessors. The latter usually visit training centers to evaluate the performance of student trainees. In coordination with recruitment agencies, TESDA also develops curricula standards and assessment materials. Indonesia's *Badan Nasional Sertifikasi Profesi*[6] similarly develops training standards and examination forms. Its affiliate, the *Lembaga Sertifikasi Profesi*[7] (LSP), conducts the examination at training centers and issues certificates.

Apart from the standard core competencies that include knowing the specifics of cleaning different rooms in the household and preparing hot and cold meals, TESDA's Household Services NC II also includes sections on how to "participate in workplace communication," "work in a team environment," "practice career professionalism," "maintain effective relationships with clients/customers," and "manage own performance." Notably, this course excludes care work, unlike its equivalent in Indonesia. LSP's final examination for household workers has one hundred questions. The first fifty are about household and care work. The remaining ones are about communication and attitude. Indicators to assess the latter include adjusting oneself to the environment, understanding the character of people in the household, "showing self-discovery, talents, and potential," "avoiding high emotional arousal (be bad-tempered, sullen, gloomy)," and "doing the household chores with pleasure," among others.

From these instruments of evaluation—which were developed by state institutions, migration industry players, and employers' demands—the ideal worker possesses not only the knowledge of what kind of cleaning chemical is appropriate to remove stains from different types of textiles and flooring, but most importantly the appropriate soft skills. While the examination materials can be highly technical, the conduct of training itself, and the examination process, emphasizes attitudinal aspects required of a workforce whose core function is to produce positive emotions in the household. "Discipline" in this case is not the kind found on the factory floor, where the body's productive forces are expected to meld into the "body-tool" or the "body-machine" (Foucault 1977, 153). While outright coercion can be a component of the domestic worker's environment, for example, by confiscating her passport or literally locking her indoors, her ability to regulate her own emotions is crucial in order to continue providing a "multi-task wonder woman"[8] to be consumed by care recipients and other members of household. The demand for a "quality maid" has opened the possibility for upskilling, and hence the diversification of the industry to

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[6] National Agency for Professional Certification.

[7] Professional Certification Institution.

[8] Terminology used by a recruiter in Singapore.

include training centers. Migrant domestic work is increasingly being organized on an industrial scale, to cater to an ever-increasing demand from globalizing markets.

Conclusion

Migrant domestic workers are enjoined to equip themselves with mental toughness to survive repeat deployments not just to one but multiple destination countries (Parreñas 2010; Piper 2010; Wickramasekara 2011). In a PAP session, an instructor, who was also a low-level bureaucrat, said the TKI were not to rely too much on others. "Protection is not by the recruitment agency, the embassy, BNP2TKI. The protection should come from you. The only people who can help you are yourself and god. You have to learn to protect yourself. Everything must start from ourselves. Protection starts from ourselves." Resilience consists in more than anticipating coming to possible harm, but internally marshalling resources to keep going. This may mean tapping into one's spirituality, but also entails knowing oneself "relying on one's strengths to overcome challenges and meet goals" (Reivich, Seligman, and McBride 2011, 27). In resilience training, the worker becomes the necessary component of neoliberalism as a governmental rationality, one that is enjoined to transform risk into opportunity and who, while doing so, provides security to the household she serves. The remittances she sends back home are likewise life-giving.

Domestic worker migration also demonstrates how neoliberal market governance is perfectly aligned with the biopolitical partitioning of populations between those made to live and those allowed to die (Mavelli 2017). On the one hand, the work of cleaning, cooking, and caring for dependents literally makes the host country's population "live." The latter fall under social reproduction (Bezanson and Luxton 2006), activities that nurture a new labor force, sustain the current one, and care for those who are no longer productive (the elderly). On the other hand, domestic workers literally bear the cost of the host population's productivity (Katz 2003), both by the gendered devaluation of this type of work and through "biopolitical racism" (Mavelli 2017, 491). The latter manifests in egregious acts of dehumanization, which, in turn, justify not only the violation of labor laws (where they exist) and employment norms, but also physical and psychological harm. In this scenario, the worker is enjoined to secure herself through resilience training. This consists of developing a set of cognitive skills to withstand employment conditions in zones of risk and danger, where the worker's security and well-being cannot be guaranteed. These skills are taught and acquired in all stages of migration, from recruitment, pre-deployment training, and during their residency in the host country. The provision of know-how and information is a co-shared responsibility by various stakeholders apart from the state. To govern resilience in this case means "to impose a certain performativity to increase the self-help capacity of individuals" (Krüger 2018, 13). Whether this results in the actual bodily security and welfare of migrants is of course another matter.

This paper demonstrated how the global labor market in domestic work exemplifies neoliberal governance through the production of resilient subjects. This process necessitates linking self-governing individuals employed in private households to large macro-social forces and actors. This case instantiates a specific kind of neoliberal governance, one without security guarantees of sovereign states but is nonetheless durable. The market model within which these processes take place has diffused from Southeast Asia to other world regions, the main features being the offshoring of governance to recruitment agencies and other market intermediaries in both sending and receiving countries, pre-departure orientations, and training prior to deployment. As mentioned earlier, there is already evidence that the same kind of resilient subject is the desired "end product" in other labor markets.

Funder Information

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