**The Making of an "Ideal" Live-In Migrant Care Worker :
Recruiting, Training, Matching and Disciplining**

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The Making of an "Ideal" Live-In Migrant Care Worker: Recruiting, Training, Matching and Disciplining[i]

Abstract

This essay investigates the contested processes through which gender and racial

ideologies are practiced thereby place specific group of women in particular gendered

and racialized labor markets. The migration of female live-in care workers to Taiwan

exemplifies how gender and racial ideologies are embodied in everyday practices that

justify the paid care work done by these women and that produce their subordinate

status. In this essay, I take the problematic of representation of "migrant care workers"

as a point of entry, to investigate how a gendered-racialized ideology is utilized to

legitimate and naturalize the gendered-racialized division of care labor within the global

capitalist context.

Key Word: labor migration, racial ideology, Asian, globalization, gender and

immigration, gender

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A range of social agents are involved with the coordination of care labor migration in the transnational context, including the state, policy makers, governmental officials, employers, and private recruiting agencies. Amongst these institutional agents, recruiting agencies perform a vital role in the processes of recruiting, screening, training, and placing migrant workers in the segregated labor market (Bakan and Stasiulis 1995; Constable 1997; Loveband 2004; Guevarra 2009). Because of the complex bureaucratic procedures involved in importing live-in migrant care workers in Taiwan, most employers rely on recruiting agencies to match workers to private households. Taiwanese recruiting agencies act as gatekeepers in facilitating and organizing the importation of migrant care workers. The interactions between recruiting agents and employers in the matching processes, including the requirements for and selection of potential workers, reflect not only how live-in migrant care workers are perceived by recruiting agencies and employers, but also how these two social agents participate in the contested discourses that legitimate the specific job performed by this particular racialized group of women.

The investigation starts with the pictures posted on the Taiwanese recruiting agencies' on-line selection systems for prospective live-in migrant care workers. The pictures represent the typical image of migrant care workers, who are originally from Southeast Asian countries and then work in Taiwan. The Southeast Asian women pictured are usually dressed in white shirts and aprons, with their hair short tied back. They smile mildly in the pictures and look feminine and submissive. In this essay, I take the problematic of the representation of "live-in migrant care workers" as an entry point to explore how a gendered-racialized ideology is utilized to legitimate and naturalize the

gendered-racialized division of labor in general, and of care labor in particular. This study unpacks the concept of an "ideal maid", which is mediated by the gendered-racialized discourses and ideologies of migrant workers, and directs the processes of coordinating migrant care labor in different spaces and at different times. To explore the pivotal role of gendered and racialized ideologies, I aim to answer the following interrelated questions, which are left out of the discussion of the global care chain (Hochschild 2000), in relation to associating different racial groups of women with carework: How does racial hierarchy work to create inequalities among women in relation to carework in the context of transnational labor migration and the global capital economy? How are gendered-racialized discourses (re)produced to legitimate the specific carework performed by a particular racial group of women?

In this essay, I use the term "care workers" to refer to those who are employed under the official category of care workers stipulated by the government. They not only provide direct health care to the sick, the elderly and people with disabilities, but are also asked to do household chores and to provide childcare. "Maid" is the more common term used by the public, including private recruiting agencies, employers, care recipients, media, and ordinary people to address this specific group of migrant women in Taiwan. In the particular writing contexts of this study, I follow the term "maid" used by the interviewees to emphasize the expectations of live-in migrant care workers imagined by recruiting agencies, employers, and the public.

Relying on interviews with ten recruiting agents, ten employers, and fifteen workers, and an analysis of the agencies' web sites, I investigate the processes of recruiting and training prospective workers, matching workers to private households, and disciplining

and managing workers. The informants were recruited via a snowball sampling through

the informants' and my own social networks. First, this essay will delineate the

recruitment and training of prospective workers in the largest sending country of live-in

migrant care workers in Taiwan, Indonesia, to demonstrate how recruiting agencies

screen potential candidates and transform them into live-in maids who satisfy

employers' expectations and demands. Second, examining the processes of matching

workers to particular households will illuminate how those practices are mediated by the

gendered-racialized discourses imposed on migrant workers. Finally, I will show

employers' cultivation of ideal maids through developing strategies to manage and

discipline their live-in migrant care workers.

Context

Since 1992, in order to satisfy demographic necessities—including the "graying" of the

population in Taiwan as fertility rates decline and people live longer, and an increase in

the number of double-salary families—the Taiwanese government has allowed the

immigration of domestic workers and care workers as part of a short-term contract labor

force to shoulder the responsibilities of caring for the elderly, people with disabilities,

the sick, and younger children.

In December 2009, the number of migrant workers in Taiwan reached a stunning

351,016, compared to 151,989 in 1993. Of the total migrant workers, female workers

numbered 222,414—more than half of the entire population of migrant workers.

According to the official categories, most female migrant workers work as care workers,

while the rest work in manufacturing. The number of care workers has reached 174,943

(including the institutional care workers and 1,840 male workers, but excluding 2,296

domestic workers), almost half of the population of migrant workers. Although the

Taiwanese government applies the "Rule of Limited Amount" to regulate the

importation of migrant labor, the number of migrant workers has grown rapidly in the

past decade, from 248,357 in 1997 to 351,016 in 2009, and the number of care workers

has increased almost six times, from 26,233 in 1997 to 174,943 in 2009. The

demographic landscape of migrant care workers has shifted gradually in the past decade.

The previous dominant group, Filipina, has been replaced by Indonesian workers. Now,

Indonesians make up the largest group, with a population of 121,058[ii] by 2009.

The Politics of Labor: Gendered and Racialized Carework in the Global Context

The concept of flexible accumulation elucidates the strategy used by many transnational

corporations to increase their profits and expand their economic power in the context of

global economic restructuring. In the global economic recession in 1970s, corporations

started searching for cheaper labor in Third World or developing countries that

promoted domestic labor to attract foreign investment and improve economic

development. The off-shore production sites and free trade zones in these countries

attracted an abundance of young female workers, who were commodified as "nimble

workers" by the nation-states, to serve the interests of transnational capitalists as soon as

the women were incorporated into the global capital system (Sassen 1984; Ong 1987;

Salzinger 2004). The incorporation of women's labor into capitalist expansion is

associated with local patriarchal systems and a gender ideology that not only confines

women's roles to reproductive labor, but also devalues women's status in both spheres

of production and reproduction. Chandra Mohanty (1997) further elucidates the

gendered and racialized ideologies that legitimize the capitalist exploitation of Third

World women to increase profitability. The gender ideologies of femininity and

masculinity intersect with racialized images to facilitate specific gendered and racialized

divisions of labor that construct Third World women as desirable workers who are

docile, cheap, and disciplined—easy for the transnational corporations to control and

utilize (e.g., Salzinger 2004).

In the past three decades, Third World women have become a new commodity,

exported by their home countries as a strategy for improving economic development. At

the other end of the exchange, they are imported by the host society to resolve labor

shortages in low-paid service industries such as domestic work, carework,

entertainment, and the sex trade. The theoretical concept of the "global city" (Sassen

1991) elucidates the increasing significance of the service sector, including domestic

and care labor, which satisfies the physical and emotional needs of white-collar and

professional workers by exploring the relationship between global capital mobility and

the flows of labor migration. The theoretical framework of the global city has been used

to understand the increasing flows of migrant domestic workers in places such as Hong

Kong, New York, Los Angeles, Rome and so forth (see also Hondahneu-Sotelo 2001;

Parrenas 2001), but it provides no explanation of the strategy of the global capital

economy, which is grounded in the gendered and racialized ideological discourse of

labor control. Jan Pettman (1998) observes how these Asian women are incorporated

into global capital: '…[I]t is not only gender which marks women's bodies for particular

kinds of work, but also processes nationalizing and racializing gendered bodies,

especially the body of the Asian woman' (p. 392). The gendered-racialized ideologies

are continually placing these specific groups of women in a segregated labor market in

the context of international labor division.

In the early development of feminist scholarship, the discussion of carework was anchored in addressing male privilege in the gender regime. Feminist scholars pointed to the gendered nature of carework and how it becomes women's burden when the nation-state imposes the responsibility of carework on the private household. The analyses of class and racial inequalities (e.g. Glenn 1992; Abel 2002) complement the discussion of gender relations in terms of care and carework. Increasingly, feminist scholars have noted that the gender lens is not enough to explain the inequalities in women's experiences of carework. They argue that analysis of carework needs to be situated in gender, race, and class contexts (Glenn 1992; Duffy 2005). These lines of power grounded in the history of colonialism and reinforced through the development of global capitalism, also contribute to the unequal division of care labor in the transnational context, especially in terms of the flows of migrant care workers.

Arlie Russell Hochschild (2000) proposes the concept of the "global care chain" to develop a theoretical understanding of the relationship between care and migration within the context of globalization. The "global care chain" is a term for the 'series of personal links between people across the globe based on the paid or unpaid work of caring' (2000: 131). This concept embodies the daily practices in global cities addressed in Sassen's theoretical work. Hochschild develops the concept based on the phenomenon of the international migration trends of domestic workers in general, and Filipina workers in particular (Constable 1997; Chin 1998; Chang and Ling 2000; Parrenas 2001). The flows of migrant domestic workers are explained through the unequal relations of economic development between wealthier and poorer countries,

especially in regard to domestic labor supply and demand. The concept of a global care

chain evokes the multiple oppressive systems affecting women by describing women's

experiences of providing/consuming care work in various local settings. Although the

concept of a "global care chain" provides a theoretical understanding of the politics in

carework between women of different class status and nationality, it is grounded in

empirical studies of child care that have limited its potential application to various types

of carework, such as health care and the elderly care (Yeates 2004a, 2004b). Besides the

limitations of these empirical data, the concept of the global care chain does not address

the way that racial hierarchies shape carework. But the discussion of carework cannot be

separated from the global hierarchy of gender, class, nationality, and race-ethnicity

(Mary Zimmerman *et al.* 2006; Guervarra 2009).

Built upon the current literature on transnational carework and domestic labor, this

study aims to shed light on gendered-racialized ideologies used to mobilize the flows of

particular groups of women, to deploy them in the gendered-racialized labor market, and

to match them to particular households as live-in care workers.

Recruiting and Training

The processes of recruiting and training live-in migrant care workers are directed by the

concept of an "ideal maid" who conforms to the requirements of submission, discipline,

and docility. Through investigating these processes, I will elucidate how particular racial

groups of women are transposed onto the body of an "ideal maid." The discussion on

recruiting and training is mainly based on the experiences of Indonesian workers. The

recruiting processes vary slightly based on sending countries' policies and regulations.

However, the goal of recruiting agencies in training prospective ideal maids is consistent

across workers' nationalities.

Targeting and Recruiting "Ideal Maids"

Most Indonesian live-in care workers depended on *Calos* (local brokers) to contact

recruiting agencies, which are usually located in big cities. *Calos* are usually respected

people in a local community, such as a village head, a successful local businessperson,

or a religious leader (Rudnyckyj 2004). A few of them are previous overseas workers

themselves. Daromir Rudnyckyj (2004) indicates the importance of *Calos* in facilitating

transnational labor migration from Indonesia. He uses the phrase "patron-client

networks" to describe the relationships between *Calos* and prospective migrant workers

and how these relationships work to help local recruitment.

The system of *Calos* not only facilitates the local recruitment of prospective

workers, but also contributes to the control of workers through local social networks and

financial dependencies. Recruiting agencies usually do not recruit workers directly.

Instead, they rely on *Calos* in local villages to target the group of women with less

financial support and education, who are viewed as easy to manage and control

compared to their counterparts in urban areas. An Indonesian recruiting agent explained

the criterion she used in interviews to screen ideal workers: 'the ease with which their

mind could be opened' (cited from Rudnyckyj 2004: 416) and whether they have the

"mental capacity" to be domestic laborers. Taiwanese recruiting agencies that share

similar criteria of selecting workers assert that those women who have innocent and

childlike characteristics are better for doing carework and household chores. The

Taiwanese recruiting agent, Lee, drew an analogy between Indonesian women and the

indigenous community in Taiwan to describe labor recruitment in Indonesia, making a

distinction between migrant factory workers and care workers:

> Generally speaking, people migrating as factory workers usually had
> better education and financial ability compared to care workers. The care
> workers from Indonesia usually lived in the remote countryside, with
> fewer job opportunities. The labor brokers preferred the countryside when
> hunting for workers. It's quite similar to the situation in Taiwan decades
> ago. We went to the mountain areas to recruit the indigenous people to
> work in urban areas. Women from the countryside were more naïve and
> childlike.

The adjectives *naïve* and *childlike* describe the perceptions of essential personalities

associated with workers who are capable of being transformed into "ideal care workers"

after training. The goal of recruitment is to screen the candidates who possess the

potential for being administrated and coached by recruiting agencies rather than

screening for their work skills or learning ability.

After interviews with candidates, recruiting agencies decide which trainees they will

accept. These prospective migrant care workers or domestic laborers have to stay in

training centers run by recruiting agencies for a couple of months. The training period

varies, depending on the agencies' policy and the timing for the trainees to be picked out

by employers. The day after arrival at the training centers, the trainees are required to go

through a medical assessment that is regulated by both the Indonesian government and

the receiving states. Those who fail to obtain the medical certification are repatriated

back home. Those passing the medical assessment are brought to the Bureau of Labor

Training, a unit of the Department of Manpower and Transmigration, for a short state-

run training program designed to certify the qualifications of prospective migrant

workers for performing as domestic workers or care workers (Rudnyckyj 2004). The

state-run training program targets women specifically, to promote women working

overseas, which contributes to the feminization of labor migration in Indonesia (Silvey

2004) but also confines this group of women to specific occupations.

Training Ideal Maids

The training centers represent a form of total institution (Goffman 1961), where

prospective migrant workers are subject to the rigorous control of recruiting agencies

and experience the processes of resocialization, through which they are transformed into

an ideal live-in maid by learning the required skills, attitudes, and ethics. The days in

training centers are routine and regular. A day usually starts at five o'clock in the

morning and begins with morning exercises that discipline the trainees' bodily strength.

After exercises, according to the rotation of duties, the trainees in charge are responsible

for cleaning the facilities and preparing breakfast. Personal activities, including bathing,

dressing, and eating breakfast, have to be finished before eight o'clock, the time the first

class starts. The main lessons are comprised of three parts: lecture on the proper

attitudes and ethics of a live-in maid, skills and application, and language classes. The

long day of formal training lessons ends at ten o'clock in the evening. At night, the

trainees share bunk beds in dormitories. If there is not enough space for all of the

trainees, some have to sleep in the classrooms using sleeping pads. When the workers

recalled their numerous nights in dormitories, the first scene they remembered was a hot

and humid scent permeating the air: 'I usually could not sleep well at night. It was too

crowded. So many people were jam-packed in a room. The ceiling fan did not work at

all. It was so muggy.' One Indonesian worker, Umi, recollected the sleepless nights in

the training center and the collective life she underwent.

Recruiting agencies provide the necessary training, which transforms the trainees

into a subject that conforms to the concept of an ideal maid. When Foucault (1997)

discusses the specific technologies for creating governable subjects, he asserts that

'modes of training and modification of individuals, not only in the obvious sense of

acquiring certain skills but also in the sense of acquiring certain attitudes,' (p. 225) are

necessary. Rudnyckyj (2004) utilizes Foucault's concept of governmentality to propose

the technologies of servitude, which 'refer to the rationalities that are intended to endow

these women with the capacities necessary to conduct domestic labor in countries

outside Indonesia' (p.419). The technologies developed by recruiting agencies ensure

not only the skills required for a care worker or a domestic worker, but also, more

importantly, the disciplined body and mind (including ethics and attitudes) required for

the specific job.

   The recruiting agents usually describe the training program in two dimensions: work

skills and spiritual education, referring to workers' ethics and attitudes. They emphasize

the intensive lessons, severe training circumstances, and strict management they provide

to guarantee workers' quality in both dimensions, particular the latter one. The

recruiting agent, Wang, outlined the trainees' regular life in the training center and how

the trainees were subject to the administration of the agency:

> During the training period all the trainees have to live in the center and
> followed the administrative rules. Their daily routine schedule is divided
> into three sections, 8:00-12:00, 1:30-4:30, and 7:00-10:00 … the trainees
> need to live in our dorm to have a collective life. They are required to
> follow the administrative rules we set up. All of them have to wear the
> uniform, which signifies order and discipline. The trainees are not allowed
> to leave the facilities or go home, even on Sunday, the day off from the
> lessons. They can only have visitors who met with them in the training
> centers.

Wang emphasized the administrative rules that guided the trainees' daily activities and

regulated their behaviors in the form of collective life. The technologies of routine

schedules, uniforms, and collective life are imposed on the trainees to achieve the goals

of making docile bodies through everyday practices. Similar technologies have been

used in other sites, such as manufacturing factories that control and discipline female

workers by patriarchal-capitalism in the economic South (Ong 1987; Ong and Peletz

1995). The recruiting agencies produce an atmosphere of strict hierarchy and tight

control through the daily practices of administrative staff and trainers in training centers.

Another Indonesian worker, Tari, had vivid memories of the high-tension life during the

training period.

> The Taiwanese manager, Miss Wu, had a very bad temper. She shouted at
> us. She scolded us frequently even without any reason. Sometimes, she
> banged at the desk to show her anger.

This way of interacting with trainees is one part of the training program, which aims to

discipline workers to be more submissive and obedient, as is required of an ideal maid.

Tari also learned from interacting with Wu the principle of keeping silent and

performing docility, which she adopted in her employment as a live-in care worker.

The Taiwanese recruiting agent, Wang, was proud to describe his facility's "semi-

military" training in order to demonstrate his absolute authority over the trainees:

> We taught them proper manners regarding how to stand up, sit down,
> listen and talk to people, and so forth. Do you know the military training
> in Taiwan? Yes, we used similar means to discipline the trainees. That
> was why our workers were different from the others. They were polite and
> disciplined. They knew how to behave in a proper way.

The military metaphor Wang used to describe the training program reveals the thinking

he applied to the trainees, and why submission and discipline, two important

characteristics in military culture, are prioritized in the training center. After one of my

interviews with Wang, he brought me to an employer's home where he had placed a

care worker; he showed me the "product" he had made in his training center. After the

visit, Wang talked to me proudly about how successful he was at training workers to be

ideal maids:

> Did you see the way they spoke to me and stood up in front of us? See,
> they were so polite and paid respect to us. They knew how to behave in
> the proper way (as a maid).

During the interview and the visit, Wang emphasized numerous times that it was

important to discipline workers who were too smart, to train them to fit in with the

image of the "ideal" maid. The workers also left the training center knowing how to

behave as an ideal maid in order to please brokers, Wang, and their employers.

The concept of an "ideal maid" directs the processes of coordinating migrant care

labor, from local recruitment to the practices of the training programs. The women

recruited are viewed as potential candidates for live-in maids after proper training.

Through the training processes, nor only do these women acquire the skills of

performing carework and household chores, but their bodies and minds are also coached

to be docile and disciplined in order to develop the essential ethics and attitudes of a

live-in maid.

Matching Workers to Private Households: The Practices of Gendered-Racialized

Discourses

After communicating about the requirements for live-in migrant care workers with

prospective employers, recruiting agents screen the potential workers for pairing. The

recruiting agencies either provide on-line selection systems (including workers'

resumes, and sometimes including video clips of self-introductions) or paper copies of

resumes for employers to pick out workers. Some agencies also offer web interviews

with prospective workers. The development of the worldwide web and relevant

technologies contributes to global circuits of labor in general and to gendered and

racialized patterns of labor migration in particular (Tyner 1998). The design of the

resumes includes a large photo, picturing almost two third of the person's body,

accompanied by personal information, physical or health conditions, work experiences,

specialties, a statement of the worker's willingness to cooperate with employers, and a

column for selection reports done by the recruiting agencies. The workers' resumes

indicate little information on workers' profession and skills as care workers. Instead, the

resumes are designed to demonstrate workers' capacity for and willingness to do

household chores and obey employers' particular requests, such as no days off, sharing

accommodation with care recipients in the same room, and eating pork (for Muslim

workers).

The column listing health conditions on the resume is not set up to inquire about the

worker's physical health. Instead, it asks about skin tone, pimples, body odor, and so on.

The inquiry into skin tone is associated with an ideological code, which is defined as

colorism by Evelyn Nakano Glenn (2008). The concept *colorism* means 'the preference

for and privileging of lighter skin and discrimination against those with darker skin,

[which] remains a persisting frontier of intergroup and intragroup relations in the

twenty-first century' (p. 281). Based on empirical studies in different geographic regions

(Hunter 2005; Maddox 2004), lighter skin is viewed in prevailing systems of racial

formation as a symbol of superiority, intelligence, trustworthiness, mobility, and

attractiveness. Recruiting agent Wang's explanation of why he started importing

Vietnamese workers demonstrates the employers' preference for lighter skin, which

exhibits a similarity with, and allows for more inclusion in, local Taiwanese society:

> My clients complain a lot about the skin color of the Filipina. They think
> that the Filipinas are darker; they speak a language that we could not
> understand. I think that the Vietnamese look more similar to us. It is also
> easier for them to learn Mandarin.

Furthermore, the preference for a lighter skin tone illuminates the stereotyped

associations between skin color and individual personality. Most recruiting agents I

interviewed mentioned employers' complaints about workers' skin tones, as in this

observation by recruiting agent Wen:

> Many Taiwanese employers do care about the maids' skin tone. Dark is
> dirty. The idea is difficult to change. I think that is ethnicity. It is the
> superiority of our ethnicity….

Darker skin is not only associated with dirtiness, but also with stupidity and ugliness.

Differences of skin tone signal a demarcation between the superior "us" and the inferior

"Other." They also justify reasons given to dismiss workers. Wen talked about an

employer's dissatisfaction with her Indonesian care worker because of skin color:

> In the first week of employment, the employer phoned me many times to
> request a refund for the worker. I went to the employer's home and tried
> to work out the situation. I asked the employer, a grandmother in her
> sixties, the reason for dismissing the worker. She told me that the worker
> didn't know how to do the work. But I noted that the maid did a good job
> in cleaning and cooking. I responded to her that the maid was doing well
> and was very submissive. Finally, she told me the real reason. She said
> that she felt shameful when she went out with the maid. The others' maids
> were smarter and had lighter skin, while her maid looked stupid with a
> darker skin tone.

The biological assumptions of ethnicity are used to describe "inherent" characteristics

and personalities of specific racial groups, which are determined by the destiny of skin

color.

Based on a qualitative analysis of twenty-seven recruitment-related web sites in

Asia, James Tyner (1998) indicates that the provision of workers' photographs and bio-

data and the emphasis on workers' personal traits in resumes are more common in the

deployment of domestic workers than other professional positions. The format of these

resumes was developed to market the "product," live-in household workers (including

care workers and domestic laborers) to its potential buyers (employers). The details of

workers' appearance, including skin tone, not only reflect colorism embedded in

employers' preference for workers, but also objectify the specific group of female

workers as a commodity that is ready to be sold in the trade of live-in household

workers (Constable 1997).

The recruiting agencies frequently use the term *ethnicity* to analyze the

characteristics and personalities of migrant care workers with different nationalities and

races. In this way, gendered and racialized discourses are produced and replicated

amongst recruiting agencies. The web sites of recruiting agencies share similar charts

that compare Filipinas with Indonesian and Vietnamese care workers. Despite the fact

that the workers are portrayed with different characteristics associated with their

nationality and racial category, they all are viewed as good for doing housework and

carework. The recruiting agents argue that their observations of workers are grounded in

their long-term experiences in recruiting migrant labor. They utilize gendered-racialized

discourses to market workers of different nationalities. The characteristics of different

nationalities are regarded as background knowledge to be applied by employers with

different demands, first to select workers, and later to manage and discipline them. For

example, the recruiting agents promote Filipina workers as better "maids" and

Vietnamese and Indonesian workers as suitable "care workers." The segmentation of

recruiting agencies as labor niche specialization (e.g., care workers, domestic workers,

entertainers, and so forth) results from a combination of factors (Tyner 1998). It works

along with gendered and racialized discourses to (re)enforce these discourses attached to

workers with different nationalities in the segregated migrant labor market.

Although employers seek certain characteristics of live-in migrant care workers in

the processes of communicating with recruiting agencies and selecting workers, they

usually associate workers' characteristics with their nationalities. The practices of

gendered-racialized discourses linked to workers' nationalities are (re)produced by

recruiting agencies and their interactions with employers. The recruiting agent, Wang,

compared Vietnamese and Indonesian workers in a way that was consistent with the

gendered-racialized discourses circulating on the recruiting agencies' web sites:

> Those Indonesians are from the countryside. Most of them are stupid and
> it is difficult to train them to use technological stuff. The Vietnamese are
> smarter and they are able pick up things more quickly. But the Indonesian
> maids are more submissive and obedient.

The gendered-racialized images of workers associated with workers' nationalities

are not only shared by recruiting agencies, but also are spread amongst employers

through communication with recruiting agencies, exposure to media reports, and

daily practices. In addition, James Tyner's research (1998) indicates that the

operation of the worldwide web also facilitates and contributes to gender-based

and ethnic-based stereotypes of workers, especially in the deployment of live-in

household workers.

One employer, Huang, described how she negotiated the requirements for the

prospective worker with her recruiting agent:

> I told the recruiting agent, 'I want a migrant maid who is smart, but not too

> smart.' She is smart, so it is easy for me to train her. She cannot be too
> smart to be out of control. I do not want a Filipina maid. Usually they are
> too smart. They play tricks on employers.

Huang indicated the concern for employing a smart maid. The characteristic,

"smartness," is not always an advantage applied to some contexts. Both recruiting

agents and employers emphasize the "right" smartness of workers, which is

represented as "the right stuff" in the qualification of being employed

(Hondagneu-Sotelo 1997). The educational degrees of the Filipinas are not

always "the right stuff" in the context of employment. Education is viewed as an

advantage for their care taking of children and learning skills, but is interpreted as

a flaw for being an "ideal maid." The recruiting agent, Chia, told his experiences

of pairing Filipina care workers with employers:

> If the care recipient's condition is really serious, which need more
> complicated caring skills and knowledge, I usually recommend the
> employer to hire a Filipina maid. They usually have better education and
> pick up things quickly. But most employers have low willingness to hire
> the Filipinas, who are regarded as troublemakers.

Because of their education, the Filipinas are described as "out-of-control" workers who

are conscious of labor rights and are difficult to manage. Furthermore, their emphasis on

legal rights marks them as less submissive and prone to exhibiting unreasonable

behaviors, such as being "picky about jobs and employers" and "accusing employers of

violating contracts." The bias against Filipina workers is commonly shared by recruiting

agencies and employers, and is circulated in Taiwanese society. A recruiting agent,

Chia, explained the reason why the majority of Taiwanese employers consider Filipina

workers to be troublemakers:

> Most Taiwanese feel that the Filipinas are troublemakers and difficult to
> deal with. It is because of employers' attitude about using workers. For

example, she is hired to care for grandfather, but you order her to do household chores, even to do work somewhere else. She was not willing to do it, and that was the cause of conflicts.

This consciousness of working rights and benefits is not tolerated by employers and is interpreted as a fault in an "ideal maid."

The demographic landscape of live-in migrant care workers in Taiwan has been continually shifting since the government first allowed the importation of care workers in 1992. The Filipinas were the majority of live-in migrant care workers for a decade, and the term, "Filipina maid" was the label for migrant care workers and domestic laborers in Taiwanese society. However, Vietnamese and Indonesian workers substituted for Filipinas as the dominant group of migrant care workers respectively in different periods. The importation of Vietnamese workers was first allowed officially in 1999. After that, Vietnamese live-in care workers became popular in the migrant care labor market. The cultural and ethnic sameness shared by Vietnam and Taiwan was emphasized when recruiting agencies marketed Vietnamese care workers. However, recruiting agencies changed their marketing strategy after the importation of live-in Vietnamese care workers was suspended in 2005. The Taiwanese explain the suspensions as a measure to prevent the high rate of runaways. Vietnamese workers were described as "communist other[s]" who were more familiar at playing with various kinds of craftiness, according to Taiwanese politics and history, which opposed Communism particularly that of Communist China (Lan 2006).

Indonesian workers now become the "ideal" maids, and are marketed by recruiting agencies, becoming the largest population of migrant care workers in Taiwan.[3] Their submissiveness and docility are stressed by recruiting agencies in order to sell them as

the "ideal" maids to employers. The population of migrant care workers in Taiwan is not

only influenced by structural factors such as state policy and political relations, but also

by the gendered-racialized discourses about workers with different nationalities.

Compared to "out-of-control" Filipinas and Vietnamese "communist others," Indonesian

migrant care workers are submissive and tame and better fit to be "ideal" maids. The

gendered-racialized discourses of migrant workers with different nationalities are

manipulated by recruiting agencies in advertising, marketing, and matching workers to

attract prospective employers with various needs and considerations. Gendered-

racialized discourses produced by recruiting agencies reflect how the local society

stereotypes workers with different nationalities. In addition, these discourses are

continually reproduced by employers and are circulated in society.

Control at a Distance: Disciplining and Managing Workers

The Taiwanese state regulates live-in migrant care workers' temporary status and

restricts their mobility to achieve the state's goal of governance. The state sets up

restrictions of new employment for employers whose workers are runaways. The

employers are not allowed to submit a new application for another worker within six

months from the time that a worker runs away. The state's regulation imposes the

responsibility of managing workers on employers, and contributes to employers' severe

discipline and strict control of workers (Cheng 2003). The state exercises its sovereignty

by intervening in the practices of employers in private households. Besides the state's

policy, the gendered-racialized discourses about migrant workers contribute to

employers' anxiety about controlling workers to guarantee compliance with state

regulations. Employers develop their own strategies of disciplining and controlling live-

in care workers, but are also instructed by recruiting agencies.

In most cases, live-in care workers are usually alone with care recipients at home during the day when their employers and other family members are out at work or school. Some workers even live with care recipients by themselves without others. Monitoring workers' time and behaviors becomes the first issue that most employers are concerned about. Recruiting agencies develop technologies for employers to oversee workers at a distance. The time-task-distribution sheet is the most popular one used in the management of workers. The recruiting agents usually show the employers a sample of the sheet, which details the time distribution of physical tasks defined by employers as a measure to manage and control workers by regulating workers' schedules. One employer, Lee, explained the reason for creating a chart for her care worker Lisa's work tasks and a schedule in which to do them:

> When she was new to our family, she did not know anything. I had to teach
> her a lot about her job duty. I did not have much time. It was a good
> strategy to use such a chart. What she had to do was just follow the items
> and schedule on the chart.

However, the tasks Lee listed on the sheet were not able to capture the work Lisa was actually doing, especially the invisible labor required to accomplish all of this physical work (DeVault 1991).

Some recruiting agencies commend employers for using digital technologies, such as pinhole cameras, to monitor workers, especially for those employers who live at a distance from care recipients and workers. Lai was going through the processes for hiring a live-in migrant care worker at the time I interviewed her. The prospective worker was to be employed to care for her mother in-law, who was in her eighties, paralyzed, and confined to bed due a rapidly degenerating health condition caused by a

brain tumor. Lai's mother in-law lived with her father in-law, who was in his early

nineties, in a bungalow about half an hour's drive from Lai's family. Lai worried that

the worker might be lazy, not responsible for her job, and even abuse her in-laws. She

recounted the suggestion by the recruiting agent, who proposed the idea of setting up

pinhole cameras in her in-laws' house:

> I did not think that it was a ridiculous idea. It might sound funny at the
> beginning. But later I really took the suggestion into consideration. There
> were so many mistreatments done by live-in migrant maids in the news
> reports. Did you remember the incident? The TV news showed the clip
> recorded by the pinhole camera in an employer's home. The Vietnamese
> worker was biting the grandma she cared for in the video. It was scary…

Pinhole cameras and schedule sheets are technologies adopted to regulate live-in care

workers in order to monitor their time use, movement, and activity.

Restrictions on using mobile phones, going out alone, and off days imposed on live-

in migrant workers share the same goal of control by isolating workers. One employer,

Huang, related the restrictions set up to regulate her Indonesian care worker, Yangti.

> I did not let her to have any day off. Many migrant maids were well-
> behaved in the beginning. But when they started knowing other people,
> they were easily seduced by others. It (no day off) was good for her. She
> was here for earning money. She could earn more money if she did not
> have days off. She was not allowed to have a mobile phone neither. I
> bought her phone cards. If she had to talk with her family back home, she
> could use the phone card via the land phone.

Huang justified these restrictions she imposed on her care worker, Yangti, as her

consideration for Yangti. It was to "protect" Yangti from temptations that might get in

the way of her duty as a responsible live-in migrant care worker. The ostensible

protection of workers is another form of controlling workers practiced by employers.

The power of employers is veiled in the myth of maternalism that treats workers as

immature and helpless children (Romero 1992: 110) who need regulation and discipline.

In addition, employers do not treat the work performed as real work and live-in migrant

care workers as real workers who are entitled to working rights. This is how employer

Chen delineated her expectation of a live-in care worker, and how she rationalized the

working conditions of her Indonesian worker, Ah-Di, working without days off:

> When I applied for a live-in migrant maid, I told my recruiting agent that I
> preferred a maid who was willing to have no days off. I did not permit Ah-
> Di to have days off. It was easy for her to have temptations if she had
> contact with others. She was not allowed to go out alone. Usually I was the
> person doing the grocery shopping. We accompanied my mother doing
> rehabilitation in the city hospital every Monday, Wednesday and Friday.
> She could meet other Indonesian maids there. It was the rest time for her
> (Ah-Di).

Employer's management of their live-in migrant care workers is mediated by the

concept of an "ideal maid" who is required to be docile, disciplined, and submissive.

Conclusion

This essay intends to understand on how a gendered-racialized labor market is created in

the labor migratory context in general and in the construction of live-in migrant care

workers in particular. I rely on the example of live-in migrant care workers in Taiwan to

explore the deployment of gendered-racialized ideology in the everyday practices of

recruiting agencies and employers. The labor flows of migrant care workers are not only

explained through the inequalities of economic development amongst countries. In

addition, gendered and racialized discourses and ideologies need to be considered to

understand the processes that facilitate specific gendered and racialized jobs, such as

that of care worker, for female migrant workers with different national affiliations. The

concept of an "ideal maid" proposed by recruiting agencies and employers directs the

processes of recruiting, training, matching, disciplining, and managing workers that aim

to transform particular racial groups of women into ideal maids who are required to be

submissive, disciplined, and docile. Through investigating these processes, this study

indicates how gendered-racialized discourses are activated by recruiting agencies and

employers to justify the work performed by live-in migrant care workers, to pair

workers to particular households, and to rationalize control over workers.

Notes

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also benefits from the mentorship of Prema Kurien, Andrew London, Jackie Orr, and

Chandra Mohanty. This essay was written during my residential fellowship in the

International Institute for Asian Studies.

[ii] The second largest group of migrant care workers is Vietnamese, with a population of

29,914. Followed by this are the Filipina (22,676), and Thai workers (1,295). These

statistics were issued by the Directorate General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics,

Executive Yuan, ROC (2009).

[3] The Taiwanese government declared the suspension from importing Indonesian live-in

care workers on August 1 2002, and reopened the importation on December 20 2004.

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