



Transnational Communities

An ESRC Research Programme

“Domestic work in private households is now the largest employment sector for migrant women workers entering the European Union.”

IMPACT OF LEGAL STATUS AND CHILDREN ON TRANSNATIONAL HOUSEHOLD STRATEGIES OF MIGRANT DOMESTICS

Principal Investigators

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Aims and objectives

Domestic work in private households is now the largest employment sector for migrant women workers entering the European Union. The majority of these workers are undocumented. The UK government is currently committed to regularising migrant domestic workers who entered the country under certain immigration conditions and this provides us with a unique opportunity to research migratory and transnational household strategies before and after the legalisation process. The research will assess the impact of legalisation for domestic workers, in particular comparing the experiences and expectations of migrant domestics and children (both in the UK and at home) with childless workers; to provide a gendered understanding of the household strategy model in migration; to provide policy makers and service providers with an in-depth analysis of the impact of legalisation on the previously undocumented population; methodologically to further develop participatory research techniques with ‘hidden’ populations.

Duration of research

September 1998 to August 2001



Methodology/study design

We have worked closely with Kalayaan, an organisation that offers support and services to migrant domestic workers in London.

We have interviewed 100 workers of different nationalities, approx. 50 before and 50 after they received their papers. We have held 4 themed group interviews with migrant domestic workers:

1. Children and their impact on migratory project;
2. Household strategies - a presentation of the household strategy model, and facilitation of migrant women's reaction to it;
3. Violence in the home as a motivator of migration (I);
4. Violence in the home as a motivator of migration (II).

We also held a group interview aimed specifically at Indian workers because language prevented many of them from participation in other sessions.

A group interview for women with children in the UK is scheduled for December.

We have also held 3 group interviews with au pairs (to contrast with migrant domestic workers, since immigration rules mean that they must not have dependants).

These interviews are supplemented by interviews with "experts" (e.g. lawyers, trades unions, embassy staff); diaries kept by domestic workers, and two questionnaires, one on remittances and one on the regularisation process. We have also devised a monitoring form for Kalayaan's employment requests which notes for example, when people stipulate a particular nationality.

We have compiled the first comprehensive profile of undocumented domestic workers in the UK. There are approximately 2,800 entries. We have also compiled a profile of those applying for regularisation with approximately 1,300 entries.

Academic and policy implications

The research has substantial policy implications including:

- a "migrant's eye" assessment of regularisation procedures;
- the impact of the new immigration rule on the treatment of domestic workers;
- how formerly undocumented can be supported in negotiating "pathways to legitimacy"
- the impact of nationality on all of the above.

The research also throws important theoretical light on:

- the household strategy model, gender and family position;
- the role of children in the migratory process;
- the nature of paid domestic work;
- the impact of illegality on households and other relationships.

SOME PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

A) Composition

- 30 different nationalities, majority Filipinos
 - 80.2% Filipinos
 - 11.5% Indian
- Majority women:
 - 92.5% women
 - 7.5% men
- Filipinos more likely to be single than other nationalities
- 70% of domestic workers come via the Middle East
- 98% did not use a migration agency but left through family/friend networks.

B) The regularisation process

There were significant problems with the regularisation process despite best efforts by both Kalayaan and the Home Office. These included:

- delay in setting criteria for regularisation meant many people delayed applications;
- criteria caused particular problems for certain nationalities, in particular those whose embassies do not issue passports. The criteria also required a letter confirming employment which many employers refused to sign because of their concerns about their own legal position.

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C) Pathways to legitimacy

Once domestic workers have received their visas there are still significant obstacles to them being part of the “mainstream”:

- Live-in workers cannot be self-employed, and employers can be extremely reluctant to declare them as their employees. Although most workers want to pay tax and National Insurance, many employers refuse.
- It is extremely difficult to get a National Insurance number. The documentation required varies from office to office, but can include e.g. information on siblings birth dates. When workers leave employers who will not support them in their attempts to get an NI number, they find they cannot get an NI number until they have a job. They cannot apply to an agency for a job without an NI number.
- Many women are attempting to move to live-out jobs, because this means they can be self-employed and for reasons of family reunification. However, live-out jobs are oversubscribed, and live-in jobs are the ones available.
- Those who have been given a one year visa are dependent on their employer to renew this visa, and will work longer hours and get paid less than those who have been given Indefinite Leave to Remain i.e. do not have to renew their visa.
- Most people who have their visas are sending much less money home because they are saving for family reunification, or setting aside money for regular visits home, or making more long-term plans (e.g. saving for pensions).

D) Household strategy model

Nearly all the research participants are women who have migrated alone. What is clear from interviews and remittance patterns is the primacy of the mother/child relationship, and the importance of female relations within the household.

- women did not feel that they left as part of a household strategy. In general migration was a decision they made themselves, often in response to an opportunity such as a call from a friend. However, they only rarely described themselves as migrating for themselves, consideration of other family members was paramount. In particular, children’s survival and education, and support for parents. Many, particularly women from India, said they migrated to escape violent husbands.
- only 2 of the 83 remittance questionnaires said that they were sending money back solely to husbands. Most sent money back to female relatives, (mothers, sisters, daughters). When this was explored in group interviews (participants from 5 different countries) there was a consensus that men could not be relied on to give the money to those who most needed it.
- “illegality” in the UK was felt to have a signifi-

cant impact on the households in the country of origin. Not being able to return home for a long period of time had a negative impact on relationships with children in particular, but also with parents. Many felt that their family did not believe they could not come back.

E) Miscellaneous

- Domestic workers entering the UK under the new immigration rule which allows them to change employer are still experiencing serious abuse. Their employers are now more likely to hold their passport than they were before the change.
- Domestic workers entering with diplomats have particular problems because, when they leave their employer, they are dependent on their Embassy to renew their passport.

SOME USERS ENGAGED IN THE PROJECT

Transport and General Workers Union; Transnational Institute (Amsterdam); International office of the Commission for Filipino Migrant Workers (Amsterdam); Kalayaan; Solidar (Brussels); Martin Cordell accountants; British Government Low Pay Unit; International Office of the Trades Union Congress; Indian High Commission; Home Office; Comite Contre l’esclavage Moderne (Paris); International Labour Office (Migration for Employment Branch); North and West Oxfordshire Community Education Council

Bridget Anderson was invited in September 2000 to give expert evidence at the European Council hearings on domestic slavery in Paris, and as an expert to the European Parliament discussion on the Smet report into the regulation of the informal cleaning sector in Brussels, September 2000.

PROJECT EVENTS

We have held one group discussion for migrant domestic workers with children, both in UK and in their country of origin. This was incorporated into the workshop held at the Respect meeting organised by Kalayaan and the Transport and General Workers Union in October 1999. As well as providing us with data we were able to come out with very specific recommendations from the workshop, aimed at the Respect network, trades unions and national and European level government.

SOME CONFERENCE/SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS

Anderson, B., 1999, Europe’s changing family structures and migrant domestic workers, European Population Conference, The Hague

Anderson, B., 1999, Maids? Servants? Slaves?

conference on 'Employment Rights for Migrant Domestic Workers', Kalayaan, TGWU and Solidar

Anderson, B., 2000 Rabbit's head, goose head, victims and agency and trafficking. Conference on Globalisation of Sexual Exploitation, Institute for Commonwealth Studies

Anderson, B. 2000 Dr Jekyll and Mrs Hyde. Feminist Utopias International Conference, University of Toronto.

Anderson, B., 2000 Putting our own house in order. Conference on migration and domestic violence, European Trades Union Congress, Brussels.

Phizacklea, A. 1999, Women, work and migration, Conference on 'Migration and Mobility', Kingston University

Phizacklea, A. 1999, Globalisation, gender and migration, 12th Women's Studies Network Conference, University of Warwick

Phizacklea, A. 1999, Women's work and migration, UNESCO symposium 'International Migration towards the New Millennium', University of Warwick

Phizacklea, A. 1999, Regularising the undocumented, Workshop on Undocumented Migration to Russia, Carnegie Moscow Centre

SOME PUBLICATIONS TO DATE

Anderson, B., 1999, 'Invisible women – Europe's domestic workers,' in J. Momsen (ed) *Women, Migration and Domestic Service*, Routledge, pp. 117-34

Anderson, B., 2000, *Doing the Dirty Work? The Global Politics of Domestic Labour*, Zed Press

Anderson, B., 2000 "Why madam have so many bathrobes?" Demand and domestic workers in the EU. *Journal of Economic and Social Geography*.

Phizacklea, A. 1999, Gender and transnational labour migration, in R. Barot et al. (eds) *Ethnicity, Gender and Social Change*, Macmillan, pp. 29-45

MISC DISSEMINATION

Press where we have been interviewed/quoted:

The Big Issue, The Sunday Times, Eve (women's glossy), BBC documentary on the rise of the domestic service industry transmission Spring 2001.

Transnational Communities Programme

On the programme's website (<http://www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk>) you will find contact details for all the project teams, guidance notes for would-be authors in the book series', information about past and forthcoming events, downloadable working papers, a searchable bibliography of world diasporas and links to related sites. An on-line news digest, TRACES aims to make sense of the human dimensions of globalisation by monitoring news items from around the world and presenting them in summary form. You can register on-line to receive hard copies of newsletters, reminders of website updates and information about related events.

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