



Making the most of it: After the live-in caregiver program

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Funded by the Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council

A Question of Agency

- “Socio-culturally mediated capacity to act”
- Informed by Western liberal humanism, autonomous individual
- Cross-cultural & critical challenges
- Foucault and bio-power
- Feminist scholars: pragmatic decisions and patriarchal bargains
- Question: How do former live-in caregivers in Canada exhibit agency in the context of the constraints and opportunities presented by their positioning within both Canadian and Filipino society?

Live-In Caregivers in Canada

- Challenges
 - Dreams deferred or denied
- Victims or Free Agents?
- Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP) - 1992
 - Requirements
 - Philippines
- Living and working under the LCP
 - Lack of control
- After the LCP
 - Educational and professional issues



Portia

- I [got] involved with this organization and they give me the strength and to know the rules as a live-in caregiver until I get the guts to talk to my first employer that I decided to go.

Portia

- Since I involved with this organization, I am powerful to talk. If I didn't found this organization I don't know where I am now *[laughs]* so this organization should give me more strength.

Pia

- If you know your resources, being creative then you know whom the people you are going to approach, but if you are not creative it's kind of you just want to isolate yourself . . . Just like when I came here, my son - I need a lot of information how to get my son into school. . . I mean it doesn't harm me asking people . . . I am not shy talking to people especially asking help because I really don't know. What can I do if I do not know. It's kind of I'll be stupid thinking that I know everything when in fact I not know nothing, so it helps. It really helps.

Isabel

- Getting to work to Canada Post is like my ultimate... like my how do you call this? – the best lot because it has good pay, good benefits. They provide him (her partner) [with benefits] . . . I feel that tranquility and it's like... I'm safe.

Willow

- I learnt to survive. I know I still will continue because I am not just living for myself. Other people are still... depending on me. Maybe that's my life, to help other people. I am happy to do that. I don't regret. What I am after for is the happiness of people...

Alma

- Why women not men? . . . Do we deserve to be beaten? Do we deserve to be always all the time we have to sacrifice for other people? I don't think so. I don't think it's - it's fair. . . . We don't get the fair share of what we contribute in this country, so I think that's the bottom line . . . Don't get me wrong - I'm not putting down doing domestic work, but what I don't like is the fact that you're treated like - a slave by your employer in the house- and then when you come out, what are the available jobs for you? . . . you make a lot of compromise and sometimes you also have to compromise your principle because you want to survive, but I always go back to that question, is this necessary? And it's not. We don't have to. Why do we allow ourselves to be treated like this?

Conclusion

- Sacrifice for family: agency?
- “Making the most of it”
- Patriarchal bargains and increased social enmeshment