

Institution: University of York		
Unit of Assessment: 17 – Business and Management		
Title of case study: Empowering migrant domestic workers through participatory art		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2016-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Joyce (Zhe) Jiang	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Lecturer in Human Resource Management	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2016 - present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2018-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Research by Dr Joyce (Zhe) Jiang, a specialist in employment relations at the University of York, increased understanding of the plight of migrant domestic workers (MDWs) as a form of modern slavery. It also demonstrated how 'participatory art' can help groups such as MDWs mobilize themselves and acquire collective identity and purpose. MDWs in London worked with Jiang to develop a video documentary highlighting their experiences, which was exhibited at galleries and museums across the UK. Through participatory art, Jiang has helped MDWs: raise public awareness of their plight; empower themselves and their associations towards improving terms and conditions; and advance the campaign to reform the Overseas Domestic Worker Visa system.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Research by Jiang at the University of York (UoY) has significantly contributed to understanding the experiences of migrant domestic workers (MDWs), and how they might use participatory art to collectively organize themselves to campaign for improved terms and conditions and influence policy. In the UK, there is growing concern that the decline in traditional labour organizing and collective bargaining has left large numbers of workers vulnerable to intensified forms of exploitation. This is especially the case with MDWs, such as, nannies, cooks and cleaners who live in accommodation provided by their employer. Typically, MDWs are not members of unions and do not benefit from the protection of domestic employment laws.</p> <p>Drawing on insights from employment relations and the sociology of work, Jiang's research has helped to understand the experiences of these workers as a form of modern slavery. A survey of MDWs conducted in early 2019, by Jiang at UoY, revealed that 59% suffered from physical, verbal or sexual abuse at work, and also that a majority of employers did not comply with the National Minimum Wage [A]. In the employment relations literature, it is often assumed that groups such as MDWs, isolated in the homes of their employers, lack a collective identity and are hard to organize in conventional ways that could improve working conditions, for example, through membership of unions. However, in earlier work (prior to joining York in 2016), Jiang (with Korczynski, University of Nottingham) had challenged the assumption that MDWs were 'un-organizable' and highlighted ways in which these workers can mobilize themselves to articulate their shared experiences and pursue collective interests.</p> <p>Research conducted at York by Jiang built on these ideas to explore how 'participatory art' can be a powerful tool in collective organizing. Key ideas were developed in '<i>The art of labour organizing</i>', published in the leading journal <i>Human Relations</i> [B]. Jiang explores the role that 'participatory art' can play in supporting and enhancing '<i>flat organizing</i>,' which she defines as a process that emerges from social relationships between workers interacting with each other in the wider community. Examples include social movements or grassroots protest groups that (initially at least) have no formal leadership or structure. In the employment context, flat organizing might occur when groups of workers come together informally and develop a sense of community, initially without the help of trades unions. Jiang's interest in participatory art was partly inspired by the critical mass of researchers at York, led by Professor Stephen Linstead, interested in the role of aesthetics for understanding organizations and the relationships between art and research. Using an in depth case study, Jiang uncovered how 'art practices' (e.g. workshops on singing, drawing, painting, writing, acting and constructing and presenting</p>		

satirical sketches) can have a significant impact on the ability of groups such as MDWs to associate and develop a collective sense of purpose. Based on these observations she developed an ideal type model for understanding the 'art of flat organizing' consisting of six elements: participatory art practices; tutor activist roles; distributed leadership; safe spaces; knowing and questioning through art; and empowerment through art.

In 2019, Jiang applied and further refined her ideas about the art of flat organizing through a co-produced project with The Voice of Domestic Workers (VoDW), for whom she acts as a trustee. This project involved a participatory video in collaboration with Tassia Kobylinska - a filmmaker from Goldsmiths - and a group of MDWs associated with VoDW [C][D]. Funded by an ESRC Impact Acceleration Account grant awarded by UoY, twelve MDWs were trained in video production. Organised by Jiang and Kobylinska, this group co-produced a short documentary video, *Our Journey* [D], and curated exhibitions (*My Home is Not My Home*) that presented a combination of video installation, photography, artworks and documents in different museums and galleries across the UK (including: in London, L'etrangere, Stephen Lawrence Gallery, Cubitt Gallery Goldsmiths and Unite the Union; in York, Norman Rea Gallery; and in Manchester, People's History Museum). As a form of 'participatory art' in action, the co-produced film, *Our Journey* [D] and the associated exhibitions helped MDWs organize themselves and to articulate their interests to politicians and public audiences.

In research terms, observations and insights from the VoDW project enabled refinement and increased understanding of the process and outcomes of 'participatory art' in supporting flat organizing and the working lives of MDWs [E][F]. Most recently, this work has continued with additional funding awarded in 2020 by Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW) to further research the plight of MDWs, their experiences of modern slavery and the ways they are organizing themselves to campaign for improved terms and conditions.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- [A] Jiang, J. (2019) *A Special Vulnerability: Migrant Domestic Workers Enslaved by the Non-renewable Six-month Overseas Domestic Worker Visa in the UK*. Policy report for The Voice of Domestic Workers, London.
- [B] Jiang, J. and Korczynski, M. (2019). The art of labour organizing: Participatory art and migrant domestic workers' self-organizing in London. *Human Relations (OnlineFirst)** + <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726719890664>
- [C] Jiang, J, Kobylinska, T. And The Voice of Domestic Workers (2020) "Art with marginalized communities: Participatory video as a tool of empowerment and resistance for migrant domestic workers in London" *City*. 24(1-2) 348-363 * <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2020.1739460>
- [D] *Our Journey* (2019) (Available upon request).
- [E] Jiang, J (2018) 'Organizing Immigrant Workers Through "Communities of Coping": An Analysis of Migrant Domestic Workers' Journey from an Individual Labour of Love to a Collective Labour with Rights', In Atzeni, M and Ness, I (eds), *Global Perspectives on Workers' and Labour Organizations*, Springer.
- [F] Jiang J (2020) Migrant Domestic Workers in the UK: Struggle and Resistance. In: Leal Filho W., Azul A., Brandli L., Lange Salvia A., Wall T. (eds) *Decent Work and Economic Growth*. Encyclopedia of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Springer.

Research grants and awards:

- ESRC Impact Acceleration Account (York): 'Exploring the implications of the non-renewable 6 month overseas domestic worker visa in the UK' (GBP1,800). 2018; 'Participatory Video Workshops for Migrant Domestic Workers in the UK.' (GBP1,500). 2018; 'Producing the exhibition 'My Home Is Not My Home.' (GBP1,500). 2018.
- GAATW 'Economic and Social Inclusion of Migrant Domestic Workers in the UK. CI: The Voice of Domestic Workers' (EUR11,000), 2020-23.

* Peer reviewed publication

+ Submitted to REF2021

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

To date Jiang's research has had an impact in three key areas: **(a)** raising public awareness of the plight of MDWs; **(b)** using participatory art practices to empower MDWs and help them organize to improve their terms and conditions; and **(c)** informing the ongoing campaign to reform the Overseas Domestic Worker Visa system.

Enhanced public awareness – Following exhibitions in multiple galleries and museums between 2019 and 2020, Jiang's research has helped to raise public and media awareness of the plight of MDWs. By December 2020 Jiang's exhibitions had attracted 1,300 visitors nationally, despite the cancellation of events after March 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic [1]. Evidence from feedback interviews and surveys reveals that the exhibitions have improved public understanding of the plight of MDWs and the need for reforming the system [1]. In exhibition questionnaires, a majority of visitors (in some cases 100%) responded positively to questions such as: *'I felt moved or inspired', 'I was exposed to new ways of thinking about things', 'It made me want to know more about what I was seeing' and 'I will use/share things learnt today'* [1]. Words that recur in visitor's comments' books and interviews are *'moving', 'important', 'enlightening', 'insightful', 'powerful', 'shocking' and 'informative'*. Some visitors expressed astonishment that 'modern slavery' still existed in the UK. One visitor, for example, stated: *'I think it's so surprising and disgraceful in this age that people are treated in a way that these workers have been treated. They are not considered as workers really. They are considered as slaves in modern society.'* A different visitor remarked on how it was: *'a really shocking exhibition. I had an idea of what has been happening...[the] abuses, but not to this extent'*, while, according to another, it was: *'A very inspiring and mind-blowing exhibition that reveals an aspect of modern life that has always been overlooked'*. Others were able to connect the exhibition to their own immediate family experiences and recognised the importance of collective organizing: *'my mum left the Philippines as a domestic worker – I don't think she has had the opportunity to share her story and her pain with people who have been through the same – I can only imagine how much it helps to join in solidarity through organisations like VoDW'* [1]. An article published in the *Guardian* on the L'Etrangere exhibition and a feature on Resonance FM radio both assisted in raising public awareness of the exhibition and the issue [2].

Empowering MDWs through participatory art: In line with her foundational research [B], the participatory art project directed by Jiang to produce the documentary video and exhibitions has supported 'flat organizing' by giving the MDWs a voice - as individuals, through unionization and by connecting them to non-traditional actors, such as museum curators.

First, it helped to empower the 12 individual MDWs who were directly involved in the art project, raising their willingness and ability to campaign on behalf of other co-workers. Feedback suggested that for many it was a transformative experience which significantly improved their skills and confidence. A typical comment from participants was: *'We learnt a lot. It's priceless, knowledge and bonding every week.'*, while another remarked: *'to be part of this project...I was so grateful because at last, we can express ourselves. We let other people hear our voices, our struggles.'* [3]. Five participants subsequently became active campaigners, representing their community by volunteering and speaking at public events. As the chair of VoDW stated: *'Some women have developed important media skills from the participatory video series. They have become very active in representing the community in various media platforms. The skills learnt in the workshops have been spilled over to other progressive activities.'* [4].

Second, the video and exhibitions helped to raise the awareness of a wider constituency of MDWs, mobilising support for the VoDW which campaigns for equal employment rights and reform of the visa system (see below). Jiang's research helped boost membership of VoDW to 1500 by December 2020. This is confirmed by the VoDW Chairperson, who noted: *'The video training has attracted...new members for us. We have also received enquiries from domestic workers who wanted to join our organization after visiting Joyce's exhibition.'* [4]. Amongst these new members are the 12 MDWs involved in the video, one of whom is now leading the media and communication working group within VoDW.

A further way in which Jiang's research has helped to empower MDWs is by facilitating union membership and changing the way that unions engage with this group: As the VoDW Chairperson explained: *'Joyce's research has informed our discussion with Unite the Union to establish a domestic worker branch within the union...Without her research, this will not happen so quickly'* [4]. These discussions led to a week-long event (starting Monday 9 March 2020), just prior to the first Covid-19 lockdown, hosted by Unite the Union at Unite House in Holborn (London). This event, attended by Unite Executive Council members, included a screening of the film followed by presentations by Jiang and MDWs themselves. Feedback from it noted how the exhibition had raised awareness and also advanced Unite's own campaign to organize MDWs and achieve equal employment rights. According to the National Officer for the Hospitality Service Sector within Unite the Union: *'This video will increase awareness and elicit wider support for their campaign to be afforded the same fundamental rights as any other worker'* [5]. The Unite Assistant General Secretary also writes: *'This event raised awareness and strengthened union organisation, demonstrating to migrant domestic workers that they are not alone, and that they are supported by the union alongside a wide alliance of organisations and individuals.'* Furthermore, she notes how: *'The film has played, and is playing, a vital role in union campaigning with migrant domestic workers...supporting union organising...and bringing together all those who want to make change'* [5]. The impact of Jiang's work in helping to empower and mobilize MDWs is further acknowledged by a spokesperson for the Trades Union Congress, who states: *'Allowing domestic workers to tell their stories themselves in her [Jiang's] video starts to give these workers the power to challenge the injustices they have suffered and shows how workers organising in unions has helped to overcome their exploitation'* [10]. Overall, Jiang's work is significant in helping to broaden the focus of unions which, traditionally, had not sought to recruit and organize marginalized groups such as MDWs.

Third, the research directly supported flat organizing by helping to forge new links with non-traditional actors such as gallery and museum curators who are now supporting the work of VoDW. As the curator from Cubitt Gallery stated: *'The film brought new audiences and conversations to Cubitt and is a great example of how art can work across and with different communities.'* [6]. Cubitt gallery and Raven Row gallery have also agreed to provide free venues for VoDW's meetings and workshop activities in the future. Curator of the Cubitt gallery stated, *"studio spaces have been made available to support the group's [VoDW] ongoing work"* and this *"sharing space at Cubitt is key to developing forms of solidarity and knowledge exchange in relation to work, education, precarity and collective organizing"* [6].

Campaign to reform the Overseas Domestic Worker Visa system: Jiang's research and work on the video has informed and energized a wider campaign led by VoDW, Unite the Union, Kalayaan and Anti-slavery to reinstate the pre-2012 Overseas Domestic Worker Visa (ODW visa). Before 2012, MDWs were allowed to renew their visa provided that they would be continuously hired as full-time domestic workers and, after five years, apply for indefinite leave to remain and eventually UK citizenship. However, in 2012, the UK Government removed these rights to renew, greatly increasing the insecurity and vulnerability of MDWs. The campaign to reverse this decision has achieved national media attention, partly as a result of the film and exhibitions that have raised awareness [2]. Jiang's survey report, commissioned by VoDW [A], provided robust evidence of modern slavery which also directly informed this campaign. Specifically, the exhibitions and film increased politicians' awareness of the plight of MDWs in the UK. As the EU & Europe manager of Anti-Slavery International noted, *'The film gives space to individuals to tell their story in their words, with dignity...it is also a homage to all that domestic workers themselves have achieved and continue to fight for'* [7]. Similarly, the former Labour MP Fiona MacTaggart noted: *'the wonderful thing about this exhibition and the video...is a very intimate description of the horrible exploitations which so many migrant domestic workers are subjected to. They are forced to a form of slavery which is not acceptable in the UK today. All of us should do more to help them.'* [8].

As a result of increasing publicity arising from Jiang's report [A], the participatory art project and growing media attention, in late 2019 Jiang was asked to help draft a Parliamentary Briefing to inform MPs and policy makers of the vulnerability and marginality of MDWs in the UK and the

problems associated with the current ODW Visa [9]. This led to Jiang being invited to speak at the campaign launch event hosted and chaired by Labour Party MP Jess Phillips. Originally planned for April 2020 in the House of Commons, this event was postponed due to Covid and finally held, virtually, on 17 November. It was attended by 115 people including MPs and the Prevention Policy lead of the Modern Slavery Unit within the Home Office. Feedback from the meeting further highlighted the impact of Jiang's work in raising awareness and how this was helping to boost the campaign to reinstate the ODW visa. Jess Phillips (MP), for example, remarked: *'It has been incredibly insightful ... we will certainly try to improve the situation which I don't know how anyone who hears this could think it's not wrong.'* [10] The Policy Officer (Rights, International, Social and Economics department) for the Trades Union Congress (TUC) further commented on how *'Joyce Jiang's video and research'* not only represented *'an important resource'* to raise awareness, but also *'supports the TUC's advocacy to change UK law to end the tied overseas domestic workers' visa and end the criminalisation of undocumented workers.'* [10]. Although this campaign to reinstate the visa was interrupted by the pandemic, it is regaining momentum and political support following the parliamentary event in November. This is due in large part to Jiang's research and wider public engagement. As the Director of VoDW stated: *"Joyce presented her research findings and video on migrant domestic workers in our online parliamentary event chaired by labour MP Jess Phillips on Nov 17 2020. We have also used Joyce's policy report in our call to action in writing letters to MPs to support the reinstatement of rights of domestic workers. Joyce's study has significantly improved parliamentarian awareness of the plight of migrant domestic workers in the UK, mobilised wide support and advanced our campaign on the Overseas Domestic Worker visa"* [10].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- [1] Assessment of exhibition impact, including emails (from curators), visitor numbers, visitor comments and survey responses, 2019.
- [2] Media coverage of exhibitions and related campaigns (radio and national press), 2019.
- [3] Personal Statements and Video Interviews with migrant domestic workers involved in the video and exhibitions, 2019.
- [4] Letter from the Chair of The Voice of Domestic Workers, March 2020.
- [5] Emails from national officers representing Unite the Union, 2020.
- [6] Emails from Curator of the Cubitt Gallery, London, September 2019 and July 2020.
- [7] Email from EU & Europe manager of Anti-Slavery International, September 2020.
- [8] Interviews with exhibition visitors and MP (former Labour MP Fiona MacTaggart) (L'etrangere)
- [9] Parliamentary briefing 'Why a UK committed to ending slavery needs to return the pre-2012 Overseas Domestic Worker Visa', VoDW, Kalayaan, Anti-slavery and Trade Union Congress.
- [10] Feedback from attendees of House of Commons briefing event, including Jess Phillips MP, Policy Officer of the TUC, and Director of the VoDW, 17 November 2020