

## Negotiating Space, Reconstructing Identity, and Community Literacy Practices: Case Study of Indonesian Domestic Workers in Hong Kong

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**Abstract :** Foreign domestic workers are arguably one of the most exploited and subordinated groups of women in the labor division under global capitalism. However, foreign domestic workers (FDWs) actively engage in activities to negotiate the prevailing structures of power in the transnational labor market. This paper seeks to understand the significance of Indonesian Domestic Workers (IDWs) cultural representations in relation to the themes of literacy and space. In particular, this paper addresses the issue of how IDWs in Hong Kong make use of the practice of suitcase libraries to make meaning of space within material limits. The term 'suitcase libraries' is used to refer to a literacy practice of book borrowing at outdoor public spaces in Hong Kong during IDWs' days off. The books are displayed in open suitcases and mats, with IDWs both as administrators and consumers engaged in the practice. This paper argues that suitcase libraries can be considered representing Thirdspace in the form of a vernacular, grassroots literacy practice that creates a productive space of resistance and community empowerment. Employing participant observation and a textual analysis of IDWs' literacy narratives, the study traced IDWs' literacy trajectories to the period of IDWs' permanent return to Indonesia. Through extended engagement in community literacy practices in their hometowns, former IDWs develop their literacy capital and break the stereotypes of uneducated and passive maids and change them into literate figures. In the context of literacy movement that has gained momentum in Indonesia recently, the practice of IDWs' suitcase libraries is also useful as a reference point to further investigate how community literacy sponsors in Indonesia also create Thirdspace and develop literacy capital through community libraries (TBM, Taman Baca Masyarakat).

**Keywords :** identity, Indonesian domestic workers, literacy narratives, Thirdspace

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