



Graduate School of Development Studies

**Masculinity, Work and Rights  
through the Lens of Citizenship:  
Filipino Male Domestic Workers in The Netherlands**

A Research Paper presented by:

***Aster Georgo Haile***  
(Eritrea)

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Members of the examining committee:

**Dr Karin Astrid Siegmann**  
**Dr. Helen Hintjens**

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***Inquiries:***

Postal address:           Institute of Social Studies  
                                  P.O. Box 29776  
                                  2502 LT The Hague  
                                  The Netherlands

Location:                 Kortenaerkade 12  
                                  2518 AX The Hague  
                                  The Netherlands

Telephone:               +31 70 426 0460

Fax:                        +31 70 426 0799

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## List of Acronyms

EMN	European Migration Network
CARE-MDW	Courage Acknowledgement Respect and Equality Domestic workers.
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMWU	Indonesian Migrant workers' Union
IOM	International Organization for Migration.
NL	Netherlands
PICUM	Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migration.
UMDW	United Migrant Domestic Workers

## **Abstract**

This paper explores how Filipino men, especially the undocumented who work in domestic labor, define themselves and their rights in relation to their work and gender roles in terms of their own masculinity. My interest in this study is to explore gender and other relevant dimensions (example, legal status) of how male undocumented domestic workers see themselves. Work and work-related networks are one of the main important practices we have in our daily lives and often involve quite a sharp gender division of roles. It is clear that the kind of work people do contributes to producing their social identities, through a combination of gender identity, class, nationalism and citizenship status among others. The study was based on both formal and informal interviews with twelve people, five women and seven men. Observation was also part of the method, and the key finding was that Filipino male domestic workers tend to define themselves in three inter-related ways: (i) First, they explain their 'feminine' job through their undocumented status. (ii) Second, they define themselves as family breadwinners and 'providers' in spite of domestic work being their main occupation. Finally (iii) the informants tended to take pride in their shared Filipino culture, although they felt this aspect of their identity was limited by their lack of legal status. Overall, the study seeks to contribute to current knowledge about vulnerable masculinities in European societies, especially of migrants. It highlights the complex elements that contribute to a socially constructed set of masculine identities.

## **Relevance to Development Studies**

In the social science literature, international migration and domestic work are overwhelmingly identified with women migrants. It is evident from looking at studies done so far, that much research has focused on Filipino female migrant domestic workers, for example, and much less work has been done on the problems of male domestic workers in general. Moreover, the researcher sees domestic work as one of the most important sectors in development, and it will be useful to add knowledge of this sector to existing literature in Development Studies. And this research paper might be useful in influencing the migration policy of Dutch government (on undocumented migrants) which falls under the realm of development studies.

## **Keywords**

Masculinity, migrants, Filipino, domestic workers, The Netherlands

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

The main objective of this research is to explore the hidden lives of undocumented male migrant domestic workers in The Netherlands, taking Filipino men as an example. The aim is to understand particularly how their insecure migration status and their work relate to their own sense of masculinity and their struggles to define themselves and their rights as migrant workers, even if undocumented.

### 1.1 The Notions of Irregularity: The Netherlands in the Context

In the contemporary globalized world, migration is an important issue which could be seen as synonymous scenario with globalization. Most people migrate to rich countries (mostly from the global south to the global North), looking for better socio-economic and political condition. However, the notion of ‘a better life’ as justification for migration produces many challenges to migrants beginning on how to enter to a country of their destination. For instance, recent example of illegal border crossing by Africans to European countries through the Libya desert to the Mediterranean Sea to reach Italy, and some cross through Senegal to Spain. In this process many lose their lives without reaching their destination and dreams. And those who managed to reach to their destination also face many challenges in the receiving countries. One of the challenges could be the failure to obtain resident permit as they enter a country ‘illegally’.

Most writers who focus on illegal migration question on the definition or classification of an illegal immigrant or an illegal border crossing (Jandl 2004:2). One of the definitions sorts out six significant categories of invisibility or clandestine: “legal entry, legal residence but illegal work; legal entry but illegal residence and illegal work; legal entry, no work but illegal residence; illegal entry, legal residence but illegal work; illegal entry, illegal residence and illegal work; and illegal entry, illegal residence but no work” (Tapinos 1999)<sup>1</sup>. However, categorizing of illegality as a point of reference could result in a number of practical problems as a person could change his/her status: “migrants may enter a country legally, but then change their status several times”(Jandl 2004:3). Moreover, using the term ‘illegal’ has many consequences for migrants themselves.

The use of the term “illegal” could be criticized for three reasons: (i) due to its connotation with criminality, and most undocumented migrants are not

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<sup>1</sup> in Jandl (2004:2)



criminals; (ii) defining people as “illegal” can be regarded as denying them their humanity; (iii) labelling “illegal” asylum seekers who find themselves in an irregular situation may further jeopardize their asylum claims. It has also been argued that a human being can never be illegal, as otherwise the right of everyone to recognition everywhere as a person before the law would be violated (PICUM 2007:5).

Moreover, in some southern European countries, regularization<sup>2</sup> programs for undocumented migrants are done in time intervals (Jandl 2004:6). For instance, In Italy, during the 1990s a policy has responded with frequent regularization programs (1986, 1990, 1997, 1998-99 and 2002-ongoing) due to the huge demand for cheap labor in sectors which was dominated by undocumented immigrants (ibid). And during the three amnesties in the 1990s a total of some 640,000 migrants received a residence permit, while the current amnesty could come up with more permits, and starting from the beginning of 2003 there were about 700,000 applications in Italy (Jandl 2004:6).

The Netherlands is a country that has long history of immigration, that belonged to the “old Europe”, however in the recent years the country transferred from a charitable or generous to a more restrictive migration policy (Van den Bergh 2006:5). The main three non-Western countries where migrants dominantly appeared to The Netherlands are Turkey and Morocco due to the “legacy of guest worker programs adopted between 1960 and 1970”, followed by Surinam, reflecting post-colonial ties (Lamchek 2011:4).

In the Netherlands regularization system could be described as “on-off, and based largely on *fait accompli*”<sup>3</sup>, whilst emphasizing draconian demands with regard to payment of taxes and social security contribution on the part of the applicants, who are thus not permitted to be working illegally” (Apap et al. 2000:279).

During the regularization procedure undertaken in 1975, 18000 applications were registered giving rise to 15,000 regularizations. The people in question had to have entered the Netherlands prior to 1<sup>st</sup> November 1974 and hold regular work. In 1979, at the same time that it was decided that work permits would no longer be issued to nationals of countries outside of the European community unless the domestic labour market was unable to fill vacant jobs... The last regularization began in 1991 by means of a case by case examination of the situation of applicants. This enabled the regularization of 2000 people up to 1994 (Apap et al. 2000:278).

Moreover, in 2001 a new alien law was implemented that considers the general amnesty for all asylum seekers falling under the old alien law (Van den

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<sup>2</sup> Regularization is defined as “a legislation relating to aliens as the granting, on the part of the state of a residence permit to a person of foreign nationality residing illegally within its territory” (Apap et al. 2000:263).

<sup>3</sup> *Fiat accompli* is a procedure that, “the regularization aims to recognize the presence of those persons who have been illegally in the country since a certain period” (Apap et al. 2000:268).

Bergh 2006:5). “Nevertheless, in February 2004 the decision was made that 26,000 former asylum seekers falling under the old alien law faced expulsion” (ibid). In The Netherlands, the Repatriation and Departure Service<sup>4</sup> is responsible for the independent and forced departure of aliens without resident permit (EMN 2010). Independent departure is usually facilitated with the assistance of the IOM (ibid).

The question of migrants’ integration in Dutch society had been for a long time easily dismissed, in the belief that the Netherlands was a successful model of ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘tolerance’, where in racism and ethnic discrimination did not exist. Today, however, the ‘tolerance’ that Dutch people considered a positive quality inherited from their past seems today to stand on shaky ground (Marchetti 2010:55).

Currently, The Netherlands exhibits typical features of a country reluctant to accept immigrants (Lamchek 2011:4). And there is a critical discussion in Dutch parliament on issue of irregular migrants.

The Rutte Cabinet [current Dutch coalition cabinet] intends to make illegality an offence. A majority in the Lower House of Parliament is against the prosecution, for instance, churches that provide assistance to asylum seekers who have exhausted all legal remedies. This became evident during a debate with the Minister for Immigration and Asylum Policy on 30 November 2010. The opposition expressed its concerns that churches, hospitals, and other organisations that provide accommodation or medical assistance to illegal aliens would also be punishable (EMN 2010).

Thus, addressing the issue of irregular migrants in The Netherlands is timely and this research focuses on Filipino migrants, and intended to explore the below listed main questions.

## 1.2 Research Questions and Research Methods

This research seeks to answer two main questions:

1. How do Filipino male domestic workers in The Netherlands balance their sense of masculinity with doing work that is widely perceived as ‘feminine’?
2. How do they seek to express their gender identity in the intersection of citizenship, class, race and basic rights?

This research thus deals with undocumented Filipino migrants who work as domestic workers in the Netherlands. The migrants who were interviewed for this study all entered The Netherlands as legal migrants by work permits and on tourist visas. Moreover, this study uses the word

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<sup>4</sup> The Repatriation and Departure Service focuses two target groups: “illegal aliens who have been apprehended within the framework of domestic (mobile) aliens supervision and aliens to whom entry is denied within the frame work of the border control” (EMN 2010).

‘undocumented’ or ‘irregular’ to refer to the Filipino undocumented migrants, who are currently without a legal residence permit. The specific group of men I chose to focus on are all worked as domestic workers. The researcher also interviewed women in order to view the construction of masculinities in a relational way.

It is important to note that a foreigner working clandestinely is not necessarily illegal, and this is only the case when apart from not having the right to work due to the absence residence permit (Apap et al. 2000:266). According to the Official Statistics Report of 2010, the total registered foreign population of The Netherlands is about 3.3 million, that is 20 per cent of the 16.6 million total Dutch population (Lamchek 2011:4). The figure for undocumented migrant is less well known, but could be from 62,000 to 108,000, depending on the estimates, for the year 2008 (ibid). Moreover, in the Netherlands, according to one estimate, the total population of Filipino migrants was 19,807 in 2009, of which an estimated 1,500 were irregular Filipino migrants (Commission on Filipino Overseas 2009).

The following section will have an overview of the chapters of the research paper which will be discussed later with more details.

### **1.3 Chapter Outline**

Chapter 2 of this paper discusses the background to the research and the research problem, as well as clarification of the central research focus. The literature about masculinities, citizenship and intersectional analysis is then reviewed in Chapter 3. This helps the researcher to elaborate her own insights through the conceptual framework guiding this research. Methodology arose from this framework, and reflections based on the fieldwork have contributed significantly to the research. All this is also discussed in Chapter 3. Filipino men interviewed tended to identify themselves as playing their roles as men bread winners on the one hand, and they also explained the influence of their citizenship status that forced them to do domestic work. They narrated their stories in defining their gender identities which is explored broadly in Chapter 4. As will be shown in this study, citizenship status could play an important role in the intersection of power relations of class, race and gender. In this way, undocumented status is a contributing factor in the constructing of identities among undocumented Filipino male domestic workers. In Chapter 4, this will be discussed in more depth.

Chapter 5 of this paper considers the experiences of a number of Filipino men in relation to their networks and finding jobs and their relationships with their families and the Filipino community in The Netherlands. It is mainly focused in relation to their day to day activities. Chapter 5 also revealed how the Filipino men interviewed for this study experience their rights within the restricted chances in accessing rights, services and their experiences not only as undocumented but as men; they narrated the series of events that led them to becoming undocumented. The research paper concludes with Chapter 6 which discusses the main findings of this research in relation the central research questions in Chapter 1. Chapter 6 also reflects on

the researcher's involvement and how the research findings influenced depending on the hypothesized researcher's personal experience which was one of the core motivations for the study.

## Chapter 2      Understanding the Research Context

### 2.1    Situating the Research Problem

Being undocumented and also being a domestic worker entails difficulties in securing rights. If in addition, the domestic work is being done by a male undocumented worker, then there are several complicating factors, in terms of masculinity and gender roles. Not only is the man less visible than other male and female workers who work outside the home, but historically and culturally domestic work is also often seen as ‘typically’ feminine work. There is little research on this topic, and little that takes male domestic workers seriously or makes their problems visible. Undocumented male migrants who are also domestic workers seem a doubly invisible category.

Most studies so far focus on female domestic workers and have tended to document only the chains of their migratory movements and their labor exploitation (Parreñas 2005; Anderson 2007; Marchetti 2010 etc). What matters in this study is how male undocumented workers engaged in domestic work feel about their position, their ideas about masculinity and how these relate to their struggles in their daily work experience as domestic workers, trying to seek rights despite being undocumented workers. Filipinos, as English speakers were selected as an example since the researcher had some prior contacts within this social group. Male domestic workers are not unique to Europe – it will be interesting to explore how this gender identity interacts with wider power relations such as class, race and citizenship status. For this purpose, an intersectional approach is adopted in the study and the background to male domestic migrant workers is explored in the literature (chapter 3).

Social scientists have devoted little attention to male domestic workers, and this paper contributes to the sparse academic literature on this topic (Sarti and Scrinzi 2010:3). In addition, in the literature about male migrant domestic workers, the focus has been either on documented migrant domestic workers or on male migrant domestic workers within developing countries, as for instance the interesting and useful study of Chopra that focused on rural to urban migration of male domestic workers in India (Chopra 2006, see also Ray 2000). This study adopted both an intersectional and gender-sensitive approach to understanding male migrant domestic workers, and would therefore be relevant to the present research. Very few studies could be found that focused on undocumented migrant (male) domestic workers who migrated internationally. What is important is that the research includes their migration status, class, race and religion as well as the difficulties they face as male migrant domestic workers.

This research is both significant and interesting because of its relevance to the current tendency towards criminalization of undocumented status in Europe, including in The Netherlands. A new law is being proposed that criminalizes undocumented migrants (as explained briefly earlier in chapter

one), and this paper can be seen as one small way of contesting this criminalisation by bringing forward the voices of irregular migrants themselves, and uncovering their hidden lives and struggles for identity and rights.

## **2.2 Discourses around Domestic Work, Gender and Citizenship**

Domestic work is one of the oldest and most important occupations for millions of workers around the world, and essential for the economy outside the household to function and, yet, it is undervalued poorly regulated and not regarded as real work (ILO 2010). Many people make their lives by doing domestic work and use it as an opportunity to make changes in life, such as to build a house, covering medical and school fees and even provision of basic necessities for migrants' families in home countries (ibid). And most societies traditionally see domestic work as feminine work as historically predominantly done by women; and perceived as a primary female domestic responsibilities in the home (King 2007:47). Moreover, "in the last three decades, paid domestic work has emerged as an often unique employment opportunity for transnational migrant women, in most industrialised countries" (Marchetti 2010:122). In most research domestic service is viewed as synonymous with women's work (Ray 2000:693). In the West, Latin America, and East Asia paid domestic workers are mostly women, in which among these are many Filipino women; thus the existence of men as paid domestic workers questions the "taken-for-grantedness of the gendered separation of spheres" (ibid).

Thus, domestic work appears to be one of the most important activities of our daily lives, and is about routines that need to be carried out so that people can eat, work, and live in a clean home environment. From the day we are born throughout life, we depend on someone doing domestic work – whether paid or unpaid, whether part-time or a family member.

In the contemporary capitalist world, however, domestic work remains one of the most essential activities, without which the main engine of the so-called economically productive sector cannot function. Within a commercialized economy like The Netherlands, many people who work in the productive sector, for example in offices, factories, schools, universities etc. employ – mostly part-time - domestic workers in their houses. This mainly applies to high-income households, who employ e.g. cleaners, cooks, nannies, gardeners etc. Businesses, schools, public institutions and churches also employ cleaners, but these are not considered 'domestic workers' for the purposes of this study.

Domestic work in the Netherlands is no more visible than elsewhere, despite the existence of NGOs, trade unions and researchers interested in domestic work (Migrante-NL, CARE-MDW, UMDW, IMWU-NL, FNV Bondgenoten etc). However, private domestic work in The Netherlands is regulated by the Regulation on Domestic Work (Regeling dienstverlening aan huis), which came into force on 1 January 2007; this Regulation implies that a private person can hire another private individual for domestic work for up to a maximum of three days a week at a minimum rate of around 10 Euros per

hour (Eurofound 2009). This regulation defines domestic work as typically including jobs in the household, such as cooking, cleaning dishes, house cleaning, doing the laundry, shopping, small repairs and maintenance jobs in and around the house, childcare, car driving and gardening (ibid). Most of these tasks, when performed in the household, are typically associated with the gender roles of women rather than men. It is therefore the location of their work in the private sphere that could be expected to raise issues of masculinity for undocumented migrant domestic workers. It might not be the tasks they undertake as such, but the fact that cooking in a restaurant is not viewed in the same way as cooking in a domestic setting. When it is in a restaurant, after all, cooking is viewed as typical of men.

Before explaining the focus of this study on Filipino male domestic workers in the Netherlands, another example, which motivated this study and its approach, is briefly outlined. That is the case of Eritrean male domestic workers in Italy. Whereas this study aimed to explore the situations of Filipino male domestic workers in The Netherlands, who do what can be seen as feminized work and yet seek to continue to play their role as men 'bread winners', it was through the Eritrean experience that I first became aware of the problems of self-identity that many male undocumented migrants were facing in Europe.

As explained earlier, in Italy as in other European societies, domestic service is typically perceived as 'women's work' (Sarti and Scrinzi 2010: 4). Italy remains the most popular destination for Eritrean migrants. For historical and political reasons, many men and women have migrated from Eritrea to Italy, seeking socio-economic and political security and income opportunities. And since "the 1960s/1970s, Italy became the first destination for Eritrean migrants to the Western world" (Marchetti 2010:63). One can note that many Eritrean men in Italy have worked as domestic workers. This is known in Eritrea and viewed as potentially humiliating by the male migrants and their families. Yet at the same time, these men continue to send money home, providing an important source of remittances. In this way, these men continue to play their role as typically male bread winners in spite of working in a 'feminine' activity. What they do in their work is not usually spoken during visits home to Eritrea, and this is because it is viewed as undermining their 'masculinity'. In Eritrean society there are no (or very few) male domestic workers – men who work in the household. In Eritrea, since domestic chores are almost entirely done by women and even by paid female or male domestic workers (cooks tend to be male, cleaners tend to be female). Eritrean migrant male domestic workers claim their superior male identity<sup>5</sup> at home, since they send money home to the family on a regular basis, whilst at the same time working in a way that continues to be culturally perceived as 'feminine' rather than work 'suited' for men.

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<sup>5</sup> Domestic work remains as their wife's work in the households back home in Eritrea. And they manifest this during their visits back home; they fit to the existing patriarchal notion of gendered division of labour.

While doing one of the MA courses (3207)<sup>6</sup> the researcher had chance to explore a little knowledge about Filipino migrant male domestic workers focusing on their irregular citizenship, which inspired and led the researcher to research in the area in addition to the earlier mentioned Eritrean experience.

However, what originally motivated this research interest in male migrants who do domestic work was the experiences of how Eritrean men negotiate their own sense of their masculine identity whilst working in what might be seen as typically 'feminine' forms of work. I wanted to know if this was also the case in The Netherlands, and whether this was also true of Filipino migrant men. From researching this question, it seems that in the Philippines, even though women participate in the labor market, their responsibility for domestic tasks such as taking care of children and cleaning and cooking have not diminished in spite of their growing economic role outside the household (Parreñas 2005:331). This research therefore aimed to explore the masculinities of Filipino men in The Netherlands who were engaged in domestic work. It was found that they managed to continue making a living, and even were regularly sending home remittances. Since they do domestic work, which in The Philippines (as in Eritrea and many other places) tended to be associated with feminine gender tasks, what were the implications? Once more, as it is shown in Marchetti (2010) domestic work could be seen as connected with colonial ties for instance Eritrean domestic work in Italy, Surinamese in The Netherlands. However, the migration line for Filipino domestic workers to The Netherlands in this research is not based on colonial purposes, as it is shown in chapter 4(see table 1), these Filipino migrants entered to The Netherlands as tourists and contract workers and became undocumented by different reasons.

Undocumented migrants are 'migrants' with similar reasons for migrating as everyone else, but due to their irregular citizenship status they come to be gradually more and more excluded from the basic rights taken for granted by those with legal status, including health insurance and health care, education and other public services. Undocumented migrants could not be seen as homogenous group; however, their differences of nationality, ethnicity, gender, race and religion can play a role in exclusion from basic rights. Indeed, being an 'irregular migrant' can be expected to influence domestic workers' identity and rights quite negatively, whatever their individual background or level of education and skill.

In The Netherlands, undocumented migrants cannot contribute to the social security system, due to the absence of what is called a 'burger service number' (formerly SOFI number) and the resulting lack of a work permit (Abvakabo FNV 2008). As a result, undocumented migrants are not able to

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<sup>6</sup> In my ISS MA course qualitative interviewing a group of six students including myself were assigned to interview migrant domestic workers (undocumented) as part of course work requirement. So, it is this time that I had a chance to interview two Filipino male domestic workers (Undocumented).



legally access rights to social security, such as unemployment benefits, pensions, or normal health insurance (ibid). As one trade union noted in a newsletter:

Currently Netherlands has a strict immigration policy, and there are very few options to get a permit for undocumented non-European migrants. This situation can only change if and when the Dutch government decides to change its policy. However, the labor union is an organization of workers and its goal is to stand up for the rights of the workers. Every worker has the right to become a member of the union, even if undocumented worker (Abvakabo FNV 2008).

For migrants, the absence of residence papers is a unique situation that denies them the right to be in the territory where they reside and places them in a highly insecure situation of legal, social, and economic exclusion (Monforte and Dufour 2011:204). In The Netherlands like many other European countries, it is evident that being undocumented means being invisible in the lives of normalized legal systems of the public sector, where every movement and every step requires a legal identification papers including the most trivial action like boarding a tram or sending money home. Important and rather basic needs such as accessing the labor market, health care, education, or the police and other security services – lack of access to these means no basic right to protection, whether from violence or sickness. Other humanly basic necessities such as decent housing and fair pay will also be affected.

In 2009, a Kenyan MA ISS student, Gladys Ngare, wrote an interesting paper on *Masculinity of Young African Asylum seekers in The Netherlands*, in which the author found evidence of: “multiple practices of exclusion, insecurity and dependency through asylum procedures, racism and gendered expectations” (Ngare 2009:52). The present research is intended to give a voice to the existence of the Filipino undocumented community, and to explore their partially hidden lives as undocumented workers, engaged in domestic work. And it particularly seeks to explore how male Filipino migrants define their own masculine identity when it intersects with wider power relations centered on race, class, status and nationality, as well as citizenship rights. The following chapter deals with the presentations of theoretical review, concepts and methodology.

# Chapter 3 Literature and Concepts, and Methodology

## 3.1 Gender Identity through the lens of Migration and Work

This chapter discusses some current academic research of relevant studies, and tries to clarify the concepts used and the methodology applied to the research problem.

One way of thinking about gender role is to see it as a role in a play which is used particularly to represent the “pre-written” part of a gendered individual in any specific social situation (Kahn 2009:54). Theorists interested in gender explained that in most cultures gender is related to everything that people do (*ibid*). Moreover, gender is about general social and cultural beliefs on how individuals and societies think about males and females and their differences (Franklin 1988; O’Neil 1981)<sup>7</sup>.

When we come to history, in the 1950s in The Netherlands like other European countries such as Britain, Germany and Sweden, mothers in all four countries were primarily housewives and fathers primarily breadwinners, and public policies were organized around the ‘single male breadwinner’ principle (Sainsbury 1994,1996; Goldin 1990)<sup>8</sup>. According to Martens (1997:30-31) Western Europe is seen as having a ‘mixed state/market’ form of public patriarchy; however, it is hard to describe The Netherlands with a stronger ‘male breadwinner and female dependent’ ideology than the surrounding societies (Martens 1997:29).

Dutch consensus politics has been relatively open to the influence of feminism, and Dutch feminists have targeted national politics. This meant that in 1982, parliament passed an act calling upon the government to make resources available for the provision of publicly funded childcare. This was the curious mixing of the image of Dutch ‘progressiveness’ with women’s emancipation (Martens 1997:213).

In the Netherlands, since the early 1970s, there have been significant numbers of Dutch women who have started to participate in paid work, even if this has been accompanied by a high ratio of part-time working (Martens 1997:214). The employers of Filipino domestic workers (male and female) that formed the basis for this study included people of various nationalities who worked in different sectors of the Dutch economy, mainly in the government or diplomatic services. In the contemporary Philippines, the idea of the conventional family could be seen as similar with most other ‘modern’ societies (Parreñas 2005:331); it includes notions of a nuclear family, a breadwinner or

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<sup>7</sup> In Kahn (2009:53)

<sup>8</sup> Mosley et al. (2002:187).

provider who is usually a father and a caring, nurturing mother (Medina as cited in Parreñas 2005: 331).

However, migration results in a shift of one's social position (for example job opportunity), in the country to which one emigrates when compared with that in the home country (Sarti and Scrinzi 2010:5). The restricted opportunities of migrants to legally enter and work in a foreign country could push male migrants toward typically female jobs in the informal economy such as domestic service (ibid). And such migrant division of labour seem to lead to the production of new gendered identities as men, and specially finding their own selves involved in feminized sectors (McIlwaine et al. 2006:21). Gender also could be seen as primary focus in reflecting the complexity of migrant identities in low –paid such as domestic work, which are not only gendered but also ethnicity and national differences based (ibid).

... Notions of work and occupations are critically important in the construction of masculine identities and especially hegemonic masculinities, often much more so than the construction of feminine identities for women (Lupton 2000)<sup>9</sup>.

Domestic workers differ in negotiating their gender identities as men and women and also on the ways they evaluate their identities (Ray 2000:692). The male domestic workers measure them-selves by their achievements or failures to gain hegemonic gender norms (Ray 2000:714). However, it is stressed that,

Hegemonic masculinity could be seen as ‘currently accepted’ strategy, and in a situation when the defence of patriarchy shift; the bases for the dominance of particular masculinity are eroded (Connell 1999:77).

Moreover, “the admirable man sacrifices his masculinity in order to ensure the survival of his charges” (Ray 2000:713). For instance, for several male domestic workers in Calcutta the feeling of pride comes from fulfilling their duties, by doing domestic work they have insured future of their family secured (Ray 2000:712). However, the idealized femininity on the other hand involves being “protected and staying at home” ; impossible for those who do paid domestic work to achieve respected masculinity or femininity as the definition seem to exclude them (Ray 2000:693). Interestingly, the presence of veiled male domestic worker in India (Calcutta), aside from the feminine discourse of veiling and its gendered implications, it appeared to present identities produced from being veiled male domestic worker in the households of India (Chopra 2006).

The intersections of class, sexuality, gender with inside “spaces of domesticity”, play a significant role in influencing relations of gender (Chopra 2006:152). And the trend towards smaller apartments and families (nuclear

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<sup>9</sup> In McIlwaine et al. (2006:14)

family) caused employers to think women as safer servants around their daughters than men (Ray 2000:694). Therefore, migrant male domestic workers are prone to multiplied identities of maleness; as migrants, men, and domestic workers which resulted in the production of “muted and surplus masculinities” formed in the households that is where they work (Chopra 2006:155-166).

Moreover, gender practices are also intersected with class, national identity and illegality in a transmigrate community; used as an internal mechanisms of regulatory and controlling notions within and beyond the community based on norms of their community of origin (Yen et al. 2008:366). Migrants might be regarded as desirable household workers particularly due to their status as migrants, rather than simply because they are the only people available to do domestic work (Anderson 2007:261). And the particular nature of their different immigration statuses might have a role in determining the mechanisms of control, but immigration status in its many variations does seem to afford employers some benefits (ibid).

Social stratification and its intersection between different identities (class, gender and ethnicity), in mixture of illegal status, might result in shaping experiences of “assimilation” and the “transformatory” potentials of migrants’ agency (Yen et al. 2008:370). “Such moves impact on the identities of male migrants as they attempt to make sense of and cope with low status jobs” (McIlwaine et al. 2006:3).

Undocumented migrants are not considered as legal subjects of a state and experience radical exclusion from citizenship rights (Monforte and Dufour 2011:224). In The Netherlands as in many European countries, for instance Germany;

Undocumented migrants are excluded from most of the rights connected to the citizenship status: no access to the labour market, to health services (except in case of emergency), housing or education. In Berlin, formal exclusion from the citizenship regime is associated with a powerful system of control, which extends to most sectors of social life. In this context, the mobility of undocumented migrants at the local level is very limited: the fear of police is permanent, and the interactions of undocumented migrants with social groups outside the immigrant community are difficult’ (Monforte and Dufour 2011:211-112)

There is an important relationship among gender, social networks, and socioeconomic adaptation and mobility of undocumented migrant community (Hogan 1998:56). And the significance of social networks structure has a great role in influencing how men and women differentiate in their adaptation experiences (ibid). Moreover, due to the informal nature of recruitment in the sector, migrant men often find a job as domestic workers through women; wives or female relatives who already work in the sector (Gallo as cited in, Sarti and Scrinzi 2010:6). The workers’ friends, villagers or relatives are also important sources of information about job opportunities or accessing work (Yen et al. 2008:374).

The above reviewed literature aided the study in rendering compulsory insight in understanding empirical findings of the research and ground and analyse in to conceptualized frame work. And in this research, in the production of gender identity (masculine identity) of Filipino migrants, intersectionality was a vital tool and the following section discusses more on clarification of the concepts used in the study.

### **3.2 Clarification of Concepts: Masculinity and Intersectionality.**

Masculinity could be seen as a contested concept, as it might differently defined in different cultures (Kahn 2009:3-4).

Different cultures have varied expectations and beliefs about masculinity. Clearly cultures view gender differently and have varying ideas about the way gender works and what kinds of behaviour and items are appropriate and for whom. Furthermore, those views vary between people in the same culture and across different situations (ibid).

Moreover, categorizing on what men and women 'do' requires 'men' and 'women', but the "terms masculinities and femininities point beyond a clear-cut sex difference to the ways men as well as women differ among themselves, and masculinity is what men ought to be" (Connell 1999:69-70). However, masculinity is a relational concept that could not exist with out femininity (Connell 1999:68). Moreover, femininity and masculinity are not simply cultural ideal-types, but they are also created through practice; and it is through practice that they are "weighed, judged, and transformed" (Ray 2000:695). The concept of hegemony derived by Antonio Gramsci, refers to the cultural dynamic by which a group claiming to sustain a dominant position in social life (Connell 1999:77).

Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy (ibid).

In this research masculinity could be understood not as a static character types but a process of practice generated in particular situations in a changing structure of relationships (Connell 1999:81).The intersected relationship between gender, race, and class, could help us to recognize "multiple masculinities" (Connell 1999:76). This research adopted an intersectional perspective: gender, class, race, and citizenship status that Filipino male domestic workers explain themselves as men with in these intersections.

Intesectionlity is "a product of seeking to have voices heard and lives acknowledged" (Dill and Zambrana 2009:3). And as it is explained earlier this research dealt to voice out on Filipino migrant male domestic workers identities (masculine identity) in the intersections of gender, class, and race and citizenship status.

A crucial assumption in intersectional thinking is that categories such as gender, class, 'race'/ethnicity and age are important social divisions which affect axes of power not only at the macro level, but also in people's actual lives (Marchetti 2010:21).

As it is reflected in this study men struggle with their gender role expectations, however, it is also revealed that any presentation of roles limits our ability to view masculinities as different men have diverse ways and experiences of playing their roles(Kahn 2009:63).

### **3.3 Methodology**

In this research paper both primary and secondary data are used. Concerning primary data, the researcher focused on interviews and participant observation. The secondary data include mainly relevant recent literature (journals, books, published and unpublished written documents, and NGO reports). The type of interview adopted in this study was mainly semi-structured and included life histories through in-depth interviews. The main interviewees were men - undocumented Filipino male undocumented domestic workers themselves. Some women Filipino workers in domestic work were also interviewed to assess how they might differ in terms of how they felt about their work.

In the semi-structured in-depth, interviews the focus was on issues of work experience, gender roles and experiences as irregular Filipino migrants. This helped the study understand interviewees' life histories by letting them discuss their past and present work experiences; reflect on gender roles and how their activities defined their sense of masculinity in The Netherlands. Their past was very important, in these reflections on their own sense of identity as male domestic workers.

So, the type of interview the research adopted assisted to explore their marginalized lives or invisible lives as undocumented migrants, rights of security in cases of abuse not only as undocumented but also documented workers. Social networks play a critical role in the transnational family, and also for the Filipino community in The Netherlands in accessing work and other services or forms of protection. So, the interviews helped reveal information that served to answer the research questions.

The researcher applied snowball sampling which is not systematic, due to the issue of the migrant's irregular citizenship status that they are not at ease to disclose themselves, and to confidently trust an outsider (researcher). So, the interviewee is approached through the gate keeper. The other main logic in using snowballing sampling is as there is no legal documentation which could assist to draw on sampling.

In order to explore the research questions the research depended in interviewing both female and male domestic workers, depending on the concepts of 'femininity' and 'masculinity', in order to understand about the masculine identity, here exists femininity as well – drawing in the theory of masculinity by Connell (1999).The sample units are 7 men and 5 women, aged

between 38 to 58 years undocumented Filipino Domestic workers. In addition to the reasons explained earlier in (chapter 2) the researcher chose Filipino domestic workers believing that most Filipino speak English so that easily communicable and good atmosphere in building interviewee /interviewer relationship.

Most of interviews took place in the residents of interviewee which gave the researcher a chance to engage in participant observation on how the male migrants live. This happened in restaurants, coffee shops (usually in train station areas after the men or women finished work). Moreover, attending Filipino social gatherings (e.g. birthday parties) was very useful in reflecting on the central research questions. For exploiting the social networks that the domestic workers use in accessing work, in addition to the interview the researcher depended in participant observation in social gatherings of Filipino migrants, for undocumented migrants. And participant observation also helped the researcher to understand the lives of documented Filipino men whether domestic workers or not through informal chats during home visits etc. And the researcher proposed to held participant observation to the work places of undocumented migrants, however the gate keeper was not able to assist the researcher in this case; as fear of employers knowledge about the researcher might result in firing the undocumented domestic workers from work.

Data was recorded (audio recorder) and sometimes note taking- as two of my interviews with men were informal interviews. But the other 10 interviews are recorded in order to win face-to-face interaction, and note taking was also applied for important interaction such as silence, facial expression, gestures, that could not be recorded in an audio. The primary data (interviews) was gathered beginning from late July up to early September.

Data was analysed by transcribing the recorded information (between mid- September until early November), and later categorized it into sections according its relevance to the research questions. The concepts are used as useful tool to analyse the characters obtained from data collection process and based on the literature (researcher's theoretical perspective), qualitative discourse analysis, that is narrative and conversational discourse analysis is applied to the study.

### **3.4 Ethical and Practical Considerations, Reflections**

The role of the gate keepers usually influences the type of the interviewees selected, however addressing undocumented Filipino domestic workers without the gate keeper was impossible. As explained earlier this research is dealing with a very sensitive issue of irregular citizenship and about the lives of individuals who feel quite insecure, so the researcher worked at a high level of confidentiality and need to ensure that information remains anonymous that interviewees cannot be identified. For this reason the names used in the analysis are pseudo names. Besides, the names of the embassies in which Filipino migrants have worked before they became undocumented is withheld to protect identifying of interviewees.

In this research, an undocumented domestic worker includes Filipino men who work only in the households (except some rarely work other type of job- such as construction, waiter etc...) and without regular citizenship status. As the researcher is aware that the interviewee are not always able to move freely and come to interview appointments, or fixed meeting places, a time and place to talk that is convenient for them was prioritized. However, given their restricted movements as undocumented people, by the help of the gate keeper I managed to meet the interviewee without problem. Recruiting people who are not allowed to work involves tax avoidance, and this means that interviewing employers was also quite difficult, and unfortunately the researcher failed to interview employers, as they were not at ease to do the interview due to fear of the law. However, as designed, interviewing employers of the undocumented Filipino male domestic workers could have been helpful to the research to enrich and understand the data from different angles.

It is not only the undocumented who experience fear, but also their documented employers. However it would have been useful to speak to some employers, and could have been helpful to enrich and understand the data from different angles and put the research in its wider perspective. However, I managed to collect the notes left to the domestic workers, SMS messages that could at least help the researcher to understand the employer/employee relationship, but still I cannot use that data for analysis since it is gathered without their (employer's) consent. Due to these sensitivities I used snow ball sampling and this means that interviewees are likely to come from similar background and angles, or perspectives (e.g. catholic, married, recent migrants, from Manila, and relatively at the same age). Field work took the researcher more than designed, as most of the domestic worker does not have work during summer as the employers went out of Netherlands for holiday, my gate keeper faced problems in contacting the domestic workers.

In addition, it was challenging as being a woman and interviewing men on the issue of masculinity, as interviewees might not always find it easy to disclose their personal feelings about being a man to a woman interviewer, and also as the researcher has different race from them.

Even though I was telling my interviewee about the aim of the interview, some of my interviewees were hesitant in my identity. My race was a topic especially during social gatherings for my participant observation (birth day party), everyone was curious about me; and some of them asked me why I became interested in undocumented Filipino, and whether I speak Dutch or not. Another interesting issue was that, as some of my interviews were conducted in burger houses, when it came to paying the bill there was no room for negotiation that allowed me to pay. The male domestic workers explained to me that, 'you are a lady'. Being a woman seemed to be an important reason for not paying, rather than my being a student. This input was very important in its implication for my reflections on how these men experienced their masculine identity. Some interviews were done late in the evenings, after the Filipino domestic workers finished working. The men would offer to accompany me, and when I explained that I could take care of myself, both men and women (undocumented) warned me it was not safe for a woman to



stand in a tram stop late in the evenings. I was thankful to my interviewees for their respect and care, and observed that in their view, as a woman I was perhaps even less safe than an undocumented man, at least at certain times of day.

Another challenging issue was that most interviewees were married and Catholic, and so it was problematic to discuss their sexual life, which might have helped to better understand their perceptions towards their own masculine identities. During interviews, they talked about their marital life and the emphasis was on keeping their marriage safe, which was stressed as being part of their devotion to their Catholic religious beliefs.

This chapter viewed some useful literature of the research relevance and framed conceptualization of the study, the methodology used and discussions of field work reflections of the researcher. The following chapter (chapter 4) discusses the empirical findings of the research by focusing on gender identity of Filipino male domestic and its relationship with their work.

## Chapter 4 Men, Identity and Work through the Lens of Masculinity.

### 4.1 Introduction:

This chapter deals with the finding on how Filipino undocumented male domestic workers play their gender roles in supporting their transnational families and themselves. It discusses their experiences of doing a type of work which has implication for their own sense of themselves as men, and for how their gender identity intersects with power relations of class, race and citizenship status.

The sections in this chapter (in Chapter five as well) are organised around the individual stories of seven of the twelve informants which is illustrated in the table below – including five men (Silvianos, Rido, Micki, Angelo and Marco) and two women (Sifora and Marie). The way they discuss their situation is presented through quite extensive quotations, which are then discussed with reference to relevant literature.

**Table 1 Profile of the respondents.**

Name	Age	Gender	Marital Status	Date of entry to The NL	Reason	Previous work
Silvianos	46	male	married	2009	tourist	college Instructor
Rido	46	male	separated	2008	contract	cook
Micki	38	male	married	2004	contract	electrician
Marco	43	male	married	2008	tourist	security guard
Sifora	46	female	married	2008	tourist	business
Marie	39	female	single	2004	tourist	unemployed
Angelo	54	male	married	2006	contract	business

The above table illustrates a brief profile of the Filipino undocumented domestic workers. It views a brief back ground of the respondents which their stories is explained below.

### 4.2 Filipino Male Domestic Workers explain themselves as Men

‘I am a domestic worker, but still the head of the family, decision maker and fulfilling my roles as a man’ (Silvianos 46 years old married, undocumented domestic worker, father of two children).

One of the respondents, **Silvianos (46 years old male)** works six to twelve hours a day as part time domestic worker by moving in to different households of The Hague, earning 10 Euro per hour and including 5 Euro transportation costs. He came to The Netherlands in November, 2009 as a tourist. And after a month his visa expired and he became undocumented. He was motivated by his brother (also a domestic worker) to come to The Netherlands. Silvianos explained that his brother's income in The Netherlands as domestic worker was three times more than what he receives as a college instructor in the Philippines. So, there was a convincing reason to decide overstay his visa duration and become undocumented. He thought that it was a good opportunity to stay in The Netherlands and earn more money so that he could invest for his family's future. *'I could not save money with what I have been receiving in The Philippines, my brother bought a house [in the Philippines] in five years' time by doing domestic work here in The Netherlands'* (Silvianos). According to him in the community he lives and The Philippines society in general the man is responsible for making money and covering the expenses of the family, and the wife is responsible for the domestic chores.

The man is the provider for his family and works outside, and the wife works in the household sphere and keeps the children. The man is the one who stirs the boat and makes the final decision of the family (Silvianos).

In this case gender seems important in dividing roles and reflecting a segmented gender division of labor. As Silvianos noted, some unemployed men left in The Philippines remain in the households and do domestic work and people perceive them, *'as isolated pieces and it is something not good to people's opinion to a husband stays at house and do domestic work especially when the wife works outside'* (Silvianos). Depending on his argument, it implies that financial incapability and unemployment could be viewed as 'unmanly' in addition to staying at home and doing domestic work. They both point to a failure to fulfill the 'provider role' and to be appeared to do the work of the woman inside the house: two potential failures.

Silvianos explained that he sends money to Philippines in order to assist his family's expectation from him as a man (husband and father). However he works in households, which he explained earlier as women's work and might diminish a man's identity as a man. Indeed, this research revealed that migrant men fulfil their traditional roles of breadwinners; by accepting jobs below they used to do and associated with women as they could survive and help their families (McIlwaine et al. 2006:17).

He sends money to the Philippines every weekend usually Saturdays in order to manage the budget, as his wife could hardly manage the family budget properly. Then importance of fulfilling the role of provider, which also enforces to be potential decision maker as a man seem significant in playing the expected gender role identity which could be explained as masculine identity, though by doing domestic work. And the role of transnational telephone services accessibility aids migrants to be involved in day-to-day family decisions (Parreñas 2005:318).

In the context of this research being undocumented produced limited choice, which makes the opportunity for accessing the legal labour market narrower. **Angelo, 54 years** old father of four children undocumented male domestic worker, he came to The Netherlands to work as a Butler, he was recommended by his sister-in-law who works in diplomat residence. And in the residence of a diplomat he found life very difficult, as what was signed in the contract was very different practically. After that he escaped from the diplomat residence and became undocumented. According to Angelo's explanation he has no choice rather than domestic work as being undocumented and he said, '*domestic work is the only way I could make money and send to my children as a father*'. Depending on his view there is a very strict or no opportunity of getting another job for undocumented migrant aside from domestic work due to citizenship status, however, this job enabled Angelo to send money and play his manly role as a father.

Angelo lives with his wife who became undocumented with him (the work contract allowed him to bring his wife) and they both work 12 hours a day in households of The Hague now. While explaining about his life in The Philippines, even though he had business (restaurant), he was not making much out of it. He noted that he:

I can only buy food, and nothing beyond this. Now two of my children are going to college, I would not be able to afford if I were in my country, and doing the same job (Angelo).

Depending on Angelo's view, Filipino domestic workers migrated to gain a living, and for economic reasons, just like many people who migrate to rich countries. So, it is their problems that forced them to migrate to The Netherlands; and again their migration status could also push them to work in domestic work that they never used to do. However, here the main triggering point seem to fulfil what is expected from them, in other words fitting to their expected gender roles as Filipino men: provider, bread winner. Therefore, even though domestic work is not the type of work of their choice, and the work they never used to do, yet it is a work that they practice to what is expected from them as men.

Female domestic workers interviewed in this mostly expresses their roles as mothers who were supposed to be care takers, and some of them explained that they are not happy that they left their husbands home who are now responsible for taking care of their children back home. One of the women is **Sifora (46 years)** who came to the Netherlands in 2008 (for the second time) as a tourist; she works eight to ten hours a day with different employers. She first came to The Netherlands (2005) through a contract on the recommendation of her sister in law who have worked in the Diplomat residence. And due to her (Sifora's sister-in-law) pregnancy they need someone as a replacement until she adjusts with her situation. So, after completing the contract she went back to The Philippines in 2006. Then she was invited by a friend and came again as tourist to The Netherlands in 2008, and after a month her visa expired, and this was how she became undocumented and started to work as domestic worker. She explained that,

I came here for work and this does not mean I want to leave my family. It is because I need to help my unemployed husband. And at this time in the Philippines we cannot handle life, everything is becoming expensive. So, I work here (Netherlands) all days of the week except Sunday and I send my family money every month. Sunday is my day off and I spent the whole day talking with my children and the husband through the internet (Skype). My husband is a good person he takes care of my children very well (Sifora).

As it is explained earlier by Angelo and Silvianos as well; Sifora also migrated for financial purpose, depending on her narration her husband did not work (paid work), or in other words he is unemployed. As she narrated above her husband is responsible for the house hold chores, in The Philippines, she also explained that they do not have live-in domestic worker except for washing and ironing. Sifora is responsible for the bills, school fee, and every expenses in other words she is the 'provider'. Indeed, she did not seem to define herself as bread winner even she is the provider as she is sending money to the family. She perceives herself as playing supportive role, even though she is providing financially for the whole family. And on the other side, she viewed her husband as a 'good person' or helpful because he is doing the domestic chores, and taking care of her children, indeed, he is explained as unemployed (no value is given to domestic work). This might lead us to understand that gender roles of Filipino migrants are something constructed with in one's identity (gender identity). And when even the 'roles' shifted or interchanged they still seem uneasy to be accepted, or to be used as tools to define themselves out of the already constructed circle rather continue to compromise (for example: 'good person', 'supporter'). And depending on the views in the above by Silvianos being unemployed man (staying at house without paid work outside) and taking care of chores is seen by The Filipino community as unmanly or not masculine, and especially when the woman is employed. So, how would be Sifora's husband perceived by the community around him?

And the empirical finding of the research revealed that women never complained about being domestic worker even they have not worked as domestic workers before (for instance Sifora was a business woman), nor relate it with their citizenship status. This might show us that the discourse in domestic work and how men and women differ in accepting it.

Another male respondent, **Micki 38 year old** domestic worker and a father of four children, who used to work as a contract worker for diplomat residence in The Netherlands and became undocumented when he left the residence. He works nine to ten hours a day. He narrated that he first started working as domestic worker with woman employer and found it very difficult situation for him. He explained that he felt shy to clean the house when his boss was around. In his words, *'you see a woman is sitting there reading a magazine and I clean the house! [Laughter...and silence], I was shy! How can a man clean, and imagine for a woman'* (Micki). For him doing domestic work is perceived doing woman's work, in other words he felt about himself as crossing his gender line and his shyness might be seen as a threat to his masculinity. And particularly doing woman's work for a woman seems much more influencing for his

perceptions to his masculine identity. He added about his experience in domestic work that he could hardly move, and unable to clean on the limited given time (as the payment is per hour) because of his situation explained earlier. Micki explained that he rarely works as electrician in the households where he works as domestic worker. For Micki working as an electrician is the job that he likes to do, but due to his status (undocumented) he could not find work as electrician. He also explained that in spite of all the difficulty he faced as a domestic worker- he has a reason to do domestic work and he noted;

I know I am working in another country for the sake of my family, so that they could live in their country. I do not want them to leave their country for work; this is a sacrifice for them. And I do not want my son or daughter to do domestic work in another family; I am doing this work for their better future (Micki 38 years old, the youngest interviewee).

His (Micki) reasons for migration is for the sake of the family, and paying sacrifice, like shift in labour status which has influence in gender identity, yet he has to swallow the difficulty of situation for the betterment of his children.

While **Rido (46 years old)** is a male domestic worker, however he used to work as a professional cook in hotels and restaurants of his country for 25 years. Even he does not like his job as domestic worker but he explained that,

I still can earn money and feed the family back home, what if my family call me and tell me on the phone that they do not have money, and my children could not go to school because of money. So, that is why I do domestic work, even though I was a cook in the restaurants, I can clean a house for this reason (Rido).

Here, he is focusing more to the security of his family, even though he is viewing domestic work as less status work compared to his previous work experience. Indeed, sending money seems important to him.

Depending on the explanations we could understand that the undocumented domestic workers seem balancing their roles of being a man (as a father , bread winner , husband) and even though it appears at the expense of doing what they never used to do before which they perceive as 'feminine'. Most of the men I interviewed perceive domestic work as a bridge for fulfilment, in other words as part of sacrifice for supporting and better future of their families back home and acceptable as they can earn more than in their countries of origin (McIlwaine et al. 2006:12), and the support they give to their families back home is the most essential to their sense of self (Ray 2000:712).

The following section explains the experiences of the male domestic workers in the intersection of gender, class, race and irregular citizenship status and its implication in defining their own senses of masculine identities.

### 4.3 In Filipino Migrants' Own Words: Domestic Work, Class, Race and Gender

This section explored Filipino domestic workers' stories and views based on their past and current work experiences. It explained the expressions they use when talking about domestic work and its intersections with other aspects of their lives that involve power relations: class, gender, race and their status as migrants.

Different domestic workers viewed their identity in relation to their work variously. However, all male domestic workers viewed their work as a job done mostly by women, and especially by people with low status (low educational background, poor, usually people from rural) and in The Philippines. *'Most people especially women who come from the rural area work domestic work in the cities of The Philippines for better life'* (Angelo).

According to Silvianos usually people who failed to get educational opportunity, or those who went only to elementary school and even some times high school are those who get low-status jobs.

Here I am working domestic work around people whom they do not know my background, and this makes it little easier. But of course in the Philippines people know you well, you live and work around relatives, and friends. And at this time I avoid telling my family, relatives and friends about my current work, as they could say something nasty comparing to my level of education, and my previous work as college instructor (Silvianos).

Here, we can understand that society's expectations could be seen as point of reference to define one's self; and this goes beyond gender as it involves class which leads individuals to define themselves with in these intersections. And Silvianos chose not to reveal about his work as it might influence negatively to his sense of self. *'So it is not about money but also you take into consideration self-esteem, and the dignity you share'* (Silvianos). However, he viewed that even domestic work is only female job, but he sometimes questions his perceptions that women are human beings like him. Only Silvianos showed little interest on the possibility of doing domestic work by humans (male and female), even it is sometimes. Indeed, all the male domestic workers I have interviewed viewed domestic work as women's work, none of them viewed domestic work as work that could be done by men and this might be seen as a reflection to the feminine discourse on domestic work.

And depending on Rido's view he explained that he told his family and friends that he is not a cook any more at this time and things are not the same as at home that he could not find any other job apart from domestic work.

And they said as long as you earn money....., but I always anger at myself that I am a domestic worker who cleans some one's house. Before for twenty-five years I have been a respected cook, working in big hotels and restaurants, not only because I am a man and doing domestic work but also because this is not my dream. It is difficult to accept to be a domestic helper comparing with my past work experience (Rido).

The only thing that motivates him to do domestic work is just because he does not have a choice. He said that *'if I could be able to survive I better choose to be unemployed than shifting from a cook to a domestic helper'* (Rido). He added that as being undocumented he has no choice rather than domestic work. In this respect class seems to have an important role in influencing one's identity. It is also discussed by the male domestic worker, Rido, that in The Philippines domestic work is seem to be perceived low paid work traditionally done by women, and no man is dare enough to work in paid domestic work. He also added that in The Philippines the only way a man could do domestic work is, in case he wants to help his wife at home but not in other people's house as work.

In Rido's view, the limited choices of accessing labour market was the reason that forced him to work as a domestic worker, though he seem perceive the work as woman's work and at the same time as a lower-class job compared to previous job. Moreover, gender intersects with migrant status, with ethnicity and class and leads to the production of different constructed migrant identities in the workplace which at one point strengthen (for example bread winning) and undermine (the type of practice) traditional gender and occupational identities (McIlwaine et al. 2006:13).

This research also revealed the challenges that Filipino men faced as being male domestic workers due to their gender and its relations to migration status. For instance **Marco 43 years old** married and father of three children narrated his experiences in such context. He stayed in The Netherlands for almost four years as undocumented domestic worker, and he came as a tourist invited by his sister. Marco works a minimum of 6 hours a day earning around 70 Euro a day, and he works the whole week days and Saturday until mid-day. He sends money to Philippines 400-500 Euros per month to his family. Marco lives alone in a single room paying 300 Euro per month in private individual apartments. As all men explained in this study, Marco also explained that domestic work is something that he learned here in The Netherlands. He viewed that he was obliged to learn any kind of job in order to earn money, *'I was working in an airport but, here I am cleaning houses, and very rarely painting and gardening'* (Marco).

Depending on Marco's view attitude of some employers towards male domestic workers is a little problematic that involved gender biased perceptions. In his explanation about his experience on getting a job through recommendation he viewed that it is easier to get a job recommended by employer to another employer than through domestic worker or friends. While sharing his experience once he was recommended by Filipino friend (female domestic worker) he explained that he faced discrimination because of his gender as a man. He explained that while reaching the new employer through the phone, *'the employer was a bit surprised and asked me weather I am documented or not and I lied that I am documented'* (Marco). The employer told him that he had to discuss about the issue with his wife and respond to Marco later. In couple of days, the employer told him that his wife was looking for a girl. Marco expressed that he was disappointed by the situation and he noted that,



Some employers like to hire female domestic workers. Because, they take domestic work is a kind of work that belongs to female only. And they think women only can do much better than men (Marco).

In this sense, being male domestic worker seem to be associated with citizenship status, as the employers jumped to ask on whether Marco is documented or not. And this could show us that the employers expectations on being male domestic worker and its relations with identity. In this case, employers could play their part in producing femininity and masculinity of domestic workers based on power relations and on the basis of normatively accepted ideas of being a female or a male and practice of doing domestic work (Ray 2000:695).

Moreover, Filipino female interviewee **Marie 39 year old** domestic worker who works for 10 families in The Hague, viewed employer's attitude to male domestic workers depending on her experience;

I have heard from one of my employers that her friends recommended her a male domestic worker and she refused to hire. She [employer] said that she wants her daughter to wear freely at home and she does not want her daughter feel an outsider's man attention in her own house (Marie).

Depending on Marie's narration, it seems that hiring male domestic worker at home might be seen as a potential sexual threat to women in a family. She also explained that she has heard such intentions from other employers as well, especially in families with teenage daughters. And she added that she knows many male domestic workers who works with female domestic workers as assistants and split the money among themselves. Moreover, as part of my observation study, I came to understand that Filipino men work with women especially when the women have long hours of work, they share it with the male domestic workers. I have observed men making appointments with women and bargaining on number of hours. I asked some women about this issue and they explained to me that they ask men to work with them usually when it is cleaning big apartments and windows. Depending on their explanation as it takes more hours and energy they share it with their male friends. And it was also explained by the women that they see it as giving assistance to their Filipino men fellow in accessing more work opportunity.

Moreover, this study also revealed some of the challenges that male domestic workers faced in commanding domestic work. According to Silvianos male domestic worker who used to work as instructor in a college as a political science instructor, he narrated that he found it difficult to be a domestic worker as he never used to that kind of work before. Being a domestic worker affected Silvianos in many ways, *'emotionally the feelings of a sort of low self-esteem, I ask myself: Do I deserve this?'* (Silvianos). Depending on his explanation, he thought domestic work was easy work, but he realized its difficulty practically later, and he added *'besides you need to know the techniques and master which place to start first in the house hold'*. So, this helped him to realize that domestic work needs a skill and is not an easy job. Adjustment to the new type of work was also another challenge for him, and Silvianos added that *'if there is a domestic work I used to do, it is just rarely ironing my clothes when I go to office or in case my wife got sick'*

*but this is an isolated cases.* The other challenge that he faced was the problem in familiarizing himself with the cleaning tools that he used for cleaning.

In the beginning I was not aware about the about the uses liquids for cleaning, I did not know what is used for what, and I could not read anything as it is written in Dutch. So, I was asking my brother [domestic worker] for information through the phone. Because I was mixing what is used for the toilet and the kitchen (Silvianos).

However, Silvianos's experiences as domestic worker helped him to realize the difficulty of domestic work and that it requires skills as any other work. He also believes that through this experience he came to understand the situation of domestic workers in The Philippines.

Domestic workers in The Philippines receive a small amount of money, but they deserve more. I am lucky than them that I am receiving 10 euro per hour. But in The Philippines imagine 2000-2500or 3000 Pesos per month nearly 50 euro a month which is equivalent five hours work of a day (Silvianos).

Form this statement we could understand that working as domestic workers here in The Netherlands might help domestic workers like Silvianos to understand the situation of domestic workers in The Philippines as they are involved themselves in the situation, as Silvianos experienced.

When we come to Rido who used to work as a cook back home (in The Philippines), he explained that he did not like to work as domestic worker. And he also explained that he rarely works in the construction that he feels easy doing painting.

I do domestic work for the money even though it is not the work I like to do, but for painting I like it as it is a man's work, and easier for me to do it. But it is available very rarely, as it is difficult for undocumented to work in such kind of work. It is only when you know a friend who works in the construction and will call to work for him when he is not available. Generally, life is different here, in The Philippines my wife used to clean, to cook and everything that belongs to the household (Rido).

Here, it seems that Rido finds it easy to do construction works as compared to domestic work even though he was not a construction worker back home. While explaining about his employers, Rido prefers to work with English speakers mostly with Americans than Dutch as it is very hard for him to communicate. But he also narrated that he does not want to work with Filipino employers, even though they have the same language as the payment is low. Moreover, race was also an issue to Filipino domestic workers, according to Angelo;

As being a migrant in Europe, oh race! Once you are here in Europe I think racial discrimination is high, it is still in practice especially to our Filipino, they look at us as no body and as we are nothing. I do not know the reason, may be they think we are only their helpers (Angelo).

Angelo narrated that he always observes bad attitudes in the public, that the way some white people look at him in trams (public transport) and

other places. And he added that while he was working in the diplomat residence, he did not feel respected by his employers who were also white. Angelo viewed that even though he was documented he would not get a good job, *'they may give us lower jobs, and I know many documented migrant professionals who do not work as professionals here'* (Angelo). Furthermore, Silvianos has also explained his experiences, he said, *'some people in the public expect you to speak Dutch and they never entertain you unless you speak the language'*. And depending on his narration, in the first days of his stay in The Netherlands, he asked one man in the streets of The Hague for direction to a bank in English. And the man responded to him *'speak Dutch; I want you to speak Dutch before I answer your question'* (Silvianos).

On the other hand Micki viewed that Filipino domestic workers are highly paid domestic workers than other nationals. He works for four people (all Dutch employers) and he gets 20 Euro per hour including 5 Euro transportation, and he explained that Polish domestic workers receive less.

I know a friend, a Polish, who receives 7 Euros per hour from his employers. And when I tell my Filipino friend about this he told me that it is big money for a Polish person. And one employer said I like Filipino, they are hard workers, I was happy and my heart was beating fast. Because Filipino work hard they do not focus on hours, they only care about their work. And Filipinos are good workers, and trusted by their employers trust me (Micki).

Micki seems happy and proud of his race as Filipino, hard worker and receiving more than other nationals. In the interview many of the Filipino domestic workers were explaining that employers are happy to hire them and that they are usually praised by their work as generalized or collective 'Filipino' rather than their individual achievement.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter revealed that Filipino male domestic workers identified themselves in different ways. However, they seem to relate their identity and their work with their gender roles, that the reasons for doing domestic work as acquiring their expected roles as Filipino men bread winners. While women even they are the providers they define themselves as supporters. In other words they are more likely to perceive their role as partial financial assistance even though they are the sole providers (breadwinners) of their families.

These domestic workers have different past work experience, in terms of domestic work most of the male domestic workers perceived it as low status, and mostly as woman's work. They were referring to their past work experiences to define themselves as men. A critical issue that was raised in many of their explanation was the question of their status that led them to lack of choices in terms of work availability as being undocumented migrant.

And the following chapter will continued to explain how undocumented Filipino male domestic workers deal with their situation through their social networks in accessing work and logistics at times of problems. It also examines how these categories of migrant workers are limited

in terms of exercising the rights, since they delimit their lives to what they feel as safe.

# Chapter 5

## Social networks and accessibility of work for Filipino male migrants

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter deals about the social networks of Filipino migrants and their accessibility such as work. It is also discussed on the way they express about rights in respect their current situation. This chapter revealed that most of the domestic workers found their first jobs through their own network of Filipino friends. Moreover, employers play a significant role in recommending domestic workers for extra work opportunity. Thus Employers became another means for domestic workers to access jobs. The following sections discuss more on this.

### 5.2 Filipino Male Domestic Workers Experience in Social Network.

In this section it is explored that Filipino relatives, friends who live in The Netherlands are found to be the main sources in helping Filipino new migrants for logistics and finding a job as well. One of the important functions of a well-developed immigrant community is to assist new comers with resources for finding work and this is more vital for undocumented migrants (Hagan 1998:58).

According to Angelo, the time he became undocumented his sister-in-law was taking care of them (he and his wife) and they lived with her for three months. And later she introduced him with Filipino (undocumented) migrants who helped Angelo to find two hours' work a day. However, later on his first employer helped him to find other clients. He put an advertisement with Angelo's phone number in his office, so that his colleagues could be able to call him directly when they need a domestic helper. *'Now I am full with clients, my employers are from different countries; Irish, Italian, Colombian, American and some Dutch'* (Angelo). It was explained also by Marco (43 years old) that he also lived with his sister until he gets many employers, so that could be able to stand by his own.

Depending on the findings domestic workers might have to show a strong effort in impressing their employers by their work, so that they will be able to be recommended to other employers, as Silvianos explained;

There were problems that I have encountered, at first there were fear on me that my work might not be appreciated by the employers and I thought they might fire me out. So, I did my best to make my employers happy by my work, you know even though it is a three hour work per house, I was spending extra time (like four or more ) in order to make sure that my employer would be satisfied. So, I was doing it from my time (Silvianos).

So, in order to be recommended to other new employers the domestic workers should be accepted by the initial employer first and then the employer recommends the domestic worker to his or her friends and colleagues later. Meanwhile, hiring undocumented domestic worker also seem to threaten employers as it does not involve tax.

Depending on Micki, he explained that his boss is really nice and he always explained to him that it is very problematic to hire undocumented. The employer always advises him on how to cope with the police like in case of checkups Micki is expected to present himself as a friend of the family. *‘And he always advises me to learn Dutch language; because even you are undocumented, speaking Dutch is very important as the police can trust you by your language’ (Micki 38 years old).*

Another important findings in this research is that we might take it for granted that the people of the same race are more likely to be connected each other and cooperate in helping each other. And as migrants are more likely to become more closely connected in social networks with their ethnic groups, which could also affect them to lose some of the advantages that could be gained from outside the community (Hagan 1998:65).

However, in this research it is found out that citizenship status seem to influence the type of their social network among Filipino migrants even though they share the same race. While explaining on the interviewees social networks, they mostly prefer to have contacts with undocumented Filipino migrants than documented. As Silvianos pointed out, *‘I prefer with undocumented like me as you cannot be afraid of them, but with documented Filipino they can only tell you what they like and you cannot complain to them.* Here, citizenship status is becoming as a category with in the same community (Filipino), as it involves power relations.

While explaining their relationship with their families back home, all domestic workers interviewed in this research explained that they have missed their families back home and they stay in touch with their families through the internet (Skype) and telephone calls. However, as in case of Rido the relationship with his family was affected due to his current citizenship status and he explained that he had happy family before he came here. He is now separated with his wife, *‘after my two years’ time in The Netherlands my wife told me on the phone that she cannot wait anymore for me and at the same time informed me that she found another man’ (Rido).* He explained that he was hurt by the situation and as he is undocumented he cannot do anything. However, he explained that he still sends money to his family in order to support his children.

Moreover, Filipino domestic workers who came to The Netherlands as legal contract workers and they expressed their experiences of documented migrant workers with no rights. The following section will have in more detailed about this.

### **5.3 Rights and restrictions**

As it is explained earlier in this research paper most of the undocumented domestic workers interviewed in this research came to The Netherlands as

documented contract workers. And depending on their stories, they explained that they were deprived of their rights as workers and as human beings.

Depending on Angelo, he explained that he was abused of unpaid excessive work load (16 hours a day) by his former employers when he was documented worker. On his view, the reason for not reporting police about his bad situation as a documented worker is the fear that the police might side with the employer and he made clear that he never thought of disclosing his situation to the police. According to him making phone call from the diplomat residence made him hesitant that the police might first meet the ambassador or any one in position than a domestic worker. And afraid that the ambassador might tell another story that could put him in to a problem that might reach to the stage of sending him home. Though he did not do anything but he decided that, *'if I go out from the residence at least I can stay here[The Netherlands], so I took a risk of leaving the residence than reporting a police, at least to stay free until the police caught me'*(Angelo).

In this sense, beyond employer/employee power relations, the status of the employer as diplomat is also another power that hinders Angelo and other respondents who used to work in the diplomat residence from reporting a police and negotiate for their rights.

Another respondent, Micki also explained that his contract was only for waiter, and when the employer (diplomat) knew about his ability as electrician he was ordered to do it free of charge. And which is not part of the contract but, *'since I am living with them I have no choice I have to do what they say'* (Micki). He also added that *he* was in charge of cleaning the swimming pool and cars; he also worked as a cook and security guard for fourteen months (seven months each). He explained that it was very difficult time for him as documented worker to go outside the residence except in rare cases when the ambassador's wife needs accompany. *'I was the only Filipino male worker in the residence and the other contract workers were Sudanese and Egyptians who were free to go out side as they wish'* (Micki). However, at last he explained that he decided to escape from the residence and his work experience as security guard and his knowledge on electricity helped him to manage his plan safely (for example in taking care of the alarm works, security cameras etc.). While explaining his life after he left the diplomat residence, *he said 'it is the time that I felt I was free from prison and started to live at least on my own.*

According to Rido who also worked as a professional cook for five months in the diplomat residence as a contract worker, he expressed that he found his job out of his expectations. He explained that he was working for sixteen hours a day which was totally out of the contract. And in the contract the salary was 1500 Euros but he was receiving 550 Euros.

I decided to go out, as I do not know how to inform the police, and I do not know about the law in The Netherlands. So, I was afraid of them. And I just escaped from the residence (Rido).

Rido's luck of information led him to fear and failed to voice for his rights as a worker. Moreover, Filipino migrants also revealed that their lives as men and restricted functions for instance their limited activities in their spare

time. According to Marco, he explained that he avoids staying out side late in the evening and having beer in the bars of The Hague, due to his citizenship status.

I have to know my place. I do not go to bars, especially in the evenings where drunken men might make trouble and fights that could lead to the presence of police (Marco).

However, Marco also explained about his experiences back home that he used to enjoy hanging out with his friends in bars, and he was even never afraid of fights and staying late, and he said *'in the Philippines it is my place, I do not have to care about paper [residence permit] or police'*. Similarly 38 years old Micki also explained that he usually spends his spare time singing in his room, and sometimes calls his friends for a beer at his house, as they are mostly busy with their work. He also rarely went to only one bar in The Hague (Scheveningen) where most Filipino meet for a drink and to socialize; *'some times when my friends ask me to go other places I always refuse because I have to know that I am undocumented, and I do not know there might be trouble and I better stay home and sleep'* (Micki).

Depending on the interviews Filipino migrants secure their rights by restricting their boundaries. And the above explanations might aid us to understand that citizenship status is seem to force Filipino men to design their own limited circle of functions as men which they never used to be back home. Moreover, when asked about their plans for future they all explained that future is unknown for them, as Angelo puts it, *'I am undocumented, I cannot plan for my future [silence] I just work and work to save until caught by police'*. Once more Micki also explained that when he leaves his house for work he always prays to God to bring him home back safely. He said that, *'I cannot be sure of today let alone tomorrow or future plan'* (Micki). However, some of them explained that if they got a chance to be regularized they would choose to work as a ship cook.

## 5.4 Conclusion

Depending on the above findings, it is revealed that the undocumented migrants use their networks in finding a job, either through their friends or employers. And Employee/employer relationship seems much fair as being undocumented than documented migrant worker.

This chapter also could help us to understand the contradiction that being documented was visible to the state but these Filipino migrants who used to work in the diplomat residence were deprived of their rights. So, regularity of citizenship does not necessarily mean the rights of migrant workers are respected. The findings of this research could be a good example of the contradiction between rights and regularity. Indeed, Filipino workers faced difficulty in obtaining their rights as workers and as human beings even if as regular workers.



## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

This study focused on Filipino migrant domestic workers in The Netherlands. These migrants entered to the country legally as contract workers and on tourist visas but who later became undocumented. The question was to understand how their migration status and their work affected their gender identity and their position in relation to other Filipino men and women and intersections of power relations. Undocumented Filipino male migrant domestic workers might be invisible from the perspective of the legal system of documentation, but not from the lives of Dutch society. The Filipino migrants interviewed, all of whom were undocumented, live and work with Dutch people, working in households which included Dutch nationals and others (US, Turkish, Italian, and UK, for example).

Depending on the interviews the research revealed how gender identities (masculine identities) are produced differently in different situations. By adopting an intersectional approach, this research supports the view that masculinity is not something that can be given for all men within one 'social group'. Instead, masculinity should be viewed as something produced in respect to power relations. These differences could help us to understand that one man might have multiple way of defining his own masculine identity in respective different situations and his position to the world. This study also revealed that Filipino male domestic workers that I interviewed often explain their masculine identity with respect to their masculine identity back home. Their past is important as a base for their current identification in terms of masculinity and work.

As hypothesized by the researcher, and as discussed in Chapter 2, there seems to be a close relationship between challenges to masculine identity and being a male domestic worker. This hypothesis was based on my previous experiences with Eritrean men working in domestic work in Italy. However, in the case of Filipino male migrant domestic workers, I found their citizenship status was given even more weight in how they defined themselves as men than being in a traditionally 'female' occupation as domestic workers. Their gender identity was not seen as that much affected by their domestic work, compared with the question of status, and being an irregular migrant. What was hypothesized became a secondary aspect of the research; it appears as connected to the primary focus, which became the question of how irregular citizenship status influenced the men's perceptions of their work and their rights.

Citizenship status thus became a triggering point of reference in how the interviewees described their domestic work experiences. Being undocumented was a cause for being a domestic worker, which they all perceived as women's work, and all felt that this influenced their masculinity. However, they still insisted that they defined themselves as men within conventional gender roles, since they kept responsibility and carried out

'breadwinning' roles fitting to what was expected from them socially as men. The main threat to their self-identity was caused by their lack of citizenship status, as well as by doing work perceived as women's work in their home context, as revealed in interviews.

Citizenship status was also a cause for restrictions of rights as human beings to access basic rights. And they define themselves not as men who could fulfill their wishes but as men with limited boundary of work and home. They delimit their circles as men with boundaries, and differentiated their borders from other men around because of their irregular citizenship status.

Women I have interviewed never seem to express themselves as providers, they rather see themselves as supporters, and from this we could understand that roles are constructed. These women are working hard to provide secured life to their families, but they still do not express themselves as bread winners. So, this could be seen as something inculcated and constructed in the circle of gender role. However, as explained earlier Filipino male domestic workers interviewed in this research see domestic work as women's work they still feel they are doing their masculine or manly role even if by doing domestic work. While women domestic workers though they are doing a role expected from a man (back in The Philippines) that is breadwinning, they neither seem to fit themselves to their pure femininity nor to masculinity.

So, when we come to consider Connell (1999) and his emphasis on masculinity, we need to view this as a relational concept with femininity. One finding of this research is that femininity may not always be defined in relation to masculinity, and vice versa. Moreover, we can perhaps better understand that a gender identity, whether masculine or feminine, conveys our aspirations, and what we construct in our minds and hearts, even if the practices are being deconstructed by harsh daily realities that serve to undermine what men – and women – expect to do as 'decent work'.

The relationship of domestic work beyond its discourse in femininity and the irregularity status, it was discussed the intersections of class, race with it. Undocumented Filipino men discussed the relationship of being, uneducated, poor; people from rural are much more connected to be a paid domestic worker- actually women domestic worker in the Philippines.

Moreover, the identity of the migrants is divided between threatening versus paying or fulfilling their roles. The men can practice out of their roles and compromise their masculinity as a sacrifice for being a man.

Furthermore, when we come to explain about the future of the undocumented Filipino men domestic workers, in the interviews some explained that they have short time attitude of saving money and go home with a better future financially. And some have a dream to be regularized and shift in other kind of job; like cook in ships. However, since a day is hanged in air either to be sent back home in case caught by police or staying and making money with fear and instability. They revealed that they do not know or plan for future as future to these migrants is unknown. Even though, everyone could not be sure on the life fates in general, indeed these Filipino men live sandwiched in two dilemmas each day and doubly suffer not only from

unpredictable life events as humans but they suffer their survival as undocumented as well.

Those domestic workers work 8 to 12 hours a day, and this research can end by stressing their role as net contributors to The Netherlands economy. More importantly, for the men I interviewed, domestic work was what they have learned to do, and with domestic work it is important to understand that, as with any other kind of work, it requires skill to be done well. This could be seen as one small way of diminishing the discourse around domestic work as less skilled and having no prestige, especially for a man. At the same time, it does remain that most work done in households is still not valued properly, either by economists or ordinary people. It is hoped this research can slightly help to assure that in future domestic work – whoever does it - might finally be seen as meriting the standards of ‘decent work’.

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## **Appendices**

### **Interview Guide**

**Some of the guiding interview questions for Filipino male domestic workers.**

Would you tell me a little bit about yourself?

How do you come to The Netherlands?

What are the challenges you faced as a migrant in the Netherlands?

What do you like about your current job?

How do you perceive your current and previous work experience?

Would you explain to me about the gender roles in your community back in The Philippines?

How do you spend your spare time?