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THE LIFE COURSES OF FILIPINA DOMESTIC WORKERS IN FINLAND

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ABSTRACT

Olivia Hoppu: The life courses of Filipina domestic workers in Finland
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The thesis explores how working for Finnish families poses critical moments that shape the life courses of Filipina domestic workers in Finland. Critical moments are events that have crucial consequences in an individual's life. Societal structures and how they affect a person's life course become apparent in these moments. Filipina domestic workers are women who work abroad to support themselves and their families in the Philippines. The phenomenon of Filipinos moving to Finland to work as domestic workers is relatively new. It is important to investigate it in order to understand why Filipina domestic workers come to Finland, how working here shapes their life courses and also their position in society.

Earlier Finnish and international research on foreign domestic workers, the legalities controlling them and life course theory, especially the concepts of critical moments and agency, form the theoretical framework of the research. Six Filipina domestic workers were interviewed for the thesis. Directed content analysis was used as the methodological tool to analyse the transcribed interviews. Attention was paid specifically to critical moments identified in the women's accounts of their lives and how these moments shape their life courses and affect their agency.

Making the decision to work abroad as a domestic worker, encountering legal processes of getting into and staying in Finland and particular experiences with Finnish families were identified as critical moments that shape the Filipina domestic workers' life courses. Simultaneously, these moments both limit and strengthen their agency. These critical moments may affect their future plans, as their previous experiences increase their awareness of what would and would not be possible for them. Institutional and legal changes are necessary, so that the life courses of Filipina and other foreign domestic workers would be more equal and less problematic and they would be valued and respected as people.

Keywords: foreign domestic worker, life course, critical moment, agency

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TIIVISTELMÄ

Olivia Hoppu: Suomessa työskentelevien filippiiniläisten kotityöntekijöiden elämäkulut
Kandidaatin tutkielma
Tampereen yliopisto
Yhteiskuntatutkimuksen tutkinto-ohjelma
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Tutkielmassa tarkastellaan suomalaisissa perheissä työskentelevien filippiiniläisten kotityöntekijöiden elämäkulkujen muotoutumista kriittisten hetkien näkökulmasta. Kriittiset hetket ovat tapahtumia, joilla on merkittäviä seurauksia yksilön elämälle. Kriittisissä hetkissä tulee näkyväksi se, miten yhteiskunnalliset rakenteet ja prosessit vaikuttavat yksilön elämäkulkuun. Filippiiniläiset kotityöntekijät ovat yleensä naisia, jotka työskentelevät ulkomailla elättääkseen itsensä ja Filippiineillä olevan perheensä. Filippiiniläiset kotityöntekijät Suomessa on suhteellisen uusi ilmiö. Ilmiötä on tärkeää tutkia, jotta ymmärretään filippiiniläisten kotityöntekijöiden Suomeen tulemisen syitä ja sitä, miten heidän työnsä täällä muokkaa heidän elämäkulkuaan ja siten myös heidän asemaansa yhteiskunnassa.

Tutkielman teoreettinen viitekehys koostuu aiemmasta, ulkomaalaisia kotityöntekijöitä käsittelevästä suomalaisesta ja kansainvälisestä tutkimuksesta, heidän asemaansa vaikuttavan lainsäädännön tarkastelusta sekä elämäkulun teoriasta. Elämäkulun teoriasta hyödynnetään erityisesti kriittisten hetkien ja toimijuuden käsitteitä. Tutkielmaa varten haastateltiin kuutta filippiiniläistä kotityöntekijää. Litteroidut haastattelut analysoitiin teoriaohjaavan sisällönanalyysin avulla. Analyysissa kiinnitettiin erityistä huomiota siihen, millaiset asiat naisten kertomuksissa hahmottuvat kriittisiksi hetkiksi, ja miten nämä hetket ovat muokanneet heidän elämäkulkuaan ja vaikuttaneet heidän toimijuuteensa.

Analyysissa naisten elämäkulkuun vaikuttaneiksi kriittisiksi hetkiksi havaittiin naisten päätös lähteä töihin ulkomaille, kokemukset Suomeen pääsemisen ja oleskeluluvan säilyttämisen oikeudellisista prosesseista sekä kokemukset työskentelystä suomalaisissa perheissä. Nämä kriittiset hetket ovat sekä rajanneet että toisaalta myös vahvistaneet heidän toimijuuttaan. Kokemuksina ne saattavat myös vaikuttaa naisten tulevaisuudensuunnitelmiin määrittämällä, mikä heille on mahdollista ja mikä ei. Tutkielmassa esitetään, että monet institutionaaliset ja lainsäädännölliset muutokset ovat tarpeen, jotta filippiiniläisten ja muiden ulkomaalaisten kotityöntekijöiden elämäkulut voisivat olla aiempaa tasa-arvoisempia. Muutosten tulisi pyrkiä siihen, että ulkomaalaisia kotityöntekijöitä arvostettaisiin ja kunnioitettaisiin ihmisinä ja että heidän elämänsä vaikeuttaviin asioihin puututaan.

Avainsanat: ulkomaalainen kotityöntekijä, elämäkulku, kriittinen hetki, toimijuus

Tämän julkaisun alkuperäisyys on tarkastettu Turnitin Originality Check -ohjelmalla.

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1 Introduction

In the spring of 2019 I read an article for my social policy course in which I came across a group of people I had never heard of before: foreign domestic workers. After doing some research of my own, I discovered the global phenomenon that surrounds them. Women, usually from poorer countries, move to other, richer countries to work as domestic workers for families that no longer have the time to do this work themselves. Perhaps it was naïve of me, but I was very surprised that hiring domestic help was still a common practice, especially in households and countries varying in wealth. What intrigued me about this particular group of people was a recurring theme I noticed while reading articles about them: the mistreatment they face all around the world. They were abused, their rights were not respected, they were not paid a proper salary and they had to do this kind of work to support their families. Reading about all of these issues made me wonder what the situation is like in Finland, my home country. Do we have foreign domestic workers here? What is it like working for a Finnish family? Is the treatment as poor here as it is elsewhere or is it better?

With these questions in mind I started my thesis process and acquired people who were employed as domestic workers for Finnish families as my interviewees. Due to my initial questions being quite broad, I had to narrow them down to one exact question, one exact perspective. After being introduced to the life course theory, I decided to focus especially on the life courses of the foreign domestic workers I interviewed, who all turned out to be Filipina women. In order to justify this choice of focus, I must refer to sociologist C. Wright Mills. Mills is famous for his theory and concept of the sociological imagination. In short, the sociological imagination is the ability to be able to see how a person affects the world and how the world affects a person. Mills (1970, 9) argues that “neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both”. We must be able to recognise how structural changes affect personal lives (ibid., 17), as without recognising this we cannot understand people. Therefore, understanding how working for Finnish families can shape a Filipina domestic worker’s life course will enable us to understand how and why she has come to Finland to work, what her experiences have been like and why she continues to work here. Additionally, it enables us to understand what kind of global structures define her choices, how they do so and how they become apparent in the critical moments of her life course. Critical moment is a term used in life course theory to describe a person’s subjective experience of a moment that has essentially affected how their life continues after the moment has passed. Thus, my research question is: **How does working for Finnish families pose critical moments that shape the life courses of Filipina domestic workers in Finland?**

This thesis comprises of six chapters. Chapter 2 provides the reader with a contextualisation of Filipina domestic workers as a particular group of people. First, I discuss the reasons behind domestic workers being hired globally, then, I define what a foreign domestic worker is, followed by a brief description of the Philippines and the history of Filipinos in Finland. Chapter 3 introduces the theoretical framework of the thesis through a description of previous research on foreign domestic workers, an explanation of the legalities that control foreign domestic workers in Finland and defining the key terms of this thesis: life course, critical moment and agency. Chapter 4 describes the methodology of the thesis: how I collected my data, an overview of the interviewees, directed content analysis as my methodological tool and all the ethical considerations that had to be taken throughout the thesis process. Chapter 5 consists of my key findings, which are the critical moments that I identified as shaping the life courses of Filipina domestic workers. These are moments which had essentially changed their lives or have had a significant impact on how their everyday life proceeded. The identified critical moments include making the decision to work abroad as a domestic worker, encountering legal processes of getting into and staying in Finland and particular experiences with Finnish families. Then, I discuss how these critical moments may affect the future plans of the Filipina domestic workers. Chapter 6, being the final chapter, includes the discussion and conclusions wherein I summarise my findings, compare them to previous research, comment on the improvements for the treatment of foreign domestic workers suggested by my interviewees, and finally, evaluate my thesis and suggest further research.

2 Background of the thesis

2.1 Globalisation of domestic work

Historically, domestic work was done by women from poor, rural backgrounds for wealthier urban families within the same country. Some of these women also belonged to ethno-racial minority groups. However, domestic workers have become an increasingly international and global group of people, mainly women, moving from country to country to work due to changes that have taken place in the Global North. Countries in the Global North, such as the United Kingdom, France and the USA, control global capitalism and are places where global social changes take place. One of the major social changes that has occurred in the Global North is the change in the number of breadwinners in a household. The conventional middle-class household consisting of a male breadwinner and a housewife or stay-at-home mother has become less common while households consisting of two breadwinners or single breadwinners have increased. This has been due to

structural changes including an increase in gender equality and an increase in the number of women working and pursuing professional careers. (Guarnizo & Rodriguez 2017.)

This change has led to the increased need for hired domestic work in both affluent and less affluent households, although not everyone can afford it. Due to both women and men working outside the home, there is less time to take care of the housework and children. Time is spent increasingly on longer working hours, commuting to and from work and on hobbies, making domestic work something that either has to be done by a person outside of the household or then not done at all. In addition to this, public childcare services have not increased in some countries, especially the USA, despite the increase in demand for these services from working mothers. This lack of meeting people's needs also results in people having to hire help. (ibid.; Varjonen & Aalto & Leskinen 2005, 22; Ehrenreich & Hochschild 2000, 3, 8–9.) Consequently, countries in the Global North attract numerous people from the Global South due to the economic and labour opportunities they offer, especially in the field of domestic work (Guarnizo & Rodriguez 2017). However, the rich Arab states and regions varying in wealth, such as Latin America and different parts of Asia, attract even more foreign domestic workers than the Global North does (Gallotti, 2015; International Labour Organisation 2013). Working in a rich or richer country as a domestic worker is oftentimes more profitable than working in a poor country in one's own field of work. As a result, there are about 67 million domestic workers in the world, of which 11.5 million have moved to work abroad. The majority of these people are young women moving from poorer areas to richer ones, whether it is within the same country or region or to a completely different continent. (International Labour Organisation 2013; Ranta & Wide 2018.)

2.2 Foreign domestic workers and the ILO Convention

I define a foreigner as a person who moves to or visits a country where they are not from and where they were not born. I have to also define the term migrant, as some of my sources, such as the International Labour Organisation (later ILO) and Parreñas (2015, 2017), use this term when talking about foreign domestic workers. A migrant is a person who moves from place to place to find work (MOT Oxford English Dictionary, 30.9.2019) and a domestic worker is a person who is paid to work in or for a household (International Labour Organisation 2011), for example, as a cleaner, nanny or elderly caregiver (Parreñas 2017, 113). Oftentimes, women are the ones who work as domestic workers, but there are also men who do this work (see Näre 2010).

There is a distinction between being a foreign domestic worker and being an au pair, although they are similar. Both entail working abroad for a family and especially looking after the family's

children. While an au pair has to live with the employing family, domestic workers do not always have to live with their employer. However, they are often required to do so. (Parreñas 2017, 118, 120, 124.) Being an au pair is considered to be a cultural exchange in which the au pair can practise their language skills, learn about the culture of the destination country through the employing family and in turn share their culture with the family. Being a domestic worker does not explicitly entail this kind of cultural exchange and the worker's livelihood truly depends on the work, while an au pair's often does not. The duration is also different, as an au pair can work for up to a year maximum, while a domestic worker can work for the same family for several years. Au pairs must be between the ages of 17-30, although exceptions can be made. Conversely, there does not seem to be a legal age limit for domestic workers. (Council of Europe 1969.)

The ILO's Domestic Workers Convention 2011 (later ILO Convention) declares the rights of domestic workers and how they should be treated. Its articles discuss, amongst other things, the right to collective bargaining (i.e. the right to negotiate with their employer about their salary and working conditions (Cambridge Online Dictionary, 11.11.2019)); the worker's right to decent working and living conditions (if they live with the employing family); the right to be informed about what their contract includes, for example, daily and weekly rest periods; and the right to agree with the employing family whether the worker lives with them or not. (International Labour Organisation 2011.) Finland ratified the convention in 2015, four years after it was established (UN Women Suomi 2015) and three years after it actually came into effect (Parreñas 2017, 114). Perhaps this could be due to the fact that Finland updated their Act on the Employment of Household Workers during the same year that the ILO Convention was established. The Act states very similar clauses as the ILO Convention, such as the domestic worker's right to a regular working day of maximum nine hours working time (Chapter 2, Section 4), the right to a weekly rest period of minimum 30 hours (Chapter 2, Section 10) and the right to be paid for overtime work (Chapter 3, Section 13). (Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Finland 2011.)

Despite this Finnish Act and the ILO Convention, the rights of foreign domestic workers are not always respected in Finland (own interviews; Määttä 2003). All of the ILO member states do not abide by the convention or do not regulate that the employing families abide by it and the convention itself lacks explicit standards and criteria, which is why many of its articles are not enforced (own interviews; Parreñas 2017, 117–120). In addition to this, some countries do not have any local laws regarding the treatment of foreign domestic workers and in some the laws are very restrictive and almost inhumane (Parreñas 2017, 117–120). For example, in Singapore foreign domestic workers must receive their employer's permission to find a new employer, even after the

contract with the current employer has ended (ibid., 114). Any other worker would not be required to do this. All of these issues are very problematic, as they place foreign domestic workers in a disadvantaged and vulnerable position. The lack of following and enforcing positive laws regarding foreign domestic workers, such as the ILO Convention, indicates that domestic workers are neither valued nor respected, although most societies would not be able to function without them (Cheever 2002, 37).

2.3 The Philippines and Filipinos in Finland

The Philippines is a South-East Asian country known for sending a notable amount of workers overseas since the 1970s. There are currently about 10 million Filipinos working abroad (International Labour Organisation, 9.3.2020) and possibly even more. The country's economy is dependent on the international mobility of its workforce, as its workers send money back to their families in the Philippines who can then pay for local products and services. This money, also known as remittances, made up 8.5 percent of the country's GDP in 2013 and was worth up to 28 billion US dollars in 2017. (Vaittinen & Näre 2014, 122; Ranta & Wide 2018.) About a quarter of the Philippine population lives below the poverty line, making millions of people dependent on their family members working abroad to make a better living. Education and healthcare are privatised while people's salaries have not increased. (Ranta & Wide 2018.) Unemployment is also a major problem in the Philippines (Central Intelligence Agency, 11.11.2019). Although many of the Filipinos who move abroad are highly educated and the country aims to send out specifically highly educated people to work, most of the time they end up working as domestic workers, cleaners, care workers, restaurant workers, builders and sailors (Vaittinen & Näre 2014, 123). Yet, due to lower wages and high unemployment in the Philippines, working in these kinds of fields abroad is more profitable than working in one's own field in their home country (Ranta & Wide 2018).

The phenomenon of Filipinos moving to Finland to work as domestic workers is relatively new. The first Filipinos moved to Finland between the 1970s and 1990s mainly due to marital reasons and some as the domestic workers of Finnish diplomats and migrants who brought their domestic workers back to Finland with them (Vaittinen & Näre 2014, 123; Filippiinit-seura ry 2019). When the Finnish Aliens Act was updated in 2004, to be more favourable towards labour immigration, more Filipinos moved here due to work (Filippiinit-seura ry 2019). Currently, about 5000 Filipinos live in Finland and many work here as domestic workers, cleaners, chefs, nurses and in the service and sales field (Filippiinit-seura ry 2019; Vaittinen & Näre 2014, 124; Ranta & Wide 2018). Many end up in Finland through working in other Nordic countries, au pair work or through friends and

relatives and they come to work as cleaners despite having university degrees in other fields (Ranta & Wide 2018).

Although hiring labour from abroad is miniscule in Finland compared to other countries, international recruitment is used to fill in the labour deficit in cleaning and care work fields (Vaittinen & Näre 2014, 123). Foreigners living in Finland are encouraged to work in the care work field despite what their previous education might be. Care work used to be the work of working class women, but now it is increasingly the work of immigrant women and men. The number of care workers recruited especially from the Philippines increases every year. (Hoppania et al. 2016, 119–120, 123.) As for childcare, Finland provides both public and private childcare, for example, in the form of early childhood education (infoFinland.fi 2020). However, as the childcare service can begin and end while the parent(s) is/are still at work, the family might need to hire a domestic worker to look after their children and take care of the housework until the parent(s) come(s) home. The desire to hire help for housework was already around in 1996, especially among families with children (Varjonen et al. 2005, 24), so perhaps it is not so surprising that help is still hired nowadays as work schedules become increasingly demanding.

3 Theoretical framework

3.1 Previous research

The experiences of foreign or migrant domestic/care workers have been researched earlier by Rhacel Salazar Parreñas Ph.D. (2015, 2017), Tiina Vaittinen Ph.D. (2014, 2016, 2017), Lena Näre Ph.D. (2014), Anne Määttä (2003), writer Susan Cheever (2002) and Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo Ph.D. (2002), amongst others. Parreñas's, Vaittinen's and Määttä's research has mainly focused on Filipino care workers, both working in the domestic field and in care homes while Näre's research focuses on Sri Lankan, Ukrainian and Filipino domestic workers, Cheever's research focuses on both Caribbean and Irish domestic workers and Hondagneu-Sotelo's work on Latino domestic workers. These researchers have observed foreign domestic workers from legal, human rights, labour and agency perspectives.

According to Parreñas (2015, 6–7), migrant domestic workers tend to migrate either to just one location or several locations. The locations vary in their standard of living as some are low-cost countries while others are high-cost countries. Migrant domestic workers are also reliant on their social networks to get a job abroad. With their work they hope to gain permanent residency in the

working country and raise money to send back home. (ibid., 5–6.) Unfortunately, migrant domestic workers are not recognised as “real” workers doing “real” work and they do not have the same freedom to change their jobs or employers, unlike other workers in the country (Parreñas 2017, 113–114). They are completely dependent on their employers, as they are usually required to live with them, and they lack authority in their work (ibid., 120–121).

Another example of not fully appreciating migrant care workers can be seen in Finland, where highly educated Filipino registered nurses have been hired to do the jobs of practical nurses, which require significantly less training than a registered nurse does (Vaitinen 2017, 85). These attitudes, devaluation and restrictions towards migrant workers put them in a disadvantaged position. However, as Näre (2014) has shown in her research on Ukrainian domestic workers, foreign domestic workers also possess agency and are not solely dependent on others or affected by global economic and social phenomena that they cannot control themselves. When social changes take place, these women have to decide what they are going to do next with the resources, skills and opportunities that they have. Foreign domestic workers are a complex, multinational group of people, who should be researched due to the different perspectives of life that they can show us and to realise that there is a very real need to change attitudes towards domestic work and the people who do it and to reinforce laws concerning them.

3.2 Legalities controlling foreign domestic workers in Finland

As global mobility is a key characteristic of being a foreign domestic worker, it is inevitable that the laws regarding foreigners and residence and working permits determine a person’s ability to both enter and stay in a country. As the laws of a country form one structural level of society, they can both affect and control a person’s life. In this section, I focus on the Finnish Aliens Act that both controls and gives opportunities to foreign domestic workers in Finland.

The Finnish Aliens Act determines what a work-related migrant’s residence permit is like. A type B residence permit is the first type of permit a person can receive. It is only a temporary permit and bound to the profession or professional field stated on the permit. For example, if someone moves here to work as a cleaner, their permit will state that the person is a cleaner and they will only have this permit while they are working as a cleaner. Once the permit expires, one has to apply for a residence permit again. However, a temporary permit can become a continuous one if a person has been in Finland for two consecutive years. Afterwards, one can apply for a type A residence permit, which has a specific time limit and can last up to a maximum of four years. This is known as a continuous residence permit. When a person has been in Finland with a continuous residence permit

for four years, they can appeal for a permanent residency and citizenship. (Vaittinen & Näre 2014, 127, 129.)

A work-related migrant's, or as in this case, a foreign domestic worker's residence permit is not bound to a specific employer, thus allowing the worker to work in that particular field across the country. However, in special cases the permit can be limited to working for a specific employer. (Vaittinen & Näre 2014, 129.) As the residence permit is bound to employment and possibly a specific employer, a foreign domestic worker is very dependent on the work in order for them to be able to stay in Finland. This enables employers to take advantage of their worker, for example, by not paying them full salaries, as the worker has to work in order to stay in Finland whether they are paid a full salary or not. Also, the fear of being sacked and thus removed from the country makes a worker work as much as possible, despite the unfair circumstances. (ibid., 128.) The rules regarding the residence permit undeniably place a foreign domestic worker in a disadvantageous position, although the ability to work in Finland is otherwise considered a great opportunity with which one can support their family back in the Philippines.

3.3 The life course, critical moments and agency

The life course perspective has been adopted in this thesis in order to understand how the aforementioned global and national structural factors are visible in an individual's life. Life has been seen as a cycle having definite chronological stages, such as childhood, adulthood and old age, each lasting a certain amount of time and containing specific events and experiences. For example, marriage and raising children were key characteristics of adulthood. However, as societies and our ways of living have developed over time, we have started to view life as a series of phases varying in length, lacking coherence and direction and being subject to people's own choices and discontinuity. We live in a time in which nothing, which was taken for granted in the past, is for certain anymore. (Hunt 2005, 2.) Instead of seeing life as a cycle, life is seen as a course. The **life course** is a person's own experienced narrative of the various phases of their life (Juntunen 2020, 21). Such characteristics as age, ethnicity, gender and social class seem to have less of an absolute impact on the life course due to people (especially in the West) having more freedom and opportunities to plan their own futures. Despite this freedom, life is also less predictable, less determined and more prone to risks. (Hunt 2005, 2–4, 9.)

Many things affect a person's life course. Particularly, social relationships, one's economic situation and timing are meaningful factors. Also, social structures and a person's environment, personal characteristics and agency shape their life course. Globalisation has its own effects too,

especially when it affects a person's local culture. (ibid., 22–24, 28–29; Juntunen 2020, 21.) For example, globalisation has enabled and possibly forced people to move from one country to another in search of work and a better life. These numerous factors can create **critical moments**, which are defined as events that have crucial consequences in a person's life (Thomson et al. 2002, 339). For example, getting an opportunity to work abroad can be seen as a critical moment. A critical moment can be both something a person has made possible by themselves, such as starting a business, or something that happens beyond their control. It can be either positive or negative. A person's agency, so their ability and possibilities to make decisions or the lack of these characteristics, affect a critical moment and vice versa. Critical moments also depict how social and economic environments and greater social processes affect a single person's life. (ibid., 338, 340, 342.) For example, as Näre (2014) portrays in her article on Ukrainian domestic workers; the collapse of the Soviet Union was a great social process that affected these women's lives and partly caused them to move abroad to work as domestic workers. Most importantly, a person's subjective experience of a life event, its meaning and effect define which moments, events and encounters become the critical moments of their life course (Juntunen 2020, 22). For example, in Näre's (2014, 227) work, one of her interviewees noted how the emerging migration industry in Ukraine gave her the opportunity to travel to Italy to work. Without knowing people in the industry and without the existence of the industry itself she would not have been able to travel, making these encounters and events meaningful to her and thus critical moments in her life course.

Agency is connected to the life course and critical moments, which is why it must be defined here. Agency is a very complicated concept. It is seen as the power to make decisions; doing otherwise; resistance; adjusting or adapting to situations; and as a person's ability and capacity to act. Mobility, as in the possibility to move between countries, is also a key capability and form of agency. A person's capacity consists of their own accomplishments and the opportunities given to them. (Näre 2014, 224–225, 226.) Chances, meaning things a person cannot influence, and social changes also affect agency. In these kinds of situations a person cannot rely on routines and habits. Instead, they must adjust to the new situation. (ibid., 229–230.) For example, while working in another country one must, at least to some extent, adjust to the way the work is done in that country. As foreign domestic workers are often seen and portrayed as either victims of employers, “the local labour markets and the globalising economic structural forces” or as people with agency and the ability to demand their rights (ibid., 224), it is important to be able to see them as both of these things and as something more. They cannot be reduced to being just victims or agents, because it is

inevitable that certain factors do control and limit them, while they also have the agency to do something about these factors.

This theoretical framework guides me as I aim to answer my research question: **How does working for Finnish families pose critical moments that shape the life courses of Filipina domestic workers in Finland?** It also enables us to discover what events, encounters and decisions these critical moments entail and how agency is present in them. I attempt to answer this question using the methodology discussed in the next chapter.

4 Methodology

4.1 Data collection

I wanted to interview foreign domestic workers in Finland in order to access their first-hand experiences of working here and how employment opportunities in Finland has shaped and continues to shape their life courses. As there is not so much research on foreign domestic workers in Finland, it is favourable to increase the amount of research by producing my own empirical research on the topic. I interviewed six Filipina women between October-November 2019 for my research. I did not choose specifically to interview Filipina women; it was just a coincidence that everyone who could take part in the interview was Filipina. I acquired three of my interviewees through people in my own social circles. I used snowball sampling to acquire the other interviewees, which is a method in which the already acquired interviewees recruit future interviewees among their acquaintances (Naderifar, Goli & Ghaljaie 2017, 2). I chose this method, as I thought it would be easier to acquire more interviewees through people who knew other foreign domestic workers. This method was successful, as one of my already acquired interviewees asked one of her friends if she would like to be interviewed and then the friend also asked her friends and flatmates to be interviewed. I was very fortunate that my interviewees could find more interviewees for me.

All of the interviews were conducted face to face and recorded with a voice recorder. I let the interviewees choose where the interview would take place. One of them took place at a fast food restaurant, two of them took place at the home of their former employers and three of them took place in the kitchen of an office building where a religious event was being held. I was surprised that two of the interviewees had chosen to have the interview at the home of their former employers, but this reflects how their relationship with their former employer is still good enough

that they might still help them with the housework sometimes and feel comfortable enough to discuss things about their former employer in the employer's house. Although two of the interviews were carried out in the former employer's house, we were given privacy by the former employer so that we could talk in peace. There were still a couple of interruptions by the former employer during the interview, but then we just stopped the interview and continued again after the former employer left. The interviews held in the kitchen of the office building were each interrupted by people participating in the religious event, which was going on at the same time. One of the interviews continued despite the interruption and two of them were stopped until we were alone again.

In the interviews I focused on the different factors of the interviewee's life course that have brought them to Finland and their experiences of working here: why and how did they come here; why are they working as domestic workers; how did they get employed; what does their job entail; what has it been like working in Finland for a Finnish family; have they faced any difficulties in Finland and what are their future plans (see the interview in detail in Appendix 2). The interview questions were inspired by my previous knowledge of foreign domestic workers and they were divided into four themes: the interviewee's background; work history as a domestic worker; work history and experiences in Finland; and plans and dreams for the future. The interview was semi-structured, meaning that I would pose specific questions but I was also open to discussions that were not entirely connected to the questions. All in all, the interviews went well and took between 20-90 minutes. Some interviewees went into great detail when answering questions while some were more reserved. Sometimes the interviewees answered my questions before I even got to ask them, so I did not have to pose each question separately to each participant. Some interviewees compared their experiences in Finland to the experiences they had had in other countries in order to show how working here was better than elsewhere. After the interviews were recorded, they were transcribed verbatim, while excluding filler words and repeated words, and numbered and then the recordings were deleted in order to secure the interviewees' anonymity. The transcriptions were saved on my laptop behind a password, so they were not easily accessible.

4.2 What kind of women are the interviewees?

Teacher. Registered nurse. Electrician. Computer scientist. These are the professions some of the six interviewees had before becoming domestic workers. Some of them are highly educated and some are not, but either way, they had to leave their home country to find work elsewhere. All of the women interviewed have been working in Finland between one to nine years as domestic workers. They are currently working as nannies and/or cleaners for various Finnish families. Some of them also work for cleaning companies and one has started her own company. Most of these

women have previously worked as domestic workers or as au pairs in Denmark, Hong Kong, Norway, Oman, the Philippines, Qatar and Russia. Three of them had lived with their employers for a part of their time in Finland while the other three had lived in their own apartments, shared either with friends or their husband, throughout their stay in Finland. Their daily tasks as nannies include taking the children to and picking them up from kindergarten; playing and eating with them; taking care of their hygiene and looking after them in general. Cooking dinner for the whole family is also a part of their job. Their daily tasks as cleaners vary from specific tasks to any tasks that they have time to do during their working hours. The tasks include general cleaning, washing the floors, cleaning the kitchen and bedrooms, washing clothes, ironing and changing the bedsheets. They work eight hours a day, five days a week and have their weekends free, at least most of the time.

4.3 Directed content analysis

I used directed content analysis as a guide for analysing the transcriptions of the interviews. However, as I will discuss later, my own analysis was somewhat more content-based than usually is the case in directed content analysis. Directed content analysis is when theory or prior knowledge can be used to aid the analysis of the research material, such as an interview. This kind of an analysis can aim to validate or extend a theoretical framework or theory. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 109; Hsieh & Shannon 2005, 1281.) According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005, 1285), the coding process in content analysis in general consists of organising “large quantities of text into much fewer content categories. Categories are patterns or themes that are directly expressed in the text or are derived from them through analysis. Then, relationships among categories are identified,” (ibid.) after which quotations are taken from the text and listed under their corresponding categories (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 123). The same occurs in directed content analysis, except theory or previous knowledge determines what codes are used to analyse the text and what categories are formed from it. The codes and categories are usually defined before analysing the text, but the initial coding scheme is revised and refined as the analysis continues. (Hsieh & Shannon 2005, 1281, 1286; Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 133.) In this method, theory or prior knowledge “will guide the discussion of findings”. The findings may either contribute to the already existing theory or knowledge, or they may contradict it. Having prior knowledge can make the researcher biased towards what they are looking for from the text that they are analysing, instead of being open to what the text has to offer. By doing so, the findings will be more likely to support the theory or prior knowledge than refute it. (Hsieh & Shannon 2005, 1283.)

My approach to directed content analysis varied slightly from what Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018) and Hsieh and Shannon (2005) have described it to be like. After transcribing the interviews, I read

through each of them carefully. Although I had previous knowledge of the treatment and experiences of foreign domestic workers and the life course, I did not form codes or categories for analysis before actually reading the interviews. Instead, I used the life course perspective as my guide while reading the interviews, so I paid attention especially to factors that the interviewees described as having had a significant impact on their life courses. I used different coloured pens to underline and highlight life course related topics and themes that recurred in each interview. The most recurring themes were three specific kinds of critical moments that had affected many of the interviewees' life courses: 1. making the decision to work abroad as a domestic worker; 2. encountering legal processes of getting into and staying in Finland; and 3. particular experiences with Finnish families. There was also a recurrence of the interviewee contemplating how these critical moments could affect her future plans, making it worthy of further analysis. The recurrence of these critical moments and contemplating how they could affect future plans indicated that they could be key topics to analyse in my thesis, further contributing to the life course theory. Thus, they became my codes for analysis. With the help of these four codes, I took quotations from each interview and listed them under their corresponding categories. At the end of each quotation I noted the interviewee by number so that I would know which interview the quotation was from while ensuring the interviewee's anonymity. My analysis described above was very much inspired by the key ideas of directed content analysis, although it was not implemented in exactly the same way.

4.4 Ethical considerations

Many ethical considerations were taken throughout the whole thesis process in order to follow good ethical conduct (Tutkimuseettinen Neuvottelukunta 2019). Before conducting the interviews I constructed a consent form for the interviewees with the help of my thesis supervisors. The form was made to inform the interviewees about how I will use the information they give me during the interview in my research (see Appendix 1). While recruiting interviewees, I had to ensure that they were recruited and agreed to participate voluntarily. As I did not approach all of the interviewees personally due to some being recruited by people they knew, I cannot say with full confidence that each participant was fully aware of what the interview was for before the interview actually took place. As some had not volunteered autonomously to participate, I had to make sure that they were still willing to participate when I met them in order to ensure their voluntariness. (Tutkimuseettinen Neuvottelukunta 2019, 8.) As stated earlier in section 4.1., the interviewees chose themselves where the interviews would be held. This was done so that the interviewees could be as comfortable as possible while answering questions.

At the beginning of each interview I explained the purpose of the interview and went through the consent form together with the interviewee to make sure that she understood what she was about to take part in and to give her the opportunity to ask questions before we started (ibid.). At the end of the interview we returned to the form and I made sure that the interviewee still agreed to it, followed by me signing the form as proof that I am obliged to process the information retrieved from the interviewee as stated on the form. The interviewee was not required to sign the form, as a signature is a very crucial way of being able to identify someone and would thus compromise the anonymity of the interviewee. During the interview, I had to take into account who could possibly overhear what we discussed. This required trusting that the former employer and the participants of the religious event would not be eavesdropping, and hoping that we would not come across any people who knew one of my interviewees while we were at the fast food restaurant. As stated earlier in section 4.1., the interviews were not entirely private due to interruptions from, and the presence of, outsiders. I also had to be sensitive and empathetic to what the interviewees told me, as some of the topics discussed were more personal and could make the interviewee feel uncomfortable. I told the interviewees that they could say as much or as little as they wanted to and that my opinions did not matter, meaning that they should not have to worry about how I would react to what they told me. As a result, some told more and some told less of their stories.

While transcribing the interviews I had to make sure that no one could hear the interview recordings and that no one would read the transcription while it was being produced. I transcribed the interviews verbatim while excluding the names of people and places mentioned in the interviews in order to reduce the possibility of being recognised, in case someone did happen to see what I was writing. I also did not mark the names of the participants anywhere due to this reason and instead each interview recording and transcription was numbered. (Tutkimuseettinen Neuvottelukunta 2019, 12.) Pseudonyms were given to each interviewee after the transcriptions were completed. In the next chapter I discuss my findings. I tell about the majority of the interviewees' experiences at a general level, while some are more detailed, and I use pseudonyms in order to reduce the possibility of recognition. I cannot fully guarantee that people will not be recognised (ibid., 12–13), but I have tried to reduce the risk as much as possible.

5 Critical moments that shape the life courses of Filipina domestic workers

5.1 Making the decision to work abroad as a domestic worker

The opportunity to go and work abroad and the reasons leading up to deciding whether to go or not was a clear critical moment in the life courses of the interviewees. Below is Marisol's reasoning for coming to Finland to work as a domestic worker.

"Well why did you decide to come to Finland?" - Interviewer

"Why? Because my country it's too difficult to, to be employed, to be honest. There is a big amount of unemployment in our country. And as an individual or I think everyone is looking for a greener pasture, you know. We have some future plans, future dreams /.../. The first reason why I decided to go to Finland to work is that, during those times I have, I have a problem with my family /.../, so I need to work. I have some work in Philippines, I taught there, I've been a teacher there, but then with two children being on your shoulder and then you don't have that [help from their father], so you, what will you do, you just depend? You just wait for, you know, anything to just drop in front of you? No, you have to move, you have to work, so that's what I did." - Marisol

Along with Marisol, most of the interviewees commented on the lack of employment opportunities and the high rate of unemployment in the Philippines. Despite having degrees for their professions, there were no job opportunities or the salary they received was not enough to cover their expenses. Moving abroad to work was seen as a good opportunity to receive a higher salary in order to provide for their families. Some were single mothers solely supporting their children, some had to support their parents, many were paying for their siblings', nieces' and nephews' education and one had to solve her money issues after her shop was robbed. Many commented on the education fees being too expensive in the Philippines, which is why they were the only ones who could pay for them by working abroad. Working abroad as a domestic worker was described as a necessity, an opportunity and a sacrifice, but also as something they did not want to do for the rest of their lives and something they did not want their family members to have to experience. Below are some statements made by the interviewees:

"I'm thinking for a greener pasture, because in the Philippines even though you're having a degree, there's no job opportunity, so need to go somewhere else, for my family's sake also."

- Analyn

“I am the one only working abroad in my families and they are not in the stable work my siblings, so they’re only like I’m the only one that they are hoping for to support them.” - Reyna

“But actually I just think of the future what I can give them, I just need to sacrifice, you know. Not only for my kids but also for my siblings, because I don’t want them to experience what I experience.” - Christine

The lack of job opportunities in the Philippines, the interviewees’ economic situation and their responsibility of providing for their families were the main reasons that caused them to leave their home country and work abroad as a domestic worker. Making the decision to move abroad to work as a domestic worker is a critical moment in their life courses, as without these reasons it is unlikely that they would have had the necessity to look for work abroad and leave their families behind. Finland was considered to be a place full of good or even better opportunities than in other countries, which is why many of the interviewees came here. Not being able to stay in other employing countries any longer was also another reason for coming here. Furthermore, most of them managed to acquire an employing family in Finland through their friends, as their friends worked as domestic workers in Finland before they did. Their friends recommended them to their employers or employer’s friends who were also looking for a nanny or a cleaner. One interviewee acquired their Finnish employer through a former employer in another country. Thus, without these social relations, these women would possibly not have been able to get a job in Finland as a domestic worker, further shaping their life course through the critical moment of a job opportunity.

The agency of a Filipina domestic worker in this critical moment is simultaneously limited, dependent on others and active. For example, in the case of Marisol, her agency was limited by the economic situation in the Philippines, as she could not work as much as she would like to there and she was not paid enough money for her to be able to support her children. Getting the opportunity to work in Finland through her friend made her dependent on her friend for her livelihood. However, opportunities given to a person increase their capacity and capability to act, thus increasing their agency. So, in a way, the opportunity to work in Finland made Marisol both dependent on her friend to have this opportunity and active due to having this opportunity. The opportunity enabled her to fulfil her goal of providing for her children. Furthermore, making the decision to move and taking the opportunity her friend gave her indicate that her agency was active, for these are actions that require commitment. Thus, the critical moment of deciding to work abroad as a domestic worker both challenged and enabled Marisol’s agency and simultaneously her agency determined how she responded to the critical moment.

5.2 Encountering legal processes of getting into and staying in Finland

Most of the interviewees described the legal process of how they came to Finland and how they have been able to stay here. Encountering these legal processes also posed critical moments in their life courses. The legal process is affected by both the actual legal requirements in Finland and whether the employing family is willing to help with fulfilling these requirements or not. The ability to fulfil these requirements affect the Filipina domestic worker's ability to stay in Finland, thus it defines how her life course will continue in or out of this country and poses another critical moment in her life course.

5.2.1 Legal requirements in Finland

As the legal processes of each interviewee varied due to timing differences and changes in legal requirements over time, it is slightly difficult to give a coherent, chronological description of the legal requirements in Finland. The level of difficulty to come to Finland also varied amongst the interviewees. Below is Nina's description of how she came to Finland. She was working as an au pair in Norway before coming here.

“It was just like I think two or three weeks before my au pair visa ends in the Norway, that's when I have like agreed or have found the employer and they have processed, they are sent me the papers that I needed to be submitted to the embassy of Norway or embassy of Finland that is in Norway. And then when I submitted the papers, the staff there they said that “oh this will be, you will be really at risk here because there's not much time there for your au pair visa so we cannot accept your application”. So then it was, it failed and the, we had like another option that before my visa ends then I need to come here in Finland and then we will going to submit my application here. So that was what happened. And it went well, after one month the application has been granted.”

- Nina

Generally, the legal process went as described in the following. First an agreement was made between the employer and the domestic worker, then either the worker or the employer would apply and pay for the residence permit and then the worker would receive a positive result, thus allowing her to reside and work in Finland for a certain amount of time, depending on the type of permit she received. Some of the interviewees could work for six months, a year or more, before having to renew their residence permit application and hope for a better, longer permit. The domestic worker would also have to pay for her new permit application and, depending on the result she got, her permit would either be a longer one, for example, type A lasting four years, or a shorter one, for example, type B lasting one year. The type of residence permit would define how long she could

still be here for until she had to nervously wait again to find out how much longer she could stay with her new permit.

Some of the interviewees commented on how receiving the residence permit could take a very long time during which they could not travel or, more importantly, work, so it is clear that the legal requirements of working in Finland can also be seen as shaping critical moments in a domestic worker's life, as they affect her life course by either enabling her to or disabling her from working here for a certain amount of time. They can also be seen as controlling or restricting her agency. In Nina's case, legal requirements limited her mobility at first, due to her au pair visa ending too soon before she was to go to Finland. Limiting her mobility is significant, because mobility is a key capability and form of agency, so ultimately her agency was limited. However, she still came to Finland and applied for her residence application while being here, showing how she was able to find other ways of getting to her destination. Doing otherwise is one form of agency, so despite the earlier legal limitation, Nina was still able to act and strengthen her own agency. The critical moment in which her application was accepted further enabled her to stay and work in Finland, so essentially legal processes both limited and strengthened her agency. Being able to live with the employing family or friends before receiving the residence permit helped Nina and the other interviewees, such as Christine, to start their lives in Finland despite being momentarily legally at sea.

“The first time [when you arrive in Finland] you cannot work without the residence permit, [so] it's great thing that I have friends here which I could stay with.” - Christine

5.2.2 How the employer affects legal processes

Unsurprisingly, the processing of the residence permit and other documents did not always go so smoothly when the employing family was involved. Although many of the interviewees stated that their employers liked to follow the law, paid for overtime work, the residence permits and insurance, some of the interviewees had negative experiences regarding how some of their employers handled the legal processes. One family refused to sign a document required by the Philippine government, which made them liable in case something bad was to happen to the domestic worker they hired, because they did not want to have to pay more money after having paid for the residence permit and flight tickets to Finland. In the end they signed the document, but covertly agreed with the worker that they actually would not be liable if something were to happen to her. She agreed to this, because she desperately needed the job. This same family refused to follow the laws when it came to paying taxes, insurance and pensions for their worker. Another

family paid a very low salary, but due to the domestic worker needing a residence permit, she still agreed to work for them. One family also refused to help a domestic worker with her residence permit renewal, because they did not want to pay for it, and ended the work contract with her. She had to find a new employer quickly; otherwise her permit would not be renewed. In addition, some families refused to pay for overtime work, although the worker had the right to be paid.

“I think that’s the most stressful part that especially on migrant workers like me, that if I need to renew my work permit and then your employer is just gonna drop you off, then that’s really a stressful thing for me to experience, because if that’s the case you need to find another family who can” - Analyn

“Hire you” - Interviewer

“Yeah, to complete the salary that you need and for you to be able to get a positive result.”
- Analyn

Some of these employing families recognised the power they had over their domestic workers and took advantage of the worker’s need for a job. They could treat the worker however they wanted to, because they knew that she was dependent on them. However, this maltreatment and lack of regard for the law drove these workers away from these families, as they ended their contracts with the families and moved on to working for other families. Thus, the family’s behaviour also shaped the domestic worker’s life course and posed a critical moment in which she had to decide what to do next: she moved on to work for someone else if the family did not follow the law or the contract or she would stay and work for the family if they followed the laws and the contract.

“Especially on my case before that I really need to have the work permit, then you, then if the family knows it that they are the only way for you to be able to get what you need, then they have the force or the upper-hand and the reason to do whatever they wanted to do and you have no other option but to say yes. /.../ I ask my employer to that time because I worked for several hours and then I am expecting this salary that much but she just gave almost half of it. /.../ So I asked her in a nice way that maybe she should re-check the payment thing or the transaction because according to my hours the salary is not correct compared to the hours that I worked and she gets mad at me on that case. /.../ After that scenario she’s not comfortable working with me anymore, she’s always mad and all that for no reason or sometimes she is just not that nice compared before. /.../ I told her if that’s the case, I’m too tired already and I’m not getting that much, because she only paid eight euros before tax. /.../ And then on that rate she still does not give me the right amount I’m supposed to get [laughs] it’s not really worth it to stay on that kind of family.” - Analyn

In Analyn's case, her agency was both restricted and reinforced by the family. Her agency appeared to be limited to both herself and the employer when it came to her residence permit; she simply had to do what the employer said so that she could stay in Finland and the employer knew this. Both Finland's legal requirements and the employer limited her agency. However, the employer's maltreatment posed a critical moment in her life course, as it gave her the opportunity to decide to leave her employer, thus reinforcing her agency. Realising that it was not worth it to work for an abusive employer indicates that Analyn recognised her self-worth and took action to improve her circumstances by leaving. Again, a legal requirement, this time accompanied by an unhelpful family, posed a critical moment in a Filipina domestic worker's life course in which her agency was both limited and strengthened.

5.3 Particular experiences with Finnish families

As already discussed above, the experiences the domestic workers have had with their Finnish employers have also shaped their life courses when it comes to staying in their job or looking for a new one. The interviewees described both positive and negative experiences that they had had with the families and some of these experiences had posed critical moments concerning the continuation of their work with them.

5.3.1 Reasons for staying with the family

Almost all of the interviewees described that they felt like one of the family members in some of the families that they worked for and viewed those families in a similar way. This was due to how the family treated them: they were nice, understanding, caring, made jokes, ate dinner together, aided the worker financially and took an interest in what was important to the worker. One even felt like her employer was like her sister and the children like her own children or sister's children, while another saw her employers more as friends. Having this kind of connection and mutually liking each other enabled these feelings of family and friendship and the decision to continue working for these families. This decision is a critical moment in a sense that it brought continuity to the interviewees' life courses and it portrays their agency.

*“They consider my situation, I mean, /.../ the important things for me that I need to do, they respect that. So for me it's like oh they **value** what my interest and my priorities are. /.../ I feel family to them.” - Nina*

*“[The mother of the family] is like my sisters and [the daughter] is like my niece. /.../ [The son] is like my **son**.” - Luz*

Most of the interviewees also emphasised the importance of being treated well, with respect, equally and as a human being, not just as a worker. A couple stated that they could feel the difference when they were seen just as a worker or as a human, an equal or a family member. Being appreciated for their work and seeing how happy the family was to come home to a clean house and a delicious dinner also made the workers feel good about themselves and happy to work for these families. The experiences of being treated well enabled them to work more, thus strengthening their agency.

“For families I think I really do like cooking and if the family really likes the food that I made, it’s just a reward for me, they appreciate all the hard work and all that stuff.” - Analyn

“That’s what I really like with the employers now, because they care about my feelings, not just they don’t just treat me as a worker, but they also treat me as a human.” - Christine

5.3.2 Reasons for leaving the family

There were only a minority of contracts that had ended between the worker and the family. Various reasons were given for ending them: feeling uncomfortable with the family; having differences that could not be overcome; suffering because of the work; the salary not being enough to provide for her children and the employer not increasing the salary; the employer being unwilling to let the domestic worker work for other families; the employer not following the law and not paying the full salary and the worker simply not having enough time to work for a certain employer when working for many families. Some interviewees also noticed that after there was a conflict or a disagreement between them and their employer, the relationship changed abruptly and became more negative. One family did not allow the domestic worker to move out, while another worker had to move out due to the parent being jealous of the time the worker spent with her child. One family got angry when the worker asked them to check the salary payment again, as the family had not paid her the full salary. As a result, the domestic worker ended the contract with the family. So, just as there were positive experiences where the workers were treated as human beings, there were also experiences to the contrary:

“They just considered me as a worker. [laughs] So yeah, you know you can feel it. You can feel it if they, what they just want from you is your service or you yourself.” - Marisol

“Sometimes I can feel that they will see you as a cleaning robot [pause] who doesn’t get stressed, who doesn’t get tired, yeah there were families like that that they are, they think they’re treating you like you’re cleaning or babysitting robot.” - Analyn

These negative experiences have caused the interviewees to end some of their contracts and find work elsewhere, yet again shifting their life course in another direction and at the same time putting them in uncertain circumstances, as it is neither easy nor guaranteed to find a new employer. Again these experiences have posed critical moments entwined with agency, as the workers had to make a decision concerning whether to continue working with the family or not. They decided to leave and find a better place to work, which both changed their life courses again and strengthened their agency.

5.4 Critical moments affecting future plans

The critical moments that I have identified as shaping the life courses of the Filipina domestic workers I interviewed include making the decision to work abroad as a domestic worker, encountering legal processes of getting into and staying in Finland and particular experiences with Finnish families. These critical moments are significant when it comes to the future plans of the interviewees. All of the interviewees had similar future plans: they wanted to go to university to start, complete or further advance their earlier degrees and learn Finnish in order to get a better job with a higher salary. Some also wished to bring their family members over from the Philippines, whether it was their children, siblings, nieces or nephews. Having family members in Finland would help with feelings of loneliness and also increase the number of people financially supporting the rest of the family, if they could also be employed in Finland. Some hoped for permanent residency and the ability to save up money for their own business, whether it would be here or in the Philippines.

“Go back to school and then turn my company into a different company and employ my siblings.”
- Marisol

“I really need to learn Finnish first and to, yeah maybe it will open many opportunities for me, first to for studies and also for work, ‘cause when you know how to speak Finnish there will be many jobs waiting [laughs].” - Nina

“I still hoping that I can get some of my maybe my nieces /.../ I want to help them to be here also and work /.../ so that they can also help me to work here then the same thing like the support our family in the Philippines. /.../ I want to do better than what I am doing now, because I’m doing only like cleaning.” - Reyna

However, many factors could and do affect the possibility of these future plans. Many struggled to imagine being able to find a balance between studying and working, as studying would take time

away from working and they need to work in order to support themselves and their families in the Philippines. Studying could also affect their current residency permit status; for example, one interviewee has not continued her studies yet, because she would have to switch her permanent residency to a student visa. As the visa and residence permit status of a foreign domestic worker is mainly unstable until after they have had a permanent residency for eight years or so, and possibly acquired Finnish citizenship, it is difficult to make any solid plans. They need to keep working as domestic workers so that their current situation in Finland, and that of their families' in the Philippines, is guaranteed.

“But it’s the problem with don’t have a time to studying here, because who’s the ones to paying my rent and then my rent and then the food also, yeah, and then how you can send money from the Philippines?” - Luz

Thus, legal, economic and social factors continue to shape the life course, giving it potentially unexpected critical moments shifting the course in various directions. Legal processes in Finland still affect these women’s agency, as although they have the ability to dream of the future and could learn Finnish to improve their working situation, the legal requirements still control what kind of a life they can have here and for how long. The employers also affect these women’s agency, as they might either be supportive of or oppose their workers’ desire to end the contract and do something else with their lives. The interviewees’ knowledge of previously experienced critical moments related to why and how they came to Finland, the legal processes and experiences with various Finnish families could also have an effect on how they view their future. The critical moment of deciding to come to Finland has made most of the interviewees think of their future as being in Finland specifically. This indicates that their life courses will continue in Finland for as long as possible. Having a future in Finland requires them to learn Finnish, which is something they are all aware of and willing to do. They know that they do not want to spend the rest of their lives as domestic workers due to their experiences of it and due to wanting to have a better life. However, they also know that they cannot have that better life until they have a permanent residency, forcing them to strive for it and continue working as domestic workers until they do get that residency. Therefore, their experiences of the critical moments posed by the legal processes in Finland do affect their future plans.

6 Discussion and conclusions

6.1 Summary of findings

In this thesis I have defined what a foreign domestic worker is; described the phenomenon from a global, Philippine and local Finnish perspective; explained the life course theory and justified why it is important to observe a Filipina domestic worker's life course and how working in Finland shapes her life course through critical moments. The first critical moment is making the decision to move abroad to work as a domestic worker and the reasons behind this decision. The main reasons are the economic situation of the interviewee and the social relations that both force her and enable her to go to Finland to work as a domestic worker. The second critical moment is encountering legal processes of getting into and staying in Finland, both controlled by, and subjected to, Finnish legal requirements and whether the employing family is willing to help the domestic worker enter the country and willing to follow the laws and the contract made with the domestic worker. The third and final critical moment consists of the particular experiences of working with Finnish families. These experiences posed critical moments in which the domestic worker had to decide whether to continue working with the family or not. The worker would stay if the family treated her well and she would leave if they did not. Afterwards, I described the future plans of the Filipina domestic workers and discussed how the critical moments in their life courses could affect these plans. Most of the interviewees want to continue their university education and learn Finnish in order to get a better job. However, their plans are inevitably subjected to Finnish laws, time and economic constraints; since the type of residence permit can limit what they are able to do in Finland, they do not have the time to combine working and studying, and they must work so that they can continue to support themselves and their families in the Philippines.

From these findings we can see how the agency of Filipina domestic workers is both under the control of others and themselves. Additionally, the critical moments they experienced served to limit and enable their agency. Other people, such as the Finnish authorities and employers and, to some extent, their own families who rely on them for financial support, control the agency of these women by compelling them to work abroad as domestic workers and at the same time controlling where, how and for how long they can do this work in Finland. These women control their own agency when they make the decision to move abroad to work, follow their friends' advice, decide to stay with or leave an employing family and make future plans by themselves. Being aware of their restrictions and abilities and acting upon them is a sign of agency. Although these women should

not be seen solely as victims of their circumstances, it does not mean that these circumstances should not be changed or improved.

6.2 Similarities to previous research

There are many similarities between my findings and previous, international research on foreign domestic workers, although not explicitly from a life course perspective. While I only discussed my findings related to life course theory, my other findings, related to the domestic workers' work experiences, reflect the findings of Cheever, Määttä and Hondagneu-Sotelo. My findings correspond with Parreñas's (2015, 2017) description of migrant domestic workers (see Chapter 3, section 3.1). In Cheever's (2002) research on foreign domestic workers in the USA and Määttä's (2003) research on foreign domestic workers in Finnish families, their interviewees also had to work longer than what was agreed, sometimes even during the night, and struggled with having a clear division between working hours and free time (Cheever 2002, 35; Määttä 2003, 132, 134). In addition, Määttä's interviewees did all the housework and looked after the children; formed strong bonds with the children; and had experiences of being both a family member and a servant, almost like a robot (Määttä 2003, 131–136). Hondagneu-Sotelo's (2002) research also portrays the negative experiences associated with ending the work contract between the employer and domestic worker. One disagreement, including conflicts over pay and demanding an increase in salary, could end the work contract. However, unlike in my findings, the contracts have been mainly terminated by the employers rather than the domestic workers. (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2002, 61, 63.) The fact that Cheever's, Määttä's and Hondagneu-Sotelo's research were conducted in the early 2000s and I have found similar results in my research conducted in 2019 indicates that the situation of foreign migrant domestic workers has neither changed nor really improved.

The similarities between mine and Näre's (2014) research on Ukrainian domestic workers in Italy concern the domestic workers' roles, relationships and agency. The Ukrainian women were already the breadwinners for their families before having to work abroad as a domestic worker (Näre 2014, 226), as was the case with my interviewees. In both researches the women's friends played a key role in helping them find work and staying in the country. There were also experiences of moving out of their employer's homes and finding their own homes. Both researches also depict the women's desire to do something else other than continue doing domestic work, but while this became a reality for Näre's interviewees (who were interviewed over a time period lasting several years), it has yet to become a reality for my interviewees. However, both researches also demonstrate how these women's agency is also subject to constraints, such as legal processes. (ibid., 229–230.)

Although the researches mentioned above do not explicitly refer to life course theory, it is clear that working as a domestic worker in different countries does shape one's life course. The similar findings indicate that domestic work tends to shape life courses in a particular way and consists of the same critical moments in which to exercise one's agency: making the decision to move abroad to work, facing the challenges involved in this work from legal processes to the employing family's treatment and ultimately striving to do something else in the future. Thus, the life course of a foreign domestic worker is quite a complex one requiring understanding and recognition in order for it to be improved.

6.3 Room for improvement

Although I found that my interviewees are happy to live in Finland and have mainly had good experiences here, they came up with improvements that should be made regarding the treatment of foreign domestic workers in Finland. First, the families hiring foreign domestic workers should abide by the laws and the contract made with the worker and there should be a way of ensuring that this happens. Perhaps, if there was a bureau specifically for foreign domestic workers and monthly inspections were made regarding the contract, the working and living conditions, the worker's legal status etc., this could be ensured. Second, the families should pay higher salaries, for example, double pay on weekends and fully paid holidays, and they should pay for overtime work. Although paying for overtime is stated in the Finnish Act on the Employment of Household Workers (as discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.2.), it is not enforced. Perhaps the Act should be revised again including sanctions corresponding to each unfulfilled section. The family should also pay for each task completed by the worker, including extra tasks. Third, the processing of the residence permit should be faster, so that the worker is not living here somewhat illegally and unable to work or travel. Fourth, there should be better work opportunities for foreigners than just cleaning and this should be possible also before knowing the Finnish language. Finally, and most importantly, the workers should be treated as human beings. Their rights should be respected, their employers should try to put themselves in their worker's shoes and there should be open communication between the employer and worker.

The next question is how can these suggestions become a reality? Law enforcement with sanctions is one obvious solution. Effecting a positive change in the law might require lobbying or active protesting, for example, in the form of signed petitions, a method actively used by the Finnish public. Also, creating a bureau specifically for foreign domestic workers, as suggested above, would be extremely useful in informing both the workers and the employers of the domestic worker's rights and ensuring that these rights are respected and that the employer abides by the law.

With regard to the faster processing of the residence permit, I am rather doubtful that will change anytime soon, as I have been told that the Finnish Immigration Service MIGRI is still handling a backlog of applications from 2018 and it is now 2020. Nevertheless, an increase in their staff and resources could potentially speed up the processing of residence permits. However, it is also possible that some permits are processed faster than others, but that discussion is beyond the scope of this thesis. The main factor that needs to change is people's attitudes towards domestic work and the workers themselves. The devaluation of domestic work is a widely studied topic in Gender Studies, Social Policy and Sociology, indicating that it is a real problem requiring efficient solutions. Once domestic work and the people who do it are valued, it is likely that there will be an improvement in how they are treated and that the laws concerning them will be followed.

What do all of these things mean when it comes to understanding the life course of a Filipina domestic worker? They demonstrate that institutional and legal changes must be made in order to make their life courses more equal and less problematic and for the workers themselves to be valued and respected as people.

6.4 Evaluation and suggestions for further research

There are many strengths and limitations in my thesis. The strengths include choosing a unique topic and perspective in Finnish research, conducting my own empirical research, having connections to potential interviewees, acquiring six interviewees through snowball sampling and having the language skills to be able to communicate with them. The limitations of my thesis require more in-depth reflection. My thesis is limited, as I could only interview six people who all happened to be women and from the Philippines. Having a larger sample size could determine whether my findings are in fact common in Finland or whether I have left out a crucial experience that shapes the life course of a Filipina domestic worker. Also, having a more versatile group of interviewees with different gender identities and nationalities could give a broader idea of what it is like to be a domestic worker in Finland and how this work shapes their life course. Are some people excluded or mistreated more due to their gender or nationality and are others treated better due to the same reasons? Are there experiences leading to critical moments that only a particular group of foreign domestic workers share? These are questions a larger, more diverse sample group could potentially answer.

Although I listed my language skills as strengths, language is also a limitation. My interviewees are not native English speakers, so it is not guaranteed that they all understood my questions and comments correctly and it is not guaranteed that I fully understood everything that they told me.

The majority spoke well enough for us to understand each other, but meaning can always be lost in conversations between two people as one can never truly fully understand what the other person means. Perhaps if I was fluent in Filipino, Tagalog or another dialect our communication could have been better. However, translating a Filipino interview into English could risk losing some important information in the translation, also resulting in an incomplete understanding of what the interviewee told me.

Another limitation is the fact that I am a young, white woman from a Nordic country. The way I perceive and have experienced the world is very different compared to my interviewees, although we might agree on some things and share some similar experiences. My own preconceptions of them, the work they do and the conditions in which the work is done may have influenced my interview questions and interpretations of their stories to some extent. However, I can also say that these preconceptions were challenged and partially overthrown by my interviewees.

Furthermore, the possibility that my interviewees might have withheld information or forgotten to tell something during the interviews is also a limitation. Some of my interviewees stated that they felt like they did not have the right to complain about their work, as they were dependent on it. With this in mind, it is very possible that some might have told me more about their positive experiences of working with Finnish families than their negative ones. One also stated that she wants to forget the negative things and only remember the positive things, which could also affect what she both wanted to, and remembered to, tell me.

With these strengths and limitations in mind, it is clear what kind of future research there should be regarding foreign domestic workers and their life courses. An increase in research both nationally and internationally would increase the knowledge and understanding we have of the matter. Having more research on domestic workers of different gender identities and nationalities would break the stereotypical image of the foreign domestic worker as a poor woman from a developing country. There should also be a change in the perspectives used to observe foreign domestic workers. Research should be done from their perspective: how they see themselves, what does this work mean to them and how they have experienced it as shaping their life courses. In addition, it would be crucial to switch from a Global North versus Global South paradigm to one in which we observe why people migrate to countries within the same region. As stated briefly in chapter 2, section 2.1., Latin America has a lot of domestic workers migrating within that region, indicating that the movement of domestic workers is not always from the Global South to the Global North. A change

towards these perspectives could also bring to light more changes that need to be made in order to improve the treatment and the life courses of foreign domestic workers.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Consent form (copied from document, not to scale)

Header text: Bulletin on the Bachelor's thesis and the consent to participate in the research
Faculty of Social Sciences, Degree Programme in Social Sciences
Tampere University, 07.10.2019



I am a student at Tampere University in the Degree Programme in Social Sciences. I am doing my Bachelor's thesis on the following topic: **The experiences of foreign domestic workers in Finland**. I am collecting material for my thesis by interviewing foreign-born domestic workers in Finland.

MY CONTACT INFORMATION

Student's name: Olivia Hoppu

University email address: [REDACTED]

PRESENTING THE RESEARCH

In my thesis I am studying the experiences of foreign domestic workers in Finland and comparing their experiences to those of their colleagues in other countries. My plan is to interview at least 3 or 4 foreign domestic workers in Finland. The research task is threefold: 1. to find out whether, and to what extent, foreign domestic workers have similar experiences globally, 2. to raise awareness of the possible problems they face in Finland regarding their legal status and working conditions, 3. and produce knowledge for the improvement of their situation and treatment in Finnish society.

INFORMING ABOUT THE PROCESSING OF PERSONAL INFORMATION IN THE THESIS

I [the Interviewee] have received both literal and oral information about the research described above and an opportunity to ask questions about it.

I [the Interviewee] have received information that the material (e.g. my recorded interview) will be processed as follows:

1. The confidentiality of the material is secured by this consent form, signed by the student processing the material.

2. In the research report (the Bachelor's thesis) my personal information will be processed in a way in which my name, place of residence, workplace or other information that enable recognition will not be revealed.

3. In addition to the student, the original material can be viewed only by the supervisors of the thesis. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed, after which the original recordings will be deleted. Transcribed text may be cited in the thesis in unidentifiable form.

4. The material collected for the Bachelor's thesis may also be used in the student's Master's thesis.

I [the Interviewee] understand, that participating in the research is voluntary and that I have the right to refuse to participate at any time.

The processing of the personal information of the participant is done according to the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation. Personal information will neither be sent abroad nor to any parties that have not been mentioned in this document. Personal information will be stored by the researcher only for the duration of the research. Personal information will be deleted, once the material has been collected.

The research participant has the right to request their personal information from the researcher and the right to request the correction or deletion of the said information. The research participant has the right to make a complaint to the overseeing authority [thesis supervisors].

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH

I [the Interviewee] am participating in the research voluntarily. I have received literal information about the research and I have been given the possibility to discuss and pose questions about things related to the research.

The information I [the Interviewee] give will be processed confidentially. Research material will not be given to be archived after the thesis is completed.

_____ I consent to the research described above

_____ I have been informed about the processing of personal information in the research in accordance with the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (2016/679).

Date _____

Researcher's signature and name in block letters

Appendix 2: Interview Questions in Themes

Theme 1: Background and warm-up qs

1. First I would like to know which country you are from?
2. How long have you been (working) in Finland?
3. Can you describe what your current job is like?
4. Why did you decide to come to Finland?
5. How did you come to Finland? (directly from home country, from another country, with the family you worked for)

Theme 2: Work history as a domestic worker

1. Why are you working/have you worked as a domestic worker (DW)/nanny/cleaner? Follow-up: do/did you send money home to your family/anyone?
2. Have you worked as a DW in another country(/ies)* before? How many families have you worked for in total/in Finland?
3. Can you tell about the process of how you got your job as a DW in Finland? Was it easy/difficult?

Theme 3: Work history and experiences in Finland

1. (Are you working as a DW now?) → depends on answer in theme 1, q.3
2. Can you describe the normal workday in your current/former job as a DW? (if not currently a DW)
3. What have the families/family been like (how many people, any pets, (wealth))?
4. Can you describe what it is like working for a Finnish family? Do you live with the family or in your own home? How does the family treat you? What do you like and dislike about your job? Are you still in contact with the families you have worked with previously? How have the contracts with the former (if there are any) families ended? (Are there any experiences or stories you would like to share about your time with the family?)
5. Have you had any problems while being in Finland? (e.g. difficult to get residency permit/living in general, finding work, prejudice or racism, disrespectful behaviour from the state/family)
6. What do you think should be changed/improved so that things would be better for you and for other foreign domestic workers in Finland?

Theme 4: Plans and dreams for the future

1. What kind of plans do you have for the future?
2. Where do you think you will be 5 or 10 years from now?
3. What do you hope to do in the future?/ What do you hope for the future?