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Track 4 Care work and Changing Care Arrangements  
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Men as paid care workers: barriers and opportunities for their incorporation in elder and long term.  
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**Talking to Men in Care: Analysis of the Narratives of Men Immigrants caregivers in the Basque Country.**

**Short Abstract:**

Despite the tendency of talking about care linked to female migrations, it is our responsibility as researchers to pay attention to emerging social dynamics. My proposal focuses on the experience of men immigrants caregivers and their narratives in concern to their experiences as care workers in the Basque country. My research involves a theoretical framework in which I develop the concept of Care and Masculinities from a gender perspective, and the use of intersectionality as a tool of analysis. In this communication I will focus on the analysis of the experiences of three immigrant men working as caregivers in the Basque country.

**Key words: Gender, Care, International Migrations, Intersectionality.**

**Introduction:**

This research attempts to bring a different perspective to the studies on gender analysis in international migrations, in order to contribute to the contemporary debate on migrant domestic work, and the crisis of care.

The core of the proposed research is to understand the social reality of these workers, so as to integrate the need to examine the work of men, who are putting their workforce in the paid care sector, especially with regard to the care for elderly and / or dependents.

In order to do so, I will focus on the micro level, in the narratives of these men, and how they create and give meaning to their work and life experiences.

In the macro level I will focus on the division of caring and cleaning work and their ethnostratification, thus, questions of "race" will emerge.

I will focus on two groups of men; on one side, I have conducted four in-depth interviews to Latin men immigrants who just like me are currently writing a Ph.D at the

University of the Basque Country, and also have or have had experience working as caregivers in this area.

The second group of men, are those men who I meet randomly at the streets, I have already conducted two in-depth interviews, but have more than ten confirmed to continue with.

I will use intersectionality because it allows me to focus on the following categories: (nationality, age, legal status, education, and previous work back in origin).

I have selected to main groups, in order to see, if there are any differences on their way to understand care and their work. Which I believe can help as to re-shape the concept of care and also influence better politics where interdependence and human existence are paramount.

These men have been open to talk, their life stories are not that different than the stories we had been reading about on the topic of female migration, it is important to make visible their experiences like men immigrants care givers and their agency capacity as well. Feminist research is not just about women or men, it is about gender equality.

### **Literature Review:**

We are facing a new scenario of feminization of international migration, where many women happen to migrate to other countries to work mainly in domestic service in the field of personal care.

These women have been pioneers in the migratory drag, and with the passage of time in some cases have opted for family reunification, this approach in order to enjoy the day to day life with their partners and children, looking for the right to privacy, pleasure and comfort of daily interaction. (When it has been possible to undertake or according to the reality of each woman). Nevertheless reality in migrations processes, does not respond to a binary reality: good/bad, success/ failure.

Most of globalization literature speaks about money, markets and flows of labor, but pay little attention to women, children and the care of one by the other. (Guiddens, y Hutton, 2001). Lately there is a new trend, due to the work of the past 12 to 15 years there is a good number of works focusing on women and the follow up work research focusing into children of transnational families. As Manalansan (2006) suggested The literature has tended to focus on heterosexual mostly married third world mothers.

In addition Alzueta (2015), Bianchi (2014) y Vicente (2015) in their Doctoral work described how as a result of an andocentric vision, women gets a passive role, as a wife who is following her husband, as companions, by the side of men, the one who usually is migrating for economical purposes, a better life, a better job.

Thanks to the contribution from feminist work women lives and experiences gets focus, the first trend was during the 90's decade in an academical movement called *women's only*. There is where the sex variable is introduced in to the research on international migrations, later on, this trend will get some critics, specially in regard on not being able to improve the conditions of live for the women who migrates ( Donato, Gabaccia, Holdaway, Manalansan & Pessar, 2006).

It is important to start talking about a process of feminization in international migration, but there is still the need to develop better analitical tools, more complex, where sex is understood not just as a variable, but as something culturally constructed, that is relational and respond to an specific context (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Donato, et al., 2006).

From the queer theory Manalansan (2006) presents a theoretical stand point for this work:

“ one way to complicate this deceptively simple picture is to commit to changes in the research agenda. First it is important to examine the work of male domestic workers. Second new work need to focus on gender fluidity and the role of woman as sexual and gendered agentive subjects, gender is relational, then my move to include the work of male domestic workers does not in any way disavow the strong gender factor in labor market segmentation nor dismiss issues of sexism and gender inequality. Rather including the labor of male domestic workers can help nuance and complicate our understanding of the idea and process of “gendering” in the domestic industry”. (Manalansan, 2006:239).

Although different perspectives of gender have already broken through the panorama of migration studies some time ago, or studies about migrant women (which is not the same), it is still necessary to address international migration from a multidimensional perspective, in order to focus on several approaches at once: gender (motives, methods and consequences of migration), and globalization (international labor organization relating to the care of dependents), as the need to incorporate in this research perspectives of the south as well as the north and that construct understandings of place and the local, as well as space and general global process. (Nagar, 2002).

In order to understand the realities of migrants is essential to observe the colonial legacies at the role at the time of the representation of strategies for meeting and subordination, as an element of analyses that goes beyond the framework of what we define as the globalization of care. These migrants have been forced to accept jobs that nobody wanted to do, within a convergence between the needs of the host societies and their own need to find a good job. (Marchetti, 2014).

The context in which the phenomenon of the feminization of international migration emerges is the highest of local services, which has much to do with cultural, demographic and socio-economic changes during the last decades in Western societies. The urgency And the need for these services is the consequence of the aging of the

population, households where both work full time, and the lack of policies that reconcile work and family life in Spain ( Parella, 2003; Martínez 2010; Bianchi, 2014).

Care and domestic work sector has become the work scenario for immigrants in the host country. There is being a linked relation in between female migration and the works of domestic work and care. Nowadays men are also putting their work force into this scenario, with a clear trend: that today they come from a more distant place. The base of the speech is it precariousness, and it is represented and occurs in both men cases as well in women life (Brah, 1999).

Both men and women are empowered to care for and be cared for; however, although care implies significant functions for society, it is the woman, facing a patriarchal world construction, which is almost attributed to her an instinctive way of caring, as well as a super specialization of women in both bodily and emotional care (Torns, 2008, Acosta, 2012).

Care work is being socially related to the women's sphere ,a work that integrates care and proximity with our loved ones, and at the same time it is accompanied by social prestige, low wages and generally a complete vulnerability within a sector that fails to be regulated like many other jobs and professions, shows how contemporary societies are not willing to negotiate and to rethink the importance of care.

An ethic of care involves to be fear with the others and honor in what most people spend their time; taking care of themselves for others and the world (Tronto, 1994).

The silence about care in a crisis scenario, makes it in terms of Juliano (2011) in "the silent crisis", this being an opportune moment to question the invisibility inherent to the issue of care and a non-causal way of how we accept and promote unequal economic structures between men and women, as well as questioning how families, the state and the market intervene in the social organization of care (Pérez-Orozco, 2006; Bodoque, Roca & Comas-D 'Argemir, 2016).

While women, for their part, not only define themselves in a context of human relationships, but are also judged in terms of their ability to care. (Gilligan, 1982) This linkage between care work and women translates into an overproduction of research work that shed light on the experiences of migrant women and domestic work and care. On the other hand Bodoque, Roca & Comas-D'argemir (2016) emphasize the absence of studies on the presence of men in paid work care work.

In the Spanish context Teresa Torns (2008) refers to care as an activity carried out mainly by women, regardless of the area in which it is performed. To this end, it identifies three areas: the public sphere, the private sphere, and the labor market, leaving room for volunteering. In addition Torns mentions how in the development of this activity are involved at least three types of responsibilities: material responsibility (work), economic (cost) and psychological (the affective side, emotion feelings).

The proposal of this research intends to advance in the debate of the crisis of the care incorporating the vision of the immigrant men care workers. For this, it is necessary to go situating the subject next to which this work is constructed. Studies of masculinities are nurtured by feminism and by liberation studies of the

LGTBI community, they understand men from a gender perspective and consider that paying attention to men does not frustrate feminism.

Both the preface to the text by Segarra & Carabí (2000) and the introduction to the text of Marques (1997) use as a reference the phrase of Simone de Beauvoir: "woman is not born, it is done" as a result of a criticism of essentialist reasoning, indicating that the characteristics attributed to women were not biological or innate, but the result of oriented socialization processes. Marques introduces the complementary phrase: "is not born male", reminding us that no emphasis has been placed on the above statement; In the words of Segarra and Carabí "man is not born, man becomes man". It shows how the ideas that we have about how it is to be a "man" and how it is to be a "woman" respond to a process of social constructions, that tends to vary true time and space.

During the last three decades a space has been developed in the academy with the purpose of what has been considered as the study of men and models of masculinity. This has been called as the *Men's Studies* an optics that is dedicated to outlining and accounting for the life of men in their generic reality. (Kimmel, Hearn & Connell, 2004).

The *Men's Studies* incorporate a new visión, where men is not just understood as the general representative of humanity, this studies takes men in their specific socio-historical-cultural formation (Minello, 2002).

Masculinities in plural are multidimensional, and are composed of different layers: race, class, ethnicity and all the various elements that combine to give someone a sense of identity. The importance of this cannot be underestimated and must be constantly present. (Connell, 1995, Kimmel, et al., 2004; Carabí & Armengol, 2008).

In the Spanish context Alzueta (2015) focuses on immigrant men as subjects of study, one of the main criticisms that has been made to the studies on masculinities revolves around the proposal of this work, in which it is intended to give light to the experiences of men as migrant subjects. Another alternative research branch connects with the current need to incorporate men into the spheres of care from the promotion of public policies of gender equality (Comas-D'argemir, 2016; Bodoque, et al., 2016).

In the context of Latin America we must rescue the contributions made by the editions created by Valdés and Olavarría (1997); The work of the anthropologist Gutman on the construction of the concept of machismo linked to the idea of the Latin man, as well as the work of Fuller (2012) rethinking Latin American machismo and Gutman & Viveros (2004) which specifically recommend the urgency of to approach men in research from a gender perspective that have not been taken into account so far. The authors raise the following cases: men in forced displacement in Colombia; studies on the situation of Mexican immigrants in the United States, as well as studies dealing with the political hierarchy that crosses the entire Latin American as a continent.

Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner (1994) work incorporates the experiences of Mexican immigrant men in the United States from a gender perspective immersed in power relations, where these men respond not to the ideal of hegemonic masculinity; on the contrary as a result of a migratory process, they have lost the status they enjoyed at the

origin, especially in the man / woman relations, to now represent a subordinate masculinity in relation to the white, local men for whom they work.

The work of Bianchi (2015) in the context of Migration and Domestic work-care suggest how today because of the economic crisis there is a timid entry of men in the employment, Bianchi recommends to delve into the experiences of these men in order to find possible gender differences in the perception of employment and realization of domestic work.

### **Methodology and Data:**

The methodology is primarily qualitative.

The basic method of data collection will be in-depth interview. The importance of a qualitative approach to the study of international migration is the need of emphasizing the experience of immigrants and how they create and give meaning to their own reality. (Halfacree, and Boyle, 1993).

A point of departure for my work will be what Mullinary and Selberg (2013) argue: Intersectionality also opened up for a critical re-thinking of the tensions between gender and (hetero) sexuality. Although intersectionality can also be seen as a "Buzzword" (Davis, 2008), for this work it allows me to specially focus on the meaning that this men gives to care, and the way in which they understand and see themselves as care workers, to be able to integrate the level of studies in to this analysis is one of the main contributions of the present work.

The men next to whom this research is constructed are Latin American immigrants who are currently living in the Basque Country, and have or had work in the care sector, taking care of the elderly or dependent.

For the purposes of this communication I have selected five categories of analysis:

Talking about Care:

1. How do you feel as a care giver?
2. How do you understand "care"? (as a concept, in general)
3. Routines and work schedules.

Regarding International Migrations

4. Experiences of racism and discrimination.

Gender

5. Gender in care and domestic work.

I am going to present excerpts from three interviews that I have selected from immigrant men who have three different positions regarding to care work.

## **Analysis of the Interviews:**

I have selected 3 interview profiles taking into account divergent positions regarding care. Both Hugo and Paco as Luis share in their experiences more things than they have imagined, however, their positions regarding work as a caregiver and how they identify in front of it are diverse.

### **Hugo:**

Is a 42 year old man from Brazil, who migrates as a result of a previous migration of his wife and daughters.

His first job as a caregiver is obtained thanks to the networks of friendships previously established by his wife, who has also worked as an intern in domestic work. At present, Hugo has obtained a job in a company, thanks to the ties he built with the family employers with whom he has worked in the Basque Country.

#### 1. How do you feel as a care giver?

“Well two hours a day I go to the street with her but I take care of her like my grandmother, like my mother and....”

Hugo is a caregiver who takes care including a personal relation with the employer, and refers to caring for these people as if it were his own family, this interviewed has already taken care of relatives in origin.

#### 2. How do you understand “care”? (as a concept, in general)

“I go out (with her) for two hours, but it’s not just going out, I take care of her as if she were my mother or my grandmother. I also put lipstick on, I cut her nails, I do her manicure and her eyebrows, so before going out I make her look pretty. I think that all humans like to take care of themselves. People like to get dressed up to go out of the house, therefore I do this for her, because I know somebody will do it for my daughters..... my parents taught me to be honest and to be very humble and I believe that is the most important thing that they taught me”.

#### 3. Routines and work schedules.

“I was there for about three hours in the morning on a daily basis to give him his medication, clean the bathroom, I used to do a bit of everything in the house. In fact I learnt from a young age to do a lot of things around the house, to cook, iron, clean clothes and I did this for him, I cleaned the bathroom and after two

months he died and I stayed on looking after his wife who was left alone and I was with her for two years”.

#### 4. Experiences of racism and discrimination

“I feel, I feel like a citizen, because I used to feel like a marginal citizen, as if I were an outlaw, it’s like when you see the Police you have to hide or run because they think you are an outlaw, so you have to be careful, because I have already lived through certain situations when you see the police and you don’t have legal papers, your heart starts racing... but now everything is better, I really feel better”

The legal status of irregular had great effects for Hugo to the point of feeling like a marginal citizen.

#### 6. Gender in care and domestic work.

“..there are more in Old People’s Homes, very little on the streets, you see more immigrants and especially women immigrants and now men immigrants, you now see more men on the streets looking after people, more men. I think that here in Donostia I am the only person that looks after a lady and there was another one looking after another person, there are few men looking after women and that walk with them in the streets, you see more men looking after men”.

For Hugo, the relation of the migrant woman as a caretaker of natives, however, makes clear that the percentage of men who care for native women is lower than that of immigrant men who are caring for native or local men. He explains the gender display in regard of the sex of the person who is taking care and the persons who receives the care.

### **Paco**

He is a Colombian man of 52 years, that has concluded his Ph.d studies at the Basque Country. Paco has returned to his home country.

#### 1. How do you feel as a care giver?

“I don’t accept cleaning chores, I only care for and accompany the person”.

“As a carer I go out for walks, I inform my employer of things. I know how to manage a pulley. I am a special needs educator”.

“I am not an educator that works accompanying people, I hold my head high and and look forward”.

Paco emphasizes the professionalization of care, and does not feel identified with the caregiver role.

2. How do you understand "care"? (as a concept, in general)

"I don't want them to get better, but I don't want them to die either (because then I wouldn't have work)".

In this statement Paco reflects a disconnection with the person he cares for, stating that the important thing is to stay with work. One of the characteristics of the care work, and especially for the people who work in the situation of inmates, is that the caregiver loses the work and even the home at the time this person dies. This is why Paco affirms that he does not die and when he states that he is not encouraged, he refers to the fact that it is thanks to this situation of dependence that he enters into an equation.

3. Routines and work schedules.

"I hope I get a wonderful job: the guy was a neurasthenic: it affected his behaviour, he was a Basque man. The family did not have him for Christmas. I earned 1000 euros in 2004, from the 24th of December to the 6th of January. They knew this guy was disgusting, having to go with him to the bathroom so that he could change... he was 60 or 62 years old".

4. Experiences of racism and discrimination

At the house we had everything, amongst the Latinos there was a lot of competition. I used to sit at the table (with my employer). The help was in the kitchen (they were Bolivians). I used to read to him. I asked him if he was uncomfortable when I sat with him and his answer was "Not at all. Why? What is happening?".

Paco has experienced situations of racism at work, emphasizes his status as a doctoral student and at the same time has discriminated against other groups of immigrants.

5. Gender in care and domestic work.

"Depending on the disease it comes in handy to be strong... one day I carried a friend in a wheelchair, you have to have physical ability, have technique to hold and if you have a guy that is 1,90 m you can't take him by the arm, you have to have your hand on his waist".

Paco has experienced a specific situation of dependency, which is why he emphasizes the need for strength, and professionalism in care. For the welfare of both the care receiver and the caregiver.

## **Luis**

Luis is a 42 year old man who was born in El Salvador, with two migratory experiences prior to the migration to the Basque Country, one in the United States, a country from which he was deported and a subsequent attempt to search for work in the Dominican Republic.

Like so many women who make the decision to migrate, Luis migrates to the Basque Country thanks to the support of a childhood neighbor, thanks to that network he also finds his first job as a caregiver. He currently works from Monday to Sunday, six hours a day.

### 1. How do you feel as a care giver?

“hahahahaha to tell the truth Tony’s father was the first person that I took care of and I think that from there on I liked it and.. well now I do this for a living, this is more human, it is like you are helping those more in need”.

Luis has accepted his role of work as a caregiver, but emphasizes the harshness of the migration process, the idea of seeking a new life, and sees his work as a caregiver with gratitude. It should be remembered that he has experienced two previous migratory attempts.

### 2. How do you understand “care”? (as a concept, in general)

“the work consists of taking care of the old person and tending to all their needs but part of my responsibility has been taken away”.

### 3. Routines and work schedules.

“My work consists of giving the person their medication. From the moment I arrive or I arrive to see that they are well, I transfer them from the chair to the sofa, to the sofa to the chair so that they are not in one position all the time. I also have to feed them so I prepare their food. We also have to leave the house, the most important thing is to go out, because people like that, with that illness, if they spend all day indoors, they go crazy, therefore they have to walk, walk, see things that move outside and that is what we do, we go out two, three hours on a daily basis and then I prepare the food, I feed them, I taken them to the bathroom, I clean them and then I sit them down on the sofa again and I go home”.

### 4. Experiences of racism and discrimination

“my latin friends call me “limpiaculos” but Im proud of my work”

5. Gender in care and domestic work.

“I don’t think that there are differences, because the difference is in the person that hires you, but a woman cleans, cooks and does the same things that I do it and I do the same things that women do, so if I have to clean him, if I have to bathe him, if I have to change his clothes, if I have to iron the clothes, I do the same things”.

Luís not only refers to physical strength but also to emotional strength. He also has no objection to recognizing that he also performs domestic work.

**Conclusions:**

Focusing light on the experiences of men with subordinated or marginalized masculinities, those men who are also seen as the OTHER, it is important to understand how gender relations are currently changing.

All the men who have been approached to participate in the research, have accepted and have agreed on the importance of giving light to their life and work experiences.

To integrate their stories can open new alternatives to the current crisis of care in which we live, their experiences can be of great help in thinking about new models and forms of care that integrate the participation of different actors: the State, The family and immigrants.

There is still much to do in order to change how as individuals, as a society we understand the work of care and domestic work.

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