Reconfigurations of Femininity and Masculinity in and through the National Childcare Policy in Cambodia

by

SAMBAT MY

ORCID iD 0000-0003-3087-7308

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Abstract

This dissertation critically interrogates the link between the National Childcare Policy in Cambodia, Khmer cultural discourse on care, and young women’s and men’s lived experiences of childcare practices. Situated in the emergent scholarship on care policies in developing countries, this research probes beyond the existing analytical focus on women’s burden of care work. The key contribution of this thesis is the articulation of a new feminist framework for transformative care, which consists of three tools: methodological, evaluative, and conceptual. The methodological tool—critical approaches to childcare policies—scrutinises the cultural and policy contexts of care policies and the assumptions underlying proposed policy representations, while interrogating policy silence on alternative representations. It also analyses the policy consequences of the allocation of care between different actors in the ‘care diamond’ (the state, the private sector, the not-for-profit sector, and the family), and between genders within the family.

The evaluative tool of this new feminist framework—the transformative ethics of care—assesses care policies against core ethical criteria: recognition, reduction, redistribution, representation, solidarity between social groups, and women’s autonomy. These criteria determine whether care policies are ‘ethically transformative’ or not, so they are crucial in relation to the moral imperative that requires genuine listening to the voices of family carers and/or women, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, directly or through their representation. Seriously taking these voices into account when designing care policies can lead to the redistribution of care labour and costs from the private sphere to the public arena to enhance both solidarity between social groups and women’s autonomy at the family level.

To analyse the distribution of care labour within the family, this new feminist framework deploys two conceptual tools: ‘social care’ and ‘caring masculinities’. The concept of ‘social care’ enables this research to capture women’s lived experiences and practices of childcare and to analyse cultural discourses on childcare. Further, it draws our attention to the role of the state in either weakening or reinforcing such cultural discourses. The concept of ‘caring masculinities’ permits this thesis to examine the extent to which, and
how, men have engaged in ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care alongside their breadwinning role. I define ‘caring masculinities’ along a continuum that encompasses ‘less-caring’ and ‘more-caring’ practices at each extreme, both shaped by men’s conceptions of their intersecting identities as fathers and husbands.

The data analysed in this dissertation are from policy texts and from people’s perspectives and/or experiences drawn from in-depth interviews with 104 respondents at the national, preschool, and family levels who have been engaged in and/or affected by the policy. The research data also draws on non-participant observations. The interviews and observations, which were used to understand gendered caring practices, were triangulated with the textual analysis.

By applying a new feminist framework for transformative care, this research argues that some Khmer women and men are adopting ‘reflexive reconfigurations’ of care practices, although others are strongly shaped by the interplay between Khmer cultural discourse on care in the Chbab Srey and the Chbab Pros and the state’s role in reconstructing such a discourse through its education textbooks and policies on childcare. By ‘reflexive reconfigurations’ I mean women are renegotiating Khmer cultural discourse on childcare by encouraging their husbands to engage more in care work, with men responding to their spouses’ constant negotiations by adopting ‘more-caring practices’. This suggests the possibility of transforming the gendered division of care labour within the family.
Declaration

I declare that the PhD thesis entitled ‘Reconfigurations of Femininity and Masculinity in and through the National Childcare Policy in Cambodia’ is my own work and no more than 100,000 words in length, including footnotes but exclusive of tables, diagrams, references, and appendices. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree. I certify that the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research project. I also certify that due acknowledgment has been made in the text to all other material used.

Sambath My
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Chapter 1
Introduction

Scholarship on care policies in development contexts is an emergent interest of gender studies and feminist scholars. This dissertation critically interrogates the link between childcare policy discourses and practices, cultural discourses on childcare, and women’s and men’s ‘reflexive reconfigurations’ of childcare practices. This research probes beyond the existing analytical focus on women’s burden of care work in the developing world. The existing analytical focus of research in Cambodia tends to be on women’s burden of childcare and the role of childcare policies on children’s educational development; therefore, the focus of this thesis on the link outlined above is crucial as it enables us to see multiple conceptions of care work and multiple practices of women and men in care work.

This chapter starts with the rationale for this dissertation. It then lays out key concepts central to this research: 'care' and 'social care', caring masculinities, and care policies. Drawing on the conception of care policies, the third section gives an overview of Cambodia’s childcare policies during three different periods. The fourth section outlines the research aims and questions, then sketches out the theoretical research framework. The chapter ends with an outline of this thesis and its argument.

1.1 Rationale for this Research

Not until relatively recently was care work on the international development agenda, although it has been an essential field of feminist research in the developed world since the 1990s. Early feminist scholarship on care policies focused on comparative studies in the developed world. These studies dealt with how different welfare states have treated
women as wives, mothers, citizens, and paid workers in relation to childcare (see Lewis 1992; Lewis & Ostner 1994; Orloff 1997; Sainsbury 1994). The issue of women’s burden of unpaid care was initially recognised in the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, but there was no concrete plan or policy among the United Nations (UN) member states to address it. Unpaid care has largely been ignored in development policy and programming (Eyben 2012). The problem was brought up at a meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2009, which laid down a ‘social policy roadmap’ for UN member states on care (Bedford 2012). Subsequently, care work—in the form of unpaid care and domestic work—was the focus of one target in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, thus formally placing the issue on the international development agenda. It placed a moral obligation on UN member states in developing countries to design social policies to address care work. Several feminist scholars welcomed this move while expressing reservations about the possibility of the obligation being neglected in practice (Esplen & O’Neill 2017; Esquivel & Kaufman 2017; Fukuda Parr 2016; Khan 2017; Razavi 2016; Rosche 2016; Seguino 2016). This incorporation of care in the international development agenda was mainly the result of feminist advocacy and research on care policies in development contexts.

Feminist research on care policies has primarily focused on the position and experiences of women. Such research in development contexts tends to concentrate on women’s burden of childcare and eldercare with a methodological focus on analysis of policy texts and time-use survey data (see Baird, Ford & Hill 2017; Razavi 2012b; Razavi & Staab 2012a). These studies therefore do not thoroughly investigate the qualitative nuances of women’s and men’s lived experiences of childcare.

In Cambodia, there has been no study examining such nuances, although some relevant studies tend to focus on women's burden of childcare and the role of care policies on children's educational development. Some studies on women’s burden of care and housework are related to research about traditional gender norms and gender relations (Brickell 2007a, 2011a; Eng & Sin 2007). Studies on childcare policies focus on children’s mental and educational development (Rao & Pearson 2009; Rao et al. 2012), or are general surveys of care within childcare and eldercare literature (Ward 2017). The most relevant works are a book chapter written by Ward (2017) and a report by Eng and Sin (2007) commissioned by the World Bank and the Ministry of Women’s Affairs. The
book chapter is not based on empirical research; rather it reviews existing childcare and
eldercare literature in Cambodia. The report by Eng and Sin (2007) maps out some
available childcare services and childcare practices within the family, but does not
provide an in-depth analysis of men’s and women’s childcare practices.

With the narrow focus on women’s burden of childcare and/or the impact of care policies
on children’s educational development, studies on men’s roles in childcare are rare in
Cambodia. Globally too the research on the role of care policies in constructing men’s
masculinities is relatively limited, though recognised as important (Hearn, Pringle &
Balkmar 2018). Particular attention needs to be paid to the role of social policy in
constructing masculinities and to men’s role in care work for the global care agenda to be
realised (Queisser 2016). This argument reflects an emergent interest in masculinities and
care in critical masculinity studies (Doucet 2013; Elliott 2016; Hunter, Riggs &
Augoustinos 2017; Jordan 2020; Marsiglio & Pleck 2005) and social geography (Blunt &
Dowling 2006; Gorman-Murray 2008). There is a dearth of scholarship on
masculinities and care in the developing world, especially in the Asian context (Yeung
2013, 2016), although there are many studies about men and masculinities. An edited
volume on men and masculinities in Southeast Asia by Ford and Lyons (2012), for
instance, focuses on ‘male heteronormative models of sexuality’ in different Southeast
Asian contexts (p. 2). Specifically, in Cambodia, studies on men and masculinities have
predominantly focused on hegemonic masculinity, especially its links with violence
against women (see Brereton 2009; Bylander 2015; GADC 2010; Haque 2012, 2013;
Jacobsen 2012; Scandurra et al. 2017). There is therefore a need for a critical investigation
of the link between childcare policy discourses and practices, cultural discourses on
childcare, and women’s and men’s ‘reflexive reconfigurations’ of childcare practices in
Cambodia.

1.2 Interrelated Concepts of Care

As this dissertation is about childcare policies, and women’s and men’s engagement in
care, I need to first define four interrelated vital concepts, “care”, “social care”, “caring
masculinities”, and “childcare policies”, before proceeding further. Section 1.2.1
conceptualises ‘care’ and ‘social care’ by drawing on three interrelated feminist
disciplines: moral philosophy, economics, and social policy. The concept of ‘caring’ as a
process in feminist moral philosophy and masculinity theory enable this research to reconceptualise ‘caring masculinities’ in a novel way in Section 1.2.2. Finally, Section 1.2.3 conceptualises ‘care policies’ through a critical review of the conceptions of care policies in the developed and developing worlds.

1.2.1 Concepts of Care and Social Care

The conceptualisation of care has varied across disciplines and has evolved over time. Concepts of ‘caring’ and ‘social care’ are essential to this dissertation.¹ Pioneering feminist scholarship conceptualised care as women’s unpaid domestic work and personal services within the social relations of marriage and kinship. Sociologist Hilary Graham (1983), for instance, conceptualised “caring” in relation to ‘human experiences’, encompassing both the ‘feeling concern for’ and ‘taking charge of’ ‘the well-being of others’, which have both ‘psychological and material’ aspects (p. 13). She asserted that caring is a ‘labour of love’ and associated it with women’s labour of love, especially within private spaces: the home and family. Drawing on this conception, sociologist Kari Waerness (1984) conceptualised caring as ‘caregiving work’, ‘personal services’, and ‘spontaneous care’ in a relationship between at least two people. She associated these types of caring with women's work or service. In this view, caring involves power relations between the carer and the care receiver. Caring is deemed as 'caregiving work' when the recipients do not have the capacity for self-care (Waerness 1984). In such cases, carers tend to be relatively more powerful than care recipients. Providing care to children or ill people is an example. Caring is a ‘personal service’ when the care recipient has capacity for self-care but still receives care from the carer (Waerness 1984). In this case the care recipient may be relatively more powerful than the carer. Women may care for their husbands, for example. ‘Spontaneous care’ is based on ‘balanced reciprocity’ (Waerness 1984) in circumstances where, for instance, individuals may help their friends with some issues. The concept of ‘caring’ involves power relations and relates to women’s concern for family members, and actual practices of caregiving to them.

Theorising care for people within familial relations has some limitations given that care can be for non-human beings and/or provided by non-family members. Caring can be

¹ The term “care work” is often used interchangeably with other similar terms such as “care”, “care labour”, “caring”, or “social care”. In this thesis, I use these terms interchangeably except for the term “social care” as defined in this section.
provided by paid domestic workers from other races or ethnic backgrounds (Graham 1991). Care is defined broadly by feminist moral philosopher Joan Tronto (1993b, 1998). She captures non-human beings and extends its boundary beyond familial relations, defining care as ‘a species activity that includes everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our “world” so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web’ [original emphasis] (Tronto 1993b, p. 103). She elaborates this definition to emphasise four main features. The first argues that caring can be for both human and non-human beings, such as objects and the environment (Tronto 1993b). The second suggests that caring is more than just being ‘dyadic or individualistic’, assumed to be a relationship between two people, a mother and a child, for example (Tronto 1993b, p. 103). The third feature is that caring is primarily defined by culture and thus varies across cultures, and, finally, the fourth defines caring as an ongoing process, as phases or dimensions (Tronto 1993b). Focusing on caring for people, this broad definition captures caregiving, personal services, and spontaneous care from Waerness’s (1984) perspective, as well as the notion of care within the SDGs’ language: unpaid care and domestic work.

This broad conception of care—capturing the nurturing aspect of care (unpaid care) and domestic work—is useful for this thesis. Domestic work is often overlooked in empirical research on care in the developed world (Razavi & Staab 2012b); for example, care is conceptualised as interpersonal interactions between carers and care-receivers to address physical and/or non-physical caring needs of the latter (see England, Budig & Folbre 2002; Eyben 2012; Standing 2001). The exclusion of domestic work from care cannot fully capture care practices in developing countries. Consequently, Razavi and Staab (2012b, 2018) assert that domestic work needs to be considered as one key component of care analysis in developing country contexts. The conception of caring in Tronto’s (1993b, 1998) sense is defined as “direct care” [the nurturing aspect] and “indirect care” [domestic work], in accord with feminist economics and social policy (see Esquivel 2014; Folbre 2006). This dissertation adopts these terms, “direct” and “indirect” care, when emphasising the two components.

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2 This definition is based on her earlier work with Berenice Fisher (see Fisher & Tronto 1990).
This thesis also finds the conception of caring as an ongoing process useful, especially for theorising “caring masculinities” in the subsequent section, as it involves an analysis of power relations. Tronto’s (1993b, 1998) concept of caring can be used for various purposes but requires ‘a mental disposition of concern’ and ‘actual practices’ that occur in an ongoing process as phases (or dimensions): “caring about”, “caring for”, “caregiving”, and “care-receiving”. ‘Caring-about’ happens when one is aware of and paying attention to caring needs. After identifying the caring needs, one engages in ‘caring-for’ when one takes an abstract responsibility for the caring needs and identifies how to respond to those needs. ‘Caregiving’, the actual practice of providing care work, corresponds with the fourth phase of ‘care-receiving’ (Tronto 1993b, 1998). The concept of caring as a process underlines the importance of the care receiver’s voice in the caring process because it can indicate how well caring needs are met (Tronto 1993b, 1998). Tronto (1993b, 1998, 2013) elaborates this caring process to capture power relations between the care provider and the care recipient, in Waerness’s (1984) sense. In some cases, the caregiver is relatively more powerful than the care recipient, but the reverse is true in other cases.

The concept of ‘caring’ as an ongoing process is beneficial for this dissertation in two respects. First, it covers both ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care, which is appropriate for social policy research in developing countries like Cambodia. Second, analysing power relations within the caring process is useful for theorising and analysing ‘caring masculinities’, discussed in the following subsection. Tronto’s (1993b, 1998) concept of caring does not, however, provide sufficient analytical elements for analysing the social relations of care.

The concept of ‘social care’ is therefore essential because of its analytical components for care policy analysis. ‘Social care’ is conceptualised by Mary Daly and Jane Lewis (1998, 2000) as a multi-dimensional concept capturing the social and political economy within which care is situated. This conceptualisation seeks to capture the ‘important dimensions of women’s lives’ and ‘more general properties of social arrangements’ around caring needs (Daly & Lewis 2000, pp. 284-85). ‘Social care’ is defined as ‘the activities and relations involved in meeting the physical and emotional requirements of dependent adults and children, and the normative, economic and social frameworks within which these are assigned and carried out’ (Daly & Lewis 2000, p. 285). In this
conception, care captures both ‘material and relational’ aspects [original emphasis] (Esquivel 2014, p. 430) based on three dimensions. The first dimension considers care as "labour". Conceptualising care in such a way places the spotlight on the nature of labour and the conditions under which labour is provided (Daly & Lewis 2000). The second dimension situates ‘social care’ within a normative framework of obligation and responsibility’ (Daly & Lewis 2000, p. 285), a ‘socially constructed responsibility’ (Esquivel 2014, p. 430). Locating care in this way allows us to analyse the ‘conditions of social and/or familial relations and responsibilities’ in which caregiving activity is provided (Daly & Lewis 2000, p. 285). It also draws our attention to the role of the state in either weakening or reinforcing social norms around care. The third dimension sees care as an activity with financial and emotional costs (Daly & Lewis 2000, p. 285). Since these costs extend across private and public boundaries, there is a need to investigate how costs are distributed among individuals, families, and within society.

The concept of ‘social care’ is essential for this dissertation in two respects. First, it can cover both ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care, which enables this research to scrutinise these two aspects of childcare. Second, it allows this study to examine the social relations of care and the state's role in reproducing or transforming social norms on care. It also permits this research to investigate Khmer cultural discourse on care and women's configurations of care practices. Although the concept of ‘social care’ incorporates both childcare and eldercare, this dissertation limits the focus to childcare analysis. The term ‘social care’ in this dissertation therefore refers to childcare and excludes eldercare.

1.2.2 Reconceptualising Caring Masculinities

The theorisation of ‘caring masculinities’ is central to this research in investigating men’s caring practices alongside their breadwinning role and their interactions with their spouses on this issue. Karla Elliott (2016) conceptualises ‘caring masculinities’ as ‘masculine identities’ that repudiate ‘domination and its associated traits’ and incorporate moral values of care, including ‘positive emotion’, ‘interdependence’, and ‘relationality’ (p. 24). This conceptualisation has two main limitations, one of which is the exclusion of ‘indirect care’ and ‘breadwinning’. In this thesis, I conceptualise ‘indirect care’ and ‘breadwinning’ as part of ‘caring masculinities’. As elaborated in the previous subsection, ‘caring’ encompasses both ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care, while ‘breadwinning’ can be
considered as one dimension of care (Schmidt 2018). Another limitation of Elliot’s (2016) concept of 'caring masculinities' lies in its assumption that men’s caring practices are only influenced by men's identities as fathers, rather than their intersecting identities as fathers and husbands.

I reconceptualise ‘caring masculinities’ to capture a complex link between men’s engagement in ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care alongside breadwinning. This reformulated concept builds on the concept of ‘caring’ as an ongoing process (Tronto 1993b, 1998) and on masculinity theory (Connell 1995, 2000, 2005, 2009; Messerschmidt 2016, 2018). Such a reconceptualisation of ‘caring masculinities’ enables this research to examine the multiple patterns of men’s engagement in ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care alongside their breadwinning role. This will be further elaborated in Chapter 3 and articulated in empirical evidence on Khmer men’s caring practices in Chapter 9. The empirical data will illustrate the multiple patterns of caring masculinities.

1.2.3 Conceptualisation of Care Policies

Care policies are conceptualised to capture three broad elements of money, care services, and time, which can be classified across four domains in the developing world. In her work on social policies on care in Scandinavia, Anne Lise Ellingsaeter (1999) theorises care policies to encompass three broad elements: money, care services, and time. Drawing on this conception, Valeria Esquivel (2014) theorises ‘care policies’ in the developing world as ‘policies that assign resources to care—time and/or money to existing caregivers, and/or deliver care services to reduce the workload of carers and transfer responsibility for delivery from the private household or family space to the state’ (p. 431). This definition can be applied across four domains of care policies (Esquivel 2016, 2018). The first domain is care service policies that aim for the redistribution of the caregiver’s burden from the private to the public sphere. These include early childhood education and care services and care services for the sick, people with disabilities, and older people, as well as those living with HIV/AIDS (Esquivel 2016, 2018). The second domain, care-relevant infrastructure, encompasses, for example, digging wells or ponds that aim to reduce women’s burden of unpaid work (Esquivel 2016, 2018). This is related to appropriate infrastructure and technology in water and sanitation, and domestic technology, which contribute to a decrease in time spent on unpaid domestic work.
undertaken by women in developing countries (Razavi & Staab 2012b). The recognition of this domain is consonant with Razavi and Staab’s (2018) argument for incorporating ‘indirect care’ in care-related research in developing countries, an aspect that is taken for granted in social policy research in the developed world. The third domain of policies is care-related social protection policies (Esquivel 2016, 2018). These include cash transfer programs, public works’ programs, pensions, and income security for children and their families, as well as for older people or people with disabilities (Esquivel 2016, 2018). Razavi and Staab (2012b) add health insurance as an additional example of this domain of policies. The fourth domain of such policies is labour market regulations which include maternal and/or paternal leave and benefits, as well as working-time arrangements (Esquivel 2016, 2018). Some labour regulations, such as Cambodia’s Labour Law, also regulate childcare services. The domain of labour market regulations therefore intersects with the first domain of care services’ policies.

The above conception of care policy domains illustrates that ‘care-relevant infrastructure’ is not theorised as a care policy domain in the developed world\(^3\) though it is conceptualised as such in the developing world. This domain is especially relevant for women in informal employment in rural areas. It accords with the argument for incorporating 'indirect care' as an analytical component of care, as elaborated in Subsection 1.2.1. These care policy domains can therefore address the care issues of people both in the formal and informal employment sectors. While the primary concern of this dissertation is childcare services’ policies in Cambodia, it also needs to investigate the domain of ‘labour market regulations’ because of its provisions relating to childcare services for women in the formal employment sector.

### 1.3 Overview of Childcare Policies in Cambodia

In Cambodia, childcare policies can be traced and analysed in three temporally distinct contexts, which are necessary for this childcare policy research. The first is childcare arrangements under the socialist regime in the 1980s after the Khmer Rouge period (also known as the Killing Fields) in the second half of the 1970s. There was no specific

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childcare policy under the socialist regime, but elements of state daycare were clearly stipulated in Article 27 of the socialist regime’s Constitution as follows:

The state cares for mothers and children. The state and society organise maternity clinics, nurseries, and children’s gardens and take other appropriate measures to reduce women’s housewife burdens and facilitate women to participate in social activities on equal terms with men.

Female workers or employees enjoy a ninety-day maternity leave with pay. Nursing mothers enjoy a reduction of daily work hours while receiving the public welfare defined by the state. The state shall take concrete measures concerning women working outside the state sector.

This provision was translated into some public daycare services for 0 to 3 year old children for state and state-run enterprises’ employees (Eng & Sin 2007; Jacobsen 2008; Swaminathan 1985). It was further translated into full-day preschool programs for 3 to 6 year old children (Eng & Sin 2007; Jacobsen 2008; Swaminathan 1985).

Childcare under the post-socialist regime between 1993 and 2010 is the second context. Public daycare services and preschool programs were dramatically reduced in the 1990s due to the adoption of a market economy after the first election in 1993. This adoption resulted in the reduction of public expenditure in the health and education sectors and the privatisation of state-owned enterprises. Consequently, state-run daycare services disappeared, and there was a sharp drop in the number of preschools. This problem was partly due to the lack of a specific policy on childcare in this period and the absence of political will to firmly enforce some childcare provisions which were embedded in the Constitution and the Labour Law. Article 73 of the 1993 Constitution stated that ‘The state cares for children and mothers. The state organises nurseries and attends to women without support who have many children under their care.’ This provision could be interpreted as stipulating day care services for women with or without paid employment in the labour market. Women with paid employment in the labour market were protected by other legal provisions in the Labour Law promulgated in 1997. The Labour Law stipulated that any enterprises, including agricultural ones, employing at least 100 female workers had to provide day care services to their employees or pay day care fees charged by other day care providers to which their female employees sent their children. If firmly enforced, this legal provision for childcare services had the potential to benefit many women in the labour market, particularly in the garment and footwear sector in which a
large majority of factories employed more than 100 employees. Of the total 861 business enterprises employing at least 100 workers, almost half (421) were in the manufacturing sector (National Institute of Statistics 2015, p. 12). That sector made up 72 per cent of Cambodia's total merchandise exports in 2017 (ILO and IFC 2018, p. 8). All factories together employed 641,461 workers in 2017, the vast majority (88 per cent) workers (Ministry of Commerce cited in ILO and IFC 2018, p. 8). The analysis of childcare services in labour market regulations therefore needs to pay particular attention to the garment and footwear sector.

Within the post-socialist childcare context, specific childcare policies with a limited scope were adopted in the 2000s. The state adopted two ministerial policies on care, and enacted the Education Law. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) adopted its first ministerial policy on Early Childhood Education (ECE) in June 2000. This was the first time in educational history that Cambodia had adopted a specific policy on ECE, but this policy had limited scope in relation to preschool education for children aged 3 to 5. In April 2006, another ministerial policy on Alternative Care for Children was adopted by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY). This policy stipulated some care services for orphaned and other vulnerable children. Later, in 2007, the state promulgated the Education Law, Article 16 of which stipulated that ‘The state shall support early childcare and childhood education (ECCE) from the age of zero to before kindergarten’. There is a general definition of ECCE in Article 16, but the Article states that ECCE needs to be further defined by a relevant institution in a policy.

The third childcare regime, from 2010 to the present, determined the national childcare agenda that is the focus of this dissertation. In 2010, the National Policy on Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) (hereafter referred to as National Childcare Policy) was adopted, coordinated by the National Committee for Childcare Policy. It was not until 2014 that the first Action Plan 2014-18 for this policy was developed. The National Childcare Policy and its first Action Plan outlined the national childcare agenda

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4. This figure is drawn from a sample of 464 factories with a total of 602,607 workers.
5. It was stated so in this policy.
6. Although this policy employs the initials “ECCD”, the 2007 Education Law uses “ECCE” which is used in the Education for All of the UN documents. I therefore use “ECCE” and “ECCD” interchangeably in this research.
for the country. The primary difference between the post-socialist childcare framework and the third [contemporary] childcare regime is that the latter has a national childcare agenda while the former childcare framework had only ministerial care policies. There is no difference between the two regimes in terms of their legal frameworks [the Constitution, the Labour Law and the Education Law], so I include these legal provisions as part of the analysis in the national childcare agenda because they are still in effect.

1.4 Research Aims, Questions, and Scope

This research aims to understand the link between the conceptualisation of childcare in the National Childcare Policy and gendered configurations of childcare responsibilities and arrangements at the family level in Cambodia. Understanding culturally-embedded gender norms is crucial to the investigation of National Childcare Policy as these norms may influence policy development as well as childcare arrangements at the family level. This research therefore aims to examine how gender norms have influenced the construction of the National Childcare Policy, policy practices, and women's and men's lived experiences of childcare. To achieve this aim, the study will examine the following critical questions:

(1) How have gender norms shaped the National Childcare Policy?

(2) How has the policy constructed masculinities and femininities in childcare?

(3) How have Khmer men and women reconfigured their masculinities and femininities in and through childcare?

This dissertation will answer the research questions at the macro and micro levels. The macro-level analysis will examine Khmer cultural and policy discourses, and policy practices. The first research question requires an analysis of Khmer cultural norms on care, which have their roots in two traditional codes, the *Chbab Srey* for women and the *Chbab Pros* for men, and consideration of the embeddedness of these codes in social institutions in Khmer society and in educational textbooks. The primary sub-question exploring these aspects is: What are the implicitly and/or explicitly stated responsibilities of men and women in childcare? Investigating these cultural norms in this way will broaden our understanding of the extent to which such norms have influenced Khmer people directly and/or through educational institutions. This is the basis for the analysis of how gender norms have influenced childcare policy texts.
The first and second research questions are linked. Following the analysis of Khmer cultural norms of care, this research will answer the related research questions by investigating the problematisation of childcare in the National Childcare Policy. The key sub-questions for investigation are as follows:

How is childcare problematised in the current policy? What are the assumptions underpinning this problematisation?

What are the issues excluded from this problematisation?

What are the responsibilities of men and women in childcare implicitly or explicitly stated in this problematisation?

To investigate this problematisation, I will scrutinise policy texts of the National Childcare Policy, its first Action Plan 2014-18, and other relevant legal documents on childcare services, such as the Constitution and the Labour Law. To understand the problematisation of childcare in this policy, we need to analyse the 'constitutive contexts' of this policy in the previous regimes, both in the 1980s and between the 1990s and the 2000s.

The micro-level analysis will answer the third question through a critical examination of policy practices and women’s and men’s responses to Khmer cultural and policy discourses and policy practices. The key sub-questions in this investigation are as follows:

To what extent, and how, have policy practices reproduced the Khmer cultural discourse of care?

To what extent and how have cultural and policy discourses, policy practices, and policy silences influenced women’s and men’s responsibilities in childcare? In what ways have men and women conformed to and/or resisted these discourses and practices?

This level of analysis will draw on the perspectives of policy practitioners at preschool-level and the lived experiences of household-level respondents who have been affected by the policy. I will investigate both women’s and men’s lived experiences in childcare to capture gendered nuances in various caring phases.
1.5 Theoretical Approach: New Feminist Framework for Transformative Care

To answer the interrelated research questions, this thesis has developed a new feminist theoretical framework for transformative care. This framework consists of three linked tools: methodological, evaluative, and conceptual. While the methodological and evaluative tools deal with both macro- and micro-level analyses, the conceptual tools are for a micro-level analysis of caring practices. Developing such a framework is a crucial theoretical contribution in the fields of gender, masculinity, and social policy as it enables us to critically analyse childcare policies at both macro and micro levels to understand the relationship between cultural discourses on care, policy discourses and practices, and gendered configurations of childcare practices.

In Chapter 2, I theorise the methodological tool and name it as ‘critical approaches to care policies’ by drawing on critical approaches to policy (Bacchi 1999, 2009; Bacchi & Goodwin 2016; Fernandez 2012; Gasper & Apthorpe 1996; Hajer 1993; Shore & Wright 1997b, 2011) and the concepts of ‘care diamond’ (Razavi 2007a) and ‘social care’ (Daly & Lewis 2000) in feminist scholarship on care policies. The theorisation of this tool is focused in two ways. First, I add a cultural discourse analysis to the existing analytical components of constitutive contexts, policy representations, policy assumptions, policy silences, and policy consequences. Second, the analysis of these analytical components is anchored in the concepts ‘care diamond’ and ‘social care’ at the macro and micro levels of analysis. The macro-level analysis seeks to investigate the relative allocation of care responsibility between the four actors (the state, the private sector, the not-for-profit sector, and the family) in the ‘care diamond’, and to examine the features and politics of this allocation. The concept of ‘social care’ enables us to investigate the distribution of care labour between genders and across generations within the family. This level of analysis also examines the state’s role in transforming or reproducing cultural discourses on care which shape the gendered division of labour across generations.

In Chapter 2, I also theorise the evaluative tool, the ‘transformative ethics of care’, by bringing together the works of feminist moral philosophers (Clement 1996; Tronto 1993b, 1998, 2013) and gender justice scholars (Daly 2001; Esquivel 2014; Fraser 1997, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2008). This tool is essential because it enables us to assess whether care policies are ‘ethically transformative’ based on six core criteria: recognition, reduction,
redistribution, representation, solidarity, and women’s autonomy. These transformative ethical criteria are crucial in relation to the moral imperative that requires genuine listening to the voices of family carers and/or women, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Seriously taking these voices into account when designing care policies can lead to the redistribution of care labour and costs from the private sphere to the public arena to enhance solidarity between social groups and support women’s autonomy at the family level.

The above methodological and evaluative tools investigate and assess the relative allocation of care labour and costs between the actors in the ‘care diamond’ at the macro level and its impacts on gendered practices of care at the micro level. The micro-level analysis of the new feminist framework on transformative care has two conceptual tools: ‘social care’ and ‘caring masculinities’. The concept of ‘social care’—embedded in the methodological tool—enables this research to capture women’s lived experiences and practices of childcare and to analyse cultural discourses on childcare. Further, it draws our attention to the role of the state in either weakening or reinforcing such cultural discourses.

To analyse men’s engagement in care, the reformulated concept of ‘caring masculinities’ (which was summarised in Subsection 1.2.2 but will be elaborated further in Chapter 3) permits this thesis to examine the extent to which, and how, men have engaged in ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care alongside their breadwinning role. ‘Caring masculinities’ are reflected along a continuum that encompasses ‘less-caring’ and ‘more-caring’ practices at each extreme, practices which are shaped by men’s conceptions of their intersecting identities as fathers and husbands.

The new feminist framework for transformative care therefore encompasses one methodological tool, one evaluative tool, and two conceptual tools ['social care’ and ‘caring masculinities’]. It is summarised in the following Diagram.
Diagram 1: New Feminist Framework for Transformative Care

1.6 Organisation of the Thesis

This dissertation, structured around ten chapters to answer the interrelated research questions, begins by developing and justifying the proposed new feminist framework for transformative care in Chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 2 theorises ‘critical approaches to childcare policies’ and a ‘transformative ethics of care’. I first review the critical perspectives of three interrelated feminist disciplines that intersect with care—moral philosophy, economics, and social policy. Drawing on these feminist analyses, I then theorise the ‘critical approaches to care policies’ and the ‘transformative ethics of care’. These tools analyse and evaluate the unequal distribution of care between the ‘care diamond’ actors, and its consequences for the gender distribution of care in the family. The family-level analysis requires an additional concept to theorise men’s engagement in
care; therefore, in Chapter 3, I theorise the concept of ‘caring masculinities’, drawing on the ‘ethics of care’ and masculinity theory.

I lay out the research methodology for data collection and the analysis of the research questions in Chapter 4. This chapter outlines the data collection and data analysis techniques of the research.

The next five analytical chapters [5-9] enable this thesis to argue that some Khmer women and men are adopting ‘reflexive reconfigurations’ of care practices, although others are strongly influenced by the interplay between the Khmer cultural discourse on care, and the state’s role in reproducing such a discourse through its education textbooks and policies on childcare. By ‘reflexive reconfigurations’ I mean that women are renegotiating the Khmer cultural discourse on care by encouraging their husbands to engage more in care, while men, receptive to their spouses’ negotiations, are adopting ‘more-caring practices’. Two chapters [5&6] investigate the cultural and policy contexts of the National Childcare Policy to answer the first two interrelated research questions. These chapters investigate the Khmer cultural discourse on care and the policy discourses in the constitutive context of the National Childcare Policy. In Chapter 7 this thesis then critically analyses the national childcare policy discourse to answer the second research question. The third research question will be answered by investigating the intersecting consequences of the Khmer cultural discourse of care, and the policy discourse and practices of gendered configurations of childcare practice in Chapters 8 and 9. At the same time, these chapters explore how women and men are renegotiating these discourses and practices in their caring activity. This thesis concludes its findings in Chapter 10 by interweaving all data analysis chapters to postulate the thesis argument, as presented earlier, and to argue for its theoretical and empirical contributions to scholarship on gender, masculinity, and social policy. The key theoretical contribution lies in a new feminist theoretical framework for transformative care, a framework that is extremely useful for any care policy analysis as it enables us to investigate the link between cultural discourses, policy discourses and practices, and gendered configurations of childcare practices.
Chapter 2
Theoretical Approach

Critical Approaches to Childcare Policies, and Transformative Ethics of Care

This chapter theorises ‘critical approaches to childcare policies’ [the methodological tool] and a ‘transformative ethics of care’ [the evaluative tool] of the new feminist framework for transformative care, as discussed in the preceding chapter. Theorising these tools draws on two bodies of literature: feminist perspectives on care and critical approaches to policy. This chapter is presented in three parts. The first part of the chapter (Section 2.1) discusses feminist philosophy, feminist economics, and feminist social policy perspectives on care to identify their critical concerns and relevant concepts to inform the critical approaches to childcare policies and the transformative ethics of care discussed in Sections 2.2 and 2.3 respectively.

The second part of the chapter (Section 2.2) theorises ‘critical approaches to childcare policies’, synthesising critical approaches to policy and the concepts of ‘care diamond’ and ‘social care’. These approaches also add a cultural discourse analysis to the existing analytical components of constitutive contexts, policy representations, policy assumptions, policy silences, and policy consequences. The analysis of each analytical component is anchored in the ‘care diamond’ concept at the macro level and the concept of ‘social care’ at the micro level.

Theorising the ‘transformative ethics of care’ is the third part of the chapter (Section 2.3). This evaluative tool encompasses the key ethical criteria of the feminist ‘ethics of care’ identified in moral philosophy and other evaluative criteria embedded in gender justice theory in feminist social policy. This tool therefore consists of the six transformative ethical criteria: recognition, reduction, redistribution, representation, solidarity between social groups, and women’s autonomy, which determine whether childcare policies are ‘ethically transformative’ or not.

2.1 Feminist Perspectives on Care

This section discusses feminists’ critical concerns in relation to care and identifies key relevant concepts for the ‘critical approaches to childcare policies’ and the ‘transformative
ethics of care’, in Sections 2.2 and 2.3, respectively. The section starts with a critical analysis of feminist moral philosophy that is interested in the ‘ethics of care’ in the private and public spheres (Subsection 2.1.1). The section then examines approaches to care in feminist economics and social policy (Subsections 2.1.2 and 2.1.3, respectively). The shared concern of both disciplines is the issue of the invisibility and undervaluing of unpaid care work and the conditions of paid workers in the care economy. At the end of each subsection, I discuss concepts relevant to the methodological and evaluative tools that will be developed in later sections.

2.1.1 Feminist Moral Philosophy Perspectives on Care

An ‘ethics of care’ with some elements of justice is a central feature of moral reasoning theory in feminist moral philosophy. The pioneering work of Carol Gilligan (1982) distinguishes between an ‘ethics of care’ and an ‘ethics of justice’ with reference to an underlying logic: the former relies on ‘a psychological logic of relationships’, while the latter relies on the ‘formal logic of fairness’, centring on ‘equality and reciprocity’ (p. 73). The 'ethics of care' and that of justice were observed to be associated with women’s and men's moral domains, respectively. While women’s moral imperative is an 'injunction of care’, which is a responsibility to understand and reduce the “real and recognisable trouble” of this world, men’s moral imperative is an ‘injunction to respect’ the rights of others and thus to protect those others from interference with their ‘rights to life and self-fulfilment’ (Gilligan 1982, p. 100). Moral reasoning encompasses rights in the ‘ethics of justice’ and responsibilities in the ‘ethics of care’ when considering both men’s and women’s voices. The value of Gilligan’s work (1982) is in challenging the normative moral reasoning of Lawrence Kohlberg (1958, 1973, 1981) and others who elevate the ‘ethics of justice’. Her work has spurred a debate about the two ethics while attracting some critique.

One line of critique concerns sexual differences in moral reasoning. Although Gilligan (1982) indicates that her work does not 'represent a generalisation about either sex', it has been interpreted as such. Gilligan's work allows her “readers to conclude that women's alleged affinity for "relations of care" is both biologically natural and a good thing” (Tronto 1993a, p. 645). By the same token, the way that she differentiates women’s and men’s moral voices could be interpreted as reinforcement of women’s traditional roles
(Sevenhuijsen 1998). Sevenhuijsen (1998) therefore treats Gilligan’s conclusion with caution, asserting that there is considerable overlap rather than a clear distinction between the styles of ‘moral reasoning’ of women and men. In contrast, Friedman (1987, 1993) emphasises the effects of gendered social constructs, attempting to interpret Gilligan’s conclusion differently. She convincingly postulates that there is a real gender difference because moral norms, values, and virtues are socially imposed on women and men differently (Friedman 1993, p. 259). Justice and rights are socially presumed to be the domain of men, for instance, while care and responsiveness are presumed to be the domain of women. Tronto (1987, 1993a), however, invites us to move beyond the discussion of gender difference in the ‘ethics of care’ to a discourse about the adequacy of the ethics as a moral theory (Tronto 1993a).

The theorisation of the link between the ‘ethics of care’ and the ‘ethics of justice’ is not uniform among feminist moral philosophers, although they agree on the value of the ethics of care in moral reasoning. One line of argument conceptualises care as the ‘most basic moral value’ to accommodate both care and justice in a single framework, with care seen as superior to justice (Held 1995, 2006). At the practical level, Held (1995, 2006) argues that human beings cannot live without care; all people need more care when young, sick or very old, and may need and want caring relations throughout their lives. From the perspective of care as a value, she also argues that care should be ‘sensitive and flexible’ towards others in caring relations (Held 1995, p. 131); for instance, children may not develop well when offered a mere provision of necessities in a non-caring way. In a society where people treat one another with only the ‘respect’ required by justice, the social structure of ‘trust and concern’ can be weakened and lost (Held 1995, p. 131). In this view, although justice is an ‘important moral value, much life has gone on without it, and much of that life has been moderately good’ (Held 1995, p. 131); we can have ‘care without justice’ (Held 1995, p. 131). In contrast, without care ‘there would be no person to respect, either in the ‘public system of rights’ or in the family’ (ibid, p. 131). The social fabric of care, which assumes that humans are ‘relational’ and ‘interdependent’ rather than being ‘individualistic, autonomous agents of the perspective of justice and rights’, enables us to demand justice (Held 1995, p. 132).

The second line of argument for the ‘ethics of care’ treats care as the dominant and universal framework, excluding a specific conception of justice (Tronto 1995, 2013). This
argument critiques justice theories for their incorporation of idealisation in their abstract philosophical concerns, prioritising the principle of fairness which is often based on ‘work ethics’, attaching need entitlements to working rights (Tronto 1995, 2013). The argument central to the ‘ethics of care’, therefore, is that people are ‘entitled to what they need because they need it’, and humans are entitled to care because they are part of ongoing relationships of care (Tronto 1995, p. 146). In this argument, Tronto critiques the universal principle of fairness based on ‘work ethics’ while accepting other notions of justice. These notions are a dedication to freedom, equality, and justice for all, embedded in Tronto (2013) conceptualisation of ‘caring-with’, an essential dimension of democratic caring. This conception is vital for making a moral judgment about caring practices in the public arena.

The third argument in feminist moral philosophy proposes treating care and justice as ‘collaborators and allies’ rather than ‘contenders for theoretical primacy or moral and political adequacy’ (Clement 1996; Friedman 1987, 1993; Narayan 1995, pp. 139-40). In this view, the ‘ethics of care’ and that of justice provide foundations for one another in two ways. First, each ethic is a necessary condition for the existence of the other. Clement (1996) argues that a ‘certain minimum level’ of one ethic is ‘necessary for the very possibility for the other ethics’ (p. 117). She explains that the ‘ethics of justice’, depending on a principle that treats individuals as autonomous, presupposes the ‘ethics of care’ in that ‘dependent individuals are nurtured to autonomy’ (ibid, p. 117). By the same token, it would be difficult for individuals to care for others in a ‘state of complete injustice’, war situations, for example (ibid, p. 117). Second, each ethic provides a foundation for the other in relation to moral adequacy (Clement 1996; Friedman 1987, 1993; Narayan 1995). Narayan (1995) argues that, in some cases, improving justice and rights may set ‘enabling conditions’ for the provision of adequate care (p. 139). If the ‘ethics of justice’ adopts an ‘action that is clearly uncaring’, then that particular version of the ‘ethics of justice’ has a problem (Clement 1996, p. 118). In the same way, care dimensions may set the ‘enabling conditions’ for ‘more adequate forms of justice’ (Narayan 1995, p. 139). Attention to the needs and suffering of the poor, for instance, may result in social policies that provide some welfare rights and adequate medical care. If the ‘ethics of care’ adopts an ‘action that is clearly unjust’, that particular version of the ‘ethics of care’ has a problem (Clement 1996, p. 118). We therefore need the
interaction between the two ethics for ‘adequate moral reasoning’ because neither of them can function alone. In this argument, Clement (1996) claims that the *autonomy* of both carers and care-recipient is the fundamental priority of the ‘ethics of care’ which commits to 'healthy caring relationships’ between its members (p. 42). She therefore considers *autonomy* to be an ethical standard for evaluating care policies.

The above discussion captures the three different lines of argument concerning the link between the two ethics: care and justice. Given these divergent conceptions of that link, feminist moral philosophers agree that the ‘ethics of care’ (with some elements of justice) is necessary for assessing caring practices in both the private sphere and in public care policies (Clement 1996; Friedman 1993; Held 1995, 2006; Narayan 1995; Sevenhuijsen 1998; Sevenhuijsen et al. 2003; Tronto 1993b, 1995, 1998, 2013). The ‘ethics of care’ has six moral standards: *attentiveness, responsibility, competence, responsiveness, solidarity, and autonomy*. The first five standards are theorised by Tronto (1993b, 1998, 2013) to correspond to her five caring phases/dimensions. *Attentiveness* is the moral standard of ‘caring-about’; *responsibility* is for ‘caring-for’; *competence* is for ‘caregiving’; *responsiveness* is for ‘care-receiving’; and *solidarity* [plurality, communication, trust, and respect] is for ‘caring-with’ (Tronto 1993b, 1998, 2013). These five moral standards encapsulate the values of care in Sevenhuijsen’s (1998) and Held’s (2006) arguments. Sevenhuijsen (1998) sees care as ‘an ability and a willingness to ‘see’ and to ‘hear’ needs, and also to take responsibility for these needs being met’ (p. 84). Similarly, Held (2006) emphasises ‘attentiveness, sensitivity, and responding to needs’ (p. 39). The sixth standard, *autonomy*, is conceptualised by Clement (1996) to prioritise the *autonomy* of both carers and care-receivers.

All these ethical standards are suitable for morally assessing care practices at the personal and group levels, while *solidarity and autonomy* are intended to adjudicate care policies at these two levels. *Solidarity* corresponds to a ‘caring-with’ dimension, democratically dedicated to *freedom, equality, and justice* for all (Tronto 2013). ‘Freedom’ refers to relatively ‘free and equal’ choices, so an understanding of the social contexts that condition these choices is essential (Tronto 2013, p. 91). ‘Equality’ is a

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*Situating the conception of care and autonomy within a social approach, Clement (1996) argues that “autonomy” is one primary element of an adequate “ethics of care”. It is not just an “internal or psychological characteristic, but also an external, social characteristic” (Clement 1996, p. 22).*
commitment to 'genuine equality of voice' to reduce unequal power relations; it requires us to genuinely accept a plurality of different voices (Tronto 2013, p. 40). ‘Justice’ is more than just working rights; rather it is committed to a principle that each person should receive what is due (Tronto 2013, p. 41). In this view, an honest understanding of social, economic, and political contexts constraining each person’s life is crucial (Tronto 2013, p. 41). Solidarity therefore requires a genuine commitment to listening to other people’s caring needs with 'respect in their choices as people' (Tronto 2013, p. 164). It embraces 'plurality' of people's voices to avoid hierarchy within caring relations in responding to other people’s needs (Tronto 2013, p. 164). ‘Solidarity’ is employed by Tronto (2013) to morally evaluate care policies in general, but I employ it for childcare policies. This ethical standard requires a critical assessment of gender relations within the caring process. In this respect, solidarity needs to be employed with Clement’s (1996) concept of ‘genuine care’, prioritising the autonomy of both caregivers and care-recipients in assessing childcare policies; that is, we need to prioritise the autonomy of women as family carers (and their children as care-recipients). This genuine care creates healthy caring relationships at the personal level between individuals within the family, and at the group level between social groups (Clement 1996). These social groups refer to the caregiver and care-recipient groups. In a broad sense, caregivers include policymakers, care professionals, and people from their social class (Clement 1996, p. 105). While people of caregivers’ social class are relatively more powerful and/or in higher-income families, the care-recipients’ group (including women as family carers and children) is relatively less powerful and in a lower-income category. Childcare policies therefore need to create and maintain healthy caring relationships between higher-and lower-income families while enhancing women’s (and children’s) autonomy at the family level.

I consider the two ethical standards of solidarity and women’s autonomy to be part of the ‘transformative ethics of care’ which will be theorised in Section 2.3; however, these moral standards are not exhaustive and thus require a consideration of other critical perspectives of care in feminist economics and social policy.

2.1.2 Feminist Economists’ Perspectives on Care

Feminist economists are interested in understanding care work through a focus on three interconnected issues: invisibility and undervaluing, capital accumulation versus social
reproduction, and the interrelatedness of good quality care and paid workers’ conditions. In relation to the first issue, the *invisibility* and *undervaluing* of unpaid care work in the national economy, feminist economists criticise the United Nations System of National Accounts (UN-SNA) which did not include any type of unpaid work until 1993. The UN-SNA is a ‘set of internationally accepted rules for calculating’ Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at the country level (Budlender 2010, p. 4). The incorporation of some types of unpaid work in the UN-NSA in its revised version in 1993 was a result of advocacy work by various actors, including researchers and some governments (Razavi 2007a). The advocacy efforts tended to draw on the influential work of Marilyn Waring (1989) who argued for the incorporation of unpaid work in the UN-SNA. She argued for ‘imputation’, or the attributing of monetary value to unpaid work (Waring 1989, pp. 276-77). Time-Use Surveys are a critical tool of ‘imputation’.

All types of unpaid work qualify for ‘imputation’, but only those that are considered to be economic activity are incorporated within the System of National Accounts’ ‘production boundary’ for calculating GDP. All production of goods (whether exchanged in the market or not) is deemed to be economic activity. From this perspective, all goods production, including fetching water and collecting firewood, should be calculated in GDP within the production boundary, although it is not always the case in practice (Budlender 2010). Only services that are exchanged in the market are considered to be elements of economic activity and thus incorporated in GDP. This means that housework (or household maintenance) and unpaid care for persons either within the household or in the community are excluded from GDP because they are viewed as non-economic activity. The UN-SNA guidelines nevertheless advise member states to use unpaid work outside the production boundary to establish ‘satellite accounts’ to reveal the value of such work to the economy (Antonopoulos & Hirway 2010; Budlender 2010). The argument for ‘imputation’ does not suggest that unpaid work should be paid; instead, it aims to reflect a ‘more “accurate and comprehensive” valuation of the work’ in the economy while supporting the argument that ‘those who do this work are entitled to a fair share of, and control over, the income generated by the paid work done by members of their family or household’ (Budlender 2010, p. 35). The recognition and accurate valuation of unpaid care work have policy implications in ‘benefits and tax credits’ to unpaid workers (Himmelweit 2005b).
The second issue is that the accurate valuation of unpaid care work and its policy implications are linked by the tension between ‘market-based capital accumulation’ and ‘non-market-based social reproduction’ (Razavi & Staab 2012b). This tension reflects the dissonance of feminist economics and mainstream economic thinking, with the latter prioritising the monetised aspects of the economy, while feminist economics values ‘social reproduction’ (Folbre 1994). ‘Social reproduction’ is broadly understood as ‘the labour and set of social processes and relationships that support production, exchange, and the maintenance of individuals, households and communities’ (Fernandez 2018, p. 145). This concept has its roots in the Marxist insight that “every social process of production is, at the same time, a process of reproduction” (Edholm, Harris & Young 1978, p. 107). From a Marxist feminist perspective, ‘social reproduction’ is central to capitalism because women's unpaid care and housework are crucial for the extraction of its 'surplus value' for capital accumulation (Hartmann 1981). Marxist feminists further argue that the existence of ‘patriarchy’ in capitalism puts women in subordinate positions both within the household (being responsible for unpaid care and housework) and in the workplace (Hartmann 1981). Feminist economists further argue that the unpaid care economy is a precondition for the production of goods and services in the market (Elson 2004; Folbre 1994; Razavi & Staab 2012b). Folbre (1994) goes a step further to argue that ‘social production’ is also a goal. Seeing the importance of the unpaid care economy, Elson (2004) argues for the integration of the unpaid care economy into macro-economic policies rather than it being considered as an add-on social policy.

Finally, patriarchal capitalism has some deleterious consequences for the interrelated issues of good quality care and paid workers' conditions. Good quality care, delivered either on an unpaid or paid basis, is very labour-intensive, and there is a definite limit to the number of people (infants, children, people with disabilities, or the elderly) that a caretaker can care for (Donath 2000). Donath (2000) argues that we run the risk of lowering the quality of care when attempting to increase the number of care recipients per caregiver at any given time. Given this fact, Himmelweit (2005a) claims that a rise in productivity in the commodity sectors will increase the cost of paid care in which purchased care is relatively expensive. She suggests however that the increase in the costs of paid care might be moderate when paid carers’ wages are not increased to the same level as those in the commodity sectors. The attempt to maintain lower wages in the paid
care economy could trigger the transfer of some unpaid care to the paid care economy, but it is likely to result in unfavourable working conditions for carers (Himmelweit 2005a). Solving the interrelated problem of good quality care and paid workers’ conditions may require policy frameworks that mandate care quality standards and require decent working conditions of paid carers, whether care is provided by the state or the private sector. It is also important that the state provide more care rather than leaving the market to do so.

The above three feminist economists' critical concerns about care reflect the invisibility and undervaluing of unpaid care, the tension between capital accumulation and social reproduction, and the interrelatedness of good quality care and paid workers’ conditions. The first issue, the invisibility and undervaluing of unpaid care and domestic work, usually has a negative effect on women’s burden of care within the family. The second focuses on feminist economists’ prioritising of social reproduction by criticising mainstream economic thinking that privileges market-based capital accumulation, forcing women to bear responsibility for both market-based and non-market-based production. The third critical concern is the issue of female paid workers' poor working conditions and the questionable availability of good quality care in the paid care economy. Viewing these concerns together, we can see that recognising and valuing ‘social reproduction’ is crucial for assessing care policies and thus theorising the ‘transformative ethics of care’, which will be discussed in Section 2.3.

2.1.3 Feminist Social Policy Perspectives on Care

Feminist social policy scholarship is interested in the issue of the state’s role in shaping women’s position within the family and the labour market through the way in which the state recognises and valorises care work. Early feminist scholarship appeared to address the limitations of Esping-Andersen's (1990) analysis and categorisation of the welfare state into ‘liberal’, ‘conservative-corporatist’, and ‘social democratic’ regimes in advanced industrial economies. This categorisation was based on the degree to which the welfare state moves towards ‘de-commodification’; that is, the extent to which ‘individuals, or families, can uphold a socially acceptable standard of living independently’ of labour market participation (Esping-Andersen 1990, p. 32). Such an analysis is gender blind (Daly 1994; Lewis 1992; Orloff 1997), and thus feminist research
examined how welfare regimes recognise and valorise care and distribute such care between genders and different social institutions (Daly 2001; Lewis 1997; Orloff 1997; Sainsbury 1994). Initially, Jane Lewis (1992) compared three welfare regimes of Britain (with reference also to Ireland), France, and Sweden to examine ways in which women were treated as ‘wives and mothers and as paid workers’ in the varied versions of the male breadwinner model. The states which adopt a ‘strong male breadwinner model’ treat women as dependents and family carers, and men as breadwinners, so they encourage men rather than women to participate in the labour market. Both Lewis (1992) and Lewis and Ostner (1994) suggest that women as wives and mothers or paid workers, rather than women as mothers and citizens, have been eligible to receive social benefits in most welfare states. They argue that the breadwinner model, in its varied forms, is a ‘predictor’ both of how women are dealt with in social security systems and of the level of their participation in the labour market.

The breadwinning model has been critiqued for its negligence towards any analysis of women’s social entitlements deriving from motherhood. In her comparative analysis of welfare regimes in the UK, the US, the Netherlands, and Sweden deploying the breadwinner and individual models, Sainsbury (1994) argues for the incorporation of women’s social entitlements as ‘mothers and citizens’ in the comparative analytical framework (p. 196). Such incorporation as an analytical category reflects the recognition of care work, while women’s social entitlements based on motherhood enable women to be independent of their spouses. Linked to the issue of women’s independence, Orloff (1997) argues that we need to investigate how labour market regulations and ‘state social provision’ influence women’s capacity for de-commodification, that is, their ability to ‘form and maintain an autonomous household’ [original emphasis] (p. 195). Women’s autonomy in this argument can be gained in two ways: via women’s access to paid work, or through the state’s cash benefits for women reflecting their intersecting identities as mothers and citizens rather than just wives and mothers. This argument is tied to the recognition and valuation of unpaid care and domestic work in care policies.

A contemporary analytical framework for care policies in developing country contexts cannot operate on both macro and micro levels. For a macro-level analysis, feminist social policy scholars draw our attention to the ways in which the four primary actors [the state, the market, the community/voluntary/not-for-profit sector, and the family] interact and
create inequality in care responsibilities (Daly & Lewis 2000; Evers 1995; Jenson 2003; Jenson & Saint-Martin 2003). In the developed world, only three actors were initially recognised in analysing welfare provision in the welfare state: Esping-Andersen’s (1999) concept of ‘welfare triangle’ or ‘welfare triad’ ignored the role of the community. Care was invisible in the welfare triangle (see Razavi 2007a), but it is emphasised in other frameworks including ‘welfare architecture’ or ‘welfare diamond’ (Jenson & Saint-Martin 2003), and ‘welfare mix’ (Daly & Lewis 2000; Evers 1995; Jenson 2003). All of these frameworks recognise the interaction of the four actors.

The analysis of the ‘welfare mix’ is part of the conceptualisation of ‘social care’ (Daly & Lewis 1998, 2000) capturing both macro- and micro-level analyses. The macro-level analysis looks at the ‘division of care labour, responsibility and costs’ between the welfare mix actors (Daly & Lewis 2000, p. 286). This analysis pays particular attention to the relative contribution of each institution to total care load, the institutional features governing care arrangements within and across institutions, and the different politics of each institution.

There is a similarity between the developed and developing worlds in the macro-level analysis. The concept of ‘care diamond’ (Razavi 2007a) has gained currency in care policy analysis in developing countries (see Baird, Ford & Hill 2017; Razavi 2012b; Razavi & Staab 2012a). Like the concept of ‘welfare mix’ (Daly & Lewis 1998, 2000), the concept of ‘care diamond’ looks at the interaction between the four actors. It is however different from ‘welfare mix’ (Daly & Lewis 1998, 2000) in its understanding of the family/household beyond nuclear units; it acknowledges other living arrangements among extended families. The concept of ‘care diamond’ is therefore more suitable for care policy analysis in developing countries than is the concept of ‘welfare mix’. In the developing world, there has been discussion regarding a fifth ‘care diamond’ actor: ‘supranational institutions’ such as international financial institutions, international aid bodies, and international NGOs (Gough 2004, 2013; Razavi & Staab 2012b). These institutions are referred to as ‘development partners’ in the Cambodian context, and it is crucial to analyse their role in care policy analysis. I include these institutions under the volunteer/not-for-profit sector as they usually join other national non-government organisations and community organisations to work and negotiate with government.
Note, however, that the concept of ‘care diamond’ (Razavi 2007a) does not provide a micro-level analysis of care distribution within the family/household.

In order to undertake a micro-level analysis of care distribution within the family, I incorporate the concept of ‘social care’ (Daly & Lewis 2000), which permits us to analyse care distribution between genders and across generations within the family. This level of analysis scrutinises both ‘women’s work and individuals’ experience of welfare in society’ (Daly & Lewis 2000, p. 286). It focuses on the division of (giving and receiving) care between genders within and between families in the community. It also focuses on the conditions under which care is provided and the state’s role in influencing such conditions. This micro-level analysis is as critical as the analysis of the care distribution between the four actors within the ‘care diamond’.

This subsection illustrated that the recognition and valuation of unpaid care and domestic work is the key concern of feminist social policy, a concern shared by feminist economics. This has implications for the analytical framework of care policies at both micro and macro levels. At the micro level, ideally, care work should be recognised and valued by all family members, especially spouses, and thus shared between them. A macro-level recognition and valuation suggests that care work should be recognised and valued by the ‘care diamond’ actors, particularly the state, so that the state can take some action to reduce and equitably redistribute the responsibilities of other actors in childcare, particularly women as family carers. Evidence of such action is seen in the state’s cash benefits for women as mothers and citizens, rather than just as wives, and/or in the facilitation of women’s access to paid jobs. This critical concern and its implications are essential in theorising the ‘transformative ethics of care’ in Section 2.3 and the ‘critical approaches to childcare policies’ in the following section.

### 2.2 Critical Approaches to Childcare Policies

Critical approaches to childcare policies represent the methodological tool of the new feminist framework for transformative care. This tool enables us to critically analyse childcare policies at both macro and micro levels to understand the link between cultural discourses on care, policy discourses and practices, and gendered configurations of childcare practices. This section begins with a review of the presuppositions and arguments of critical approaches to policy. These arguments prescribe their methodology,
which enables this section to theorise the analytical components of critical approaches to childcare policies. In this theorising, I add a cultural discourse analysis to the existing components, and I end this theorising by interweaving the analytical components with the concepts of ‘care diamond’ and ‘social care’.

2.2.1 Presuppositions and Arguments

Critical approaches to policy are seen as an alternative to traditional approaches to policy. Traditional approaches to policy are premised on the positivist supposition of ‘objective, value-free’ evaluation of policy, and tend to centre on a cost-benefit analysis of policy (Bacchi 1999; Fischer 2003; Fischer et al. 2015; Hajer & Wagenaar 2003; Shore & Wright 1997b, 2011; Wagenaar 2011; Yanow 2000). Technical and political rationalist approaches to policy view ‘policy as about decision-making, finding solutions to problems’ [original emphasis]’ (Bacchi 1999, p. 19). The technical rationalists tend to focus on “problem identification”, while the political rationalists tend to emphasise “problem definition” (ibid). These traditional approaches see policy as a technical and instrumental tool for solving existing problems and as a linear process with sequential steps: analysing problems, proposing and evaluating alternative responses to the problems, choosing a preferred alternative, executing the policy, evaluating policy impacts, and making some modifications for a new policy (Shore & Wright 2011). Within this positivist presupposition, policy actions are therefore seen as solutions to ‘objective’ problems addressed in a linear process.

Critical approaches to policy view policy actions as political, rather than value-free. These approaches presuppose that policy actions are not objective; rather they involve interpretations and/or constructions (Bacchi 1999, 2009; Bacchi & Goodwin 2016; Fischer 2003; Fischer et al. 2015; Hajer & Wagenaar 2003; Shore & Wright 1997b, 2011; Wagenaar 2011; Yanow 1996, 2000), and thus presuppose “post-positivist, interpretive methodology” (Fischer et al. 2015; Yanow 2014). This means that policy problems are political in the sense that they are constructed or interpreted in certain ways to prescribe interventions. The emphasis is therefore on ‘competing interpretations or representations of political issues’ rather than ‘solutions’ to problems (Bacchi 1999). Unlike traditional approaches assuming discrete and linear policy processes, problem representations, in Bacchi’s view, do not precede execution. She rather argues that policy processes are a ‘package constituted around problem representations’ (Bacchi 1999, p. 13). In a similar
vein, Dvora Yanow (2000, 2014) asserts that all actors involved in policy actions not only analyse but also interpret policy interventions in order to make sense of them. She argues that interpretative policy analysis aims not only to investigate “what” a particular policy means but also “how” it is understood by different actors. The focus here is on the sense-making of policy actions by different actors, and how these meanings are communicated among them. These ‘what and how’ aspects require scrutiny of the communication processes of policy meanings to targeted policy subjects and scrutiny of the context-specific meanings that the policy subjects and other actors take from the policy (Yanow 2000, p. 8).

Besides the preceding ‘what and how’ argument, two further points are suggested by Shore and Wright (2011). First, policies are ‘not simply instrumental governmental tools’ but are ‘actants’; that is, policies have ‘agency’ and ‘change’ when travelling between policy actors such as policy analysts, policymakers, and policy subjects (Shore & Wright 2011, p. 20); that is, policies are ‘reinterpreted’ rather than just being ‘simply transferred’ when being communicated across cultural boundaries; policies are not ‘discrete things’ but ‘assemblages’ (Shore & Wright 2011). They therefore suggest that we need to analyse policies as they develop and are implemented in everyday practice. Second, policies are a valuable diagnostic tool for us in understanding ‘how systems of governance’ come into being and how subjects are constructed as ‘objects of power’ (Shore & Wright 2011, p. 20). The primary role of critical policy analysis is therefore as a methodology to unpack the mechanisms of power operations within policy assemblages (Shore & Wright 2011, p. 16).

2.2.2 Methodology and Its Analytical Components

The methodology of critical approaches to policy is focused on analysis of the priorities or perspectives of various policy actors and of policy language. There are at least three types of policy actors (or policy communities): policymakers, implementing agency personnel, and affected citizens [policy subjects] (Yanow 2000). In my view, we also need to include multilateral institutions and non-government organisations (NGOs) in the analysis of social policy in developing countries given that these institutions are policy advocates-cum-practitioners. Such institutions are neither policymakers nor implementers but occupy a position between these two roles. Policy actors have different and competing priorities in problem representations (Bacchi 2009); they also have
different interpretations of policy meanings (Yanow 2000). These competing priorities and interpretations influence policy practices and the ways of communicating policy meanings to policy subjects. These interpretations, policy practices, and the communication of policy meanings represent policy acts that influence the policy subjects (Yanow 2000). Policy subjects, nevertheless, also make sense of these acts, and their interpretations may be different from the intended meanings in policy acts. It is therefore essential to analyse the contradictory perspectives of various policy actors in conjunction with the analysis of policy language.

The analysis of policy language or texts tends to focus on five components: policy representations, policy assumptions, constitutive contexts, policy silences, and policy consequences. The policy texts include policy statements, media publications, public speeches, parliamentary debates, images, videos, and other forms of digital communication (Bacchi 1999, 2009; Bacchi & Goodwin 2016). The first analytical component of policy language investigates what Bacchi (1999, 2009) calls ‘policy representations’ [or the representations of problems]. She asks the question: “What is the problem… represented to be in a specific policy?” (Bacchi 2009, p. 2). The task is to “work backwards” from a policy proposal(s) or action(s) to identify ‘what is represented to be the problem’ within policy options or proposals (Bacchi & Goodwin 2016, p. 20). Understanding this problem representation enables one to see the ‘implicit problematisation (s)’ of policy (Bacchi & Goodwin 2016). If a credit program for women is part of a policy on women's empowerment, for example, the problem is implicitly represented to be women’s lack of financial resources, rather than unequal gender power relations within the family and in society.

Scrutinising ‘presuppositions or assumptions’ of the problem representations is the second component of the analysis. It is captured in Bacchi’s question: ‘What deep-seated presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the “problem” …?’ (Bacchi & Goodwin 2016, p. 20). These presuppositions refer to ‘background “knowledge” that is taken-for-granted’ (Bacchi 2009, p. 5). The scrutiny of these assumptions or presuppositions seeks to identify ‘deep-seated cultural promises and values’ (Bacchi 2009, p. 7). Unpacking these presuppositions can reveal the ‘conceptual
premises’ or conceptual logic⁸ underlying specific problem representations’ (Bacchi 2009, p. 5). A critical analysis of policy discourse is essential in scrutinising these presuppositions (Bacchi 1999, 2009; Shore & Wright 2011; Yanow 2000). Discourse is more than just language; it is a ‘meaning system’ which comprises ‘assumptions, values, presuppositions and companying signs’ (Bacchi 2009, p. 7). In this meaning system, ‘discourse’ is conceptualised as ‘socially produced forms of knowledge’ that set limits upon what it is possible to think, write or speak about a “given social object or practice” [original emphasis] (McHoul and Grace 1993 cited in Bacchi & Goodwin 2016, p. 35). ‘Discourse’ in policy is defined by Maarten Hajer (1993) as an ‘ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categories through which meaning is given to phenomena’(p. 49). ‘Policy discourse’ can draw on ‘historical references’ and, at the same time, constitutes ‘the context in which phenomena are understood; it thus predetermines the definition of the problem’ (Hajer 1993, p. 46).

Analysis of policy discourse needs to pay attention to the structure of arguments and the formation of subjects and objects in policy language (Bacchi 1999). Policy arguments, in Gasper and Apthorpe’s view, produce policy “framing” [‘what and who’ is included and ignored] in policy representations. We can see this framing through concepts and categories, so we need to identify and interrogate such concepts and categories in the policy representations (Bacchi 1999, 2009; Gasper & Apthorpe 1996; Hajer 1993; Yanow 2000). Concepts [‘abstract labels’] are not ‘given’ but are constructed, and are thus contested (Bacchi 2009, p. 8). Given their contested nature, we need to pinpoint some key concepts and examine their constructed meanings (Bacchi 2009, p. 8). To analyse categories, we pay attention to people categories as the analysis of these categories enables us to understand how people are governed in policy discourse (Bacchi 2009, p. 9). Policy concepts and categories are also known as ‘keywords’ (Gasper & Apthorpe 1996; Shore & Wright 1997b) or ‘labels’ (Wood 1985). Our critical task is to see how concepts, keywords, or people categories in policy function to give particular meanings to problem representations, rather than just to accept them (Bacchi 2009). Embedding the analysis of concepts, keywords, or people categories within feminist research methodology, we need to scrutinise explicit, sexist language and the ideological usage of

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⁸ It refers to ‘meanings that must be in place for a particular problem representation to cohere or to make sense’ (Bacchi 2009, p. 5).
‘positive and benign language’ which masks inequalities between women and men (Kleinman 2007).

The third component of policy analysis is what Bina Fernandez (2012) calls ‘*constitutive contexts*’ of the problem representations. This component investigates the conditions that have produced policy representations ‘within historical, economic, social and political domains’ (Fernandez 2012, p. 29). It situates 'the investigation of policies within the socially embedded' and considers 'the relevance of social relationships and networks to the actualisation of policy’ and to ‘gendered regimes of social reproduction' (Fernandez 2012, p. 29).

For childcare policy analysis, I argue that the ‘constitutive contexts’ can be extended to incorporate ‘*cultural contexts*’ by focusing on a cultural discourse analysis as it shapes not only policy representations but also childcare practices. The analysis of cultural discourses is informed by Connell’s (1995, 2000, 2005, 2009) conceptions of masculinity and femininity as ‘configurations of gender practice’, to be discussed in Chapter 3. This analysis is consonant with Gasper and Apthorpe’s (1996) argument that policy discourse analysis requires not only an investigation of ‘policy texts’ but also its ‘contexts’. To analyse cultural discourse in childcare policy in Cambodia, we need to trace its genealogy in written material, as well as its multiple and contradictory interpretations by different social actors across time. Such an analysis is consonant with Caroline Hughes and Joakim Ojendal’s (2006) theoretical approach for an analysis of ‘culture and power’ in Cambodia. They conceptualise Khmer culture and traditions as 'landscapes' of a struggle between certain 'historical features' and different perspectives that produce ‘significant trajectories of change’ over time (Hughes & Öjendal 2006, p. 419). This conceptualisation is well encapsulated in Nira Yuval-Davis’ (1997) analytical notion of two ‘contradictory coexistent’ components of cultural discourses: the tendency for a continuation of traditional norms, and perpetual modification of such norms. This analysis pays attention to three primary elements: manhood and womanhood, sexuality, and unequal gender relations (Yuval-Davis 1997, p. 23). The tendency for a continuation of traditional norms involves the state’s interventions in a continual ‘reconstruction’ (Dahm 1999; Eisenstadt & Giesen 1995) or ‘invention’ (Hobsbawm 1983) of traditions. Such a reconstruction of traditions aims to revive some meaningful traditional elements and defend the ‘national identity’ in times of change (Dahm 1999; Eisenstadt & Giesen 1995).
Analysing ‘policy silences’ is the fourth component. The analysis of the constitutive contexts of policy is helpful for this analytical component. It is based on the interrelated questions suggested by Bacchi and Goodwin: 'What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the "problem" be conceptualised differently? This analysis, which encourages a 'critical practice for thinking otherwise' (Bacchi & Goodwin 2016, p. 22), can uncover the unproblematised elements or silences of the problem representations. It is encapsulated in Gasper and Apthorpe's concept of ‘framing’ in problem representations, which enable us to understand ‘what and who’ is ignored and excluded from them.

The fifth element is ‘policy consequences’ that are the result of the interaction between policy labels [keywords or concepts and people categories] and their practices (Bacchi 1999, 2009; Bacchi & Goodwin 2016; Wood 1985; Yanow 2000). Both Wood and Bacchi emphasise the direct consequences of policy discourse and practice, while Bacchi categorises these consequences into three linked and overlapping effects: discursive, subjectification and lived. Discursive effects refer to constrained thoughts and discussions of a particular issue resulting from policy discourses embedded in policy representations (Bacchi 2009). If a credit program for women is part of a policy on women's empowerment, for instance, this policy limits our conceptualisation of women’s empowerment to financial resources and excludes other options such as dealing with unequal power relations within the family and in society. Subjectification effects are a result of the drawing of policy subjects as specific kinds of people in policy representations and policy practices (Bacchi & Goodwin 2016). In other words, policy representations create certain subject positions [characteristics, behaviours and dispositions] for us to assume (Bacchi & Goodwin 2016). The subject position in the above example of the credit program for women encourages them to be seen as entrepreneurs rather than advocates for change in unequal power relations. Lived effects are the ‘material impact of policy representations [original emphasis]’ on policy subjects (Bacchi 2009, p. 17). They are how discursive and subjectification effects are translated into people’s lives (Bacchi & Goodwin 2016), that is, through people’s practice of adopting certain ‘subject positions’ produced in policy subjectifications. Women who have engaged in the above credit program may become small entrepreneurs, but at the same time they may be burdened by additional unpaid and paid work as entrepreneurs. In
Wood’s and Bacchi’s perspective, policy subjects often tend to accept policy subjectifications uncritically.

These assumptions about policy subjectifications are not always true, however, especially for care policy analysis. Three points need to be considered in this respect. First, I argue that policy silences can be as influential as problematised problems. We therefore need to closely examine the lived effects of these policy silences in conjunction with that of problematised issues. I think of these effects as indirect consequences. Second, I see the effects on people’s lives not only as an outcome of such policy discourses but also as the interplay between policy and cultural discourses. The latter discourse exists independently of, but intersects with, the policy discourse. As will be discussed in Chapter 3, cultural discourses also shape women's and men's configurations of gender practice (Connell 1995, 2000, 2005, 2009).

Third, not all policy subjects adopt particular characteristics, behaviours, and dispositions or are subjugated through policy and cultural discourses. The concept of ‘reflexive subjects’ (Shore & Wright 2011) is relevant here as it enables us to investigate how policy subjects may resist policy subjectification. These researchers argue that political subjects are not ‘passive’, ‘docile bodies’, but ‘reflexive subjects’ who sometimes ‘ask back’ (Shore & Wright 2011, p. 17). Some policy subjects, in Shore and Wright’s view, may be aware of policy subjectification. They then reject their subject position subjugated by the policy or modify it; they can sometimes mobilise to contest policy subjectification collectively when the rejection of their subject position and aspirations for change are shared (Shore & Wright 2011, p. 18). Although the concept of ‘reflexive subjects’ is used to explain how policy subjects may resist policy subjectification, I expand this concept, when analysing childcare policy in Cambodia, to investigate how some men and women may resist cultural and policy subjectification. I connect the concept of ‘reflexive subjects’ with Connell’s (1995, 2000, 2005, 2009) conceptions of masculinity and femininity as ‘configurations of gender practice’ (Chapter 3). Connecting these concepts is useful in understanding how men and women reflexively reconfigure their care practices within the family in response to cultural and policy discourses and practices.

The existing analytical components of critical approaches to policy are extremely useful for any policy analysis but insufficient for childcare policy analysis; therefore, two further
components are required. First, as argued in the above discussion, it is essential to incorporate a cultural discourse analysis when analysing childcare policies in developing countries like Cambodia. These analytical components therefore encompass *policy representations, presuppositions or assumptions, cultural discourse, constitutive contexts, policy silences, and policy consequences*. Second, these analytical components require the concepts of ‘care diamond’ (Razavi 2007a) and ‘social care’ (Daly & Lewis 2000) at macro- and micro-level analyses. The macro-level analysis needs to investigate the relative allocation of care responsibility between the four actors in the ‘care diamond’ (Razavi 2007a) and the features and politics of this allocation. The concept of ‘social care’ (Daly & Lewis 2000) enables us to investigate the distribution of care labour between genders within the family. This level of analysis also investigates the state’s role in transforming or reproducing cultural discourses of childcare which shape the gendered division of labour. In this analysis, we need to expand the notion of the ‘family’ beyond the nuclear unit to incorporate other living arrangements within the household and/or the extended family. This expansion is extremely useful for this research in examining ‘familial care’, childcare provided by any family members within the same or different household, a pervasive form of care in many developing countries, including Southeast Asian countries like Cambodia, and even in some advanced industrial economies in Northeast Asia (Hill, Ford & Baird 2017; Razavi 2012a; Razavi & Staab 2012b). With this expanded notion of the family, we can examine the distribution of care labour between genders and across generations [kinship support in care] within the same and/or different households.

2.3 Transformed Ethics of Care

The ‘transformative ethics of care’ is the evaluative tool of a new feminist framework for transformative care, and I theorise it based on the ‘ethics of care’ in feminist moral philosophy and a ‘transformative approach to care’ embedded in gender justice theory. This evaluative tool not only adds more ethical criteria to the transformative approach to care but also redefines its existing elements. This tool is essential because it enables us to assess whether care policies are ‘ethically transformative’ based on six core criteria: *recognition, reduction, redistribution, representation, solidarity, and women’s autonomy*. These transformative ethical criteria are crucial in terms of the moral imperative that requires genuine listening to the voices of family carers and/or women, especially those
from disadvantaged backgrounds, directly or through their representation. Seriously taking these voices into account when designing care policies can lead to the redistribution of care labour and costs from the private sphere to the public arena to enhance solidarity between social groups and increase women’s autonomy at the family level.


**Recognition** is the acknowledgement of the nature and role of care work in human development (Esquivel 2014). The emphasis here should be on the feminist economists’ argument that ‘social reproduction’ is a precondition of other commodity production, and also a goal in itself (Elson 2004; Folbre 1994; Razavi & Staab 2012b). ‘Recognition’ requires a detailed analysis of who is doing the work and how much time they spend on it (Esquivel 2014). In this analysis, we need to understand and challenge inequitable gendered social norms around care and to value care work, including improving working conditions and increasing wages of care workers (Esquivel 2014). Further, we need 'legitimisation of care work’ through recognition and valorisation, as argued by Daly (2001). In this view, care work is not just deemed a good thing, but is legitimised in policy or legislation.

**Reduction** refers to efforts aimed at reducing the drudgery or time and costs incurred when undertaking care work and seeking to improve the health and wellbeing of caregivers (Esquivel 2014). Excessive time spent and the associated costs of doing unpaid care and housework are a result of inadequate social or household infrastructure; therefore, labour-saving infrastructure investment can address these problems (Esquivel 2014). Digging wells or ponds, for example, can reduce caregivers’ time in fetching
water, while investment in biogas technology can reduce both the time spent (usually that of women) and the risks associated with collecting firewood; however, investment in labour-saving infrastructure alone may not overturn the gender ideology attached to women’s domestic responsibilities (Brickell 2011a). The redistribution component of the approach is therefore critical.

*Redistribution* aims to reallocate care work within the family and in society as a whole (Esquivel 2014). At the family level, the redistribution of care work requires the challenging of gendered social norms of care that ascribe particular tasks, roles, or responsibilities to women. Redistribution also challenges any customary law, institutions, norms, or regulations in which gender norms of care are deeply rooted. The approach suggests that changes in economic incentives for women outside the household may impact on intra-household redistribution of care labour (Esquivel 2014). Gender gaps in wages and opportunities for work make it economically ‘rational’ for the household to keep a ‘male-breadwinner/female-carer arrangement’ (Esquivel 2014, p. 435).

At the societal level, care should be equitably distributed among the four actors in the ‘care diamond’ (Razavi 2007a) rather than be just a family responsibility; therefore, more care work should be moved to the ‘public sphere’ of markets and the state (Esquivel 2014, p. 435). In moving care work to the 'public sphere' of markets, the emphasis should be on the care provider role of business enterprises supporting their workers, rather than just profit-driven care providers, as theorised by Esquivel (2014). This can minimise the reinforcement of social inequalities while improving the ability of women in low-income families to access paid care services. State investment in ‘social infrastructure’ such as public childcare services could contribute to the redistribution of care work at home while increasing job opportunities for women in the paid care sector (Esquivel 2014). The provision of care work in the ‘public sphere’ can decrease the total care work of women and men in the home and the community, enabling women to engage in paid employment outside the house. It may also increase women’s bargaining power at home.

The redistribution of care also needs to aim for *solidarity* between social groups and for *women’s autonomy*, key moral standards of an ‘ethics of care’. These standards can create ‘healthy’ caring relationships between people at the individual and group levels (Clement 1996; Tronto 1993b, 1998, 2013). As discussed in Section 2.1.1, *solidarity* is essential
for democratic care. It requires a genuine commitment to listening to others’ caring needs with ‘respect in their choices as people’ (Tronto 2013), thereby embracing the ‘plurality’ of people's voices; otherwise, caring relations are hierarchical and dominative rather than equalitarian. Similarly, the autonomy of women as family carers (and their children) is the fundamental priority in ‘healthy caring relationships’ between people at both personal and group levels (Clement 1996). A redistribution of childcare that only prioritises children’s autonomy may result in a reduction rather than an enhancement of women’s autonomy because such a redistribution may not reduce women’s burden of childcare.

The ethical standards of care—solidarity and autonomy—are essential considerations in evaluating childcare policies and analysing power relations between the caregiver and the care-receiver in the institutional caring process. It is however somewhat challenging to hear the voices of care recipients when those recipients are very young children. To address this problem, we may need to consider care-receivers as a group of at least two people rather than as separate individuals, and to analyse the interactions between caregivers and care-receivers as children and/or as children’s carers/guardians. In such a case, children and their guardians/carers are considered as a care-recipient group. The consideration of the voices of the care-receiver as a group is encapsulated in Fraser’s (2005, 2008, 2013) concept of representation focusing on ‘ordinary-political’ voices. In the public childcare service context, these political voices can constitute familial and non-familial representation. The voluntary/not-for-profit sector can play a role in providing non-familial representation to bring the concerns of women as family carers and/or of children to policymakers (Evers 1993, 1995). We therefore add representation as another ethical value of care.

The ‘transformative ethics of care’ therefore consists of six interrelated ethical criteria, namely recognition, representation, reduction, redistribution, solidarity, and women’s autonomy. The fundamental argument of this transformative ethics is that care policies need to redistribute care from women to men within the family and from the family to the public arena, represented by the state and the market. The public sphere of the market emphasises the role of business enterprises in providing care for their employees rather than families relying only on paid care providers. This redistribution needs to take solidarity between social groups and women’s autonomy into account very seriously; the
voices of family carers and/or women from disadvantaged backgrounds must be genuinely listened to and heard.

These six transformative ethical criteria can lead the desired transformation of gender relations (Daly 2001; Esquivel 2014; Razavi 2007b), consonant with Fraser’s (1997) ‘universal caregiver’ model that promotes gender equity in society. Such gender equity requires care policies to dismantle the gendered conflict between breadwinning and caregiving by inducing ‘men to become more like most women are now [original emphasis]’ (Fraser 1997, p. 60); that is, we need to make women’s current life-patterns that combine breadwinning and caregiving the norm for everyone.

2.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter theorised the ‘critical approaches to childcare policies’ and the ‘transformative ethics of care’ as the methodological and evaluative tools respectively of the new feminist framework for transformative care. While the evaluative tool draws on feminist perspectives of moral philosophy, economics, and social policy on care, the methodological tool combines feminist social policy perspectives on care and critical approaches to policy.

The critical approaches to childcare policies incorporate a cultural discourse analysis as well as the concepts of ‘care diamond’ (Razavi 2007a) and ‘social care’ (Daly & Lewis 2000) into the generic analytical components embedded in the critical approaches to policy (Bacchi 1999, 2009; Bacchi & Goodwin 2016; Fernandez 2012). This tool therefore encompasses six analytical components: cultural discourse, constitutive contexts, policy representations, policy assumptions, policy silences, and policy consequences. The analysis of each component is anchored in the concept of ‘care diamond’, enabling investigation into the relative care distribution between the four actors and their politics at the macro level. The tool employs the concept of ‘social care’ to investigate intra-family care distribution between genders across generations at the micro level. This level of analysis also investigates the state’s role in transforming or reproducing gendered cultural discourses of care which shape the gendered division of labour across generations within the family.

The ‘transformative ethics of care’, which synthesises the link and compatibility between the feminist ‘ethics of care’ (Clement 1996; Tronto 1993b, 1998, 2013) and gender justice
theory (Daly 2001; Esquivel 2014; Fraser 1997; Razavi 2007b), consists of the six interrelated ethical criteria: recognition, reduction, redistribution, representation, solidarity, and women’s autonomy, which are important in assessing care policies. Acting in accordance with these ethical criteria in care policies can lead to transformative gender relations in which the gendered conflict between breadwinning and caregiving is dismantled.

The ‘critical approaches to childcare policies’ and the ‘transformative ethics of care’ are the methodological and evaluative tools respectively of the new feminist framework for transformative care, dealing with both macro- and micro-level analyses. At the micro level, we have so far focused on a conceptual tool, the concept of ‘social care’, that enables us to analyse women’s perspectives and ‘lived’ experiences of childcare. The missing piece here is a conceptual tool dealing with men’s perspectives and their ‘lived’ experiences of childcare, which is the primary focus of the next chapter.
Chapter 3

Theoretical Approach

Reconceptualising Caring Masculinities

This chapter theorises ‘caring masculinities’ as a conceptual tool of the new feminist framework for transformative care with which to analyse men’s engagement in childcare at the family level. As this theorisation builds upon a feminist ‘ethics of care’ and masculinity theory, this chapter first summarises the ‘ethics of care’, and then critically reviews key features of masculinities. From the ‘ethics of care’ perspective, ‘caring’ is understood as an ongoing process, as phases/dimensions (Tronto 1993b, 1998, 2013). Masculinity is defined as the ‘configurations of gender practice’ that engage ‘social embodiment’ within gender structures (Connell 1995, 2000, 2005, 2009; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Messerschmidt 2016, 2018). Masculinities are plural and hierarchical with ‘hegemonic masculinity’ [breadwinning and manhood] at the apex.

The third part of this chapter theorises 'caring masculinities' by reviewing the link between 'hegemonic masculinity' and care. I employ this theorising to investigate caring practices embedded in various empirical studies in developed and developing countries. With ‘more-caring masculinity’ being the desirable end of the spectrum of ‘caring masculinities’, I also examine its constitutive factors at the end of this third part of the chapter.

3.1 Feminist Ethics of Care

Conceptualising caring as a process, as phases/dimensions with moral standards for evaluating care practices, is extremely useful for theorising ‘caring masculinities’. Chapters 1 and 2 illustrate that caring is an ongoing process that can be conceived as five phases/dimensions which feature five moral standards for evaluating caring practices. 

*Attentiveness* is the moral standard of ‘caring-about’; *responsibility* is for ‘caring-for’; *competence* is for ‘caregiving’; *responsiveness* is for ‘care-receiving’; and *solidarity* is for ‘caring-with’ (Tronto 1993b, 1998, 2013). The concept of caring as a process underlines the importance of the care receiver’s voice in care because it can indicate how well care needs are met (Tronto 1993b, 1998, 2013). This caring process captures power relations between the care provider and the care recipient. In some cases, the caregiver is
relatively more powerful than the care recipient, but the reverse is true in other cases. Of these five ethical standards, *solidarity* is intended to evaluate caring practices in the public sphere. I therefore find the first four ethical standards corresponding to their caring phases/dimensions extremely useful for theorising ‘caring masculinities’ as a conceptual tool.

There is some degree of difficulty in capturing the ‘responsiveness’ aspect in the caring process within the family, however. To solve this problem, we need to consider care receivers as at least two people engaged in the process rather than separate individuals, and to understand the interactions between spouses concerning childcare.

Two reasons underpin this. First, it is challenging to distinguish between ‘indirect care’ for children and that for a spouse (or other family members); for instance, when the husband is cooking food for children, the food is not only for children but also for other family members. Second, even if we can distinguish ‘direct’ and/or ‘indirect’ care for children from that for other family members (especially spouses), a father undertakes care work based on his conception of the intersecting identities of both father and husband. There are always intersecting identities in the care provider within the family.

### 3.2 Key Features of Masculinities

This section examines the vital features of masculinities for theorising ‘caring masculinities’ in the next section. The concepts of masculinities and ‘hegemonic masculinity’ are theorised by sociologist Raewyn Connell with an attempt to capture ‘patriarchal power’ and ‘social change’ that is not conceptualised in sex-role theory (Demetriou 2001; Edley & Wetherell 1996). Masculinities are ‘inherently relational’ to femininities and other masculinities (Connell 2005, p. 68) and are defined as the ‘configurations of gender practice’ within gender structures or gender relations (Connell 1987, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2005, 2009). The emphasis is on ‘what people actually do, not on what is expected or imagined’ (Connell 1996, p. 56). It is ‘the process of configuring of practice’ or a social action (Connell 2000, p. 28; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). The constructions of masculinities, embedded within gender structures, have four main features.

The first suggests that the construction of one’s masculinity is a form of ‘social embodiment’. The ‘social embodiment’ process is a ‘body-reflexive practice’ (Connell
and thus engages bodies as ‘both objects of and agents in’ social practice (Connell 2002, p. 47). Social practices produce ‘social structures’ and ‘personal trajectories’ which are the conditions on which new practices can draw (Connell 2009, p. 67). Within gender practice, in Connell’s (2009) view, it is difficult to escape the influence of institutional ‘gender regimes’ and the ‘gender order’ within society, although they do not determine one’s gender practice. She therefore argues that responding to gender patterns [in personal life], or constructing one’s masculinity, involves both one’s agency and the influences of ‘gender structures’ (Connell 2009, p. 101; see also Edley & Wetherell 1996; Hearn & Collinson 1994; Holter 2005; Messerschmidt 2016, 2018). In these processes, the construction of masculine patterns in personal life is not smooth but rather ‘a series of encounters with the constraints and possibilities of the existing gender order’ (Connell 2009, p. 101). In other words, gender practices are shaped by ‘constraints’ and ‘enablers’ embedded in social structures (Messerschmidt 2016, p. 47). In these circumstances, one may copy, adapt, and invent one’s gender characteristics in particular situations under gender relations (Connell 2009, p. 101). This suggests that masculinity or gender is societal-culture dependent and changes over time (Hearn & Collinson 1994, p. 105; Kimmel, Hearn & Connell 2005). In short, the construction of one’s masculinity (or femininity) is the interaction between one’s own agency and gender structures, which vary across cultures and change over time.

Second, masculinities are plural and hierarchical. The plurality and hierarchy of masculinities are both among masculinities and between masculinities and femininities (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Messerschmidt 2016, 2018, 2019; Messerschmidt & Messner 2018). There is a consensus among gender studies and masculinity scholars regarding the multiplicity of masculine patterns (see Brittan 1989; Brod & Kaufman 1994; Connell 1987, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Demetriou 2001; Donaldson 1993; Gerson 1993; Hearn & Collinson 1994; Howson 2006; Kimmel 1994). The investigation of the multiplicity of ‘discourses of masculinity’ and ‘multiple masculinities’ is vital in critical men's studies (Hearn 1996, p. 214). ‘Hegemonic masculinity’ is at the apex of masculinities; it subordinates other non-hegemonic masculinities: complicit, subordinated, and marginalised (Carrigan, Connell & Lee 1985; Connell 1987, 1995, 2005). These plural masculinities are discussed in order.
Antonio Gramsci’s concept of ‘hegemony’ in the analysis of class relations is the basis for the conceptualisation of ‘hegemonic masculinity’. It is conceptualised by Connell (1995, 2005) as the ‘configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women’ (Connell 2005, p. 77). It can be understood as a ‘dominative masculine hegemony’ (Howson 2006, p. 61). This dominative masculine hegemony is not about physical forces but a pattern of ‘social ascendency’ that is achieved through ‘social forces’ embedded in culture [including religious doctrine and practice], various social institutions, and persuasion in the commercial mass media (Carrigan, Connell & Lee 1985; Connell 1987; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Messerschmidt 2016, 2018). This ‘hegemonic masculinity’ is about ‘breadwinning’ and ‘manhood’ (Donaldson 1993, p. 645). Empirical evidence in Cambodia suggests that men's ability to earn a family income puts Khmer men in a hegemonic position (Haque 2013; Jacobsen 2012). Manhood is defined as ‘being strong, successful, capable, reliable, and in control’ (Kimmel 1994, p. 125). The hegemonic form of manhood is ‘a man in power, a man with power, and a man of power’ (Kimmel 1994, p. 125). This ‘hegemonic masculinity’ is ‘hegemony over women’, also known as ‘external hegemony’ (Demetriou 2001). This conceptualisation illustrates that breadwinning and dominative manhood are the key characteristics of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ for external hegemony.

‘Hegemonic masculinity’ also has hegemony over other non-hegemonic masculinities or ‘internal hegemony’ (Demetriou 2001). ‘Hegemonic masculinity’, in Connell's view, is a ‘cultural ideal’ which is practised by a small number of men. Connell therefore conceptualises another important concept, 'complicit masculinity', that refers to the masculinity of men who have a complicit relationship with ‘hegemonic masculinity’. These men benefit from the ‘patriarchal dividend’ without practising 'hegemonic masculinity’ or confronting women (Connell 1995, 2005). In Connell’s plain language, ‘complicit masculine’ men may respect their wives and mothers, do some housework, bring home their wage, and not commit any violence against women. It is inevitable that there is some degree of overlap or blurring between ‘complicit’ and ‘hegemonic’ masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005), so ‘complicit masculinity’ is treated as a
weaker version of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (Connell 2005). This ‘complicit masculinity’ is the second pattern of masculinities.

The third pattern of masculinities, in Connell’s view, is ‘subordinated masculinity’. The relationship between ‘hegemonic’ and ‘subordinated’ masculinities is based on sexuality. Connell associates this masculinity with homosexual or gay men. It is subordinate to ‘hegemonic masculinity’ in terms of social status and prestige, and in relation to a series of material practices, including political, cultural, economic, and legal discrimination (Carrigan, Connell & Lee 1985; Connell 1995, 2005). The relationship between ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and the fourth masculine pattern (‘marginalised masculinity’) is based on social class, ethnicity, and race (Connell 1995, 2005). This masculinity belongs to working-class and/or ethnic men who are socially marginalised by hegemonic men. In Australia, for example, African or Asian male migrants may fall into the marginalised masculinity pattern.

There is a reciprocal influence between ‘hegemonic’ and ‘non-hegemonic’ masculinities, and between ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and femininities in gender hierarchy. In Connell’s initial view, the relationships between masculinities, and between masculinities and femininities, were exclusive. Hegemonic masculine men reject and suppress rather than adopt non-hegemonic masculine practices or characteristics. This initial view is critiqued by Demetriou (2001) in his argument that ‘hegemonic masculinity’ is a ‘hybrid bloc’ that adopts various, diverse masculine practices from other non-hegemonic masculinities. Hegemonic men’s earring-wearing practice, which used to be associated with homosexual men, is an example. The reformulated concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005) considers Demetriou’s (2001) critique valid. They acknowledge that ‘hegemonic masculinity’ may change to incorporate non-hegemonic masculine practices (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). The recognition of women’s role in constructing ‘hegemonic’ and ‘non-hegemonic’ masculinities is also essential (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). In this view, we need to understand ‘hegemonic masculinity’ in a holistic way to recognise the agency of subordinated groups in tandem with the power of the dominant ones and their influence on one another.

The third feature of masculinities is that ‘hegemonic masculinities’ are plural and embedded in different geographical settings, influencing one another. While Connell’s
earlier conceptualisation of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ was in the Western context, she later acknowledged non-Western hegemonic masculinities by locating hegemonic masculinities at three levels: local, regional, and global (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Messerschmidt 2016, 2018). A ‘local hegemonic masculinity’ pertains to ‘face-to-face interactions of families, organisations, and immediate communities’ (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005, p. 849). A ‘regional hegemonic masculinity’ is associated with ‘the level of the culture or the nation-state’ (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005, p. 849). A ‘global hegemonic masculinity’ is concerned with ‘transnational arenas such as world politics and transnational business and media’ (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005, p. 849). These levels of hegemonic masculinity may be interconnected and influence one another (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). Such an understanding of masculinities permits us to investigate hegemonic masculinities in non-Western contexts, Khmer hegemonic masculinity, for instance.

The fourth feature is the possibility of a positive reconfiguration of hegemonic masculinities. ‘Hegemonic masculinity’ is always contested or open to challenge (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Messerschmidt 2018, 2019; Messerschmidt & Messner 2018). This challenge can be from women’s and/or non-hegemonic masculinities’ resistance to patriarchal relations such that ‘hegemonic masculinity’ gets reconfigured or redefined (Howson 2006). Some scholars’ earlier view was that men’s dominative power would never change as they would adopt a new strategy to sustain the legitimacy of patriarchy when its bases were threatened, and its conditions changed (Connell 1987, 1995). What has been changed are the forms, presentations, and packaging of male dominative power (Brittan 1989). This view suggests that ‘hegemonic masculine’ practices are oppressive, a view critiqued by Collier (1998) who argues that hegemonic practices are not always oppressive to women and other men, but include positive qualities such as generosity, independence, and self-sacrifice (Collier 1998). This critique is deemed valid in the reformulated concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005) which postulates the possibility of masculine reconfigurations in democratising gender relations by abolishing patriarchal power relations. This requires an attempt to construct a ‘positive hegemonic masculinity’ among men that is ‘open to equality with women’ (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005, p. 853).
This section discussed the four key features of masculinities relevant for theorising ‘caring masculinities’ and analysing caring practices. First, masculinity is defined as ‘configurations of gender practice’ that engage ‘social embodiment’ within gender structures, with these configurations representing the interplay between human agency and influences of gender structures. Second, masculinities are plural and hierarchical with ‘hegemonic masculinity’ at the apex, dominating other non-hegemonic masculinities. Understanding of multiple and hierarchical masculinities is essential, but it is not necessary for us to firmly adhere to Connell’s four masculinities (hegemonic, complicit, subordinated, and marginalised). The difficulty of strict adherence to these categories is that each masculinity may incorporate characteristics of the others. The third feature of masculinities is that hegemonic masculinities are plural and embedded in different geographical settings, influencing one another, and enabling us to examine ‘hegemonic masculinity’ in a non-Western context. Fourth, ‘hegemonic masculinity’ is always contested and thus reconfigured, so there is the possibility of a ‘positive hegemonic masculinity’ in the reconfiguring process. These four features of masculinities are foundational for conceptualising ‘caring masculinities’ in the following section.

3.3 Reconceptualising Caring Masculinities

This section reconceptualises a recently theorised concept of ‘caring masculinities’ focusing on fathering in ‘direct care’ in developed countries. In this reconceptualisation, I discuss three things. I first critically review relevant concepts and approaches about fatherhood and fathering, then look at a current debate on the link between caring and hegemonic masculinities to reconceptualise ‘caring masculinities’ as a conceptual tool. My reconceptualisation is based on the ‘ethics of care’ and masculinity theory. Then I employ the reformulated concept of ‘caring masculinities’ to investigate different masculine caring patterns embedded in empirical studies in developed and developing countries. Third, I examine the constitutive factors of men’s ‘more-caring’ practices.

Research on men’s caring practices appears to investigate fathering in fatherhood studies; however, such a focus has limitations because ‘caring masculinities’ are not only about fathers’ identities but also about the intersecting identities of fathers and husbands. Fatherhood studies are a recent focus in various disciplines, including sociology, social geography, and moral philosophy (Blunt & Dowling 2006; Doucet 2013; Elliott 2016;
Gorman-Murray 2008; Jordan 2020; Marsiglio & Pleck 2005). Such research in developing countries, specifically Asia, is limited (Yeung 2013, 2016). Scholarship on fathering is situated within the sociology of masculinity in that 'it is characterised by several social divisions or inclusions and exclusions', which can be understood through a cultural discourse on 'familial masculinity' and men's roles in their family life (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill 2003, p. 45). The sociological approach to fatherhood studies has emerged to address the limitations of the psychological perspective (Featherstone 2009; Haywood & Mac an Ghaill 2003; Marsiglio & Pleck 2005). The psychological approach is primarily interested in fathers' positive roles in children's psychological and cognitive development. This focus tends to ignore other dimensions of fatherhood (for example, economic support) and its embeddedness in broader social relationships, such as couple relationships (Featherstone 2009).

The sociological approach to research on fathering is situated within the field of men and masculinities. Fathering (and mothering) practices are in the field of the gender divisions of labour (Doucet 2006, 2013). These practices can be explained by and are situated within masculinity theory (Connell 1987, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2009; Messerschmidt 2016, 2018). William Marsiglio and Joseph Pleck (2005) suggest that we need to examine how fathering practices are shaped by men’s involvement in different gendered institutional and social contexts. Sociologist Andrea Doucet (2004b) emphasises the roles of social networks and community in imposing a ‘social gaze’ on men’s fathering. Like masculinities, fathering practices are shaped by various social characteristics such as age, race or ethnicity, economic standing, sexual orientation (Coltrane 2010; Marsiglio & Pleck 2005), and sociohistorical discourses in specific geographic settings (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill 2003); that is, fathering practices vary across social divisions and are intertwined with the history of particular social settings.

Both psychological and sociological approaches to fatherhood are interested in fathers’ positive roles in child development, with the latter approach situating fathering within broader social relations (see Coltrane 2010; Marsiglio & Pleck 2005). Psychologists Lamb et al. (1987) and sociologist Doucet (2006) conceptualise fathers' involvement in childcare as having three components. Lamb et al. (1987) conceptualise ‘paternal involvement’ as having three elements: direct interaction with children; availability for potential interaction or just being present or accessible to children; and responsibility in
ascertaining that children are cared for and providing necessary resources. Doucet (2006) reconceptualises Lamb et al.’s (1987) elements of paternal involvement into three interconnected childrearing responsibilities, emotional, community, and moral, to analyse both maternal and paternal involvement (Doucet 2000, 2004b). ‘Emotional responsibility’ captures ‘the essence and work of protective care and the responsibility for its enactment (that is, the “response-ability”)’ (Doucet 2006, p. 111). ‘Protective care’ is more than conventional nurturing; it includes fun and playfulness, physical and outdoor activities, and the promotion of independence and risk-taking (Doucet 2006). These elements, in Doucet’s argument, are essential aspects of ‘emotional responsibility’ for children. These elements are interconnected with parental ‘community responsibility’ that refers to ‘the extra-domestic, community-based quality of the work of being responsible for children’ (Doucet 2006, p. 141). It is the ‘responsibility for domestic life and for children’, involving a ‘variety of relationships between households as well as between the social institutions of families/households, schools, the state, and the workplace’ (Doucet 2006, p. 141). It is related to the establishment and maintenance of social relationships and networks for children (Doucet 2006, p. 251). Undertaking these two responsibilities is shaped by ‘moral responsibility’: fathers' (or mothers') conceptions of their identities. It is conceptualised as the ‘sense of people’s identities as moral beings’, driven by how fathers and mothers feel ‘they should act in society’ (Doucet 2006, p. 176). ‘Moral responsibility’ refers to ‘the shoulds and oughts of what it currently means to be a good mother or proper mother and a good father or a responsible father’ (Doucet 2006, p. 219).

It is possible that Doucet's conceptualisation of parental responsibilities captures both ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care, although she tends to focus on ‘direct care’ and/or does not foreground ‘indirect care’ in her analysis. The conceptions of ‘emotional’ and ‘community’ responsibilities broaden our understanding of ‘direct care’ to include fun and playfulness, physical and outdoor activities, and the promotion of independence and risk-taking. These activities are captured in Brandth and Kvande’s (1998) concept of ‘masculine care’: ‘being together and doing things together’ (p. 310). I refer to it as ‘masculine direct care’. I also expand such care to include men’s engagement in activities involving establishment and maintenance of social relationships and networks for children as part of men’s ‘community responsibility’ (Doucet 2006). A limitation of
Doucet's conceptualisation of parental responsibilities, however, is its focus on fathers’ identities rather than their intersecting identities as both fathers and husbands. Understanding fathers’ engagement in care, especially ‘indirect care’, requires an analysis of such intersecting identities given that men usually provide care to their children and/or the family based on their understanding of these intersecting identities rather than just on fathers’ identities. This understanding is incorporated in my theorisation of ‘caring masculinities’.

Two major conceptions of ‘caring masculinities’ have been observed within an unsettling debate about the link between ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and care. The first is to theorise a ‘caring masculinity’ as opposed to a hegemonic one, which is embedded within Doucet’s (2004b, 2006, 2013) and Elliott’s (2016) argument. Doucet (2004b, 2006, 2013) argues that fathering in caregiving may produce new forms of masculinity which combine some aspects of femininities and masculinities. In other words, men are reconfiguring their ‘paternal and masculine identities’ within the home, which is traditionally considered to be a maternal and feminine space (Doucet 2004b). These new forms of masculinities are different from Connell’s ‘hegemonic’ and ‘non-hegemonic’ masculinities (Doucet 2004b). This argument enabled Karla Elliott (2016) to conceptualise ‘caring masculinities’ as ‘masculine identities’ that repudiate ‘domination and its associated traits’, so that these identities incorporate moral values of care, including positive emotions, interdependence and relationality (p. 24). This conception rejects an oppressive form of ‘manhood’ that is part of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (Donaldson 1993; Kimmel 1994). This conceptualisation represents a visionary model of ‘caring masculinities’ that focuses on positive manhood as opposed to a hegemonic one. In this case, it tends to emphasise ‘direct’ rather than ‘indirect care’.

Some arguments and evidence claim that men are competent in caring practices in Elliot’s (2016) sense, and that such practices may not only benefit men but also their relationships with others. Critical psychologist Lynne Segal (2007) asserts that men’s engagement in ‘childcare and nurturing’ is one of the essential factors in ‘the forging of masculinity into something less coercive and oppressive to women’ in the domestic space (p. 47). Similarly, drawing on the varied literature on fatherhood, Scott Coltrane (2010) asserts that there is a positive relationship between caring fathering and gender equity, and a negative relationship with violence against women. Empirical data collected from
in-depth interviews and observation allow Gillian Ranson (2015) to confidently assert that men can be competent in caretaking and that ‘fathers’ embodied caregiving’ may have positive effects on men and their relationships with their spouses and children, as well as with the wider world. It is essential to note that although this empirical evidence supports men's competence in care, it does not mean that men have surrendered their breadwinning role to care for their children; these men took their paid paternal leave to care for their children only for a certain period.

Other scholars have a conception of ‘caring masculinities’ that is different from the visionary model in Elliot’s (2016) sense as this model has some limitations in understanding the multiplicity of caring practices and the link between ‘breadwinning’ and ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care. A conceptualisation of caring masculinity as a rejection of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ is criticised because it inadequately captures the realities of caring practices (Hunter, Riggs & Augoustinos 2017; Jordan 2020). In fact, men’s caring practices in Jordan’s (2020) study tend to ‘incorporate, rather than reject, domination’ while embracing some aspects traditionally considered as feminine care (Jordan 2020, p. 36). Similarly, based on his concept of ‘critical positive masculinity’ arising from his research on men’s health and wellbeing, Tim Lomas (2013) argues that some men can strategically negotiate their ‘hegemonic masculinity’ to engage in more positive masculine practices. Men flexibly interpret and ‘strategically incorporate caring’ within traditional hegemonic norms rather than resisting them, and thus men may ‘endorse and challenge’ conventional hegemonic constructions (Lomas 2013, p. 177). We therefore need to theorise the link between ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and ‘caring masculinity’ (Jordan 2020, p. 36). A ‘caring masculinity’ is appropriately theorised as a ‘broadening of hegemonic masculinity’ to incorporate roles traditionally performed by women (Hunter, Riggs & Augoustinos 2017, p. 6). In this regard, they argue that we need to recognise a complex interaction between breadwinning and fathers’ caring practices (Hunter, Riggs & Augoustinos 2017, p. 6). Conceptualising breadwinning as part of ‘caring masculinities’ is consonant with the ‘ethics of care’, as it can be deemed a form of care (Schmidt 2018). Similarly, men in Brand and Kvande’s (1998) and Brandth’s (2016) studies in Norway incorporate childcare [masculine direct care] into their ‘hegemonic masculinity’ because men focus on both their breadwinning and these caring practices.
The above argument for the theorisation of ‘caring masculinities’ to incorporate rather than reject ‘hegemonic masculinity’ is extremely helpful because it can fully capture the nature of caring practices. It is therefore better to theorise ‘caring masculinities’ as capturing ‘breadwinning’ as a form of care alongside ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care in order to investigate multiple patterns of caring practices. In this view, I reconceptualise ‘caring masculinities’ along a continuum that encompasses ‘less-caring’ and ‘more-caring’ practices at each extreme, both shaped by men’s conceptions of their intersecting identities as fathers and husbands. This theorising builds on Tronto’s (1993b, 1998, 2013) concept of caring as an ongoing process, as phases/dimensions, and masculinity theory as the ‘configurations of gender practice’ (Connell 1995, 2000, 2005, 2009; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Messerschmidt 2016, 2018). My theorising enables this dissertation to understand men’s caring practices in Tronto’s (1993b, 1998, 2013) terms. The analysis of men’s caring masculinities requires us to investigate the interactions between men’s and women’s configurations of care practices, as suggested by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) and Messerschmidt (2016, 2018). We therefore examine men’s configurations of care practices not only based on their identities as fathers but also as husbands, and thus their intersecting identities as both fathers and husbands. Men with ‘more-caring masculinity’ have a positive perception of ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care and are thus reconfiguring their caring practices to embrace these types of care alongside varying degrees of breadwinning. They therefore actively and regularly engage in the four caring phases/dimensions (Tronto 1993b, 1998, 2013). These ‘more-caring’ men are ‘reflexive subjects’ (Shore & Wright 2011) in reconfiguring their gender practice. In contrast, men with ‘less-caring masculinity’ may not necessarily have a positive perception of the two types of care and thus irregularly and minimally engage in some rather than all four caring phases/dimensions (Tronto 1993b, 1998, 2013). These men tend to prioritise their breadwinning over other types of care.

3.3.1 Empirical Evidence of More-Caring and Less-Caring Practices

The concepts of ‘more-caring’ and ‘less-caring’ masculinities theorised in this research permit us to examine the two caring patterns in childcare in empirical studies in both developed and developing contexts. A recent study on fathering practices among men who took parental leave in Norway by Brandth and Kvande (2018) confirms that men engage in both ‘more-caring’ and ‘less-caring’ practices without surrendering their
breadwinning roles, although they are on paid leave during this caring process. Other empirical studies also illustrate these two caring patterns in heterosexual families, and I discuss them under each of these patterns.

‘Less-caring masculinity’ tends to prioritise breadwinning over domestic responsibility in various studies. The vast majority of American men in Hochschild’s (1989, 2003, 2012) research and 36 per cent of men in Gerson’s (1993) study oriented themselves towards this ‘less-caring’ masculine pattern, with the orientation causing some tension within the family in Gerson’s (1993) study. A study by Jump and Haas (1987) with American dual-career families also confirms this pattern. Similarly, in her study of two generations of fathers in rural Norway, Brandth (2016) illustrates that older generation fathers tend to fit this pattern. The orientation towards the breadwinning role was dominant from the mid-twentieth century until after the Second World War (Kimmel 1987; Pleck 1987).

‘More-caring masculinity’ in various empirical studies in both developed and developing countries tends to embrace both breadwinning and other types of care. In the Northern Vietnamese context where women migrate transnationally for work, Hoang and Yeoh (2011) found that the stay-at-home husbands provided ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care for their children and also undertook the breadwinning role as part of their masculinity, although they faced some challenges in doing so. Similarly, in their study on the effects of MenCare+ program in guiding men towards more gender-equitable practices within the home in Rwanda, Doyle et al. (2014) observe that men reconfigure their masculinity towards being more involved in domestic work and ‘direct care’ for their babies, as well as in shared household decision-making, alongside their breadwinning role. Similarly, in their study with a wide range of men engaging in different types of care, Morrell and Jewkes (2011) found that some men engaged in household childcare in South Africa, suggesting that caring practices may encourage some men to change their masculine

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9 Although her books were published in these three different years, they are based on the original data collected for the 1989 version. In this study, she conducted in-depth interviews with 50 couples and was observing 12 homes.
10 In this study, 36 per cent of 138 men oriented themselves towards breadwinning responsibility.
11 The time use analysis of 50 dual-career couples indicated that 54 per cent were egalitarian couples, 40 per cent were transitional couples, and 6 per cent were traditional couples.
12 This research targeted men from three types of care: direct and indirect care within the households, paid care professionals, and community care.
perceptions and identities. Empirical qualitative studies in the United States seem to be in line with this pattern, although they do not distinguish between direct and indirect care. Gerson (1993)\textsuperscript{13} and Hochschild (1989, 2003, 2012) observe this pattern as one of the diverse paternal responses to caring. Hochschild (1989, 2003, 2012)\textsuperscript{14} found that 20 per cent of male respondents were actively ‘involved at home’ along with their wives (Hochschild 1989, 2003; 2012, p. 145). Gerson (1993) also found that some men (33 per cent) oriented themselves towards ‘family involvement’, though she may be referring to just fathers’ caring about their children rather than caregiving. She notes that 75 per cent of ‘involved fathers’ were in a committed relationship with their partners, with the rest being divorced but still committed to engaging and providing some financial support [caring about and caring for in Tronto’s sense] with their children (Gerson 1993, p. 142).

3.3.2 Constitutive Factors of More-Caring Masculinity

Caring masculinities encompass ‘less-caring’ and ‘more-caring’ practices, but the latter practices are desirable; therefore, it is essential to understand their contributing factors. Marsiglio and Pleck (2005) call for research to investigate why some men are more likely than others to adopt caring fathering practices. Feminist and gender studies scholars tend to endorse gender-equitable fathering (Coltrane 2010; Daly 2001; Doucet 2004a; Esquivel 2014; Fraser 1997; Marsiglio & Pleck 2005; Razavi 2007b; Segal 2007) but may not agree on its constitutive factors. It is essential to explore the complexity of configurations of masculine practices within social divisions and its interaction with femininities when examining the constituting factors of ‘more-caring masculinity’ within heterosexual families. This is because masculinities and fathering practices are produced through social divisions of gender, class and age (Hearn & Collinson 1994); for instance, working-class fathers are more likely to be involved in childcare than middle-class fathers (Hochschild 1989, 2003, 2012), and younger men are more likely to engage in childcare of their own children compared to older men (Brandth 2016; Marsiglio & Pleck 2005).

Besides these social divisions, both qualitative and quantitative studies suggest that wives’ interactions with husbands may influence fathering practices. Connell and

\textsuperscript{13} Kathleen Gerson employed a life histories method in conducting in-depth interviews with 138 men from diverse backgrounds.

\textsuperscript{14} Although Hochschild’s books were published in these three different years, they are based on the original data collected for the 1989 version. In this study, she conducted in-depth interviews with 50 couples and was observing 12 homes.
Messerschmidt (2005) and Messerschmidt (2016, 2018) suggest that any research on hegemonic masculinity requires placing the spotlight on ‘the practices of women’ in constructing masculinities and on the historical interaction between femininities and masculinities. Coltrane (2010) predicts that economic parity and more egalitarian gender relations will enable women to negotiate with their spouses or partners to participate more in family work. On the economic front, there may be differentiated effects of women’s economic independence gained through the informal and formal economy. Hochschild’s (1989, 2003, 2012) empirical data underscores the importance of women’s economic independence, gained through the formal economy and their higher education, with both factors enabling women to negotiate with their husbands to share more care work. Drawing on their comparative statistical analysis in 13 countries, Davis and Greenstein (2004) link women’s higher education and employment outside the home with men’s increased participation in childcare work. I would argue however that it is not always the case that women can successfully negotiate with their partners to share childcare work. More equitable sharing of childcare also depends on perceptions of equality in both husbands and wives (Coltrane 2010; Greenstein 1996). Based on quantitative data compiled in the United States, Greenstein (1996) argues that only the interplay between egalitarian gender ideologies of husbands and wives can lead to an increase in husbands’ contribution to housework when both strongly support the idea that sharing domestic workloads between husbands and wives is desirable. Men’s positive perceptions of childcare are important in their interactions with their spouses, leading to ‘more caring’ practices.

A debate about factors shaping men’s positive perspectives focuses on three issues. The first deliberates between the effect of higher education towards and a construct of men’s masculinity on positive attitudes towards men’s childcare engagement, with the latter appearing to be more convincing. Yeung (2013, 2016) suggests men’s higher education level is the primary driver of men engaging more in care in the future (Yeung 2013). I am a bit sceptical about this postulation as it depends on the types of education acquired. Men’s positive perceptions towards care and their caring practices may not need higher education, but rather exposure to an egalitarian gender relations discourse. Gendered

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15 This analysis is based on the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) data in the United States of America in 1988.
social constructions rather than men’s lower education levels are a primary obstacle in enticing men to engage more in care (see Segal 2007). Constructing a ‘positive hegemonic masculinity’ can demolish this obstacle (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). Some empirical studies indicate the success of such constructions. An example is the MenCare+ program in Rwanda which has stimulated peasant men into sharing domestic work, childcare, and household decisions (Doyle et al. 2014). Similarly, some more-caring men in South Africa in Morrell and Jewkes’ (2011) study shared caring responsibilities due to an awareness of gender inequity issues.

Another debated issue is men’s childhood experiences of housework. Hochschild (1989, 2003, 2012) has observed that men’s childhood immersive experiences with their mothers and the absence of their fathers may have some positive effect on men’s fathering practices. She observed that involved fathers tended to have closer ties with their mothers in their young lives and dissatisfying experiences with their fathers. In contrast, Gerson (1993) is cautious about the influence of childhood experiences, observing that men's challenging experiences in adulthood may dilute these experiences. As I will show in Chapter 9, however, my data is in accord with Hochschild’s finding that men’s childhood and/or teenage exposure to housework is essential in shaping their positive attitudes toward childcare and to their receptiveness to their spouses’ negotiations on this issue.

The third debated factor concerns the level of men's economic dependency in relation to their spouses. Coltrane (2010) argues that men’s engagement in childcare work depends on their spouses’ or partners’ employment and education; that is, men tend to participate more in family work if their spouses or partners need to work relatively long hours, can earn relatively more money, and have relatively higher education (Coltrane 2010, p. 444). Hochschild (1989, 2003, 2012) is sceptical about this economic logic. Her empirical evidence indicates that none of the men who earned less than their wives shared housework, but those who earned more than, or about the same amount, as their wives (21 per cent and 30 per cent) respectively were actively engaged in housework (Hochschild 1989, p. 221). These figures and her interviews enable her to suggest a ‘principle of balancing’ in which men’s negligence of housework is a way to compensate for the power they lost due to their poor capacity to earn income compared with their wives. Likewise, in her analysis of quantitative data on economic dependency and division of labour within the family, sociologist Julie Brines (1994) argues that men in
families that do not conform to the traditional family structure [breadwinning husbands and dependent wives] ‘display gender’ by conforming to the traditional gender division of labour; that is, men who are economically dependent on their wives ‘display gender’ by not sharing domestic labour because their economic dependency threatens their male breadwinner identity. In my view, the ‘principle of balancing’ or ‘displaying gender’ may be observable where men have a negative conception of care work. As will be shown in Chapter 9, the empirical data of this research illustrates that men who have a positive view of childcare do not ‘display gender’, as theorised by Brines (1994), when their capacity to earn the family income is curtailed.

This subsection examined the constitutive factors of ‘more-caring’ practices embedded in men’s social divisions and in their interactions with their spouses. On the social division front, working-class men tend to engage in more-caring practices than middle-class men; younger men are more likely to engage in caring practices compared to older men. With regard to the interactions between men and their spouses, various studies suggest that women’s and men’s positive conceptions of childcare tend to lead men to engage more in care work; however, there is debate about the constitutive factors shaping men’s positive perspectives on care work around three issues, which will be explored in Chapter 9. This research will show that men’s childhood and/or teenage experiences of and/or exposure to housework and their spouses’ negotiations on childcare are important in shaping their 'more-caring' practices.

3.4 Chapter Summary

I started this chapter by summarising the concept of the ‘ethics of care’ in feminist moral philosophy. The ‘ethics of care’ relevant for theorising ‘caring masculinities’ is characterised by four ethical standards corresponding to four caring phases/dimensions. ‘Attentiveness’ is for ‘caring-about’; ‘responsibility’ is for ‘caring-for’; ‘competence’ is for ‘caregiving’; ‘responsiveness’ is for ‘care-receiving’ (Tronto 1993b, 1998, 2013). Providing care within these caring phases/dimensions involves power relations between the care provider and the care-receiver. In the analysis of the care provided within power relations at the family level, I argued that there are always intersecting identities of family carers.
The chapter then discussed four key features of masculinities beneficial for theorising ‘caring masculinities’. First, masculinity is defined as ‘configurations of gender practice’ that engage ‘social embodiment’ within gender structures (Connell 1995, 2000, 2005, 2009; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Messerschmidt 2016, 2018). The construction of one’s gender is not smooth but rather a series of encounters, of ‘challenges’ and ‘enablements’ within gender structures. This construction is therefore an interplay between human agency and the influences of gender structures. Second, masculinities are plural and hierarchical with hegemonic masculinity at the apex, dominating other non-hegemonic masculinities. Third, hegemonic masculinities are plural, embedded in different geographical settings, and influencing one another. Fourth, hegemonic masculinity is always contested and thus reconfigured, so there is the possibility of a ‘positive hegemonic masculinity’ in a reconfiguration process.

The above two bodies of literature enable this research to theorise ‘caring masculinities’ that incorporate rather than reject ‘hegemonic masculinity’. I therefore reconceptualise ‘caring masculinities’ along a continuum that encompasses ‘less-caring’ and ‘more-caring’ practices at each extreme, both shaped by men’s conceptions of their intersecting identities as fathers and husbands. My theorising enables this dissertation to understand men’s caring practices in the four caring phases/dimensions in Tronto’s (1993b, 1998, 2013) concept of caring as an ongoing process. It also allows us to investigate the interactions between men’s and women’s configurations of care practices, as suggested by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) and Messerschmidt (2016, 2018). The multiple patterns of men’s caring practices will be illustrated in discussion of Khmer caring masculinities in Chapter 9.

My reconceptualisation of ‘caring masculinities’ in this chapter, and the ‘critical approaches of childcare policies’ and the ‘transformative ethics of care’ as theorised in the preceding chapter, will be interwoven in the research design for data analysis in the next chapter.
Chapter 4

Research Design

Data Collection Techniques and Analysis

This chapter focuses on my research methodology for data collection and analysis of the research questions, drawing on a new feminist framework for transformative care, as theorised in the two preceding chapters. With this aim, the chapter deals with three main issues. First, it describes the research sites and methods of primary data collection—in-depth interviews and observation—which are informed by an interpretive methodology. Second, the chapter describes how data will be critically analysed in the data chapters of this dissertation. This section interweaves three tools: methodological, evaluative, and conceptual, as theorised in Chapters 2 and 3, to analyse the research data. Third, the chapter describes research ethics and data management. This section deals with interview respondents’ understanding of the research objectives and their potential risks in this research. It also illustrates some ethical measures taken to ensure respondents’ confidentiality and privacy.

4.1 Data Collection Methodology, Methods and Sites

This section describes the research methodology, an ‘interpretive methodology’, before discussing the sites and the data collection methods as it prescribes the methods for this dissertation. While methodology is a ‘theory and analysis of how research’ should be conducted, method is a ‘technique for (or way of proceeding in)’ collecting evidence (Harding 1987, pp. 2-3). An ‘interpretive methodology’ draws on ‘hermeneutics’ and ‘phenomenology’ (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow 2012). While ‘hermeneutics’ concentrates on interpretations of human meanings embedded in written or spoken language, acts, and physical artifacts, ‘phenomenology’ focuses on ‘meaning-making’ in the “lifeworld” of individuals within social, political, and cultural contexts (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow 2012, p. 42). A primary emphasis on ‘meaning-making’ in a traditional sense has been critiqued for its lack of ‘emancipatory interests’ (Saretzki 2015). Although interpretive scholars acknowledge such a limitation at a philosophical level of writing, they argue that the interpretive methodology for policy analysis has an emancipatory purpose (Fischer et al. 2015; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow 2012; Wagenaar 2011; Yanow 2014, 2015). In this sense,
the interpretive methodology is argued to be an ‘applied hermeneutic phenomenology’ involving an analysis of power dynamics (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow 2012). As explained in Chapter 2, the interpretive methodology generates ‘critical approaches to childcare policies’, the methodological tool of the new feminist framework for transformative care developed for this dissertation. This methodology scrutinises both policy texts/language, and the perspectives and/or lived experiences of different policy actors/communities (Bacchi 1999, 2009; Bacchi & Goodwin 2016; Shore & Wright 1997a, 2011; Yanow 2000, 2014). As theorised in Chapter 2, in the policy texts/language we pay particular attention to a discourse analysis examining keywords/policy labels, treating it as crucial, like the primary data collected from respondents. For the analysis of primary data, knowledge is generated through ‘intersubjective interpretations’ of the researcher and the researched (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow 2012; Yanow 2014).

For the primary data, this research employed two techniques: in-depth interviews and observation. This data was collected between early February and early May 2018 in the Phnom Penh capital representing an urban/peri-urban setting, and in a rural area represented by four communes—KraingYov, Beung Khyang, SvayRolum and Setbo—in two districts [Kandal Steung and Saang] in Kandal province in Cambodia. The primary reason for selecting Phnom Penh as a research site was that the majority of policymakers and policy advocates are in Phnom Penh, permitting this dissertation to investigate women’s and men’s experiences of childcare practices in an urban/peri-urban setting.

There were two reasons for selecting Kandal province as a research site. My prior professional experience working for non-government organisations (NGOs) meant I had NGO networks that could connect me with some community preschools in a rural setting. In the Saang district, an international NGO [Aide et Action (AEA)] that runs a social enterprise, iLEAD International School in Phnom Penh, connected me to community preschools supported by iLEAD in this geographical area.¹⁶ In the Kandal Steung district¹⁷, a Japanese NGO [Caring for Young Khmer] that used to support a preschool community running long day childcare programs in this commune introduced me to a preschool. The other reason for selecting Kandal province was that its four communes

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¹⁶ In Saang district, this research targeted three communes: KraingYov, SvayRolum and Setbo.
¹⁷ This research targeted Beung Khyang commune where a community preschool [community preschool A] is located.
enabled us to understand women’s and men’s experiences of childcare practices in a rural setting.

4.1.1 In-depth Interviews

In Chapter 2, I argued the need to incorporate ‘development partners’, including non-government organisations, into Yanow’s (2000) conceptualisation of policy communities. The primary data presented in this dissertation is therefore based on 104 in-depth qualitative interviews in three different policy communities. One of the policy communities is the national-level community consisting of policymakers from various government agencies and policy advocates-cum-workers from UN Agencies and local and international NGOs, all of which are in Phnom Penh. I conducted 23 interviews with this community. In the second community, I conducted 29 interviews with preschool-level respondents. This research targeted both preschool management and teachers/carers. The third community consisted of 52 respondents [men and women] at the household level.

National-Level Policy Community

The primary purpose of in-depth interviews at this level is to explore possibly competing interpretations of the childcare discourse in Cambodia. These competing interpretations can be investigated through the National Childcare Policy and its First Action Plan 2014-18. To explore these interpretations, I interviewed 23 policymakers and policy advocates-cum-workers (see Table 1). For guiding interview questions, see appendices 3, 4 and 5.

Table 1: Summary of Respondents at the National-Level Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Institutions</th>
<th>Individuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministries</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN Agencies on Women’s Rights</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN Agencies on ECCE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INGOs on ECCE</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LNGOs on Women’s Rights</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LNGOs on General Policy</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LNGOs on ECCE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LNGOs on Labour Rights</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals on ECCE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Number</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data from In-depth Interviews
Policymakers are the staff of government agencies, and policy advocates-cum-workers the staff of non-government institutions such as UN agencies and international and local NGOs. I purposively selected government ministries that were members of the National Childcare Committee. The primary criterion for selecting these ministerial representatives was their engagement in the development of the National Childcare Policy and/or policies in gender and women’s rights in Cambodia. In total, I interviewed six ministerial representatives by employing a referral technique from one participant to another. These ministerial representatives were from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA), the Ministry of Planning (MoP), and the Ministry of Interior (MoI). I interviewed two respondents per institution at MoEYS and MoWA. For MoEYS, I interviewed one respondent representing the Early Childhood Education Department and another from the Directorate General of Policy and Planning. Of the two respondents at MoWA, one is a deputy department director who has engaged in the National Childcare Policy from the outset. The other is a director-general who engages in policymaking on gender and women’s rights issues. MoP’s representative is a deputy-director general in charge of consolidating various national policies and planning. The sixth ministerial representative is from the Department of Municipal, District, Commune/Sangkat Administration Affairs at MoI. This department is responsible for the management of commune councils that run community preschools.

As well as the six ministerial representatives, I conducted 17 interviews (11 of them with women) with representatives from UN agencies and local and international NGOs. I reached out to these respondents through connections established during my years of professional experience working for NGOs. In UN agencies I conducted four in-depth interviews with representatives engaging in gender equality [UN institution C] and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) issues [UN institution A and UN institution B]. One UN C representative had engaged in national policies or planning on gender and women’s rights in Cambodia, while the other UN agencies had engaged in the National Childcare Policy and its first Action Plan. At UN institution B, I interviewed two people, one of whom is responsible for ECCE and the other in charge of social policy. I also conducted 13 in-depth interviews with local and international NGOs working on

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18 It is a Khmer term that has a meaning equivalent to “commune”.

women’s rights and ECCE issues. Four of the 13 interviews were with NGO networks on gender and women’s rights, ECCE, social policy, and labour rights dealing with enterprise-based day care issues. The rest were local and international NGOs working on ECCE and engaged in the development of the National Childcare Policy and/or its first Action Plan. One of the 13 respondents is an individual who has expertise in ECCE and used to be a director of a local NGO working on ECCE.

**Preschool-Level Policy Community**

I consider two different types of institutions as preschool-level policy communities. The first type includes different types of preschools; the other is home-based childcare programs at the village level. The purpose of the interviews with these preschool respondents were twofold (see appendices 6, 7 and 8 for guiding interview questions). The first aim was to understand their interpretation both of ECCE in Cambodia generally and of their particular ECCE service. The second was to explore their perspectives on patterns of fathers’ and mothers’ involvement in care. I interviewed preschool directors and preschool teachers/carers for these purposes.

Preschools encompass state preschools, community preschools, private preschools, and preschools and/or daycare centres run by NGOs. There are two different types of state preschools, one of which is detached state preschools which have their management and budget determined by MoEYS. Another type is attached state preschools which do not have their own separate management and budget but are managed by primary schools. Community preschools initially emerged from a community-based childcare class model of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in 2002. Community preschools are run and funded by commune councils with some support from UNICEF and other NGOs in the form of teachers’ allowances, education materials, and technical assistance. Generally, state and community preschools provide only three-hour sessions for preschool children, except for a few preschools which provide long day care services. Private preschools are profit-driven institutions providing either three-hour sessions or long day care services. Some NGOs consider their preschools as day care centres, and others prefer to name their day care centres preschools or community preschools. Hereafter I refer to these daycare centres and preschools as NGO preschools or just
preschools. NGO preschools require parents to contribute some money for their children’s lunches.

The primary purpose of interviewing in the second type of institution [home-based childcare programs] was to explore how these programs have feminised childcare at the family level. They were initiated by MoEYS and funded by the World Bank in 2009, but are run at the village level, jointly governed by commune councils. Under this program village-based core mothers’ groups have been established in approximately 2,612 villages spread across 84 per cent of all districts in Cambodia (MoEYS 2019, p. 28). I interviewed leaders of two core mothers’ groups at two villages and some commune councillors in KraingYov commune in Kandal province.

In total, I conducted 29 in-depth interviews (20 women) with interviewees from 12 preschools and two core mothers’ groups (see Table 2). These interviews consisted of six interviews with state preschools, ten interviews with community preschools, nine interviews with NGO preschools, two interviews with private preschools, and two interviews with core mothers’ groups. Initially, I planned to conduct two separate in-depth interviews with one preschool director and one preschool teacher at each preschool; however, three preschool directors insisted that I interview a group of preschool teachers. I counted such groups of interviewees as one interview. I conducted three group interviews—each group of two respondents—with commune councillors who directly govern core mothers’ groups and community preschools in this preschool-level policy community. I counted these groups as three interviews.

Table 2: Respondents at Preschool-Level Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Preschools</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Preschools</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO-Community Preschools</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Preschools</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Mothers’ Groups</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Number</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Primary Data from In-depth Interviews
The third policy community encompassed household-level respondents. In-depth interviews with these respondents [fathers and mothers] have enabled this research to understand various configurations of childcare practices in order to answer the third research question: How have men and women (re)configured their masculinities and femininities in and through childcare? To answer this question, I conducted 52 in-depth interviews with 26 men and 26 women (see appendices 9 and 10 for guiding interview questions). Many of these parents send their children to preschools, while the others have participated in village-based core mothers’ groups. I recruited these participants through respondents at the preschool level community. Each institution initially provided the names and contact numbers of two couples whom I phoned to check their availability to participate in this research before making an appointment for an interview. I initially aimed to interview two couples per institution from 11 preschools and two village-based core mothers’ groups, but some male respondents connected to two preschools were not available for interview. I therefore conducted in-depth interviews with some male respondents from an additional community preschool to replace these missing men. The total number of preschools is 12 rather than 11. Of the total number of respondents, 18 represent nine households as I managed to interview both husband and wife. The remaining 34 respondents represent 34 different households as wives and husbands in those households were not available for interviews together, as planned. The total number of respondents therefore represents 43 households (46.5 per cent in an urban setting versus 53.5 per cent in a rural setting). The summary of these respondents is presented in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Preschools</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Preschools</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO-Community Preschools</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Preschools</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Mothers’ Groups</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Respondents</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Primary Data from In-depth Interviews
Respondents’ Demographic Information

The household-level respondents are young mothers and fathers. Their median age is 35 with the youngest 24 and the oldest aged 55. The majority of them (88.5 per cent) fall into the 31 to 40 age category, while the second largest age category (21 per cent) includes 24 to 30 year olds. The smallest proportion (13.5 per cent) are aged 41 to 55.

The majority of the households (48.84 per cent of the 43 households) have two children. The proportion of households having one and three children are the same at 23.26 per cent, equivalent to 10 households. Only one household (2.33 per cent) has four children, with another household having six.

The proportion of women with primary and upper secondary education is relatively high. In contrast, the percentage of men with lower secondary and tertiary education is relatively high (see Table 4). Just above one-third (34.62 per cent) of women received primary school education, but less than a quarter (23.08 per cent) of men attained this educational level. The percentage of women with an upper secondary school level and tertiary education is the same at 19.23 per cent. For lower secondary education, less than one-third (30.77 per cent) of men and just above a quarter (26.92 per cent) of women achieved it. A higher proportion of men (38.46 per cent) received tertiary education, but only a small percentage (7.69 per cent) of them received an upper secondary education.

Table 4: Men’s and Women’s Educational Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Men (%)</th>
<th>Women (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Education [Grades 1-6]</td>
<td>23.08</td>
<td>34.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Secondary Education [Grades 7-9]</td>
<td>30.77</td>
<td>26.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Secondary Education [Grades 10-12]</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>19.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary Education</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>19.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data from In-depth Interviews

Although the proportions of men and women in both the formal and informal economy are not significantly different, they have different kinds of jobs. A little over one-third (38.46 per cent) of women are employed, while the rest are unpaid workers and paid home workers (19.23 per cent and 42.31 per cent respectively). Unpaid workers (or unpaid working women) are traditionally known as housewives. I prefer to use the term ‘unpaid workers’ or ‘unpaid working women’ rather than ‘housewives’ to recognise the value of social reproduction. Home work is ‘a form of work performed in the home for
subcontractors, also referred to as industrial home work, “by own account” or self-employed’ (Delaney et al. 2018, p. 1). In this study, home workers (or paid home working women) perform both housework and other kinds of paid work at home, such as subcontracting sewing or running a small shop selling groceries, vegetables, and fruit. The most substantial proportion of fathers (65.38 per cent) work in the informal economy, while 44.62 per cent of them are employed in the formal economy. The majority of men in the informal economy tend to run a small business outside their house rather than being home workers.

4.1.2 Observation

The observation method was employed to complement my in-depth interviews with respondents from the first and second policy communities. This method helps develop a better understanding of ‘symbolic acts’ (Yanow 2000). It not only helped me deeply understand what was said during the in-depth interviews but also what was said by non-research participants, which was linked to the research questions. Initially, I aimed to observe meetings of core mothers’ groups, but no meetings were organised during the period of my data collection. I therefore observed three other relevant events.

One of the observation events was training provided to NGO preschool teachers. I was able to observe this event after my interview with the NGO’s Preschool director. This observation enabled me to understand the priorities for childcare and the materials used by this NGO-Preschool. I also understood the relationship between the ECE Department at MoEYS with other preschools as this training was provided by a staff member of the ECE Department.

Another event was an annual National Education Congress, organised by MoEYS. My interviews with an NGO network and the ECE Department at MoEYS facilitated my observation of this event. Participating in this Congress allowed me to understand the different perspectives of the preschool-level participants and other policymakers.

The last event was a consultative workshop on the general framework for day care centres in garment factories that was co-organised by a French NGO, Planète Enfants et Développement (PE&D), and MoEYS. The representatives of PE&D and the ECE Department I interviewed enabled me to observe this workshop. I had more understanding
about the progress of enterprise-based daycare and interactions between key players in ECCE in Cambodia.

4.2 Research Data Analysis

This section describes how the research data is critically analysed in the five data chapters of this dissertation. Analyses in these chapters draw on methodological, evaluative and conceptual tools of the new feminist framework for transformative care, as theorised in the two preceding chapters. These tools enable us to conduct a discourse analysis of policy texts and to analyse the primary data from in-depth interviews.

In-depth interviews were translated from Khmer to English and simultaneously transcribed. I kept some Khmer expressions however because I could not think of equivalent expressions in English as they appear in these word documents; thus, these English transcriptions contain some Khmer expressions. The primary reason for using the Khmer was to keep their original meanings which I checked in the analysis stage in a software program called NVivo 12. This software allowed me to code all interview cases (transcriptions) from different respondent types and consolidate them under each coding theme. The analysis of these coding themes was guided by the research questions and anchored in the key elements of the methodological, evaluative, and conceptual tools.

The data analysis of this research in five chapters covers three interconnected dimensions: Khmer cultural discourse on childcare, policy discourses and practices, and gendered caring practices—women’s and men’s reconfigurations of gender practice in care. Three of these data chapters deploy a discourse analysis, and the rest focus on respondents’ lived experiences in and around childcare. Discourse analysis is a primary component of the ‘critical approaches to childcare policies’. Analysing ‘policy discourse’ is central to the analysis of policy presuppositions or assumptions (Bacchi 1999, 2009; Shore & Wright 2011; Yanow 2000). Such an analysis aims to deconstruct critical concepts, people categories, labels, or keywords in policy documents (Bacchi 1999, 2009; Gasper & Apthorpe 1996; Hajer 1993; Wood 1985). As argued in Chapter 2, the configurations of femininities and masculinities in and around childcare are not only shaped by policy discourse but also by cultural discourse. Cultural discourses not only constitute policy discourses [in policy representations] but are also embedded in society, with this embeddedness operating independently of but interacting with policy discourses and
practices. A critical analysis of cultural discourses and their effects on femininities and masculinities is therefore as critical as an analysis of policy discourses and practices. In this dissertation, I conduct a discourse analysis in three chapters: Khmer cultural discourse on childcare [Chapter 5], childcare discourses in the socialist and post-socialist regimes [Chapter 6], and childcare discourses in the National Childcare Policy [Chapter 7]. These chapters answer the first two research questions: How have gender norms shaped the National Childcare Policy? How has the policy constructed masculinities and femininities in or around childcare?

In Chapter 5, I analyse Khmer cultural discourse on childcare with two inseparable purposes. The first is to understand Khmer culture as a constitutive feature of the National Childcare Policy. This feature is interconnected with how the policy has influenced femininities and masculinities in Khmer society. Drawing on the ‘critical approaches to childcare policies’, we will scrutinise the genealogy of Khmer cultural discourse in written traditional codes, as well as considering its multiple and contradictory interpretations by different social actors. This analysis therefore examines Khmer cultural discourse as ‘landscapes’ of a struggle between certain ‘historical features’ and different perspectives producing major trajectories of change across time. As culture is political and Khmer culture has its roots in traditional written codes, it is useful to employ a discourse analysis in the ‘critical approaches to childcare policies’ as a tool to scrutinise these cultural texts (Bacchi 1999, 2009; Hajer 1993). The primary texts used in this analysis are Khmer traditional codes for women and men, which are embedded in some educational textbooks, and multiple interpretations of these texts found in reports of women’s rights NGOs. The analysis of these documents enables this research to understand the multiple ‘contradictory coexistent’ elements of cultural discourses (Hughes & Öjendal 2006; Yuval-Davis 1997). To triangulate this textual analysis and embed it within feminist research methodology, we need to scrutinise the ‘spoken words’ [speeches] (Kleinman 2007) of various policy actors that are explicitly and implicitly biased towards the traditional gender division of care labour.

A discourse analysis is also conducted in Chapter 6 to investigate the ‘constitutive contexts’ (Fernandez 2012) of the National Childcare Policy, and in Chapter 7 to interrogate the childcare discourse of the National Childcare Policy. Chapter 6 will investigate the conditions surrounding the production of the National Childcare Policy in
Cambodia within historical, economic, social, and political domains. While Chapter 6 will investigate the childcare discourse during the socialist and post-socialist regimes in the 1980s and the 1990s respectively, Chapter 7 will examine such a discourse in the National Childcare Policy. Chapter 6 will examine policy representations, policy assumptions, and policy consequences on political subjects, whereas Chapter 7 will investigate policy silences in addition to the three components of Chapter 6 (Bacchi 1999, 2009; Bacchi & Goodwin 2016); these analytical elements are embedded in the ‘critical approaches to childcare policy’. The analytical aspects of these two chapters [6 & 7] will pay particular attention to care distribution between the ‘care diamond’ actors (Razavi 2007a) and the intra-family gender division of childcare across generations, situated within the concept of ‘social care’ (Daly & Lewis 2000). In addition to these analytical components, I will use the ‘transformative ethics of care’ encompassing recognition, reduction, redistribution, representation, solidarity, and women’s autonomy (Clement 1996; Daly 2001; Esquivel 2014; Fraser 1997, 2005, 2008, 2013; Razavi 2007b; Tronto 1993b, 1998, 2013) to evaluate the constitutive contexts [Chapter 6] and the national childcare policy discourse in Chapter 7. These methodological and evaluative tools will be used to scrutinise policy and legal documents, as well as the perspectives of policymakers and policy advocates-cum-practitioners in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE).

In Chapter 8, a keyword analysis is employed to investigate the feminisation of childcare in the home-based childcare program, a central component of the National Childcare Policy, and possible negotiation around the feminisation of childcare. This investigation will enable us to scrutinise to the extent to which, and how, the policy has shaped women’s lived experiences of childcare. This analysis stays focused on the keywords/labels (Gasper & Apthorpe 1996; Wood 1985) of the five booklets of the home-based childcare program, and the spoken words/speeches (Kleinman 2007) of policymakers and practitioners that are biased towards the unequal gendered division of care labour. Analysis of keywords and verbal statements is anchored in the concept of ‘social care’ (Daly & Lewis 2000), illustrating the state’s role in transforming or reproducing cultural discourses on childcare that shape the gendered division of labour across generations. Such analysis can illuminate the intersecting effects of policy and cultural discourses and policy silences on the distribution of care labour between genders.
and across generations within the family. Simultaneously, this chapter will investigate how women negotiate cultural and policy discourses on childcare by employing the concept of ‘reflexive subjects’ (Shore & Wright 2011).

The analysis of women’s lived experience of childcare practices is based on the narratives of 26 women in their roles as mothers of preschool children. Using NVivo 12, I categorised participants’ accounts into two key themes: compliance with the interplay of policy and cultural discourses and policy silences, and possible resistance to these discourses. In both themes, I scrutinise the constitutive factors of compliance with and resistance to these discourses. Understanding these constitutive factors is crucial in seeing the whole picture of women’s agency.

The concepts of ‘more-caring’ and ‘less-caring’ masculinities are used to investigate the varied patterns of Khmer caring masculinities in Chapter 9. This investigation primarily draws on the experiences and/or perspectives of childcare practices in the accounts of 26 fathers of preschool children, as well as the supplementary accounts of 26 young mothers. Analysing these patterns is a way to understand the intersecting effects of cultural and policy discourses and policy silences on men, and their possible resistance to these discourses. ‘More-caring’ and ‘less-caring’ practices are embedded within ‘caring masculinities’, reconceptualised in Chapter 3, enabling us to scrutinise the multiplicity of men's configurations of childcare practices around the four caring phases/dimensions (Tronto 1993b, 1998, 2013). This scrutiny of caring practices pays particular attention to a complex interplay between ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care, including ‘masculine care’, and ‘breadwinning’ within Khmer caring masculinities. The notion of ‘more-caring masculinity’ rests upon the concept of masculinity as the ‘configurations of gender practice’ (Connell 1995, 2000, 2005, 2009; Messerschmidt 2016, 2018) and the concept of ‘reflexive subjects’ (Shore & Wright 2011). In the analysis of Khmer ‘more-caring masculinity’, I will investigate its constitutive factors by concentrating on the interactions between femininities and masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005).

The above discussion illustrates how different tools will be used in these five data chapters after discussing the research methodology and data collection methods in the preceding section. The third subject in this chapter is ethics and data management, which is the focus of the following section.
4.3 Ethics and Data Management

The principles of ethical research are concerned with respondents’ understanding of research objectives and their potential risks, as well as their confidentiality and privacy. All researchers have a responsibility to act in accordance with such research ethics. I have therefore put in place several mechanisms to ensure application of the principles of ethical research at three different research stages: preparatory, data collection, and post-data collection.

In the preparatory stage, the Faculty of Arts Human Ethics Advisory Group at the University of Melbourne reviewed and approved this research project’s ethics application. As part of this application, I developed two key types of documents to ensure that respondents understood the research objectives, their role, and the potential risks in their research involvement. First, I developed three tailored plain language statements for the three different respondent groups and translated them into the Khmer language, the respondents' and my mother tongue. The second types of document were tailored consent forms for in-depth interviews and observations. I tailored consent forms to different types of interview respondents, but I developed only one type of consent form for observations. I translated all the forms into the Khmer language to make sure that all respondents could understand them.

In the data collection stage, I provided a plain language statement and a consent form to each participant and explained the research objectives and respondents’ role to them, as well as noting the potential risks of their participation in this research. I also explained that while each interview would be audio-recorded, they had the right to decline this recording. Only one interview with a UN agency was not audio-recorded as the participant requested that I not do so. I also explained the protocol of data storage to ensure respondents’ confidentiality and privacy. For the household-level respondents, I briefly read and explained both the plain language statement and consent form to them before seeking their consent. I kept all signed consent forms and audio recordings in a secure place during my data collection period.

Ethical practices have involved two important actions in the post-data collection stage. First, I made a research summary and sent it to as many respondents as possible. I could not however send this summary to the household-level respondents and some respondents
at the preschool-level policy community as they did not have an email account. The second action involved protecting participants’ privacy and confidentiality. This is linked to audio recordings and their transcriptions, the notes of individual interviews and observation of events, signed consent forms, and presentation of respondents in this dissertation. I have kept all audio recordings and their transcriptions securely, and will keep them for a minimum period of five years. Likewise, I have kept all field notes as hard copies in a secure place, and will also keep them for up to five years. As for the signed consent forms, I have kept them in a locked drawer at my home and will keep them for a period up to five years. Audio recordings and their transcriptions in the NVivo program and respondents’ names and contact details have been kept in separate and password-protected computer files. I have also regularly backed up my data onto a hard drive and other cloud drives: Google Drive, iCloud Drive, and Cloudstor. All respondents are referred to by their pseudonyms in this research, and any reference to personal information that might allow someone to guess respondents’ identities has been removed. For preschool and policy-level respondents, this research has removed the name of their institution and/or its geographical location and replaced it with a word representing the type of institution and/or its geographic location, followed by an alphabetical letter.

4.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has laid out the research methodology for data collection and analysis of the research questions. First, I described the justifications for selecting the research sites and the two data collection methods: in-depth interviews and observation. Second, the chapter has interwoven different tools of the new feminist framework for transformative care for the analyses of five data chapters in order to examine the three key interconnected dimensions: Khmer cultural discourse on childcare, policy discourses and practices, and women’s and men’s lived experiences of childcare. Third, the chapter dealt with the ethics and data management mechanisms of this research that ensured a thorough understanding by the respondents of the research questions, the potential risks of their participation, and assurance of their confidentiality and privacy.

In the next chapter, I will analyse Khmer cultural discourse on childcare and its embeddedness within Khmer society and educational textbooks.
Chapter 5
Khmer Cultural Discourse
Femininity and Masculinity in Childcare

This chapter aims to critically investigate Khmer cultural discourse on childcare. This investigation is essential for childcare policy research because it was formative to the National Childcare Policy which constructs women’s identities as family carers and men’s identities as family breadwinners. This chapter critically analyses Khmer cultural discourse on childcare by tracing its genealogy in written ‘traditional’ codes. It then scrutinises the embeddedness of this discourse within Khmer society and educational textbooks. As part of this analysis, I investigate multiple and contradictory interpretations of cultural norms by various social actors through time. Given these various interpretations of Khmer cultural discourse on childcare, this chapter argues that the embeddedness of such a discourse in society and in educational textbooks has constructed women’s caring femininity and men’s ‘less-caring masculinity’.

The analysis of the genealogy of Khmer cultural discourse on gender roles and its multiple and contradictory interpretations by social actors is consonant with Hughes and Ojendal’s (2006) and Yuval-Davis’ (1997) understanding of the link between culture and power. This analysis also builds on Bowen’s (1995) argument that ‘Rather than reading events, institutions, or ways of speaking as parts of a single cultural "text"’, we should probe ‘how social actors interpret cultural forms, how actors change their interpretations over time, and what is most at stake for them in their interpretations’ (p. 1050). Yet, in exploring how social actors interpret cultural forms, whatever they may be, we need to also pay close attention to the manner in which some are elevated and taken on by institutions, policies, and mechanisms, cementing what becomes a dominant cultural discourse. Investigating these aspects requires a discourse analysis. In reference to Bacchi’s (2000, 2009) and Hajer’s (1993) conception of discourse, the former theorises a discourse as a ‘meaning’ construction or system which contains specific values, assumptions, and presuppositions that shape our thoughts and practices (Bacchi 2000,
A discourse analysis requires the identification and interrogation of an assemblage of ‘ideas, concepts, and categories’ that assign meanings to a specific social phenomenon (Bacchi 1999, 2009; Hajer 1993, p. 49). Certain notions of ‘traditional culture’, for example, in texts such as the *Chbabs* discussed in this chapter coming to be accepted as the epitome of how ‘traditional’ Cambodian culture and gender relations has come to be constructed, point to the inherent power of some cultural forms, and to their political and social efficacy in reining in gender norms and expectations. Embedding a discourse analysis within feminist research methodology, we need to put the spotlight on explicit, sexist language and the ideological usage of ‘positive and benign language’ which masks inequalities between women and men (Kleinman 2007). I employ feminist discourse analysis as a tool to analyse Khmer traditional codes for women and men, civics-morals textbooks for grades 7 to 12, and the various reports of national women’s rights NGOs in Cambodia and the Committee on Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) at the UN. This discourse analysis also scrutinises the embeddedness of Khmer cultural discourse in various social institutions by drawing on my interviews with respondents from various policy-level communities.

This chapter is composed of two primary sections: Khmer femininity and Khmer masculinity. In the analysis of Khmer femininity, I first review the background and critical content of the traditional code for women [the *Chbab Srey*] and then revisit key debates about its influence in contemporary Khmer society. This section starts with a discussion of broader domains of traditional gender norms and then focuses on ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care. It then investigates the extent to which Khmer cultural discourse has been embedded in educational textbooks. The second part of the chapter analyses Khmer men’s masculinity in ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care. It reviews contemporary dominant qualities of Khmer masculinity, tracing its genealogy in the traditional code for men [the *Chbab Bros*] and its embeddedness in some educational textbooks. This part then

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19 This is a Khmer term, literally meaning “rules for women”. Note, the spelling of this term in the Latin language varies, and these are other possible spellings: *Chpb Srei, Chhap Srey, Cpap Sri*. One reason for the variation of this writing is that one scholar follows the pronunciation of the Pali or Sanskrit word rather than Khmer sound; for instance, Judy Ledgerwood, who crafted the term as “Cpap Sri”, may follow the Pali or Sanskrit pronunciation. I follow the Khmer pronunciation and the transliteration rules of the Documentation Centre of Cambodia, updated in 1998 (DC-Cam 1998).

20 This is also a Khmer term, literally meaning “rules for men”. This term was written as *M'in Mai* by Judy Ledgerwood and as *Minh Mai* by Jacobsen (2008).
analyses the key qualities of Khmer masculinity affecting men’s engagement in ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care.

5.1 Khmer Women’s Femininities

This section examines the constructions of Khmer caring femininity in ‘traditional’ and contemporary Khmer societies. It starts with an examination of the construction of Khmer caring femininity in the traditional code before colonial rule, and then discusses the debate about women’s roles during the colonial and postcolonial periods. For Khmer femininity in contemporary Cambodia, the section investigates the construction of femininity in educational textbooks and in other social institutions and practices. The section will illustrate that such a construction centres on a discourse of ‘good wife’ and of women as ‘head of the household’.

5.1.1 Constructions of Caring Femininity in ‘Traditional’ Khmer Society

To understand the social expectations ascribing domestic affairs to women, and women’s negotiations of these expectations in contemporary Cambodia, we need to understand Khmer culture and traditions and its trajectories of influence in contemporary Cambodia. This research views Khmer culture and ‘traditions’ as a continual process of (re)construction and practice, rather than as a given, or as fixed (see Dahm 1999; Eisenstadt & Giesen 1995; Hobsbawm 1983; Ledgerwood, Ebihara & Mortland 1994). Contemporary Khmer culture and traditions have undergone various transformations under different political regimes. This subsection deconstructs ‘traditional’ cultural constructs of gender symbolism, a ‘set of social relations’ (Ledgerwood, Ebihara & Mortland 1994, p. 25), by investigating earlier cultural constructions in the period between the late 19th and early 20th centuries, regarded by many scholars and Khmer people as ‘traditional’ Khmer society (Jacobsen 2008, 2010; Ledgerwood, Ebihara & Mortland 1994). Khmer traditional norms have their roots in various genres of the Khmer literature, namely religious texts, various Chbabs (codes of conduct)21, folktales, stories in verse, and novels (Ledgerwood 1990, p. 96). Only Chbabs, especially the Chbab Srey, detail explicit Khmer cultural values of comportment, sexuality, and activities for Khmer

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21 Chbab was composed as a poem that is meant to be chanted and memorised based on its rhymed verses.
women to follow (Ledgerwood 1990). This subsection therefore pays particular attention to the *Chbab Srey*.

The *Chbab Srey* is an essential traditional code—written as a poem—inscribing characteristics of “virtuous” and “unvirtuous” women. There are various versions of the *Chbab Srey*. Ledgerwood (1990) asserts that the code was composed initially by Ang Duong in 1837, modelled on a lecture of the Buddha (see also Khing Hoc Dy cited in Jacobsen 2008). Another version of the code was written by Meun Mai around the 18th to mid-19th centuries, while the third version was written by Suttantaprija Ind around the turn of the 19th century (Wong 2010, p. 13). The fourth version is a description of 31 characteristics of *Srey Krup Leakkh* (virtuous women) by Sun Siv (Sun Siv 1967 cited in Ledgerwood 1990, p. 86). Meun Mai’s version has been the most influential. It was incorporated into Cambodia’s educational textbooks in the 1960s and the 2000s.

Meun Mai’s *Chbab Srey* asserts that the rules inscribed in this *Chbab* follow Buddhist teachings. This *Chbab Srey*, consisting of 227 verses, is summarised in the appendices.

*Srey Krup Leakkh* [virtuous women] and *Srey Khat Leakkh* [unvirtuous women] are two crucial concepts in the *Chbab Srey*, covering both single and married women. The *Chbab* lays out key characteristics of these concepts, centring on three sets of attributes, ‘comportment’, ‘sexuality’, and ‘activities and domains’, each dictating women’s roles and responsibilities. Under each component, the *Chbab* prescribes some proper or appropriate characteristics for women to embrace in order to be virtuous. At the same time, it warns women not to embrace some improper or inappropriate characteristics; otherwise, they become ‘unvirtuous’ women. Of the three sets of characteristics, only the last set [activities and domains] is related to caring femininity on which this subsection focuses.

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22 A prince who later became the King reigning from 1848 to 1859.
23 The author’s name in the third version was written as Suttantaprija Ind by Ledgerwood (1990).
24 This Khmer word can be written as *Sri Grap Lakkhana* following the pronunciation of the Pali or Sanskrit word; for instance, Judy Ledgerwood always writes every Khmer word with Pali or Sanskrit sounds.
25 Meun Mai’s Version of Chbab Srey was initially published as part of *Diverse Chbabs* by Chuon Nath Association in 1974, and republished by the Buddhist Institute in 1955, according to Aing (2004). The version that I analyse in this thesis was published by the Buddhist Institute in 1995.
26 Ledgerwood (1990) examines the attributes of virtuous women inscribed in Khmer literature in three categories, namely ‘comportment, activities and sexuality’ (p.65).
This set of activities and domains prescribe women’s roles and duties in the domestic sphere. ‘Wife’ is a keyword that encompasses women’s duties or responsibilities as a married woman and a mother of children. The concept is often attached to either ‘good’ or ‘bad’ to form a concept of a ‘good’ wife or a ‘bad’ wife. The characteristics of a good or bad wife are included in large sections of the Chbab Srey’s texts and in the Khmer dictionary. The Chbab elaborates women’s duties as a ‘wife’ and ‘mother’ in relation to housework and to caring for children and the husband in the home. Meun Mai emphasises seven types of wives, four of which are considered to be ‘good’ wives.27 These types of wives are ‘mother-like wife’, ‘friend-like wife’, ‘sibling-like wife’, and ‘servant-like wife’ (1995, pp. 26-8).28 In total, there are sixteen characteristics of the four types of wives. The following is a summary of these characteristics:

The three characteristics of a ‘mother-like’ wife are: (1) changing old clothes with new ones for her husband, and she wears the old or used ones; (2) preparing food for a husband; and (3) caring for her husband, including looking for medications or a physician or traditional healer when he is sick.

A ‘sibling-like’ wife has two characteristics, as follows: (1) calming her husband, creating harmony, and taking good care of the property; and (2) protecting her husband’s reputation and not spreading his scandals.

A ‘friend-like’ wife has three characteristics: (1) always keeping in mind that she needs to avoid quarrels; (2) showing a strong love towards her husband; and (3) being faithful to her husband.

The eight characteristics of a ‘servant-like’ wife are: (1) always being afraid of her husband so that she will not be hit; (2) staying vigilant in the event that her husband curses or blames her; (3) never daring to answer back to her husband when he is angry; (4) keeping quiet when her husband is so aggressive and hits or curses her; (5) responding to her husband’s verbal or physical insults in a way that avoids damage to her reputation; (6) preparing food; (7) not eating food before her husband; and (8) eating a meal together with her husband.

Some aspects of the above characteristics imposed on Khmer women are about the construction of general femininity, avoiding quarrels with and being afraid of their husbands, for example; however, most of them concern the construction of a caring femininity centring on clothing, cooking, caring for a sick husband, and taking good care of the property. Although childcare is not explicitly included in these attributes, verses

27 The other three are bad wives, as follows: (1) a ‘murderer-like’ wife with four main characteristics, (2) an ‘enemy-like wife’ with seven characteristics, and (3) a ‘thief-like’ wife with three characteristics. These characteristics are included in verses 158 to 188.

28 The characteristics of these four types of wives are included in verses 124 to 154.
24 to 33 mention married women’s childcare responsibilities in the context of single women. These verses instruct single women to work harder in productive work; otherwise, they would be very busy with cooking and child-minding, just like married women. Alongside the good characteristics of a virtuous wife, the Chhab Srey also lists fourteen characteristics of three types of ‘bad wives’. Not taking good care of the property and being lazy with housework are among these characteristics. The Chhab Srey warns that an unvirtuous wife will go to the different kinds of hell upon dying of old age. The characteristics of these seven types of wives tend to follow those of the seven types of wives detailed in Ang Duong’s version of the Chhab Srey. Although the two versions use the same names for these types of wives, Ang Duong’s version with fewer characteristics for each type of wife is recognised in Chuon Nath’s Khmer Dictionary in explaining the Khmer word ‘Prapun’ (wife). The above characteristics situate women as inferior to men while limiting women’s sphere to the domestic domain. In other verses, the Chhab Srey explicitly confines women to the home by warning them not to visit neighbouring houses during their husbands’ absence, but to stay at home. Jacobsen (2008) asserts that all versions of the Chhab Srey attempt to control and disempower women by imposing specific characteristics on them; she argues that Ang Duong’s inspiration in composing the Chhab Srey was twofold: his frustration with his niece who ruled the country before him, and the more conservative ideas in the Dhammayut sect of Buddhism which influenced him at the Thai court.

Limiting women’s sphere to the domestic domain was later legalised in the Codes Cambodiens in 1889 and the Civil Code Cambodgien in 1920 under French colonial rule. The 1889 Codes Cambodiens assigned women to homemaking responsibilities but did not limit their economic activity; however, women were restricted to only homemaking responsibilities under the 1920 Civil Code Cambodgien (Haque 2012). The three types of bad wives are as follows: a “murderer-like wife” with four main characteristics, an “enemy-like wife” with seven characteristics, and a “thief-like wife” with three characteristics. These characteristics are included in verses 158 to 188. This is the only formal Khmer dictionary in the country, and it now has its own electronic version for computers and smartphones. The current publication in the electronic form is copied from its 5th edition published in 1967. King Ang Duong’s niece was Queen Ang Mei who ruled the country before him from 1835 to 1840 and from 1844 to 1846/48. During this period, Vietnamization, which imposed Vietnamese traditions in the Cambodian royal court, was happening in Cambodia (Jacobsen 2008). Ang Duong had grown up at the Thai court and brought the Dhammayut sect of Buddhism to Cambodia during his reign (Jacobsen 2008).
Under the latter code, men were legally obliged to be the sole breadwinner of the family, so women needed to ask permission from their husbands if they wanted to participate in any economic activity (Haque 2012).

The concept of a ‘good wife’ (or its interrelated discourse nominating women as ‘head of the household’) was brought up and debated towards the end of colonial rule as part of the nationalist movement. Cambodian writers used a Khmer-language newspaper, specifically the Kampuchea newspaper, as a platform to debate women’s roles in patriotism in the 1940s. A few female writers published some articles in the Kampuchea newspaper that instructed Khmer women to follow traditional norms in fulfilling their household responsibilities as part of rebuilding the Khmer nation. The instructions included in an article entitled “Khmer Daughters” are as follows:

Countries which are glorious and prosperous are not only composed of men but also of women who help out in all fields. Indeed, the most important field is the home [emphasis added]. This is because the most important person in the family is the woman whose aim is to make the family well. So people, do not forget that a country which is comprised of good families will be a prosperous country. So please fulfil your duties as good housewives. Because it is the woman who is head of the household [emphasis added]. It is the woman who arranges the affairs of her family; keeps the family members in harmony; it is the wife who works hard to make the family prosper. And if the family does not adopt this model, it will not be effective. The wife holds the wealth of the family, and she should have good conduct, work industriously, keep the house clean and neat, and think only of her family's well-being. Khmer daughters should be civilised, especially in connection with education and development. A woman is not considered civilised if she does not follow customs and does not contribute to the development of the motherland. Khmer daughters--your nation is waiting for you to apply your collective strengths! [original emphasis] (Kampuchea No.190 published in 1945 cited in Frieson 2001, p. 5)

The above article clearly promotes women’s role as ‘good wives’ or ‘heads of the household’. The notion of Khmer women as a ‘good wife’ may be endorsed by many Khmer people, especially men, but it might not be shared by all Khmer people. Some pieces of evidence lie in a few newspaper articles published in response, some of which disagree with the above ideology, while others endorse it. Two articles with a radical view written by female writers oppose the aforementioned notion and attribute the imposition of such traditional norms to men. One article explicitly criticises the Chhab Srey that restricts women to the household domain:
I am a woman of the new era, and I like to follow European ways . . . Any country where women have maintained their customs is not a very developed country . . . all development and civilisation requires much attention and people must adapt to new conditions of modernity. Women must have equal rights to men. In the old traditions, women were put in the house, and their freedom was less than their husbands in accordance with the Chbab Srey instructions. When examining these instructions, it is clear that men in the old society wanted this to be so . . . Today women in our country are seeking rights for themselves and for their families in order to catch up quickly with civilised countries. (Kampuchea No.348 published in 1946 cited in Frieson 2001, p. 6)

This radical view attempted to change the gendered roles of women and appeared to consider colonialist values superior to Khmer moral values. This radical view was denounced by some male writers. For instance, an article entitled "Opinion from a Compatriot" emphasised the “sorrow” of nationalists whose work for the country was disturbed by their wives (Kampuchea No.363 published in 1946 cited in Frieson 2001, p. 7). The writer pleads to women to “do housework such as cooking rice and bathing the children” (ibid p. 7). Likewise, another article dubbed “Women’s Work is in the Kitchen” noted that “earning money is the responsibility of every man and it is every woman’s responsibility to manage the house, including the cooking” (Kampuchea No.235 published in 1946 cited in Frieson 2001, p. 7). The title of this article echoes a famous Khmer proverb, “women cannot move around the stove”, meaning that women cannot do anything except the domestic tasks of the kitchen. The proverb delimits women’s space to the home.

In the post-colonial period of the 1950s and 1960s, women participated more in economic and public life while having primary responsibility for domestic work. The Chbab Srey was incorporated into the education system (Jacobsen 2008; Ledgerwood 1990), and the concept of a “good wife” was disseminated through book publications. These publications prescribe more rules for women and offer more detailed pieces of advice than does the Chbab Srey. The epitome of such publications is a book entitled “Rules for Women’s Characteristics” which was written by a female author, Sakhan Samon. This book includes four chapters: “Duties for Daughters”, “Arts for being a Wife”, “Approaches for Child Education”, and “Cooking Recipes” (Sakhan 1957).33 A book

33 This book was initially published in 1957 immediately after independence because this year was dated in its preface. It was republished in 1964. According to the preface, the author was a female secretary of the Propaganda Ministry.
entitled “Women’s Wealth” discusses the duties of a wife towards her husband and women’s comportment by citing Ang Duong’s version of the Chhab Srey (Aing 2004). Another book entitled “Savoir-Vivre”\textsuperscript{34} instructs women to fulfil their responsibilities as a wife, housewife, and mother even though they work outside the house (ibid).

Nevertheless, women, to some extent, enjoyed some legal rights. Women had the legal right to participate in business enterprises without prior consent from their spouses, suffrage rights, and rights to stand for election in national politics in this post-colonial period [usually known as the Sangkum Reastr Niyum]\textsuperscript{35} (Jacobsen 2008). The Cambodian government adopted different policies to encourage women to gain more education, including medical training, and to participate in diverse fields of work outside the home (Frieson 2001; Jacobsen 2008). Peasant women actively engaged in productive work both inside and outside the house in the Sangkum era. An ethnographic study conducted by May Ebihara (1968) in the late 1950s and early 1960s captures these activities. Women were responsible for raising pigs and chickens as a source of cash income. They typically were actively engaged in some tasks in the rice fields, including sowing seeds, transplanting seedlings, reaping and winnowing, and women also sought temporary employment in the non-agricultural sector in Phnom Penh, engaging in handicrafts and weaving (Ebihara 1968).

The above discussion illustrates that women can be actively engaged in diverse economic activities, even though Khmer cultural discourse assigns them domestic responsibility and women still tend to be burdened with domestic tasks. The Khmer cultural discourse was disrupted and dismantled during the Civil Wars in the 1970s, however. It was disrupted during the Khmer Republic regime in the first half of the 1970s and dismantled in the Khmer Rouge Regime [formally known as Democratic Kampuchea] in the second half of the 1970s. In the former regime, women were mobilised into military activities, although there were some publications reminding women to be ready to go back to the domestic space after the war (Jacobsen 2008). In the Khmer Rouge Regime, traditional

\textsuperscript{34} It was translated from a Khmer term “Sochi Vithar”.

\textsuperscript{35} This is the name of a political party and regime established by former King Norodom Sihanouk, and it is also known as the Sangkum period or Sihanouk Era. This regime started after Cambodia became independent of France in 1953 and lasted until the end of 1969. Sangkum means a society or group; Reastr means people; Niyum means love or common agreement or popularity. Therefore, the Sangkum Reastr Niyum refers to a state which loves or is accountable to its people.
gender roles were dismantled entirely (Frieson 2010); like men, women were forced to participate in ‘public works, agriculture and military activities’ while some worked in factories (Jacobsen 2008, p. 218). The Democratic Kampuchea regime experimented with ‘ultra-collectivisation’, with small children cared for by the state (see Chandler 1993; Frieson 2010; Frings 1993; Jacobsen 2008). Nevertheless, women were still responsible for nurturing and domestic work at the state’s daycare centres, which were part of cooperatives (Jacobsen 2008). The next subsection discusses the extent to which the cultural discourse still influences contemporary Cambodia, beginning in the 1990s [the post-socialist regime]. It also examines the debate around this traditional code among various actors, and the conditions under which women and men accept the discourse.

5.1.2 Constructions of Caring Femininity in Contemporary Khmer Society

The cultural discourse on women and the home was embedded in Khmer society by various social institutions which have shaped contemporary femininities, while at the same time some women have attempted to renegotiate this traditional discourse. Although the contemporary conceptualisation of women and the domestic space is less rigid than Khmer traditional discourse on childcare prescribed in the Chbab Srey, it is still influenced by the concept of a “good wife” rooted in this Chbab. Brickell (2011b) notes that ‘the spirit of the Chbab Srey continues to be embodied’ within many Cambodian people (p. 443). It does not necessarily mean that women and men can recall this code or its contents (see Aing 2004; Brickell 2011b); indeed, more than half of the household-level respondents (55.5 per cent) in this dissertation did not know of, or remember, any of the content of the Chbab Srey. The other respondents (44.5 per cent) were aware of the Chbab Srey and could recall some content concerning the concept of a “good wife”, including doing housework, respecting husbands, avoiding extra-marital relationships, and not spending time at other people’s houses.

Women’s engagement in the domestic domain is captured in Brickell and Chant’s (2010) notion of the ‘unbearable heaviness of being’ accompanying female altruism, which denies women’s ‘personhood and human rights’ and prevents them from making any

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36 This term is written as Chbap Srei in her article, but I changed it to Chbab Srey for consistency.
37 This percentage is based on a calculation of 27 sampled respondents out of the total 52 household-level respondents. These 27 respondents were asked whether they had ever heard of or knew the Chbab Srey and what they remembered. Of the 27 respondents, 18.5 per cent did not know of the existence of the Chbab Srey, while 37 per cent knew of its existence but did not remember anything.
decision in their own interests (p. 146). A literature review and empirical research in Cambodia and other countries enabled Brickell and Chant (2010) to categorise four dimensions of female altruism, three of which, they contended, concerned the domestic sphere. These characteristics are: (1) undertaking care work; (2) physical altruism [prioritising other family members’ food intake]; (3) economic altruism [devoting a large proportion of their earnings to household expenditures]; and (4) sociocultural altruism [being driven by traditional codes] (Brickell & Chant 2010, pp. 151-4). Although there is no up-to-date time-use survey data in Cambodia, the available data suggests that women’s time spent in the domestic domain is statistically higher than that of men. Time-use survey data collected in 2004 indicated that women spent 188 minutes (3.13 hours) each day on housework, while men spent only 18 minutes (0.3 hours) per day (ILO 2018, p. 44). The same data analysed by Hong (2013a) indicated that a mother and a father spent 2.48 hours and 0.21 hours on childcare respectively per 24 hour day in a two-parent, nuclear household (p. 27). Regression analysis illustrates that, while a mother is estimated to devote 1.89 hours more than her spouse to childcare per day (Hong 2013a, pp. 30-6), Khmer women’s and men’s time spent on childcare work is lower than an international median value. This median value of women's time spent on housework, childcare, and community work is 269 minutes (4.48 hours) per 24 hours, while men spend 111 minutes (1.85 hours) on these three types of care work (ILO 2018, p. 43).

Two main recurring themes in accounting for women’s responsibility for housework are observed in Brickell’s (2011a) study. First, men’s negligence towards housework leaves women with no ‘alternative option’ but to perform the housework (Brickell 2011a, p. 1362). The second theme, linked to marital breakdown, suggests that women’s disregard for domestic work may lead to ‘abandonment, separation and divorce’ (ibid, p. 1362).

38 This article drew data from Cambodia and other countries [the Philippines, the Gambia and Costa Rica].
39 Time-use survey data was incorporated in the Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey (CSES) in 2004, but such data was not collected in later CSESs partly due to no donor offering funding. A director-general at Ministry A told me about this funding issue during an interview. Interview, 14 March 2018.
40 Women’s and men’s time spent on childcare is not mentioned in this survey report, but Savet Hong analysed her data based on the raw survey dataset from the National Institute of Statistics, and yet her analysis does not mention the numbers of actual hours spent on childcare.
41 This report draws on time-use survey data collected in a different timeframe in 67 countries.
Some quantitative research related to violence against women in Cambodia confirms that women’s negligence of childcare is among the reasons presented for spousal violence committed by men (National Institute of Statistics 2014; National Institute of Statistics & Directorate-General for Health 2015). Fear of violence and abandonment, or divorce, along with economic dependence are \textit{structural conditions} which create a trap that forces women to undertake domestic responsibilities. As I will discuss in Chapter 8, female home workers tend to fall into this trap, whereas some women can escape it. Brickell (2011b) asserts that urban women, particularly younger and middle-aged ones, tend to challenge and negotiate traditional gender norms. My fieldwork in Chapter 8 suggests that women’s higher education and their formal employment play a significant role in enabling them to negotiate the sharing of housework and childcare with their husbands.

The spirit of the \textit{Chbab Srey} has shaped the conception of feminine domesticity through its embeddedness in various social institutions in Khmer society. Schools (and the media) are vital institutions for reproducing ‘traditional’ gender ideologies (Pen 2016; Yuval-Davis 1997). In the post-socialist period, the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport (MoEYS) incorporated the \textit{Chbab Srey} and other folktales in some educational textbooks. In their discourse analysis, Anderson and Grace (2018) found some implicit and explicit elements of the \textit{Chbab Srey} in some education policies and Khmer studies’ textbooks for eighth- and ninth-grade students. This infiltration into the education system provoked ongoing debate between some women’s rights organisations and the Cambodian state in the 2000s.

The first four of the five shadow reports\footnote{Thus far, a women’s rights organisation, named the Cambodian NGO Committee on CEDAW (NGO-CEDAW), prepared five shadow reports on CEDAW, the latest report published in 2017. The first four reports were submitted to the United Nation’s Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women in 2001, 2005, 2010, and 2013 respectively. Only the latest report submitted in 2017 no longer discusses the issues of the \textit{Chbab Srey}.} on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) from 2001 to 2017 criticise the \textit{Chbab Srey} (see NGO-CEDAW 2001, 2005, 2013, 2017; NGO-CEDAW and CAMBOW 2011). These reports criticise the \textit{Chbab Srey} for reinforcing inequalities between girls and boys and women and men in numerous domains such as household tasks, intra-household and employment decisions, violence against women, education, and leadership and politics. These reports assert that gender inequality within the private sphere
contributes to gender inequality in the public sphere. The 2005 shadow report attacks the incorporation of the *Chhab Srey* into Cambodia’s educational textbooks. The state also recognises the influence of the *Chhab Srey* on the burden of housework, on the low level of women’s education, and on arranged marriages of girls in their 2004 National Report on CEDAW (UN-CEDAW 2004). After an examination of both national and shadow reports, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women of the United Nations (UN-CEDAW) expressed its concern over the *Chhab Srey* in the education system, recommending that the state should remove this code from the system (UN-CEDAW 2006). Upon receiving these comments, the state explained to the UN-CEDAW in their 2010 National Report that MoEYS had removed references to the *Chhab Srey* from the education system in 2007 (UN-CEDAW 2011).

Although MoEYS removed those references, the 2010 Shadow Report underscores the issue of the *Chhab Srey*’s continuing influence on Khmer society and on the education curriculum. The 2013 Shadow Report also underscores the embeddedness of the *Chhab Srey* ideology in society (NGO-CEDAW 2013). This report suggests that the state should take action to counteract this code’s influence. In their comments in 2013, the UN-CEDAW still expressed their concerns over the effects of the *Chhab Srey* in Khmer society (UN-CEDAW 2013). In response to comments made by the NGO-CEDAW and the UN-CEDAW, MoEYS incorporated some lessons about “gender and women’s rights” in their textbooks to raise awareness about gender discrimination issues among younger Cambodian people.

The removal of the explicit content of the *Chhab Srey* and the introduction of “gender and women’s rights” in educational textbooks ostensibly indicated the state’s willingness to promote gender equality. At the same time, nevertheless, MoEYS continued to incorporate lessons about “family happiness/harmony” in some textbooks, again restricting women to the domestic domain. This suggests that the state continues to formally reconstruct contemporary Khmer social norms and values to confirm women’s responsibility for domestic affairs. The following is a critical examination of this reconstruction.
Current Khmer social values are taught in the civics-morals subject as part of Social Studies. This subject, taught from grade 7 to grade 12, deals with two main concepts: “gender and women’s rights”, and the “Khmer family”. Through these concepts students can understand Khmer fundamental social values about the relationships among family members. From these textbooks ‘gender and women’s rights’ are mainly taught at grade 7, although there is a lesson on “women’s rights” for grade 12 students. The civics-morals textbook for grade 7 students includes a thick chapter about “gender and women’s rights” that comprises six key lessons: “sex and gender”, “stereotypes”, “gender and stereotypes”, “discrimination and emotional issues”, “elimination of discrimination against women”, and “measures ensuring gender equality” (see MoEYS 2016, pp. 151-72). The incorporation of these lessons suggests that the state, through MoEYS, wishes to nullify numerous traditional gender norms inscribed in the Chbab Srey. An explanation of women’s rights in the textbook, for instance, regards any educational message that forces ‘women to respect culture and traditions’ or assigns housework to women as a discriminatory act (MoEYS 2016, p. 160).

In contrast, another chapter about the “Khmer family” in the same textbook lays out Khmer women’s and men’s social values in a way that resonates with some of Chbab Srey’s content. The use of the ostensibly gender-neutral term ‘family’ can, as Kleinman (2007) notes, act as a ‘benign’ mask of gender inequality. The chapter comprises three primary lessons: “types of the family”, “family happiness”, and “approaches to family happiness” (see MoEYS 2016, pp. 185-98). This chapter asserts that ‘family happiness is contingent on the fact that each member understands their own role’ (ibid p. 185). The lesson on ‘approaches to have family happiness’ assigns a wife roles ‘head of the household, a mother of children, and blessing’ in the family. She has the following specific duties for her husband and children (ibid p. 194):

- Manage housework smartly
- Maintain the property
- Sangkruos (support) her husband's kin appropriately
- Abide by Chbab, religion and social traditions
- Respect, love, and be honest with a husband

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43 There are four subjects in the Social Studies textbooks: civics-morals, housekeeping, geography, and history.
44 It is a Khmer term which literally means “rescue”, but in this context it could refer to love and/or support.
Take care of the family for safety and prosperity, and
Take care of the husband's honour, as well as the family’s honour (My own translation from the Khmer language).

Similarly, in the civics-morals subject textbook for grade 8 students, lesson 2, dubbed “family harmony”[^45], also instructs a wife to perform five duties to bring happiness to the family, two of which are about domestic work. One instructs a wife to 'manage the household tasks well', including clothes washing; another duty requires a wife to 'maintain the property well' and to ‘cook foods to satisfy her husband’ (MoEYS 2015, p. 192).

The concept of ‘family harmony/happiness’ in these textbooks resonates with the concepts of “good wife” and “virtuous woman” in the Chbab Srey. Embedding the concept of ‘family harmony/happiness’ in these educational textbooks indicates that the state considers women’s domestic duties in the home as reflecting essential Khmer social values, even while embracing gender equality. This suggests that the conception of a modern society subscribed to by the Cambodian state is different from that of the Western world; that is, they may prefer to be modern in a Khmer way so as to distinguish themselves from Western values (see Jacobsen 2010). Nevertheless, this preference tends to preserve Khmer cultural values which are harmful to the feminist agenda (see Narayan 1998).

The spirit of the Chbab Srey has also been embedded in other social institutions in Khmer society. The UN-CEDAW and a group of Cambodian women’s rights NGOs expressed their concerns about this embeddedness, but they do not specify the social institutions to which they referred (see NGO-CEDAW 2013; UN-CEDAW 2013). My fieldwork suggests that the Khmer cultural discourse on women and the home is embedded in the traditional wedding ceremony, in social interactions between peers, and in dialogue between older and younger generations. The traditional wedding ceremony is significant for Khmer people, occurring before they cohabit with one another. It was certainly significant for the household-level respondents in this research. The majority of them (70

[^45]: This lesson is under chapter 2, entitled “Intra-Family Relationships".
per cent)\(^{46}\) could recall some advice provided by their acha\(^{47}\) [lay priest or celebrant] that reflected three key concepts: ‘men as head of the family’, ‘women as head of the household’, and keeping the ‘three fires’.\(^{48}\) This was also my experience. I recall that an acha advised me about these three key concepts during my wedding ceremony rituals. This does not mean that such advice from the acha is new to marrying couples, but it does suggest that the advice is reinforced in these ceremony rituals. Khmer people already understand these concepts well through their social interactions with peers and/or through talking with older and younger generations.

The Khmer cultural discourse of ‘men as head of the family’ and ‘women as head of the household’ is embedded in social interactions in two ways, one of which is social pressure. Peer-to-peer and intergenerational pressure is evident in the findings of this research. Phanith, a father to twin daughters, explained that he had faced challenges from both his male peers and father.\(^{49}\) Some of his male friends said that he was a weaker person—not a man—because he was staying at home caring for his daughters and was economically dependent on his wife. His father at first did not allow him to wash his wife’s underclothes at all, because, in his view, it ruined men’s identity. Another case of intergenerational pressure is illustrated in Theavy’s story.\(^{50}\) She told me that her mother always scolded her because she asked her husband to share household chores and childcare. The embeddedness of Khmer cultural discourse in social interactions is not always confrontational; it is apparent in observation and practice. In intergenerational social interactions within the family, a second-generation mother [young mother] might observe it in her mother [a first-generation mother]. Sivninh, a mother of a one year old girl, told me that she had learned mothering from her mother, receiving help on mothering

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\(^{46}\) Initially, I did not ask the household-level respondents about this matter, so only 20 of the 52 respondents were asked. This matter came to my attention when I was reflecting on my personal life trajectory, on how I have been exposed to the concepts of men-as-the-family-head and breadwinner.

\(^{47}\) It is a key term referring to a wise man whose profession is performing wedding rituals.

\(^{48}\) The notion of keeping the ‘three fires’ is scripted in the Chhab Srey. It instructs women not to bring the outside fire into the house [meaning that a woman should not tell her husband if her parents think or say bad things about him], or the inside fire outside the house [meaning that a woman should not tell her parents and others about whatever happens inside the house]. This instruction is concerned with three groups of people with which women need to deal, to avoid sparking trouble. These people are her parents, husbands, and others. Women are instructed not to pass information [or gossip] between the three groups.

\(^{49}\) Interview, [father at NGO preschool A], Phnom Penh, 14 March 2018.

\(^{50}\) Interview, [mother at NGO preschool B], Phnom Penh, 08 March 2018.
and housework from her mother every day. These young mothers may have been taught housework and child-minding skills since they were very small. Such learning is evidenced in ethnographic studies conducted in rural settings in the 1960s (Ebihara 1968) and in the present (Gorman, Dorina & Kheng 1999; Hukin 2014).

This chapter has so far investigated the constructions of Khmer women’s caring femininity in ‘traditional’ and contemporary Khmer societies. The next section focuses on the constructions of Khmer masculinity.

5.2 Discourse on Khmer Men’s Masculinity

This section examines the dominant traits of Khmer men’s masculinity in contemporary Khmer society, then investigates the constructions of Khmer men’s masculinity in relationship to care in both traditional and contemporary society. In ‘traditional’ Khmer society, a discourse of men as ‘head of the family’ was constructed to prioritise men’s breadwinning role; however, in contemporary Khmer society this discourse is constructed to include men's supporting role in care work.

5.2.1 Dominant Traits of Khmer Men’s Masculinity

Being the family head and being its breadwinner are considered desirable qualities among Khmer men. These characteristics are consonant with the two primary components, ‘breadwinning and manhood’, of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (Donaldson 1993). The dominant characteristics of Khmer masculinity have been illustrated in several empirical studies (Brereton 2009; Bylander 2015; GADC 2010; Scandurra et al. 2017). In my view, the concepts of men as the family head and as provider are co-constitutive and interrelated, and could be viewed together. One action research report indicates that men’s role as the family provider is ‘central to a man’s sense of pride and identity’, implying that men are the family decision-makers (Brereton 2009, p. 12). The “Men of Success” discourse, prioritising men’s ability to provide a family income, puts men in a hegemonic position in contemporary Cambodia (Haque 2013). Similarly, many Khmer men in Jacobsen’s (2012) study preferred being a successful man to being a good man. The

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51 Interview, [mother at village B], KraingYov, 01 April 2018.
former involves income-earning while the latter is related to “Sel” \textsuperscript{52} [morality]. These Khmer men associated this morality with being a good man rather than a successful one.

The dominant characteristics of Khmer masculinity that are considered desirable were inscribed in the traditional codes [the Chbab Srey and the Chbab Pros] and legally codified in the 1898 Codes Cambodgiens and 1920 Civil Code Cambodgien during the French colonial period (Haque 2012). In Meun Mai’s version of the Cbbab Srey, it is repeatedly stated that a husband is superior to a wife, dictating that a wife should always respect and serve her husband, while also warning her not to consider herself as equal to her husband. The Chbab Pros does not directly assert men's superiority over women; rather, it emphasises men’s role as the family provider in the context of an agricultural society. Article 37 of the Codes Cambodgiens stated that a ‘husband must provide food and other amenities to his wife’ (Haque 2012, p. 90). The 1920 Civil Code Cambodgien obligated men to be the sole breadwinner of the family. The evidence lies in two main articles. Article 193 stated that men had to ‘provide support and resources for their wives and families’, and Article 207 allowed a woman to ‘seek divorce if her husband failed to support her and the family’ (ibid p. 94).

The notion of men as ‘head of the family’, which is a central, dominant characteristic of Khmer masculinity, is being reproduced and sustained in contemporary Cambodia through social practices and institutions, such as through civil registration practice in producing marriage certificates or family books \textsuperscript{53}, and in textbooks for grades 7 and 8 students. If a newly married couple wants to apply for a marriage certificate or family book at the commune level, a commune civil registrar will name the husband as ‘head of the family’ in the marriage certificate or family book. The concept of “family happiness” in textbooks for grade 7 students prescribes a husband’s roles as the family head and as the father of children, with seven family tasks outlined (MoEYS 2016). One of the seven family tasks is to ‘lead and manage the family well and be responsible for the welfare of the whole family’ (ibid p. 193). This conceptualisation is also taught at grade 8 with seven

\textsuperscript{52} It is a Pali or Sanskrit term with an equivalent meaning to morality in English. This ‘Sel’ usually is associated with the five precepts of Buddhism: abstinence from “killing”, from “stealing”, from “sexual misconduct”, from “false speech” and from “intoxicants”.

\textsuperscript{53} A family book is a record of family members and their details: date of birth, sex, nationality, place of birth, and status. A family book can be used for several purposes, including applying for an ID card.
family responsibilities detailed, one of which is that a husband must not ‘be lazy but has to work hard to earn an income to support the family’ (MoEYS 2015, p. 192).

The notion of men as ‘head of the family’ is well understood by many men in this research. It is central to men’s identity, especially in social interactions with peers and people outside the family. When asked who the family head was, almost all male research respondents referred to themselves as the ‘head’. They associated ‘head of the family’ with an ability to earn the family income. This association was explained by a few men whose wives were the primary family providers, in which case the men acknowledged their wives as ‘head of the family’. Pheaktra told me that ‘the woman [my wife] is head of the family as she is earning more money. The man [me] is head of the household as I am managing household chores. My wife is still managing a family income.’

The acknowledgement of their wives as ‘head of the family’ causes embarrassment for men in public however, so men ‘display a family’, in Finch’s (2007) terms, meaning that men publicly convey the socially accepted notion of ‘men as head of the family’ to ensure public recognition of that role. When asked who the head of the family was, Vuthy, for example, explained that ‘Outside the house, I am head of the family and I make decisions in front of other friends, but I allow her [my wife] to be head of the family at home. This means that she manages our son [making any decisions about the son] and I am doing housework.’ When asked to give a concrete example, however, it is clear that his wife is a primary decision-maker even in public, although he pretends to be the decision-maker and head of the family. The following is his explanation:

For social interactions outside the house, such as meetings with friends or dealing with business issues, the family head needs to face many things. Usually, the head makes decisions. We have been a husband and wife for a long time; we understand each other very well. For example, when I am discussing with others and if my wife does not agree with what I am about to make a decision, she just clears her throat to signal me that I need to rethink before making the decision. However, if she agrees with my decision, she does not need to look at my face or clear her throat. This means that I can make my own decision (Vuthy at state preschool A, Phnom Penh, 12 March 2018).

The above discussion indicates that the notion of men as head of the family is co-constitutive and interrelated with the discourse of men as the family breadwinner. The

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54 Interview, [father at village A], KraingYov, 24 April 2018.
55 Interview, [father at state preschool A], Phnom Penh, 12 March 2018.
discussion also suggests that these interrelated discourses are pervasive in Khmer society, even though not all men succeed in living up to this ideal. Successful men according to this ideal standard are privileged in that they are not required to engage in care work. This privilege is endorsed by many male and female respondents, as will be discussed in Chapters 8 and 9. Nevertheless, not all men subscribe to these discourses, and approximately half of the men in this research have oriented themselves towards ‘more-caring masculinity’.

Other Khmer manhood characteristics include being ‘strong and courageous’ (Brereton 2009, p. 11), while being dominant over and controlling of women, assuming themselves superior (GADC 2010, p. 27). These characteristics tend to be consonant with the teachings of the Chbab Srey and the Chbab Pros which instruct men to protect the family and to become the family problem-solver. It may be a prevailing belief that Khmer people want men and boys to display a strong and courageous character; however, it is possible that only some men wish to be dominant over and controlling of women. This characteristic may not be desired by Khmer society as a whole. Brereton’s (2009) qualitative study indicates that being a strong and brave man was commonly cited by men as important to them, but at the same time they emphasised the importance of being ‘gentle, polite, and loving and respectful to everyone’ (p. 11). This implies that men could be strong and courageous in a positive way.

Alcohol consumption with peers is also central to Khmer men’s masculine practices (see Scandurra et al. 2017). Moderate alcohol consumption is generally accepted and sometimes encouraged by Khmer society at large, although it is prohibited by the Chbab Pros. This Chbab considers alcohol consumption as one of the three types of men’s madness (see appendix 2: Summary of the Chbab Pros).

The above discussion focused on the dominant traits of contemporary Khmer men’s masculinities. I now turn to analyse Khmer men’s masculinity in the context of housework and childcare, a key focus of this dissertation.

5.2.2 Traditional and Contemporary Constructions of Khmer Less-Caring Masculinity

The discussion above suggests that contemporary Khmer society tends to follow a discourse that ascribes childcare and housework to women, and that the dominant feature
of Khmer masculinity is men occupying family head and breadwinner roles. This does not suggest that men are not constructed to be responsible for anything linked to housework at all. According to the *Chbab Pros*, Khmer men are charged with two main domestic tasks: filling giant jars with water and collecting firewood for cooking. Corollary housework ascribed to men is to ask them to look for vegetables whenever they are in the forest. The tasks assigned to men tend to draw on the stereotype that men have physical strength. Traditionally men are not expected to perform tasks other than the domestic tasks just mentioned, and they are not blamed by society if they fail to perform other tasks.

The contemporary construction of manhood in school textbooks, which assumes men to be head of the family and the breadwinner, also exhorts men to ‘care about’ and ‘care for’, in Tronto’s (1993b, 1998, 2013) sense. An example in the grade 7 textbook for the civics-morals subject details nine tasks of a ‘family head’ (or parent) in relation to their children. These tasks involve loving, understanding, providing an education, encouraging, arranging their marriage, and providing them with an inheritance. The textbooks also specify men's responsibilities concerning their wives and families. The grade 7 textbook for the civics-morals subject indicates men’s supporting role in childcare and housework by advising men to help their wives engage in ‘childcare, child education, and housework’ (MoEYS 2016, p. 193). A slightly different version of advice is in the grade 8 textbook that instructs men to allow their wife to have ‘headship in the management of household tasks’ (MoEYS 2015, p. 192). This contemporary discourse of manhood and husbandhood is more flexible than the traditional one. It attempts to attach men’s supporting role in housework and childcare to the traditional dominant trait [family head and provider]; he can be a man, a husband, and a father. I will illustrate in Chapter 9 how this newly constructed discourse of Khmer men’s masculinity plays out, and how some men have become ‘more-caring’ fathers. There is no study to date that analyses how men balance care work and their traditional masculine traits, although there is some relevant research.

Some limited but relevant empirical studies suggest that many Khmer men generally do not take part in care work, although some women (and men) expect them to do so. A study by Brickell (2007b) on intra-household gender relations in the Khmer home found that the majority of men were not engaged in childcare (and domestic work). She asserts
that some men who participated in childcare tended to actively instil their daughters, not their sons, with traditional gender norms around housework and the private sphere. Linked to the absence of men’s role in childcare in Cambodia, especially housework, Brickell (2011a) attempts to elucidate the reasons by drawing on her qualitative study. She postulates that three primary interconnected discourses emerged from her study in accounting for men’s non-participation in housework.

The first discourse is linked with ‘women as keepers of domestic and national pride’ (Brickell 2011a, p. 1359). Many men (and some other women) tend to assume that women represent the home, so women are highly appreciated and admired by society at large when their home is clean and nicely decorated (Brickell 2011a). The first discourse is related to the second one, which considers domestic work to be a form of labour attached to a ‘gendered politics of reciprocity’ (ibid, p. 1359). Following the traditional gender roles, men tend to think that ‘reciprocity’ is reflected in men’s focus on earnings to support the family and women’s focus on housework. These gender roles are evoked in a famous Khmer proverb, “the seedlings support the soil, the women support the men”. It implies that women’s domestic role is limited to their supporting their husbands while the men focus on earnings. The third discourse builds on the first and second discourses. It considers domestic work as a ‘practice that embodies notions of tradition and respect that both genders must adhere to’ (ibid, p. 1359).

Although approximately half of the men in my fieldwork tended to endorse these dominant discourses, other men resisted them and have become ‘more-caring’ fathers. I will discuss these patterns of fathering practices and the constitutive factors for these ‘more-caring’ fathers in Chapter 9.

5.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter has critically investigated how Khmer cultural discourse on childcare has been embedded in Khmer society and has constructed men’s ‘less-caring’ masculinity and women’s caring femininity. The chapter investigated a construction of caring femininity before examining a construction of ‘less-caring’ masculinity. In investigating the construction of caring femininity, the chapter first analysed Khmer cultural discourse on childcare by tracing its genealogy in the Chhab Srey and by examining contradictory interpretations of Khmer cultural norms by various social actors through time. The
chapter then analysed the contemporary construction of Khmer caring femininity through a critical analysis of educational textbooks. To analyse the construction of ‘less-caring’ masculinity, the chapter started with a review of the dominant traits of Khmer masculinity and then investigated their genealogy in the Chhab Pros. The chapter then demonstrated how the notion of ‘men as head of the family’ has been reproduced and maintained in Khmer society. Then I paid particular attention to Khmer cultural discourse on masculinity in relation to childcare by tracking its genealogy in the Chhab Pros and constructions in school textbooks.

The chapter illustrated that the Khmer cultural discourse on childcare is embedded in the civics-morals textbooks, in the ceremonial rituals of weddings, and in social interactions with peers and between older and younger generations. This embeddedness has shaped a notion of ‘men as the family head and breadwinner’ and neglected men’s involvement in care. At the same time, it has shaped a notion of ‘women as head of the household’, embracing housework and care.

Chapter 7 and 8 will discuss how the Khmer cultural discourse on childcare has shaped the constructions and practices of the National Childcare Policy and how women have conformed to, and resisted, the ‘women as head of the household’ discourse. Chapter 9 will discuss how men have conformed to, and resisted, the ‘men as the family head and breadwinner’ discourse, and will then consider their engagement in care. Before these discussions, the next chapter [6] will investigate the constitutive context of the National Childcare Policy in the socialist and post-socialist periods before the emergence of the National Policy in 2010. This investigation will examine how traditional cultural assumptions interact with political ideologies in shaping policy discourses in these periods.
Chapter 6
The Constitutive Policy Contexts

Socialist and Post-socialist Childcare in Cambodia

This chapter investigates the constitutive contexts surrounding the production of the current National Childcare Policy. This analysis looks at childcare discourse during the socialist regime [the 1980s to the early 1990s] and the post-socialist period [the early 1990s to 2010]. This chapter illustrates that the socialist regime adopted a childcare discourse aimed at easing women’s caring responsibilities and increasing their workforce participation. The post-socialist regime, however, adopted a childcare discourse focusing on ‘early childhood education’ with a rhetorical commitment to state- and enterprise-funded daycare. This chapter argues that the socialist style of childcare was oriented towards being ‘ethically transformative’, partly because of its contribution to the redistribution of childcare loads from the family to the state, and the enhancement of both solidarity between social groups and women’s autonomy, enabling women to participate in the labour market. In contrast, post-socialist childcare was not ‘ethically transformative’ at all.

The rationale for the analysis of the constitutive contexts of the National Childcare Policy and its analytical components draws on the ‘critical approaches to childcare policies’ and the ‘transformative ethics of care’. A policy representation is inherently political, and thus requires an analysis of its competing representations [or discourses] in the constitutive contexts (Bacchi 1999, 2009; Bacchi & Goodwin 2016; Fernandez 2012). To analyse childcare discourses, I investigate policy representations, underlying assumptions, and policy consequences (Bacchi 1999, 2009; Bacchi & Goodwin 2016) in conjunction with the concepts of ‘care diamond’ (Razavi 2007a) at the macro level and ‘social care’ (Daly & Lewis 2000) at the micro level. The macro-level analysis scrutinises the care distributions between the four ‘care diamond’ actors: the state, the not-for-profit sector, the private sector, and the family. The micro-level analysis looks at care distribution between genders within the family. The analysis therefore looks at the policy
representations, policy assumptions, and policy consequences in relation to the distribution of care between the ‘care diamond’ actors and genders. The chapter also assesses these policy representations, policy assumptions, and policy consequences through the ‘transformative ethics of care’ lens. The primary ethical criteria investigated are recognition, reduction, redistribution, representation, solidarity, and women’s autonomy (Clement 1996; Daly 2001; Esquivel 2014; Fraser 1997, 2005, 2008, 2013; Razavi 2007b; Tronto 1993b, 1998, 2013).

The primary policy texts scrutinised in this chapter are legal documents [the Constitution, the Labour Law, the Education Law] and ministerial childcare policies. To substantiate and/or triangulate this textual analysis, the chapter reviews various reports, produced both by state and non-state institutions, and scholarly works, as well as the perspectives of the policy-level community interviewees.

As the name of the chapter suggests, this chapter analyses and evaluates childcare discourses of the socialist regime and of the post-socialist period in Cambodia. Before analysing and evaluating childcare discourses in the socialist regime, the chapter briefly reviews the historical background of childcare in Cambodia.

6.1 Historical Background of Childcare

Childcare is situated either in the ‘care policy’ discourse or the ‘early childhood education policy’ discourse. The ‘care policy’ discourse aims to reduce women’s caring responsibility to enable them to do other things, primarily to engage in socio-economic activities. The ‘early childhood education policy’ discourse focuses on preschool education and children’s needs rather than children’s families, although the families may also benefit from it. Historically, from the 19th century until immediately before the World Wars (Haddad, L 2002)), numerous global child education projects combined the two discourses. The two discourses, however, were split during the Cold War period when capitalist-oriented countries moved away from the underlying principle of ‘collective care’, and were followed by socialist countries (ibid ). These two discourses were the recurring themes in a post-neoliberal ‘social investment’ approach in Europe and North

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56 Haddad, L (2002) notes that childcare discourse linked childcare services with poverty alleviation by providing such services to households, especially single-parent ones, that required ‘extra-family childcare’ to allow them to work outside the home in the 19th century.
America in the late 1990s, although the weight of the two discourses is not the same (Jenson & Saint-Martin 2003). Some countries in the developed world, as Bacchi (1999) observes, promoted a discourse of childcare as a necessity to enable women’s labour participation. They provided daycare services to the family to facilitate women’s participation in the labour market with an expectation of improving women’s social status and material living conditions. At the same time, however, some other countries subscribed to a discourse of care in terms of ‘preschool education’ by focusing on early child development (Bacchi 1999).

In Cambodia, the ‘care as preschool education’ discourse had its roots in the pre-socialist regime, specifically the Sangkum era in the 1950s and 1960s. I refer to the pre-socialist regime as three regimes, from the Sangkum era, to the Khmer Republic of Kampuchea in the first half of the 1970s, and then to Democratic Kampuchea in the second half of the 1970s. Although this discourse first emerged in this era, it seemed not to be among the priorities for state investment. Visible evidence lies in the negligence towards childcare in the regime's Constitution; there was no article discussing childcare. According to Jacobsen’s (2008) book, childcare either in the form of preschool education or easing women’s caring burden is discussed in the other two pre-socialist regimes. Perhaps data on childcare was not available as it was not one of the priorities of the state during that period. According to one respondent who has expertise in early childhood education in Cambodia, and to a research report on 'preschools' in Cambodia, the first state preschool was opened in 1954 in the Sangkum era (Ky 1996). The same report notes that the number of preschools peaked at only 37 nationwide during this regime [23 preschools in Phnom Penh and the other 14 in the remaining 13 provinces]. This preschool education was a full-day program in which the state provided lunch to students, while giving parents the option of picking up their children for lunch at home and bringing them back to school for the afternoon session.

57 This book traces female power from the 3rd century to the 21st century in Cambodian history.
58 Interview, [senior specialist on early childhood and education], Phnom Penh, 26 March 2018.
59 These provinces are Battambang, Pursat, Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Thom, Prey Veng, Kratie, Svay Rieng, Kampong Cham, Kampong Speu, Takeo, Steung Treng, Kampong Som, Kep.
60 Interview, [senior specialist on early childhood and education], Phnom Penh, 26 March 2018.
While some state preschools were closed, others were still operational, with lunch no longer provided, in the early 1970s during the Khmer Republic of Kampuchea (KRK) 1970-75. At the same time, during this short-lived regime, as a report by Ky (1996) suggested, some private preschools were opened. The number of preschools peaked at 75, mostly in Phnom Penh [62 in Phnom Penh and 13 at the provincial level] in the 1972/73 academic year (Ky 1996, p. 4). Although the number of preschools in the KRK regime was slightly higher than in the Sangkum era, this does not suggest that childcare was prioritised. Neither the Constitution of the Sangkum era nor the KRK regime discussed childcare issues.

All schools were demolished in the era of Democratic Kampuchea (also known as the Khmer Rouge regime) from April 1975 to January 1979, but small children were in the care of the state so that their parents could go to work on farms. The regime leaders attempted to revolutionise Cambodia into what they called an egalitarian society embedded in socialist ideology. This attempt was written into their four-year plan which focused on a leap to a ‘socialist revolution’ through eliminating leisure time, religion, education, and the private lives of people (Chandler 1993, p. 215). The regime implemented unprecedented policies on ‘de-urbanisation, rural collectivisation, the abolishment of private property and social levelling’ (Frieson 1988, p. 417). As part of the de-urbanisation ideology and practice, millions of people in Phnom Penh were forcefully evacuated to rural areas to boost agricultural production. This regime was responsible for the deaths of more than one million people.

This brief history of childcare in the form of early childhood education in the pre-socialist regime indicates that it started in the Sangkum era, but was totally interrupted by the Khmer Rouge regime. Discourses of ‘care as preschool education’ and ‘care as a means to reduce women’s caring responsibility’ were revitalised during the socialist regime discussed in the following section.

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61 ibid
62 The KRK government took the country in a coup to oust late King Sihanouk in 1970. The United States of America provided military support to the PKK government until it fell to the Democratic Kampuchea regime in 1975.
63 I read these two constitutions in the Khmer language, but none of them discussed childcare.
6.2 Childcare under the Socialist Regime

‘Childcare as a means to improve women’s labour participation’ was the key construct under this socialist regime. ‘This regime’ refers to both the People’s Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) and the State of Cambodia (SoC) from 1979 to 1993. These two regimes—PRK and SoC—were controlled by the same political party in more or less the same fashion (Slocomb 2010, p. 238). This section starts by sketching out key features of the regime, critically analysing the PRK regime’s childcare discourse and services. The section then investigates the SoC regime’s childcare discourse and services. Finally, the section evaluates the regime’s childcare discourse and services based on the ‘transformative ethics of care’.

Upon the collapse of the Khmer Rouge regime in January 1979, the PRK took control of the country with the adoption of a ‘socialist framework’ for reconstructing the economy. With support from Vietnamese advisors, the state introduced the collectivisation of the agricultural sector, but the new system was not as extreme as the preceding regime’s (Frings 1993, 1994). The Krom Samaky Bangkar Bangkeun Phal system (meaning production solidarity groups) was the key feature of this collectivisation, known as the Krom Samaky for short. There were three different levels of the Krom Samaky system (Hughes 2003). The first-level groups were fully collectivised, making up approximately one-third of all Krom Samaky for the entire 1980s (Hughes 2003). Within these groups, no private land ownership was allowed, while food and other goods were distributed to members based on each member’s working capacity (Hughes 2003). The second-level groups were approximately one-fifth of all Krom Samaky in the early 1980s but jumped to about two-thirds by 1987 (Hughes 2003). These groups distributed ‘land and equipment’ to their member families to work their land. They could keep their output, working together as a collective unit only for some specific tasks such as harvesting (Hughes 2003). Third-level groups represented about 10 per cent of all groups in mid-1980 but skyrocketed to approximately 90 per cent by the end of the decade (Hughes 2003). They were a ‘little bit more than loose associations of independent, land-tenured family farms’ (Hughes 2003, p. 28).

The PRK regime paid particular attention to childcare support for the family as part of the process of incorporating more women into the labour market. Such attention was not
an isolated phenomenon in Cambodia; it was common amongst socialist states in that period which attempted to facilitate the two realms of women’s participation: production labour and their caring responsibilities in the home (Valentova 2012). The PRK government took action to reduce women’s burden in the home and to facilitate their participation in ‘social activities’ on equal terms with men (Jacobsen 2008). These efforts were inscribed in the following Article 27 of the PRK’s Constitution:

The state cares for mothers and children. The state and society organise maternity clinics, nurseries, and children’s gardens and take other appropriate measures to reduce women’s housewife burdens and facilitate women to participate in social activities on equal terms with men.

Female workers or employees enjoy a ninety-day maternity leave with pay. Nursing mothers enjoy a reduction of daily work hours while receiving the public welfare defined by the state. The state shall take concrete measures concerning women working outside the state sector.

The regime’s commitment to childcare was translated into provision of some full-day nurseries and preschools. The de facto leader (Heng Samrin) used the national radio platform to urge all communities to reopen preschools throughout the country in 1981.64 Alongside this top-level political commitment, the Krom Samaky and the Women’s Association65 actively encouraged communities and ‘production units’ at the Ministry of Industry to open nurseries or crèches and preschools (Eng & Sin 2007). The state funded the training and salaries of regular staff, but the Krom Samaky and workers’ unions covered the costs of most facilities (space and equipment) and paid for ancillary staff (Eng & Sin 2007). Parents contributed either cash or rice. The accounts of two respondents who were formerly preschool teachers and directors during the PRK regime and a UNICEF report written by Swaminathan (1985) suggest that there were no uniform benefits for preschool teachers across the country. One respondent, who was a director of a preschool in Kampong Chhnang province, recalled that she received only between 10 and 20 Thang66 of paddy rice annually and a small piece (20 x 50 metres) of land.67 She explained that the commune authority collected this rice from people in the community

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64 Interview, [senior specialist on early childhood and education], Phnom Penh, 26 March 2018.
65 According to Jacobsen 2008, the women’s association was among other organs of the state, and it was established on 2 December 1978. Its representatives were from all levels: central, provincial, district, commune, and village, and one woman from each Krom Samaky.
66 A Khmer traditional measurement of unmilled rice. One Thang is equivalent to 20 to 22 kilograms (Ebihara 1968, p. 102).
67 She is a staff member of an international non-government organisation [INGO C] in Phnom Penh.
and delivered it to her home. Another respondent, who was also a preschool director in Kandal province, received a small salary in addition to rice and a piece of farming land.68 During this period, crèches—targeting children aged between two and thirty-six months—were run by two ministries [Industry and Health] with technical support and regular supervision from the Ministry of Health (Eng & Sin 2007; Swaminathan 1985). The Ministry of Industry ran approximately half of the crèches for female workers at state factories, while the Ministry of Health ran the rest for female civil servants at various ministries and state institutions such as the Phnom Penh municipality or provincial municipalities (Swaminathan 1985). There were about 102 nurseries, 85 of them in Phnom Penh, operated by the state during that regime (Eng & Sin 2007, p. 23). In some crèches, where there was insufficient funding, parents were required to pay an average of 50 riels (approximately USD 7.5)69 and 5 kilograms of rice per month for an average 8-hour day of care, but, in crèches that were run by production units with adequate funding, the care service was free of charge (ibid p. 23). To put this amount in context, the salaries of government officials were between 100 and 500 riels per month during the early 1980s (Hughes 2003).

Preschool programs—targeting children aged three to six—were run by various state institutions and the Krom Samaky with technical support from the Ministry of Education (Swaminathan 1985). According to a UNICEF report, preschools generally ran a six-hour education program—three hours in the morning and the other three in the afternoon—with breakfast and refreshments in the afternoon for children, but parents required to pick up their children for lunch (Swaminathan 1985). The same report notes that some preschools provided lunches to children to respond to some parents’ needs. Generally, the state paid teachers’ salaries, with parent contributions mostly spent on children’s food [breakfast and refreshments] in state institutional preschools (Swaminathan 1985); however, parents tended to be responsible for both teachers’ salaries and children’s food for preschools run by the Krom Samaky (Swaminathan 1985). As summarised in Table 5, based on a report prepared by the Department of Education Management Information System (DEMIS), the number of preschools started at 96 in the

68 She just retired from a local NGO in Phnom Penh.
69 According to Hughes (2003), 100 riels is equivalent to $15 at 1983 exchange rates.
academic year 1979/80, reached its peak at 689 in 1985/86, and then significantly dropped in the subsequent years before slightly increasing to 679 in 1988/89 at the end of the regime (DEMIS 2017, p. 57). The fall in this number might be due to the agricultural crisis, as well as some changes in the leadership of the regime and its economic stand in relation to regulating the private sector in late 1985 (see Huxley 1987).

Table 5: Preschool Education Statistics from 1979-1989

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>No. Preschools</th>
<th>No. Classes</th>
<th>No. Students</th>
<th>No. Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1979-80</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>8,229</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-81</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>15,077</td>
<td>630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981-82</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>16,579</td>
<td>818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982-83</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>823</td>
<td>23,797</td>
<td>956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983-84</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1,128</td>
<td>25,466</td>
<td>1,493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984-85</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>1,420</td>
<td>39,920</td>
<td>1,835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985-86</td>
<td>689</td>
<td>1,557</td>
<td>56,165</td>
<td>2,398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986-87</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>1,864</td>
<td>55,760</td>
<td>2,625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987-88</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>2,059</td>
<td>59,679</td>
<td>3,017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988-89</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>2,195</td>
<td>61,349</td>
<td>3,209</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Education Management Information System (DEMIS) 2017

Data on the exact number of crèches and preschools that were run together is not available, but a UNICEF report shows that some crèches and preschools were run in tandem by the same institutions such as in Phnom Penh and some provincial municipalities and by some state enterprises (Swaminathan 1985). Two respondents, who were directors of preschools in the 1980s, were aware of this issue. One respondent explained that nurseries were situated within preschools under the same management, that of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), although staff members were from the Ministry of Health (MoH). She added that though these preschools were managed by each district education office, they were supported in cash or kind by the Krom Samaky. This respondent noted however that nurseries and preschools were later separated from one another because of conflict arising from management shared between dual institutions.

Another respondent who managed a preschool in Kampong Chhnang province in the 1980s confirmed the integration of the two institutions as follows:

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70 Interview, [senior specialist on early childhood and education], Phnom Penh, 26 March 2018.
I was the director of a preschool with 15 classes in Kampong Chhnang in 1985. Some three classes were nurseries which accepted children aged below three years and the other classes were for preschool students accepting children aged between 3 to 5 years. The preschool classes were a full-day program opening at about 7.30 to 10.30 am and from 2.00 to 4.00 pm (Staff member of INGO C, Phnom Penh, 18 February 2018).

The discourse of ‘childcare as a means to reduce women’s domestic responsibility’ was a rhetorical commitment under the SoC government from May 1989 to September 1993 as it was a transition period for liberalising the state economy. The name of the country was changed from the PRK to the SoC when the PRK’s National Assembly made some amendments to the Constitution in April 1989 as part of a general policy of economic liberation (Jacobsen 2008). Some reforms occurred, including the abolition of the Krom Samaky, the introduction of private ownership of land, and the partial or complete privatisation of many state-owned enterprises (Jacobsen 2008); however, Article 27 from the PRK constitution regarding childcare support was intact. Although this childcare provision was unsullied, the overall reforms brought down both preschools and daycare centres. As shown in Table 6 below, the number of preschools dropped from 679 in 1989/99 to 220 in 1992/93 (DEMIS 2017, p. 57). A report prepared by the Secretariat of State for Women’s Affairs indicates that there were only 32 nurseries [30 in Phnom Penh and two in the province] in 1990, dropping to six [five in Phnom Penh and one in the province] in 1993 (the Secretariat of State for Women’s Affairs 1994, p. 33). These remaining nurseries were finally transferred from MoH to MoEYS (Eng & Sin 2007). This deteriorating situation of childcare provision occurred in a period of a massive deficit in the state budget when the Soviet Union and Vietnam dramatically reduced their aid to Cambodia (Chandler 1993).

Table 6: Preschool Education Statistics from 1989-1993

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>No. Preschools</th>
<th>No. Classes</th>
<th>No. Students</th>
<th>No. Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988-89</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>2,195</td>
<td>61,349</td>
<td>3,209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989-90</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>2,181</td>
<td>56,017</td>
<td>3,383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-91</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>1,789</td>
<td>51,421</td>
<td>2,959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-92</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>1,714</td>
<td>48,207</td>
<td>2,736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-93</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>1,712</td>
<td>50,976</td>
<td>2,920</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Education Management Information System (DEMIS) 2017
Assessing Socialist Childcare through the Transformative Ethics of Care

The childcare discourse and practices under the PRK’s regime can be assessed as ‘ethically transformative’ if evaluated against the essential criteria of the ‘transformative ethics of care’, as theorised in Chapter 2. These ethical criteria are solidarity between social groups (Tronto 2013), women’s autonomy (Clement 1996), representation (Fraser 2003, 2008, 2013), recognition, reduction and redistribution (Daly 2001; Esquivel 2014; Fraser 1997; Razavi 2007b). These criteria enable us to determine that childcare policies are ‘ethically transformative’ if they redistribute care work from women to men within the family and from the family to the public arena, represented by the state and/or the market. The socialist childcare discourse and practices accorded with these evaluative elements to a significant extent, as illustrated in the following.

The Krom Samaky had contributed to solidarity between social groups as it was very beneficial for the ‘most disadvantaged groups’ who lacked agricultural tools and animals, groups such as widows, old people, disabled people, and the most impoverished farmers (Frings 1994, p. 57). The regime’s investment in daycare and preschool services had also contributed to the enhancement of women’s autonomy so that they could participate in the labour market (see Jacobsen 2008; Swaminathan 1985). As noted in Eng and Sin’s (2007) report, many civil servants who started work in the 1980s could recall their experience in accessing daycare services. One preschool teacher, for instance, recalled her experience as follows: “I used to enjoy having access to daycare centre for my young children. I did not have to look for someone to help me at home because the centre provided service according to my office working hours as well” (Eng & Sin 2007, p. 22). A staff member at the Ministry of Social Affairs shared a similar experience: “Oh, it was easy that we could put our children at the crèche of the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts because my wife and I both worked; otherwise my wife would not be able to work” (Eng & Sin 2007, p. 22).

The enhancement of solidarity between social groups and of women’s autonomy is primarily connected with the socialist ideology embedded in the Constitution. Women’s burden of childcare was recognised by the Constitution, as illustrated earlier, and it was reflected in the Ministry of Health’s directive for the establishment of daycare centres (Swaminathan 1985). This Constitutional commitment may have been reinforced by
women’s voices about caring needs represented by the Krom Samaky and the Women’s Association (Eng & Sin 2007; Swaminathan 1985; UNICEF 1988). The Constitutional commitment to childcare provision resulted in the redistribution of childcare loads from the family to the state through daycare services for children below three years of age and full-day preschool education for children aged three to five years. Such a redistribution can be viewed as ‘ethically transformative’ as it contributed to the enhancement of women’s autonomy by reducing their care burdens so that they could participate in socio-economic activities. The redistribution of care labour occurred in the relative absence of a private sector during this period.

This redistribution may not have reduced women’s burden of care at the family level in rural settings, however. An ethnographic study conducted by Frieson (2010) suggested that Khmer peasant women had a heavy burden of both care work and income-generating activities in this period. Two possible reasons may be behind this. A shortage of men’s labour within the family is the first reason. A UNICEF report in 1988 noted that approximately 60 to 64 per cent of the adult population [aged 15 years and over] were women, while the percentage of women-headed households in rural areas was 35 per cent (UNICEF 1988, p. 89). A survey in 1986 indicated that 91 per cent of women-headed households were headed by widows (Jacobsen 2008, p. 241). The shortage of men’s labour might be due to the loss of men’s lives during the war.

The second reason was the concentration of ‘daycare services’ in urban rather than rural settings, meaning that public daycare services may only have benefited women in urban settings, mostly state employees, rather than the general public in rural settings. Childcare benefits were provided to civil servants and state-owned enterprise workers in addition to their regular salary and other necessities, such as ‘rice, clothes, sugar, cigarettes, detergent and soaps, petrol and paraffin’ (Eng & Sin 2007, p. 22; see also Hughes 2003; UNICEF 1988). There were about 15,000 industrial workers under the Ministry of Industry, one-third of whom were women (Swaminathan 1985, p. 45). Similarly, data presented at the Women’s Congress in 1988, cited by Jacobsen (2008), estimated that women made up 65 per cent of garment factory employees, 70 per cent of salt factory workers, and 50 per cent of rubber plantation workers (p. 241). As indicated above, 85 out of 102 nurseries
were operated in Phnom Penh, with the rest in the provinces. One respondent explained that preschools were concentrated only in provincial or district towns rather than rural areas. A preschool with nursery classes situated in the provincial town of Kampong Chhnang province is an example. Only government officials and teachers sent their children to these classes, not farmers.

The above analysis indicates that the discourse of childcare as a means of reducing women’s caring burden and increasing their labour participation was constructed and translated into tangible full-day preschool programs and daycare services to the family for almost the whole decade of the 1980s. Such a discourse, nevertheless, did not have durable results as childcare services dwindled during the later stages of the socialist regime. As I will elaborate in the following section, this discourse was entirely supplanted during the post-socialist regime by a discourse of childcare as preschool education, and daycare as the private sector’s and family’s responsibility.

6.3 Childcare in the Post-socialist Regime

The primary focus of this analysis is to scrutinise childcare discourses during this post-socialist period. The post-socialist regime dated from the first democratic election in 1993 to 2010, the year that the Royal Government of Cambodia approved the National Childcare Policy. This section indicates that a discourse of childcare as a means to increase women’s participation in the paid workforce was neglected in this period. Instead, the state relinquished its daycare provision role to the private sector, the not-for-profit sector, and finally to the family. The state’s childcare discourse at the later stage of the regime focused on preschool education, but there was no clear policy commitment on childcare at the early stage. The state’s childcare discourse on and commitment to preschool education at the time were shaped by an international education agenda on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), supported financially to a large extent by development partners—donor agencies and international non-government organisations and their local partners.

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71 Interview, [senior specialist on early childhood and education], Phnom Penh, 26 March 2018. She was the director of a preschool in Kandal province in the 1980s.
72 Interview, [INGO C representative], Phnom Penh, 18 February 2018. She was director of a preschool in Kampong Chhnang province in the 1980s.
73 A period after 2010 is technically the post-socialist regime, but I do not call it such as I will investigate it under the National Childcare Policy in Cambodia in next chapter.
To investigate post-socialist childcare, this section focuses on five issues. It starts by looking at the overall effect of neoliberalism on the regime's childcare. The section then analyses the influences of the ECCE international agenda on Cambodia's ECCE, critically analysing the state's limited role in preschool education and alternative care. Third, the section investigates issues related to the private sector and familial care. Analysing the not-for-profit sector's role in community preschool education is the fourth aspect of the analysis. Finally, the section assesses post-socialist childcare based on the 'transformative ethics of care'.

Neoliberal ideas filtering into Cambodia from the Western world affected how the state dealt with childcare matters from the early 1990s when the state started the normalisation of its relations with the West, after the Peace Agreements in 1991. As part of the normalised relations with the Western world, Cambodia fully opened up its economy. It embraced a Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in 1994 imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in exchange for some grants and loans (Ear 1997). Reduction of public expenditure and the privatisation of state-owned enterprises were among the key areas for reform. Expenditure on education and health was decreased (Slocomb 2010, p. 236). In the SAP agreement with the IMF in 1994, the government committed to cutting spending on social services by 20 per cent by 1997 (Slocomb 2010, p. 243). The economic reforms resulted in the closure of all state-run crèches by the late 1990s (see Eng & Sin 2007). A representative of the Department of Inspection at MoEYS explained these closures in Eng and Sin’s (2007) report in the following words:

most childcare centres could not sustain staff, had no materials and equipment, no budget to pay for water and electricity, daycare staff were reduced and eliminated from the state payroll, staff salary was very minimal, parents contributed very little to support the centres, so the quality of the centre was poor and led to the closure of many centres by early 1990s (Eng & Sin 2007, pp. 25-6).

The number of preschools also dropped to its lowest point in 1994/1995 (DEMIS 2017), this sharp drop correlating with a decrease in the education budget between 1994 and 1996 (Ear 1997). A drastic cut in social service spending—partly resulting in the drop

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74 The ten areas for structural adjustment were fiscal policy, public expenditure priorities, tax policy, the privatisation of state-owned enterprises, interest rate policy, the deregulation of industry, foreign direct investment, property rights, exchange rate policy, and trade liberalisation (and credibility).
and/or closure of preschools and state-run crèches—was a common phenomenon embedded in the SAPs imposed on developing countries in the 1980s and the 1990s (Ear 1997; Elson 1991; Kabeer & Humphrey 2012). This phenomenon was a result of what Elson (1991) calls the male bias of the SAP, which resulted in an increase in women's burdens in both paid and unpaid care. Childcare as a means of improving women’s labour participation has been neglected by the Cambodian state since this period, although there are some legal provisions for daycare services.

A discourse of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) was promoted by the World Bank [including other UNs institutions] and the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in the mid-1990s to respond to the negative impacts of the SAP embedded in the neoliberal economy (Jenson 2009, 2017; Jenson & Saint-Martin 2003; Mayers 2000; Razavi 2007a, 2015). ECCE was viewed as an investment for future generations in a post-neoliberal 'social investment' approach to childcare policy (Jenson 2009, 2017; Jenson & Saint-Martin 2003; Razavi 2007a, 2015). The ECCE discourse which focuses on preschool education has shaped the education agenda in the developing world, including Cambodia, since then. At its early stage, the discourse was just part of basic education discussed at the World Conference on Education for All, jointly organised and funded by major international actors in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 (see Haddad, WD et al. 1990). The expansion of the scope of Basic Education for All to include ECCE was considered as a ‘watershed in ECCE development’ (Kamerman 2006). Cambodia was a signatory to the Education for All agenda (see MOEYS 2000b).

In the 1990s, ECCE embedded in Education for All was not translated into a specific policy in Cambodia, but was implemented as part of the Action Plan of Cambodia Education for All (see MoEYS 2000a). This may be due to that fact that the state’s budget was still heavily invested in national security and defence. For the whole decade of the 1990s there was no policy on ECCE, nor an Early Childhood Education department in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) in Cambodia, although there were

75 These actors include the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), United Nations International Children’s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the World Bank.
some legal provisions relating to daycare services. Primary rather than preschool education was among education priorities in MoEYS’ first Educational and Training Plan 1996 to 2000. It had a limited budget as the state invested almost half of the national budget in national defence (Ear 1997; MoEYS 2000a; Prasertsri 1996). The state accepted a minimal role in providing three-hour sessions for some preschool children through some state preschools. UNESCO reports note that the slight growth in numbers of preschools during this period—as indicated in Table 7—was mostly thanks to financial support from development partners [international donors and NGOs] and some local NGOs (MoEYS 2000a; Prasertsri 1996). This growth was mostly in urban rather than rural areas (MoEYS 2000a; Prasertsri 1996). The state transferred its daycare provision role to the private sector and the family.

Table 7: Preschool Education Statistics from 1993-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>No. Preschools</th>
<th>No. Classes</th>
<th>No. Students</th>
<th>No. Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993-94</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>1,700</td>
<td>53,080</td>
<td>2,682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-95</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>1,586</td>
<td>49,591</td>
<td>2,628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-96</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>1,516</td>
<td>48,721</td>
<td>2,519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-97</td>
<td>812</td>
<td>1,438</td>
<td>44,814</td>
<td>2,071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-98</td>
<td>793</td>
<td>1,393</td>
<td>43,358</td>
<td>1,971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-99</td>
<td>806</td>
<td>1,414</td>
<td>45,068</td>
<td>1,983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>874</td>
<td>1,523</td>
<td>50,597</td>
<td>2,125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Education Management Information System (DEMIS) 2017

A discourse of childcare as a means to ease women’s care burdens became merely rhetoric in the Constitution, the Education Law and the Labour Law, without any concrete plan or budget for this commitment. I discuss daycare provisions in the Constitution and the Education Law here, while daycare provisions in the Labour Law will be elaborated in the subsection entitled ‘the Private Sector and Familial Care’ later in this chapter. There are three significant provisions covering childcare in the 1993 Constitution. The first provision in paragraph 3 of Article 36 is about the equal value of housework and remunerated work performed outside the home. The second, in Article 48, is about the rights and protection of children, drawing on the International Convention on Child Rights. The emphasis of this provision is on the rights to life, education, and protection.

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76 The Early Childhood Education Department at MoEYS was established in 2002. An ECE Department representative at MoEYS marked 2002 as a significant year for the improvement of ECCE, and he considered a period between 2002 and 2010 as the second stage for ECCE development in Cambodia.
during wartime, and from economic or sexual exploitation. The third provision, stipulated in Article 73, is specifically about childcare and mothers, as follows: ‘The state cares for children and mothers. The state organises nurseries and attends to women without support who have many children under their care.’ The state’s role in childcare provision in the Constitution was later translated into Article 16 in the 2007 Education Law in the following terms:

The state shall support early childcare and childhood education from the age of zero to before kindergarten, generally provided at childcare centres in communities or the home. Kindergarten education shall commence education before primary education for preparation to attend primary school. The Ministry in charge of Education and other relevant ministries and institutions shall determine the meanings of early childcare and childhood education.

Early Childcare and Childhood Education, defined in the National Childcare Policy approved by the Council of Ministers in 2010, is the primary focus of the next chapter. Before 2010, the first ministerial policy, limited to early childhood education and technically influenced and financially supported by some development partners, was adopted by MoEYS in June 2000. Specifically, this policy was influenced by the Dakar Framework for Action of the Education for All (EFA) agenda in 2000, which reiterated the Jomtien conference’s commitments and set a specific goal on ECCE, calling for country action plans to achieve EFA’s goals and targets by 2015 (UNESCO 2000). One respondent explained that Cambodia’s Education Minister was asked about Cambodia’s preschool education situation at the Dakar Conference, but he did not have sufficient information to respond to the question. Upon his return to Cambodia, he called for a meeting to discuss preschool education in Cambodia. Different UN agencies and national and international NGOs were invited to this meeting, the Minister encouraging all these institutions to work on preschool education in Cambodia. An international NGO, Save the Children, then drafted the policy for MoEYS to endorse.

The policy was limited to preschool education for children aged three to five, and was designed to prepare them for primary education, but no concrete action plan was...

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77 The policy acknowledged its existence as a result of the commitment to EFA goals.
78 Interview, [senior specialist on early childhood education], Phnom Penh, 26 March 2018.
79 ibid
80 Interview, [senior specialist on early childhood education], Phnom Penh, 26 March 2018; The policy’s back cover says that this policy was supported by Save the Children Cambodia.
developed for this policy (see MoEYS 2000a); hence, the operation of preschool education was still under the National Plan for Education for All. The implicit assumption of the policy was that daycare—for children aged five and below—was the private sector's and family's responsibility; therefore, the state invested their limited budget in only preschool education. Although the enrolment rate for children aged three to five was still very low, the rate increased significantly between 2000 and 2010. It increased from 6.5 per cent in 2000/01 to 22 per cent in 2009/10 (NEFA Committee 2015, p. 4). This increase corresponded to a modest rise in the number of preschools, as illustrated in Table 8 below. The modest rise in enrolment rates and numbers of preschools reflected a low budget allocation of 0.60 per cent of the total education program budget in 2006, 0.62 per cent in the next three years, dropping to 0.53 per cent in 2010 (NEFA Committee 2015, p. 7). This childcare policy discourse failed to address women’s burden of care work, although there were some Constitutional public daycare provisions—illustrated earlier—and enterprise-funded daycare provisions in the Labour Law, as discussed in the subsequent subsection.

Table 8: Preschool Education Statistics from 2000-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>No. Preschools</th>
<th>No. Classes</th>
<th>No. Students</th>
<th>No. Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>915</td>
<td>1,605</td>
<td>55,798</td>
<td>2,181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>1,015</td>
<td>1,772</td>
<td>63,747</td>
<td>2,346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>1,145</td>
<td>2,041</td>
<td>64,727</td>
<td>2,538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>1,238</td>
<td>2,205</td>
<td>72,224</td>
<td>2,697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>1,345</td>
<td>2,316</td>
<td>72,214</td>
<td>2,833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>1,429</td>
<td>2,413</td>
<td>75,669</td>
<td>2,882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>1,524</td>
<td>2,548</td>
<td>77,899</td>
<td>2,978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>1,634</td>
<td>2,678</td>
<td>79,585</td>
<td>3,130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>1,798</td>
<td>2,916</td>
<td>90,036</td>
<td>3,247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>1,895</td>
<td>3,111</td>
<td>99,130</td>
<td>3,353</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Education Management Information System (DEMIS) 2017

Alongside its limited role in preschool education, the state focuses on a regulatory role in daycare service provision for orphaned and other vulnerable children through another ministerial policy on Alternative Care for Children (PoACC), which was adopted by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY) in April 2006. The concept of alternative care defined in this policy is 'care for orphaned and other vulnerable children, who are not under the care of their biological parents' (MoSVY 2006,
The information on the number of alternative care facilities before and after the adoption of PoACC is not available; however, the total number of current non-residential and residential care facilities is 401, located in five provinces (MoSVY 2016, p. 7). Of the 401 facilities, 267 are residential care facilities and the rest are non-residential care facilities [57 group homes, 46 boarding schools, 20 transitional homes and temporary emergency accommodation, and 11 pagodas and other faith-based care facilities in religious buildings] (MoSVY 2016, p. 7).

The existence of residential care facilities seems to be a positive, but they are heavily reliant on non-state actors’ funds rather than the state’s budget (see MoSVY 2011). Of the 401 facilities, only 9 are state orphanages managed by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY 2016, p. 10). The number of state orphanages was 20 out of 204 residential care facilities surveyed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in 2005 (USAID 2005). This evidence suggests that the state is not interested in funding residential care facilities, but prefers to focus on the regulation and monitoring of these facilities. Another piece of evidence lies in the Minimum Standards of Alternative Care adopted in 2008 which aimed to regulate and register residential care facilities (MoSVY 2008).

6.3.1 The Private Sector and Familial Care

The state's limited role in preschool education and alternative care has served to transfer the provision of daycare to the private sector, and finally to the family, especially women. The state relinquished its daycare provision role to the private sector in the late 1990s, maintaining only its regulatory and monitoring roles. The private sector consists of two types of institution: private preschools/daycare centres, and business enterprises. In Cambodia, private preschools/childcare centres started in 1998 with an initial emphasis on preschool education for five year old children (Haddad, L 2002). The presence of these private preschools (especially international schools) reflects the penetration of neoliberalism in Asia (Adriany 2018). These private preschools benefit only children from high-income families, as many low-income families cannot afford private school fees. Low socio-economic family children are under familial care, primarily being women's responsibility. It is not possible to estimate the number of private preschools in
that period, but private preschools accommodated 12.44 per cent of all enrolled students in the academic year 2016/17 (MoEYS 2018a).

As well as regulating private preschools, the 1997 Labour Law regulates business enterprises in the agricultural and industrial sectors which provide daycare services to their employees, but the related legal provisions have not been adequately enforced. In the 1990s and 2000s, employment was concentrated in the agricultural sector, with the industrial sector representing a small proportion of total employment. Over the last 30 years, employment in the agricultural sector has declined, but the industry sector has expanded significantly. The proportion of employment in agriculture was 78.8 per cent in 1991, but only 32.3 per cent in 2019 (ILO 2019). In contrast, the industry sector represented only 6.5 per cent of total employment in 1991 but increased to 29 per cent in 2019 (ILO 2019). In 2019, the percentage of employment in the service sector was 38.7 per cent, a drastic increase from 14.6 per cent in 1991 (ILO 2019).

The industrial sector is concentrated in footwear and garment factories which emerged in the 1990s as part of the SAP. The sector was boosted by preferential trade agreements with the United States of America, which included Cambodia among its Most Favoured Nations for trade in 1996, and was a beneficiary of the Generalised System of Preferences in 1997 (Hatsukano 2010; Slocomb 2010). The sector has grown significantly since then, although Cambodia lost its preferential trade agreements with the USA in 2004 when it became a member of the World Trade Organisation (Ear 2013). Growth slowed after 2008 following the global financial crisis.

The Labour Law requires all business enterprises employing at least 100 female workers to provide daycare services to their employees or pay for the daycare fees charged by other daycare providers to which their employees send their children. Article 186 states the following:

Managers of enterprises employing a minimum of 100 women or girls shall set up, within their establishments or nearby, a nursing room and a crèche. If the company is not able to set up a crèche on its premises for children over eighteen months of age, female workers can place their children in any crèche, and the employer shall pay the charges.

This daycare provision for general enterprises sets the minimum age (18 months) but does not specify the maximum age of children eligible for this nursery. In contrast, the daycare
provisions for agricultural businesses do not set a limit on the minimum age of children but do specify the maximum age of children as six years (Articles 219 and 220). This provision also requires plantation owners to provide ‘necessary supplies, such as milk and rice’ to all children, and an additional variety of food to children aged two and above (Article 219).

In practice, daycare provisions in the Labour Law are no more than a rhetorical commitment. At the time of my data collection in early 2018 there were only two standardised enterprise daycare centres within garment factories in Cambodia. This situation, the low number of such centres, is mainly due to the absence of a monitoring and law enforcement system that can penalise business enterprises that do not follow the legal provisions. Although data on daycare provision on agricultural plantations are not available, it is likely that the situation is no better than in business enterprise-based daycare in garment factories. In the absence of state-funded and enterprise-based daycare services and the introduction of private preschools, childcare labour and costs were primarily shifted to the family, although the not-for-profit sector (mainly NGOs) for childcare did emerge to partly address the absence of other provision.

6.3.2 The Not-for-profit Sector: Community Preschools

Community preschools are primarily funded by the not-for-profit sector and the family. These preschools usually provide a daily two-hour education session to children aged three to five for five days a week. Community preschools emerged from the first mandate of commune/Sangkat in its first election in 2002. This modality drew on the community-based childcare class model of UNICEF in 2001. The community-based childcare classes were part of UNICEF’s Community Action for Child Rights (also known as Sith Koma) program 2001-2005. At the village level, they aimed to facilitate young mothers and adolescent girls’ participation in 604 literacy classes and simultaneous income-generating activities (Hénard 2016, p. 4). In 2004, the program shifted its focus from the village to commune levels, giving birth to community preschools. According to a UNICEF report written by Hénard (2016), the initial 700 childcare classes were converted into

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81 Interviews: ECE Department representative at MoEYS, Phnom Penh, 02 March 2018; INGO B representative, Phnom Penh, 09 March 2018; NGO D representative, Phnom Penh, 02 May 2018.
82 The Khmer term “Sith Koma” means child rights.
83 Sith Koma program set up 693 childcare classes, caring for 13,946 children (7,459 girls) aged three to five in 117 communes at the village level by 2004 (Hénard 2016, p. 4).
community preschools to be managed by local government (commune/Sangkat councils). These preschools were funded by UNICEF (UNESCO 2006).

The state did not allocate specific budgets to fund community preschools through commune/Sangkat councils but did provide a budget for general community development at this local level. The underlying assumption was that community preschool education should be supported by the not-for-profit sector and the family, but not the state. Community preschools were therefore funded by the not-for-profit sector and the family in different ways.\(^{84}\) One consequence was that many communes/Sangkat did not allocate their budgets for the establishment of community preschools if no financial and technical support was available from local or international NGOs or UN agencies. Estimated total funding from the not-for-profit sector for preschool education amounted to US$27,192,947.00 by the academic year 2004-05 (UNESCO 2006, p. 3). In the first decade of the 2000s, UNICEF poured direct funds into communes/Sangkat through the Ministry of Interior to establish more community preschools (see UNESCO 2006). Although communes/Sangkat allocated some funds for community preschools, it was only a small fund provided for volunteer teachers’ allowances, not for proper preschool buildings; therefore, many preschools were and are located under trees or in teachers’ houses.

The Ministry of Interior (MoI) and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) are the critical national level institutions that provide support to community preschools at the local level. Initially, MoI was responsible for issuing legal frameworks and general guidance for commune/Sangkat councils in relation to the management of community preschools. Since 2008, the National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Development\(^{85}\) has performed MoI’s role in relation to legal frameworks and general guidance, but the Department of Municipality, District, Commune, Sangkat Administration Affairs at the MoI is still responsible for the disbursement of commune/Sangkat funds. MoEYS plays a primary role in aspects of ECCE, such as training to community preschool teachers, curriculum development and learning materials.

\(^{84}\) Interviews: Commune chief, commune B, 07 March 2018; Social policy specialist at UN institution B, Phnom Penh, 01 March 2018; Representative of Ministry B, Phnom Penh, 06 March 2018.

\(^{85}\) In December 2008, the National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Development, which is an inter-ministerial institution, was created by a Royal Decree, number ក្រសុម្រុង/ចិនភារ/១២០៨/១៤២៩.
Along with community preschools governed by the commune/Sangkat, some community preschools were initiated and funded by some NGOs but were managed by a joint management committee—represented by parents, elder people, the village and commune authorities, and NGOs. In the early stages, commune/Sangkat councils are just part of this committee but are expected to own and fund this type of preschool at a later stage. Currently there are 2,955 community preschools (3,075 classes) in Cambodia enrolling 65,422 children aged three to five, or 21 per cent of all enrolled children in this age group (MoEYS 2018a, p. 25).

6.3.3 Assessing Post-socialist Childcare through the Transformative Ethics of Care

Post-socialist childcare did not promote healthy caring relationships and thus was not ‘ethically transformative’ if evaluated against the essential criteria of the ‘transformative ethics of care’. The ‘transformative ethics of care’ calls for solidarity between social groups (Tronto 2013), the autonomy of both carers and care-recipients (Clement 1996), representation (Fraser 2003, 2008, 2013), recognition, reduction and redistribution (Daly 2001; Esquivel 2014; Fraser 1997; Razavi 2007b).

The analysis in the preceding sections indicates that the state problematised childcare in terms of preschool education for most children and residential care for orphaned and vulnerable children, taking a minimal role in these areas. Post-socialist childcare did not therefore enhance solidarity between high-income and low-income families. The children of the former could access private daycare services, but the children of the latter were under familial care, specifically being women's responsibility; hence post-socialist care placed a burden on women in providing daycare, limiting their autonomy. This problem was partly the result of poor representation of women’s needs by women's rights’ organisations and labour unions. The post-socialist childcare discourse was promoted by the state and influenced by the global ECCE discourse and some service delivery non-

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86 Two of the five community preschools targeted by this research fall into this category. One of them is a preschool run by a management committee but funded by a local NGO for three years before it was transferred entirely to this committee but not the Sangkat; however, there is no Sangkat fund to finance this preschool yet. The other is the community childcare centre that was initiated and run by an NGO for many years before being transferred to the commune council in early 2018. This commune council currently funds this centre.

87 The researcher calculated this proportion based on data presented in MoEYS (2018a, p. 25).
government institutions in the country. Prioritising ECCE tends to sideline women’s priorities in daycare services (see Jenson 2009).

There are however some favourable provisions relating to daycare services in the Constitution and the Labour Law. This legal recognition could have been translated into a ‘redistribution’ of daycare from the family to the public arena, taken by the state and business enterprises (Daly 2001; Esquivel 2014; Fraser 1997; Razavi 2007b). It could have enhanced solidarity between social groups and the autonomy of women as family carers, but such provisions were not translated into concrete actions and services. Article 73 of the Constitution specifies care for children and mothers by undertaking to organise some nurseries and attend to women without support who have numerous children under their care. This Article was promising and should have translated into some funding of public daycare centres.

Similarly, the legal provisions in the 1997 Labour Law aim to respond to women’s caring needs by instructing business enterprises to set up daycare services for their female employees. Again, these promising provisions were not adequately enforced in practice, so garment and footwear factory daycare services were not provided for female employees. The absence of public and enterprise-funded daycare services has constrained rather than enhanced women’s choices and autonomy.

6.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has illustrated that the socialist and post-socialist states adopted different childcare discourses, resulting in varied effects on women’s lives. The socialist state adopted a childcare discourse as a means of reducing women’s childcare burden and integrating women into the labour market. The state therefore took steps to translate this discourse into concrete actions, like establishing some nurseries and preschools for caring children, but the daycare services tended to benefit women in urban settings rather than rural areas.

In contrast, the post-socialist state adopted a childcare discourse that covered preschool education, given the legal rhetorical commitment to public and enterprise-funded daycare. Immediately after the socialist regime fell, the post-socialist state initially had no clear policy and concrete plan on childcare, although there are relevant Constitutional provisions on public daycare. Gradually, the state legalised some provisions for business
enterprise-funded daycare in the Labour Law which required the private sector to provide
daycare services to their employees, but these provisions were not enforced. At the same
time, and as part of the neoliberal agenda, the private sector emerged to provide education
and care to children from high-income families in private preschools in this period. The
state then developed a ministerial policy on early childhood education which provided
limited preschool education to some three to five year old children. The absence of public
and enterprise-funded daycare services and the introduction of private preschools have
pushed daycare onto the family and specifically back onto women.

The two different childcare discourses discussed in this chapter enable us to investigate
the discourse prevalent in the current National Childcare Policy, discussed in the next
chapter.
This chapter investigates the childcare discourse in the National Childcare Policy by interrogating both the policy texts and perspectives of policy communities. The primary policy texts scrutinised in this chapter are the National Childcare Policy and its first Action Plan 2014-18. To substantiate and triangulate this discourse analysis, I analyse the perspectives of the different policy communities. I will illustrate that the policy has presented ‘preschool education’ and ‘familial care’ as the solutions to childcare problems. These solutions are shaped by the discourse of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in the post-socialist period and by the Khmer cultural discourse of ‘men as head of the family’ and ‘women as head of the household’. This chapter argues that the childcare policy discourse is not ‘ethically transformative’ because it neither contributes to the redistribution of childcare loads from the family to the state nor enhances solidarity between social groups or women’s autonomy in a way that enables them to participate in the labour market.

The preceding argument and its conclusion derive from a critical analysis which employs the ‘critical approaches to childcare policies’ and the ‘transformative ethics of care’ developed in Chapter 2. The ‘critical approaches to childcare polices’—the methodological tool—enables this chapter to critically scrutinise policy presentations, policy assumptions, policy silences, and policy consequences (Bacchi 1999, 2009; Bacchi & Goodwin 2016) in conjunction with the concept of ‘care diamond’ (Razavi 2007a) to understand care distribution between the four actors. The ‘transformative ethics of care’—the evaluative tool—assesses the childcare policy discourse embedded in the policy and its first action plan. This assessment focuses on solidarity between social groups, women’s autonomy, representation, recognition, reduction, and redistribution.

This chapter is structured into three sections. Section 7.1 investigates the policy representations and their underlying assumptions by critically analysing the division of
care labour and costs between the ‘care diamond’ actors. It identifies the state’s limited role in children’s preschool education, and then investigates the role of preschool education and daycare provided by the not-for-profit and for-profit sectors. This section goes on to analyse the family’s role in daycare and the feminisation of familial care. Section 7.2 scrutinises policy silences on public and enterprise-funded daycare and the current circumstances of those two kinds of daycare. The chapter finally evaluates the policy representations and their underlying assumptions [in Section 7.3] against the ‘transformative ethics of care’, then the chapter ends with a summary.

7.1 Policy Representations and their Underlying Assumptions

The policy representation subsection deconstructs problems apparent in the policy and the policy discourse, which are manifest in the policy’s objectives and strategies and in its first Action Plan 2014-18. This subsection will illustrate that the policy focuses on the state’s limited role in preschool education and its promotion of ‘familial care’. The second subsection on underlying assumptions analyses the division of care labour and costs between the four actors: the state, the market, the not-for-profit sector, and the family.

7.1.1 Policy Representations

Policy visions and objectives contain embedded representations of policy problems and prescribed solutions. These problems and prescribed solutions produce a particular policy discourse to which critical policy scholars advise us to pay attention (Bacchi 1999; Hajer 1993; Shore & Wright 1997b, 2011; Yanow 2000). The National Childcare Policy contains four key components: policy vision, goal and objectives, strategies, and implementing institutions. The policy vision frames its overall scope as ‘care and development’ services for all children, from their conception to six years of age, with a particular focus on ‘disadvantaged, vulnerable and poor children’. This vision is an abstract commitment, but the policy objectives and strategies define a policy frame and prescribe solutions to designated problems, all incorporated into its Action Plan 2014-18.

In its six objectives, the policy has constructed childcare as addressing two problems with a set of solutions and assumptions. In its first two objectives [1 and 2]88, the policy

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88 Objective 1 is to ‘ensure that all women are provided with care, health education services, and nutrition during pregnancy’; Objective 2 is to ‘ensure that all children have their births registered, are provided with regular care and health check-ups, have access to adequate immunisation and nutrition and early learning’ (MoEYS 2010, p. 3).
considers women’s lack of knowledge about their own and children’s health [care, nutrition, immunisation, and early learning] during pregnancy and in postnatal periods as an issue requiring intervention. Objectives 3 and 6\textsuperscript{89} conceptualise children’s ‘physical, cognitive, mental, and emotional development at home and in centres as an issue requiring intervention so that children are prepared for primary school education.

The above problems are linked with a solution proposed in Objective 4\textsuperscript{90}, which aims to equip ‘parents and guardians’ and educators with appropriate ECCD knowledge at home and through preschool/daycare facilities. Equipping parents with ECCD knowledge in the home was translated as home-based childcare programs which educate young mothers to care for their children up to age six. This program created village-based ‘core mothers’ groups in approximately 2,612 villages in 84 per cent of all districts in Cambodia (MoEYS 2019, p. 28) and worked with 83,299 parents [85 per cent are mothers] by 2016/17 (MoEYS 2018a, p. 25). As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, the practices of this program have feminised ‘familial care’. Although the descriptor “core mothers’ groups” is not used in the policy or its Action Plan, it is pervasive among people working on early childhood education and is used in other documents\textsuperscript{91}. This term suggests that the program aims to educate only mothers (not fathers) in ECCD, and it frames ‘what and who’ to include in, and exclude from, the policy (Gasper & Apthorpe 1996).

Equipping educators with ECCD knowledge aims to train technical staff and caregivers/preschool teachers at private, state, and community preschools, but it is not an investment in public daycare. State preschools provide a three-hour session daily for five days a week, while community preschools provide only two-hour sessions daily for five days a week. Private preschools/daycare facilities provide either part-time or full-time education and care services.

The preceding policy representations explicitly prescribe the home-based childcare program and preschool education as avenues for ensuring children’s readiness for primary education.

\textsuperscript{89} Objective 3 is to ‘ensure school readiness of all Cambodian children to start grade 1 at age six’; Objective 6 is to ‘ensure that children from birth to schooling age shall enjoy physical, cognitive, mental and emotional development at both home and centres, providing quality and sustainable health services, nutrition and education’ (MoEYS 2010, p. 3).

\textsuperscript{90} Objective 4 is to ‘ensure that there will be technical staff, caregivers, parents and guardians with appropriate knowledge on early childhood care and development’ (MoEYS 2010, p. 3).

\textsuperscript{91} A report format printed by MoEYS for village-based core mothers’ group leaders.
school education, rather than referring to daycare services in this context. The policy discourse implicitly considers childcare to be ‘preschool education’ and ‘familial care’ rather than daylong childcare services funded by the state and business enterprises. The state’s limited role in preschool education is consonant with the post-socialist childcare discourse [analysed in Chapter 6]. A notion of daycare as a ‘family matter’ is shaped by the pervasive discourse of ‘women as head of the household’ constructed in the civics-morals education textbooks, as analysed in Chapter 5. This critical understanding of these policy representations is gained through our analysis of the ‘policy contexts’ (Gasper & Apthorpe 1996). Constructing the policy discourse around women’s lack of knowledge about ECCD has two problems. First, it tends to discount some traditional good practices of familial care that have existed for centuries. Second, this policy discourse neglects daylong childcare services, largely funded by the state and business enterprises, which are a key provision in the Constitution and the Labour Law, and which could meet the needs of many families, especially lower-income ones.

This policy discourse is underpinned by a set of assumptions implicit in Objective 592, in other objectives, and in policy strategies, as well as explicitly mentioned in the Action Plan 2014-18. These assumptions concern the distribution of care labour, responsibility, and costs between the four ‘care diamond’ actors (Razavi 2007a) discussed in the following subsection.

7.1.2 Policy Assumptions

The above policy discourse enables the state to accept a limited role in children’s preschool education and parental childcare education as it is underpinned by a set of assumptions that distribute care labour and costs to the three other non-state actors. These assumptions are embedded in policy objectives and strategies and in the Action Plan. I now examine the state’s acceptance of limited responsibility and its consequences.

State’s Limited Responsibility for Preschool Education

All types of preschool education and the home-based childcare program benefit only a small proportion of children aged five years and under. These preschool types consist of

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92 Objective 5 is to ‘ensure that all relevant ministries/institutions work together closely to address the issues concerning early childhood care and development’ (MoEYS 2010, p. 3).
state preschools, community preschools, and private preschools. The number of children aged five years and under enrolled in all preschool types and the home-based childcare program is about one quarter [25.4 percent] of the total population in this age group.\textsuperscript{93} State preschools accommodated 66 per cent of all enrolled children aged three to five in the academic year 2016/2017 (see Table 9).\textsuperscript{94}

Table 9: Proportions of Children aged three to five years disaggregated by preschool types in 2016-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preschool Types</th>
<th>No. of Schools</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>No. of Classes</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>No. of Children</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Preschools</td>
<td>4,176</td>
<td>55.04%</td>
<td>6,825</td>
<td>57.93%</td>
<td>203,567</td>
<td>66.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Preschools</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>6.01%</td>
<td>1,882</td>
<td>15.97%</td>
<td>38,215</td>
<td>12.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Preschools</td>
<td>2,955</td>
<td>38.95%</td>
<td>3,075</td>
<td>26.10%</td>
<td>65,422</td>
<td>21.30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textbf{Source:} Author’s compilation drawing on MoEYS (2018)

Of the three types of preschool education, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) invested only in state preschools until 2018. In 2018, MoEYS issued the community preschool standards to evaluate all community preschools run by commune/Sangkat councils as a means of selecting 600\textsuperscript{95} out of 2,955 community preschools to be supported through payment of their teachers’ salaries. Although many policy community respondents in this research considered this initiative a positive step in ECCE in Cambodia, they pointed out a severe problem with the selection criteria. These criteria appeared to prioritise physical buildings over teaching quality in community preschools (see MoEYS 2018b).\textsuperscript{96} One female commune councillor told me that one community preschool in her commune was excluded from the list for evaluation because of its ‘inappropriate’ building rather than the quality of teaching.\textsuperscript{97} This meant that the 500 community preschools, all concrete buildings, which were built by a project run by

\textsuperscript{93} The proportion of children aged zero to five years enrolled in all preschool education types, and the home-based childcare program was only 25.4 per cent in the academic year 2016/17 (MoEYS 2018, p. 24). This percentage rises to 43.10 per cent for children aged three to five years and increases to 68.5 per cent for five year old children (ibid p. 24).

\textsuperscript{94} It was calculated based on data presented in MoEYS (2018, p. 25).

\textsuperscript{95} Prakas No.90/EYS/PK issued in January 2018 by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport.

\textsuperscript{96} Interviews: NGO H representative, Phnom Penh, 26 March 2018; INGO B representative, Phnom Penh, 09 March 2018; senior specialist on early childhood education, Phnom Penh, 26 March 2018.

\textsuperscript{97} Interview, [commune councillor], commune A, 07 March 2018.
MoEYS with the World Bank Fund, would be more likely to meet these criteria (see subsection about this project below). Other preschools with high quality teaching but without physical buildings in good condition were excluded by the selection criteria for the successful 600 standardised preschools. This means that teachers in more than 2,000 community preschools still work today without a sufficient monthly salary. Note, however, that state investment through MoEYS in the selected preschools is still in three-hour preschool education rather than daylong care services.

The state’s limited responsibility in preschool education has two primary problems. The first is the possibly reduced cognitive capacity of children due to the inaccessibility of any type of preschool education. As presented earlier, only about one quarter of all preschool-aged children benefit from all preschool types, including the home-based childcare program, meaning that almost three-quarters [74.6 per cent] are not at preschool and/or do not benefit from the home-based childcare program. Quantitative data analysis reports confirm that children who attended any preschool programs performed significantly better in tests than stay-at-home children (Rao & Pearson 2007; Rao et al. 2012; Zanolini 2011). One report indicated that children who attended state preschools performed better than those who benefited from community preschools and the home-based childcare program (Rao & Pearson 2007). Secondly, the state’s limited responsibility in preschool education neglects daycare services which could be funded by the state or business enterprises [embedded in the Constitution and the Labour Law]. This problem will be further analysed under Section 7.2 Policy Silences. The neglect of such services suggests that children, those in lower-income families in particular, need to be under the care of the family or non-state daycare centres.

The Not-for-Profit and the Private Sectors: Preschool Education and Daycare

One way of reducing the state’s responsibility in childcare is to share this responsibility with the not-for-profit sector—local and international NGOs, UN agencies, multilateral institutions, and the community—and the private sector. The reduction of the state’s

99 These reports investigated the effectiveness of state and community preschools and the home-based childcare program, but not private preschools, on children’s cognitive performances by comparing with the controlled group of children who did not attend any types of preschools.
responsibility in childcare in the form of preschool education and daycare is explicitly referenced in the National Childcare Policy and its first Action Plan. The policy mentions that the state is not exclusively responsible for the provision of ECCD services (see MoEYS 2010), while the Action Plan 2014-18 redistributes childcare responsibility to the not-for-profit sector (see NC-ECCD 2014). In this sector in Cambodia there is a network of ECCD consisting of approximately 38 institutional members: local and international NGOs and UN agencies.\(^\text{100}\) The sector has significantly contributed to ECCD services in three ways: by providing ECCD services to preschool children; through supporting community preschools at the commune level; and by funding MoEYS’ budgets on ECCD services. For the direct provision of ECCD service to children, most of the institutions of the ECCD network provide a two- to three-hour education session daily to preschool children, while a few run daycare centres requiring some financial contributions from children’s parents. To my knowledge, there are approximately ten local and international NGOs that provide daylong childcare services in Cambodia, five targeted in this dissertation.\(^\text{101}\) These NGO daycare centres ease childcare loads of women so that they can participate in the formal employment economy, especially in the textile industry.

Other NGOs provide financial and technical support to community preschools managed by commune/Sangkat councils. This support is in the form of training of preschool teachers, learning materials, physical buildings, morning refreshments for children, and allowances for community preschool teachers. One local NGO \(\text{[Bandos Komar Association]}\), for example, provides such support.\(^\text{102}\) Some NGOs initiated and funded community preschools and/or daycare centres governed by a management committee. In the early stages, commune/Sangkat councillors were just part of this committee. They were expected to own and fund this type of preschool and/or daycare centre at a later stage. Prey Tatouch Community Childcare Centre, for instance, was established by an NGO, Caring for Young Khmer, in 1992. It was run by the NGO from 1992 to 2017 before it was transferred to the Beung Khyang commune council.

\(^{100}\) A list of Network of ECCD prepared by Thai Soda in February 2017.
\(^{101}\) NGO preschool B, NGO preschool C, NGO preschool A, community preschool D, and community preschool A.
\(^{102}\) Interview, [NGO H representative]. Phnom Penh, 26 March 2018.
Key institutions funding MoEYS’ budgets for ECCD services—through state preschools, the home-based childcare program and community preschools—are the World Bank and UNICEF. UNICEF funded community preschools through MoEYS to the tune of US$733,091 from 2011 to 2016 (Hénard 2016, p. 9). Currently, there are 2,955 community preschools in Cambodia, enrolling 21 per cent of the total preschool enrolled cohort (MoEYS 2018, p. 25). The World Bank funded MoEYS in two significant projects. First, from 2008 to 2012, the Education-For-All Fast Track Initiative (FTI project), with 4.09 million US dollars, funded community preschools and the home-based childcare program (the World Bank 2014). The second project was the Cambodia Global Partnership for Education Second Education Support Project (PGE project), offering a total of US$23,870,00 from 2014 to 2017 (the World Bank 2018) to fund state and community preschools. This PGE Project built 500 community preschools in the country, while the commune/Sangkat supported the salaries of their teachers. Only community preschool buildings of the PGE project are standardised and made of concrete, but other community preschools are not. Some are made of wood; others are under trees and in community preschool teachers’ houses.

The state has transferred its daycare provision role to the private sector [private preschools and business enterprises] which grew during the post-socialist regime, as well as to the not-for-profit sector. I argue that this transfer has two primary problems. First, heavy dependence on private preschools and/or daycare centres to care for children in the Action Plan 2014-18 has excluded many children from low socio-economic backgrounds because they cannot afford preschool/daycare fees. On average, a monthly fee for daylong childcare/preschool programs for 3 to 5 year old children is USD 100, but this fee increases to USD 155 for children aged under two (International Finance Corporation 2020, p. 39). This fee is unaffordable for many low socio-economic families, including footwear and garment factory workers. The monthly base salary for textile and footwear factory workers was only USD 182 in 2019 (MoLVT 2019, p. 28). The poverty rate is 13.5 per cent (the World Bank 2019), but it increases to 37.2 per cent if we include people

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103 Interviews: NGO I representative, Phnom Penh, 19 February 2018; NGO H representative, Phnom Penh, 26 March 2018; ECE Department representative at MoEYS, Phnom Penh, 02 March 2018.
who are multi-dimensionally poor (UNDP 2019).104 The unaffordability of preschool/daycare services has pushed daycare responsibility onto the family. The available data shows that 74.6 per cent are under familial care because only 25.4 per cent of children aged zero to five were enrolled at any preschool and daycare institution (MoEYS 2018a, p. 24). Daycare centres generally accept children aged below three, while private preschools generally run full-day education programs to function as educational and daycare institutions. Private preschools usually accept children aged three to six. Data on the total number of childcare centres are not available, but the number of private preschools is 456, accommodating 12.44 per cent of all enrolled children in the country in 2016/17 (MoEYS 2018, p. 25).

The second problem with the transfer of childcare to the private sector is the lack of political will to firmly enforce business enterprise-funded daycare provisions in the Labour Law. Chapter 6 indicated that the state instructs business enterprises employing at least 100 female workers to provide daycare services to their employees, but the state lacks the political will to firmly enforce this law. At the date of my data collection in early 2018 there were only two enterprise-funded daycare centres in garment factories in Cambodia.105 This lack of political will is manifest in two examples. One was the exclusion of the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT) from membership of the National Childcare Committee that oversees the National Childcare Policy. MoLVT is a state institution responsible for monitoring the enforcement of the Labour Law. The second explicit example was the exclusion of enterprise-funded daycare provisions [Article 173 in the Labour Law] from the rationale of the policy and its first Action Plan 2014-18. In this action plan, there is only one relevant activity: conducting ‘feasibility studies to encourage factories and enterprises to organise ECCD services’ (NC-ECCD 2014, p. 15). To implement this activity, the Education Minister and his team paid a visit to a factory-based childcare centre in Siem Reap province, but the MoEYS took no further action.106 These two pieces of evidence suggest that the policy has constructed a childcare discourse, privileging preschools over daycare services. At the

104 The latest data for this poverty rate and multidimensional poverty was collected in 2014. Multidimensional poverty is based on a measurement of individuals’ overlapping deprivations in health, education, and standards of living.
105 Interviews: ECE Department representative at MoEYS, Phnom Penh, 02 March 2018; INGO B representative, Phnom Penh, 09 March 2018; NGO D representative, Phnom Penh, 02 May 2018.
106 Interview, ECE Department representative at Ministry C, Phnom Penh, 02 March 2018.
same time, the policy has promoted ‘familial care’ through its home-based childcare program, as discussed in the following subsection.

The Family and Feminisation of Familial Care

‘Familial care’ is explicitly referenced in the Action Plan 2014-18 that introduces the home-based childcare program\(^{107}\), emphasising the essential role of the family in providing ECCD services at home. The program attempts to bypass the state’s role in daycare provision by educating ‘parents and guardians’ on ECCD (see NC-ECCD 2014). Policymakers and practitioners in practice interpreted the keywords “parents” and “guardians” as “mothers”, so the program established village-based “core mothers’ groups” to equip other mothers with ECCD skills. My fieldwork and the work of Rao and Pearson (2009) indicate that the vast majority of parents engaged in this program are mothers. Likewise, data presented at the Education Congress in early 2018 indicate that all 13,378 mothers’ group leaders are women, while 85 per cent of 83,299 participating parents are women (MoEYS 2018, p. 25). This indicates that the state considers daycare a family matter, specifically as women’s work rather than as the state’s responsibility. My interviews with two core mothers’ group leaders and some mothers [group members] illustrated that these leaders were instructing other mothers about how to care for their children and perform housework.\(^{108}\) The home-based childcare program has thus feminised ‘familial care’. I argue that the program discourse is shaped by the dominant Khmer cultural discourse of ‘men as head of the family’ and ‘women as head of the household’, as discussed in Chapter 5. This cultural discourse promotes the concept of a “good wife” in the traditional code [the Chhab Srey] and that of “family happiness/harmony” as taught in the civics-morals education textbooks. The feminisation of ‘familial care’ in this program reflects Shore and Wright’s (1997b) argument that policies not only ‘codify social norms and values and articulate fundamental organising principles of society’ but also ‘contain implicit (and sometimes explicit) models of

\(^{107}\) The program established a large group of 26 mothers per targeted village. One core mothers’ group leader leads each big group, disseminating ECCD messages to five chiefs of small mothers’ groups. Each chief of a small mothers’ group (also known as core parents) disseminates essential messages to their four members (parents but mostly mothers) monthly.

\(^{108}\) Interviews: Core mothers’ group leader at village A, KraingYov, 13 March 2018; Core mothers’ group leader at village B, KraingYov, 21 March 2018; Chief of a small group at village A, KraingYov, 21 March 2018; Chief of a small group at village B, KraingYov, 1 April 2018.
society’ (p. 7). In Chapter 8, I will look at the practices of this program and how women have dealt with this feminisation of familial care.

7.2 Policy Silences: Public and Enterprise-Funded Daycare

The policy representations—conceptualising childcare as ‘preschool education’ and ‘familial care’—have silenced the state’s and business enterprises’ obligation to provide daycare services. The analysis of policy silences is an analytical component of the ‘critical approaches to childcare policies’ that enables us to investigate what is implicitly designated unproblematic in the policy representations (Bacchi 1999, 2009; Bacchi & Goodwin 2016). The analysis in Chapter 6 allows this chapter to argue that ‘childcare as a means of reducing women’s care responsibility’ is not problematised in the current national childcare policy representations. This unproblematised issue could be conceptualised as daycare services funded by the state and business enterprises in the private sector. As discussed in Chapter 6, there are legal provisions for public daycare services [in the Constitution and the Education Law] and business enterprise-funded daycare services [in the Labour Law].

Analysing the significance and existence of the policy allows us to understand that the state strategically ignores those provisions to avoid their accountability towards its people, especially women. The policy justifies its significance and existence by privileging preschool education above daycare, drawing on both the international and national frameworks on rights to education and/or child protection. Referencing the international framework, the policy alludes to the 2000 Dakar Framework for Action of the Education For All framework to which Cambodia is a signatory.\textsuperscript{109} With regard to the national framework, the policy cites Article 48 of the Constitution which concerns the protection of child rights\textsuperscript{110} but ignores the Constitution’s Article 73, Education Law’s Article 16, and Labour Law’s Article 186, all of which recognise the state’s and business enterprises’ responsibilities towards daycare services. Article 73 of the Constitution and Article 16 of Education Law relate to public daycare services, while Article 186 of the Labour Law concerns business enterprise-funded daycare services.

\textsuperscript{109} The policy alluded to the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000, and a representative of the ECE Department specified this framework during an interview on 02 March 2018.

\textsuperscript{110} See the details of this article in the Constitutive Contexts of the Policy.
The state ignores these legal provisions on daycare deliberately. My interviews with state and non-state institutions support this view. When asked about the negligence of the state towards daycare services during my interview with him, a representative of the ECE Department at the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports (MoEYS) responded thus: ‘We cannot list all articles in the Constitution or laws, so we highlighted only the main ones. There are many relevant articles, but we selected only some of them.’

He added that the policy vision clearly indicates the scope of the policy, and childcare centres within garment factories are within that scope. He highlighted the relevance of Article 16 of the Education Law in this Policy. Interestingly, a policymaker who moderated the National Education Congress mentioned Article 73 of the Constitution as an important provision for childcare in Cambodia. This suggests that policymakers are aware of childcare provisions in relevant laws but strategically decide not to emphasise them in policy to avoid their obligations. A representative of an international NGO confirms this: ‘If all-important legal childcare provisions had been detailed in the policy, it would oblige the government to work on it. If they cannot achieve it, this is the point that can be attacked by opposition people or other civil society organisations. That is why they put things more broadly.’

I now turn to an examination of the current situation in public daycare services and enterprise-funded childcare in Cambodia.

7.2.1 Public Daycare Services provided by Preschools and State Institutions

Chapter 6 indicated that public daycare services were available during the socialist regime in the 1980s as part of the discourse on childcare ‘as a means to reduce women’s care burden’. In contrast, the current policy conceptualises childcare as ‘preschool education’ and ‘familial care’, so there is no public childcare per se, although some state preschools function as public childcare centres. State preschools generally provide a three-hour education session either in the morning or afternoon for children aged three to five. The implicit purpose of this preschool early childhood education is to prepare children for primary school education but it may not reduce childcare responsibilities undertaken by the family, especially mothers.

111 Interview, [ECE Department representative at Ministry C], Phnom Penh, 02 March 2018.
112 Ibid.
113 Observation, [the National Education Congress], Phnom Penh, 19 March 2018.
114 Interview, [INGO B representative], Phnom Penh, 09 March 2018.
A few detached state preschools, however, do provide daycare services as a response to parents’ needs. The total number of state preschools providing daylong childcare services is unknown, or the data is unavailable from the annual education congress report of MoEYS or from annual education reports prepared by each provincial education office. The unavailability of such data arises from preschools not being required to report daylong childcare services to their capital-provincial Department of Education, Youth and Sport or the ECE Department at MoEYS. One representative of the Municipality Department of Education, Youth and Sport in Phnom Penh, responsible for producing the Annual Education Report, was unaware of such daylong childcare services. Full-day childcare service may escape policymakers’ attention.

Two teachers at state preschool A indicated however that at least four of the 18 detached preschools in Phnom Penh provide such services in addition to their daily three-hour educational sessions. State preschool A, for instance, targeted by this research, provides daylong childcare services in addition to their daily three-hour sessions; however, the parents who need such services are required to pay USD 23 per month for children’s lunches. State preschool A provided daylong childcare services to 144 (80 girls) of the 425 children enrolled in this preschool in the academic year 2017/18.

Besides detached state preschools like state preschool A, one community preschool also provides daylong childcare services to children from low-income families. This centre, established in 1992 by an NGO, Caring for Young Khmer, was run by this NGO from 1992 to 2017 before it was transferred to the Beung Khyang commune council. This centre was evaluated by MoEYS as part of its community preschool standards program, qualifying as a standardised community preschool in 2018, so its teachers’ salaries have been paid by MoEYS since then. In early 2018, this standardised community preschool cared for 30 children (17 girls) aged three to five from

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115 Interview, [ECE Department representative at Ministry C], Phnom Penh, 02 March 2018.
116 Interview, [Phnom Penh Education Department], Phnom Penh, 03 May 2018.
117 Interview, [state preschool A teachers], Phnom Penh, 27 February 2018.
118 In Phnom Penh, 18 of 146 state preschools are detached preschools (PPMDoEYS 2017).
119 Interview, [state preschool A teachers], Phnom Penh, 27 February 2018.
120 Interview, [state preschool A director], Phnom Penh, 27 February 2018.
low socio-economic backgrounds. Parents of each child are required to pay 10 US dollars per month.

In addition to daycare services provided by state and community preschools, I found a daycare initiative at Ministry A. Ministry A trained their staff to be carers for these small children, with staff members not required to pay fees for access to this service. This centre cared for about ten children aged two to three years.

While Ministry A’s daycare centre benefits only its staff members, preschool daycare services like state preschool A and community preschool A benefit many low-income families. All eight interviewees representing six households who use these two services explained that such daylong services allowed them to work full-time. Investment in public daycare may therefore benefit 37.2 per cent of Cambodian people who are multidimensionally poor (UNDP 2019) and cannot afford private daycare, as well as support the larger working population.

7.2.2 Business Enterprise-Funded daycare Services

Legal provisions relating to enterprise-based daycare within the Labour Law should have been translated into childcare services being funded by business enterprises. Unfortunately, the state seems to ignore these provisions, failing to include them in the National Childcare Policy and its Action Plan 2014-18. This failure has meant almost no enterprise-funded daycare centres in Cambodian enterprises, particularly garment and footwear factories. Output from these garment and footwear enterprises made up 72 per cent of Cambodia’s total merchandise exports in 2017, while the number of textile factories increased from 626 in 2016 to 661 in 2017 (ILO and IFC 2018, p. 8). All factories employed 641,461 workers in 2017, the vast majority (88 per cent) women (Ministry of Commerce cited in ILO and IFC 2018, p. 8). The monthly base salary for textile and footwear factory workers increased noticeably after the 2013 National Election, increasing from only USD 80 in 2013 to USD 182 in 2019 (MoLVT 2019, p.

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121 Interviews: Vuthy [father at state preschool A], Phnom Penh, 12 March 2018; Thearon [father at state preschool A], Phnom Penh, 18 March 2018; Vantha [mother at state preschool A], Phnom Penh, 23 April 2018; Sereyrath [mother at state preschool A], Phnom Penh, 18 March 2018; Socheat [father at community preschool A], Beung Khyang, 18 March 2018; Poly [father at community preschool A], Beung Khyang, 18 March 2018; Rina [mother at community preschool A], Beung Khyang, 18 March 2018; Mariyan [mother at community preschool A], Beung Khyang, 18 March 2018.

122 This figure was drawn from a sample of 464 factories with the total of 602,607 workers.
The low monthly salary forced workers to work overtime, so an average monthly salary for factory workers, including other benefits and overtime wages, was about 242.8 USD in 2017 (ILO and IFC 2018, p. 10). This low salary is compounded by the unavailability of enterprise-funded childcare centres to care for their children. The 2017 shadow CEDAW report echoed the unavailability of garment factory-funded daycare as one of the problems (NGO-CEDAW 2017).

Although national statistical data on the number of enterprise-funded childcare centres are not available, anecdotal evidence suggests that the actual number is low. According to one respondent from an INGO B that has been working on enterprise-based daycare, the number of enterprise-based daycare centres in the garment and footwear sector is less than five. A report by ILO and IFC (2018) indicated that 74.72 per cent of 464 factories did not have 'functioning and accessible' nursing rooms, or 'functioning' nurseries at or near the workplace in 2018 (p. 51). The figure had increased from 72.90 per cent and 71.65 per cent in 2016 and 2017 respectively (ibid p. 51). If the figure for nursing rooms is separated from that of nurseries then the proportion of factories with no nurseries may jump to almost 100 per cent. Interviews with various actors who have been working on enterprise-based daycare services confirm this figure. MoEYS and PE&D recognise only one enterprise-based childcare centre in Siem Reap province as a standardised one. An international NGO [INGO B] acknowledges that there is another childcare centre within an M&V factory that needs improvement. A representative of an NGO working with various workers’ unions [NGO D] confirmed that there is only one childcare centre among almost 60 factories with which NGO D is working. She added that this childcare centre is in poor condition; its roof and walls are zinc, so it is unattractive to workers because of the heat. About ten children with an average age of 1.5 use this nursery. There seem to be only two good enterprise-based childcare centres in Cambodia,

123 Interview, [INGO B representative], Phnom Penh, 09 March 2018.
124 Though the researcher’s interviews with various institutions, including an NGO Network on ECCD in Cambodia, PE&D seems to be the only NGO that has a project on childcare within garment factories.
125 Interviews: ECE Department representative at Ministry C, Phnom Penh, 02 March 2018; INGO B representative, Phnom Penh, 09 March 2018.
126 Interview, [INGO B representative], Phnom Penh, 09 March 2018.
127 Interview, [NGO D representative], Phnom Penh, 02 May 2018. NGO D is working with almost 60 factories in Phnom Penh, Kandal, Kampong Speu, and Kampong Som provinces.
128 Interview, [NGO D representative], Phnom Penh, 02 May 2018.
129 Ibid.
therefore, although the Labour Law requires all business enterprises employing at least 100 women to provide childcare centres for their employees. Available data collected for the Cambodia Inter-Censal Economic Survey 2015 indicated that there were then 861 establishments/enterprises employing at least 100 workers (National Institute of Statistics 2015). The majority (421) of these enterprises were in the manufacturing sector in which women comprise 68.5 per cent of the labour force (National Institute of Statistics 2015, p. 12). The unavailability of business enterprise-funded daycare in the manufacturing sector has negatively affected female workers.

The Labour Law stipulates that enterprises must pay childcare costs to their workers if there is no enterprise-based nursery onsite; however, this provision is not enforced in practice. According to ILO and IFC (2018), only 25 per cent of 464 factories sampled did not comply with the legal provisions of enterprise-based daycare or pay childcare costs to female workers (p. 33). This figure is mystifying. As indicated above, the vast majority of factories have not established enterprise-based daycare centres, so this figure (25 per cent) may refer to the payment of childcare costs rather than the existence of daycare centres. In practice, employers appear to equate milk allowances with childcare costs to compensate for the non-existence of daycare centres. According to a representative of NGO D, most factories provide around 5 to 7 US dollars monthly for 12 months, and a small number give around 10 to 20 US dollars monthly. One factory provides 20 US dollars per child per month for the first 18 months of age following tough negotiations between unions and the factory.

Available evidence indicates workers’ dissatisfaction with this small milk allowance and/or their failed demands for enterprise-funded daycare. Understanding these problems is made possible through at least two possibly interconnected sources: collective bargaining agreements and workers’ complaints. First, the examination of ‘collective bargaining agreements’ between unions and employers enables us to understand worker’s demands. In 2004, enterprise-funded daycare was among many other priorities demanded by worker unions in 17 of the 22 ‘collective bargaining agreements’ (CBAs) between

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130 This figure is based on the author’s calculation of the number of establishments employing at least 100 workers in each subsector.
131 Interview, [NGO D representative], Phnom Penh, 02 May 2018.
132 ibid.
133 ibid.
unions and employers (Chiu 2007). The priorities demanded in the CBAs are not always provided by employers. In this case, workers have no choice but to take their complaints to the Arbitration Council, a tripartite, ‘quasi-judicial’ authority established by a Prakas [Ministerial Decree] in 2004 in accordance with the Labour Law. The Arbitration Council’s primary role is to ‘resolve labour disputes through conciliation and arbitration’ (the Arbitration Council 2019). It is important to note that other unions with no CBAs with employers can also file complaints to the Arbitration Council. Examining workers’ complaints to the Arbitration Council is the second way to understand workers’ dissatisfaction with insufficient milk allowances and/or failed demands for daycare. Although I cannot track all related union complaints due to technical errors in the online database of the Arbitration Council, at least 11 complaints between 2004 and 2012 demanded that factories set up daycare centres for employees, while three complaints required factories to increase their milk allowances. Drawing on Article 186 in the Labour Law, the Arbitration Council ruled out any requests for an increase in milk allowances while demanding that all six factories establish nurseries within their businesses. While the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT), rather than the Arbitration Council, has the power to enforce the Labour Law, the Council’s decisions have not been adequately enforced; hence the situation of enterprise-based nurseries has not yet improved, as indicated above.

Others, such as Planete Enfants and Developpement (PE&D), saw the significance of such services. PE&D sought cooperation from MoEYS and MoLVT to pilot an enterprise-based Social Services Project from 2017 to 2019. With additional funding from the World Bank, PE&D increased its budget to provide daycare services in 15

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134 The Prakas No.99 MOSALVY dated April 2004 in the Arbitration Council indicates that its members (arbitrators) need to be appointed annually by three parties—The Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, Labour Unions (Federation), and Employers’ Association—with equal numbers, meaning that each party appoints 10 of the total 30 members.

135 Cases: No.63/04, No.81/09, No. 63/11-Jocam Footwear, No. 56/11-Star Knitting, No.53/04, No.56/04, No.68/04, No.83/04, No.94/04, No.99/04, and No.107/04.

136 These cases demand an additional specific amount of money per month for the absence of daycare services: Case No.04/12-USA Fully Field: demanding for 5US$ on top of 5US$, Case No.89/12-USA Filly Field: demanding for 10US$, Case No.107/04: demanding for 10US$.

137 A sub-decree No.52ANK.BK issued in April 2005 assigned the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training to do so.

138 Interview, [INGO B representative], Phnom Penh, 09 March 2018.
factories. The pilot project is a positive milestone in provision of enterprise-based childcare in Cambodia because it has two primary concerns: early childhood development and the reduction of women’s childcare burdens to enable participation in the labour market.

The primary problem with the project lies in its explicit assumption that daycare services are a means to worker’s productivity rather than an employee’s entitlement. The explicit intentions in the establishment of daycare centres are to improve workers’ welfare [including feeling less stressed and more comfortable], contribute to child development, increase workers’ productivity, and lower the staff turn-over rate. The assumption of a link between daycare services and workers’ productivity is problematic. Donath (2000) argues that care services should be viewed as an end in themselves, not as a ‘means to producing commodities’ (p. 116). If an inter-ministerial Prakas on enterprise-based nurseries is to be promulgated to instruct these pilot enterprises and others to establish their daycare centres, then the project assumptions about the purposes of daycare centres must be valid, as determined in continuous evaluation by a World Bank team. In my view, if the project evaluation finds those assumptions valid, the state may decide to lobby business enterprises to establish enterprise-funded daycare rather than enforce legal provisions on them. If the project assumptions are not found to be valid, however, the state can keep on ignoring the enforcement of daycare provisions in the Labour Law.

**7.3 Assessing the Policy through the Transformative Ethics of Care**

In this chapter, I evaluate the policy representations and their underlying assumptions against the six ethical criteria of the transformative ethics of care: recognition, reduction, redistribution, representation, solidarity, and women’s autonomy, as theorised in Chapter

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139 Ibid.
140 Interviews: ECE Department representative at Ministry C, Phnom Penh, 02 March 2018; INGO B representative, Phnom Penh, 09 March 2018; Representative of NGO D, Phnom Penh, 02 May 2018.
141 These key aspects are stated in a summary of a project document.
142 Interview, [INGO B representative], Phnom Penh, 09 March 2018; Observation and informal conversation with a staff member of the World Bank during the consultative workshop, Phnom Penh, 27 March 2018.
143 It is a Khmer legal term, which is a ministerial legal framework.
144 Interview, [INGO B representative], Phnom Penh, 09 March 2018; Observation and informal conversation with a staff member of the World Bank during the consultative workshop, Phnom Penh, 27 March 2018.
2. **Recognition** is the acknowledgement of the nature and role of care work in human development (Esquivel 2014) as well as care work as a precondition for other commodity productions, and thus it is crucial to prioritise care work in policy (Elson 2004; Folbre 1994; Razavi & Staab 2012b). This recognition of care work roles needs to challenge traditional gender norms while requiring the 'legitimisation of care work' (Daly 2001) in policy and legal documents.

The nature and role of care work are not recognised in the National Childcare Policy (and its first Action Plan) but are coded in some legislation in a way that reproduces gendered social norms of care. Paragraph 3 in Article 36 of the Constitution recognises the equal value of housework and the remunerated work performed outside the home. This Constitutional recognition of housework is translated into Article 980 of the Civil Code of Cambodia that instructs family income-earners to share their common property with their spouses upon marriage. Point 2 in paragraph 2 of Article 980 of this code, for instance, states that ‘Each spouse shall have the right to receive one half of the common property in addition to his or her separate property…’. Paragraph 3 in the same article also states that ‘Housework shall be deemed to have the same value as work outside the house’. The Constitution also recognises the difficulty faced by women without any support who have many children under their care (Article 73). Article 186 in the Labour Law also recognises unpaid care work undertaken by women by instructing business enterprises employing at least 100 female employees to set up daycare centres within or adjacent to their premises or to pay private daycare centres to which their employees send their children. These legal provisions recognise the value of the housework and childcare undertaken by women as being equal to paid work, presumably undertaken by men. The primary problem with these legal provisions however is that they fail to recognise men’s role in childcare and housework; they implicitly reinforce the discourse of men as breadwinners and women as family carers.

**Reduction** is associated with efforts aimed at reducing the drudgery and costs of care work and improving the health and wellbeing of carers (Esquivel 2014). The policy discourse of ‘preschool education’ and the home-based childcare program has not reduced women’s care labour to an extent that has enabled women to participate in paid employment;

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145 The Civil Code of Cambodia was promulgated in 2007. Refer page 352.
However, my interviews with female respondents indicate that these limited childcare sessions have given them some child-free time to undertake domestic chores like shopping or cooking. Preschool education sessions and the home-based childcare program may benefit children cognitively, and may prepare them for primary education, but they do not facilitate women’s engagement in the labour market.

The core argument of the transformative ethics of care relates to the redistribution of care labour and costs from the family to the public sphere, and between genders in the family (Daly 2001; Esquivel 2014; Fraser 1997; Razavi 2007b). This redistribution needs to be geared towards the enhancement of the autonomy of women as family carers (Clement 1996) and towards solidarity between social groups (Tronto 2013). This chapter has illustrated that unpaid care work is not recognised in policy representations and assumptions in that the policy excludes public daycare and enterprise-funded daycare (see Section 7.2); indeed, it has revitalised the discourse of ‘men as head of the family and the breadwinner’ and ‘women as head of the household’ by feminising ‘familial care’. The policy discourse and its silences do not therefore lead to the redistribution of care labour and costs from the family to the public arena so as to enhance women’s autonomy.

The policy discourse and silences are connected to the absence of representation of care-recipients’ voices (Fraser 2005, 2008, 2013) in the policy process. This absence indicates dominant relationships—between policymakers and policy subjects—as the voices of the care-recipient group are not heard. This chapter has demonstrated that the National Childcare Policy and its first Action Plan have created disparities rather than solidarity because of the absence of care-receivers’ representation in the policy process. My interviews with various respondents from a federation of labour unions, local and international NGOs, and UN agencies show that childcare service institutions rather than advocacy organisations participated in the development process of the National Childcare Policy and its first Action Plan 2014-18. Service institutions tend not to challenge the state in their approach to daycare services. Advocacy organisations, which tend to question the state’s accountability for daycare services, were either unaware of, or not invited to participate in, the National Childcare Policy process. NGO D, for instance, which had been actively engaged in negotiation with garment and footwear factories on
enterprise-funded daycare was not aware of the process. It excluded not only non-state actors like NGO D, but also state institutions like the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT), as this ministry is not one of the 11 members of the National Childcare Committee. The absence of a plurality of voices (care-receivers' representation) may have predisposed policy representations towards ‘preschool education’ and ‘familial care’, silencing the views of key daycare services. The policy discourse and silences have created inequality rather than solidarity between social groups, as well as reduced rather than enhanced women’s autonomy. Section 7.1 discusses the disparities between children from low-income and high-income families in their access to education and care services. Higher-income families can afford to send their children to private preschools and daycare centres, but lower-income family children are under familial care, primarily women's responsibility, and/or accessing minimal state and community preschool daycare services.

The above assessment indicates that the National Childcare Policy and its First Action Plan are far from being ‘ethically transformative’; instead, they have reproduced gendered social norms by feminising ‘familial care’ through their home-based childcare program.

7.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has illustrated that the National Childcare Policy and its first Action Plan 2014-18 have conceptualised childcare as ‘preschool education’ and ‘familial care’. The rationale of this policy discourse is that such care prepares children for primary education; it is not concerned with facilitating women’s participation in economic activity or reducing the burden of childcare on women and redistributing it to men. This policy discourse has been shaped by the Khmer cultural discourse of ‘men as head of the family and breadwinner’ and ‘women as head of the household’, as analysed in Chapter 5. The policy discourse has silenced public and enterprise-funded daycare services, and the debate about redistribution of care labour to men. The policy discourse and policy silences have pushed daycare onto the family, especially women as young mothers and grandmothers.

146 Interview, [NGO D representative], Phnom Penh, 02 May 2018.
Assessing the National Childcare Policy (and its first Action Plan) through the ‘transformative ethics of care’ indicates that the policy is not ‘ethically transformative’ as it does not create healthy caring relationships within society. It does not redistribute care labour and costs from the family to the public sphere, represented by the state and business enterprises, or between genders in the family. Without such a redistribution, it has reduced women’s autonomy as family carers; they are burdened with household chores and childcare and thus have lost their opportunity to engage in income-producing activities. At the societal level, the policy has created disparities rather than solidarity between policymakers and high-income families in their social class, and the care-receivers’ group in low-income families. The former can afford to send their children to private preschool and/or daycare services, but the latter cannot afford such services, leaving their children under ‘familial care’ and/or in minimal state and community preschool daycare services. Public and enterprise-funded daycare therefore needs to be problematised as part of the policy discourse in order to transform care labour and costs, as well as create healthy caring relationships between groups of carers and care recipients. The redistribution of care labour and responsibility from women to men is also required in order to enhance women’s autonomy.

This chapter and the preceding one investigated childcare policy discourses. The next two chapters will analyse policy practices and the consequences of the policy discourses and policy silences on women’s and men’s lives, and on reconfigurations of childcare practices. Chapter 8 investigates the practices of the home-based childcare program and their consequences on young mothers’ lives, how these young mothers have dealt with ‘familial care’, and how grandmothers have engaged in ‘familial care’.
Chapter 8
Feminisation of Familial Care and Female Kinship Support
Young Mothers as Reflexive Subjects

This chapter critically investigates how the home-based childcare program has feminised ‘familial care’ and how women have dealt with this phenomenon. The chapter examines kinship support in ‘familial care’ in the absence of public and enterprise-funded daycare but with utilisation of other daycare services. The chapter also investigates how some young mothers have challenged the Khmer cultural discourse on care and the feminisation of ‘familial care’ by negotiating with their spouses.

This chapter reveals that the Khmer cultural discourse on care and its embeddedness in social institutions and interactions [elaborated in Chapter 5] have shaped the policy texts and practices of the National Childcare Policy by feminising ‘familial care’ in the home-based childcare program. As a consequence, policy practices have reinforced the Khmer cultural discourse on childcare. The reinforcement of this discourse has shaped the thoughts and practices of some young mothers and many grandmothers in undertaking ‘familial care’. Grandmothers undertake ‘familial care’ through co-residence, living in adjacent residences, or from remote residences. Some young mothers have left paid work when becoming pregnant or on a baby’s arrival where neither affordable daycare services nor support from female kin [usually grandmothers] has been available. Some young mothers are nevertheless able to negotiate around the Khmer cultural discourse and the feminisation of ‘familial care’, with the enabling factors being their high level of education and their capacity to earn an income in the formal economy.

This argument draws on the analyses of ‘social care’ (Daly & Lewis 2000), keywords or labels (Gasper & Apthorpe 1996; Wood 1985), and explicitly sexist and/or positive and benign language [texts and verbal statements] that mask gender inequality (Kleinman 2007). The concept of ‘social care’ enables this research to examine childcare division between genders and across generations within the family by scrutinising gendered social
norms of care, as well as the state’s role in either reinforcing or challenging such norms. To analyse the state’s role around Khmer cultural norms of childcare, I analyse ‘keywords’/‘labels’ of the policy texts, the series of five booklets of the home-based childcare program, and the ‘spoken words’/verbal statements of policymakers and practitioners. Deconstructing these keywords enables us to understand the influences of a policy frame—what and who is included and excluded—which is crucial in analysing policy practices (Gasper & Apthorpe 1996). The inclusion and exclusion of particular groups or policy subjects in policy practices have led to subjectification and ‘lived’ effects on those subjects (Bacchi 2009; Bacchi & Goodwin 2016). In other words, policy practices produce a particular kind of subject, constructed by policy representations. Embedding this analysis within feminist research methodology, I pay particular attention to keywords/labels and respondents’ verbal statements which are explicitly sexist, and/or ‘positive and benign’, that mask the inequitable gender division of care (Kleinman 2007). Deconstructing textual keywords and verbal statements enables this chapter to understand how the home-based childcare program has feminised ‘familial care’ and given rise to its potential subjectification and lived effects. Some women do not accept their subject position imposed by the keywords and verbal statements in policy practices and representations. The concept of ‘reflexive subjects’ (Shore & Wright 2011) is useful in this analysis, enabling this research to investigate how younger women have resisted subjectification imposed by cultural and policy discourses around childcare. Women’s resistance can be illustrated through an analysis of their actual daily practice of childcare in relation to their spouses. The chapter examines some of the enabling factors in this resistance.

These analytical elements contribute to the structure of this chapter around three primary themes. First, the chapter investigates the feminisation of ‘familial care’ by the home-based childcare program, scrutinising keywords in the policy texts and booklets of the home-based childcare program, as well as verbal statements of people involved in this program. Second, the chapter examines cultural and policy subjectification and its lived effects on Khmer women through the analysis of two primary patterns of Khmer caring femininities. The third theme examines how female kinship support plays a vital role in ‘familial care’. This chapter ends with a summary and discussion section which
summarises the findings and points to some research contributions. Before analysing the three themes, this chapter briefly sketches the home-based program’s background.

8.1 Brief Background

The home-based childcare program is an integral part of the National Childcare Policy adopted in 2010 and its Action Plan 2014-18. Like the preschool education discourse discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, this program model was technically influenced and financially supported by the not-for-profit sector. The program was initially piloted by an international non-government organisation (LNGO), Save the Children Cambodia, in Kampong Chhnang province in the academic year 1999/2000 (see also Hénard 2016).147 Save the Children engaged the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) in this pilot project by inviting the Education Minister for a field visit, after which MoEYS recognised the model in their Ministerial Policy on Early Childhood Education (ECE), in 2000.148 From 2008 to 2012, the World Bank’s Education for All Fast Track Initiative project (FTI project) funded MoEYS to run the home-based childcare program in some provinces, targeting children from birth to five (IEG Review Team 2014). The United Nations International Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and Save the Children Cambodia also funded the program (see Hénard 2016). Subsequently, the World Bank continued to fund MoEYS to run the program from 2014 to 2017 through the Cambodia Global Partnership for Education project (PGE project) (IEG Review Team 2018).

The primary purpose of the program was to equip families with Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) knowledge to better care for their children (NC-ECCD 2014). The key concept of ECCD prioritises child development from conception until primary school age. This prioritisation is justified as representing an investment for ‘national economic productivity and competitiveness’ (NC-ECCD 2014, p. 5). The underlying assumption is that families, particularly women, are responsible for the care of their children who will contribute to the future economic competitiveness of the country. The program therefore established village-based core mothers’ groups149 [2,460 core mothers (about 85%) of 2,894 core parents (MoEYS 2018a, p. 25)]—especially in

147 Interview, [Representative of INGO A], Phnom Penh, 09 March 2018.
148 Ibid.
149 The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport recently called these groups as core parents’ groups, although its original name as core mothers’ group is on the actual form for reporting groups’ activities.
villages where preschools were not available—to educate members in ECCD knowledge. All people engaging in these groups were volunteers, with some groups’ leaders being women at the village authority. MoEYS invited group leaders to attend training on ECCD for a total of 35 days before they disseminated vital messages to the chiefs of core mothers' groups. This training in 2009 during the FTI project focused on the contents of a series of five booklets on ECCD. These booklets were officially published late in 2016 by Prakas No. 1012. EYS. PK. These booklets encompass: (1) Child Rights, Pregnancy Care, Postnatal Care, and Nutrition; (2) Play and Child Development, Management of Child Characteristics, and Child Protection; (3) Communication and Child Development, General Dangers and their Protection, and Health Services and Access to these services; (4) Children with Disabilities and Prompt Interventions, School Readiness, and Non-Communicable Diseases and their Protection; (5) and General Diseases and their Protection, and Hygienic Environment.

This research puts the spotlight on how the program structure and content messages, core mothers’ leaders, and chiefs of mothers’ groups have reinforced the identity of women as the family carers, rather than men. Unpacking this identity construction is made possible through an analysis of an information-sharing process within core mothers’ groups, between these groups, and to other mothers in the villages. The process is that each core mother’s group leader disseminates key childcare messages to five chiefs of small mothers’ groups in one meeting. Each chief of a small mothers’ group then disseminates these vital messages in a monthly meeting to her four members. In practice, each core mothers’ group leader sometimes asks her five chiefs of small groups to invite their members and others to attend a large meeting, and then she and/or a health worker from a health centre at the commune level disseminate key ECCD messages to the attendants. At other times, the core mothers' group leaders disseminate vital messages to the five chiefs of small groups. The chiefs of small groups may not organise a meeting with their members as a group but talk to each member individually in their spare time. There may have been regular meetings of each core mothers’ group and/or small groups at the beginning of the program in 2009, but my fieldwork shows that regular meetings

150 The two leaders of core mothers’ groups that I interviewed are village chiefs.
151 Interviews: Chakriya [mother at village A], KraingYov, 13 March 2018; Mana [Mother at village A], KraingYov, 21 March 2018; Core mothers’ group leader at village A, KraingYov, 13 March 2018.
may not have continued; however, my research is not intended to evaluate whether core mothers’ group leaders and chiefs of mothers' groups organised dissemination meetings on ECCD messages regularly or not.

Each core mothers’ group leader reports their activities regularly to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) through their respective commune council. This information is finally compiled in a report for the Annual Education Congress organised by MoEYS. It was reported, for instance, that the program is currently operational in 2,836 of 14,119 villages in 801 of 1,646 communes in 170 of 197 districts, but the number of provinces was not shown in this report (MoEYS 2018a, p. 25). Data presented in the 2018 Education Congress report indicated that 13,378 core mothers’ group leaders managed 2,894 core parents, and that these core parents disseminated ECCD messages to 83,299 parents in the academic year 2016/17 (MoEYS 2018a, p. 25).

8.2 The Feminisation of Familial Care through Policy Texts and Practices

Recalling Khmer cultural discourse on gender roles investigated in Chapter 5, the discourse of ‘women as head of the household’ has its currency in Khmer society, underpinning the concept of ‘family happiness/harmony’ as taught in civics-morals textbooks. This discourse has its roots in the concept of a ‘good wife’ in the Chbab Srey, which assigned women to providing ‘familial care’ to all family members. Chapter 5 also explained that the discourse of ‘women as head of the household’ has been reinforced in social institutions such as Khmer wedding ceremony rituals, in social interactions with peers, and between older and younger generations. I argue that this Khmer cultural discourse on gender roles has shaped the texts and practices of the National Childcare Policy and its home-based childcare program in such a way as to feminise ‘familial care’. This assertion is consonant with Gasper and Apthorpe’s (1996) argument for the analysis of policy ‘contexts’ as part of policy ‘texts’.

152 My observation and interviews with these village mothers’ group leaders and chiefs of mothers’ groups suggest that they may not have organised regular dissemination meetings with their members recently because many of chiefs of mothers’ groups and group mothers are busy with their daily livelihoods, especially those who are garment factory workers. Many of them leave home for the factory jobs in the early morning and arrive home in the late afternoon from Monday to Saturday.

153 One possible reason that the program does not cover all villages and communes is because it prioritises villages and communes where preschools are not available.
The home-based childcare program has been feminised through two linked features: the program structure and its placing of caring responsibility onto mothers rather than fathers. First, Chapter 7 illustrated that the National Childcare Policy has shaped childcare to address the so-called insufficient knowledge of ‘parents and guardians’ on ECCD and women’s lack of knowledge about health education services, nutrition and care during pregnancy and postnatal care. The policy therefore aims to equip ‘parents’ or ‘guardians’ and women with ‘appropriate knowledge and practices’ so that they can provide their children with ‘essential care and early learning opportunities’ (NC-ECCD 2014, p. 14). While both gender-neutral terms, ‘parents’ and ‘guardians’, and a gender-biased term, ‘women’, are employed in the policy and its first Action plan 2014-18, in practice policymakers and practitioners associate these gender-neutral terms only with mothers or women.

Consequently, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) provided instructions to commune councils to establish village-based core mothers’ groups rather than core parents’ groups. These core mothers’ groups target mothers rather than fathers in their ECCD education meetings. All village-based core mothers’ groups are under a ‘Working Group for Early Childhood Education or Parents’ Education’ at the commune level.154 The providers of ECCD education under each working group are village-based core mothers’ groups. These core mothers’ groups are governed by a five-member management team and a five-member technical team at the commune level.155

A core mothers’ group leader manages five chiefs of small mothers’ groups, with each chief managing four mothers; therefore, there are five small mothers’ groups within a village-based core mothers’ group, making a total of 26 women (see Diagram 2). At the commune level, a Commune Women and Children Focal Person is responsible for the general coordination of these village-based core mothers’ groups; she is the one who appoints village-based core mothers’ group leaders. The leaders hold permanent

154 In a notebook of a core mothers’ group leader dated 11 March 2009, the name ‘Working Groups for Early Childhood Education’ is used, but the name ‘Working Groups on Parents’ Education’ is used on a printed form with some typed letters and space to fill out to report to the MoEYS. These documents were obtained by the researcher from a core mothers’ group leader at village A on 13 March 2018.

155 Each management team comprises a commune chief, a commune women and children focal point, a village chief, a village member, and a senior. Each technical team consists of one chief in the District Office of Education, Youth and Sports (also known as District Education Office), one chief of District Section on Early Childhood Education, one chief of a primary schools’ cluster, a primary school director, and one chief of the commune health centre.
positions, but chiefs of mothers’ groups and their members keep changing. A primary criterion for being chiefs and members of the groups is the age of the women’s children. Their children need to be five years old or below, so whenever their children turn six the leaders drop them from the list and recruit new chiefs or members.

**Diagram 2: Structure of Core Mothers’ Groups**

![Diagram of Core Mothers' Groups]

**Source:** Author’s Interviews with Core Mothers’ Groups and Printed Form

A core mothers’ group leader at village A remarked that the Commune Women and Children Focal Person had selected her as the leader. When asked about the feminisation of the program, the Commune Women and Children Focal Person responded that the ministry [MoEYS] advised her to establish core mothers’ groups, not core fathers’ groups. She added her reasoning: ‘I think the reason that the ministry instructed us to establish only mothers’ groups for the home-based childcare program is because fathers go to work far from home. Mothers are emotionally and physically closer to their children than fathers.’ A representative of the ECE Department at MoEYS acknowledged problems with the feminisation of the program structure.

When asked why they were focusing only on mothers in the home-based childcare program, a senior specialist on early childhood education in Cambodia (hereafter

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156 Interview, [Leader of Core Mothers’ Group at village A], KraingYov, 13 March 2018.
157 Interview, [Commune Councillor], Commune A, 13 March 2018.
158 Interview, [ECE Department representative at Ministry C], Phnom Penh, 02 March 2018.
159 Interview, [senior specialist on early childhood care and education], Phnom Penh, 26 March 2018.
referred to by her pseudonym, Sampha,) replied that the program was influenced by Save the Children; no fathers joined the home-based childcare program initiated by Save the Children, so they established core mothers’ groups and named these groups as such. Similarly, one respondent from INGO A remarked that Save the Children had lobbied MoEYS to include the home-based childcare program as part of the Ministerial Policy on Early Childhood Education in 2000 and the National Childcare Policy in 2010.\(^{160}\) This person claimed however that MoEYS was responsible, especially the Provincial Department of Education, Youth and Sports (PDoEYS), for feminising the program structure.\(^{161}\) In her words, ‘PDoEYS named these core groups core mothers’ groups because it is shorter and more straightforward than naming them core parents’ groups\(^ {162}\). It is also linked with our Khmer culture that childcare is women's responsibility, and fathers go out to earn money, so they named core mothers’ groups in short.'\(^ {163}\)

The second aspect of this feminisation is that the program instils a caring responsibility into mothers rather than fathers. This is articulated through keywords in the five-series booklets and the spoken words of core mothers' group leaders and chiefs of mothers' groups during their dissemination meetings. After reviewing the five-series booklets in the Khmer language, I found that while the words ‘women' and 'mothers' are used in some lessons, the word ‘parents’ appears in others. The words “mothers” and “women” are found under sections target participants, brainstorming technique, and key content messages of some lessons.\(^ {164}\) Table 10 below analyses gender-biased, gender-transformative, and gender-neutral keywords in the three sections of each booklet: target participants, brainstorming technique, and key content messages.

\(^{160}\) Interview, [specialist on early childhood care and education at INGO A], Phnom Penh, 09 March 2018.

\(^{161}\) Ibid.

\(^{162}\) In the Khmer language, the word “parents” is not used, but we say “fathers and mothers”.

\(^{163}\) Interview, [specialist on early childhood care and education], Phnom Penh, 09 March 2018.

\(^{164}\) Each lesson of each book series contains different components of the training process, but the most common components are target participants, brainstorming techniques, and key messages or contents. The target participants tell trainers who should attend training. Brainstorming techniques instruct trainers to ask questions about a particular topic before giving an answer. A brainstorming technique is a common technique found in these lessons. Key messages or contents are usually included in the conclusion of the lessons.
### Table 10: Keyword Analysis in the Booklets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Booklet Title</th>
<th>Gender-biased Word (Mother or Women)</th>
<th>Gender-Transformative Word (Father or Uncle)</th>
<th>Gender-Neutral Word (Parent or You)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Target Participants</td>
<td>Brainstorming Techniques</td>
<td>Contents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Children’s Rights, Pregnancy Care, Postnatal Care, and Nutrition</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Play and Child Development, Child Characteristics Management, and Child Protection</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Communication and Child Development, General Dangers and their Protection, and Health Services and Access to these services</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Children with Disabilities and Prompt Interventions, School Readiness, and Non-Communicable Diseases and their Protection</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>General Diseases and their Protection, and Hygienic Environment</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Author’s Analysis of the Five Series of Booklets
As illustrated in Table 10 above, the words “mothers” and “women” appear in both target group and brainstorming techniques in four lessons [Conception and Pregnancy Care, Contraception and its Benefits, Nutrition, and Micronutrients] in the first booklet of the series. The word ‘mothers’ also appears in a brainstorming technique in three lessons [Cognitive Development, Development in five Areas, and How to Manage Child Behaviour] in the second booklet. One brainstorming question in a lesson titled “Development in Five Areas”, for instance, asks mothers to describe their children’s behaviour in relation to bowing their head to older people, thanking people, or bending while walking in front of the elderly.

In the third booklet, the word ‘mothers’ also appears in a lesson entitled “Communication and Language Development of Children Aged Three to under Six years”. This lesson focuses on ten tasks, many of which represent indirect care, namely, doing the shopping, rice cooking, water boiling, doing the dishes, rice pounding, rubbish sweeping, taking a bath, participation in any social ceremony, hosting visitors, and going to bed. In the fourth booklet, the word ‘mothers’ is used in both the brainstorming technique and content of a lesson entitled “Children with Disabilities, Weakness and Care”. In the conclusion of this lesson, the booklet concludes in the following way:

…core parents’ leaders need to instruct the chiefs of mothers’ groups to observe child development of their members as mothers and to tell the members of mothers’ groups to observe the development of their children. The chief of mothers' groups needs to inform other mothers who are not part of our mothers’ groups to observe the development of their own children…. (My translation from the Khmer language).

This lesson conclusion suggests that policymakers and practitioners assume that women are primarily responsible for caring for their children. The home-based childcare program was designed to reinforce this assumption.

When scrutinising the key terms “father” or “uncle” in these booklets, I found them in three small pieces of text in the first and second booklets out of the series of five (see Table 10 above). In the first booklet, the lesson entitled "postpartum care" instructs core parents' group leaders and the chiefs of small mothers' groups to read key messages on fathers’ responsibilities in postpartum care to participating mothers. Embedding these

\[165\] In some contexts, the word “uncle” refers to the word “father” so that I scrutinised these two terms in the booklets.
messages in this lesson serves to reproduce sociocultural norms in Khmer society. The lesson indicates that the leaders and chiefs of small mothers' groups should ask these mothers to pass these messages on to their husbands. While these key messages about men's responsibilities in postpartum care are positive, my interviews with all women who are core mothers’ group leaders, chiefs of small groups, and mothers in the home-based childcare program indicate that none of them has ever told their husbands about these responsibilities.

The gender-neutral word ‘parents’ also appears in the booklets. The word ‘parents’ also appears in lessons in the first four booklets other than the lessons mentioned above that contain gender-biased words. The variation of keywords in these booklets suggests that some critical aspects of childcare are assumed to be women's responsibility, while others may be thought to be gender-neutral. Although the gender-neutral term "parents" and the keyword "father" are used in some parts of the booklets, it is not possible for the education material of the home-based childcare program to move away from the feminisation of ‘familial childcare’; the program was clearly designed to target mothers rather than fathers.

The preceding analysis indicates that the booklets series for the home-based childcare program has constructed women’s identity as mothers primarily responsible for childcare within the home. To investigate participant interpretations of the keywords ‘mothers’, ‘women’, ‘parents’, and ‘father’ in this booklet series, I interviewed two core mothers’ group participants: two leaders, three chiefs of small mothers’ groups, and a member, as well as their spouses. According to these interviewees, it is evident that the program sought to instil caring responsibilities into women rather than men.

When asked who was expected to care for children according to the lessons disseminated, a core mothers’ group leader responded that it is mothers as there were only mothers’ groups for the home-based childcare program.166 Her account is as follows:

I invited only mothers to come as they are the ones who directly care for children. They [trainers from MoEYS] did not tell me to invite fathers to join. Sometimes we talked about hygiene problems. I only advised mothers, who are close to their children, but not fathers as they do not stay at home or do not care for children (Leader of Core Mothers’ Group at village A, KraingYov, 13 March 2018).

166 Interview, [leader of Core Mothers’ Group at village A], KraingYov, 13 March 2018.
Similarly, a chief of a small mothers’ group confirmed that ‘Childcare is the responsibility of women as men go out to earn money’. Another chief of a small mothers’ group confirmed that ‘In the meetings, we discussed the role of mothers in caring for children. We did not discuss a father’s role in childcare.’ Sampha explained that instilling caring responsibility into mothers rather than fathers was influenced by the name of core mothers’ groups. She postulates that more fathers might join the groups if the name of the core groups were changed to core parents’ groups.

I also asked core mothers’ group leaders whether they ever tried to invite men to attend any meetings or ever talked about a father’s role in childcare. A core mothers’ group leader responded that ‘I have never wanted to try, but I talked to them individually’. Similarly, another core mothers’ group leader responded that men do not have enough time to attend a meeting because they earn money far from home, ‘so we [mothers] need to care for our children’. I further asked them whether they advised participating mothers to disseminate key messages to their husbands. These core mothers’ group leaders responded that they did not advise their members to do so.

The preceding analysis vividly illustrates that the structure of the home-based childcare program has feminised childcare, seeking to instil caring responsibility into mothers rather than into fathers. Through the analysis of labels or keywords in policy within its sociocultural context, I argue that the feminisation of the program structure is shaped by interpretations of the neutral term “parents or guardians” in the National Childcare Policy and its Action Plan 2014-18, and a specific guideline to establish mothers’ core groups [as instructed by MoEYS during the five-series training on ECCD]. Consequently, mothers were predominantly assigned by the program structure to disseminate childcare knowledge to other mothers.

Through a critical analysis of spoken keywords of core mothers’ group leaders, chiefs of small mothers’ groups, and keywords in the series of five booklets, I argue that the program has instilled a caring responsibility into mothers rather than fathers. Such instilling of attitudes and the feminised program structure tend to ignore fathers’ caring

167 Interview, Chakriya [mother at Village A], KraingYov, 13 March 2018.
168 Interview, Mana [mother at Village A], KraingYov, 21 March 2018.
169 Interview, [senior specialist on early childhood care and education], Phnom Penh, 26 March 2018.
170 Interview, [leader of Core Mothers’ Group at village A], KraingYov, 13 March 2018.
171 Interview, [leader of Core Mothers’ Group at village B], KraingYov, 21 March 2018.
role. This process of feminising childcare is consonant with the concept of ‘family happiness/harmony’ taught through the civics-morals textbooks in grades 7 and 8, as discussed in Chapter 5.

The state has thus reinforced rather than challenged the Khmer cultural discourse on care with its home-based childcare program targeting women rather than men and seeking to instil caring responsibility into women rather than men. It has reinforced the Khmer cultural discourse of women as the family carer and men as the breadwinner, reflecting Bacchi and Goodwin’s (2016) argument that policy is ‘creative’ or ‘productive’ in generating the identity of policy subjects. Similarly, the reinforcement of Khmer cultural discourse resonates with Shore and Wright’s (1997b) argument that ‘Not only do policies codify social norms and values, and articulate fundamental organising principles of society, they also contain implicit (and sometimes explicit) models of society’ (p. 7). The codification of such sociocultural norms in this policy and its program makes it difficult to challenge the cycle of feminisation of childcare in Cambodia.

A representative of the ECE Department at MoEYS ostensibly acknowledged the above problem and explained to me that MoEYS had changed the name of ‘core mothers’ to ‘core parents’ in the last 2 or 3 three years after he learned of the possible consequences of such keywords at a meeting in Sweden. He explained: ‘Before we called them core mothers’ groups, but we now call them core parents’ groups because of the context of gender.’ He added that, in the context of talking about gender, ‘many people focus only on women’s participation. When it comes to childcare, this does not mean that only women should care for their children, but men should engage in care.’ Despite this, the problem of using gender-biased terms remains; for instance, the printed forms reflecting the feminised structure of these groups, used by core mothers’ group leaders to report their progress, have not yet been revised. Similarly, core mothers’ group leadership positions remain unchanged, as these are permanent. All core mothers’ group leaders are women. There were 13,378 leaders in the academic year 2016/17 (MoEYS 2018a, p. 25).

172 Interview, [ECE Department representative at Ministry C], Phnom Penh, 02 March 2018.
173 Interview, [ECE Department representative at Ministry C], Phnom Penh, 02 March 2018.
174 Interview, [ECE Department representative at Ministry C], Phnom Penh, 02 March 2018.
175 Based on a document on the structure of the working group on parents’ education 2016-17, prepared by Leader of Core Mothers’ Group at village A and obtained by the researcher on 13 March 2018.
with the number dropping slightly to 12,674 in 2017/18 (MoEYS 2019, p. 28). It is highly unlikely that the group structure implemented by MoEYS will change.

Nevertheless, in recognition of the problems deriving from the feminised structure of the program, some NGOs working on the home-based childcare program have gradually attempted to change how the program operates. Plan International-Cambodia and its local partner, Bandos Komar Association (BKA), have taken the lead in these attempts. They implemented a three-year pilot project between 2018 and 2020 to establish only core fathers’ groups in parallel with existing core mothers’ groups in some indigenous villages in Ratanakiri province. At the date of my interview with BKA, they had not yet managed to establish these groups but they planned to establish 24 of them.\textsuperscript{176} MoEYS reported in their Education Congress report in 2019 that some development partners had established 25 core fathers’ groups (MoEYS 2019, p. 29). I assume that MoEYS refers to these 25 groups as the work of BKA supported by the Plan International-Cambodia.\textsuperscript{177} The establishment of these core fathers’ groups can be considered a form of recalibration of the dominant model of core mother’s groups.

One ministry [Ministry A] also critiqued the feminisation of the home-based childcare program. A Ministry A representative told me in an interview that ‘If we disseminate this information [childcare knowledge] to only mothers, only mothers are responsible for this care work. That is why we have encouraged more men to participate in our events [positive parenting training]. This is what our working group is determined to do.’\textsuperscript{178} This critique and the establishment of core fathers’ groups indicate that there are contradictory discourses on the role of mothers and fathers in childcare in Cambodia, although the feminising childcare discourse may yet prevail.

The analyses mentioned above illustrate that the sociocultural context has shaped the policy texts and practices, and that these texts and practices have feminised ‘familial

\textsuperscript{176} Interview, [NGO H representative], Phnom Penh, 26 March 2018.
\textsuperscript{177} During my interview with a representative of INGO C, she told me that Plan International-Cambodia usually reports the organisational achievements to MoEYS for the Annual Congress.
\textsuperscript{178} Interview, [Deputy department director at Ministry A], Phnom Penh, 09 March 2018. Initially, with financial support from UNICEF and in cooperation with the commune councils, MoWA had an ECCD project educating parents to engage in ECCD and/or send their children to community preschools. However, UNICEF shifted their funding to MoEYS and the Ministry of Interior (MoI) around 2011/12. With financial support from UNICEF, MoWA is implementing a positive parenting program as part of the National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women 2014-18 from 2017 to 2021.
care’, although some attempts at reversing the feminisation process have emerged. To what extent the feminisation of childcare has successfully shaped women’s thoughts and practices in childcare is investigated in the next section. The section will specifically examine the conditions under which the feminisation of familial care has, or has not, successfully shaped women’s practices in childcare.

8.3 Policy consequences: Patterns of Khmer Women’s Caring Femininities

The analysis of this section is anchored in arguments about the ‘policy consequences’ of ‘critical approaches to childcare policies’ theorised in Chapter 2. The first argument I make is that policy silences [indirect consequences] are as influential as problematised issues, including keywords in policy representations [direct consequences resulting from policy discourse], in shaping policy subjects’ lived experiences. Second, people’s lived experiences are a result of the interplay between the cultural and policy discourses rather than the latter discourse alone. The Cambodian state has reproduced such a discourse by feminising the home-based childcare program, as critically analysed in the preceding section. This section therefore investigates the ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ consequences of the policy and cultural discourses around women’s roles in childcare. In this investigation, I also examine resistant practices central to the third argument about policy consequences. This examination employs Shore and Wright’s (2011) concept of ‘reflexive subjects’.

The section reveals two primary patterns of caring femininities in Cambodia. In the dominant pattern, the majority of women are primarily responsible for ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care with little or no engagement/support from their spouses. In the second pattern, a minority receive some support from their spouses in the caring role. I argue that younger mothers’ high level of education and their capacity to earn an income in the formal economy play a critical role in enabling them to negotiate with their spouses to share childcare and housework in this second pattern.

To analyse the patterns of caring femininities, I focus on the qualitative nuances of women’s configurations of caring practices in relation to their employment, their level of education, accessibility of daycare services, and kinship support. Table 11 below provides an overview of women’s employment under each pattern of caring femininity.
Table 11: Analysis of Patterns of Caring Femininities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women’s Employment</th>
<th>Women with No or Minimal Support from Spouse</th>
<th>Women with Significant Support from Spouse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed Mothers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpaid Working Mothers(^{179})</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid Homeworking Mothers(^{180})</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Author’s Analysis of Research Respondent Data

### 8.3.1 Dominant Pattern: Caring Femininity with No or Minimal Support

The first dominant pattern includes a large group (77 per cent, equivalent to 20 women)\(^{181}\) who primarily undertake childcare and housework tasks with *no or minimal support* from their husbands in some of the caring tasks. Minimal participation refers to a situation in which men do not perceive ‘direct’ and/or ‘indirect’ care as their responsibility but irregularly engage in one or a combination of caring tasks. Within ‘direct care’, men tend to engage more in care that can be reconciled with their ‘traditional’ masculine identity—I consider this as ‘masculine direct care’ that is similar to ‘masculine care’ conceptualised by Brandth and Kvande (1998)—rather than care that is traditionally undertaken by women. Khmer men’s typical masculine identity derives from driving, public representation of family, education, and going around the village during their free time. Their ‘masculine direct care’ is apparent in their educating children at home [including assisting them in homework], dropping children off and/or picking them up from preschool, meeting with children’s teachers, and taking children for a walk around the village. Other ‘direct care’ that these women’s spouses minimally engage in is one or a combination of spoon-feeding their children, bathing their children, putting children to sleep, playing with children during their free time, and taking children to hospital.

A closer look within the dominant pattern illustrates that almost all women (90 per cent)\(^{182}\) reported receiving minimal support from their husbands in ‘direct care’, with just 10 per cent of them reporting that they received minimal support from their spouses in

\(^{179}\) They are referred to as housewives (see Subsection: Respondents’ Demographic Information in Chapter 4).

\(^{180}\) These mothers perform both housework and other different kinds of paid work at home (see Subsection: Respondents’ Demographic Information in Chapter 4).

\(^{181}\) 20 out of 26 women

\(^{182}\) It is equivalent to 18 of 20 women.
‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care. These figures suggest that men tend not to engage in ‘indirect care’ [housework and cooking] as they do not consider it part of their identity, but they do minimally engage in ‘direct care’. An account from a mother at NGO preschool B confirms this tendency:

He usually does not do the cooking and housework as he thinks that it is women’s work. However, he sometimes also helps me wash dishes, although I usually do the dishes after meals. When I am busy, and I tell him that I am tired, and he helps me wash clothes with his hands. At times, he does not do as requested by responding that we just keep it for the next day. I do not say anything, but I do it myself without waiting for the next day. Usually, I do what needs to be done without waiting for the next day (Bora at NGO preschool B, Phnom Penh, 27 February 2018).

This quotation clearly illustrates that some men do not consider ‘indirect care’ as part of their identity and thus neglect this care work, giving women no choice but to do the work themselves.

When critically analysing 20 women's occupations in this dominant pattern, we found that 75 per cent [15 women]\(^{183}\) of the women are unpaid working mothers and/or paid homeworking mothers (see Table 11). Only 25 per cent\(^ {184}\) of women are employed mothers in the garment and/or footwear factories or in hospitals. The analysis of women’s employment trajectories indicates that almost half (7 of 15 women equivalent to 47 per cent) of the unpaid working and/or paid homeworking mothers were former garment factory workers. They quit their jobs due to the unavailability of public or factory-based daycare, and because of poor working conditions for pregnant women at these garment factories.

Daycare services and female kinship support are essential for women in paid home employment, particularly those who have two or three children in this dominant pattern. 40 per cent\(^ {185}\) of women (equivalent to 8 of 20 women) in this dominant pattern accessed daycare services provided by community preschools, private schools, and NGOs (see Table 12). Half (4 women) of these eight women are employed mothers, and the other half (4 women) are unpaid working and/or paid homeworking mothers (see Table 13). These figures mean that while almost all employed mothers (4 of 5) accessed daycare

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\(^{183}\) It is equivalent to 15 of 20 women.

\(^{184}\) It is equivalent to 5 of 20 women.

\(^{185}\) It is equivalent to 8 of 20 women.
services, only 4 of 15 (27 per cent) of unpaid working and/or paid homeworking mothers accessed such services.

Table 12: Analysis of Mothers’ Support within both Patterns of Caring Femininities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis of Daycare and Kinship Support</th>
<th>Women with No or Minimal Support (20 in total)</th>
<th>Women with Significant Support (6 in total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessing any type of daycare services(^{186})</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having female kinship support</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not accessing daycare services or having kinship support</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Author’s Analysis of Research Respondent Data

Although the four women, unpaid working and/or paid homeworking mothers, accessed daycare services, such services did not enable them to participate in the formal employment economy because they spent a significant amount of time caring for their two to three children without any kinship support. These women had made a constrained choice to be homeworkers so that they had sufficient time to care for their children and generate some income at the same time. The mobility of their husbands in earning an income far from home also pushed these women to spend more time with their children, although some husbands shared significant childcare and household tasks when they were at home.

Table 13: Analysis of Caring Femininities with No or Minimal Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis of Daycare and Kinship Support</th>
<th>Paid Working Mothers (5 in total)</th>
<th>Unpaid working and/or Paid Homeworking Mothers (15 in total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessing Daycare Services</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having female Kinship Support</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not accessing daycare services or having kinship support</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Author’s Analysis of Research Respondent Data

As indicated in Table 13, only 40 per cent (8 of 20) of women in this pattern received support from their female kin [their mothers] in childcare and/or housework. Half (4

\(^{186}\) Either state, community, private, or NGO preschools.
women) of them are employed mothers, and the rest are unpaid-working mothers and/or unpaid workers/paid homeworkers. These figures indicate that only 27 per cent (4 of 15) of unpaid working and/or paid homeworking mothers received such kinship support, while 80 per cent (4 of 5) of employed mothers received such support.

The above figures suggest that female kinship support in familial care and daycare services are essential factors in allowing women [particularly those who have more than one child] to work in the formal employment economy when there is no or minimal support from their spouses in childcare and/or housework. The primary question is whether there is a significant difference between the employed women and the paid homeworking women in their negotiations with their spouses about childcare and/or housework. In other words, have employed women questioned their spouses about men’s negligence of care work?

Following a critical examination of all women’s accounts, my research suggests that neither women as unpaid working and/or paid-homeworking mothers nor employed mothers tend to critically question their husbands’ minimal engagement in childcare and/or housework as long as their spouses engage in income-generating activities. Generally, this suggests that Khmer women accept their spouses’ negligence of care work as long as men are engaged in their breadwinning role, even though these men are not the sole family providers.

The following accounts of mothers illustrate their acceptance of minimal support from their husbands in childcare and/housework. In one instance a paid homeworking mother said that ‘We [husband and wife] help each other like bathing our children. He does it when I am busy, and I do it when he is busy. When he is not at home, I am responsible for everything. I do not request him to do anything as he is tired from his work.’ A similar account from another unpaid working mother asserts that ‘I do not earn any money but just take care of my children and do the cooking’. Similarly, the account of employed mothers below reflects a typical pattern of minimal engagement from men in childcare and housework, except for the two extreme cases:

Mostly, my husband does not spend time with or play with children, although he has time. His character is like that. Occasionally, he was playing with all children.

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187 Interview, Chakriya [mother at village A], KraingYov, 13 March 2018.
188 Interview, Mana [mother at village A], KraingYov, 21 March 2018.
when he had a good feeling. Concerning homework, he sometimes helps our children do it, but other times I do it by myself. For dropping or picking up our children, he picks them up if he works in the morning shift and drops them at school if he works in the afternoon shift; otherwise, my mother-in-law walks them to and from school. However, he takes my children for a walk alone without me as I do not like going for a walk. When our children were sick, I phoned him to bring our children to the hospital. When he could not take leave, I brought my children to the hospital alone (Bora at NGO preschool B, Phnom Penh, 27 February 2018).

A critical investigation of all women’s life trajectories tends to suggest that women’s capacity to earn an income in the formal economy earns them some respect from their spouses and inclines the spouses to share some care work tasks. Men tend not to share childcare and housework tasks at all if their spouses do not earn any income but are unpaid working mothers. These women’s life trajectories indicate that when they were factory workers their spouses tended to share some of the childcare and housework load. The following accounts of three homemaking women confirm this trend:

When I was working, I cooked lunch for the family if my husband was not at home. However, he cooked lunch for us at my request when he was at home. I usually arrived home at 4.30 pm, so I also cooked dinner for the family. Nevertheless, I had overtime work every day, except for Saturday and Sunday during a busy period, so my husband cooked simple food for my children. Typically, my children wanted to wait for me to have dinner together if I came home at 6.00 pm, but if I arrived home late at 8.00 pm, my children ate dinner with their daddy before me (Kanha at community preschool E, KraingYov, 29 March 2019).

I stopped working at a factory due to my pregnancy. I cook lunch and dinner for the family, and he [husband] does not cook. I get up at 5.00 am; I cook rice at 9.00 am and eat lunch at 10.00 am. He [husband] eats breakfast at a café shop. Nevertheless, when I was working at a factory, my husband cooked rice and food for our dinner every day. When I arrived home, I just took a bath and ate dinner. He cooked different kinds of broth and did some frying. At times, he bought food for our dinner. He started cooking since I started working at a factory (Rumduol at community preschool C, KraingYov, 29 March 2018).

I do not earn any money but do the housework, such as cooking and washing clothes. I am responsible for everything at home. I cook breakfast for him [husband] and prepare the house and go to the market to do the shopping once a day. From the market, I cook food and wait for him from work. I prepare lunch for him to eat. During my free time, I am lying down on my hammock. I do the dishes, and he never cares for this housework since I stopped working. However, when I was working, he shared housework a lot. I left my working place at 5.00 pm, and my husband gave me a ride home [on his motorbike]. He helped me wash clothes at night twice a week. This was after our dinner. We took a turn to do the
housework during that time. If I was washing clothes, he was cooking food and the other way around (Bopha at state preschool B, SvayRolum, 04 April 2018).

The above narratives clearly show that women’s paid employment earns them some respect from their spouses such that these men tend to engage in some care work. Among 26 interviews, there were two extreme cases where women (as employed mothers) were primarily responsible for childcare and/or housework tasks with regular female kinship support, with the husbands undertaking no care tasks at all. In the first case, the wife had challenged the husband’s negligence of childcare and/or housework and attempted to divorce him.189 In the second case, the wife did not challenge her husband’s negligence of childcare and/or housework, but her husband abandoned her.190

8.3.2 Minor Pattern: Caring Femininity with Significant Support

The minor pattern is represented by a small group (23%)191 of women who received significant support from their husbands in both ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care. Significant support here refers to a situation where men consider some childcare and/or housework tasks as part of their daily routine of work, and thus undertake them regularly. There are two sub-patterns in this minor pattern. Four women (67 per cent) reported that they received significant support from their spouses in both ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care, while the other two women (33 per cent) reported that they received significant support in ‘direct care’ rather than ‘indirect care’ from their husbands.

These figures suggest that men tend to significantly engage both in ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care when they have positive perceptions of care work. In contrast, the spouses of women in the dominant pattern of Khmer caring femininities tend to engage minimally in ‘direct care’, especially ‘masculine care’, rather than ‘indirect care’ as they do not have a positive perception of care work. These two trends of men’s engagement in care—reported by these women—tend to be consistent with men’s accounts in Chapter 9.

Although all six women received significant spousal support in childcare and/or housework, not all of them were able to be in paid employment in the formal sector. Of these six women, five are employed mothers, and the remaining one a paid homeworking

189 Interview, Rina [mother at community preschool A], Beung Khyang, 18 March 2018.
190 Interview, Chanthy [mother at NGO preschool A], Phnom Penh, 09 April 2018.
191 Six out of 26 women.
mother. Four of these six women, one of whom is the paid homeworking mother, access daycare services. The reason that this mother is not able to participate in the formal paid employment sector is the number of her children; she has three children with no female kinship support. She quit her garment factory job and started a small business at home. Three of the four women who access daycare services are employed mothers; two of the six women are employed mothers who receive childcare support from their female kin. Another employed mother has a live-in paid carer. As indicated in Table 14, in total, three of the five employed mothers access daycare services and have other childcare support, either kinship support or home-based paid care.

Table 14: Analysis of Women’s Support within the Minor Pattern of Caring Femininities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Analysis</th>
<th>Employed Mothers (5 in total)</th>
<th>Paid Homeworking Mothers (1 in total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessing Daycare Services</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having Kinship Support</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home-based Paid Carers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s Analysis of Research Respondent Data

The preceding analysis indicates that men’s significant engagement in childcare and/or housework, female kinship support and/or home-based paid care, and daycare services are crucial options for women seeking paid employment in the formal economy, especially for those who have two children or more. Hiring a live-in paid carer to undertake both ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care is a common practice among better-off families in Cambodia; however, only two of the 43 households in this research have a live-in paid carer. One of the two households with a live-in paid carer is a ‘less-caring’ man’s household, while the other is a ‘more-caring’ man’s household. The working conditions of the home-based paid carer in the ‘less-caring’ man’s household appears to be similar to that of domestic workers in general in Cambodia, conditions which are poor.192 Domestic workers routinely work more than 12 hours per day (Tous, Veasna & Cormaci 2010, p. 8). They are not recognised by the Labour Law and thus not eligible for the

192 Although national statistics for domestic workers are not available, the Ministry of Women's Affairs estimated that the total number of domestic workers is more than 240,000, the largest majority of whom are women (Mom 2019). A survey of child domestic workers conducted in 2003 in Phnom Penh estimates that there were 27,950 child domestic workers [aged 7-17 years old] in Phnom Penh (National Institute of Statistics 2004, p. 28).
National Social Security Fund\textsuperscript{193} (see Oxfam 2019). Nevertheless, the working conditions of the live-in paid carer in the ‘more-caring’ man’s household seems to be much better than that of the one in the ‘less-caring’ man’s household; the ‘more-caring’ man shares the childcare and housework load with the paid carer alongside his wife who is employed in the formal economy.

Employed mothers who receive significant support from their spouses in childcare and/or housework tend to negotiate with their husbands to achieve this sharing of some domestic tasks. This trend contrasts with the dominant pattern of women tending not to question their spouses’ minimal engagement in childcare and/or housework. Four of the five employed women are in Phnom Penh or on the outskirts of Phnom Penh, and the same number had obtained at least a high school education. The life history of Sinath, who is a newly appointed chief of a small mothers’ group at village B, is illustrative of women’s negotiations with their spouses on care work.

Sinath was a stay-at-home mother living with her parents from the time she was pregnant until her son was three years and three months old. Her husband migrated to work as a security officer at a University in Phnom Penh, but he came home every fortnight while Sinath was an unpaid worker. Sinath went back to work approximately six months before my interview with her. When asked about care work within the family, she told me that her husband did not participate in this work at all before she started her work; however, her husband started engaging in childcare and washing clothes at the weekend after she started her work as he then came home every weekend rather than fortnightly. Her husband’s engagement in care work was an outcome of her negotiation with him about his previous neglect of care work and his binge drinking. She explained to me in her own words that ‘It is a result of my talking or negotiation [with him] as well. I talked to him when he was not drunk. I told him that we could not go forward or stay together anymore if we disagreed all the time. I added that if he did not change, I would not stay with him. He said that he would change, and I am noticing this change now.’\textsuperscript{194}

Women’s accounts in this minor pattern of Khmer caring femininities illustrate that employment in the formal economy and the high level of education of these mothers have

\textsuperscript{193} This fund is a form of social health insurance paid by employers for their workers (Kwon & Keo 2019).

\textsuperscript{194} Interview, Sinath [mother at village B], KraingYov, 01 April 2018.
enabled them to negotiate with their spouses to engage more in care work. Similarly, women’s narratives in the dominant pattern of Khmer caring femininities suggest that women’s employment in the formal economy earns them some respect from their spouses, inclining them to participate in care. It is logical to conclude therefore that employment in the formal economy and/or the level of education of young mothers play significant roles in earning respect from their spouses and/or enabling these mothers to negotiate with their spouses regarding the sharing of some ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care responsibilities. This insight offers some understanding of the contributing factors to younger Khmer women being able to negotiate with traditional social norms. Drawing on her qualitative study in Cambodia, Brickell (2011b) asserts that urban women, particularly younger and middle-aged ones, tend to challenge and negotiate traditional gender norms. My research suggests that it is not just urban location, but women’s ability to earn an income in the formal employment economy and their level of education which play significant roles in this matter.

In my view, women’s negotiations with their spouses can be considered as a practice of gentle resistance, if not a direct challenge, to the Khmer cultural discourse on childcare and feminisation of ‘familial care’ by policy practices. Reflecting on these women’s accounts suggests that they are “reflexive subjects” (Shore & Wright 2011), not passive or docile women, as they do not merely accept their subject position. According to Connell’s (1995, 2000, 2005, 2009) femininity theory, these women are reconfiguring their ‘gender practice’ of childcare to involve negotiation with their spouses about engaging more in childcare, in contrast to their counterparts in the first dominant pattern.

The analysis in this section demonstrates that daycare services and other forms of support—female kinship support and home-based paid care—are the enabling factors for women who have two or more children and wish to be in paid employment. In cases where women have only one child, spousal support and daycare services are sufficient for enabling women to be in paid employment. The crucial difference between women who have no or minimal spousal support and those who have significant spousal support in care work is that the former are more burdened with care work than the latter. The experiences of women who have significant spousal support indicate that their employment in the formal economy and high level of education tend to enable them to renegotiate the feminisation of ‘familial care’ constructed by the Khmer cultural discourse on childcare and the
practices of the National Childcare Policy in Cambodia. This is a practice of women’s resistance in relation to childcare. As kinship support is as crucial as daycare services, the next section will investigate how kinship support operates in Khmer society.

8.4 Policy Consequences: Female Kinship Support in Direct and Indirect Care

Kinship support in childcare is one crucial factor in keeping women involved in the formal employment economy, so the primary purpose of this section is to examine how kinship support operates in Khmer society. I undertake a microanalysis of 52 interviews with men and women at the household-level policy community representing 43 households. This microanalysis draws on the concept of ‘social care’ (Daly & Lewis 2000).

To analyse these households, we need to understand various family types, beyond the nuclear family. Social anthropologist May Ebihara who studied Khmer culture in the late 1960s, before the civil wars, categorises Khmer families/households into three different types: nuclear families, stem families, and extended families with other kin (Ebihara 1968). The nuclear family comprises two generations: parents and unwedded offspring. The stem family consists of two or three generations living together: parents, unwedded children, and a wedded offspring with his or her spouse and possibly the latter’s children (Ebihara 1968). A stem family is one kind of extended family (Ebihara 1968). An extended family with other kin is any ‘familial grouping that is larger than a nuclear family, that is, a unit that incorporates kinsmen [sic] other than parents and unmarried children’ (Ebihara 1968, p. 51). A married couple’s inability to afford a new house, and their social responsibility to care for their older parents, are the two primary reasons for a wedded couple to justify their residence with parents (Ebihara 1968). Ebihara (1968) also noted that couples who resided with their parents tended to inherit the property upon the passing of their parents. Her analysis is essential for this research in understanding the reciprocal relationships between members of any stem family or extended family with other kin, and it is partly aligned with contemporary research on ‘intergeneration support’ in aged care in Asia (Biddlecom, Chayovan & Ofstedal 2002; Hermalin 2002). In my view, however, Ebihara's (1968) analysis focusing on social care provided by younger generations to older ones misses another dimension of care transfer, from older to younger generations, which is evident through this research.
My fieldwork suggests that grandparents, especially grandmothers, play a significant role in childcare (and housework), even though nuclear families are the predominant familial grouping. Grandmothers rather than grandfathers are prescribed a caring responsibility for their grandchildren, a responsibility influenced by Khmer women’s caring roles constructed in traditional society and still prevalent in contemporary Cambodia, as discussed in Chapter 5. In the regression analysis of quantitative data based on a Cambodian socio-economic survey in her PhD dissertation, Hong (2013b) indicates that a grandmother is likely to spend 1.18 hours longer per day than a grandfather in caring for their grandchildren (pp. 30-6). My research suggests that grandmothers provide significant childcare support through their co-residence with children in stem families and extended families with other kin, and when occupying residences adjacent to nuclear families. Approximately 37 per cent (16 households) of the 43 households in this study are stem families and extended families with other kin, more than double the national figure at 16.7 per cent in 2005 (Demont & Heuveline 2008, p. 299). The remaining 63 per cent (27 households) are nuclear families, reflecting the national rate of 61.1 per cent in 2005 (Demont & Heuveline 2008, p. 299). This figure was reflected in another quantitative data survey conducted in 2008, with the rate of nuclear families being 61.3 per cent (Heuveline & Hong 2016, p. 228).

Co-residence can happen in two ways. First, a couple with their children may choose either matrilocal or patrilocality, although the vast majority (87.5 per cent) of them choose a matrilocal residence. A preference of matrilocal residence over patrilocal residence tends to be common among Khmer families, whether they are living in Cambodia or abroad (see Ledgerwood 1990; Ledgerwood 1995). As care work is gendered, grandmothers (and aunties) in a stem or extended family generally provide childcare and do household chores. One young mother, for example who had just started factory work in the months before my interview with her, leaves her son in the care of her mother for the whole day. She explains as follows:

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195 Savet Hong analysed the data of Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey (CSES) 2004, which recorded activities of respondents within 24 hours, so “one day” here refers to 24 hours.
196 This figure is drawn from the total 52 community respondents representing 43 households.
197 This figure is drawn from the total 52 community respondents representing 43 households.
198 The remaining 22.2 per cent of the national data are other types of household arrangements.
199 This figure is drawn from a total of 52 community respondents representing 43 households.
My mother takes care of my son at home. My son does not get up yet when I leave home every morning for my factory work. I eat breakfast and lunch at my working place. Typically, I arrive back home at around 4.30 pm in case that I do not have overtime work, but I arrive home at 6.30 pm if I have overtime work. I do not cook but just come home and eat dinner. My youngest sister also started doing housework for the whole family after I started my work (Sinath at village B, Kraing Yov, 01 April 2018).

This type of co-residence also allows a couple or a spouse to migrate for short- or long-term jobs, leaving their children in the care of the grandparents. A vivid example is the case of grandparents whose granddaughter attends a community preschool supported by the iLEAD International School in Kraing Yov commune. The grandparents care for their granddaughter, viewing her as their youngest daughter, which allows the parents (their daughter and son-in-law) of the child to migrate to work in Phnom Penh. Leaving children in the care of grandparents, especially grandmothers in rural villages, is common in these rural research sites.

The above conclusion is drawn from my discussions with preschool teachers and parents in setting up appointments for interviews with fathers and mothers. Whenever I asked preschool teachers to recommend some fathers and mothers for me to interview, I needed to confirm whether they were parents or grandparents of the children. In the above case of the family at Kraing Yov commune, I found out only during my actual interview with them that they cared for their granddaughter, not their daughter. In the phone conversation before the interview, when I asked them whether they had a child aged under six, they said ‘yes’ to me. These grandparents adopted the parent identity in caring for their granddaughter as she had been under their care from the age of four months. This pattern is also described in Pen (2016) qualitative PhD dissertation focused on Cambodia, a pattern of migrating parents leaving their children behind with grandparents, particularly grandmothers, in rural areas. Statistically, approximately 9.2 per cent of rural households have one or more children aged under 18 being cared for by grandparents (Zimmer & Van Natta 2018, p. 278).

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200 This study employed in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observation in three provinces: Battambang, Kampong Speu and Mondulkiri.

201 This pattern was found in Battambang and Kampong Speu provinces, but the study does not mention this pattern in Mondulkiri province, which is another site of her fieldwork. It may be the case that there was no outmigration in Mondulkiri.
Elder translocality in order to live with their children is the second mode of co-residence. Matrilineal grandmothers usually move to live with their grandchildren to provide childcare support. This phenomenon is also observed by Lawreniuk and Parsons (2017) in the context of migration for garment factory jobs in Phnom Penh. An illustrative example in this research is a goldsmith who sends his daughter to a community preschool at SvayRolum commune. He brought his mother-in-law to live with him in a rental house to care for his youngest son so that his wife could work at a factory. His mother-in-law also does the cooking in addition to this childcare duty. His words in the following quotation illustrate this maternal grandmother’s responsibilities:

I moved to live here for more than five years already. I rent a house with a monthly rent of 30 US Dollars exclusive of utility. It is a room. My mother-in-law also resides with me to take care of my little son. She is almost 70 years. My wife eats lunch at home but breakfast at her workplace. She leaves her workplace for lunch at 11.30 am and starts her work again at 12.30 pm. My mother-in-law cooks food for us, but I do the shopping every day: two times a day (Bona at community preschool B, SvayRolum, 04 April 2018).

Choosing to live in an adjacent residence also allows grandparents, especially grandmothers and aunties, to provide support with childcare. Among nuclear families, about 44 per cent (12 households) live adjacent to their parents’ dwellings in the same village, the large majority (67 per cent) of which are adjacent to the matrilineal parents. The case of a father at private preschool A in Phnom Penh illustrates this pattern. This father, an electrician at a state-owned company, is required to change his working shifts every week. Whenever he is busy his mother-in-law provides after-school care to his two children, while all his family members eat lunch cooked by the mother-in-law. His younger siblings-in-law also help him by picking up his children from school. The following quotation illustrates his experience:

I am responsible for dropping off my children at school if I am working in the morning shift, and my siblings-in-law help me pick them up. If I am busy with work, my children are staying with my mother-in-law, but if I am not working, my children are staying with me at home in the afternoon. If I am working in the morning shift, I arrive home at 12.00 pm, so I eat lunch at my mother-in-law’s. If I am working in the night shift, I drop my children with mother-in-law before I go to work. Then, my wife picks up the children from my mother-in-law’s house and [they] eat dinner at home (Sothea at private preschool A, Phnom Penh, 23 March 2018).
The above analysis illustrates how grandparents, especially grandmothers, provide childcare and housework support to some young parents when in co-residence or in an adjacent residence. This analysis is in line with a conclusion, based on national statistical data from Demont and Heuveline (2008), claiming that kinship support in care may be a practical solution adopted by young Khmer parents in urban areas in the absence of public daycare services; that is, where the state does not provide them. The authors interpreted an increase in the number of extended families (and a decrease in nuclear families) in urban settings as a practical solution to childcare dilemmas in which female kin provided care support to younger parents in a period of rapid economic growth in Cambodia between 2000 and 2005.

Even where nuclear families are not living adjacent to their parents, other female kin such as grandmothers and aunts still provide some kind of childcare support, especially during Chhlang Tonle\(^{202}\) and Sasai Kchey\(^{203}\)–postpartum period. Economic pressures often play a part. Sovann at community preschool D in Phnom Penh, for example, left her 18 year old daughter and one of her 6 year old twins in the care of her older sister [in both financial terms and in other aspects of care] in her hometown due to her family’s limited financial resources. Sovann and her husband could only financially support their 6 year old daughter, who lives with them in Phnom Penh.

During Chhlang Tonle and Sasai Kchey, grandmothers (and aunts) commonly provide childcare support to newborn babies, regardless of residence patterns. In cases where a nuclear family’s residence was not adjacent to any grandmothers, this research observed two patterns. The first pattern is that grandmothers come to visit their children during Chhlang Tonle for a few days, and then their children bring grandchildren to the grandmother’s house for postpartum care during a Sasai Kchey period. Nisa at private preschool A, for instance, delivered her baby at a hospital in Phnom Penh, her mother coming to care for her and the baby when she was hospitalised. After ten days, when she was discharged from the hospital, she brought her baby girl to stay with her mother in

\(^{202}\) Khmer colloquial expression for giving birth, but its literal meaning is crossing the river. Khmer ancestors liken “delivering a baby” to “crossing the river” as the former is as risky as the latter for Khmer women. A woman can die while giving birth to a baby, and a boat can sink while crossing the river.

\(^{203}\) Sasai literally refers to strings but metaphorically refers to nerves, tendons, veins or any long tube-like structure in the body. If any fruit is Kchey, it is not yet ripe. In this context, the term Sasai Kchey refers to a postpartum period in which a woman is not strong enough to perform her regular or heavy work.
Kampong Cham province for the whole period of her maternity leave. She then came back to work in Phnom Penh, leaving her daughter in the care of her mother until she was six months old. The second pattern is when an expectant mother goes to stay with her mother for a period before and after giving birth. Vantha at state preschool A in Phnom Penh came to live with her parents in Prey Veng province when she was two months pregnant, staying until her son was one year old, and then she came back to work in Phnom Penh.\textsuperscript{204} She left her boy in the care of her mother until he turned four.

The above analysis has illustrated that female kinship support in childcare is crucial in Khmer society. It occurs in circumstances of co-residence, adjacent residence, and remote residence. This kinship support is an informal or traditional practice, with no financial incentives for grandmothers offered by the state. Such kinship support is a practical solution when there is no daycare funded by the state or by business enterprises, despite such provision being enshrined in the Constitution and the Labour Law. As discussed in this section, grandmothers rather than grandfathers provide this kinship support. Women’s role in childcare is reinforced and/or influenced by the feminisation of childcare through Khmer cultural discourse, through the contemporary education system as demonstrated in Chapter 5, and through the home-based childcare program, as discussed in the preceding section.

Female kinship support with childcare and/or housework is also examined in intergenerational support studies on aged care in Asia. A theoretical framework of factors influencing the wellbeing of aging people and others by Hermalin (2002) examines ‘intergenerational support systems' as one of the 'immediate institutions and influences' in the wellbeing of elderly people and others. Based on this framework, Biddlecom, Chayovan and Ofstedal (2002) investigate intergenerational support and transfers through ‘co-residence, time\textsuperscript{205}, and money’ in four countries: the Philippines, Thailand, Taiwan, and Singapore. As well as the upward transfer [from married children to their parents], the survey also examined the downward transfer [from parents to married children through caring for grandchildren]. One of the most common forms of downward support

\textsuperscript{204} Interview, Vantha [mother at state preschool A], Phnom Penh, 23 April 2018.

\textsuperscript{205} In the form of time or service, this survey focuses on two aspects: Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) including dressing or bathing, and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs) including doing the shopping or meal preparation.
in these countries is caring for grandchildren. In the case of Thailand and Singapore, childcare is provided to grandchildren through co-residence, while childcare is not confined to co-residence in the other two countries. A downward support flow is also found in a study by Schröder-Butterfill (2004) based on semi-structured interviews and ethnography in East Java, Indonesia. This support is in the form of grandparents caring for grandchildren and providing financial assistance and housework support to their children.

8.5 Chapter Summary and Discussion

This chapter has scrutinised policy practices and their consequences for the division of care between women and men across generations within families. This analysis paid particular attention to the interplay between the Khmer cultural discourse on childcare, childcare policy discourses and practices, and policy silences. In policy discourses and practices, I deconstructed explicitly sexist and benign language—of texts and of verbal statements of policymakers and practitioners—which masks the gendered division of labour.

The chapter revealed that the Cambodian state has feminised ‘familial care’ through the rhetoric and practices of the home-based childcare program as part of the National Childcare Policy in two interconnected ways. First, the program structure is feminised by recruiting only women to be village-based core mothers’ group leaders, mothers as chiefs of small mothers’ groups, and mothers as members of these small mothers’ groups. The second way of feminising the program lies in its instilling gendered responsibility for care into women rather than men. This is vividly evident in keywords used in the five-series booklets on childcare and the verbal statements [spoken words] and practices of core mothers’ group leaders and chiefs of small mothers’ groups in their dissemination meetings on care.

The feminisation of the program intersects with the Khmer cultural discourse on childcare and policy silences—the absence of public and enterprise-funded daycare—to shape women’s ‘more-caring femininity’ across generations. The vast majority of young women in this study are primarily responsible for care work with no or minimal support from their spouses. Some abandoned their paid employment during their pregnancy and/or after the delivery of their babies to run home-based micro-businesses so that they
had time to undertake both ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care. A few women who have female kinship support with childcare or can access daycare services provided by community preschools and NGOs can manage to be in paid employment.

Despite the gendered consequences on care division discussed above, I observed some negotiation between men and women affecting ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care within the family. These negotiations are reflected in the life trajectories of a few women who received significant support from their husbands in childcare and/or housework. Critical scrutiny of these women’s accounts shows that women’s ability to earn an income in the formal employment economy and their high level of education appear to be significant factors in transforming the distribution of care work between women and men within the family. Women’s ability to earn an income in the formal employment economy tends to engender some respect from their husbands, resulting in the sharing of childcare and housework. When this ability intersects with women’s high level of education, these two factors constitute enabling conditions for women to negotiate with their husbands in the sharing of some domestic work. This insight contributes to an understanding of constitutive factors enabling younger Khmer women to negotiate gendered social norms.

The chapter also shows that female kinship support in childcare and/or daycare services are essential in keeping women in the formal employment economy where there is no support, or minimal support, or significant support from their spouses in childcare and/or housework. The analysis of kinship support in childcare in this research enhances our understanding of ‘familial care’ embedded in the concept of ‘social care’ (Daly & Lewis 2000); this concept incorporates care support by female kin in co-residence, adjacent residences, and distant residences in the absence of spousal support within nuclear families.

The next chapter will investigate various patterns of Khmer ‘caring masculinities’ as a continuum in Cambodia. This investigation examines how Khmer men have dealt with the intersecting effects of the Khmer cultural discourse on childcare, childcare policy discourses and practices, and policy silences. Such a critical investigation is crucial because it will complement a missing analytical component in care policy analysis in developing contexts.
Chapter 9

Khmer Caring Masculinities

Less-Caring and More-Caring Practices

This chapter investigates the extent to which, and how, young men have engaged in ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care. In doing so it illustrates two primary patterns of men’s engagement in care work. The first pattern includes men who minimally engage in care work but prioritise their breadwinning role. I categorise such minimal engagement as ‘less-caring masculinity’ at the lower end of the spectrum of ‘caring masculinities’. I argue that this ‘less-caring masculinity’ is shaped by the intersecting effects of the Khmer cultural discourse on childcare, care policy discourses and practices in ‘familial care’, and by policy silences [specifically, the absence of public and enterprise-funded daycare].

The second pattern includes men who significantly engage in care work alongside their breadwinning role. I categorise this group of men as representing a ‘more-caring masculinity’ which is at the higher end of the spectrum of ‘caring masculinities’. I argue that men’s experiences of housework during their childhood and/or teenage years, along with their spouses’ constant negotiation of childcare, are the primary factors that motivate men to incorporate care into their couple life. The life trajectories of men demonstrating ‘more-caring masculinity’ illustrate that they are renegotiating the Khmer cultural discourse on childcare, challenging its embeddedness in social institutions and interactions.

The analysis of men’s engagement in childcare in this chapter draws on the concept of ‘caring masculinities’ reconceptualised in Chapter 3. This concept focuses on the extent to which, and how, men are involved in 'direct' and 'indirect' care, including ‘masculine care’, and breadwinning. It draws on both the ethics of care (Tronto 1993b, 1998, 2013) and masculinity theory (Connell 1995, 2000, 2005, 2009; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Messerschmidt 2016, 2018). The ‘ethics of care’ generates a conceptualisation of ‘caring masculinities’ as a continuum, enabling us to critically analyse men’s engagement in four-phases/dimensions of the caring process. Masculinity theory allows us to
scrutinise the construction of the multiple patterns of ‘caring masculinities’, and to interrogate women’s role in constructing men’s ‘caring masculinities’. Empirically, the analysis of ‘caring masculinities’ in this chapter draws on the life trajectories of 26 young fathers, with supplementary accounts from 26 young mothers.

This chapter is structured around men’s ‘less-caring’ and ‘more-caring’ practices. The next section, focusing on men’s ‘less-caring masculinity’, scrutinises primary aspects of care in which men engage during and after the postpartum care period. It investigates the qualitative nuances of men’s engagement in childcare in the presence and absence of female kinship support, daycare services, and live-in paid care. This section explains the argument that men’s ‘less-caring masculinity’ is shaped by the Khmer cultural discourse on childcare, care policy discourses and practices on ‘familial care’, and policy silences.

The second section, discussing men’s ‘more-caring masculinity’, examines men’s active engagement in care work and the factors that contribute to it. It illuminates key aspects of care in which young fathers are actively involved and the primary factors stimulating this significant engagement. This section illustrates how men are renegotiating the Khmer cultural discourse on care and challenging its embeddedness in social institutions and interactions. The concluding section summarises the discussions in the previous two parts, postulating some theoretical points in the research regarding men’s masculinities and care.

**9.1 Men’s Less-Caring Masculinity**

I argue that ‘less-caring masculinity’ is constructed by a number of factors: the Khmer cultural discourse on care; its embeddedness in civics-morals textbooks and in Khmer society; and the feminisation of ‘familial care’ in the home-based childcare program. I define ‘less-caring masculinity’ as a type of masculinity in which men prioritise their breadwinning role but do not consider other types of care as a central part of their intersecting identities as fathers and husbands, so they irregularly and/or minimally engage in one or some chores of ‘direct’ and/or ‘indirect’ care. The definition of ‘less-caring masculinity’ is informed by the ‘ethics of care’ in Tronto’s (1993b, 1998, 2013) four-phase caring process: ‘caring about’, ‘caring for’, ‘caregiving’ and ‘care-receiving’. Men with ‘less-caring masculinity’ are actively engaged in the first two rather than the last two phases of the caring process because both ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care in these
phases is central to men’s traditional masculine identity. This feature of men’s active engagement suggests that men – as care providers – are relatively more powerful than their spouses and children – as care receivers. These power relations are also reflected in men’s engagement in the last two caring phases because men tend to engage in ‘direct care’ that is closely linked to their masculine identity rather than in both types of care that are more associated with feminine identity. I consider both ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care that is central to men’s traditional identity as ‘masculine care’. This conceptualisation is more expansive than ‘masculine care’ defined by Brandth and Kvande (1998), which concentrates on 'direct care'.

This section critically focuses on three themes. First, the section examines the overall patterns of 'less-caring' practices. It then deconstructs 'masculine care’ in relation to both ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ types of care and men’s rationale for ignoring housework. Third, this section investigates Khmer masculinity as it manifests during women’s postpartum care.

9.1.1 Two Subpatterns of Less-Caring Masculinity

Almost 50 per cent (12 of 26 fathers) of men in this research have adopted ‘less-caring masculinity’. The critical scrutiny of the narratives of 12 ‘less-caring’ fathers illustrates that they tend to minimally engage in ‘direct care’, especially in the form of ‘masculine care’, rather than ‘indirect care’ that is traditionally performed by women. ‘Masculine direct care’ in which these men engage includes dropping off children at preschool or picking them up, meeting with their children’s teachers, taking children for a walk around the village, educating children at home [including assisting them in homework], and taking children to hospital with their spouses or female kin. These ‘less-caring’ fathers also irregularly engage in other aspects of ‘direct care’ such as playing with children during their free time, spoon-feeding their children, bathing their children, and putting children to sleep. They sometimes engage in cooking as part of their ‘indirect care’.

There are two sub-patterns of the ‘less-caring’ practices among these 12 fathers. The majority, represented by ten men, minimally undertook ‘direct care’ tasks, while a minority [two men] minimally engaged in both childcare and housework chores. A clear example of the first sub-pattern, which has been shaped by the Khmer cultural discourse on childcare and the state’s role in codifying such a discourse and neglecting daycare, is
the case of Terith at community preschool D. Terith withdrew his wife from garment factory work to care for his children so that he could focus on his breadwinning role in teaching and tutoring students. He spent minimal time with his two children, and that was directed at instilling moral education. Vorak at community preschool E, who is a lumberjack, spent most of his time earning an income, but little time with his children. He occasionally took his children for a walk, while his wife was responsible for everything at home.

Likewise, Sokha and Sopheak at village A were minimally involved in care, leaving it to their spouses. These fathers focused on earning the family income. Sopheak, a labourer in the village, engaged in two childcare tasks, bathing his two children and putting them to sleep. My separate interviews with Sopheak and his spouse, Mana, indicated that their existence is hand-to-mouth. Mana therefore wanted to work in the garment sector where she used to work before becoming pregnant with her first child, but she could not do so because the responsibility for care was on her. When asked about kinship support, Mana said that her parents, whose house was adjacent to hers, did not have time to care for her children as they needed to earn an income for their family. She needed daycare services. In the same vein, Sokha migrated to work as an assistant chef in Phnom Penh, visiting his home fortnightly. His wife undertook childcare and housework chores at home, but he sometimes took his children for a walk around the village during his visits home. In my interview with Sokha’s wife, Chakriya, her desire for public daycare was apparent; she needed it in order to go to work because her parents had no time to care for her children.

In the same way, Sokhom at state preschool C minimally engaged in childcare. He is a clothes wholesaler, and his spouse is a housewife who undertakes care work at home. Sokhom mostly dropped his daughter at preschool and picked her up, and he met his daughter’s teacher as part of his community responsibility. He also engaged in reading books to his daughter on the weekend and/or before bedtime.

The accounts of the five fathers above exemplify men’s minimal engagement in childcare and men’s primary role as the family provider. At the same time, these accounts demonstrate that their wives are primarily responsible for childcare and housework without having opportunities for paid employment in circumstances where daycare services and significant female kinship support are not available to them.
‘Less-caring’ men tend to engage in relatively more childcare, however, if their wives run a home-based small business and access daycare services. This is the case of Sophat at NGO preschool C [NGO daycare centre]. Sophat is a marketing officer in a small business dealing in educational materials, in which he has a small number of shares. Sending his older daughter to a full day primary school program and younger daughter to an NGO preschool C allows his wife to run a home-based sewing business. His primary childcare responsibilities include dropping the children off and picking them up from school, bathing children, and playing with them from around 9.00 pm until bedtime at around 11.00 pm to allow his wife to sew clothes until around 11.00 pm or midnight. This example indicates the importance of daycare services in allowing women to have sufficient time to run a small-business, which encourages ‘less-caring’ men to engage more in care work.

With ‘less-caring’ men’s minimal engagement, the responsibility for care tends to be shared between their spouses and female kin [mothers or mothers-in-law] in situations where female kinship support is available. This pattern is reflected in three cases of these ‘less-caring’ fathers. The first is the case of Rythea at NGO preschool B [NGO daycare centre]. Rythea is a security guard at the Ministry of Interior. His small family and his mother reside in his brother’s house, and his wife is a worker at a soft drink factory. He has two children. Caring responsibility is shared between his wife and his mother. His engagement in childcare includes dropping his children off or picking them up from their preschool and meeting with teachers whenever he can do so; otherwise, his mother does this job. He sometimes plays with his children, helps children with their homework, and takes his children to hospital, when necessary, with his wife. Similar to Rythea’s case is that of Socheat at community preschool A [daycare centre run by the commune council]. Socheat has three children. Rythea and Socheat both receive female kinship support in childcare and access daycare services, with both their wives employed. The significant difference is that Socheat engages less in childcare tasks than does Rythea.

The third case is the case of Kimsoare at state preschool C. Kimsoare, a small plants seller, has four children, his youngest daughter being less than two years old. He concentrates on income generation, while his wife focuses on care work at home. His primary caring role is to teach his three bigger children and help them do their homework before their bedtime. Occasionally he drops his children at state preschools when his wife is busy.
This family requires daycare, but it is not available to them. With female kinship support for childcare\textsuperscript{206} his wife is now able to do a part-time job—teaching at a state primary school. His wife usually arrives home earlier than him, bathes his children, and cooks food, but he does these tasks if he arrives home earlier than his wife.

The preceding three cases of Rythea, Socheat and Kimsore illustrate the disproportionate distribution of care work between women (both spouses and female kin) and ‘less-caring’ fathers. Rythea’s and Socheat’s examples, however, show that their wives can work full-time in the garment sector when they can access daycare services, even though Rythea and Socheat minimally engage in childcare. In Kimsore’s case, the absence of access to daycare services meant his wife is not able to work full-time.

Caring responsibility is sometimes shared between ‘less-caring’ fathers’ wives and live-in paid carers in high-income families. Of the ten ‘less-caring’ fathers, only one father could afford to hire a live-in paid carer. This is the case of Chanthan at NGO preschool A [NGO daycare centre accepting children with disabilities]. He is a chief of the Sangkat police with a five year old deaf-mute daughter and a nine year old son without any disability. In addition to his government position, he runs a small business selling and repairing electronic equipment. His wife also runs a small business in wholesale poultry eggs. Chanthan hired a live-in paid carer for his children so that his engagement in childcare would be minimal.

The above dominant sub-pattern illustrates men’s minimal engagement in ‘direct care’, especially ‘masculine care’, within ‘less-caring masculinity’. I observed another, minor sub-pattern of men’s minimal participation in both childcare and housework in two fathers. These are the cases of Sovath and Sovann at community preschool E who are self-employed and whose families do not access daycare services. Sovath’s spouse runs a micro home-based business, while Sovann’s wife used to be a garment factory worker but quit her job for a while due to illness. Sovath, who is in his fifties, adopted his granddaughter as his youngest daughter, while Sovann has two sons. Their routine engagement in childcare is to drop their children off and pick them up from preschool, but only Sovath takes his adopted daughter for a walk around the village regularly. Sovath

\textsuperscript{206} His wife received childcare support from his mother-in-law in the same village. She drops the youngest child at her mother’s house before she goes to teach.
is a typical old Khmer man who usually looks for vegetables or food [pork or fish] from the lakes or hills around the village. This is a role specified by the Chhab Pros, as discussed in Chapter 5.

Like many other men, Sovath is primarily responsible for masculine housework such as pumping water to fill containers and looking for and chopping firewood; however, he usually washed his own clothes and those of his adopted daughter, while Sovann washed his clothes only when his wife was angry with him. These men did the cooking when their wives were not at home at mealtimes. Sovath’s wife expressed her appreciation of Sovath’s cooking skills during my interview with her.207 Sovann did the cooking when his wife was working at a garment factory in the village.

Sovath’s and Sovann’s families are similar to those of other men in terms of the tendency to split care work between their wives and female kin when kinship support exists within the family. In the case of Sovann, his mother-in-law, whose residence is adjacent to his house, took care of his children when he was not at home and his wife was working. In Sovath’s case, he and his wife chose to adopt the role of parents to care for their granddaughter, which allowed his daughter to migrate to work in Phnom Penh.

The preceding accounts illustrate that men are ‘doing gender’, which prioritises the breadwinning role, while at the same time relegating care, especially ‘indirect care’, to their wives. These men minimally engage in ‘direct care’, especially in the form of ‘masculine care’, rather than ‘indirect care’. This ‘less-caring masculinity’ reflects the discourse of ‘family happiness/harmony’—scripted in the civics-morals textbooks—in that men are primarily responsible for breadwinning and only play a supportive role in care work. This male orientation towards a ‘less-caring masculinity’ is similar to that of other men as shown in some studies in the developed world. The majority of American men are not actively engaged in care work (Gerson 1993; Hochschild 1989, 2003, 2012). Similarly, older generation men in rural Norway tend to reflect this pattern (Brandth 2016).

207 Interviews: Manich [mother at community preschool E], Kraing Yov, 13 March 2018; Sovath [father at community preschool E], Kraing Yov, 13 March 2018.
Although men with ‘less-caring masculinity’ tend not to engage in ‘indirect care’, it does not mean that they are not involved in any ‘indirect care’ at all; rather, they engage in only specific types of ‘indirect care’, as discussed in the following subsection.

9.1.2 Masculine Care and Men’s Rationale for Negligence of Housework

The above dominant sub-pattern of men’s ‘less-caring masculinity’ vividly demonstrates that men minimally engage in childcare chores and housework; however, they do not ignore all housework. They usually perform some household chores requiring physical strength, a characteristic central to their masculine identity. These household chores include filling giant jars with water and collecting or chopping firewood for cooking. I categorise such chores as representing ‘masculine indirect care’. Such ‘masculine indirect care’ is more relevant to rural areas than to urban ones in contemporary Cambodia. A classic example is the case of Kimsore at state preschool C. When asked what he usually did in the morning, he responded as follows: ‘I sweep the land and/or pump water into jars if needed. I need to start a generator to pump water from the well. At times, I chop firewood for cooking. I bought firewood (dead trees) from others and transported them home on my auto-rickshaw. I chop the firewood when needed.’

These ‘less-caring’ fathers neglected household chores requiring *less physical strength but more time*, such as washing clothes, cooking, doing the dishes, and cleaning the house. As discussed in Chapter 5, Brickell (2011a) postulates that three interconnected discourses underpin Khmer men’s negligence of housework, but only the first two resonate in men’s and some women’s accounts in this research. The first discourse suggests that men consider this type of domestic work to be women’s work as it does not require physical strength. The second discourse reflects the ‘gendered politics of reciprocity’ (Brickell 2011a) which suggests that all family members use the income earned by the family head [usually husband], so the wife needs to undertake domestic tasks to support the husband who has the breadwinning role. These two discourses are not only shared by some men but also by women in this study, especially those who are unpaid working and/or paid homeworking mothers. This is linked with Connell and Messerschmidt’s (2005) conceptualisation of women’s role in constructing hegemonic masculinity. The accounts of these ‘less-caring’ fathers and young mothers indicate that

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208 Interview, Kimsore [father at state preschool C], Setbo, 10 April 2018.
women’s social and occupational status has contributed to the construction of men’s ‘less-caring masculinity’. The third discourse, building upon the first two postulated by Brickell (2011a), considers domestic tasks as practices embodying ‘notions of tradition and respect’ to which both genders must hold.

The first two discourses affecting men’s neglect of housework (Brickell 2011a) are reflected in this dissertation, but the third discourse seems not to resonate with these ‘less-caring’ fathers. I observed some fluidity in this type of ‘less-caring masculinity’. The narrative of Sokhom at state preschool C is a typical example of this flexibility. When asked whether he used to wash clothes [by hand or not], he answered thus: ‘I help her [his wife] wash the family’s clothes sometimes only. As a man, I do not distinguish between men’s and women’s work. Whenever she is busy, I do it [washing clothes]. If my wife is sick, I need to do it [washing clothes]; otherwise, I do not have clothes to wear.’

The clear subscription to all three discourses, is shown nevertheless in the accounts of two [Chanthan at NGO Preschool A and Socheat at community preschool A] of the 12 ‘less-caring’ fathers. These two fathers adopt ‘masculine direct care’ linked to traditional men’s masculine identity. Chanthan, a chief of the Sangkat police, has a five year old deaf-mute daughter and a nine year old son without any disability. His engagement in childcare reflects the concept of ‘masculine care’ coined by Brandth and Kvande (1998). ‘Masculine care’ in Brandth and Kvande’s (1998) study is associated with fathers teaching their children to be independent and taking their children to outdoor activities, such as going for walks in the woods. Chanthan taught his son to be a particular type of man, identical to himself. His accounts show that he spent little time with his daughter but spent some time with his son. He often took his son with him wherever he went at the weekend. He expects his son to follow in his footsteps and is teaching his boy how to be a particular man and leader by exposing the boy to his life experiences as a police chief. He is instilling three essential qualities of a ‘less-caring’ man into his son: taking responsibility for siblings, privileging education and leadership in society, and socialising with peers by consuming alcohol. First, Chanthan keeps reminding his son to be responsible for his deaf-mute sister when she is growing up. Chanthan believes that his son needs to have a good education and possess leadership characteristics to shoulder this

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209 Interview, Sokhom [father at state preschool C], Setbo, 30 March 2018.
family responsibility. Chanthan is trying to show his son the importance of education and leadership in society by exposing him to his real-life experiences as a police officer. As Chanthan is a chief of Sangkat police, people, even older ones, are expected to show him respect by bowing their heads to him. Chanthan explained to his son that he received this respect because of his good education and leadership position in society. In his own words: ‘I told him [my son] that although I am younger than them [older people in public], I have higher education than them and a good position. I asked him [his son] whether you like other people to bow their heads with two hands together to you. He said yes to this question.’

Chanthan also taught his son to bow his head with two hands together to those from a lower socio-economic background to gain support in return. The following are his own words:

   Another thing is that I bowed my head with my two hands together to scrap collectors. Then, my boy asked me why I did that. I responded that we need support from all the people around us. Typically, other families always ask their children to bow their head with two hands together to only wealthier families but not to those with lower socio-economic status. But I taught my son to bow his head with two hands together to whoever is older than him, not only to those who are richer and more powerful than us. This is the way that I have taught my son (Chanthan at NGO preschool A, Phnom Penh, 03 April 2018).

Concerning socialisation with peers, Chanthan taught his nine year old son to taste beer in preparing the boy to be a man like him. He took his son with him when he was drinking beer with his friends and asked him to taste the beer. He explained the benefits of socialising with friends through alcohol consumption, telling his son that ‘It [drinking beer] is not delicious, but you need to drink it when you grow up, and if you do not know how to drink, it will be a problem.’ He told his son that alcohol consumption with friends is a way to deepen a relationship and to exchange valuable information. This perception of alcohol consumption as an integral part of masculinity resonates with Scandurra et al.’s (2017) study in both rural and urban areas in Cambodia.

The preceding account exemplifies a particular form of ‘masculine direct care’ in its preparing of sons to become ‘traditional’ masculine men like their fathers. A critical

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210 Interview, Chanthan [father at NGO preschool A], Phnom Penh, 03 April 2018.
211 Ibid.
analysis of all male and female interviewees’ accounts indicates that the pattern of this ‘masculine direct care’ occurs when fathers highly value their current professions. A similar example of the above is the case of Socheata’s husband at state preschool C. Socheata indicated that her husband usually showed love to their son rather than their daughters, spending more time with the boy.\textsuperscript{212} Her husband wanted the son to take on his current profession as a \textit{Cheang Thmenh}\textsuperscript{213} (a local dentist), and he usually gave money to his son, but not to his two daughters. Men who do not highly value their current professions prepare their sons for an occupation other than theirs. An example is the case of Kimsore at state preschool C who is a small plants seller. Although Kimsore is conscious that he needs to love both his son and his daughters, he usually reads books to his son, not his daughters. He wants his son to select an occupation that does not require physical strength as his own job does. His conversation with his son before bedtime indicates this pattern:

Before bedtime, I always ask him [his son] whether the daddy is tired or not. Do you want to be like me? He responded that yes, you are tired. I said that this idea is wrong. If you want to help me, you need to get higher education [at least grade 12] and to learn languages. I appreciate my brother-in-law and take him as an example to show my son. He [his brother-in-law] can speak several languages, and he has a good job. In the morning, he puts on a handsome uniform with a tie and goes to work in an office. For me, I carry a grub hoe to work and \textit{Kambet Phakeak} [big, long knife] to the forest (Kimsore at state preschool C, Setbo, 10 April 2018).

The second example of ‘masculine direct care’ is the case of Socheat who has three daughters at community preschool A. He had just, in the last six months, sold his small truck business and is now staying at home. He resides in his mother-in-law’s house, and his wife is a garment factory worker. His wife, Rina, complained that he did not engage in any housework and farming at all.\textsuperscript{214} He acknowledged his negligence of these kinds of work during the interview. When asked whether he was involved in any housework, he responded: ‘I do not help with anything except take my children for a walk around the village, but I am an energetic person in doing business.’\textsuperscript{215} His self-perception was as a

\textsuperscript{212} Interview, Socheata [mother at state preschool C], Setbo, 08 April 2018.
\textsuperscript{213} \textit{Cheang Thmenh} is a Khmer term literally translated as a tooth smith. \textit{Cheang Thmenh} perform as dentists after going through some hands-on training in dental health for a while, but they do not have any recognised degree. \textit{Cheang Thmenh} used to be popular when there was a shortage of dentists, but now this type of business mainly exists in remote areas.
\textsuperscript{214} Interview, Rina [mother at community preschool A], Beung Khyang, 18 March 2018.
\textsuperscript{215} Interview, Socheat [father at community preschool A], Beung Khyang, 18 March 2018.
strong man in the family. After loss of the truck business, he reported that he was demotivated and disappointed with himself, sometimes crying alone because he had earned no money in the last six months. He did not have any money of his own for personal spending in this period, but sometimes his brothers and mother gave him some. During the interview, he kept saying that he used to be a ‘strong man’ who could earn money but now earned nothing. Rina [his wife] reported that he went for a drink with friends every day and came home late at night. When I interviewed him, he acknowledged this, telling me that he had increased his alcohol consumption after losing the business. This man is in a ‘crisis of the gender order’ (Connell 1995, 2005) within the family, but his response to this situation neither restored ‘dominant’ masculinity through violence nor supported gender equality with some eminent scholars (Brittan 1989; Connell 1995, 2005) suggest might be expected, according to masculinity theory. Instead, this father seems to harm his physical and emotional health through an increase in alcohol consumption.

This subsection has illuminated men’s active involvement in ‘masculine care’ in both care types: ‘masculine indirect care’ that requires more physical strength, and ‘masculine direct care’ that is linked with men’s typical masculine identity. Active involvement in such care is implicitly informed by the concept of ‘family happiness/harmony’ embedded in civils-morals textbooks and Khmer society. There is however an exception to this general observation during the postpartum care period with these ‘less-caring’ men actively engaged in both ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care that is usually provided by women, as discussed in the following subsection.

9.1.3 Masculinity in Postpartum Care

The life trajectories of all ‘less-caring’ fathers demonstrate that they tend to engage more in childcare and housework in the first two or three months after the birth of their children than they usually do later on. The ‘less-caring’ fathers’ level of engagement in this care work, however, is not as high as that of ‘more-caring’ fathers’ engagement in care work during this period. The typical tasks that these ‘less-caring’ fathers performed during this period included washing the baby’s clothes, boiling water, and cooking rice and food, demonstrating a different degree of engagement among these ‘less-caring’ fathers during

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216 Interview, Rina [mother at community preschool A], Beung Khyang, 18 March 2018.
their spouses’ postpartum period. Sokha at village A, for instance, explained that he washed baby clothes in the first two or three months, then he left this task to his wife afterwards. He helped very little with cooking as his wife could do it during this period.217 Sokhom at state preschool C was at work while his wife was delivering the baby, but his mother-in-law was with her. With his mother-in-law helping him do the housework, Sokhom’s primary tasks were to wash his baby’s clothes and boil water for his wife.218 Likewise, Rythea at NGO preschool B cooked rice and food and washed his baby’s clothes during the first month of his wife’s postpartum period after his mother-in-law went back to her home in the province.219 In a similar vein, Terith [a secondary school teacher], who sent his son to community preschool D and usually did not engage in any household chores, also engaged in clothes-washing and performed other chores during his wife’s postpartum period. The following are his own words:

As I said in Khmer Society, when we do not have any support, the husband was responsible for washing the baby’s clothes or family clothes. Our parents came to help with some housework. As a husband, I could do anything. For Mongkol’s case [one of his children], he was born in August, which was in a holiday period from August to November. Therefore, it did not affect my teaching (Terith at community preschool D, Korkroka, Phnom Penh, 24 April 2018).

Similarly, Chanthan was significantly engaged in care during his wife's postpartum care, even though he adopts ‘masculine direct care’, as discussed earlier, and has a live-in paid carer and mother-in-law to help out. His own words illustrate this active engagement.

I bathed my baby. I cared for the baby’s umbilical cord and cleaned water from the baby’s ears. I washed milk bottles, fed my baby water, and applied liquid ointment to the baby. These are my skills because I used to care for my nieces and nephews. I did not trust my domestic worker [for these tasks]. However, I asked my housemaid to wash my baby’s clothes. I did all of these tasks for about a month and a half, and then I transferred them to my mother-in-law and the maid. I was working during that time, but I reduced approximately 50 per cent of my work to care for my baby (Chanthan at NGO preschool A, Phnom Penh, 03 April 2018).

Other cases indicate men’s active engagement in care during their wives' postpartum period even though their usual engagement in care is minimal. The following narratives illustrate this pattern:

217 Interview, Sokha [father at village A], Kraing Yov, 29 March 2018.
218 Interview, Sokhom [father at state preschool C], Setbo, 30 March 2018.
219 Interview, Rythea [father at NGO preschool B], Phnom Penh, 04 March 2018.
I cooked rice and food and boiled water for my wife. I washed my baby’s clothes. My parents-in-law also helped us with some work, but I was the one who washed my baby’s clothes. As a husband, I need to do this when my wife is Sasai Khachey [postpartum period]. It is good for other husbands and me to do this work (Sopheak at village A, Kraing Yov, 21 March 2018).

I did what I had never done before the postpartum period. My obligation in the house was that I was responsible for everything and did whatever my wife used to do [had usually done]. It was about 3 to 4 months (Kimsore at state preschool C, Setbo, 10 April 2018).

Besides washing the baby’s and family’s clothes, cooking, and boiling water, a father may also organise a traditional practice called ‘Aing Phaleung’. Aing Phaleung is a Khmer term referring to a traditional practice after the birth of a child in which a mother customarily lies upon a raised bed of bamboo slats under which small fires continuously burn in clay pots (see Ebihara 1968, p. 184). This practice continues for approximately three days to a week (Ebihara 1968; Keo 2004). Vorak at community preschool E said that he was responsible for collecting and organising firewood and/or charcoal for the Aing Phaleung practice in addition to his responsibility in cooking rice and food and washing his baby’s clothes in the first month of his wife’s postpartum period.  

Men’s accounts in this subsection illustrate that ‘less-caring’ men conceptualise care work as part of a good father’s and husband’s responsibility during their spouses’ postpartum period. Such a conceptualisation is not formally inscribed in the Chhab Pros and Chhab Srey but is a social expectation of men in Khmer society. The analysis in Chapter 8 indicates that such a social expectation is officially scripted in a lesson in one of the five booklets of the home-based childcare program. It is headed “Postpartum Care” in the booklet entitled “Children’s Rights, Pregnancy Care, Postnatal Care, and Nutrition”.

Most mothers in this study generally confirmed the narratives of the above ‘less-caring’ fathers in relation to care during their postpartum period. When asked about her husband's engagement in care work during her postpartum care period, Chakriya at village A, for example, said the following:

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220 My interviews with the research participants as well as observation in my village suggest that this traditional practice is gradually disappearing these days.
221 Interview, Vorak [father at community preschool E], Kraing Yov, 01 April 2018.
My husband cooked rice and food for me, and he washed clothes for me. He did everything. He also worked during that time. In the evening, he cooked food for me. Before he went to work, he cooked food for me and boiled water for me. He came home at around 4.00 or 5.00 pm during that time. He did these tasks for both children during their first three months [after I delivered my baby]. However, whenever my husband was not at home, my parents helped me (Chakriya at village A, Kraing Yov, 13 March 2018).

Nevertheless, a few mothers reported that their spouses engaged significantly in care work for only a very short period. These mothers received significant support from their spouses for about a week after the delivery of their baby because these mothers had some female kinship support and their husbands needed to earn an income. Sivnhin at village B is a typical example: ‘My mother, mother-in-law and my husband cared for me at the hospital, but after the delivery, only my husband was there to take care of me for a week. He [my husband] bought food, and my husband washed clothes during that time, and he changed my clothes for me.’

There is an extreme case in which a husband did nothing apart from administering anaesthetic to his wife during labour because he had expertise in anaesthetics. This case concerns Rachana at private preschool A, a woman from what is considered to be a well-off family in Phnom Penh. Her husband is an old Cambodian Frenchman in his seventies. Rachana prepared everything before the delivery of her baby, including purchasing a machine for washing milk bottles. The family has a washing-machine. Rachana’s mother came to help Rachana for two or three days after Rachana gave birth to her son, but Rachana did everything by herself afterwards. She may well be less burdened than mothers in low-income families because she has labour-saving equipment such as a washing-machine and a bottle-washer.

‘Less-caring’ fathers and mothers with no or minimal support from their spouses generally confirm that it is common for young fathers to engage in care work during the postpartum period. Despite being involved in care work in this period, their level of engagement is not as high as that of ‘more-caring’ fathers.

222 This man migrated to France when he was young, received French citizenship, and was working there until he retired. He divorced his wife in France and came back to Cambodia recently to live with Rachana, his young de facto wife. The gaps between him and Rachana in terms of age, wealth, and expertise/knowledge [profession] may explain why he did not help Rachana in postpartum care.
This section has illustrated the fluidity of ‘less-caring masculinity’. Men with this ‘less-caring masculinity’ minimally engage in ‘direct’ but not ‘indirect’ care. They usually ignore ‘indirect care’ that requires *relatively less strength and more time*, but engage in ‘indirect care’ that requires *relatively more physical strength and less time*; however, these ‘less-caring’ men significantly engage in both types of care in the postpartum care period. The ways in which ‘less-caring’ men in this research are involved in these aspects of care are expected of them according to the Khmer cultural discourse on childcare and the discourse embedded in booklets of the home-based childcare program. These men’s configurations of ‘less-caring’ practices are also shaped by the childcare policy that has excluded public- and enterprise-funded daycare. This research, nevertheless, observed an alternative pattern of ‘caring masculinities’, which is the focus of the following section.

**9.2 Men’s ‘More-Caring’ Masculinity and its Constitutive Factors**

**9.2.1 Two Sub-patterns of ‘More-Caring’ Masculinity**

Parallel to men’s ‘less-caring masculinity’, some men’s narratives in this study illustrate their ‘more-caring masculinity’. It is demonstrated in men’s active engagement in childcare and/or housework. Such active engagement illustrates men’s ‘reflexive reconfigurations’ of ‘more-caring’ practices that involve negotiation around the Khmer cultural discourse on childcare, consonant with the concepts of ‘reflexive subjects’ (Shore & Wright 2011) and ‘positive’ ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005).

‘More-caring masculinity’ refers to a *type of masculinity in which men accept both care work and breadwinning as a central part of their intersecting identities as fathers and husbands, and thus they regularly and significantly undertake a wider range of care work tasks, while contributing to the family income*. ‘More-caring’ practices take place in the four phases/dimensions of the caring process (Tronto 1993b, 1998, 2013): ‘caring about’, ‘caring for’, ‘caregiving’, and ‘care-receiving’. With the construction of ‘more-caring masculinity’ drawing on men’s intersecting identities as fathers and husbands, these ‘more-caring’ men stay attentive to their spouse’s feedback about their caregiving. This characteristic of men’s attentiveness suggests that women are relatively more powerful in this caring process. ‘Direct care’ in which these ‘more-caring’ fathers significantly engage encompasses playing with children during their free time, childminding, dropping
children off or picking them up from preschools and/or meeting with their children’s teachers, taking children for a walk around the village, spoon-feeding, milk-feeding, and putting children to sleep. These ‘more-caring’ men undertake ‘indirect care’ which includes cooking, clothes-washing, milk bottle-washing, sweeping and mopping the house, and dishwashing.

Although ‘less-caring’ and ‘more-caring’ men may engage in similar tasks, the ‘less-caring’ fathers do not consider care to be part of their identities as fathers and husbands, so they minimally and irregularly engage in ‘direct care’, but not ‘indirect’ care. In contrast, ‘more-caring’ fathers perceive care as part of their joint father and husband identities and thus regularly and actively engage in a broader range of ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care tasks, as mentioned earlier.

More than 50 per cent (equivalent to 14 fathers) of all 26 young fathers are constructing their ‘more-caring masculinity’ in two sub-patterns. The lives of 10 fathers reflect the first sub-pattern of significant engagement in care work along with their breadwinning role. Four fathers’ life trajectories in the second sub-pattern demonstrate their noticeable engagement in care work but negligible involvement in the breadwinning role. Within ‘more-caring masculinity’, care work is distributed not only between family carers [‘more-caring’ fathers, and their spouses and/or female kin] but also between these family carers and paid care providers.

Undertaking Breadwinning Role and Care Work

Without female kinship support, care work is distributed between ‘more-caring’ men, their spouses, and daycare service providers. Three stories of fathers reflect this scenario. The first is the story of Vichet at NGO preschool B [community preschool daycare run by an NGO], who has three boys aged 11, six, and three. He is a self-employed blacksmith, while his wife runs a home-based micro business. He did not distinguish between women’s and men’s work, usually doing housework such as dishwashing or clothes-washing whenever he had time at home. His work site kept changing, sometimes being near the home and at other times in a province. When his work took him to a province, he washed family clothes with his hands at the weekend. He is skilful in caring for his infants. His wife Theavy, a homeworker, confirmed that Vichet was a skilful carer
in bathing his infants, and he usually woke up to milk-feed his small babies at night. His wife recounted his routine childcare and housework when his business was near home:

Even every day, he helped me wash clothes and swept and mopped the house. At night, he also got up to feed milk to the baby and washed milk bottles. He knew how to bath our small baby. It was almost 100 per cent that my husband did these tasks. He did such tasks since my mother-in-law was still alive and living with us (Theavy at NGO preschool B, Phnom Penh, 08 March 2018).

Sothun at NGO preschool C is the second example of a ‘more-caring’ father. He has two daughters, aged 13 and five. He is a Tuk-Tuk driver [auto-rickshaw], while his wife is a garment factory worker in Phnom Penh. His older daughter is living in his house on her own in the province, looked after by his sister-in-law whose house is adjacent to his. Sothun is living with his wife and younger daughter in a rented room in Phnom Penh. Along with earning an income, he was the primary carer for his younger daughter from when she was seven or eight months old. Sothun carried his daughter in one hand and drove his auto-rickshaw with the other while transporting his clients. He fed his baby with formula milk three times a day while resting under a tree. His clients sometimes helped him carry the baby while he was driving the auto-rickshaw. Sothun cared for his daughter in this way for a few months before finding a community preschool daycare run by an NGO. He would buy some snacks [milk and/or other food] for her when picking up his daughter from the preschool. When I interviewed him at a minimart, it was time for him to pick up his daughter, and I saw him buying some drinks and chips for his daughter. He sometimes cooked both rice and other food for dinner but usually cooked the rice after dropping his daughter at home while his wife cooked the rest of the meal. He dropped his wife at work, picked her up from work, and dropped her at the market to do the shopping for dinner. He washed his girl’s and wife’s clothes every two or three days during the week, but his wife washed all the family clothes on the weekend.

The third case concerns Chamnan who is associated with private preschool A in Phnom Penh. Chamnan has two daughters aged seven and a half and three years and a half. He used to be a worker in an NGO in education. In partnership with his siblings, he recently started a home-based family business in food catering. His wife used to be an accountant at a newsagent but is now working in their business. Chamnan is mainly responsible for dropping off and picking up his daughters from school, but he recently withdrew his younger daughter from her preschool for a while because of a health problem. He has a
primary role in educating his children at home and playing with them. His narratives about the games he plays with his children tell us that he is close to them. As his wife is also at home where he is running his business, he tends to feed and mind his daughter when his wife is not home. His life trajectory indicated that he significantly engaged in childcare when he and his wife were employed. When his first daughter was about three, his wife cared for the girl in the morning and dropped her at a state preschool in the afternoon on her way to work. Chamnan picked up his daughter from the preschool, minded her at his office or in a nearby park, and fed her until his wife left from work to drive the daughter home. He cooked for the family before working on the catering business. He explained that his wife was good at traditional recipes, but he developed new recipes and participated in some decoration of the food.

The above three cases demonstrate how ‘more-caring’ fathers are significantly involved in care work in the absence of female kinship support, though their degree of engagement is slightly different. This difference is determined by the nature of each father’s occupation and each wife’s job. In Sothun’s case, he is responsible for every childcare task in the day because of the flexibility of his job and the inflexibility of his wife’s occupation. In contrast, Vichet engaged more in care work when his work was near home but less in care work when his work took him far from home. The flexibility of Vichet’s engagement in care work is possible because of the flexibility of his wife’s home-based business. The number of children in the family may also play a role in shaping decisions about the type of occupation these fathers’ spouses can engage in. Vichet has three small children, while Sothun has only a small daughter who is in his daily care because the older one is in the care of his sister-in-law in the province. In Chamnan’s case, he engaged more in care work when he and his wife were in paid employment.

With female kinship support, and without access to daycare services, care work is shared between these ‘more-caring’ fathers, their spouses, and female kin. This pattern is reflected in six ‘more-caring’ fathers’ lives. Pheaktra [a farmer] at village A is a father of a five year old daughter and a four month old baby boy, while his wife is a garment factory worker but on maternity leave without pay. He has been responsible for caring for his

223 They are virtual horse riding and foot massage. Virtual horse riding is a typical game in Khmer society in which an adult pretends to be a horse, and a child rides on his or her back.
daughter and doing some household chores since his daughter was five months old, getting some support from his mother and sister who are living in the same village. Pheaktra feeds his daughter and does the cooking and the shopping.

Bona at community preschool B is the father of a daughter aged four and a half and a son aged one and a half. Bona is a self-employed goldsmith, and his wife a garment factory worker. His mother-in-law resides with them to care for the small boy and do the cooking. In addition to his income-earning role as a goldsmith, his primary roles in the family are to do the shopping every day, to educate his daughter at home, to feed his daughter every morning, and to drop his daughter off and pick her up from school.

Vanarith at community preschool B is the father of a 10 year old boy and five year old daughter. He was employed at his sibling-in-law’s service station in front of his house, and living in his parents-in-law's house. His wife is a factory worker. Vanarith shared caring responsibilities with his mother-in-law during the day. His central caring role involves dropping his children off and picking them up from school, feeding his daughter, and minding his daughter with some support from his mother-in-law. His mother-in-law does the shopping and the cooking for the family. Although he needed to drop the children off and pick them up from school, he did not always have time to do so. He occasionally asked his clients who filled up their motorcycles at his station to drop his daughter at preschool, while his younger sibling sometimes helped him in picking up his daughter from preschool.

Sothea at private preschool A, who has a daughter aged four and a son aged three, is an electrician at a state-owned enterprise. His wife is a member of staff at a private bank. His primary role is to take care of his two children during the day and do the housework. He explained his role as follows: ‘Because I have more time [than my wife], I am responsible for my children’s education and housework, such as feeding children, doing the cooking [rice and food] for my children, and putting my children to sleep. My wife always eats lunch at her office.’ Although he is primarily responsible for childcare and housework, his mother-in-law and sibling-in-law who share a residence adjacent to his house provide essential support to him because his working shifts keep changing every day, except for Thursdays. His sibling-in-law helps him pick up his children while his mother-in-law cooks for him when he does not have time for such tasks.
Phalla at village B is the father of a three year old son. Phalla’s wife, Sinath, recently started a paid job as an assistant to a Chinese designer at a garment factory. He is a security guard at a university in Phnom Penh and usually stays at this university; however, he comes home every Friday to wash the family’s clothes and to mind his son on the weekend.

Sok at state preschool B, who has a five year old son, is an apprentice motorbike mechanic at a motor repair shop, while his wife is a garment factory worker. He can earn income by growing some vegetables during the dry season to supplement his apprenticeship wage. He is primarily responsible for caring for his son during the day with some support from his mother, whose house is in the same village. He spends his whole day in his apprenticeship role at the motor repair shop, eating lunch there. His daily childcare responsibility includes dropping off his son at preschool for a three-hour session before starting his apprenticeship work. He then picks his son up from preschool and takes him to his workplace. While he is working, his son plays and/or takes a nap on a hammock at the shop. This means that Sok is looking after his son while working as an apprentice. At times he asks that his mother care for his son at her home while he is working. Sometimes he cooks rice and buys some cooked food in case his wife has to work overtime; otherwise, his wife cooks dinner for the family.

Although female kin share some care work with the above six caring fathers, these fathers actively and regularly engage in care work. Their spouses are full-time employees and they are not able to access any type of daycare service beyond the three-hour preschool option. Like Vichet, Sothun and Chamnan, who do not have female kinship support, the nature of each father’s occupation influences their level of engagement in care work. Phalla at village B, for instance, participates in childcare and housework only at the weekend as he is not at home during weekdays.

Unlike ‘less-caring’ men, these ‘more-caring’ men are significantly involved in care work, although they also have either live-in paid carers and/or access daycare services. Of the 14 ‘more-caring’ fathers, one father could afford to hire a live-in domestic worker. This is the case of Thearon at state preschool A [state preschool daycare]. Thearon has a daughter aged three and a half and an eight month old son. He is a credit officer at a private bank, while his wife is a marketing officer at the same bank, so Thearon employs
a live-in housemaid to care for his smaller son at home. The daycare service and housemaid have enabled the couple to be in paid employment. His primary responsibility is doing the household chores, such as cooking for the family and washing the family clothes, and his secondary responsibility is in childcare tasks like milk-feeding.

The narratives of these ten ‘more-caring’ fathers represent the first sub-pattern of ‘more-caring masculinity’; they are actively and/or regularly engaged in care work while earning an income in the formal employment economy or through self-employment. This sub-pattern is consonant with findings in some empirical studies conducted in Rwanda by Doyle et al. (2014), in South Africa by Morrell and Jewkes (2011), and in North Vietnam by Hoang and Yeoh (2011). In the case of Rwanda, young men aged under 35 were deliberately targeted by a program called MenCare+ to influence them in engaging more in care work. In the North Vietnamese case, these men were ‘left-behind’ husbands whose spouses had migrated internationally for work.

Swapping Breadwinning Role with Care Work

The following life trajectories of four fathers illustrate the second sub-pattern of ‘more-caring masculinity’ that swaps the primary breadwinning role from the men to their spouses; that is, the fathers undertake responsibility for the ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care that is traditionally undertaken by women. These fathers still earn some income, but it is much less than their wives’ incomes.

One of these four fathers is Phanith at NGO preschool A who quit his professional job to care for his twin daughters [one of whom is blind] immediately after his wife delivered the twin babies. Sao at state preschool B is another father who could not find another job near home after leaving his garment factory job, and who decided, at the request of his wife, not to migrate for a job. Sao is responsible for doing the shopping and cooking and taking his children to and from preschool. The third father is Poly at community preschool A who decided not to migrate but to look after his three children at home while farming. The fourth father is Vuthy at state preschool A who is responsible for childcare and housework while working as a security guard at a private hospital. Phanith, Vuthy and Poly accessed daycare services provided by NGOs, commune councils, and state preschools, while Sao only accessed three-hour preschool sessions. These four fathers have some female kinship support in care work.
My in-depth interviews with these fathers suggest that their wives’ incomes [in the formal economy] played a vital role in shaping their decisions to undertake care work, given their challenges in finding a job and managing their caring responsibilities. Phanith for instance was an administrator at a garment factory before quitting his job, earning about 300 US dollars per month, but his wife’s monthly salary was about 500 to 600 US dollars, including overtime pay. As Phanith’s twin daughters were not healthy after birth, one of them being blind, Phanith spent about 400 US dollars per month on medical treatment. After thoughtful discussions within his nuclear family and with his siblings, he decided to quit his job and take care of his twin daughters at home, with some support from his elderly mother. When asked about how he made such a decision, he explained:

The decision was based on our expenditure. We spent about 200 USD for each child, so we spent about 400 USD monthly, but my monthly salary was about 300 USD. My wife got about 500 to 600 USD a month, including overtime pay. We discussed this issue with one another. My salary was low, but we spent more. My wife dared not ask me to stop working. Each of us thought individually first. My older brother and sister-in-law also suggested an idea that “You both should make your own decision, but you needed to make sure that you both had equivalence between income and expenditure and try not to borrow money from others all the time” (Phanith at NGO preschool A, Phnom Penh, 14 March 2018).

The preceding narrative clearly illustrates men’s acknowledgement of the importance of women’s income in the family. Such acknowledgment is supported by the narratives of three female interviewees receiving no or minimal support from their husbands in this study. These women explained that their husbands helped them do some housework while they were working in garment factories, but stopped helping after these women quit their jobs.224

The adoption of ‘more-caring masculinity’ by these Khmer men when facing challenges in finding a job questions the validity of Hochschild’s (1989, 2003, 2012) ‘principle of balancing’ or Brines’ (1994) notion of ‘displaying gender’ which draw on American fathers’ experiences of childcare. The ‘principle of balance’ and the notion of ‘displaying gender’ suggest that American men ignore care work when they face challenges in finding a job, or their incomes are lower than their spouses’ incomes (Brines 1994; Hochschild

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224 Interviews: Rumduol [mother at community preschool C], Kraing Yov, 29 March 2018; Kanha [mother at community preschool E], Kraing Yov, 29 March 2018; Bopha [mother at state preschool B], Svay Rolum, 4 April 2018.
In the following subsection, I critically scrutinise the life trajectories of Khmer ‘more-caring’ men to elucidate why they adopt ‘more-caring’ practices, especially when they are facing challenges in fulfilling their breadwinning role.

9.2.2 Contributing Factors of More-Caring Masculinity

This subsection argues that men’s childhood and/or teenage experiences of, and/or exposure to housework, along with their spouses’ constant negotiations in relation to care, are essential factors in enabling men to adopt ‘more-caring’ practices. This research and other studies suggest one explanation for more equal gender relations in hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Messerschmidt 2016, 2018). Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argue that the possibility of equality requires program interventions to construct ‘positive hegemonic masculinity’. This argument is illustrated in an empirical study of the MenCare+ project in Rwanda (Doyle et al. 2014). Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) also advise us to look at women’s role in shaping men’s masculinities. Spouses’ roles in influencing husbands’ ‘more-caring masculinity’ resonates in this dissertation, as well as Hochschild’s (1989, 2003, 2012) qualitative studies and Davis and Greenstein’s (2004) quantitative research. These quantitative and qualitative studies show that a wife’s higher education and professional job encourage men to reconstruct a ‘more-caring masculinity’. Likewise, in-depth interviews with all ‘more-caring’ fathers in this research suggest that women’s higher income in paid employment and/or their higher level of education influence these ‘more-caring’ fathers’ attitudes towards, and practices of, childcare.

The construction of a discourse of ‘more-caring masculinity’ and women’s role in shaping men’s caring masculinities are essential, but these factors do not necessarily guarantee that a ‘more-caring masculinity’ will result. American men who earned less income compared with their spouses, for instance, attempted to regain their hegemonic power by not sharing care work with their spouses (Brines 1994; Hochschild 1989, 2003, 2012). I argue that men’s childhood and/or teenage experiences of, and/or exposure to housework, along with their spouses’ constant negotiation around the work, are essential factors enabling men to adopt their ‘more-caring’ practices. The life trajectories of men who actively engaged in care work indicate that these fathers had either childhood or teenage experiences of housework with their parents, especially mothers. Phanith at NGO
preschool A is a typical example; when asked about his perception of and engagement in care work, he explained as follows:

Since I was young, I helped my mother, so I think it is normal for me to do these tasks [childcare and housework]. My father was a bicycle/motorbike repairer, and other brothers helped my father, but I helped my mother in cooking as it did not need more physical strength. I did not have more physical strength like my other brothers did (Phanith at NGO preschool A, Phnom Penh, 14 March 2018).

Similarly, Vuthy at state preschool A was close to his mother when he was small but started engaging in cooking with her in his late teenage years when his family’s economic situation was poor. He explained: ‘I understood my parent’s feelings when our family situation went down to zero. I helped my mother sell food to factory workers. At around 4.00 am, I brought her [mother] to Deum Kor market to buy some vegetables and came back to prepare these vegetables for her’. In a similar vein, Thearon at state preschool A cooked food for his family when he was about 12 as he was the oldest son. He said: ‘My parents just allowed me to do whatever I could do [cooking any food] during that time as they did not have time [to cook]’. This insight is in line with Hochschild’s (1989, 2003, 2012) observation in a study in the United States that men who shared housework with their spouses often tended to have close ties with their mothers but distant relationships with their fathers when they were young. Dissatisfying experiences with their fathers and immersive experiences with their mothers’ daily lives could be one of the factors influencing them.

Although men’s childhood and/or teenage experiences of housework have contributed to the shaping of their male identities, these identities are not fixed; they can be further shaped by men’s interactions with their spouses, families, and peers. Life stories of ‘more-caring’ fathers suggest that these fathers do not maintain their active engagement in care work continuously from their childhood or teenage years to their couple life. Despite discontinuity of engagement in care work, the experience of housework at an early age has prepared them to re-engage in care work in their couple life when it is required. Critical scrutiny of the life stories of ‘more-caring’ fathers suggests that their spouses have influenced their decision to incorporate care work into their masculinity. Vuthy at state preschool A, a security guard, is an example. His wife is a nurse, with a monthly

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225 Interview, Vuthy [father at state preschool A], Phnom Penh, 12 March 2018.
226 Interview, Thearon [father at state preschool A], Phnom Penh, 18 March 2018.
salary that is double his salary. In the first year of his couple life he did not cook or wash clothes but consumed a significant amount of alcohol at night. One night, he went binge-drinking with his friends for a whole night, so his wife was furious with him when he came home. After this he reduced his alcohol consumption little by little, telling his friends that he needed time to care for his son. He did not confess that his wife asked him to cook and wash the family clothes; rather, he told me that he started doing all the household chores because he understood his wife's burden of paid work and housework, and he recognised his binge-drinking problem.

In a changing socio-economic context, some men accept their reality by adopting ‘more-caring’ practices and supporting one another. An interview with a ‘more-caring’ father in a rural setting indicated that his peers who faced similar situations supported each other in adopting care work as part of their masculinity. Pheaktra at village A recounted how his peers encouraged one another to engage in care work in changing socio-economic contexts. He participated in social gatherings, having a drink with his friends once a month. About four or five of his male peers cooked food for their families because their spouses were employed in factories. At the gatherings, they discussed different things, including farming techniques and their wives’ monthly incomes. They sometimes talked about how to cook more delicious food for their families, supporting one another in doing so. In his words, ‘My male friends support and motivate me to do the housework and cooking. They said that we are in the same situation. Your wife and my wife are working in a factory, so you cook the food, and I also cook food. Just do it.’

This subsection has so far indicated that men’s childhood experiences and/or teenage exposure to housework, along with their spouse’s paid employment and constant negotiation about caring roles are the primary constitutive factors of ‘more-caring masculinity’.

With support from their spouses, these ‘more-caring’ fathers are negotiating the gender norms of Khmer cultural discourse on childcare through their social interactions with their family and peers. The cases of Thearon at state preschool A and Phanith at NGO preschool A epitomise this argument. Thearon is a credit officer at a private bank who was a heavy drinker when he was single, before he had children. He socialised with friends and drank beer almost every day, but later reduced this to once or twice a week. 

227 Interview, Pheaktra [father at village A], Kraing Yov, 14 April 2018.
He now spends only one to two hours on his coffee at the weekend as his time is fully occupied with paid and care work, although he has a live-in paid carer to assist. He explained: ‘I do not have enough time with my colleagues, including my supervisors and/or friends to eat out as I am responsible for taking my wife and daughter home every day [after work]’. He usually rejected colleagues’ requests to eat out. His peers always teased him, saying he is like a woman because he is at home with his children and wife all the time. He responded that he needed to do that as his children were still small, but that he might have more time when his children were older. The following quote shows how Thearon has challenged his friends:

The way that I challenged my friends is that I told them that I could not neglect my children after they were born. Some friends also challenged me by saying that other people also have children and wives. How can they have time to enjoy? I responded to them that I did not know about others. They may manage their time efficiently or may have others to help out. This is how I prioritise my tasks (Thearon at state preschool A, Phnom Penh, 18 March 2018).

How Thearon has dealt with the challenges posed by his peers is connected with his understanding of the problem of Khmer social norms. When asked about the *Chbab Srey*, Thearon responded that he did not know much about it, but he did know about the problem of the gender division of labour in this *Chbab*. He told me that he listened to education programs a lot and found that couples often have arguments over the distinction between men’s and women’s work because men normally do not do women’s work [housework]. He explained to me that women’s work mirrors the old saying, “women cannot move around the stove”. He went on to explain that a large amount of housework imposed on women prevents them from doing other work outside the house.

Thearon’s case shows a man trying to challenge his peers who have adopted ‘hegemonic masculinity’, as prescribed in the Khmer cultural discourse on care. My interview with his wife, Sereyrath, indicated that she played an essential role in reviving his ‘more-caring masculinity’ which had been dormant since his childhood experiences of housework. Sereyrath explained that sometimes Thearon was upset with her when his peers teased him about doing housework, pressuring him to go for a drink at night when he could not join them. In Sereyrath’s view, teasing by his peers occurred when he socialised with
them. It hurt his feelings, so she asked Thearon not to hang out with those friends; instead, she suggested Thearon drink beer at home.  

Similarly, Phanith at NGO preschool A negotiated Khmer cultural discourse by reducing his social time with peers. He also tried to convince his father to accept his ‘more-caring’ masculinity. At first, Phanith’s father did not allow him to wash the family clothes, especially his wife’s underclothes. In his father’s opinion, washing women’s underclothes brought bad luck upon the family, so that the family would not be prosperous. Phanith and his wife attempted to correct the father’s misconception several times, while Phanith kept washing his wife’s underclothes. Gradually, his father accepted it. When asked about peer pressure, Phanith responded as follows:

> ‘I do not care much about what others are saying, but what I care the most is to do everything for my children. Even if others may say that a stay-at-home father who cares for his children and depends on his wife’s income to feed the family is weak’ (Phanith at NGO preschool A, Phnom Penh, 14 March 2018).

The preceding quotation is illustrative of men’s ‘more-caring’ practices that have renegotiated the traditional gender roles of Khmer society.

### 9.3 Chapter Summary and Discussion

In this chapter, I have illustrated the two extremes on the ‘caring masculinities’ spectrum. ‘Less-caring masculinity’ is at the lower end of the spectrum. Men with ‘less-caring masculinity’ prioritise their breadwinning role and do not consider other types of care as central to their intersecting identities as fathers and husbands, so they are irregularly and/or minimally engaged in one or some ‘direct care’ and/or ‘indirect care’ tasks. They are inclined to minimally engage in ‘direct’ rather than ‘indirect’ care, especially in the form of ‘masculine care’. In addition to the minimal and irregular engagement in ‘direct care’, they are actively engaged in ‘masculine indirect care’ [housework] that requires relatively more physical strength but less time. They nevertheless make an exception during their spouses’ postpartum care period during which men are involved in both types of care work that are traditionally undertaken by women. This involvement in postpartum care is shaped by social expectations of men’s responsibility to their wives at this time.

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228 Interview, Sereyrath [mother at state preschool A], Phnom Penh, 18 March 2018.
an expectation that is officially scripted in one of the five booklets of the home-based childcare program, as analysed in Chapter 8.

Situating ‘less-caring’ practices in the four phases of the caring process (Tronto 1993b, 1998, 2013), these men are actively engaged in the first two phases [caring about and caring for] as these phases are central to men’s traditional masculine identity. In ‘caring’ and ‘cared-for’ stages, men tend to engage in ‘direct care’ that is closely linked to their traditional masculine identity rather than in both types of care that are associated with feminine identity.

To elucidate men’s negligible engagement in care work and women’s acceptance of such work, I argue that we need to expand the concept of the ‘gendered politics of reciprocity’ (Brickell 2011a) to consider the intersecting effects on care of the absence of public daycare and female kinship support, and gendered social norms, rather than focusing on the latter alone. Chapters 8 and 9 show that men’s negligible engagement in care work and women’s acceptance of their spouses’ minimal engagement in that care occur when women are prevented from working outside the house due to the unavailability of any type of daycare service and limitations in female kinship support. These men and women consider that the primary income earned by the husband is for the support of the whole family and that therefore the wife needs to undertake care work at home to support her spouse. The pressure for women to undertake housework involves the production of both the work itself and their identity as the family carer. Such production, at the same time, contributes to the shaping of ‘less-caring masculinity’ which is consonant with the masculinity theory on women’s role in constructing ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Messerschmidt 2016, 2018). The life trajectories of women in this study suggest that women’s social and occupational status has contributed to the construction of men’s ‘less-caring masculinity’. As elaborated in these two chapters [8 & 9], only women who have made the difficult choice to be unpaid-working or paid homemaking mothers have been forced to accept their spouses’ ‘less-caring’ practices. Their choice is forced upon them by the interplay between the Khmer cultural discourse on care and the absence of public and enterprise-funded daycare services and female kinship support. The notion of ‘gendered politics of reciprocity’, therefore, is not only constructed by Khmer gendered social norms but also by the absence of state and enterprise-funded daycare and kinship support for care.
At the other end of the spectrum of ‘caring masculinities’ is ‘more-caring masculinity’. ‘More-caring’ men consider care work as a central responsibility of their intersecting identities as fathers and husbands, even though they may have female kinship support and/or access to daycare services. They regularly engage in all four stages of the caring process (Tronto 1993b, 1998, 2013). I argue that this ‘more-caring masculinity’ is a form of ‘positive hegemonic masculinity’ (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005) or ‘critical positive masculinity’ (Lomas 2013). It is a form of resistance to the Khmer cultural discourse on care. Nevertheless, the degree of men’s active involvement in care work may depend on the nature of their employment and their spouses’ employment. Some ‘more-caring’ fathers have changed their occupations to self-employment or work in the informal economy as a way of prioritising care work over their breadwinning role. Their limited earning ability and their wife’s greater capacity to earn the family income have influenced these men’s decisions to make an occupational adjustment.

I have shown that men’s childhood experiences and/or teenage exposure to housework, along with their spouses’ negotiations around care, have enabled these fathers to reconfigure their masculinity towards ‘more-caring masculinity’ when confronting challenges in earning the family income. This insight sheds light on the constitutive factors inspiring men to significantly participate in care work, and questions the validity of Hochschild’s (1989, 2003, 2012) ‘principle of balancing’ or Brines’ (1994) notion of ‘displaying gender’.

The reformulated concept of ‘caring masculinities’ theorised and articulated in this research significantly contributes to the current debate on the link between ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and care (Doucet 2004b, 2006, 2013; Elliott 2016; Hunter, Riggs & Augoustinos 2017; Jordan 2020; Marsiglio & Pleck 2005). Specifically, it enhances Elliot’s (2016) limited conception of ‘caring masculinities’ as a visionary model of ‘direct care’ that is opposed to ‘hegemonic masculinity’. This limited conception focuses on fathering practices in ‘direct care’ and thus excludes breadwinning and ‘indirect care’. I have posited the reformulated concept of ‘caring masculinities’ in this chapter to encompass both ‘less-caring’ and ‘more-caring’ practices which capture a complex interplay between ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care, including ‘masculine care’, and breadwinning based on men’s intersecting identities as fathers and husbands.
The analysis in this chapter shows that women’s occupations and education have contributed to the construction of both ‘less-caring’ and ‘more-caring’ masculinities. On the one hand, unpaid-working and/or paid homeworking women have made constrained choices that support ‘less-caring masculinity’; on the other hand, ‘more-caring masculinity’ has been shaped by men’s childhood and/or teenage experiences of and/or exposure to housework, and their spouses’ constant negotiation in relation to care. As analysed in Chapter 8, women’s successful negotiation of care practice has resulted from their paid employment outside the house and their higher levels of education. The reformulated concept of ‘caring masculinities’ theorised and articulated in this research is therefore a key theoretical contribution to critical men’s studies.
Chapter 10
Discussion and Conclusion
Reconfigurations of Caring Practices

Feminist scholarship on care policies in developing country contexts has paid scant attention to the link between cultural discourses, policy discourses and practices, and women’s and men’s experiences of childcare practices. Such a link is illustrated through this dissertation, which investigated the National Childcare Policy in Cambodia by answering three interrelated questions: (1) How have Khmer gender norms shaped the National Childcare Policy? (2) How has the policy constructed masculinities and femininities in childcare work? and (3) How have men and women reconfigured their masculinities and femininities in and through childcare work?

This dissertation developed and articulated a new feminist framework for transformative care utilising three interconnected tools: methodological, evaluative, and conceptual. The methodological tool [critical approaches to childcare policies] scrutinises the cultural and policy contexts of childcare policies, examines the assumptions underlying proposed policy representations, and interrogates policy silences on alternative representations. It also analyses the policy consequences of the allocation of care between the four different actors in the ‘care diamond’, and between genders within the family.

The evaluative tool of the new feminist framework [the transformative ethics of care] assesses childcare policies against core ethical criteria: recognition, reduction, redistribution, representation, solidarity between social groups, and women’s autonomy. These criteria determine whether childcare policies are ‘ethically transformative’ or not; policies are deemed to be so if contributing to the fulfilment of these criteria.

To analyse the distribution of care labour within the family, the new feminist framework deploys two conceptual tools: ‘social care’ and ‘caring masculinities’. The concept of ‘social care’ enables this research to capture women’s lived experiences and practices of childcare and to analyse cultural discourses on childcare. Further, it draws our attention
to the role of the state in either weakening or reinforcing such cultural discourses. The concept of ‘caring masculinities’ permits this thesis to examine the extent to which, and how, men have engaged in ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care, including ‘masculine care’, alongside their breadwinning role. I define ‘caring masculinities’ along a continuum that includes ‘less-caring’ and ‘more-caring’ practices at each end, both of which are shaped by men’s conceptions of their intersecting identities as fathers and husbands.

The critical analysis of the research data employing the new feminist framework for transformative care enables this dissertation to argue that some Khmer women and men are adopting ‘reflexive reconfigurations’ of care practices, although others are strongly shaped by the interplay between the Khmer cultural discourse on childcare, and the state’s role in reconstructing such a discourse through its education textbooks and policies on childcare. Evidence supporting this thesis’ argument is that, while these cultural and policy discourses and practices have firmly shaped the thoughts and practices of many women in childcare and housework, some women are ‘reflexively’ negotiating such discourses and practices on childcare by encouraging their spouses to engage more in care work. Similarly, such discourses and practices have propelled about half of the men in this research to adopt ‘less-caring’ practices, while the others are ‘reflexively’ renegotiating these discourses by adopting ‘more-caring’ practices.

This concluding chapter first summarises the supporting evidence for the thesis’ argument and situates it within the broader literature. This section will also answer the three linked research questions. The chapter then concludes with a discussion of key contributions to the theoretical fields of gender, masculinity, and social policy.

10.1 Evidence for the thesis argument

The argument of this thesis derives from the interrogation of the link between the Khmer cultural discourse on childcare, policy discourses and practices, and women’s and men’s ‘reflexive reconfigurations’ of childcare practices. Such a link was critically investigated through the three interrelated questions answered in the five data chapters [5 to 9]. This section is structured around these three research questions in order. Although the research findings will be discussed under questions 1 and 2 separately, they are co-constitutive and mutually reinforcing. The section will include discussion of the first two questions with
an evaluation of the National Childcare Policy and its first Action Plan before tackling the final research question.

(1) How have Khmer gender norms shaped the National Childcare Policy?

To answer this first research question, the thesis first examined the Khmer cultural discourse on childcare and how the Cambodian state and other social institutions have embedded this discourse in Khmer society (Chapter 5). This research then investigated the influence of the Khmer cultural discourse and its embeddedness in Khmer society, and its influence on the National Childcare Policy and its constitutive contexts. In Chapter 5, I investigated the cultural discourse scripted in the Chbab Srey and the Chbab Pros, exploring how such a discourse has been imparted to younger generations of Khmer society. The Chbab Srey constructs women’s identity as the family carer through the concept of a ‘good wife’ that is central to its definition of ‘virtuous women’. At the same time, this Chbab categorises women who do not undertake caring responsibilities as a ‘bad wife’, central to its definition of ‘unvirtuous women’. The concept of a ‘good wife’ presupposes a discourse of ‘women as head of the household’. This chapter indicated that the ‘women as head of the household’ discourse was instilled in younger generations through Khmer wedding ceremony rituals, through social interactions between peers, and by older parents influencing younger parents.

Chapter 5 also indicated that a state institution, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), embedded the Khmer cultural discourse on childcare in their civics-morals textbooks, constructing the concept of ‘family happiness/harmony’ in these texts. Such a concept casts women’s identities as mother and wife, as ‘head of the household’, responsible for managing housework and taking care of children and husbands. In contrast, this concept constructs men’s identities as father and husband, as ‘head of the family’, one whose primary role is to earn a family income, with their secondary role being support of their wives in childcare, child education, and housework. The embeddedness of this Khmer cultural discourse on childcare in these civics-morals textbooks suggests that this state institution attempts to impose what Shore and Wright (1997b) call the ‘fundamental organising principles of society’ in Khmer society, or the ‘gender order’ in Connell’s term. I argue that this embedded concept of ‘family happiness/harmony’ reflects the cultural context to which the National Childcare Policy...
and other care-related policies subscribe in the neoliberal economy. This argument is in line with Gasper and Apthorpe’s (1996) suggestion that both policy ‘contexts’ and ‘texts’ should be considered.

The concept of ‘family happiness/harmony’ has shaped childcare policies in two ways in the context of the neoliberal economy. First, it has shaped the National Childcare Policy (through its first Action Plan 2014-18), and its constituent context in the post-socialist regime, from the 1990s to 2010, by relegating daycare matters to the private rather than the public sphere. This influence was scrutinised in Chapter 7, and its constitutive contexts examined in Chapter 6. Although there are some legal provisions relating to public daycare in the Constitution and to enterprise-funded daycare in the Labour Law, the National Childcare Policy has conceptualised childcare as comprising ‘preschool education’ and ‘familial care’. This conceptualisation has given rise to two crucial policy silences [on state-funded and enterprise-based daycare], explicitly assuming that private daycare services can accommodate daycare needs. Only high-income families can afford these private daycare services, effectively excluding low-income families whose daycare labour and costs must therefore be borne by the family, including the extended family.

Understanding the above policy silences is possible through the analysis of constitutive policy contexts in the National Childcare Policy (Chapter 6). This chapter indicated that childcare was conceptualised as a means of enabling women to participate in economic activities during the socialist regime of the 1980s. Although the community and family bore some responsibility for daycare, the state took a pivotal role during this socialist period in providing public daycare services to families, in the absence of a private sector. The state’s commitment to daycare provision was enshrined in the Constitution and then was translated into actual daycare services. Nevertheless, from the 1990s when neoliberal ideas permeated Cambodia, childcare was conceptualised as supporting provision of ‘preschool education’ and ‘familial care’ rather than as a ‘means of facilitating women’s access to the labour market’. Chapters 6 and 7 elaborated further, explaining that the Cambodian state accepted only limited responsibility for preschool education, transferring complete responsibility for daycare to the private sector and the family. Although the Cambodian state has transferred responsibility for daycare to business enterprises, and to private preschools and daycare centres in the private sector, it has not
firmly enforced the legal provisions covering enterprise-based daycare. Daycare services therefore are all commercialised.

The second key influence of the concept of ‘family happiness/harmony’ is in its shaping of policy representations and practices by its feminising of ‘familial care’. The feminisation of childcare occurred through the interpretation of gender-neutral keywords “parents” and “guardians” in the policy [Chapter 7] as gender-biased terms “women” and “mother” when designing the home-based childcare program and publishing the program booklets, as analysed in Chapter 8. The influence of the concept of ‘family happiness/harmony’ on the national policy discourse and policy practices has been to construct Khmer masculinities and femininities in particular ways, as discussed in the following section.

(2) How has the policy constructed masculinities and femininities in childcare work?

This second research question was tackled through a critical analysis of the national childcare discourse—in policy representations and through their underlying assumptions in Chapter 7—and of policy practices in Chapter 8. As illustrated in Chapter 7, this research demonstrated that the national childcare discourse focuses on ‘preschool education’ and ‘familial care’. Policy practices through the home-based childcare program have feminised ‘familial care’ in two ways, through the program structure and through seeking to instil caring responsibilities into women rather than men. Regarding the program structure, women were assigned to lead the program and to disseminate key childcare messages to young mothers. A core mothers’ group leader disseminated important childcare messages to five chiefs of small groups, and then each chief passed on these messages to their four young mothers’ group members. Secondly, core mothers’ group leaders and small mothers’ group chiefs had instructed other women as mothers rather than men as fathers to care for their children. This instruction draws on the cultural norms of Khmer society and important childcare messages in the program booklets. These booklets associate caring responsibility with mothers while limiting men’s supporting role in care to just postpartum care. This analysis suggests that the national childcare discourse and policy practices have explicitly constructed Khmer women’s femininities as embracing the mother and wife roles, responsible for ‘familial care’. At the same time, they have implicitly constructed men’s masculinities around the breadwinning role but with an explicit supporting responsibility in postpartum care.
The above analysis indicates that the National Childcare Policy and its first Action Plan 2014-18 have problematised childcare as ‘preschool education’ and ‘familial care’ and thus excluded two crucial policy representations [public daycare and enterprise-based daycare], despite their being embedded in the Constitution and the Labour Law. Such a problematisation of childcare and its practices shows that the state chooses not to redistribute care labour and costs from the family to the public sphere; instead, the state has feminised ‘familial care’ by not challenging the Khmer cultural discourse. Assessing this policy conceptualisation of childcare and its practices through the ‘transformative ethics of care’ indicates that it is not ‘ethically transformative’ as it does not adequately satisfy the six evaluative ethical criteria. In particular, the policy and its first Action Plan neither create solidarity between social groups nor enhance women’s autonomy within the family; rather, the policy and its action plan have sustained ‘gender structures’ or the ‘gender order’ which have shaped the thoughts and practices of many women and men in childcare arrangements, as illustrated in discussion of the following research question.

(3) How have men and women reconfigured their masculinities and femininities in and through childcare work?

This third research question was answered in Chapters 8 and 9 by investigating the intersecting consequences of the Khmer cultural discourse on childcare, and the policy discourses and practices in the gendered configurations of childcare practices. At the same time, these chapters explored how women and men are renegotiating these discourses in caring practices.

The absence of public and enterprise-funded daycare services, combined with the feminisation of ‘familial care’, has forced families to find their own solutions to the management of daycare matters. Women’s and men’s configurations of childcare practices were explored in Chapters 8 and 9, respectively. Chapter 8 revealed a dominant pattern in which many young women (75 per cent in this study, equivalent to 20 out of 26) are required to take primary responsibility for childcare and housework with no or minimal engagement from their spouses. Most women (15 women) in this first dominant pattern are unpaid working and/or paid homeworking mothers, but a few (5 women) are employed mothers. As many as 60 per cent of these women do not access any types of daycare services, and only 20 per cent of them have significant female
kinship support. Accessing available daycare services and/or significant kinship support from female kin has enabled the five employed women to be in paid employment in the formal economy.

Chapter 9 illustrated two essential patterns of men’s caring masculinities: ‘less-caring’ and ‘more-caring’. Men with ‘less-caring masculinity’ do not consider care as their primary responsibility and thus irregularly perform one or more chores, spending little time on childcare; instead, they prioritise their role as the family provider and relegate the work of childcare to their spouses. The proportion of men adopting this ‘less-caring masculinity’ (reported in Chapter 9) is much lower than women's reports of their spouses' neglect of care in Chapter 8. As illustrated in Chapter 9, only 46 per cent of these men (equivalent to 14 out of 26) fall under men's ‘less-caring masculinity’, while 75 per cent of women reported their spouses' neglect of care, as indicated in Chapter 8. The higher proportion reported in women's accounts is due to the connection between women's occupations and their caring responsibility. Women who reported their spouse’s neglect of care are unpaid working and/or paid homeworking mothers. These occupations tend to determine their responsibility in childcare work. Nevertheless, both men’s and women’s accounts concerning men’s engagement in ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care are consistent. Men adopting a ‘less-caring masculinity’ tend to minimally participate in ‘direct’ rather than ‘indirect’ care, especially in the form of ‘masculine care’.

Men with the ‘less-caring’ masculine pattern tend to neglect housework ['indirect care'] requiring relatively less physical strength and more time, including washing clothes, cooking, doing the dishes and cleaning up the house. ‘Less-caring’ fathers usually take up only ‘masculine ‘indirect care’, housework requiring relatively more physical strength and less time, such as filling giant jars with water and collecting or chopping firewood for cooking. The common childcare tasks undertaken by ‘less-caring’ fathers are taking their children for a walk and dropping their children off and picking them up from preschool, both seen as a form of ‘masculine direct care’. A few (2) fathers adopt only ‘masculine direct care’ and ignore other childcare tasks. The concept of the ‘gendered politics of reciprocity’ (Brickell 2011a) helps us explain men’s disinclination towards housework and women’s acceptance of their spouses’ disinclination. These men and women consider that the primary income earned by the husband is for the support of the whole family and that therefore the wife needs to undertake childcare work at home to
support her spouse. Women’s life trajectories in this study suggest that women, who are unpaid working and/or paid homeworking mothers, tend to accept their husbands’ ‘less-caring’ practices, but women in formal paid employment tend to challenge these ‘less-caring’ practices.

Notably, ‘less-caring’ fathers do conceptualise childcare work as part of good fathers’ and husbands’ traits during the postpartum care period specifically. They generally engage in more childcare work during this period. This engagement is generally confirmed even by mothers who usually have no or minimal support from their spouses in childcare. This engagement is congruent with some of the content of the home-based childcare program’s booklets. Despite being involved in care work in this period, ‘less-caring’ fathers’ level of engagement is still not as high as that of ‘more-caring’ fathers.

Both Chapters 8 and 9 indicated that female members of extended families (especially grandmothers) play a significant role as daycare providers in supporting young mothers’ care work. These grandmothers provide significant childcare support through their co-residence with their children in extended families or provide it to nuclear families from adjacent residences. Even if nuclear families are not adjacent to their parents, grandmothers still provide some childcare support, especially during Chhlang Tonle and Sasai Kchey [postpartum care period]. This role of the extended family in childcare work is typical of developing countries and of Asia (see Hill, Ford & Baird 2017; Razavi & Staab 2012b; Yeung 2013).

The preceding analyses have vividly indicated that women’s caring responsibilities and men’s ‘less-caring’ masculinity have been shaped by the interaction between the Khmer cultural discourse on childcare and the state’s interventions and policies on childcare. The Khmer cultural discourse on childcare and its embeddedness in society have given rise to women’s identity as ‘good wives’ and as ‘heads of the household’. The state has constructed the concept of ‘family happiness/harmony’ by drawing on the Khmer cultural discourse on childcare. This familial conceptualisation of childcare has influenced the policy representations so as to create silence around public daycare and enterprise-funded daycare, while shaping policy practices so as to feminise ‘familial care’.

This dissertation also identified women’s and men’s ‘reflexive reconfigurations’ of caring practices, despite the influence of the Khmer cultural discourse on childcare and
feminisation of ‘familial care’ in gender structures. Some women and many men have reflexively reconfigured their childcare practices in attempting to modify these gender structures. In Chapter 8, a minority (23 per cent) of women had significant support in childcare and housework from their spouses. These women’s accounts suggest that their employment in the formal economy and/or higher level of education play an essential role in enabling these mothers to negotiate with their spouses to share some childcare and housework tasks. They challenge the dichotomy between the husband as the breadwinner and the wife as the family carer embedded in Brickell’s (2011a) concept of the ‘gendered politics of reciprocity’.

Women’s negotiations with their husbands in relation to engaging more in care work are reflected in many men’s narratives, as analysed in Chapter 9. More than half of the men (54 per cent) in this study oriented themselves towards ‘more-caring masculinity’. This percentage is far higher than women’s accounts in Chapter 8 and may be related to these men being in contact with preschool programs, meaning that all men in this research have been engaged in some childcare work. This proportion may not statistically represent the total population. These ‘more-caring’ men consider care work an integral part of their intersecting identities as fathers and husbands, however, even though some of them have female kinship support and access daycare services or can afford to hire a live-in paid carer. These men spent more time in childcare work compared with ‘less-caring’ men. This ‘more-caring’ masculinity can be construed as a form of ‘positive hegemonic masculinity’ (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005) or ‘critical positive masculinity’ (Lomas 2013). While the majority of these ‘more-caring’ men (10 men) are involved both in their breadwinning role and care work, a minority of them (four men) surrender their breadwinning role to their spouses and undertake the caring responsibility. These men still earn some income, but it is much less than their wives’ earnings. Of these four fathers, three access daycare services provided by NGOs, commune councils, and state preschools, while one father does not access such services. All fathers have some female kinship support in childcare work. My in-depth interviews with these ‘more-caring’ men suggest that their spouses’ incomes [in the formal economy] play a vital role in shaping men’s decisions to undertake childcare work, as do their challenges in finding jobs. Childcare is therefore shared between these men and their female kin and/or daycare service providers, permitting their wives to be in full-time employment with minimal
engagement in care work. These men’s accounts are consonant with the narratives of three female interviewees who have no or minimal spousal support with care work; that is, men tend to value women’s paid employment in the formal economy and to engage more in some housework chores when their spouses are employed.

Women’s voices are essential but not sufficient in constructing this ‘more-caring masculinity’. I argue that the interaction between women’s constant negotiations with their husbands and their husbands’ positive perceptions of childcare may explain why men have adopted a ‘more-caring masculinity’. The narratives of men who have engaged in childcare as much as or more than their spouses suggest that these men’s childhood and/or teenage experiences in housework have influenced their positive perceptions of childcare work. Experiences in housework at an early age have influenced their masculine identities to include the responsibility for childcare. These identities are not fixed but reinforced through ongoing negotiations with their spouses.

This section summarised the dissertation findings in relation to the three research questions to support the thesis argument. These findings illustrated how women’s intersecting identities as mothers and wives in care work, and men’s ‘caring masculinities’, are shaped by the interplay between the Khmer cultural discourse on care and its embeddedness in society, and the state’s role in reconstructing such a discourse through education textbooks and its policies on childcare. Without having access to any daycare services and with no significant female kinship support, many women in this research have made a constrained choice to be unpaid working and/or paid homeworking mothers. Becoming such mothers gives them sufficient time to care for their children and do the housework, but only to earn a limited income. In these cases, men have oriented themselves towards ‘less-caring masculinity’ by focusing on their breadwinning role and minimally engaging in care work. At the same time, this research also showed how women and men are negotiating Khmer cultural and policy discourses on childcare, with a small group of women but a significant group of men ‘reflexively’ reconfiguring their caring practices in ways that diverge from traditional Khmer gender role norms. This small group of women are negotiating with their spouses to engage more in care work, and many men are adopting ‘more-caring masculinity’ as a result.
10.2 Thesis Contributions

This thesis has made both theoretical and empirical contributions to the fields of gender, masculinity, and social policy, which in turn have implications for policy and project development designs. The primary theoretical contribution is the theorisation and articulation of a new feminist framework for transformative care. The three tools [methodological, evaluative and conceptual] of this framework are potentially extremely useful for any research on care policies, including this thesis, to enable critical interrogation of the link between childcare policy discourses and practices, cultural discourses on childcare, and women’s and men’s ‘reflexive reconfigurations’ of childcare practices.

10.2.1 Theoretical Contributions

The methodological tool ['critical approaches to childcare policy'] enriches our knowledge of policy consequences on people’s identities in critical policy studies. Critical policy scholars (Bacchi 1999, 2009; Bacchi & Goodwin 2016; Wood 1985) theorise that policy discourse and policy practices have shaped people’s identities. While acknowledging the validity of this theorising in many types of social policy, I argue that we also need to pay particular heed to the intersecting consequences of cultural discourses, policy discourses and practices, and policy silences when analysing childcare policies. This research shows that while the Khmer cultural discourse on childcare has shaped childcare policy discourses in Cambodia, such a cultural discourse is embedded in social institutions and interactions which operates independently of these policy discourses but nevertheless intersects with them; that is, men’s and women’s configurations of care practices are not shaped by the policy discourses alone, but by the interplay between policy and cultural discourses. Moreover, this dissertation indicates that we need to pay particular attention to policy silences, as they are as influential as problematised actions in policy representations. We need to examine the effects of these policy silences in conjunction with the issues problematised in the policy.

The ‘transformative ethics of care’—the evaluative tool—adds additional ethical criteria to the existing evaluative standards of the ‘transformative approach to care’ (Esquivel 2014) while redefining these evaluative standards [recognition and redistribution]. Doing so enables us to assess care policies in developing country contexts in an ethically
transformative way. First, by drawing on the feminist ethics of care (Clement 1996; Tronto 1993b, 1998, 2013) and feminist gender justice theory (Fraser 2005, 2008, 2013), this evaluative tool adds three interrelated ethical criteria, *solidarity* between social groups, *representation*, and *women’s autonomy*, to the existing three evaluative standards, *recognition*, *reduction* and *redistribution*, theorised by Esquivel (2014). Second, in this evaluative tool, I extend the concept of ‘recognition’ and ‘redistribution’ of care work embedded in the ‘transformative approach to care’ (Esquivel 2014). The concept of ‘recognition’ is better understood as the 'legitimisation of care work' which includes both recognition and valorisation (Daly 2001). In this view, care work is not just deemed a good thing, but is legitimised in policies and other legal documents (Daly 2001). This concept should pay particular attention to the feminist economists’ argument that ‘social reproduction’ is a precondition for other commodity productions and also a goal in itself (Elson 2004; Folbre 1994; Razavi & Staab 2012b). This evaluative tool also enriches Esquivel’s (2014) conception of ‘redistribution’ at the societal level; she believes that care work should be moved from the family to the ‘public sphere’ of markets and the state (Esquivel 2014, p. 435). Using this evaluative tool, I redefine the ‘public sphere’ of markets to include the care provider role of business enterprises supporting their workers rather than focusing just on profit-driven care providers, as proposed by Esquivel (2014). This can avoid the reinforcement of social inequalities while increasing the ability of women in low-income families to access paid care services.

The two conceptual tools ['caring masculinities' and 'social care'] are also an important contribution. The reformulated concept of ‘caring masculinities’—an original theoretical contribution of the thesis—enabled this research to examine the extent to which, and how, men have engaged in ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care, including ‘masculine care’, alongside their breadwinning role. This research illustrated that ‘caring masculinities’ manifest along a continuum that encompasses ‘less-caring’ and ‘more-caring’ practices, both shaped by men’s conceptualisation of their intersecting identities as fathers and husbands. While almost half of the men in this research are exhibiting a ‘less-caring masculinity’, the others are adopting ‘reflexive reconfigurations’ of caring practices by embodying ‘more-caring masculinity’. The reformulated concept of ‘caring masculinities’ addresses the limitations of Elliott (2016) conception of ‘caring masculinities’—embedded in the current debate about the link between ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and care (Doucet 2004b, 

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2006, 2013; Elliott 2016; Hunter, Riggs & Augoustinos 2017; Jordan 2020; Marsiglio & Pleck 2005)—in two respects. First, the incorporation of ‘indirect care’ and ‘breadwinning’ into the concept of ‘caring masculinities’ can advance our understanding of this concept beyond ‘direct care’, as theorised by Elliott (2016). Such an incorporation allows us to examine multiple patterns of men’s caring practices both in developing and developed countries. From the feminist ‘ethics of care’ perspective, ‘breadwinning’ can be understood as a form of care (Schmidt 2018). Second, the reformulated concept of ‘caring masculinities’ enriches our understanding of men’s caring practices as being shaped by their conceptualisation of men’s intersecting identities [as fathers and husbands] rather than just men’s identity as fathers, as assumed by Elliott (2016). For the second conceptual tool, the analysis of kinship support in childcare in this research enhances our understanding of ‘familial care’ embedded in the concept of ‘social care’ (Daly & Lewis 2000) as incorporating care support by female kin in co-residence, in adjacent residences, and from distant residences, rather than just spousal support within nuclear families, as originally theorised by Daly and Lewis (2000).

The articulation of the factors contributing to a 'more-caring masculinity' is also a theoretical advance. This investigation contributes to a debate on the conditions that shape men’s positive perceptions of ‘more-caring’ practices (Coltrane 2010; Davis & Greenstein 2004; Greenstein 1996; Hochschild 1989, 2003, 2012; Marsiglio & Pleck 2005; Yeung 2013, 2016). This research and other empirical studies (Coltrane 2010; Davis & Greenstein 2004; Greenstein 1996; Hochschild 1989, 2003, 2012) indicate that women play an important role in influencing their spouses to engage more in care work, though it is not always the case that women can successfully negotiate with their spouses to share childcare work, as argued in Chapters 3 and 9. This research contends that men's 'more-caring' practices are shaped by the positive conceptualisation of their intersecting identities as fathers and husbands which tends to be derived from their childhood and/or teenage practices in housework. Unlike men in Hochschild’s (1989, 2003, 2012) and Brines’ (1994) studies who did not engage in care work when earning less than their spouses, men in this research accepted their realities by embodying ‘more-caring’ practices when they were unable to earn the family income. This research illustrates that men’s better education, as postulated by Yeung (2013, 2016), is not important to their greater engagement in care work.
10.2.2 Empirical Contributions

The theoretical contributions embedded in the new feminist framework on transformative care allow this research to make a key empirical contribution. This framework enables us to interrogate the link between the national childcare policy discourse and its practices, the Khmer cultural discourse on childcare, and young mothers’ and fathers’ ‘reflexive reconfigurations’ of childcare practices. Such an interrogation in this thesis probed beyond the existing analytical focus on women’s burden of care using a methodological approach that involved an analysis of policy texts, and quantitative, time-use survey data on intra-household care distribution in the developing world (see Baird, Ford & Hill 2017; Budlender & Lund 2012; Esquivel & Faur 2012; Ford & Nurchayati 2017; Hill & Palriwala 2017; Lindio-McGovern 2017; Martinez-Franzoni & Voorend 2012; Palriwala & N 2012; Razavi 2012b; Razavi & Staab 2012a; Siddiqi & Ashraf 2017; Hill & Palriwala 2017; Razavi 2012b; Razavi & Staab 2012a; Ward 2017; Withers 2017). The detailed analysis of the constructions of feminine and masculine care in the National Childcare Policy and its practices, and the varied patterns of women’s and men’s caring practices, addresses the current dearth of relevant research in Cambodia and Southeast Asia (Baird, Ford & Hill 2017; Brickell 2011a; Hill, Ford & Baird 2017; Razavi 2012b; Razavi & Staab 2012a; Ward 2017). The life trajectories of women indicate that they are not passive subjects who just conform to culturally-embedded norms and policy discourses and practices. Some women are ‘reflexive subjects’ who question the gendered division of care labour and negotiate with their spouses to share ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ care. This thesis argues that young women’s level of education and their employment in the formal economy tend to play a critical role in enabling them to negotiate with their husbands to engage more in childcare. This knowledge enriches our current understanding of varied ways that women and men have engaged in ‘familial care’. It enhances our knowledge of Hill, Ford and Baird’s (2017) feminist typology of the ‘familial/informal care regime’ in Southeast Asia and Ward’s (2017) argument regarding the ‘familial/informal care regime’ in Cambodia, both of which assume that only women are responsible for ‘familial care’ and that they are not reflexive in the configurations of their childcare practices. Such an assumption does not reflect varied ways that women, men, and their female kin participate in ‘familial care’.
10.2.3 Policy Implications and Project Design

The theoretical and empirical contributions of this research have implications for policy and project development design. With regard to policy design, it contributes to the sum of policymakers’ knowledge on the relationship between care policies and gendered configurations of childcare practices. Policymakers tend to attribute women’s burden and men’s disdain for unpaid care work to socially gendered norms without acknowledging their own part in the assumptions underlying their policy design. This thesis illustrates that the structure and practices of childcare policies have reinforced women’s burden and men’s neglect of care work. Chapters 8 and 9 indicated that childcare policy discourse, policy practices, and policy silences in relation to daycare services have reproduced the Khmer cultural discourse on childcare, shaping many men’s and women’s gendered experiences in childcare arrangements. Addressing this problem requires the state in their childcare policies to transform culturally-embedded norms of care and to redistribute care labour and costs from the family to the ‘public sphere’ of markets and the state, and from women to men.

Non-state actors engaging in project development design and policy advocacy should pay particular attention to the factors contributing to a ‘more-caring masculinity’ and to women’s ‘reflexive reconfiguration’ of caring practices. As illustrated in Chapter 8, focusing on their education and on enhancement of women’s capacity to earn an income outside the house may improve women’s capacity to negotiate with their spouses about engaging more in care work. At the same time, other empirical studies and Chapter 9 indicated that reconstructing the narratives of men’s ‘more-caring masculinity’ and/or exposing boys to care work may shape ‘more-caring’ practices.


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Appendices

Appendix 1: Summary of the Chbab Srey

Verses 1 to 7 introduce readers to a queen mother telling her princess daughter that she is following her husband to the human world from the dragon world. The queen advises the daughter to serve her husband but not make him unsatisfied and not to look down on him.

Verses 8 to 12 instruct women to use ‘sweet words’ and be ‘kind’ to neighbours and relatives.

Verses 13 to 20 instruct single women on how to properly behave as they are virgins; otherwise, they are considered as bad, useless women. The Chbab does not explicitly use the words "single women" in these verses, but single women are implied.

Verses 21 to 23 instruct married women to sit appropriately; otherwise, other men would look down on their husbands.

Verses 24 to 33 instruct single women to work hard in productive work [e.g. weaving or knitting] as they are virgins; otherwise, they will be very busy with childcare and housework when they get married.

Verses 34 to 61 instruct women to manage “three fires” properly to get prosperity or happiness; otherwise, they will burn women. The code instructs women not to bring the outside fire into the house229, or take the inside fire outside the house.230 This instruction is concerned with three groups of people with whom women need to deal to avoid sparking troubles. These people are her parents, husbands, and others231. Women are instructed not to pass information between the three groups, or to gossip.

Verses 62 to 70 instruct women to use sweet words and be patient with their husbands.

229 It means that the code asks a woman not to tell her husband if her parents think or say bad things about him.
230 The code instructs a woman not to tell her parents and others about whatever happens inside the house.
231 These verses talk a lot about women’s gratitude towards their parents and women’s responsibilities towards their husbands; however, the code talks less about others.
Verses 71 to 77 show women the consequences of non-stop quarrelling with their husbands, of failing to use “sweet words”, and of not “being patient”.

Verses 78 to 82 instruct women to listen to their husbands, even if they are wrong. They advise women to avoid replicating the mistakes made by their husbands.

Verses 83 to 89 are about the consequences of not adhering to the above instructions.

Verses 90 to 98 stress the importance of the rules by comparing two women: one with dark skin and the other with light skin. The Chbab stresses that even though a woman has dark skin, she can be chosen and loved by her husband if she knows and follows the rules.

Verses 99 to 123 talk about ten types of bad luck.

Verses 124 to 154 talk about seven good characteristics of women. Under these characteristics, there are four types of wife: Mother-like wife, friend-like wife, sibling-like wife, and servant-like wife.

Verses 155 to 157 talk about the results of possessing the seven good characteristics for happiness and harmony within the family.

Verses 158 to 167 talk about four characteristics of not-a-good wife, one of which is the murdering of her husband.

Verses 168 to 176 detail the characteristics of an enemy-like wife.

Verses 177 to 188 detail characteristics of a thief-like wife.

Verses 189 to 211 talk about eight behaviours of women that are deemed disrespectful to their husbands.

Verses 212 to 227 are the conclusion of the Chbab. Firmly Practising this code of conduct can bring women a glorious life full of dignity and prosperity, in this life and the next life, or it will bring women to heaven. This code will also bless a perfect mother.
Appendix 2: Summary of the Chbab Pros

Verses 1 to 2 introduce the Chbab Pros, emphasising that this is a law organised as a story for teaching future generations of men and women.

Verses 3 to 4 emphasise the importance of thinking rather than owning physical property, so proper behaviour towards neighbours is essential.

Verses 5 to 10 emphasise the importance of men's politeness and gentleness towards others, warning them not to be aggressive; otherwise, their elders will be blamed.

Verse 11 to 16 instruct men to look after their property, save money, and not sleep too much. Even during their sleep, they should be alert to what is happening around them as there may be a thief. The code also advises that men should not go back to sleep if they wake up at night, suggesting that smoking cigarettes or eating beetle nuts is a good way to stay awake.

Verses 17 to 19 provide men with some ways to protect themselves during their sleep, by putting a knife next to them, for example, or keeping a fire burning outside the house, or worshipping the Buddha. One of these verses also advises men to put water at their feet before sleeping.

Verses 20 to 30 instruct men to engage in household chores, emphasising their role in traditional medicine, or in finding dead branches of trees for firewood, filling up giant jars with water, or looking for vegetables when going into the forest.

Verses 31 to 39 instruct men to work hard on the farm to ensure sufficient rice for the family and to avoid any complaints from their wives.

Verses 40 to 42 instruct men not to be lazy in pulling out the weeds around the house and to take care of their orchards.

Verses 43 to 44 instruct men to discuss the matter with their wives before selling or buying things.

Verses 45 to 47 instruct men to inform the people at home before going somewhere, allowing the people at home to find them if they are in trouble.

Verses 48 to 51 advise men not to indulge themselves by going somewhere for work without reason. Doing so can destroy men’s prestige.
Verses 52 introduces the three kinds of madness, that is, gambling, women (adultery), and alcohol consumption, based on Buddhist teaching.

Verses 53 to 67 warn men against the madness of gambling.

Verses 68 to 77 warn men against madness with women (adultery).

Verses 78 to 89 warn men against the madness of alcohol consumption.

Verses 90 to 94 conclude that the above three kinds of madness are based on the Buddhist texts.

Verses 95 to 96 conclude the Chhab Pros by mentioning the author’s name, acknowledging that he has learned these lessons of the Chhab from his father.
Appendix 3: Guiding Interview Questions for State Institutions regarding Early Childhood Care and Education

1. **Rationale for policy development**
   1.1. What is the rationale for developing the National Policy on ECCD?
   1.2. Why does the National Childcare Policy cite Article 48 instead of Article 73 of the Constitution?
   1.3. Why is Article 219 about daycare nurseries in the agricultural sector not referred to in the National Childcare Policy?

2. **Women’s and men’s roles in childcare**
   2.1. What is your view on women’s and men’s roles in childcare (in the home or paid care services)?
   2.2. How are women’s and men’s roles portrayed in (1) training programs on ECCD for parents, and in (2) pre-and in-service training for ECCD service providers?
   **Note:** Ask for training manuals and reports, procedures and codes of conduct for early childhood care and development, and any reports of non-governmental institutions (NGOs).

3. **Expansion of early childhood care and development services provision, including state, community, private, and home-based services, especially early learning for young children**
   3.1. What practical strategies have you implemented to expand ECCD service provision?
   **Note:** Ask for any annual progress reports, feasibility study reports to encourage factories (business enterprises) to organize ECCD services, or minimum standards and accreditation for ECCD centres, or any other reports or strategy documents of NGOs.

4. **Decentralised ECCD working system: Consultative Committee on Women and Children at the Capital, Provincial and Municipal, District and Khan levels, and Commune/Sangkat Committee for Women and Children**
   4.1. How do these committees help expand ECCD services to children and/or parents/mothers?
   4.2. Does MoEYS finance these committees to provide ECCD services? Why? Why not? Main challenges?

5. **Gender-responsive budgeting**
   5.1. What is your view on gender-responsive budgeting? Have you tracked gender-responsive budgeting? How?

6. **Institutional engagement in policy development**
   6.1. In what ways has your institution engaged in the development of the National Childcare Policy?
6.2. To what extent has your input been accepted? What was accepted? What was excluded? Why?

7. Limitations of the National Childcare Policy
What are the main limitations of this national policy?

8. Institutional engagement in this the localisation process
8.1. In what ways has your institution engaged in the localisation process of the SDGs in Cambodia, SDG 4 in particular?
8.2. To what extent has your input been accepted? What was accepted? What was excluded? Why?

9. Perspectives on the principles of “no-one left behind”, “gender equality provisions”, and “gender targets” in the SDG framework
9.1. What is your view on the principles of “no-one left behind”, “gender equality provisions”, and “gender targets” in the SDGs?
9.2. Is there any link between SDGs 4 and 5? In what way?

10. Effects on the National Childcare Policy
To what extent and how will the Cambodian SDG 4 impact the National Childcare Policy and its practices?

11. Limitations of the SDG4
What are the main limitations or challenges of the (Cambodian) SDG 4?

12. Future Engagement in Cambodian SDG4
What is your plan for engaging in the (Cambodian) SDG 4?
Appendix 4: Guiding Interview Questions for State and Non-State Institutions regarding Women’s Rights

1. Institutional engagement in this localisation process
   1. What is the progress of the localisation of the SDGs in Cambodia, SDG 5 in particular?
   2. In what ways has your institution engaged in the localisation process of the SDGs in Cambodia, SDG 5 in particular?
   3. To what extent has your input been accepted? What was accepted? What was excluded? Why?

2. Perspectives on the principle of "no-one left", "gender equality provisions", and "gender targets" in the SDG framework
   1. What is your view on the principles of "no-one left behind", "gender equality provisions", and "gender targets" in the SDGs?
   1. Are there any implications of SDG 5 for early childhood care and education and women’s unpaid care work in Cambodia? In what ways?

3. Effects on the National Childcare Policy
   1. Are you aware of the National Policy on ECCD?
   2. To what extent and how will the Cambodian SDG 5 impact the National Childcare Policy and its practices?

4. Gender-responsive budgeting
   4.1. What is your view on gender-responsive budgeting? Have you tracked gender-responsive budgeting? How?
   4.2. What is the budget for SDG 5 each year? Who funds this?

5. Limitations of SDG5
   What are the main limitations or challenges of (Cambodian) SDG 5?

6. Future engagement in Cambodian SDG5
   What is your plan for engaging in (Cambodian) SDG 5? What is your plan to contribute to the realisation of (Cambodian) SDG 5?
Appendix 5: Guiding Interview Questions for Non-State Institutions regarding Early Childhood Care and Education

1. Rationale for policy development
1.1. What is the rationale for developing the National Policy on ECCD?
1.2. Why does the National Childcare Policy cite Article 48 instead of Article 73 of the Constitution?
1.3. Why is Article 219 about daycare nurseries in the agricultural sector not referred to in the National Childcare Policy?

2. Women’s and men’s roles in childcare
2.1. What is your view on women’s and men’s roles in childcare (in the home or paid care services)?
2.2. How are women’s and men’s roles portrayed in (1) training programs on ECCD for parents, and in (2) pre-and in-service training for ECCD service providers?
Note: Ask for training manuals and reports, procedures and code of conduct for early childhood care and development, and any other reports of non-governmental institutions (NGOs)?

3. Expansion of early childhood care and development services provision, including state, community, private, and home-based services, especially early learning for young children
3.1. What practical strategies have you implemented to expand ECCD service provision?
Note: Ask for any annual progress reports, feasibility study report to encourage factories (business enterprises) to organize ECCD services, minimum standards and accreditation for ECCD centres, and any other reports or strategy documents of NGOs.

4. Decentralised ECCD working system: Consultative Committee on Women and Children at the Capital, Provincial and Municipal, District and Khan levels, and Commune/Sangkat Committee for Women and Children
4.1. How do these committees help expand ECCD services to children and/or parents/mothers?
4.2. Does MoEYS finance these committees to provide ECCD services? Why? Why not? Main challenges?
Note: Maybe they are applicable only for UNICEF

5. Gender-responsive budgeting
5.1. What is your view on gender-responsive budgeting? Have you tracked gender-responsive budgeting? How?
Note: Maybe they are applicable only for UNICEF

6. Institutional engagement in policy development
6.1. In what ways has your institution engaged in the development of the National Childcare Policy?
6.2. To what extent has your input been accepted? What was accepted? What was excluded? Why?

7. Limitations of the National Childcare Policy
What are the main limitations of this national policy?

8. Institutional engagement in this localisation process
8.1. In what ways has your institution engaged in the localisation process of the SDGs in Cambodia, SDG 4 in particular?
8.2. To what extent has your input been accepted? What was accepted? What was excluded? Why?

9. Perspectives on the principles of “no-one left behind”, “gender equality provisions”, and “gender targets” in the SDG framework
9.1. What is your view on the principles of "no-one left behind", "gender equality provisions", and "gender targets" in the SDGs?
9.2. Is there any link between SDGs 4 and 5? In what ways?

10. Effects on the National Childcare Policy
To what extent and how will the Cambodian SDG 4 impact the National Childcare Policy and its practices?

11. Limitations of SDG4
What are the main limitations or challenges of (Cambodian) SDG 4?

12. Future Engagement in Cambodian SDG4
What is your plan for engaging in (Cambodian) SDG 4?
Appendix 6: Guiding Interview Questions for the Management of Private and Public Preschools

1. General questions about preschool services
   1.1. Please tell me about your ECCD services. Who are the beneficiaries? Any criteria? Do the beneficiaries need to pay for these services? Why? Why not? How much?
   1.2. What are the sources of funding for your services? Any challenges? Any suggestions?
   1.3. What is the relationship between your school and other institutions (MoEYS, MoWA, MoSVY, or district authorities)? What are their roles in your school? What do they support in your institution? Any suggestions for them?
   1.4. What is the relationship between your school and other public preschools? Community preschools? The home-based care programs? How do you support each other? Any positive aspects? Challenges?

2. Women’s and men’s roles in childcare
   2.1. What is your view on women’s and men’s roles in childcare (in the home or paid care services)?
   2.2. How are women’s and men’s roles portrayed in your school curriculum?
   Note: Ask for any training manuals and reports, or procedures and codes of conduct for early childhood care and development.

3. Femininities and masculinities in preschools or childcare services or home-based care training programs
   3.1. Who (women or men) facilitates home-based care training meetings/events? Are there male and female carers or teachers? Why or why not?
   3.2. If yes, have you observed any differences in terms of knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour between male and female carers or teachers? What are some challenges in hiring male carers or teachers?
   3.3. What is your evaluation of your services or programs in ECCD in relation to community/family? Positive aspects? Challenges/limitations?

4. Parents’ engagement in preschool services
   4.1. Who (husband, wife or others) drop off children at school? Who (husband, wife or others) picks them up from school? Have they engaged in any school activities? Why? Or why not?
   4.2. Who (husband, wife or others) have engaged in any school activities? Why? What are the benefits of participating in the school activities?
Appendix 7: Guiding Interview Questions for the Management of Community Preschools

1. General questions about preschool services
1.1. Please tell me about your ECCD services. Who are the beneficiaries? Any criteria? Do the beneficiaries need to pay for these services? Why? Why not? How much?
1.2. What are the sources of funding for your services? Any challenges? Any suggestions?
1.3. What is the relationship between your school and other institutions (MoEYS, MoWA, MoSVY, or district authority)? What are their roles in your school? What do they support in your institution? Any suggestions for them?
1.4. What is the relationship between your school and other public preschools? Community preschools? The home-based care programs? How do you support each other? Any positive aspects? Challenges?

2. Women’s and men’s roles in childcare
2.1. What is your view on women’s and men’s roles in childcare (in the home or paid care services)?
2.2. How are women’s and men’s roles portrayed in your (1) school curriculum and in (2) training programs on ECCD for parents?

Note: Ask for any training manuals and reports, or procedures and codes of conduct for early childhood care and development.

3. Decentralised ECCD working system: Consultative Committee on Women and Children at the Capital, Provincial and Municipal, District and Khan levels, and Commune/Sangkat Committee for Women and Children
3.1. How do these committees help expand ECCD services to children and/or parents/mothers?
3.2. Does MoEYS finance these committees on ECCD services? Why? Why not? Main challenges?

4. Gender-responsive budgeting
4.1. What is your view on gender-responsive budgeting? Have you tracked gender-responsive budgeting? How?

5. Femininities and masculinities in preschools or childcare services or home-based care educational programs
5.1. Who (women or men) facilitates home-based care educational sessions? Are there male and female carers or teachers? Why or why not?
5.2. If yes, have you observed any differences in terms of knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour between male and female carers or teachers? What are some challenges in hiring male carers or teachers?
5.3. What is your evaluation of your services or programs in ECCD in relation to community/family? Positive aspects? Challenges/limitations?

6. Parents’ engagement in the home-based care training program
6.1. Who (husband, wife or others) participates in the home-based care training program? Why?
6.2. What benefits (on children, husband or wife) of the program have they observed?

7. Parents’ engagement in preschool services

7.1. Who (husband, wife or others) drops off children at school? Who (husband, wife or others) picks them up from school? Have they engaged in any school activities? Why? Or why not?

7.2. Who (husband, wife or others) have engaged in any school activities? Why? What are the benefits of participating in the school activities?
Appendix 8: Guiding Interview Questions for Preschool Carers and/or Teachers

1. General questions about participants
   1.1. Please tell me about yourself (name, ethnicity, age, education, village).
   1.2. How long have you been teaching here?
   1.3. Do you have another job besides teaching here? What is it?
   1.4. What has motivated you to teach here?

2. Women’s and men’s roles in childcare
   2.1. What is your view on women’s and men’s roles in childcare (in the home or paid care services)?
   2.2. How are women’s and men’s roles portrayed in your (1) school curriculum and in (2) training programs on ECCD for parents?
   2.3. Have you observed any differences in terms of knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour between male and female carers or teachers? What are some challenges for female and male carers or teachers in this profession?

3. Parents’ engagements in home-based care educational programs
   3.1. Who (husband, wife or others) participates in the home-based care educational sessions? Why?
   3.2. What benefits (on children, husband or wife) of the program have they observed?

4. Parents’ engagements in preschool services
   4.1. Who (husband, wife or others) drops off children at school? Who (husband, wife or others) picks them up from school? Have they engaged in any school activities? Why? Or why not?
   4.2. Who (husband, wife or others) have engaged in any school activities? Why? What are the benefits of participating in the school activities?

5. Effects of ECCD services on communities
   5.1. What is your evaluation of your services or program in ECCD in relation to community/family? Positive aspects? Challenges/limitations?
   5.2. What is your general observation on the division of labour in childcare in the community? Who is responsible for what tasks within the family? Who decides on who does what tasks within the family? Why?
Appendix 9: Guiding Interview Questions for Young Mothers

1. General Questions about Participants
1.1. Please tell me about yourself (name, ethnicity, age, education, village). Your family (children, husband, other members, if any)? How many children? How old are they? What does your husband do for a living? How long have you been with your husband? How long have you been living here?
1.2. What do you do for a living? Farming season? Off-farm income-generating activities?

2. Home-based Care Educational Program Participants
2.1. Have you engaged in this home-based care program? Why or why not? Who facilitates this program? Who funds this program? What are some benefits of this program? For your children? For you or your husband or your family?
2.2. If your husband has not engaged in this program, why not?
2.3. For women whose husbands have engaged in this program, why has your husband, not you, engaged in this program? Has he shared what he has learned from the program with you? What do other friends or family members say about this?

3. Preschool Program Participants
3.1. Do you send your children to preschool? How many children do you send to preschool? Why or why not all of them under 6 years? What are some benefits you have observed from sending your children to school? For your children? For you or your family as a whole?
3.2. What do you have to contribute to the preschool program? Paying school fees? How much? Any comments on these fees?
3.3. Who drops children off at school? Who picks them up from school? What is the means of transport? Have you engaged in any school activities? Why? Or why not? What are those activities? What are some benefits of participating in those activities?
3.4. If your husband drops your children off at school and/or has engaged in school activities, why him, not you? What did he say about that engagement? What did your children and/or school say about that?

4. Common Gender Questions
4.1. Please describe your, your husband’s, and other family members’ responsibilities in the following tasks?
   - Housework (cooking, house cleaning, fetching water, collecting firewood)
   - Playing with children
   - Helping children with their homework or reading books to them
   - Feeding children
   - Taking care of them when they are sick.
4.2. What are the main differences between the husband and the wife in caring for your children within your family? What factors/conditions have contributed to these differences?
4.3. If your husband shares childcare and domestic work, why does he share these tasks? If your husband does not share childcare and domestic work, why doesn’t he share these tasks? What challenges have prevented him from caring for your children?
What are some consequences? What could be done to help your husband engage in taking care of your children?

4.4. What decisions have you or your husband made solely or jointly linked to childcare?
- Sending children to preschool or not? Which school?
- Attending the home-based care program or not?
- Participating in parents’ committee or school activities or not?
- Getting children immunised/vaccinated or not?

4.5. Has the gendered division of care labour changed over time? Why or why not? What are the perceptions of male and female peers on the gendered division of childcare?

4.6. What is your view on the role of preschools, commune councils, or national government in childcare? Have you shared your view with the commune councils or other government institutions? Why? Why not? In what ways/on what platforms have you shared? What are some responses from the commune councils?
Appendix 10: Guiding Interview Questions for Young Fathers

1. General Questions about Participants
1.1. Please tell me about yourself (name, ethnicity, age, education, village). Your family (children, wife, other members, if any)? How many children? How old are they? What does your wife do for a living? How long have you been with your wife? How long have you been living here?
1.2. What do you do for a living? Farming season? Off-farm income-generating activities?

2. Home-based Care Educational Program Participants
2.1. Have you engaged in the home-based care program? Why or why not? Who facilitates this program? Who funds this program? What are some benefits of this program? For your children? For you or your wife or your family?
2.2. If his wife has not engaged in this program, why not?
2.3. For men whose spouses have engaged in this program, why has your wife, not you, engaged in this program? Has she shared what she has learned from the program with you? What do other friends or family members say about this?

3. Pre-school Program Participants
3.1. Do you send your children to preschool? How many children do you send to preschool? Why or why not all of them under 6 years? What are some benefits you have observed from sending your children to school? For your children? For you or your family as a whole?
3.2. What do you have to contribute to the preschool program? Paying school fees? How much? Any comments on these fees?
3.3. Who drops children off at school? Who picks them up from school? What is the means of transport? Have you engaged in any school activities? Why? Or why not? What are those activities? What are some benefits of participating in those activities?
3.4. If your wife drops your children off at school and/or has engaged in school activities, why her, not you? What did she say about that engagement? What did your children and/or school say about that?

4. Common Gender Questions
4.1. Please describe your, your wife’s, and other family members’ responsibilities in the following tasks:
   - Housework (cooking, house cleaning, fetching water, collecting firewood)
   - Playing with children
   - Helping children with their homework or reading books to them
   - Feeding children
   - Taking care of them when they are sick.

4.2. What are the main differences between the husband and the wife in caring for your children within your family? What factors/conditions have contributed to these differences?

4.3. If you do not share childcare and domestic work, why don’t you share these tasks? What challenges have prevented you from caring for your children? What are some
consequences? What could be done to help you to engage in taking care of your children?

4.4. What decisions have you or your wife made solely or jointly linked to childcare?
   - Sending children to preschool or not? Which school?
   - Attending the home-based care program or not?
   - Participating in parents’ committee or school activities or not?
   - Getting children immunised/vaccinated or not?

4.5. Has the gendered division of care labour changed over time? Why or why not?
What are the perceptions of male and female peers on the gendered division of childcare?

4.6. What is your view on the role of preschools, commune councils, or national government in childcare? Have you shared your view with the commune councils or other government institutions? Why? Why not? In what ways/on what platforms have you shared? What are some responses from the commune councils?
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Author/s:
My, Sambath

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