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# From Behind the Bakery Counter: Exploring Cambodian Women's Transnational Connections and Sense of Belonging

A research report presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
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# Abstract

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This study foregrounds Khmer women's stories of migration and settlement in New Zealand's North Island towns. Specifically, it has engaged with women working in Khmer owned, New Zealand bakeries. Conceptually, a gender and migration lens was applied, supporting an understanding of the balancing act women encounter in their everyday lives, where bakery spaces simultaneously enable and disable Khmer women. Keeping this gender lens in mind, this study delved into Khmer women's transnational social spaces and the ways in which they remain connected to their kin, culture and homeland. Focusing on the women's everyday realities, the methodology used an ethnographic approach, to centre on the voices of Khmer women.

This study identified that depending on their background, women's personal migration journeys vary. This study concluded that belonging must be seen in a wider context than just about Khmer women identifying with either New Zealand or Cambodia as their homes. Women crafted their new life of belonging, where the memories of their families, friends, and former lives were constantly woven through their everyday activities and thoughts. A new, re-imagined existence was created, with women weighing their memories and knowledge of Cambodia's realities, against the constraints and opportunities that bakeries offered. Significantly, Khmer women were placing family unity and their children's welfare above their own happiness and aspirations, as they crafted this new kind of belonging.

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# Abbreviations and Tables

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## Abbreviations:

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
DHBs	District Health Boards
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Indicator
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
MU	Massey University of New Zealand
NZMFAT	New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
US	United States
USD	United States Dollars
WB	World Bank

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction and Background

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### 1.1 Introduction and Research Rationale

This research report specifically seeks the views of Khmer women who have migrated to New Zealand and work in Cambodian bakeries in the North Island. 'Khmer' are also known as Cambodian, or Kampuchean (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2019). Cambodian family bakeries emerged in the late 1980s, resulting from New Zealand's deregulation, meaning a subsequent economic downturn and redundancies (Liev, 2008, p. 122). In the 1980s the Angkor Wat bakery franchise was established, followed by an increasing number of successful Cambodian family bakeries (Liev, 2008, p. 125). Bakeries offer Khmer families self-employment. Families can start-up a bakery or purchase an existing bakery business or franchise. Cambodian community members support Khmer business owners and mentor newcomers. This support extends to rotating credit, known in Khmer as *tontine*, where 12 to 24 members contribute equally to a money pool and bid, taking turns to access funds (Liev, 2008, p. ix).

Cambodian bakers are well-regarded for their skills, having received numerous national pie baking awards. Former refugee, Patrick Lam, and his wife are multiple national winners who are dedicated to their Tauranga business, working 12-13 hour days, seven days a week (Roy, 2016, para. 17). Lam reflects:

We are proud of ourselves and winning just makes you want to try even harder. But I think I have to work harder because I came from nothing, I came from zero dollars. I think only in New Zealand could you achieve this (Roy, 2016, para. 24).

Lam believes that the increasing popularity of bakery businesses amongst Asian migrants is due to bakeries being able to be operated by families and that there are few employment options for Khmer migrants with limited English skills (Roy, 2016, para. 12). Lam and his wife exemplify the wider Khmer family networks as they work hard, support, mentor and share their knowledge, skills and funds with each other to establish bakeries.



Khmer women are hard workers in their businesses and homes. Cambodian family bakeries are “labour-intensive” operations, necessitating “hardworking labourers” who are predominantly family members or friends (Liev, 2008, p. 125). Additionally, women are “in charge of the family budget, and she serves as the major ethical and religious model for the[ir] children” (Headley, 1990, as cited in Liev, 2008, p. 138). Therefore, Khmer women are under great pressure in their multiple roles as business owner, worker, wife, mother and family household manager.

The possibility of “losing face” and the family “losing reputation” through children’s bad behaviour is a situation with the potential for embarrassment and shame (Liev, 2008, p. 135, as Liev explains the cultural, gendered onus on Khmer women:

Cambodians see women as social actors or players who improve the husband, the family, and the community existence. Cambodians say: “As the roots of the seedling pull dirt away from the seedling bed, women pull men from misery” (p. 159).

The necessity for women to be responsible for their husband’s and children’s improved lives is in addition to the Khmer ethos of hard work. The reason women ensure their children gain a good education is in the “hope that their children will have better jobs and brighter futures” (Liev, 2008, p. 128). These multiple burdens relate back to Cambodia’s moral and religious codes of behaviour and Khmer gendered ideals placed on women, discussed later.

Although Cambodian bakeries and Khmer bakers’ national achievements are recognised, Liev (2008) highlights that there has been relatively limited studies on Khmer living in New Zealand. Friesen’s 2005 research identified only 13 previous studies on Cambodians since first arriving in New Zealand (Liev, 2008, p. 3). This modest number reinforces the need for “more in-depth studies based on interviews and research into smaller local communities” (Gustafson & Tarling, 2005, as cited in Liev, 2008, p. 3). This research report’s rationale therefore aims to provide an in-depth perspective, by focusing specifically on the stories of four Khmer women working in Cambodian bakeries, located in smaller communities of the North Island.

In order to achieve my research aim, which is discussed next, it is important that the study's design encapsulate Khmer women's voices. A qualitative methodology supports women's descriptions of their everyday realities, experiences and views. Story-telling uncovers Khmer women's culturally constructed and constrained experiences and views on migration, living and working in New Zealand. Narratives are compiled from the face-to-face interviews held with each woman, which supports an ethnographic approach. In this way, Khmer women's transnational connections and the ways that gender impacts them, is uncovered.

The women's unique experiences and views are the primary source of information in the ethnographic narratives and analysis in Chapter 4. The women's stories are framed by a literature review of gender and migration, feminist perspectives, and transnational social spaces, as outlined in Chapter 2. The significance of women's everyday lives remaining socially connected across national borders informs the key issue of belonging. Marlowe (2018) observes belonging within "transnational, gendered, relational and situational dimensions" (p. 56). The methodology, methods and ethical considerations employed in this study, detailed in Chapter 3, supports story-telling. Khmer women's experiences, and gender and migration literature, are considered in the context of Cambodia, which informs the discussion in Chapter 5. It is significant that Khmer women living in smaller communities have the opportunity to be heard, as their sense of belonging is constituted in the transnational social spaces and neighbourhoods we share.

This chapter firstly, outlines the study's aim, questions and objectives, before secondly, looking at Cambodia's political, economic and development challenges, and connections with New Zealand. This background informs the reasons why Khmer have moved to New Zealand. Since the 1970s, Cambodian migrant groupings (Liev, 2008) illustrate the diverse channels and complex narratives of settlement in New Zealand. Lastly, this chapter explores the development challenges, inequalities, socio-cultural features and gendered traditions of Cambodia. This context impacts the hardworking, mobile Khmer women who leave their homeland, families and friends to settle in New Zealand.

## 1.2 Research Aim, Questions and Objectives

As this study focuses on Cambodian women who have migrated to New Zealand, my aim is to explore their transnational connections and learn about their experiences of belonging. The research questions and objectives supporting this aim are:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explore women's interactions with New Zealanders.</li><li>• Explore women's interactions with Cambodians living in New Zealand.</li><li>• Learn about women's practical experiences and feelings of living in New Zealand.</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observe whether and how women maintain connections.</li><li>• Study any physical activities, such as travel, women make to Cambodia.</li><li>• Learn whether and how women exchange gifts, finances and contributions.</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learn whether women display purchased or gifted nostalgic signs, symbols or images of Cambodia in their workplaces.</li><li>• Study whether and how women maintain social and cultural values.</li><li>• Look at women's descriptions of their sense of belonging.</li></ul>

## 1.3 Cambodia – Connections to New Zealand

With the purpose of providing some background, this section looks at Cambodia, the homeland of the Khmer women in this study, and introduces New Zealand's longstanding relationship and multiple connections with Cambodia. The Kingdom of

Cambodia covers an area of 181,035 square kilometres and is located in the southwest part of the Indochina Peninsula in Southeast Asia, sharing its borders with Thailand, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Vietnam (Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2019) (see map below). In 2017 Cambodia's population was 16 million, with 65.3 per cent of its population under the age of 30 years and 80 per cent of Cambodians living in rural areas (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2020, p. 1). Two of the women in this study previously lived in Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh. One woman lived in a rural village in Kampong Thom, whilst another woman fled Cambodia in the 1970s, as a young child, to Khao I Dang Refugee Camp<sup>1</sup> in Thailand, before resettling in New Zealand in 1993.



Map of Cambodia and neighbouring countries.

Source: Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2019, n.p.).

<sup>1</sup> In 1979, after the Khmer Rouge fell, Khao I Dang camp was opened on the Thai-Cambodia border, housing almost 140,000 refugees at its peak. The large compound of bamboo and thatched houses closed in 1993 (Tan, 2016, para. 2).

Between 1995 and 2018, Cambodia achieved a rate of 7.7 per cent average economic growth rate (World Bank [WB], 2019, n.p.). In 1992 Cambodia's Gross Domestic Product [GDP] per capita was approximately \$200 USD, which has since grown to a GDP per capita of approximately \$1,215 USD in 2016, placing it as a low middle-income country (UNDP, 2020, p. 1). The Cambodian Government aims to reach upper middle-income status by 2030 (WB, 2019, n.p.). This growth is buoyed by the country's garment manufacturing export industry which contributed to 80 per cent of Cambodia's total recorded exports in 2018 and provided over 800,000 factory jobs (Spiess, 2018, as cited in Un, 2019, p. 17). Cambodia also enjoys economic benefits from its tourism sector which saw 5,602,157 international visitors, according to the *Tourism Statistics Report 2017* (Tourism of Cambodia, 2019, n.p.). Other industries such as agriculture, manufacturing and construction are also contributing towards Cambodia's improving economy. Although there have been positive economic gains, Cambodia faces serious gaps in key infrastructure networks, impacting Khmer livelihoods.

Cambodia is a developing country, lagging behind other Asian countries in access to "key national infrastructure networks" (Jones, 2006, p. 31). These networks are key to the country's development, including electricity, water, sanitation, tele-density, and road density (by population and area) (Jones, 2006). The country is challenged in providing equitable access to water and sanitation. In 2015 3.8 million Cambodians (25 per cent) did not have access to improved water, and 6.8 million Cambodians (44 per cent) did not have access to improved sanitation (WB, 2019, n.p.). Approximately 4.5 million Cambodians "remain near-poor, vulnerable to falling back into poverty when exposed to economic and other external shocks" (WB, 2019, n.p.), such as climate change. In 2014, Cambodia was the world's "second most climate-vulnerable country" (Kreft et al. 2016, as cited in Parsons, 2019, p. 671).

The communist Khmer Rouge forces' take-over of the country between 1975 and 1979 caused more than 2 million Cambodians to perish, mainly due to starvation, disease, or violence (Becker, 1998, as cited in Czymoniewicz-Klippel, 2019, p. 2). The social disruption and devastation following the war in Cambodia was "extreme and

daunting” (Haque, 2013, p. 56), with many Cambodians fleeing the country. After enduring two decades of fighting, Cambodia was occupied by the Vietnamese in April 1979 (Czymoniewicz-Klippel, 2019, p. 2). Between 1979 and 1981, 630,000 Khmer refugees crossed the Cambodian-Thai border, seeking refuge in Thailand (Kiljunen, 1984, as cited in Liev, 2008, p. 70).

Two of the main sources of refugees to New Zealand between the 1970s and the early 1980s were from Cambodia and Vietnam (Bedford & Ho, 2008, p. 11). Cambodia’s refugee crisis became more widely known after Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge were overthrown and hundreds of thousands of refugees sought sanctuary in Thai refugee camps (Liev & Chhun, 2015). Images of vulnerable Kampuchean refugees were televised into New Zealand living rooms, resulting in a “double-edged sword” for Khmer survivors, who were labelled and stigmatised as Indochinese “boat people” (Liev, 2008, pp. 65, 77).

The New Zealand Government resettled 4,661 Cambodian refugees between 1979 and 1992, participating in an international response to the Cambodian conflict and refugee crisis (Liev & Chhun, 2015, p. 1). With the support of New Zealand sponsors, many Khmer were resettled in the North Island cities of Auckland, Wellington, Hamilton and Palmerston North, whilst others were resettled in Christchurch and Dunedin (Liev, 2008, p. 86). These gateway cities have a higher concentration of migrants in their populations and are identified as primary migrant entry points (Friesen, 2012). The ‘gateway cities’ metaphor “suggests that migrants might move through and on from these cities to other places within the country” (Friesen, 2012, p. 2). The Government’s planned refugee resettlement was known as “pepper-potting”, which was ceased in the mid-1980s (Liev, 2008, p. 77). Table 1.1 below highlights the upward trend in the number of New Zealand residents born in Cambodia and now living in New Zealand between 1991 and 2013.

Table 1.1

*New Zealand Resident Population Born in Cambodia, 1991 to 2013 New Zealand Census*

Year of New Zealand Census	Country of birth – Cambodia
1991	4,182
2001	4,773
2006	5,583
2013	6,370

Note: 2006 and 2013 census respondents could indicate more than one ethnic group, that is, 6,918 (2006), 8,601 (2013).

Source: Adapted from Liev and Chhun, 2015, p. 1.

Cambodian communities in New Zealand cities are small. For instance, in 2013 the largest numbers of Cambodians resided in Auckland (4,188), Wellington (1,704), and Hamilton (1,410) (Liev & Chhun, 2015, p. 1).

New Zealand has a long-standing relationship and multiple connections with Cambodia involving peacekeeping, trade, consultancies, and migration. As part of the United Nations [UN] peacekeeping mission during 1991 and 2005, the New Zealand Government deployed 100 military personnel to Cambodia in landmine clearing training roles (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade [NZMFAT], 2019, n.p.). Trade agreements connect New Zealand and Cambodia, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations [ASEAN] and the East Asia Summit (NZMFAT, 2019, n.p.). In 2016 trade imports of mainly clothing goods from Cambodia were worth \$23.08 million, whilst New Zealand exports to Cambodia included fruit, frozen meats and milk powder, worth \$8.24 million (NZMFAT, 2019, n.p.). New Zealand consultancies support Cambodia's infrastructure, including engineering, resource management, sanitation, water supply and other areas (NZMFAT, 2019). These country ties are additionally strengthened by the groupings of Khmer who have migrated to settle in New Zealand, discussed next.

## 1.4 Groupings of Cambodians Migrating to New Zealand

Since the 1980s international migration has been one of the leading drivers behind Asia's contemporary social changes (Hugo, 2005, as cited in Yeoh, Huang & Lam, 2005, p. 308), with more women than men migrating from the Global South to the Global North for work (Fajardo, 2008). Migrant-sending countries have been portrayed as weak nation-states, with their largely female migrant workers depicted as exploited people (Fajardo, 2008). Khmer women face tensions and pressures from their households to be "dutiful daughters" at home, whilst also being pressured to migrate and contribute to the financial support of family households (Mills, 1995, as cited in Bylander, 2015, p. 1132). Migration-related language hides the complex, contradictory emotions and thoughts of migrants themselves. Bylander and Maillard (2013) refer to one young Khmer woman's thoughts on the prospect of migrating to Thailand: "Half easy, half difficult; half exciting, half terrible" (p. 58). Cambodians have moved from their homeland through force, exile, refugee resettlement and voluntary migration.

The Khmer women in this study have migrated to New Zealand for different reasons and in various ways. Liev (2008) has researched the groupings of Cambodians who have migrated to New Zealand and explored the various reasons for their (re)settlement (Table 1.2). Cambodia's political, economic, development and socio-cultural contexts convey multiple impacts on Khmer women within these groupings.

Table 1.2

### *Groupings of Cambodians Settling in New Zealand*

Groupings:	Description of Cambodians arriving in New Zealand
First	Prior to 1975 - Khmer scholarship students
Second	After 1979 – multiple intakes of Khmer refugees (later known as "quota refugees"), under the humanitarian refugee scheme
Third	After 1979 - close Khmer relatives – under the orderly departure programme or the family reunion scheme
Fourth	General skilled migrants
Fifth	Overseas students

Source: Adapted from Liev, 2008, p. 82.



### 1.4.1 First and Second Groupings

The first grouping of Cambodians to New Zealand were Khmer scholarship students who arrived in the 1970s to undertake study (Table 1.2), as Liev (2008) highlights. The 41 Khmer students studying under Colombo Plan and Ford Foundation scholarships were offered permanent residency by the New Zealand Government in 1976, due to the political unrest (Liev & Chunn, 2015, p. 1). Cambodian family businesses and franchises emerged across New Zealand in the 1980s, including “taxi owner-drivers, dairies, bakeries, fast-food shops, lunch bars, noodle shops, sewing contractors, and ethnic food shops” (Liev, 2008, p. 122). The Angkor Restaurant chain established in Wellington by a former Colombo Plan Cambodian graduate (Liev, 2008), is an example of Khmer entrepreneurship. Subsequently, permanent residencies were extended to thousands of Cambodian refugees living in Thai refugee camps, noted as Liev’s (2008) second grouping in Table 1.2.

During the 1980s the majority of Khmer were employed in factories, car assembly plants, welding, garment manufacturing, fruit picking and casual work (Liev, 2008, p. 118). Many New Zealand employers valued Cambodians’ willingness to work hard, learn new skills and their “good working attitudes” (Liev, 2008, p. 118). Some refugees later “regrouped” themselves and moved north to warmer climates or to be close to relatives and friends (Liev, 2008, p. 86). Other reasons for subsequent movements involved economic and educational opportunities (Thou, 1989), employment (Liev, 1995), and “above all... to find a more familiar social environment in the company of people like themselves”, where life would be “less boring and lonely” (Thou, 1989) (as cited in Liev, 2008, p. 86). Marlowe (2018) maintains that resettled Cambodian refugees, between 1975 and the 1990s, are now “no longer predominantly viewed as refugees by the wider [New Zealand] society” (p. 35). In 1993 the UN sponsored national elections in Cambodia, with a coalition government formed in 1998, bringing political stability to the country.

### 1.4.2 Third Grouping

The third grouping of migrants were the close Khmer relatives (Liev, 2008) who were offered residency under the orderly departure programme or the family reunion scheme (Table 1.2). By way of background, in the mid-1990s many foreign investors, bilateral and multilateral donors and international development agencies established in Cambodia, resulting in “uneven, development” across the country (Czymoniewicz-Klippel, 2019, p. 2). Cambodia endures “widespread corruption and [is] often characterized as a hybrid democracy and a fragile state” (Becker, 1998; Un, 2005; as cited in Wijers, 2014, p. 1527). The country has a “restrictive regime” in freedoms of speech and press (Cambodian Center for Human Rights, 2010; as cited in Wijers, 2013, p. 7). Therefore, joining family members in foreign countries becomes attractive to Khmer wanting to leave their homeland to be reunited with kin.

### 1.4.3 Fourth and Fifth Groupings

Due to Cambodia’s political, economic and development challenges, as discussed, many Khmer are motivated to migrate to take up opportunities elsewhere to improve their livelihoods. Khmer migrate to New Zealand to work in family businesses, such as bakeries, particularly if there are already family members resident. This is Liev’s (2008) fourth grouping of Cambodians entering New Zealand, as general skilled migrants and sponsored family members (Table 1.2). According to the 2006 Census, female migrants account for almost half of all global migrants, with significantly more Asian women than Asian men in the skilled labour, working-age groups, of migrants to New Zealand (Badkar, Callister, Krishnan, Didham, & Bedford, 2007, p. 126). Reasons for Khmer economic migration includes the lower costs to migrate and the perceived reduced risks in joining family members who have already migrated (Bylander, 2014).

Liev’s (2008) fifth grouping of Cambodians are students studying in New Zealand (Table 1.2). Fully paid scholarships are offered by the New Zealand Government to Cambodian students wanting to undertake postgraduate study in programmes that will contribute to Cambodia’s social and economic future, on their return (NZMFAT, 2019, n.p.). New Zealand recognises the benefits of international students as

contributing to their nation's economy through foreign exchange earnings and by furthering international links (Badkar et al. 2007). Alongside Cambodia's growing economy, uneven development and political fragility, as discussed, there are increasing challenges and inequalities to be overcome to ensure development gains are realised for all Cambodians, and in particular, Khmer women.

## 1.5 Development Challenges and Inequalities for Khmer Women

Over the previous two decades Cambodia's growing economy has brought a significant reduction in poverty, moving from 50 per cent in 1992 to 13.5 per cent in 2014 (UNDP, 2020, p. 1). However, its human capital indicators continue to lag, with approximately 500,000 or 32 per cent of its under five year olds having stunted growth (WB, 2019, n.p.), and 161 women dying from pregnancy related causes for every 100,000 live births (UNDP, 2018, p. 5). The UNDP categorises Cambodia as 'medium', placing it 146 out of 189 countries on the Human Development Index [HDI] (UNDP, 2018, p. 2). Cambodia is challenged by disparities in income, gender, regional differences, and between its urban and rural populace. Khmer women face inequalities and continue to be disadvantaged in secondary and higher education attainment and opportunities for decently paid employment.

In the past, Cambodia has been identified as having "relatively low literacy levels and enrolment rates in primary, secondary and tertiary education" (Jayaweera, 1997, p. 412). These enrolment rates have since improved for primary schooling, increasing from 82 per cent in 1997 to 97 per cent in 2016, however, early childhood education enrolment lags at 36 per cent for three to five year olds (WB, 2019, n.p.). The completion rates for lower secondary schooling remain below other lower middle income countries at 57 per cent in 2017 (WB, 2019, n.p.). Women's education is considered an important agent of empowerment as it broadens skills and knowledge and is an indicator of a society's valuing of women (Jayaweera, 1997). Education achievement in Cambodia highlights gender disparities, with 15.1 per cent of adult Khmer women reaching at least secondary level, compared with 28.1 per cent of Khmer men (UNDP, 2018, p. 5). Gendered attitudes in Cambodian society also

influence the value placed on girls' enrolment in education. This means that women have less opportunity to pursue traditionally male gendered fields of work due to their level of education, alongside societal attitudes and Khmer ideals.

As women's access to education is constrained by culturally gendered attitudes, their training and employment options in the labour market are limited, which subsequently causes economic disempowerment (Jayaweera, 1997). When considering women's opportunities to participate in the labour market, the UNDP (2018, p. 5) found a participation rate of 80.9 per cent of women, compared to 88.7 per cent of men. There are many benefits related to women's workforce participation, not only for Cambodia but for women and their families. A Cambodian female empowerment study identified workforce participation as a key factor in women's greater freedom to participate in decision-making about "important economic matters, educating their children, or moving freely" (Ballon, 2018, p. 1315). Being able to economically contribute to the household is a form of economic mobility for women, raising their status and giving them "the right to make decisions within the household" (Lawreniuk & Parsons, 2017, p. 1675).

This research is therefore framed around gender and migration, where Silvey (2006) emphasises that gender has the power to reshape and reconstitute migration. A country's focus on purely economic growth will not ensure gender equality for women if there are pre-existing gendered ideals of women (Bhandari, 2019). The disadvantages and inequalities described so far are associated with the political, economic and development constraints on Khmer women's empowerment. These constraints draw on pre-revolutionary ideals of womanhood, discussed next and in Chapter 2, where women face inequalities due to Cambodia's pre-existing gendered ideals.

## 1.6 A Balancing Act for Khmer Women – Socio-Cultural Features

Today Cambodia's hierarchical and gendered societal structure is challenged by the global push for human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment.

Concurrently, Cambodia continues to teach traditional Khmer culture which constrains women. The traditional teachings such as the *Chbap Srei* (Code for women) and its social system confines women in cultural positions of past Khmer lifestyles and customs (Brickell, 2011). The Chbap Srei enforces the belief that women are responsible for keeping the peace and order within the family and in broader Cambodian society (Derks, 2008, p. 43). Daughters are instructed by their mothers “to move quietly around the house, be polite, avoid vulgarity, and be careful to preserve the dignity and feelings of her husband despite any indiscretion on his part” (Brickell, 2011, p. 438). Brickell (2011, p. 437) refers to Ledgerwood’s 1990s research into Cambodian society which, prior to the 1970s, valued a “successful Khmer woman” if she ascribed to the traditional “virtuous” ideals of womanhood and conformed to the conventions imparted by the Chbap Srei. This code and other texts, accounts and sayings portray a “proper” Khmer woman as perfectly virtuous and full of qualities (Derks, 2008, p. 42). The Chbap Srei and other pre-colonial normative codes and ideals have endured in Cambodian society, despite being abolished during the Khmer Rouge period.

Between 1975-1979 the Khmer Rouge abolished Cambodia’s social hierarchy, Theravada Buddhism and its codes, which had guided Cambodian social relations based on an individual’s power and status, place in society, and expected behaviour (Brickell, 2011). Today, the memories and continuation of a traditional Khmer Theravada Buddhist culture once again has embraced the Chbap Srei and a “masculinized memory” of passive women who are inferior to men (Enloe, 1990, as cited in Brickell, 2011, p. 439). The Cambodian Minister for Women’s Affairs, Dr. Ing Kantha Phavi, reported at a 2006 UN General Assembly that the rules for women were still being taught in schools as a matter of “national identity” (Brickell, 2011, p. 440). Chapter 2 delves into the importance of Theravada Buddhist temples for Khmer migrant women in relation to their sense of belonging. The entwining of Khmer cultural and spiritual beliefs culminates in Cambodia’s complex, gendered social constructs where women’s power in relation to men is viewed in a negative light. These beliefs also impact women’s education and employment.

Education is viewed as more important for boys than girls as boys are seen as the household heads and main earners of household income. Jayaweera (1997) observed:

Investment in the education of girls is apt to be considered a waste of resources as girls are married very early and are lost to the natal family. Young girls are seen as an economic asset, collecting water, fuel and fodder for the household and assisting in domestic chores or in economic activities (p. 417).

At a national level, there are contradictions for women who are caught between Khmer traditional values and the Cambodian Government's desire that women participate in its labour economy and gender equality goals. Life becomes a balancing act for Khmer women.

The Government's pursuit of economic development and social transformation sees women as the "nation's invaluable assets" (United Nations Development Fund for Women [UNIFEM] et al. 2004, as cited in Brickell, 2011, p. 440). However, traditional attitudes "are now often criticised for reinforcing a disadvantaged position of Cambodian women" (Derks, 2008, p. 54). As women increasingly participate in employment, they are overburdened with additional domestic household and family responsibilities (Brickell, 2008). Traditional Khmer gender biases, ideals of womanhood, codes, customary sayings and the memories of pre-revolutionary times shape the balancing act Khmer women face today. This rich socio-cultural context provides a contemporary platform from which to discuss women's mobility in Cambodia's complex cultural landscape.

## 1.7 Women's Mobility – Challenging Cambodia's Gendered Traditions

Cambodians are increasingly mobile due to increased productive work within and beyond Cambodia's borders. Lawreniuk and Parsons (2017, p. 1670) highlight that one-third of working-age Cambodians are in employment away from their birth places. As women's participation in employment and the economy is increasing, Cambodia's gendered ideals regarding women's mobility and status is challenged. Mobility has the power to reinforce, inform or disrupt cultural meanings (Fajardo, 2008), including the freedom of speech, ideas, beliefs and actions which are entwined with the freedom of

movement. “The motorbike has become, for many Khmer women, a “metaphorical seat for gendered mobility” offering both physical and socioeconomic mobility away from the household” (Truitt, 2008, p. 7, as cited in Brickell, 2011, p. 451). Where women aspire to migrate, they are often required to negotiate their migration due to gendered household resistance based on family members’ concerns (Bylander, 2015). The gendered notions of Khmer women’s freedom to move beyond the bounds of familial and spousal control challenges ideas about women’s mobility and status. Whether walking to the nearest school, navigating the city by motorbike, or crossing internal or international borders, mobility and migration are gendered processes full of meanings and pressures impacting Khmer women.

This chapter has outlined the research aim and provided background on Cambodia’s political history, economic, development and socio-cultural aspects for women. These features inform the ongoing connections between Cambodia and New Zealand, and the groupings of Khmer settling in New Zealand. This study focuses on Khmer women’s experiences of migration and settlement in New Zealand, which is further informed by the gendered, social constructs of women migrants, discussed in Chapter 2.

## 1.8 Report Outline

The following four chapters complete this report, with Chapter 2 reviewing the literature on gender and migration with a feminist focus, women’s transnational social spaces using Information and Communication Technologies [ICTs] to stay connected, remittances, and belonging. The qualitative ethnographic methodology and methods supports research with migrant woman, ensuring an in-depth and ethical approach to listening to Khmer women’s narratives, detailed in Chapter 3. Each woman’s unique story is shared as individual narratives, with four themes analysed and discussed in Chapter 4. An interpretation (Chapter 5) of the Khmer women’s narratives in light of my research aim, context and literature review, considers what it is to belong as Khmer women in New Zealand.

# Chapter 2

## Gender and Migration – Settlement is About Belonging

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### 2.1 Introduction

Following on from the context of Cambodia and the groupings of Khmer settling in New Zealand, discussed in Chapter 1, this chapter presents a literature review on gender and development, with a focus on women and migration. Settlement and the concept of belonging are also explored. As globalisation intensifies and people travel across borders, 2013 estimates highlight the more than 230 million people living outside of their homelands (WB, 2013, as cited in Pham & Lim, 2016, p. 110). Migration can be a positive, empowering and dynamic experience for migrants where choice and opportunities are involved. However, it can also be a hard decision for families to make when members are compelled to move. Motivation to migrate can generate from “strong social pressures to work abroad... poverty, joblessness, environmental distress, a desire for mobility, or simply for lack of better options” (Bylander & Maillard, 2013, p. 58). Refugee resettlement is distinct from migrants settling in a country, in that refugees firstly need the protection of a country, before integrating like migrants, which involves integrating and participating in society (Marlowe, 2018, p. 6). This study includes one Khmer woman migrant with a refugee background, therefore refugee resettlement is occasionally referenced.

This chapter looks firstly at gender and migration, focusing on the framing of women and feminist perspectives. Secondly, transnational social spaces and the ways that migrants stay connected with their homeland is explored, such as, ICTs and remittances. Finally, the chapter looks at the concept of belonging and its many “transnational, gendered, relational and situational dimensions” (Marlowe, 2018, p. 56). The first dimension considered is gender’s impact on women’s migration.



## 2.2 Gender and Migration

Gender is understood as a social construct which is open to interpretation by different cultures and in different periods (Oakley, 2016). Rose's (1993) feminism and geography work suggests the need for increased sensitivity towards the differences amongst women, as not only gender but also religion, race, class and sexuality simultaneously frame women (as cited in Karaagac, 2019, p. 445). An analysis of gender is crucial to understanding the multiple processes and issues contributing to migration flows, remittances and their uses (Beneria, Deere & Kabeer, 2012). In the 1970s international development began discussing gender (Mohanty et al. 1991; Ostergaard, 1992; Jackson & Pearson, 1998; Connell & Pearse, 2015, as cited in Harcourt, 2016). However, gender analysis was focused on understanding the differences between men and women, where men were stereotyped as "dominant" and women as "victimized" (Parpart et al. 2002; Connell, 2014; as cited in Harcourt, 2016, p. 167). By 2015 development offered a more nuanced view of gender, which included transgender.

Gender relations are about power, emotions and shifting identities related to diverging femininities and masculinities, and, moving beyond these binaries, it now encompasses transgender realities (Connell, 2012, as cited in Harcourt, 2016, p. 167).

Historically complex and changeable, the gender process itself has been shaped, just as it shapes cultural, economic and social institutions (Harcourt, 2016). The importance of considering migration's gendered processes for women and men is raised (Bylander, 2015), including how migration affects those who choose to leave and those who remain.

Prior to the 1970s, migration research was silent on women (Levitt, 2001). It was assumed that women migrated as dependents of men, in supportive roles as their "appendages" (Yeoh & Willis, 2004, p. 160), rather than as independent migrants. This belief reinforced the gendered idea of men as economic household providers, as discussed, and women as domestic beings. Since the 1970s global gender inequality has been viewed as largely an economic growth issue. Some studies (Hill & King, 1995; Klasen & Lamanna, 2009) have argued that the focus remains on the contributions to

economic development, as a result of gender equality in women's education and employment (Dorius & Firebaugh, 2010) (as cited in Bhandari, 2019, p. 681). Although linkages between women's employment and economic growth have been found, there remains some debate of the reverse, that is, whether "economic growth leads to improvements in women's status" (Kabeer & Natali, 2013; as cited in Bhandari, 2019, p. 681).

The counter-argument to economic growth (Kabeer & Natali, 2013; Sequino, 2003) is that it is "unlikely to promote gender equality" where countries have pre-existing gendered societies (Bhandari, 2019, p. 681). The treatment of women as relocatable domestic appendages to men continues with the support of governments. For instance, there is international demand for marriageable women due to some populations having less women and the low fertility rates in Asian societies, such as Japan and South Korea (Beneria et al. 2012). The South Korean government has intervened by encouraging international marriages. The global movement of women has been endorsed at the national level "through subsidies and other policies that facilitate the immigration of foreign-born women" (Beneria et al. 2012, p. 8). The status benefits are assumed for women, which recalls Levitt's (2001) caution that women "achieve some limited, albeit uneven, benefits from migration and settlement" (p. 243).

Sylvia Chant believes that development thinking and programmes are causing women from the Global South to be made responsible for the alleviation of poverty (Casolo & Doshi, 2013), such as through microcredit schemes. Interestingly, women have experienced greater freedom to challenge gendered hierarchies in their families, whilst simultaneously experiencing constraints in their spatial mobility. Loan development schemes have financed women to produce vegetables for sale from their homes. However, Young (2010) argues that women become 'fixed' to their homes, therefore "reproducing the social relations of production and reproduction" (Casolo & Doshi, 2013, p. 812).

A further example of social construction in Asia is where migrant women are viewed as both “vital contributors” to their countries’ economies through their remittances and as “vulnerable to sexual and moral impurity” (Yeoh et al. 2005, p. 309). Remittances are discussed later in this chapter. These views may relate to the trend in more women, including mothers, migrating alone without their families (Beneria et al. 2012, p. 12). Nonetheless, the power of others to shape and frame women migrants is underscored. Questions remain as to whether migration enhances women’s independence or causes them to be more dependent on men (Pessar, 1999; as cited in Levitt, 2001). Where a feminist, rather than an economic, perspective on migration has occurred, the “structures, scales, subjects and spatial logics” shaping inequalities based on gender roles and social differences, is of interest (Silvey, 2006, p. 64).

Feminist scholars have focused on global policy processes as a way to highlight how women’s lives are changed through “laws, policies, and programmes”, and also the “‘hidden pathways’ made possible through more diffuse economic, political, and cultural changes” (Cornwall, 2013, p. ix). A gendered critique of migration’s processes, informed by improved data collection and categorisation is necessary, so that migration policies (Palmary, 2010) respond best to women’s realities. For instance, Canada is reviewing its immigration policies, with a view to identifying the potential impact of gender on women (Badkar et al. 2007). The following section takes a feminist perspective on migration and looks at the framing of women.

### 2.2.1 Feminist Perspectives on Migration

A feminist critique of the migration development nexus has unearthed some of the assumptions related to women’s decision-making and power. These studies have looked at the social and spatial inequalities underlying mobility, displacement, exclusion and belonging (Silvey, 2006). Crises or extraordinary events in women’s lives, such as pregnancy, birth, parenting, sickness, migration, and death have been analysed by Teather (1999) as ‘rites of passage’, in relation to women’s gendered bodies and space (Longhurst, 2001, p. 644). Fenster (1999) has looked at how space is culturally constructed and reconstructed, based on gender (Longhurst, 2001, p. 644).

Sarausad (2006) highlights migration's "contradictory effects" on women as they form new social spaces amidst inequalities, burdens, displacement and instability (p. 134).

When a gendered perspective on migrants' transnational communities has occurred Yeoh and Willis (2004) have highlighted three foci:

- (i) The influence that being part of a family has on an individual's experience of migration, that is, a "household strategies approach to gendered migration" (Chant, 1998, p. 9, as cited in Yeoh & Willis, 2004, p. 148).
- (ii) The reproductive sphere, households and domesticity as crucial sustaining sites for transnational communities and mobilities where women's role in constructing and maintaining social networks is viewed as the gendered division of labour and power inequalities (p. 148).
- (iii) The critique of gendered discourses and relations which are interwoven as stories into the matrix of nation, state, citizenship, and migration. Feminist scholars have deconstructed migration rhetoric and policies to reveal their "ethnicized, classed and gendered connotations" (pp. 148-149).

The everyday experience of transnational families has been analysed to learn how members negotiate "webs of relationships and developing intimacies" despite there being an ideological base of patriarchal norms (Yeoh et al. 2005, p. 309).

Analysis from a feminist perspective addresses the assumptions of the "power-laden, socially constructed, and gender- and difference-inflected nature of spatial scales" (Hyndman & Walton-Roberts, 2000; Marston, 2000; Nagar et al. 2002; Tyner, 2000; as cited in Silvey, 2006, p. 74). Hyndman has suggested the redefining of scales, as the body is rethought as the object and subject of geopolitics (Casolo & Doshi, 2013). The feminised migration of Asian women between regions of Asia demonstrates the need for policy reform and implementation so that women's social and economic rights in relation to migration are strengthened (Piper, 2008). A critique of the framing of scale is vital as it informs the types of research undertaken, the way that government policies are shaped, and "generate[s] common frames of reference" (Hyndman & Walton-Roberts, 2000, p. 246, as cited in Silvey, 2006, p. 74). This means that the

political engagement of women in national-level policymaking and the holding of the state to account is vital, given that policymaking has been a “male-dominated world” (Desai & Potter, 2014, p. 385).

The framing of issues is important as these impact the behaviours, attitudes, policies and activities of societies. For instance, migrant domestic workers’ rights can be framed as a women’s issue, a global issue, or an issue resulting from the needs of national economies. As migrant domestic work can take place in private households beyond national and global jurisdictions, any abuse of workers may be framed as a local issue rather than national or global issues. This means that the responsibility falls to an “individual migrant, her family, or her nation of origin” (Silvey, 2006, p. 74). Migration has been found to “reproduce and even exacerbate class, gender, and regional inequalities” (Guarnizo, 1997, as cited in Yeoh & Willis, 2004, p. 149). Therefore it is crucial to acknowledge the double impact of being a migrant and a woman, and how this affects the migration experience and women’s participation in social, economic (Holliday, Hennebry & Gammage, 2019; O’Leary 2017), and labour rights. The feminisation of labour migration has resulted from economic globalisation which has opened up both opportunities and risks for migrant women.

A critique of labour roles is used to highlight the entrenched gendered inequalities which affect the uneven distribution and use of time. Studies have shown that migration does not alter the “status of women equally in the workplace, community, and home”, and whilst women may enjoy gains in one sphere of life, they may also experience constraints and contradictions elsewhere (Morokvasic, 1984, as cited in Levitt, 2001, p. 243). Research on care roles within transnational families and migrant caregiving roles in developed countries (Baldassar, Baldock & Wilding, 2007; Bauer & Osterle, 2013; Datta, McLlwaine, Evans, Herbert, May & Willis, 2010; Gammage & Stevanovic, 2019; Locke, 2017) has looked at the impact of gender. Women carry the main burden of caring, as traditionally it is viewed as “women’s labour, unpaid and provided because of love and obligation” (Bock & Duden, 1977, as cited in Bauer & Osterle, 2013, p. 462). Datta et al. (2010) have looked at the feminisation of labour-related migration, such as care work undertaken by migrants. They suggest that the

recipient and the provider of care are nurtured through emotional interdependent relationships. Gendered expectations vary between nations in relation to transnational family life and caregiving, for instance, resources and roles are subject to the potential for power struggles within family networks when family members require care (Baldassar et al. 2007).

In Indonesia, for example, there are two opposing dominant views on women, perceived either as domestic and inferior to men, or equal and capable of carrying out public and professional tasks (Lim & Lim, 2016). As women have entered Indonesia's workforce, patriarchal dominant views have constrained women's status, nature and dignity in society (Ida, 2009, as cited in Lim & Lim, 2016, p. 36). Women face an ongoing dilemma between their domestic and public roles and how to best balance these (Sudarto, 2008; Subiantoro, 2008, as cited in Lim & Lim, 2016, p. 37). Therefore due to cultural views the negotiation of transnational space and the forming of transnational communities are also "strongly gendered processes" (Yeoh & Willis, 2004, p. 148) requiring women's negotiation, which is discussed next. Despite the increasing feminisation of labour migration, there has been little research on gender's impact on the patterns of migration to New Zealand from Asian economies, according to Badkar et al. (2007).

### 2.3 Transnational Social Spaces – Women Staying Connected

A feminist standpoint suggests that the social and spatial aspects of mobility are associated with "gender, citizenship, race, class, nation, sexuality, caste, religion, and disability" (Kofman et al. 2000; Willis & Yeoh, 2000; as cited in Silvey, 2006, p. 65). A gendered perspective (Pessar, 1999) has examined the ways in which transnational mobilities "simultaneously reinforce and challenge patriarchy" in its various forms (as cited in Yeoh & Willis, 2004, p. 149). Casolo and Doshi (2013) have used a transnational feminist perspective to look at the intersections of power and difference embedded in social reproduction and difference. The gendered processes, both from within and from outside the family impact women, such as the cultural expectations of 'dutiful

daughters', which Silvey believes have led to Indonesian domestic workers' enduring exploitive labour relations (Casolo & Doshi, 2013, p. 806).

Living transnationally involves what Vertovec described in the 1990s as "multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states" (Jackson, Crang & Dwyer, 2004, p. 4). Increasingly, people are living their daily lives across nation-state borders (Beck, 2008):

[They] shop internationally, work internationally, love internationally, marry internationally, research internationally, grow up and are educated internationally (that is, multi-lingually), live and think transnationally, that is, combine multiple loyalties and identities in their lives (p. 222).

Migrants' lives are thus forged by the "multi-stranded social relations linking together their societies of origin and settlement" (Basch, Glick Schiller & Blanc, 2008, p. 263). Although migration networks are deemed influential, they are at the same time unobservable. However, transnational networks are precisely where a sense of belonging can be revealed (Roth & Tiberti, 2017, Marlowe, 2018).

There is broad agreement amongst writers (Baldassar et al. 2007; Castles et al. 2012; Faist, 2010; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007; and Vertovec, 2009, as cited in Marlowe, 2018, p. 9) that the "analytical focus is on [the] everyday lives and social relationships" of migrants. For example, Cambodian women living in the United States [US] seek life balance, which involves "spiritual fulfilment, re-establishing kinship, and engaging in meaningful work" (Catolico, 2013, p. 238). By revealing migrants' perspectives and everyday experiences in relation to health, housing, education, employment, community relations, and so forth, a sense of belonging emerges from their networks and transnational connections (Marlowe, 2018). Everyday activities and social relationships are enabled by ICTs which support a sense of close connection and imagined presence.

This section explores women's closer connections and imagined presence through ICTs and remittances. Women's transnational connections and obligations provide migrants support, as Marlowe (2018) highlights: "Settlement is about belonging, which

involves crafting a new existence” (p. 160). The ways in which Cambodian women working in New Zealand bakeries stay in touch, crafting a new existence and sense of belonging, is of interest to this study.

### 2.3.1 ICTs

Transnational social networks are maintained and transformed through the exchange of social remittances. ICTs and social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Messenger, Skype, WhatsApp and Viber are central to this “transformation” (Madianou & Miller, 2013, as cited in Marlowe, 2018, p. 11). ICTs are considered “useful new political devices”, supporting migrants to remain connected and “build powerful transnational networks of information that facilitate[s] the mobility of people” (Muniandy & Bonatti, 2014, p. 1850). As ICTs have become more affordable and accessible to migrants and their families, the ways in which migrants think about their geographic separation by time and distance has changed. The instantaneous and frequent use of ICTs has transformed transnational family relations towards being more closely connected, even though physically distanced.

A feminist critique of ICT usage in staying connected has uncovered the emotional struggles and labour of women. These struggles are due to the expectations related to gender, social class, language and nationality of migrant women as they interact with family members in homelands (Cuban, 2017). Activities replicating “doing family” through ICTs produces “intense affective bonds that regenerate the ‘family feeling’ required to reproduce the family as a transnational corporation of kin”, and has somewhat mitigated the “pain of separation” (Kaur & Shruti, 2016, p. 71). For instance, the regular use of ICTs benefits the health of elderly Cambodians with migrant children, as health-related Internet sourced information and social contact is shared (Frank & Hummer, 2002; Hadi, 1999; Kanaiaupuni et al. 2005; Taylor, 1999, as cited in Kuhn, Everett & Silvey, 2011, p. 185). ICTs facilitate connections into social spaces and relationships, culminating in an “imagined presence” (Urry, 2004, p. 28), where the reality of physical separation is replaced by imagined proximity and supportive care networks (Baldassar et al. 2007). ICTs have not only blurred relationship interactions



of presence and absence, but have altered the scale and pattern of migration and women's experiences and perceptions of connections.

Although physically distanced and yet connected through ICTs with their transnational communities, migrant women can nevertheless experience feelings of dislocation and imperfect belonging. For instance, Kim (2016) found that migrant women's feelings of being more strongly and intimately connected to their East-Asian homelands (Japan, Korea and China) was enabled by a "hyper-connectivity" (p. 532) through the rapid development of ICTs and place-making practices. Women felt a sense of "placelessness" when creating their new homes and identities in London (Kim, 2016, p. 532). Whilst they were connected to their transnational communities, they felt dislocated and were more conscious of their cultural differences and distinction. ICTs support migrants' engagement and settlement, and also offer opportunities for new narratives of belonging in a global world (Gifford & Wilding, 2013). The continuous pattern of interactions, instantaneous communications and the resulting "hyper-connectivity" is additionally supported by the exchange of remittances.

### 2.3.2 Remittances

Staying in touch also encompasses the tourism sector, monetary remittances and the trade in nostalgia (Wise & Covarrubias, 2009). Remittances from Cambodians working out of the country have risen from \$138 million USD in 2003, to \$364 million USD in 2010 (WB, 2011, p. 84). One of the reasons women migrate is to provide for their families remaining in their homeland, through the social and economic remittances they share, as "caring from abroad" (Holliday et al. 2019, p. 2552). In this study, the focus is on social remittances, rather than economic remittances, as the regular sending of money back to families in Cambodia was not highlighted by the women as important to staying connected. Instead the emotional and social support between women and their families utilising ICTs, as discussed, and occasional visits, were important.

An approach to understanding transnational socio-cultural spaces is to follow or map social remittance exchanges, which may also involve face-to-face visits of migrants to

their home or non-migrants to host countries. Return visits can have a profound effect on migrants in revising their “earlier construction in the light of their new experience, and their emotional attachment with their previous and current homelands” (Barnes, 2001, as cited in Liev, 2008, p. 33). Social remittances can include the exchange of things (gifts, nostalgic items), metaphors (signs, symbols, images), stories (experiences, memories) and lives or the issues that are argued in public spaces (Vertovec, 1999). The flow of social remittances is followed from their source to destination as they are “transmitted systematically and intentionally” between people who personally know each other or know each other through mutual social ties (Levitt, 2001, p. 63). It is worthwhile following these flows as a better understanding of migrants transfer of resources and ideas is a “powerful force for development” (Castles, 2009, p. 19). The exchange of social remittances enhances a collective identity, creating solidarity for transnational communities (Faist, 2010), and an opportunity to support migrants in their expression of culture.

Migrants engage in several practices to feel connected with their culture and country of origin. The generational passing down of Khmer culture has been found “uneven and weak” in the “Cambodian diaspora” (North, 1995, as cited in Liev, 2008, p. 34). Staying connected involves “co-present” interactions such as festivals, celebrations and fashion shows which provide significant opportunities to bring people together in “non-political” events (Mohan, 2008, p. 473). Migrant networks also produce cultural borders and boundaries within host countries. Migrants’ articulation of cultural identity is produced by “re-enactments around traditional food, which serves as creating a kind of home space while in a foreign land” (Naidu, 2014, p. 55).

Migrants’ purchase and display of nostalgia from their homeland is a practice which provides “symbolic ties of common ethnicity or even nationhood” (Faist, 2010, p. 196). Marlowe (2018) refers to Billig’s (1995) important work on banal nationalism, which underscores how migration:

...makes events and practices that were once interwoven into the fabric of previous, everyday, lived experience worth actively remembering in a host society. The embodiment of particular cultural markers such as clothing,

enactment of rituals, childhood games and food production are examples whereby these commonplace symbols reinforce (and construct) national identities in largely unnoticed ways because they are embedded in everyday life (p. 38).

The public display of cultural symbols and nostalgia aids migrants' wellbeing by relating their diversity with others, which involves space for migrants to speak and be heard, as part of settling and belonging, which is discussed next.

## 2.4 Belonging

When considering the importance placed on migrants feeling that they belong somewhere, Marlowe (2018) maintains that belonging remains a fuzzy and under-theorised concept in development. Little is known about what belonging stands for and how belonging can be claimed, making it worth asking: "What do you mean that you belong here?" (Antonsich, 2010, p. 644). Belonging requires our "engage[ment] with our surroundings, we develop competencies in relationship to them, and this means sometimes we can be 'settled'" (Jackson et al. 2004, p. 7). Therefore a personal commitment to engage in the process of belonging-in-place is needed in the broader context of the "discourses and practices of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion at play" (Antonsich, 2010, p. 649). The struggles of migrant women can be exposed by looking at the spaces they spend time in, such as churches, migrant communities (Sarausad, 2006, p. 136), and temples. Marlowe (2018) cautions that migrants' may "have limited commitment to local host society interactions" due to their "ongoing transnational interactions" (p. 41). This brings to light the complexities and tensions of belonging in the transnational context, as Carruthers' (2013) highlighted the simultaneous straddling of interactions both 'here' and 'there' (as cited in Marlowe, 2018, p. 42).

One dimension of belonging is based on the "politics of belonging" as a "discursive resource that constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion" (Antonsich, 2010, p. 644). To formally belong in a country, whether as a citizen or as someone who has rights to stay, work and access social benefits is a significant "pre-condition to participate in and actively shape one's environment" (Mee, 2009, as cited in Antonsich, 2010, p. 648). The politics of

belonging is complemented by place-belongingness, which is a “symbolic space of familiarity, comfort, security, and emotional attachment” (hooks, 2009), bringing an intensely personal and intimate feeling of being rooted in a place (as cited in Antonsich, 2010, p. 646). A sense of belonging is developed through a combination of contributing factors involving the “powers of memory, shared narratives and collective identification” provided by “points of contact between various social groupings and institutions” (Marlowe, 2018, p. 40). Migrant women’s spaces were identified by Sarausad (2006) as “simultaneously enabling and disabling” (p. 135), with gender impacting women’s experiences of migration and transnational ties.

Belonging to a place and to a group of people becomes synonymous with social and individual identity (Lovell, 1998, as cited in Antonsich, 2010, p. 649). The strengthening of migrants’ culture and identity has also been recognised, such as Jackson et al.’s (2004) reference to Kong’s (1999) findings that a stronger nationalist response was expressed by Singaporean migrants in China. A sense of place-belongingness can also be generated through migrants’ successful integration into an economy (Chow, 2007; Threadgold et al. 2008), such as bakeries, meaning that they feel they have a part in the future of that place (Jayaweera & Choudhury, 2008; Sporton & Valentine, 2007; as cited in Antonsich, 2010, p. 648). The engagement of Cambodians in New Zealand’s economy has assisted Khmer to “advance themselves and their famil[ies]” (Liev, 2008, p. 118). Little attention has been given to the impact on New Zealand’s economy from ethnic entrepreneurship and sub-economies, and the role of ethnic networks assisting business establishment (Meares et al. 2011), such as Cambodian bakeries. Other spaces supporting place-belongingness for Khmer are Theravada Buddhist temples.

Religion plays an important role in supporting migrants to settle in host countries and enjoy a sense of wellbeing and belonging. The identity of Cambodians in diaspora has been linked to their traditional faith and temple attendance: “to be Khmer [Cambodian] is to be Buddhist” (Men, 2002, p. 222). Temples are special places of “prayer and worship, news, socialization, and planning of events associated with religious holidays” (Catolico, 2013, p. 238). Temples also support the passing on of religious and cultural traditions to younger family members (Slade & Borovnik, 2018,

p. 107). Temple attendance enables Khmer “to live out aspects of their ethnic way of life just like they did” in Cambodia (Liev, 2008, p. 26).

Liev (2008) identified Khmer organisations and associations as beneficial for Cambodian communities and for broader New Zealand society, finding “strong evidence of the positive contributions of religious groups and associations to the Cambodian community and to New Zealand society as a whole” (p. 4). Likewise, Friesen (2012) argues that ethnic activities provide a “bridging mechanism” (p. 61) to wider society, beyond the support activities provided for their own ethnic groups. However, Liev (2008) and Friesen’s (2012) findings may not be applicable to Khmer women working in bakeries in New Zealand towns. Women may feel isolated from their fellow Khmer due to their locations and work-related constraints, as highlighted in Chapters 4 and 5. Thus this section has looked at the multiple sources contributing to and sustaining the many ways migrants belong.

## 2.5 Summary

This chapter explored the intersections between gender and development, migration and women’s experiences in the context of settlement and belonging. Feminist perspectives on women migrating were explored in relation to dominant gender beliefs and conventions. A feminist critique of migrants’ transnational communities has brought to light the complex web of intimacies, power and relationships which women negotiate on an everyday basis. The gendered nature of spatial scales, and the framing of issues and women has important implications for women’s migration experience and their participation in social, economic and labour rights.

The simultaneous reinforcing and challenging of patriarchy in transnational mobilities is woven into the fabric of multi-stranded ties and connections, linking women to their countries of origin and settlement. The ability to stay connected and co-present on a regular basis is enabled through the proliferation and integration of ICTs and social media platforms, culminating in an imagined presence. Internet facilitated hyper-connectivity means that families are reproduced in transnational kin relationships of

feeling, intimacy and immediacy, and somewhat mitigates the sadness of separation. The exchange of remittances further strengthens migrants' connections to their homelands, communities and cultures. A better understanding of these flows of resources and ideas has been identified as a "powerful force for development" (Castles, 2009, p. 19). Therefore, migrants' identity, wellbeing and sense of belonging emerges from close transnational connections and relationships.

Belonging has many dimensions and is supported through the use of ICTs in the context of migrants' host and transnational communities. Finding peace, safety, stability and social support by maintaining cultural identity, traditions, religion and participation in the economy are believed vital to migrants' wellbeing, sense of being "at home" and future aspirations. Chapter 3 discusses the qualitative methodology used to undertake research with the migrant women in this study.

# Chapter 3

## Research With Cambodian Migrant Women

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### 3.1 Introduction

In exploring migrant Cambodian women's transnational connections and learning about their experiences of belonging, it was important that this study's design capture women's voices as they share their experiences and lives. Therefore this study has been designed with a qualitative methodology of story-telling and an ethnographic narrative approach. Tracing women's linkages, connections and social relations supports a "richer understanding of [women's] contemporary, often transnational, lives", according to Stewart-Withers et al. (2014, p. 72). This chapter presents the methodology and methods used to support a richer understanding by employing semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis. The challenge of recruiting four Khmer women with the time and willingness to participate is discussed, together with bakeries as field sites, data analysis, positionality, and limitations. The chapter concludes with the ethical considerations given in this study.

### 3.2 Methodology

This research uses qualitative methodology to support women's descriptions of their everyday realities, experiences and views, enabling an alternative approach to knowledge production (O'Leary, 2017). Qualitative research offers the opportunity to listen to women's unique viewpoints and realise a "different approach to knowing fully and in a more trustworthy way" (Smith, 1990, as cited in Peet & Hardwick, 2015, p. 275). This study has therefore aimed to uncover the transnational socio-cultural connections embedded in women's everyday activities and experiences. Women's stories "allows viewpoints to be heard that otherwise might be silenced or excluded" within an analysis of structures such as social, cultural, economic, political or environmental (Winchester & Rofe, 2010, p. 7). Thus, it was important that the

research methodology used was supporting women's re-telling of stories of exchange and everyday life, central to the collated narratives of each woman. Research with traditionally marginalised voices, such as women migrants, is "essential to any full understanding" (p. 58), that captures the "true essence" (p. 143) and produces credible, responsible research (O'Leary, 2017). The Khmer women's narratives are analysed, themed and explained in Chapter 4.

In order to make women's voices heard, story-telling was employed to uncover Khmer women's culturally constructed and constrained experiences and views on migration, living, and working in New Zealand. Story-telling has been used to support transnational research by Kim (2016) with East Asian migrant women (Korean, Japanese, Chinese), who now live in London. Kim (2016) found story-telling "central" and sometimes "compulsive", providing "access to an understanding of their subjective experience of migratory trajectories and social relations, inner mobility or their reflexive understanding of the self" (pp. 536-537). In this study, story-telling was supported by an ethnographic approach, uncovering women's transnational connections.

An ethnographic approach to tracing the linkages, connections and social relations aids a "richer understanding of [women's] contemporary, often transnational, lives" (Stewart-Withers et al. 2014, p. 72). Ethnography involves the study of "cultural groups in a bid to understand, describe and interpret a way of life from the point of view of its participants" (O'Leary, 2017, p. 145). Khmer women working in New Zealand bakeries are such a cultural group. Rather than simply describing circumstances, ethnography "attempt[s] to delve into cultural complexities in order to understand the world from the perspective of participants" (O'Leary, 2017, p. 145). Generating "thick descriptions" (p. 145) involves understanding, discovering, describing and interpreting so that the underlying frameworks that produce behaviour and meaning are unearthed (O'Leary, 2017). To support an ethnographic narrative and story-telling approach, semi-structured interviews were used to ensure "thick descriptions" and a richer understanding of Khmer women's transnational lives.



### 3.2.1 Methods – Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews with the four Khmer women who participated in this study, offered an opportunity to share their former lives in Cambodia, their migration experiences, and feelings about living and working in New Zealand. The women also talked about their aspirations for their children, families and themselves. It was important to hear women's unique experiences, therefore an interview question guide was developed in line with my research aim, objectives and questions. Dunn (2010) explained, semi-structured interviews strengthen the data collection process and demonstrate "respect for and empowers" interview participants (p. 102). Part of this respect and empowerment relates to the interview flexibility. The interviews were therefore aimed at supporting "free flowing" (p. 240) conversations with the women, producing additional interesting and unexpected data (O'Leary, 2017). Although I had envisaged interviewing each of the four women individually, one of the women had her teenage son translating when needed. Another woman had her sister-in-law supporting her in translation. This interpreting woman agreed to also be interviewed for the study. The process of interviewing the two women together was open, and they interacted with each other. The influence on each other's opinions was taken into account, particularly where the sister-in-law with the greater English proficiency spoke on her sister-in-law's behalf.

As the interviews were arranged with the women, their commitments to work and family were respected, with suitable days and times organised. A deeper insight into the women's work demands was also gained through this process. At the interview's conclusion, some women shared their family photos on their mobile phones. These photos included a family wedding celebration, an elderly father in Cambodia, and a family holiday in Vietnam. I appreciated these special moments as women shared their personal family photos. Leaving my contact details with the women participants meant ongoing text messages between myself and two of the women. I have also re-visited some of the women to clarify points and to stay in touch.

### 3.2.2 Participant Selection

Initially I had envisaged interviewing a Cambodian woman whom I had known over the years and using a snowball sampling technique to locate more women. However, this woman phoned and apologised that she did not want to participate. Subsequently, I spontaneously stepped into North Island bakeries, often buying a product and waiting for an opportunity for a brief discussion with the woman. I would leave her with a Khmer Participant Information Leaflet and Participant Consent Form (Appendix 1). An unexpected benefit of the information leaflets was seeing the women's faces light up in delight as they instantly recognised their Khmer language. The connection made in those fleeting moments went some way to successfully finding participants. However, it remained challenging to find women available to commit to an hour-long interview but eventually four women agreed to be interviewed.

During the participant recruitment phase I became aware that many women could not commit to an interview as they were frequently working in sole charge of the front counter, as well as numerous other bakery tasks. Due to the difficulty in engaging participants, I decided to offer a gift to the women. Often the decision to participate in the interview was made jointly with a woman's husband. On reflection, my selecting of participants, relied on women's willingness to generously give their time.

The ways in which the four women who agreed to participate, migrated to New Zealand vary. One Khmer woman migrant was resettled from a refugee camp in Thailand, another woman migrated with her former husband, whilst a further woman joined her Khmer-Kiwi husband, and the last woman was sponsored, with their two children, to join her husband. Face-to-face interviews were held with the women in their bakeries, on their preferred day of the week and time of day, as discussed next.

### 3.2.3 Field Sites

The four women who agreed to be interviewed worked in bakeries in the North Island of New Zealand. Pseudonyms were used for the names of women's locations. Two of the women's bakeries were in small rural towns and one suburban bakery was in a

medium-sized city. These locations were chosen as they are not considered New Zealand's gateway cities, as discussed in Chapter 1. Three of the women entered New Zealand and settled in three different gateway cities, before relocating to smaller rural or suburban locations, with fewer migrants. The woman sponsored by her husband, settled in a rural town with him and their two children, rather than first settling in a gateway city. The pull of the women's former cities and their family temples became apparent in the women's stories and thematic analysis in Chapter 4.

The day and time of each interview was negotiated with each woman. The women chose to be interviewed in their bakeries on quieter Mondays, and in one case, on a late Saturday afternoon after 3pm. Other family members or staff assisted with the women's bakery tasks during the interviews. The bakery environments resulted in the recorded interviews being interspersed with the background sounds of door chimes and the comings and goings of customers, suppliers and staff. Husbands continued to bake, loading long trays of pies into stainless ovens, and children chatted happily after school, in the back of bakeries. Rather than the bakeries constraining the interview process, these environments offered a further sensory contextual layer, supporting the women's voices. The immediacy of their bustling environments brought a deeper significance to their experiences and the subsequent themes, discussed later.

### 3.2.4 Data Analysis

Interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed, before being compiled as firstly, narratives and secondly, analysed into four themes. Stewart-Withers et al. (2014, p. 76) propose "becom[ing] intimate with raw data", and this was possible as I had chosen a small number of participants using an ethnographic narrative approach, rather than surveying a larger number of women. I spent time reviewing the four transcripts, collating and piecing together each woman's responses into individual narratives, to support an insight into the women's lives, experiences and views. Narrative analysis, interprets the stories which are constructed through the iterative data collection and interpretation process (O'Leary, 2017, p. 339). I returned to two of the women and sought clarification on points, such as temple attendance, other extended family members, meanings of comments, and so on. The emerging topics

were contemplated from the collated data and analysed into four themes, discussed in Chapter 4: workload issues and long hours; (im)mobility and (in)dependence; temples offering opportunities for Khmer friendship; and aspirations for the family.

### 3.2.5 Positionality

An interviewer's role requires reflexive consideration, given the power and influence that they have on their participants' responses (O'Leary, 2017), with researchers required to be "self-aware and reflexive" as lines of gender, ethnicity, class and age are crossed (Scheyvens, Scheyvens & Murray et al. 2014, p. 189). I am a mature, middle-class, New Zealand woman of European descent, married, with three young adult children. Working with people in my community has entailed various roles in District Health Boards [DHBs] and voluntary activities. In 2018, I joined Dr. Jeph Mathias on a fieldtrip to Cambodia, to assist with a mid-term programme review. I was impressed by Cambodia, its people, and the Cambodian Non-Government Organisation's [NGO's] team whom we worked alongside. Returning to New Zealand, I was interested in learning more about Cambodian women's experiences of living in this country. The Khmer women I had met over the years worked in Cambodian bakeries, hence my study's focus on these women. Prior to this research project, I had not worked or volunteered with migrants directly and recognise that this study provides an unfamiliar context to my past vocational and volunteer experiences.

### 3.2.6 Limitations

Language and research design were the main limitations in this research. The four women participants' native tongue is Khmer, with English being their second language. Language is understood to hold power in research. Therefore, I considered the possibility of misunderstanding or inadvertently misrepresenting participants' voices, through my own personal filter and language interpretation (O'Leary, 2017). The interview and participant consent processes, were considered in light of language and its power. The translation of the Participant Information Leaflet and Participant Consent Form into Khmer, assisted the women and their families to understand what I was asking of them. These leaflets were discussed before commencing the interviews

and in two situations the woman's relatives translated the contents for them. I am aware that by having family members present in the interviews, the women's responses may have been influenced. However, it was valuable to hear from the women who would not have been able to participate, without their family's support in the interviews.

A further limitation was the necessity to narrow the research design's focus. This narrowed focus concentrated on learning about migrant women's connections to others, both in New Zealand and in Cambodia. The research design was not looking to validate the information received about the women's families in Cambodia or from any New Zealanders that they mentioned. As four women were interviewed, the knowledge generated is not expected to generalise the experiences for all Khmer women working in bakeries. Instead, this knowledge represents the personal everyday experiences of migration, settling in New Zealand, and on belonging for these women, specifically. The topics discussed in this methodology section are informed by the following ethical considerations.

### 3.3 Ethical Considerations

Research ethics requires care, responsibility and integrity which tasks researchers to capture valuable reality,

because it is so central to our ability to learn, to grow, to shift, to change – to make a difference. This means research needs to be handled with the utmost care. At every stage, the goal needs to be responsibility and integrity (O'Leary, 2017, p. 54).

This goal is vital to research with migrant women, so that the utmost care is taken to reveal and value their realities. Ethics must always take precedence in the collection of research data (O'Leary, 2017), where an approach of "deep consideration" is endorsed (Massey University [MU], 2017, p. 3). The Massey University's *Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations Involving Human Participants* (2017) guided this consideration and the potential risks (MU, 2017). The MU Development Studies in-house ethics form was submitted and an ethics meeting was

held with my supervisor, Dr. Maria Borovnik, and her colleague, Dr. Rochelle Stuart-Withers. The translation of the Participant Information Leaflet and the Participant Consent Form into Khmer to support the women's informed consent was also discussed. Consequently, a Cambodian friend and former colleague kindly provided Khmer translation, which was greatly appreciated and proved beneficial, as discussed in Participant Selection.

Maintaining the privacy of each woman participant and demonstrating an appreciation of their involvement, were important ethical considerations, as research "must ensure the participants' dignity, privacy and safety, and must 'give back' to them in some ways" (Banks & Scheyvens, 2014, p. 161). Therefore, the locations of the women's bakeries, temples and former home towns were omitted and pseudonyms were used for each woman, as discussed earlier. One woman chose her own pseudonym and the other three women agreed to Khmer pseudonyms meaning: radiant jewel, blossom, and flowers. It is important that the sharing of research findings with marginalised groups such as migrants, ensures that the outcomes for them are positive, and that where possible, any negative outcomes are eliminated (Scheyvens et al. 2014). Cultural awareness, and the sharing of the study findings, were actions reflecting this ethos. Cultural consideration was given to my modest clothing attire when I approached potential participants, during the interviews and return visits.

### 3.4 Summary

This chapter has looked at the value of story-telling and an ethnographic narrative approach to listening to the voices of migrant women, who are often silent and unheard in public spaces. Khmer women working in New Zealand bakeries are a cultural group whose stories deserve to be told and heard. The location of women's bakeries in the North Island was raised in Chapter 1, expanded in this chapter's field sites section (see key theme in Chapter 4). Women's re-telling of their exchanges of things, metaphors, stories and lives, or issues, lays bare their transnational connections. The women in this study shared about their former lives in Cambodia,

their migration experiences and how they felt about living and working in New Zealand. The women also discussed about their aspirations for their children, families and themselves. The unique, personal stories are central to the collated narratives, which are analysed and filtered into four key themes and discussed next.

# Chapter 4

## Khmer Women's Narratives and Thematic Analysis

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### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the four semi-structured interviews with Khmer women working in rural and suburban Cambodian owned bakeries in New Zealand. The chapter firstly, provides a brief synopsis of each woman's story of their move from Cambodia to New Zealand. The essence of their personal journeys varies, as they share about their former lives in Cambodia, experiences of leaving, adjustment to life in New Zealand, and their experiences of working in bakeries. Secondly, this chapter brings together four themes emerging from an analysis of the women's interview transcripts. The voices of women, as quotes, are incorporated to support their descriptions of everyday realities, and in line with an ethnographic narrative approach (Chapter 3). Pseudonyms are used for the women, and the locations of their bakeries, temples and former homes are omitted to provide them privacy. The themes discussed in this chapter supports a better understanding of Khmer women's experiences of settlement and belonging in New Zealand.

### 4.2 Four Khmer Women's Narratives

The women, whom are named here, Maly, Chanta, Bopha and Jorani, describe their unique journeys from Cambodia to New Zealand and their experiences as they settle and stay connected with their families. The women's narratives provide background to the analysis of the four themes discussed later in this chapter.

#### 4.2.1 Maly

Maly grew up in Kampong Thom, above Phnom Penh, with her mother and father, an older sister and brother, a younger brother and her extended family members. Maly happily recounts her life in Cambodia: "I got cows, I got chickens, I grow vegetables. I



do by myself". Her mother passed away when she was five years old, which she says was "hard". Maly's family are involved in teaching and rice farming, and she compares her life with that of her younger brother, farming in Cambodia. She considers herself "lucky", as his work is "very hard", compared to her work.

In 2007 Maly met her Khmer-Kiwi husband when he visited his mother's village in Cambodia. He moved from Cambodia to New Zealand when he was five, living with his mother and brother in a North Island city. Maly and her husband were married in her village and their daughter was born in 2009, before they left in 2010 to settle in New Zealand. Maly's family had mixed feelings about her leaving.

They miss me a lot but they want me to come here [New Zealand]. They want me to know everything new... [but they say]: Oh I don't want you to go - but I want you to go.

Maly knew little about New Zealand before arriving, finding her situation "very scary" and remembering her initial sadness, sharing: "I'm not sad anymore. Before, when I come [to New Zealand] I [was] very sad – I miss my family". Maly and her husband had a baby son in 2011.

The couple have now established their own bakery which they operate together. A picture of Angkor Wat hangs prominently from the wall above the counter and Maly proudly explains that they created the name and Khmer-inspired logo themselves. She wears her logo-embroidered shirt and points happily to the clear bakery cabinets: "We bake everything in here... just two people. He [does] everything. [I prepare] some bread, biscuit, and slice, and the icing." Maly previously enjoyed gardening in Cambodia and she is happy with her bakery's wall-display of hanging pot plants. Maly explains why she has no garden yet: "No time to do the garden but I have a lot of plant[s] in here and a lot [of pot plants] at home as well, but no garden." However, she cheerfully talks about her pot plants at home and the bakery.

Maly does not know any other Cambodians in her city, apart from hearing her husband speak about another Cambodian baker, pointing in the direction of his bakery. "I know the bakery, but never meet him." Maly has found New Zealanders to be friendly and

tells of one woman and an elderly couple: “She teach[es] me about driving the car, and an old lady and an old man, they like my kids and they take my kids [out sometimes]. Yeah, I’ve got two New Zealand families.” When Maly talks about New Zealanders who have extended friendship to her, she refers to them as her “New Zealand families”. Considering Maly does not have any of her own family members living in New Zealand, this is an important distinction, indicating the closeness she values.

Staying in touch with her family and friends in Cambodia is important to Maly: “I just want to know about my family and how they live, and my friends”. She uses social media to connect with them: “Facebook, Messenger, do the camera, photos. Especially with my sister. We do a lot with my sister.” Maly’s older sister looks after their 80 year old father. She recounts conversations with her family, telling them:

Oh, I’m good, I’m so happy when I come here [to New Zealand]. How about you? What are you doing now? They say: I’m not good with the job over here [in Cambodia] – really hard. I tell them about New Zealand. My kids go to school and the teacher [is] teaching a lot and not playing, like teaching in Cambodia.

Together with regular conversations, Maly occasionally sends money home: “Yeah, a little bit, not much, to my father and to my sister. They say: Oh I don’t need anything. Yeah, they are good.” Maly’s strong ties with her family and friends in Cambodia appear to sustain her.

Maly looks at Cambodian newsfeeds on Facebook: “Sometime[s] I look at [the news] on Facebook, what’s happening. I know about [road] accident[s]. A lot of accident[s] in Cambodia. Quite sad. I don’t want to look. The Government in Cambodia is not good. That’s why I don’t want to know.” Maly believes that the Government could do more to improve the roads and reduce the frequent accidents. Discussing whether Maly sees herself returning to Cambodia to live, she replies:

No, I don’t want to go back to Cambodia. I don’t want to go home. I want to stay here in New Zealand. I think New Zealand is home. [I have] children, husband, [and] work. Have like a beautiful country, everywhere... not like Cambodia. And we can go anywhere, and like freedom. Not like Cambodia. When we go anywhere [in Cambodia] we worry about people stealing and accidents. That’s why I’m happy.

Maly's comments highlight the complex and contradictory nature of belonging. While referring to Cambodia as "home", she makes a conscious decision that New Zealand is now her home. Maly's husband and two children are her essence of "home".

#### 4.2.2 Chanta

Chanta was born in Cambodia but fled the country in the 1970s, as a young child, due to the Cambodian-Vietnamese war, saying: "I run to Thailand to stay in Khao I Dang Camp". This camp was discussed in Chapter 1. Later on, life in the refugee camp was centred around Chanta's family trying to find assistance for her brother's disabled son. Chanta recalls the multiple visits to the Camp doctors, attending appointments, sharing:

I go with him [brother] every time when they bring the car to get him [nephew] to like study, or some stuff like that. I go with him because I like to ride the car [laughing] – go for a ride in the car [laughing].

Chanta's brother asked a visiting New Zealand doctor if his son could go to New Zealand, recounting:

They [officials] took my brother's family first. Then he [the brother] go back to Khao I Dang and then he say [to the officials] he miss my Mum and my family and then they said that's fine, that's ok, because [they are] Mum and son. And then after two or three years, they took me from Khao I Dang to New Zealand.

Chanta's family members have been resettled across the world, with one brother and sister living in the US and one sister living in France. Chanta's mother and father joined her and her brother in New Zealand (see Khmer groupings in Chapter 1). Chanta was a young married woman with children of her own when she was eventually resettled in New Zealand in 1993. She had spent many years in Khao I Dang Refugee Camp, recounting:

Before I married, like a long time ago, when I leave from Thailand I already married but my husband is not good. He find another girl and then he go with the girl and then I stay by myself. I was a widow and then I look after my son and my other three daughters.

Chanta speaks with her son in Khmer, checking the term she should use to describe her husband leaving her for another woman. It is agreed that "widow" best describes her situation, bringing up four children alone.

In 2009, Chanta remarried and they had a daughter in 2012. Chanta's eldest three daughters live in a large North Island city, a few hours' drive away from her. When a Cambodian bakery was offered for sale in a small North Island town, Chanta and her husband decided to purchase it, explaining:

They [previous owners] sell the bakery here and then they said: Are you interested to buy that? So, yeah, and then I come from [former city]. Oh yeah, because I want to buy my own bakery. When we buy the shop from the old owners, they teach us for two weeks to make everything.

Having operated the bakery for the past five years, they plan to sell their business and move back to their former home city. Chanta's father passed away in 1997, but she is looking forward to living near her mother, brother and friends again.

She does not know any other Cambodians in their small town, replying: "No, no, no, - only me. Yeah, yeah, got no [other] Cambodia[ns] here. Only me! [laughing]." Chanta describes her isolated life, being the only Khmer in her town, having operated their bakery for the past five years in their remote location. This means that she no longer has regular contact with Khmer in in her former home city. Chanta formerly knew a New Zealand woman, a Chinese neighbour, but her friend has moved to Taiwan. Chanta does not know anyone in Cambodia: "No, got no one in Cambodia". Chanta remains connected to Cambodian social media news, replying: "Yeah, sometime[s] I look on Facebook, TV on Facebook. I see the news but [there is] a lot of fighting."

Chanta stays in touch with family in New Zealand and her siblings in the US and France using Facebook, Messenger and Viber. They do not exchange any money or gifts. The feeling of being disconnected from her country, extended family, and not socialising with Khmer over the past five years, culminates in her desire to return to her former home city. The isolation of living as the only Khmer in her town contrasts with the comfort Chanta feels from staying connected with her family. When we discuss the possibility of her returning to Cambodia, Chanta's son translates: "She said, she like New Zealand more." Chanta replies confidently:

Yeah, yeah, New Zealand – that's my home. Yeah, because like when I live in Cambodia, [we've] got war and nothing to eat, like very poor. When I go to

New Zealand we've got work, we've got money, like [to] spend, very happy.  
That's why New Zealand [is] my home.

Chanta, hence, contrasts her early memories of life in Cambodia and her experiences when she visited Cambodia, against the benefits of her life in New Zealand. As can be seen, the reasons for declaring New Zealand as her home are: work, money, freedom to spend and happiness.

### 4.2.3 Bopha

Bopha moved to New Zealand four months earlier from Phnom Penh. Her conversational English is uncertain so she requests her sister-in-law, Jorani, who owns two bakeries, to join us to translate. Jorani's youngest brother is Bopha's husband, as Jorani explains:

He went back to Cambodia and married Bopha and came back to New Zealand.  
Sometime[s] when he [was] not run[ning] the shop, like two time[s] a year, he go[es] back to Cambodia [to visit].

Jorani's brother sponsored Bopha and their two young daughters to New Zealand. In Phnom Penh Bopha previously stayed at home, caring for their daughters, but now they are in childcare while Bopha works in the bakery. The shop is on a busy main road and is open seven days a week, from 4.30am until 8pm (7pm on Saturday and Sunday).

Bopha's mother and father live in the US with her elder sister, also sponsored. Bopha stays in touch with her family there and her friends in Cambodia on Facebook, and talks on Messenger once a week. Bopha has not made any Cambodian or New Zealand friends yet, but is very happy living in New Zealand. She sees what is happening in Cambodia on Facebook but is not intending to return there, explaining: "Oh no. Because I have my husband and my daughters here. Life in Cambodia is so hot!" There is a noticeable supportive bond between Jorani and Bopha.

### 4.2.4 Jorani

Jorani moved to New Zealand from Phnom Penh nine years ago, not knowing anything about the country before arriving. She completed her primary schooling, can read and write Khmer, and read English. Jorani was sponsored by her husband to New Zealand

but was divorced “a long time ago” and has an eight year old son whom she cares for. When Jorani first migrated she felt sad: “Oh, yes, very [sad]. I did before. Before we come here I feel like that, but long times ago like, no more.” She has owned the bakery with her youngest brother and Bopha for the past 12 months. Jorani says she often finishes work at 7pm in the evening, although closing can be as late as 11pm. She also owns and operates another bakery in a nearby town which closes earlier at 5pm.

Jorani’s parents live in Phnom Penh and she has family members who care for her mother and father in her absence. Her family are “very happy” that she moved to New Zealand. Jorani sees Cambodian news on Facebook and uses Facebook and Messenger to stay in contact with her family and friends, sometimes sending money for birthday gifts. Jorani does not think her parents miss her too much as they visit New Zealand for three months each year, during Cambodia’s hot season. They help Jorani with childcare while she works. Jorani does not have any Cambodian friends in New Zealand and instead refers to her family members who live nearby.

Jorani has travelled around New Zealand but has not been back to visit Cambodia: “No, we can’t now.” [looking at Bopha and indicating the bakery businesses]. She would like to make New Zealand friends and knows one woman customer, sharing:

Yes, I know one of the ladies but she is [a] Jehovah Witness and she always call[s] me to the meetings. She is New Zealander.

Jorani enjoys life in New Zealand, explaining: “Yes, I got freedom in New Zealand. I just like a little bit of business and then the weather as well, and the safety.” After nine years in New Zealand Jorani feels that Cambodia is her home, seeing herself as “probably Cambodian”, intending to return to live there one day: “Yes, I want to go back.” As a Cambodian migrant businesswoman and sole parent of her son, Jorani impressed me with her confidence and friendly openness.

In summary, this section has looked at the four women’s narratives which have provided a glimpse into their former lives, their transition into New Zealand life, and their connections with family and friends in Cambodia. The women’s interview transcripts were analysed, with their experiences collectively considered and

developed into the following four themes: workload issues and long hours; (im)mobility and (in)dependence; temples offering opportunities for Khmer friendship; and aspirations for the family.

### 4.3 Workload Issues and Long Hours

Exploring the women's experiences and language used to describe their bakery work indicates that the businesses are operated seven days a week and open almost every day of the year. Cambodian bakery hours are extended in order to meet customer demand, such as truck drivers and other customers wanting to purchase food early in the morning. The interviews suggest that the women experience tiredness from the incessantly "long" work hours and having to converse in English, describing their work as "hard".

Women typically wake and begin their day at 4am on week days and at 5am on the weekends. Often the bakeries close between 4pm and 8pm in the evenings, but some women do not finish work until 11pm. School-aged children are required to spend time with their parents at the bakeries. Chanta describes her working week:

Like, Monday to Friday I wake up at 4 o'clock [in the morning]. Saturday and Sunday, 5 o'clock [in the morning]. [Finishing in the evening can be late], like sometimes, when my husband, he got a lot of job to do, like pie or something like that, 10 o'clock or 11 o'clock [at night] we go home.

The long work hours mean that women do not have time to build personal friendships or develop skills or interests outside of bakery work. The combination of workload issues and the long hours cause women to experience an overwhelming tiredness, with their family life coming second to the demands of their bakery businesses.

Maly's bakery and cafe is open 11 hours a day and this, similarly to Chanta, also requires her to juggle her family's needs as well as the bakery's demands. She explains:

Just with my family [in the shop]. Go home and sleep. Long days. Work seven days a week.

The long work hours, seven days a week, are typical of each woman's everyday experience, impacting family life. Jorani and Bopha appear to be in better positions as they employ staff who work later in the day, releasing the women to return home earlier. All women describe bakery work as "hard", or difficult.

Part of this difficulty is attributed to the need to converse in English with customers, which women experience as additional pressure. Maly recalls how challenging it was when she first worked in New Zealand, with limited English:

[Knowing only] a little bit...a, b, c, how are you, thank you, [...] very hard, not enough English, really hard for me. [There is] a lot to learn.

Whilst both the men and women in this study work long hours in the bakery, women are required to converse in English with customers, whilst their husbands work in the back of bakeries.

The long hours, hard work and tiredness due to sleep deprivation causes Chanta, the mother of five, to feel she is "getting old":

Sometimes when I wake up at 4 o'clock [in the morning], oh, very cold to go to work. When I sleep only... four or five [hours] at night and then when I wake up. [Because] five years now [of bakery work]. Long time, yeah, that's why. I'm getting old.

There is a resignation at what the long hours have cost Chanta, but also a powerful sense of her resilience. The impact of bakery work on Chanta's physical health, affecting her mobility and independence is discussed next. Through exploring the experiences and language used by women describing their workloads and the long bakery hours, it is apparent that they and their children are significantly impacted. Family life very much centres around the demands of bakeries, with women facing reduced freedoms in mobility and independence.



## 4.4 (Im)mobility and (In)dependence

The factors impacting women's mobility, such as driving, appear to be a lack of available time, needing to ensure that a woman is available to serve customers, and reasons such as:

- not knowing how to drive a car
- knowing how to drive a car but not holding a New Zealand driver's licence
- no longer being able to drive due to eyesight deterioration.

In Cambodia Maly walked or rode a bike. In New Zealand, Maly has not yet learned to drive, although she tells of a New Zealand friend, a woman customer, who has given her some driving lessons. Bopha, a new migrant, can drive but does not drive in New Zealand because she does not hold a driver's licence. Instead Bopha is transported as a passenger.

Bakery work has affected Chanta's physical health and her ability to be independently mobile. Initially Chanta happily shared her enjoyment of driving in New Zealand, but she saddens when reflecting on her deteriorating eyesight which makes it impossible for her to drive.

I enjoy[ed] driving but not now. Now I go with my husband. I can't see properly now with my eyes because I work too much - that's why, because not enough sleep. When my husband drives, I sit in the car. I see two car[s] coming [towards us], but [there is] only one car. [Chanta becomes very animated and laughs as she retells an instance of her double-vision.] Sometimes I scream [to my husband]: Oh! Two car coming!....but only one car [coming].

Chanta's retelling of her current travel situation illustrates her passive passenger role, as she is reliant on being driven by her husband. Unlike the other three women, Jorani regularly drives a car, commuting between her two bakeries in neighbouring towns. Jorani gives the impression of being an independent modern businesswoman, with few mobility barriers. Glancing out the bakery window towards the main road running through their small rural town and the surrounding rolling green paddocks dotted with sheep, Jorani and Bopha laugh together. From previously riding motorbikes in Phnom Penh, a dramatic change and contrasting scene faces them now. Jorani exclaims: "Yeah, feel like boring [now]!". The changes for Bopha are most striking, given she has

recently migrated. Bopha is now reliant on others to drive her places in rural New Zealand. Previously looking after her young daughters at home, to now working long hours serving customers in English, with her daughters in childcare.

The changes and restrictions on women's mobility, combined with their long work hours in bakeries, result in reduced opportunities for involvement in their children's school life. Chanta has visited her young daughter's primary school "sometimes", and happily recounts an invitation to a parent-teacher interview. Maly's husband takes care of the school drop-off and pick-up of their two children and shuttles the family between their home and bakery. When he drives the school-run, Maly has sole-charge of their bakery, preparing meals and serving customers. Although Maly says she wants her children to attend the nearby primary school, only a short five minute walk from the bakery, she is reluctant to move them. There is a sensitivity towards the impact that moving may have on her children and an awareness of the importance of their children's school friendships. Jorani believes that her son has made friends because he attends school, confirming: "Yes, I think so, because they go to school". However, Jorani does not mention meeting any of his friends. Referencing the women's earlier narratives, the women very rarely have friendships with New Zealanders and may assume that their children do, because they attend school.

The distance between the women and their children's schools, or in later years, work, increases. Chanta's 17 year old son travels to a larger neighbouring town by bus each day as there is no high school in their town. Chanta's three older daughters live in a large North Island city a few hours' drive away, working as a hairdresser, stay-at-home mother, and computer science student. The ability to drive, time, energy and distance are all barriers to Chanta easily visiting and spending time with them. She explains about having to miss a night's sleep in order to make the return journey by car to visit her daughter:

Sometimes, when it['s] quiet on Saturday and Sunday, I just take Sunday away. When I go to [name of city] to visit my daughter, we go there we can't sleep. When we go there sometime to [name of city], we get to [name of city] at seven or eight o'clock at night. Then we visit her for only three or four hours, and then come home. Can't sleep. Yeah, come back home at four o'clock [in

the morning], can't sleep and start working. Not sleep. Long way, that's why. Yeah, sometimes my daughter she miss me. Like, [she says:] Mum, come and visit. Oh and sometimes I miss her too. Oh, just go and don't worry about the sleep, can't sleep... all right.

On the rare occasions when Chanta visits her daughters who live a few hours' drive away, they miss a night's sleep due to the long travel distance. The importance of Chanta's relationship with her daughter and her joy in being needed as a mother is clear. Following a brief, but special family reunion, they make the return early morning journey home to re-open their bakery. Chanta's desire to maintain her family unit across distance sees her overcoming her tiredness, making the long journey and foregoing a night's sleep.

Where women describe a break from their bakery work, it necessitates their husbands driving them and their children, such as in Chanta and Maly's experiences. Chanta talks about visiting her mother and brother in another city, and Maly recounts visiting her mother-in-law and her husband's cousins a few hours' drive away. Maly shares about closing the shop for a day to enjoy a day at the snow with her husband and children. These first two themes impact women's freedom and their ability to connect with their extended family members and to build friendships with fellow Khmer living in New Zealand.

## 4.5 Temples Offering Opportunities for Khmer Friendship

Theravada Buddhist temples play an important role for women in bringing together their family members and in establishing Khmer friendships. The women all spoke fondly of their Buddhist faith and its importance to their families. Maly speaks of passing on Buddhism to her children, confirming: "Yeah, they know a lot." The women need to travel to a larger city with a Theravada Buddhist temple, a distance of between 30 minutes to 90 minutes by car. Where women want to worship with their extended family members, the travel distance increases to between three and five hours. Visiting temples is important to women's faith, the passing on of Khmer culture to

their children, and as places where they can meet fellow Khmer women and extended family members.

When the women were asked about knowing other Khmer in New Zealand, their answers reveal that they do not know anyone. Chanta is the exception as she has Khmer friends in her former home city, and explains meeting them at her former temple:

Yeah, I got friend in [name of former city], like a lot of friend[s there]. Only by myself when I go to [the] temple but just meet my friends at [the] temple. I just go with my family or my mum when I go there, and meet my friends there. Some Cambodians work, a lot of people work in [name of city]. Some people stay home, some people working. Yeah, I don't know much Cambodia[ns] too because I move here from [name of town] a long time ago [five years].

The fond memories of friendship and family, mixed with temple attendance, contrasts the remoteness and isolation Chanta now feels, being the only Cambodian family in her town. She explains her lack of Khmer friends, due to spending the past five years living away from her former home city. There is an urgency to Chanta's voice as she explains why some Cambodians do not attend temple, because they are busy working or are at home and unable to attend.

It is significant that discussions regarding the women's occasional visits to Theravada Buddhist temples are also linked to their contact with fellow Khmer, friends and extended family members. The larger cities with temples mentioned by the women were home to greater numbers of Cambodians than the women's locations. Friendships with fellow Khmer require more frequent contact than the rare occasions when the bakeries are closed and women travel with their families to attend temple. For Chanta and Maly, occasional temple attendance requires the closing of their bakeries for the day. Contrasting Chanta and Maly's experiences, Jorani and Bopha do not need to close their bakery as Jorani employs New Zealand staff. However, they observe only two annual Cambodian religious festivals at their temple, that is, the Cambodian New Year celebration and Pchum Ben<sup>2</sup>, held in late September. Although

<sup>2</sup> "A commemoration of the spirit of ancestors, this is one of the main festivities of the Khmer calendar around the last crescent of September or October" (Liev, 2008, p. viii).

Jorani and Bopha have greater freedom and flexibility due to employed staff, the demands of their bakeries and the need to work “hard” continues to impact them. Theravada Buddhist temples are important religious, cultural and social sites where Khmer women meet together as larger extended families, develop friendships with other Khmer women, and strengthen their family connections with Cambodia.

## 4.6 Aspirations for the Family

When discussing with the women their aspirations for their children, it is evident that none of them want their children to work in bakeries when they are older. Recent migrant, Bopha, is emphatic that her two daughters will not work in the bakery: “No”. The other three women all hope that their children will work in well-paid professions. Suggestions of engineer, airline pilot, banker and doctor are given. Jorani shares:

Yeah, I dream [for] the boy to become the engineering or pilot... but he don't know whether he can do or not. He can get too much money, it's good money like that. Don't want him [to do] hard work like me. Very long hours and tired too.

Maly similarly shares:

I want my boy to work at the bank. I want my girl to be a doctor. I don't know what happen when they grow up - just dreams, just by myself.

The women leave it to their children to decide their careers, realising that it will require waiting for them to grow older to see whether they can enter these professions. Chanta does not suggest that her teenage son work in their bakery when he finishes school in two months' time. He is undecided as to work, and Chanta shares:

I hope my son and my daughter got a good job. Yeah, [I] like him to get a good job, I think, work. I hope [that he will be a] good, good, good boy, not bad boy.

A “good” job refers to the possibility of gaining well paid jobs with bright futures which are not as demanding as bakery work. As discussed in Chapter 1, being a “good boy” references the risk to Khmer families, and women in particular, that any “bad” behaviour of their children would mean “losing face” and “losing reputation” (Liev, 2008, p. 135).

Together with aspirations for their children's future employment, the women are also eager to pass on Khmer culture. There is a mix of language abilities amongst the children, with most children able to understand Khmer but only half able to speak Khmer. Most of the children cannot write Khmer, as Jorani explains: "Probably hard for them I think". The women want their children to understand Khmer and culture, making family visits to Cambodia valuable, as Maly shares:

Yeah I want to [teach my children Khmer]. I want them to speak Khmer and I want them to like Khmer food, but they don't like it. Yeah, I want them to visit Cambodia, speak Khmer and do something about Khmer. They know a lot [about Buddhism]. Last month we go to [name of city] and we go to the temple. Yeah, I'm going to teach her [the Chbap Srei]. Not time to teach [Khmer dancing]. I want to but no time to teach. I'm not good with dancing.

It is important to Maly to pass on Khmer culture to her children, who know a lot about Buddhism, but their nearest temple is 90 minutes away. Maly was taught the Chbap Srei in school and hopes to teach her daughter the code, including being modest in her clothing. "Yeah, like this [pointing to her short sleeves] and not being too loud [laughing], like me!". Bopha and Jorani view themselves as city women and refer to the Chbap Srei as a code more for traditional "country women", than themselves, commenting about Khmer girls' role:

Work hard in the home. It is our traditional for the lady in Cambodia. Sometimes [Khmer mothers] check the manners [of the girls], like tidy at home and like that.

Although Bopha and Jorani share their knowledge of the Chbap Srei, only Maly intends passing on the Chbap Srei's cultural teachings (Chapter 1) to her daughter.

Women's occasional visits to Cambodia, or in Jorani's case, her parents visiting New Zealand, form part of the women's strategy to pass on Khmer culture to their children. Chanta explains visiting Cambodia with her youngest daughter:

Yeah, before she's three years old. I take her to Cambodia. [My daughter says:] No, I don't want to talk Cambodian. Very hard. I want him [son] to go back to Cambodia to visit but he say[s:] No. Because when he go[es] there, it's boring. He['s] got no car, he has to walk. That's why. It's very hot.

Spoken and written Khmer language is a constant difficulty for the women with younger children. Chanta's teenage son is able to speak Khmer but unable to read or

write Khmer. Interestingly, Maly also described having to speak in English as being “very hard” when she first migrated to New Zealand and worked serving customers. Return visits to Cambodia formed significant connectors as the women sought to pass on their Khmer culture to their children, some of whom arrived at a young age or were born in New Zealand. Maly plans to visit Cambodia later in the year and shares about her visit the previous year:

Last year bring the two kids [to visit Cambodia]. My daughter she really wants to go to Cambodia but my son says: “I don’t want to”. Because my daughter was born in Cambodia. I might just plan to go back [to visit] this year. It might happen.

Maly believes that visiting Cambodia with her children will strengthen their Khmer culture but her son is reluctant to visit the country, while her daughter’s interest in Cambodia is because she was born there. Above all, the women’s hopes for their children and their families supersede any personal goals for themselves.

Bopha demurely responds that she does not know her personal aspirations yet but talks about her happiness in living in New Zealand with her husband and daughters. As discussed earlier, Jorani wants to return to Cambodia as she feels Cambodian. Maly is content with her life in New Zealand and wants to one day teach, like her friends, sister, and younger brother in Cambodia. She enthusiastically shares: “I like to [be a] teacher as well. I could teach Khmer”. The resolve is heard in Maly’s voice about her new life:

Yeah, very happy. [New Zealand is] a lot better than in Cambodia. Just no friends here, no uncle and no aunty, like in Cambodia. But I’m still happy. I want to change my life as well. No friends here. But in Cambodia a lot of friends, a lot of aunt[ies], a lot of uncle[s], a lot of sister[s], and a lot of cousins in Cambodia. But here, just family [pointing to her husband and children], and yeah... but we can make something by myself. So happy. Yeah, like that – yeah, keep myself happy.

Maly makes the distinction between her own extended family members in Cambodia and her husband’s family members in New Zealand. Maly is reconciled to living in New Zealand and appears to gain strength from the closeness of her husband, daughter and son. Frequently Maly shares her concern for her family and friends’ hard life in

Cambodia, whilst also facing her own workload issues, long hours and having reduced mobility and independence, due to bakery demands.

Chanta hopes that her 17 year old son would be a “good, good, good boy” with a “good” job. Additionally, Chanta wants her family to have a “good life” and a “good future” together.

Yeah, dream myself? Yeah, yeah, I know about my dream but hard to, like hard to say? I dream about [the future] all the time. I want to have a good life, a good future. I say please don’t break my family - my daughter, my son – keep next to me, together like that [showing me her hands tightly clasped together].

Chanta’s aspirations for her family are predominantly to stay close together as a unit, where their future lives are “good”, that is, work, freedom to spend, and happiness. Her heartfelt plea for her family togetherness appears to be made to an external power that may bring separation. Echoes of Chanta’s earliest memories of fleeing Cambodia, the drawn-out ordeal of living in a refugee camp and the gradual separation of her family members over time across the globe, is heard in her forceful resolve to remain together. Chanta’s desire that her son and daughter remain close may also be an outcome of the enormous ordeal it is to visit her older daughters, living further away.

Women hold aspirations centred on their children. These involve choosing their own career pathways, beyond bakeries, in professional roles and a desire for them to become knowledgeable about Khmer culture, including visiting Cambodia. There is a compelling desire of women that their children experience lives full of goodness, and not hardship, and that their family units stay close and strong. The women’s interviews reveal their frequent contrasts between Cambodia and New Zealand. The benefits of life in New Zealand encompass the freedom to travel anywhere, safe roading, beautiful country, weather, free from fear of theft, work opportunities, income and happiness.



## 4.7 Summary

The women share their personal experiences of coming to New Zealand, settling into life and work in Cambodian bakeries. An analysis of the women's interview transcripts supports the four themes discussed. Workload issues and the long hours of preparing food, serving and conversing in English with customers each day is producing an overwhelming tiredness. There are constraints on women's mobility and independence due to their work roles and bakery locations. Bakeries are closed rarely for special occasions, to spend time with their families or to visit extended family members and temples further away. Temples are viewed as important gathering places to reinforce Khmer culture, meet with extended family members and develop Khmer friendships. Women's aspirations for their children indicates that Khmer culture and family togetherness are most important to them and they encourage their children to choose their own future career paths. Women relay the difficulties and constraints, relationships and religion, promoting Khmer culture and opportunities for their children, and ultimately emphasise the importance of living, as close family units.

# Chapter 5

## Discussion and Conclusion: Creating Khmer Spaces

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### 5.1 Introduction

Migration presents contradictions and complexities, as does bakery work for Khmer women. This chapter delves deeper into Khmer women's diverse experiences and perceptions. It will explore their unique migration stories further by discussing the complex pathways to creating financial security, connecting with their homeland, Cambodia, through Theravada Buddhist temples and ICTs. New spaces are created, as Khmer family havens of belonging. In this way, this chapter will reveal that the women's stories are not straightforward journeys from country of origin to country of residence. Instead, the women's narratives uncover the complex pathways of leaving, and the memories and longings entwined in their ongoing connections to Cambodia. Their deeply-felt emotions reveal qualities of perseverance, resilience, hope and determination, as they craft a new kind of belonging as Khmer women in a foreign country. This research aims to discuss the results, which were presented in Chapter 4, hence, to reveal Khmer women's transnational connections and relationships with Cambodia, and their experience of belonging. This chapter, therefore, links with the overall aim of this study, as it will show that the results support a wider view of Cambodian migrant women's lives, beyond their economic contributions to their family bakeries, to encompass their social, cultural and economic transnational connections.

To recap, this report started by explaining how my personal awareness of migrant women in my local community resulted in this specific focus on Khmer women working in Cambodian family bakeries. In Chapter 1, this report then provided background to Cambodia and outlined the ongoing connections between Cambodia and New Zealand. These connections included the several groupings of Khmer migrating and settling in New Zealand from the 1970s. It was explained how the socio-cultural and

gendered ideals of Cambodia and the pressures challenging Khmer women working in Cambodian bakeries have been imprinted on migrant women. The aim of this research was to learn about the views and experiences of Cambodian women working in New Zealand bakeries. This required exploring Khmer women's transnational connections to learn about their experiences of belonging. Therefore, the conceptual framework of gender and development, with a feminist perspective on women's migration in relation to dominant gender beliefs and conventions, supported a critique of Khmer women's transnational lives. This framing brings to light the multiple and complex webs of intimacies, power and relationships Khmer women negotiate every day. The simultaneous reinforcing and challenging of patriarchy entwined in women's transnational lives, as explained in Chapter 2, is revealed.

Given the preference to hear women's voices through their stories, a qualitative methodology based on ethnographic narratives was chosen. Hence, semi-structured interviews, focusing on the women's story-telling, were chosen as methods, discussed in Chapter 3. The women's narratives have revealed important themes, as presented in Chapter 4. Women have workload issues and spend long hours in their bakeries, they face contradictions in terms of their mobility and independence, Theravada Buddhist temples offer women opportunities for Khmer friendship, and women hold loving aspirations for their families.

This chapter discusses the study's data under the three research questions, outlined in Chapter 1, as follows. Focusing on the first research question, Khmer women's experiences of their everyday life, working hard in bakeries is discussed. Sarausad (2006) had identified migrant women's spaces as "simultaneously enabling and disabling" (p. 135). The chapter will then look at the ability of women to move freely and independently. As Young's (2010) research found, development may have the unwanted causal effect, where women become spatially 'fixed', which in turn reinforces gendered hierarchies and "reproduce[es] the social relations of production and reproduction" (Casolo & Doshi, 2013, p. 812). Although Khmer women participate in New Zealand's workforce and are economically mobile, the expected benefits of increased decision-making, empowerment and freedom of movement (Ballon, 2018)

is uneven. This situation has consequences for women's decision-making, and is discussed later, in relation to their children's schooling, where social and spatial inequalities for women are reinforced (Silvey, 2006). The draw of familiar Theravada Buddhist temples as a refuge from the everyday will then be discussed. Headley (1990) observes Khmer women as the ethical and religious role models for their children (as cited in Liev, 2008). However, bakery locations in smaller communities mean that women are physically distanced from their religious, cultural, and social supports. The gendered responsibility, as women and mothers, to model Khmer values and Theravada Buddhist beliefs in their families, is in addition to the double impact of being a woman and a migrant (Holliday et al. 2019).

Addressing the second research question, this chapter discusses how Khmer women's experiences of everyday life is entwined with technology and visits with family. ICTs reinforce a gendered division of labour and power inequalities, as women construct and maintain social networks with family and friends (Yeoh & Willis, 2004). Women's transnational connections provide contrasts which support Khmer women in constructing a sense of belonging. Cuban (2017) argued that ICTs involve emotional struggles and additional labour for women as they stay connected with family in homelands, due to expectations related to gender, social class, language and nationality.

This chapter will then focus on research question three, by discussing women's alternative socio-spatial sites of belonging, supporting their social and cultural Khmer values. Sarausad (2006) argued that spaces such as churches and migrant communities expose migrant women's struggles. The creation of Khmer cultural havens by women, as an alternative to cultural, religious and social supports involved keeping their family members close so that they can "live out aspects of their ethnic way of life" (Liev, 2008, p. 26). Bakeries offer a sense of place-belongingness as Khmer women successfully integrate into community economies, instilling the hope of a future in their towns, as discussed in Chapter 2. The final conclusion of this research report observes women crafting their everyday for themselves and their families, by drawing on their own notions of belonging, despite the constraints of bakeries.

## 5.2 Bakeries Simultaneously Enable and Disable Khmer Women

As this chapter discusses Khmer women's experiences of everyday life, including their interactions with Khmer and New Zealanders, this section will focus on research question one: What are Cambodian women's experiences in New Zealand? Whilst Khmer women experience gains in some spheres of their lives, including business ownership, self-employment, income and new skills, they also face constraints and contradictions elsewhere. Women expressed tiredness from their long hours, and a lack of free time away from their bakeries. Sarausad (2006) had identified migrant women's spaces as "simultaneously enabling and disabling" (p. 135). Women required the freedom to spend time with their children, family members living elsewhere in New Zealand, regularly attending temples, and building friendships with Khmer and New Zealanders.

Morokvasic (1984) had explained that migration does not alter women's status equally in their homes, communities or workplaces (as cited in Levitt, 2001, p. 243). Whilst bakeries offer Khmer women the opportunity to be self-employed, develop work and conversational English skills and business decision-making, women's experiences of life in New Zealand is impacted by their isolation. In this study, isolation resulted from time and work constraints due to the long and tiring hours of bakery work, mobility issues, and bakery locations. These factors culminate in women having few friendships with Khmer or New Zealanders. Brickell (2008) reported, that as women increasingly participated in employment in Cambodia, they were overburdened with additional domestic household and family responsibilities. Similarly, in the New Zealand bakery context, Khmer women were found to be overburdened due to business, domestic and family responsibilities.

The following subsections address the intensity of women's work in relation to their experiences of life in New Zealand and references the literature on feminised migrant labour. I will then delve into the mobility imbalance that women experience, fostering feelings of freedom or isolation, followed by a discussion on the draw of temples for women.

### 5.2.1 Bakeries are “Hard” Work

Cambodian families operate bakeries with the support of fellow Khmer, providing employment and an income for migrants with limited English (Roy, 2016). These family bakeries also offer Khmer women the opportunity to be self-employed and economically self-determining. Although bakeries are “labour-intensive”, requiring “hardworking labourers” (Liev, 2008, p. 125), women convey their positive aspects. These aspects include business ownership, employment, income, spending money, freedom, happiness, and the opportunity to change their lives. Women explained that within their family businesses, they participated in decisions to move locations, and establish or purchase existing bakeries. Women were also involved in the planning of family day-trips and holidays, even if these required men to drive them. Self-sufficiency and self-determination echoed through the women’s stories.

The context of women’s education and employment in Cambodia and their benefits to women and children was explained in Chapter 1. Benefits included economic mobility, which raised women’s status in households (Lawreniuk & Parsons, 2017), decision-making in their children’s education, and being able to “mov[e] freely” (Ballon, 2018, p. 1315). Ledgerwood’s 1990 research highlighted the Khmer codes for women which constructed and valued women as “successful Khmer woman”, if they conformed and were virtuous (cited in Brickell, 2011, p. 437). The women’s stories in this study, shed light on the personal cost to women of their multiple roles, as they juggle being a “successful Khmer woman” in business, home and family life. The re-emergence in Cambodian society of a “masculinized memory” of passive Khmer women, inferior to men (Enloe, 1990, as cited in Brickell, 2011, p. 439) was also raised in Chapter 1. However, this study has found Khmer women active in their bakeries, homes and families. Women eagerly shared their accomplishments and spoke positively about their families’ futures. They trusted that their children would gain professional, well-paying vocations, outside of bakeries.

As introduced earlier, women are impacted to a far greater extent by the employment context of bakeries, rather than pre-existing gendered ideals of Khmer women

(Bhandari, 2019). The workload and long hours of bakeries, unfortunately, has a disabling effect on women socially, culturally, and faith, as highlighted in Chapter 4. Women are constrained in their involvement in their children's schooling, from daily school runs, to out-of-classroom activities. Learning new skills such as driving, socialising and building friendships with Khmer and New Zealanders, attending temples, and resting in the familiarity of fellow Khmer, are also not possible. It can be concluded, that Khmer women's employment in Cambodian bakeries results in uneven benefits for them. The next section explores some of these unequal situations impacting women's mobility.

### 5.2.2 Moving Freely and Independently?

Mobility holds the power to reinforce, inform or disrupt cultural meanings and ideas (Fajardo, 2008). A feminist perspective questions inequalities based on gender roles and social differences, affecting equitable decision-making and women's power (Silvey, 2006) (Chapter 2). The women's stories are testament to their mobility, as they have migrated away from their strongly defined Cambodian culture to New Zealand. However, the assumption cannot be made that mobility is experienced in women's everyday lives and activities. This study has found that Khmer cultural restrictions have been carried to New Zealand, impacting on women's free movements, even though they are economically mobile. As raised by Ballon (2018), participation in the workforce brings empowerment for women, corresponding in a greater freedom in women's decision-making in "economic matters, educating their children, or moving freely" (p. 1315). Although Khmer women participate in New Zealand's workforce and are economically mobile, the expected benefits outlined by Ballon (2018) are uneven.

The impact of bakery workloads and long hours on women freely and independently moving resulted in women being constrained in mobility, compared to their husbands and male relatives. As noted, for many women in Cambodia, the motorbike "has become a "metaphorical seat for gendered mobility", offering both physical and socioeconomic mobility away from the household" (Truitt, 2008, p. 7, as cited in Brickell, 2011, p. 451). This study's bakery context reinforces Fajardo's (2008) argument that mobility holds the power to reinforce, inform or disrupt cultural

meanings and ideas for Khmer women in New Zealand. Almost all of the women in this study did not have the freedom to physically, socially, or economically spend time away from their bakeries or households, including husbands and male relatives, thereby reinforcing gendered, cultural ideals.

Whilst women are integral to the success of their family businesses, they rely on their husbands and male relatives, on a daily basis, to transport them and their children. When families close their bakeries to spend the day together visiting families and temples, women continue to depend on their husbands and male relatives to transport them. Contrary to Ballon's (2018) finding, most women in this study are restricted in their involvement in their children's schooling, beyond the annual parent-teacher interviews, due to time availability and mobility issues. Women are unable to participate in the daily drop-off and after school pick-up of children. Instead, Cambodian men experience greater freedom in mobility and independence than women, who remain behind in bakeries serving customers. As Young's (2010) research found, development may have the unwanted causal effect, where women become spatially 'fixed', which in turn reinforces gendered hierarchies and "reproduce[es] the social relations of production and reproduction" (Casolo & Doshi, 2013, p. 812). This situation has consequences for women's decision-making, and reinforces the social and spatial inequalities for women (Silvey, 2006), in reinstating gendered hierarchies (Casolo & Doshi, 2013).

Khmer women move within New Zealand for reasons such as for warmer climates and to live closer to other Khmer, where life will be "less boring and lonely" (Thou, 1989; as cited in Liev, 2008, p. 86). In this study, Cambodian bakeries are located in rural towns and a smaller North Island city, as outlined in Chapter 3. Women, as was explained in Chapter 4, have referred to the cold climate, their isolation in rural areas, hard work causing them a lack of time, and other difficulties, such as tiredness, and a lack of mobility. They also explained that they had no friends or family nearby and that life felt boring. This study therefore concludes, that the loss of independent mobility is relevant to understanding Khmer women's social and spatial inequalities (Silvey,



2006). The personal cost to women, of living far away from other Khmer, family and friends, is isolation and potentially, loneliness.

### 5.2.3 The Draw of Temples

Women felt drawn to temples as the important and familiar connecting spaces of faith, family, Khmer culture and friendship. Temples offered opportunities for Khmer friendship, which was a great need for women, as was discussed in the previous section and explored in Chapter 4. The bakeries in this study were located quite some distance from gateway cities. In comparison, women did not have the benefit of linking in with the large migrant numbers that could be found in cities (Friesen, 2012). Therefore, there were also no large groupings of Khmer, Theravada Buddhist temples, or Khmer associations offering women the cultural, social, and spiritual support appreciated by migrants settling in a foreign country and culture. Gateway cities are migrant entry points, and the metaphor suggests that migrants pass through these cities to other locations (Friesen, 2012; see Chapter 1). This study has found that Khmer women desired to return to gateway cities, where they could live near their Theravada Buddhist temples, families and Khmer friends. Chanta's story reinforces the draw of temples for women as she sought to reconnect with her family, friends and faith. When women discussed temple attendance, they spoke animatedly about going together, or meeting family and friends there. This study has found that bakery demands and the distance, in time and travel, between Khmer women and their temples are additional difficulties for women. Being able to connect with their cultural peer communities, practice their faith, and find communal and kin support in teaching their children cultural and spiritual values, is absent.

Liev (2008) and Friesen (2012) had observed that Khmer communities and the wider New Zealand society benefited from migrant organised activities that provided a 'bridging mechanism'. Yet, women in this study were excluded from participating in Khmer bridging activities between themselves, their fellow Khmer, and their local communities. Instead, bakery locations created a paradox for women as they lived isolated from fellow Khmer, and at the same time, were relentlessly busy conversing in English with customers. Although women's everyday lives revolved around the

surrounding New Zealand culture and the demands bakeries placed on them, there were very few friendships between women and New Zealanders or Khmer. This lack of friendship is a result of the abovementioned restricted mobility and independence, workload issues, the constant constraint of time, and the isolated bakery locations. When women discussed New Zealanders, they shared the moments that had given them the feeling of having a “New Zealand family”. These associations confer the special affective bond women felt when they connected with New Zealanders, even if the deeper interactions were infrequent. The women all desired New Zealand friendships, and, as noted in Chapter 4, they believed that their children were making friends because they attended school.

The absence of Theravada Buddhist temples and Khmer associations in the women’s locations had resulted in women being unable to regularly meet fellow Khmer at “points of contact” and experience the enabling benefits of “powers of memory, shared narratives and collective identification” (Marlowe, 2018, p. 40). As raised in Chapter 2, temples supported Khmer “to live out aspects of their ethnic way of life” (Liev, 2008, p. 26), and experience a sense of wellbeing. The double impact of being a migrant and a woman (Holliday et al. 2019), discussed in Chapter 2, means that Khmer women are the “major ethical and religious model for the[ir] children” (Headley, 1990, as cited in Liev, 2008, p. 138). This Khmer ideal of women, implies that women carry a greater cultural role and responsibility due to there being no Theravada Buddhist temples, Khmer associations, friends or family nearby to support them. In Chapter 2, it was highlighted that the generational passing down of Khmer culture is “uneven and weak” in settlement countries (North, 1995, as cited in Liev, 2008, p. 34). Women are devout in their Buddhist faith and desire their children to learn Buddhism. However, women are in the unenviable position of having a gendered responsibility to teach Khmer cultural and religious values to their children, without ready access to Khmer religious or socio-cultural support.

### 5.3 Connecting, Contrasting and Constructing Lives

This section focuses predominantly on the role of ICTs, together with gifting and visits. These topics respond to research question two: How do Cambodian women in New Zealand maintain connections with their families in Cambodia? Specifically, this section discusses how Khmer women's sense of belonging is supported through working towards their aspirations for their families. This study has found that Khmer women rely on ICTs to stay close to their families, and that they contrast their life in New Zealand, to life in Cambodia, as a way of constructing belonging. This involves reinforcing internal negotiations of migration decisions for the women themselves, and the feelings of family members in seeing the women leave. The regular contact maintained with family, friends, and staying in touch with Cambodian newsfeeds, is supported by ICTs. Mobile phones and social media platforms enable instant communication via messaging, phone calls, emails, photo-sharing and videos. In this way, women connect and manage their feelings about belonging. The use of ICTs is complemented by occasional gifts sent overseas to family members, and rare family trips to Cambodia. Women found support in sharing their Khmer culture with their children through their ongoing connections with family and friends.

ICTs facilitate these connections, which negotiate distance, where absence and presence becomes blurred (Wilding, 2006), providing an "imagined presence" (Urry, 2004, p. 28). ICTs offer relational personal space to women, free from the demands and long hours of a bakery, to read and respond to messages in the quieter moments of women's days. Regular contact offers "hyper-connectivity" (Kim, 2016, p. 532) of strong, intimate feelings of sustained relationships. The "pain of separation" (Kaur & Shruti, 2016, p. 71) and distance is somewhat mitigated by ICTs, which facilitates supportive emotional and social care networks through imagined proximity (Baldassar et al. 2007). ICTs are in this way producing a "family feeling" (Kaur & Shruti, 2016, p. 71). Wilding (2006) observed the use of ICTs in facilitating relationships, as culture, is integral to women's sense of belonging and feeling "closely connected" to their families (p. 132). Constructing and maintaining social networks was viewed by Yeoh and Willis (2004) as a gendered division of labour and power inequalities for women

(see Chapter 2). Women carry the main burden of caring, as traditionally it is viewed as “women’s labour, unpaid and provided because of love and obligation” (Bock & Duden, 1977, as cited in Bauer & Osterle, 2013, p. 462). Similarly, in my study, Khmer women actively maintained connections with their families and regularly communicated through Facebook, Messenger and Viber through sharing photos, videos, messages and calls. Women discussed everyday topics in their frequent conversations and were interested in their family and friends’ lives, including care of elderly parents. No mention of husbands or male relatives’ role in communicating care with family members living elsewhere was made by the women.

ICTs mediate intimacy in transnational relationships, producing tangible feelings (Wilding, 2006). Nurturing relationships is significant for transnational networks, which reveal a sense of belonging (Roth & Tiberti, 2017; Marlowe, 2018). Women contrasted their lives to those of their family and friends in Cambodia and elsewhere, as discussed in Chapter 4. This study found topics such as life and work being referred to as “hard”, frequently arising. Significantly, the Khmer ideal of women being responsible for the family’s reputation, and improved lives, is additional to the Khmer ethos of hard work (see Chapter 1). This study found the descriptor “hard” a transnational connector between everyday life in Cambodia and New Zealand. Difficulties were shared between Khmer women migrants and their loved ones in Cambodia, nurturing relationships, and substantiating Urry’s (2004, p. 28) “imagined presence”. Working “hard” becomes a shared narrative and collective identification (Marlowe, 2018).

Chapter 2 discussed a feminist critique of ICT usage, where the struggles and women’s labour were highlighted in family interactions (Cuban, 2017). The “family feeling” (Kaur & Shruti, 2016, p. 71) is replicated in ICT facilitated conversations, sharing “hard” work and life experiences. Kim’s (2016) contention that story-telling brings to light women’s “inner mobility or their reflexive understanding of the self” (pp. 536-537) is also highlighted in this study’s observation (see Chapter 3). Working hard becomes in this context a matter of pride and of transnational belonging, in the sense that it is important to work hard and diligently, to feel connected to family in Cambodia, who

are also working hard. ICTs have a prominent role in facilitating the construction of migrants' new lives, beyond women's former physical and familiar realm of family. To a lesser extent, this study found ICTs also supported women to remain informed of Cambodian news through Facebook newsfeeds, where road accidents, theft and the Cambodian Government's role in safe roading were mentioned. This study found ICTs particularly important in strengthening the multiple ties with family, in the absence of physical Theravada Buddhist temples and Khmer cultural supports in New Zealand. Transnational connections were also strengthened through the exchange of finances and contributions made between family members, such as celebrating birthdays. Women did not regularly remit money to family members in Cambodia. Therefore, women's remittances and financial contributions cannot be understood as "vital" to their families in Cambodia or to Cambodia's national economy, as Yeoh et al. (2005, p. 309) had maintained. Greater importance for women was remaining in regular contact with families through ICTs, rather than sending financial gifts.

This study found that women usually planned their visits to Cambodia with the aim of cultivating their children's Khmer culture, further strengthening transnational connections. In Chapter 2, the profound effect that return visits by migrants can have on their revision of an "earlier construction in the light of their new experience, and their emotional attachment with their previous and current homelands" (Barnes, 2001, as cited in Liev, 2008, p. 33) was highlighted. The transnational context of this study also identified family members in Cambodia visiting women in New Zealand, such as Jorani's parents annual visit to New Zealand. Hence, visits to Cambodia, and family visits to New Zealand added a dimension to women's construction of migration decisions and belonging by contrasting livelihoods.

## 5.4 Alternative Socio-Spatial Sites of Belonging - Creating Khmer Family Havens

As a way to understand how women describe their sense of belonging, this section answers research question three: How do Cambodian women in New Zealand describe their sense of belonging? This section firstly, looks at women's display of purchased or

gifted nostalgic signs, symbols or images of Cambodia in their workplaces, and secondly, discusses women's maintaining of Khmer social and cultural values in the absence of Theravada Buddhist temples, Khmer associations and fellow Khmer. Firstly, this study has found that women display pictures of Angkor Wat in their bakeries, creating a symbolic, and recognisable, public Khmer space. Antonsich (2010; see Chapter 2) discussed belonging as a space which involves "intensely personal and intimate feeling[s] of being rooted in place" (p. 646). In this context, Angkor Wat is an alternative symbolic space enabling belonging, which women display in their bakeries. Additionally, the naming of businesses with Cambodian related words and imagery, is such a space of belonging. Migrants' purchase and display of nostalgia from their homeland is a practice which provides "symbolic ties of common ethnicity or even nationhood" (Faist, 2010, p. 196), and hence, creates feelings of belonging across different cultures.

This study demonstrates that women experience work-related constraints and isolation from physical socio-spatial supports, such as Theravada Buddhist temples and Khmer associations. Sarausad (2006) argued that spaces such as churches and migrant communities exposed migrant women's struggles. Catolico (2013, p. 238) identified "spiritual fulfilment" as important to Khmer migrants' seeking of life balance. Therefore in the absence of temples, Khmer women's struggles may be unknown. The creation of Khmer cultural havens by women, as an alternative to cultural, religious and social supports, involves keeping their family members close so that they can "live out aspects of their ethnic way of life" (Liev, 2008, p. 26). Bakeries offer a sense of place-belongingness as Khmer women successfully integrate into community economies, instilling the hope of a future in their towns, as discussed in Chapter 2.

There is a need, therefore, to create alternative symbolic spaces to support women's Khmer culture. These spaces offer "familiarity, comfort, security, and emotional attachment" (hooks, 2009, as cited in Antonsich, 2010, p. 646). Women actively incorporated symbolic objects offering familiarity, such as Angkor Wat pictures, and pot plants reminding Maly of her garden in Cambodia, into their bakery workplaces.

Customers are unlikely to appreciate the significance of these objects to Khmer women's cultural connections. However, conversations between customers and migrant women could reveal these emotional connections and Khmer women's struggles. It can therefore be concluded, that women proudly display symbolic reminders and pictures of Cambodia in their bakeries, and desire to be identified as Khmer in their communities.

Secondly, the maintaining of social and cultural values is entwined with Theravada Buddhist temples and Khmer communities. As this study has demonstrated, bakery locations and the long work hours constrain women in their access to socio-cultural and religious support. This study therefore found that women maintained their social and cultural values in the Khmer family havens they created. In Chapter 1, Brickell (2011) highlighted the traditional teachings of the Chbap Srei and its social system confining women in cultural positions of past Khmer lifestyles and customs (Brickell, 2011). Although the passing on of traditional teachings was raised in Chapter 4, this study found less importance on traditional teachings for daughters, and instead women's hopes that their daughters and sons would gain good educations, which would open opportunities for professional roles for them. Liev (2008, p. 128) believes this desire is in the "hope that their children will have better jobs and brighter futures", as explained by in Chapter 1.

Women compellingly expressed their desire for their children to experience lives full of goodness, and not hardship. They, however, also did not want their families to lose face or reputation through the bad behaviour of their children. Good behaviour, as mentioned in Chapter 1, is an added cultural responsibility of women, as opposed to men, to maintain peace and order in families (Derks, 2008). To achieve appropriate values and behaviour in their children, women desired passing on Khmer social, cultural and religious values to their children. Therefore, this study has found that women are keeping their family units close and strong as Khmer cultural havens of belonging, whilst also realising the benefits of living in New Zealand, and are compensating for the constraints and contradictions their families are embedded in.

## 5.5 Conclusion - Khmer Women's Notions of Belonging

The results in this report have shown that women are crafting their everyday lives for themselves and their families. The key findings of this study demonstrate that Khmer women are actively managing multiple roles in their bakeries, homes and families. They eagerly and proudly share their accomplishments and hold positive aspirations for their families' futures. Working in bakeries located in New Zealand's smaller towns carries a greater workload for women, as they seek to pass on Khmer culture, Buddhism, and a love of Cambodia to their children. The absence of Theravada Buddhist temples, Khmer associations, and fellow Khmer, increases women's responsibility. Not only are women isolated from cultural, religious and social supports due to their bakery locations, time constraints and workloads, they are emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually tested as "successful" Khmer women. Women live with pre-existing gendered and cultural ideals that they are responsible to improve their husband's and children's lives. As highlighted in this study, this places additional responsibility and pressure on women to uphold Khmer ideals and to ensure their children's behaviour is good, and does not cause "losing face" or "losing reputation" to their families.

Isolation and a lack of mobility and independence for women has been highlighted as a key finding related to bakeries. This study concludes that it is uncertain whether Khmer women gain greater mobility and independence through migration. For example, women's participation in the workplace has not necessarily increased their empowerment and decision-making in their children's schooling, due to bakery demands, immobility and dependence on their husbands and male relatives. Time has been identified as a constant constraint to women's relationship building and personal skill development, such as driving. Women's transnational relationships via ICTs, has therefore gained greater importance in supporting women's settlement, providing "familiarity, comfort, security, and emotional attachment" (hooks, 2009, as cited in Antonsich, 2010, p. 646).



As seen in the context of Khmer women, their lives are indeed forged by multiple social relations, as Basch et al. (2008) have suggested. These relationships link women's everyday activities across borders and distance, and, as Roth & Tiberti (2017) and Marlowe (2018) suggest, reveals a sense of belonging. This study has shown that Khmer women are distanced from the community bridging activities that Khmer cultural associations offer, and are instead creating alternative socio-spatial sites of belonging comprising connections with their homeland, extended family, cultural spaces in bakeries and homes, and Khmer family havens. Therefore, opportunities for future research regarding migrant women's access to cultural, social and health services in New Zealand's smaller towns would be beneficial to supporting the settlement of migrant families.

It can be concluded from this research that belonging must be seen in a wider context than just about Khmer women identifying with either New Zealand or Cambodia as their homes. Instead, belonging involves Khmer women crafting their new life of belonging, where the memories of families, friends, and former lives are constantly woven through their everyday activities and thoughts. Being settled relies on not only being engaged with our surroundings and developing competencies in relationship to them (Jackson et al., 2004, p. 7), but also remaining engaged with kin, culture and homeland. By actively maintaining transnational relationships and virtual intimacies, Khmer women create a new, re-imagined existence. This recreated life involves women weighing their memories and knowledge of Cambodia's realities, against the constraints and opportunities that bakeries offer.

In the absence of Theravada Buddhist temples and Khmer associations, women craft a new kind of belonging, despite the highlighted constraints of bakery work, immobility and lack of independence. Significantly, Khmer women place family unity and their children's welfare, above their own happiness and aspirations. This family priority is expressed in Chanta's aspirations for her and her family's future, embodying this study's findings on Khmer women's feelings about belonging:

I dream about [the future] all the time. I want to have a good life, a good future. I say please don't break my family - my daughter, my son – keep next to me, together like that [showing me her hands tightly clasped together].

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# Appendix

## Participant Information Leaflet

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### Participant Information Leaflet

#### From behind the bakery counter: Exploring Cambodian women's transnational connections and sense of belonging

##### Kia ora

My name is Suzanne Andrew. I am a Master of International Development student at Massey University.

With this research project I aim at exploring Cambodian women migrants' connections with Cambodia and how these ties impact on their wellbeing, and whether they support Cambodian women's sense of belonging in New Zealand.

I would like to conduct interviews with Cambodian women who work in bakeries in New Zealand. You are invited to participate because you meet this criteria.

This leaflet tells you more about this study so that you can decide if you want to take part or not.

##### Who will be involved in the study?

The accomplishments of Cambodian bakers has become more widely known through their successes at the national pie awards in New Zealand. Cambodian women working in Cambodian owned bakeries often stay in less visible spaces behind the counter. This study is interested in foregrounding women's views and their stories.

Your participation in this study will be adding to more understanding on settlement and belonging in the context of migration, women, and development.

If you would like to be involved, you will be asked to complete an interview face-to-face with me, sometime next month. This interview can be completed at a time and place that suits you and should take no longer than one hour. You are welcome to invite a support person/people to be with you. If you would like a Khmer translator, I will try to meet your request.

Who to contact if you have questions:

Suzanne Andrew  
Researcher  
T: 021 492933  
E: [suzanneandrew22@gmail.com](mailto:suzanneandrew22@gmail.com)  
P: 79A Oceanview Road  
Mount Maunganui 3116

Dr Maria Borovnik  
Senior Lecturer in Development  
Studies School of People,  
Environment and Planning  
Massey University  
P: Private Bag 11222  
Palmerston North, 4410  
T: 06 3569099 ext. 83643  
E: [m.borovnik@massey.ac.nz](mailto:m.borovnik@massey.ac.nz)

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor Craig Johnson, Director (Research Ethics), email [humanethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@massey.ac.nz).

# Participant Information Leaflet (Khmer)



MASSEY UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES  
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
TE KURA PUKENGA TANGATA

ប័ណ្ណព័ត៌មានរបស់អ្នកចូលរួម  
រឿង ការសិក្សាស្រាវជ្រាវពីទំនាក់ទំនងរវាង

## Kia ora

ខ្ញុំឈ្មោះ Suzanne Andrew ជា  
និស្សិតផ្នែក ការអភិវឌ្ឍ  
អន្តរជាតិ នៅសាកលវិទ្យាល័យ  
Massey ។

ការសិក្សានេះមានបំណងស្វែង  
យល់ពីទំនាក់ទំនងរវាង  
ជាមួយប្រទេសកំណើតរបស់ខ្លួន  
និង ថាទំនាក់ទំនងនោះ  
មានឥទ្ធិពលដល់អ្វីខ្លះដល់ពួកគេ។  
ការសិក្សានេះក៏ចង់ដឹងផងដែរ  
ថា តើពួកគេធ្លាប់ជួយស្ត្រីខ្មែរ  
ផ្សេងទៀតឲ្យមានអារម្មណ៍ថា  
ខ្លួនជាប្រជាជនរបស់ប្រទេស  
New Zealand ដែរឬទេ។

ខ្ញុំមានបំណងសម្ភាសន៍ស្ត្រីខ្មែរ  
ដែលធ្វើការក្នុងហាងនំ  
នៅក្នុងប្រទេស New Zealand។ ខ្ញុំ  
អញ្ជើញលោកអ្នកចូលរួមក្នុង  
ការសិក្សានេះ ព្រោះ  
លោកអ្នកមានលក្ខខណ្ឌទាំង  
នោះ។

ប័ណ្ណនេះនឹងផ្តល់ព័ត៌មាន  
បន្ថែមពីការសិក្សាស្រាវជ្រាវ  
មុនពេលលោកអ្នកសម្រេចចិត្ត  
ចូលរួមក្នុងការសិក្សានេះ។

## តើមានអ្វីខុសគ្នាខ្លះៗក្នុងការសិក្សានេះ?

ស្នាដៃធ្វើនេះរបស់ជនជាតិខ្មែរត្រូវ  
បានគេទទួលស្គាល់កាន់តែច្រើន ក្រោយពេល  
ដែលពួកគេបានទទួលជោគជ័យក្នុង  
ការប្រកួតធ្វើនំនៅក្នុងប្រទេស New  
Zealand។ ស្ត្រីខ្មែរដែលធ្វើការនៅហាងនំដែល  
មានម្ចាស់ជាជនជាតិខ្មែរ មិនសូវចេញមុខ  
ទេ។ ការសិក្សាស្រាវជ្រាវនេះ  
ចាប់អារម្មណ៍ចង់ឲ្យស្ត្រីទាំងនោះបញ្ចេញគំនិត  
និងប្រាប់រឿងរ៉ាវរបស់ពួកគេដល់ពួកយើង។

ការចូលរួមរបស់លោកអ្នកនឹងជួយបន្ថែម  
ចំណេះដឹងលើការរស់នៅប្រទេស និង  
អារម្មណ៍ថាជាប្រជាជនលើទឹកដី ក្នុងបរិបទ  
ការធ្វើ  
អន្តោប្រវេសន៍ ស្ត្រី និងការអភិវឌ្ឍ។

ប្រសិនបើលោកអ្នកចង់ចូលរួមក្នុង  
ការសិក្សាស្រាវជ្រាវនេះ  
ខ្ញុំនឹងសម្ភាសន៍លោកអ្នកដោយផ្ទាល់  
ក្នុងខែក្រោយ។  
ការសម្ភាសន៍នេះទាមទារឲ្យលោកអ្នក  
ចំណាយពេលប្រហែលមួយម៉ោង។ ខ្ញុំអាច  
សម្ភាសន៍លោកអ្នកទៅតាមពេលវេលា និង  
ទីកន្លែងដែលលោកអ្នកជ្រើសរើស។  
លោកអ្នកអាចនាំមនុស្សដែល  
លោកអ្នកទុកចិត្តមកជាមួយ។ ប្រសិនបើ  
លោកអ្នកត្រូវការអ្នកបកប្រែភាសាខ្មែរ  
ខ្ញុំនឹងព្យាយាមរកជូនលោកអ្នក។

ប្រសិនបើលោកអ្នកមានសំណួរ សូមទាក់ទង៖  
**លោកស្រី Suzanne Andrew** អ្នកស្រាវជ្រាវ  
ទូរស័ព្ទ: 021 492933  
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បរិស្ថាន និងផែនការ (Development  
Studies School of People, Environment and  
Planning) នៃសាកលវិទ្យាល័យ Massey ។  
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Palmerston North, 4410  
ទូរស័ព្ទ: 06 3569099 ext. 83643  
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ការសិក្សានេះត្រូវបានរាយការណ៍ជាមុន និងពិនិត្យឃើញថាមានហានិភ័យទាប។ ការសិក្សានេះ  
ត្រូវបាន  
ពិនិត្យផ្ទៀងផ្ទាត់ដោយគណៈកម្មការផ្នែកក្រមសីលធម៌ (Human Ethics) របស់សាកលវិទ្យាល័យ។  
អ្នកសិក្សាស្រាវជ្រាវដែលមានឈ្មោះក្នុងឯកសារនេះនឹងទទួលខុសត្រូវលើផ្នែកក្រមសីលធម៌  
លើការសិក្សាស្រាវជ្រាវនេះ។ ប្រសិនបើលោកអ្នកមានចំណង់ទាក់ទងនឹងការសិក្សាស្រាវជ្រាវនេះ  
តែមិនចង់ពិភាក្សាជាមួយអ្នកស្រាវជ្រាវ សូមទាក់ទងលោកសាស្ត្រាចារ្យ Craig Johnson នាយក  
ផ្នែកស្រាវជ្រាវ តាមរយៈ អ៊ីម៉ែល [humanethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@massey.ac.nz) ។

# Participant Consent Form

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## Participant Consent Form

From behind the bakery counter: Exploring Cambodian women's  
transnational connections and sense of belonging

Thank you for taking part in this research!

First name: \_\_\_\_\_

Last name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

I would prefer to be contacted by: phone / email

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

By taking part in this study, you will contribute to more understanding on settlement and belonging in the context of migration, women and development.

Please tick the circles to indicate your consent:

- ☐ I know that I can decline to answer any question at any time
- ☐ I know that I can withdraw from the study at any time, up until 30 October 2019
- ☐ I know that I can ask any questions about the study at any time
- ☐ I agree to tape record the interview and I understand that I can ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time
- ☐ I agree to provide information on the understanding that my name and any identifiable information will not be used. My information will be kept private and confidential.

- ☐ I would like a summary of the study findings when it is concluded
- ☐ I have read the Participant Information Leaflet and all my questions have been answered.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



នជាប្បាជននលីទិត្យដិថិឃ្យស្នសិស្តុមនាហងនំ

នាមត្រកូល: \_\_\_\_\_  
 នាមខ្មែរ: \_\_\_\_\_  
 អាសយដ្ឋាន: \_\_\_\_\_

**ឆែងឆែងខាងទក្ខម ប្បីននបិអុន្យយល់យ្យក្ខម**

- [illegible]

ហត្ថលេខា: កាលបុរិ

