

Theoretical aims and the truth

Child prostitution in Cambodia



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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Cambodia is a country where child prostitution is a common thing. Both boys and girls lend their sexual services in exchange for money or other valuables. The age of children can range from 7 to 17 years due to the fact that youth and freshness are considered important in the sex industry. Some children offer their services in organized prostitution such as brothels, while others work on the streets or beaches. Child prostitution is often related to trafficking and force. Not many, if none, children are voluntarily involved. Trafficking for child prostitution happens mainly from rural areas to the bigger cities. People in rural areas often live in poverty and lack education which leads to easily being deceived into prostitution or selling their child for an income. It is often thought that Western tourists are the main group in demand of child prostitution. In reality, Western tourists turn out to play only a minor part in the demand of child prostitution. Rather, it is Asian and Cambodian men that are much more involved.

The convention on the rights of the child (later referred to as the CRC), designed by the UN, came to life in 1990. It entitles supplementing rights to children besides the human rights everyone has. Most of these rights are based upon protection, prevention, provision and participation (the 4 P's). These rights seek to optimize the child's environment leading to a harmonious development into adulthood. The CRC also entails articles about sexual exploitation of children. For example, article 34 states that children should be protected against all forms of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse. Child prostitution can be considered as a form of sexual exploitation, especially because many children are trafficked into prostitution. Cambodia ratified the convention in 1992. With ratifying the CRC, Cambodia recognizes children as distinct from adults and in need of additional rights to the universal human rights. Cambodia also agreed upon article 34, that every child should be protected against sexual exploitation. Several measures have been taken by governmental and non-governmental institutions to diminish child sexual exploitation in Cambodia.

Unfortunately, figures of child prostitution in Cambodia show that Cambodia is far from realizing their goals mentioned in the CRC. Why is it so difficult to realize these rights in Cambodia? Is there a discrepancy in the perceptions held by the CRC and the ones held in Cambodian society? To find answers to these questions it is important to know something about cultural norms of sexual behaviour, the financial and cultural environment and perceptions of childhood, gender and social norms in Cambodia. These environmental aspects and cultural norms influence people's mentality and choices related to child prostitution and are therefore important. With a better insight on these topics it is easier to deduce the answers that will follow on these questions. It will allow us to comprehend how

child prostitution is embedded in Cambodian society and how this differs from those rights set down in the CRC. Ultimately, it might lead to a possible solution for reducing the amount of children that work as a prostitute. A cultural perception of childhood and child prostitution could be compared to the one in the CRC. With perceptions I mean how people seem to understand, view, and enact upon a certain topic by analyzing their behaviour and attitudes rather than interview Cambodians about this.

All countries that have ratified the CRC reckon value in these rights. However, one cannot but wonder if the perception taken on childhood, which is underlying these rights, is a universal one. It is one thing to acknowledge the rights set down in the CRC, but whether these rights are put into practice might not be as simple as it seems. The concept of childhood is acknowledging that children are different from adults. The conception of childhood is a social construction that entails how children are perceived as different from adults and what is expected of them. Important is the connection between the theoretical debate of children's rights and practices in reality relating to children's rights. Countries can ratify the convention, but if the society's current vision on childhood is not coherent to the one underlying the CRC, implementation of these rights might be difficult because the effectiveness of legislation is partly dependent on the framing of childhood. (Shanahan 2007) For that reason it is useful to know which position the CRC resembles, taking childhood into consideration and compare this with perspectives in the reality of society. Before one can state which rights a child should have, one needs to conceptualize what childhood should be like for a child. The rights described in the CRC are a result of a certain perspective on childhood. Along with the conceptualization of childhood come different views on childhood and the position of a child in society. How we define what children are sets a foundation on how we think about childhood and the ways we like to organize childhood within our society.

In this case it is about how Cambodian people perceive childhood and child prostitution. The perception of childhood in Cambodia is important in understanding the perception on child prostitution in Cambodia. In Cambodia, child prostitution is a phenomenon very much maintained through cultural norms and local circumstances, such as poverty, Cambodian people live in. The cultural norms and circumstances play a key role in the existence of and the possibility of diminishing child prostitution. Examples are the conception of childhood and sexuality framed by these cultural norms and circumstances. How the CRC perceives this is based upon the content and background of the CRC. A comparison of these two perceptions, the ones held in Cambodia and the ones implied in the CRC, should give insight on the local perceptions possibly influencing the implementation of article 34 of the CRC. This leads to my research question: *“Are Cambodian perspectives of childhood and local conditions of influence on the implementation of article 34 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Cambodia?”*

A better understanding of child prostitution requires insight in different aspects. Among those are sexual norms, such as the importance of virginity, of which insight is needed in order to

understand the value of child prostitution in society. Another important theme is the family context; this is where most children get socialized and therefore of importance in understanding the Cambodian perceptions on childhood. The organizational aspects and processes of demand are important to analyze to get insight in what stimulates this industry, for what reasons child prostitution is in demand and for whom. These perceptions are related to the concept and conception of childhood. The analysis of my data gave me insight in these norms and circumstances and with that I have tried to derive perceptions held about children and child prostitution.

CHAPTER 2

Field experience

Chapter one has given an overall introduction of my research. Before I will go into detail with the data gathered, I would like to focus this chapter on background information about the field experiences and organizational aspects of the research. Topics such as the research relevance, framework, methods, and reflections will be discussed here. Cambodia, child prostitution and children's rights are the three themes at the core of my research. The combination of these themes in my research is relevant to broader discussions of implementation of universal conventions in different local contexts. This will be discussed in the first paragraph. The second paragraph on my framework will show details on how and why the analyses of data changed the research question initially used. It leads to a stronger focus than before. In the third paragraph I will discuss my intended methods and how I experienced these in the field as being useful or not. Furthermore, I will discuss the problems I encountered in obtaining access to sources of data. Finally I will briefly relate my personal experience and reflections which I gained while doing my research.

2.1 Relevance & Motivations

Within a framework on the universal rights of the child, my research is focussed on commercial sexual exploitation of children. My personal interest for doing research on sexual exploitation of children first began after reading the book "Rosario is dood" by Majgull Axelsson. It inspired me to work as a volunteer for a local organization in South Africa specialised in helping sexually abused children.

This experience made me want to specialise in the development of children. My bachelor thesis focussed on the causes of sexual abuse of children in South Africa. After learning more about children's rights at another voluntary job, I decided to do research on sexual exploitation in relation to the convention of the rights of the child.

Every UN country except for one (the U.S., Somalia has recently announced to ratify the convention¹) has ratified the CRC. Ratification of the convention means that, in theory, each country is trying to realize these rights to the maximum extent within their capacities. Unfortunately, realization of the rights stated in the CRC does not always correlate with what was initially intended.

Commercial sexual exploitation of children illustrates the problem of adhering to the rights set down in the CRC. Cambodia in particular is often depicted as a paedophile paradise, despite the country has ratified the CRC. Therefore, Cambodia serves as a good place to do research on commercial sexual exploitation. Sexual exploitation is an issue with growing attention in media at the global and the local level. This is also pointed out by the large numbers of local and international NGO's working on sexual exploitation in specific or in broader means on human rights and children's rights located in Cambodia. I have focussed on child prostitution as a part of sexual exploitation as many children are trafficked into prostitution. Prostitution could be seen as sexual exploitative because a truly voluntary choice to practice prostitution rarely exists. The discussion whether prostitution is always a case of exploitation has arisen because there often is a lack of free will involved when someone gets into prostitution. I have chosen not to use the term sexual exploitation but prostitution. With this choice I leave the discussion whether prostitution is exploitative or not out in the open.

One could reason that attention going to this subject is based on the intrinsic reason to end this phenomenon or at least change it to a level where no rights are harmed. Within my research I focus on how international rights are brought into practice on a local level and why these rights are not always experienced in reality. This research could contribute to the worldwide debate of international rights implemented on different local contexts.

Article 34 in the CRC could be understood as a goal, a theory one wants to achieve in reality. According to the CRC, a child has the right to be protected "*from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse*" (CRC 1989, article 34) which is a goal for countries that seek to adhere to these rights. This can only become reality when one acts on every possible level of policy such as governmental based and non-governmental based institutions. Another condition in order for the CRC to be successfully implemented is that the rights should be ingrained and fully accepted in society.

¹ <http://www.crin.org/resources/infodetail.asp?id=21323>

2.2 Research framework

In order to find out why commercial sexual exploitation still continues to be a big industry in Cambodia, one needs to identify the different actors and factors related to its existence. According to the literature sources I used, there are social economic factors such as poverty and tourism and there are cultural factors like hierarchy and sexuality. The literature identifies 7 main actors which are related to commercial sexual exploitation of children. These actors are related among each other and to different factors as well which I will explain below.

The first group of actors are the international policy makers, the United Nations (UN) who composed the CRC. Besides the composition of this convention there is a UN-committee appointed to the verifying task on the national level of each country which has ratified the convention. This happens through overview sessions every couple of years where governmental and NGO reports containing the progress in fulfilling these rights are discussed. So far, Cambodia has had two sessions, one in 2000 and one in 2011. The second group of actors, the local policy makers and organizations institutionalized by the government have to implement the international convention on a local level. The core task is to create supplementing laws and taking actions related on child prostitution. The third group of actors are the NGO's who overlap partly with the national policy makers and institutions by implementing the international convention on a local level. The main difference is that they are not governmental based and create their own policy on diminishing child prostitution. Traffickers are the fourth group of actors. They are the ones who buy, sell and exploit the children. Examples are brothel owners, human traffickers and parents who sell their children. The latter makes up the fifth group, the parents who are said to be selling their children. Parents can be understood as an actor on their own, independent of the group actors called 'traffickers'. Although, they can be traffickers as well, one does have to take in account that this depends on intentions of selling their child or them being deceived and never intended to do this. Children are the sixth type of actors, they are the ones who shape the industry of child prostitution; they are 'the commodity' which can be bought either by force or by their own choice. The last group of actors are the sex buyers, the ones who buy the sexual services of these children.

The different factors and actors mentioned above have mutual connections and need to be set out to get a step further in understanding the existence of child prostitution in Cambodia. This gives rise to the next research question. "*What are the role and influences of local conditions on article 34 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Cambodia?*" This research question extends the conceptual model in which the actors, factors and the reality of child prostitution are centralized and in relation to article 34 in the CRC. These three concepts are considered as the base of my research out of which I formulated my sub-questions. By considering the following sub-questions in my research I

could reach to a conclusion and answer the main research question. The first three questions are based on the written literature and the fourth question offers space for new insights done in the field.

1. *What actions do policymakers and NGO's take to realize article 34?*
2. *In which way contribute, positive or negative, the directly involved of child prostitution in realizing article 34?*
3. *In which way do, positive or negative, social economic and cultural factors contribute in realizing article 34?*
4. *Which other factors contribute, positive or negative, in realizing article 34?*

In order to answer each sub-question I have made a list of themes with related questions that needed to be answered before I could answer the sub-question. Based on these lists of questions I made my list of interview questionnaire.

While doing my research I noticed that I could arrange my data into different themes, all relating to my research question: “*What are the role and influences of local conditions on article 34 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Cambodia?*” One important theme was law and implementation of these, which was overlapping with the other themes. Another theme dealt with cultural subjects such as family setting, gender and sexuality which gave insight in the local norms and values related to the bigger theme of sexual exploitation. The last theme was the perpetrators, the ones who make money or have pleasure out of sexual exploitation. After reconsidering my theoretical framework I found that many of these themes together provide an insight in the cultural perspective on childhood, which might or might not correspond with the perception on childhood used in the CRC. Therefore I decided to use the concept childhood as the theoretical framework of my research. My gathered data could have given an answer to the old research question, but the new framework placed these local conditions under an umbrella with the focus on childhood. This makes my research question a bit altered: “*Are Cambodian perspectives on childhood and local conditions of influence on the implementation of article 34 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Cambodia?*” Since my research question changes, the sub-questions naturally followed

- 1 *Which conception of childhood does the CRC entail?*
- 2 *How are sexuality and sexual norms embedded in Cambodian society?*
- 3 *How are family roles and its context related to child prostitution in Cambodia?*
- 4 *Which organizational processes are of influence in the demand and existence of child prostitution in Cambodia?*

These questions will make it easier to answer the final research question; therefore I will spend a chapter on each question in order to reach a thorough conclusion. I will explain the structure of the chapters with each question in paragraph 2.6 of this chapter.

2.3 Research methods

I expected that interviews and observations would be my most used techniques. I hoped to gather information out of experience taken from daily life and out of the interaction with the local people. I predicted that observational techniques might pose a danger to my own well-being and it turned out to be even more dangerous than I had expected. This will be discussed more thoroughly in the paragraph on access (2.3.2) and the paragraph on personal reflections (2.3.3). The lack of observational data made me lose the possibility of “*the imponderabilia of actual life*” as Bronislaw Malinowski called the certain phenomenon’s which cannot be ascertained in any other way (Malinowski 2007: 53). Another option was gathering data through reports and documents containing statistics or other related information. Although I expected this would be only a minor part of my data, it turned out to be one of the major data sources I gathered. The different reasons that proved observation to be difficult will be explained paragraph 2.3.2 of this chapter.

I expected that I needed to contact several NGO’s to accompany me in the research but in reality this turned out to be different. NGO’s were much more protective on their business and not waiting for someone doing research. Someone entrusted me by explaining these organizations are afraid to become like orphanages. Many orphanages have turned into a tourist attraction with one day visits and easy access to volunteers. It has proven to become an ideal area for people searching for sex with children. Before I left the Netherlands I had already five commitments to interviews, I got the other commitments to interviews while I was already in the field.

I used semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews. This choice was based on the fact that each respondent would have a different background and made it therefore impossible to create a standardized list of questions. Because of the sensitivity of the subject I had to make sure I verbalized the questions in the right way considering the expertise, background and language barrier of each respondent. Unstructured interviews were merely used within off the record data gathering.

2.3.1 Performance

My Performance started with presenting my research question while being in the field; I simply told everyone I was doing research on commercial sexual exploitation of children. Instead my actual research question details and focuses more on the relation between the CRC and its implementation in real life in Cambodia. My main sources of data were several nongovernmental organizations I would talk to, so even before contacting them I decided I would explain my research question a bit more simplistic to prevent some bias in the data they would provide me with. I expected that if I presented every aspect of my research question, the organizations would try to glorify their work. This might have still been the case but at least to a lesser extent than it otherwise might have been. Another reason for simplifying my research question was that it might have been perceived as though I was checking on these organizations, which possibly would be received as negative and might have resulted in less access to different sources of data.

As a researcher my relation to the several organizations I talked to can be seen as quite doubtful. On the one hand I was obviously ‘on their side’ by doing research on this topic. On the other hand I was their critic because I wanted to know about their work and programs on this subject and analyse the aforementioned. There is a possibility that people had the idea that they had to prove themselves (or the organization) and told me on purpose more good things instead of the things that don’t go so well within the organization’s program. In order to avoid this bias as much as possible I told people that I did research on the local factors influencing implementation of article 34. With this strategy I hoped to receive less biased data concerning program involvement of organizations on this topic.

I also tried to make sure I was dressed according to Cambodian custom. When I arrived in Phnom Penh I soon noticed that people that have a formal job were very decently dressed. As my backpack contained some casual travellers’ clothes I quickly bought decent trousers and a blouse in which I could present myself more appropriately. A few weeks later I also bought some local style skirts to blend in more. As it turned out, this was the best way to present myself. I received many compliments on my skirts which lead to more personal questions about my stay in Cambodia. Presenting myself as being interested in and liking the local customs obviously worked in my advantage, people seemed to put me in a different context as a foreigner. It appeared to me that I wasn’t the regular foreigner who wanted to know things but as someone positioned closer to the Cambodian society.

2.3.2 Access

I noticed that being a foreign researcher worked against me as some organizations were trying to pull me off. One respondent told me that this is because they are really protective. They are too afraid that data will be used for wrongdoing by paedophiles and the like. Additionally, they are afraid the organizations providing aftercare turn into the next 'orphanages', the kind where sex tourism happens behind closed doors and is accompanied by many dangers. I contacted about fifty organizations for interviews and heard back from about twenty of them. Obviously, the majority never replied for reasons unknown. Despite not hearing back from most organizations I kept sending them emails. I tried to phone a couple of organizations but without success due to a language barrier.

After being in the field for a couple of weeks I found it was much harder to collect data through means of observation than I had thought. There wasn't as much happening on the streets as I had expected. Sometimes when an event did occur it was inconspicuous rather than the clear-cut events literature on child prostitution in Cambodia suggested. Kay Warren for example wrote in 2008 that "*children were present, but they were locked behind iron gates padlocked shut. The adults were smiling indulgently, but it was the self-indulgent smile of a predator waiting patiently for its prey, this was a street where child prostitutes as young as seven or eight were peddled and sold in the thriving illegal sex trade.*" (Warren 2008:1) Comparing my own observations to what is being said in literature, I deduct that in the last couple of years the whole sex industry has gone through a process of change which made it from an open industry to more of an underground one.

After hearing a couple of horrific stories about Western women who went into a 'hostess bar' and came out drugged or raped, I decided it would, for my own safety, be better to stay out of these types of bars. Being a white young woman was in this surrounding definitely working against me, because as a woman and especially as a Western woman I had no reason to go to such bars or other areas where prostitution is happening. People in the areas where prostitution takes place suspect that you're a researcher, journalist or someone else who is 'against' their business and therefore a threat. Knowing that I would be perceived as a threat among people who don't hold back for crime left me no other choice than to stay out of these areas. This consequently limited my data gaining a lot.

An unbridgeable language barrier made doing research even trickier. Even though I mostly spoke directly with English speaking Cambodians, I noticed it was hard for them to speak fluent English. This caused me to rephrase my sentences which led to more simplistic answers by them because they did not have the capacity to speak in more detail. When I tried to go into detail I often got the same answers. By using suggestive questions I tried to steer the conversation to a certain direction hoping that it would give me more details to work with in my research. I only allowed myself to use subjective questions to bridge the language barrier. It sometimes helped breathing new life into the conversation, but at other times it was to no avail and a small amount of data was

obtained.

While I was in Cambodia, there were several (social) obligations, holidays and festivities that slowed down my research. First of all there was Khmer New Year, a festivity of four days in which every shop and company is closed. Secondly, the sister of one of the family members was going to get married and I personally received an invitation to join this festivity covering three days. Also the timely expiration of my visa took up a lot of time; it forced me to cross the border of Cambodia to get a new Cambodian visa. This trip took me four days. Other little things as for example going to the water park with the landlord's children were something else that took my time. The problem with these things was that sometimes I enjoyed it and I hoped to learn more about the Cambodian culture and at other times it felt more like a social obligation I had to give in to or in some cases my refusal was just not heard. Even though I was worried about losing valuable time in the beginning, in the end it did not really matter because I was not able to get more interviews or obtain more data without putting myself in danger.

The fact that access to data was such a difficult issue in my research was rather frustrating. I was doing 'the' fieldwork, but sometimes weeks went by without appointments. Nevertheless I tried to keep myself busy with research related issues. I felt stupid for being so naive that I, as young Western woman, would be able to do research on such a sensitive topic embedded in many criminal circuits. The literature I had read had not been up to date in terms of the visibility of child prostitution thereby given me a completely wrong view on reality. Naturally this is a lesson learned only by being in the field, but it is still hard for me to accept. I decided that back home I would see whether I should rephrase my research question, now I had other data than I had first expected. Meanwhile I tried to gather data elsewhere, such as from reports and researches on Cambodia done by local organizations, which I found in several organizational libraries. What I found there was very useful; these reports and researches were written by the very same local organizations I had interviewed or had tried to contact. Noteworthy, many of these documents were not published on the internet and therefore only available by visiting these libraries. Another thing I did to keep myself at least a bit busy with my research was reading books related to my topic. Among these I read "*De stilte van de onschuld*" by Somaly Mam; "*Addicted to Love: Exploring the Nightlife in Cambodia*" by Randy Nightwalker; "*Sex Slaves: the trafficking of women in Asia*" by Louise Brown; "*Terrify no more*" by G.A. Haugen & G. Hunter; "*The Gods drink whiskey: stumbling toward enlightenment in the land of the tattered Buddha*" by S.T Asma. These books gave me a better overall understanding of what I was trying to research in Cambodia and its cultural context.

2.4 Personal reflections

By positioning myself as a researcher in the field, I had to be conscious of my personal presentation. Being a white young woman doing research on a sensitive topic such as commercial sexual exploitation made me think a lot about how others might perceive me. Soon I found out that cultural differences in perception of gender and its normative behaviour was influential on how I was probably perceived and how I perceived others due to my personal background. These cultural differences might have very well influenced how I was perceived by Cambodians. I travelled unaccompanied to Cambodia, leaving my family behind for four months and I have no scruples to voice my thoughts. To Cambodians, this might seem highly unusual and inappropriate. One of the many things I would take into account during my stay in Cambodia.

Another example of cultural differences is the meaning given to different kinds of behaviour which is very different from what I am used to with my own background. A lot of girls in the Netherlands use make-up on a daily basis; this is not the case in Cambodia. Most Cambodian girls don't wear make-up unless they have to go to, for example, a wedding party. Therefore, I was at first oblivious to the possibility of Cambodian girls wearing make-up being a prostitute. Another example; where I would think a group of girls was just having fun hanging around in the streets or in the park (where a lot of people, local and tourists hang around in the evening) it appeared to be a group of young prostitutes. It was really hard for me to feel so suspicious towards behaviour I was used to as being normal in the Netherlands. Another problem I ran in to was recognizing women's age. Most of Cambodian women look very young, which makes it hard to tell whether they are 16 or 26 years old. This made me see why it is so easy for Western tourists to close their eyes for what is happening. Partly because we don't recognize prostitution, partly because we find it hard to realize some behaviour as suspicious as it is so normal to us.

The way I coped with experiences related to child prostitution changed over time. After reading a lot of literature and personal stories on child prostitution I thought I had created a kind shield around me as not to get too much overwhelmed by what I would experience and see in Cambodia. The first time I was confronted by something shocking I failed to put my guard up. I left a hotel after celebrating a friend's birthday. When I got to the entrance I bumped into a middle-aged Caucasian man and a young, raggedy looking Asian boy. They entered the aforementioned hotel together. Because it was a well known hotel I had doubts whether it really was what I thought I was witnessing: child prostitution. I desperately hoped I was wrong in thinking this. At the moment itself I was so discomposed, I had no idea what to do and so I left. As soon as I arrived home I burst out in tears for I felt guilty for not interfering. Considering that what I saw was indeed a perpetrator taking an unknown child with him to the hotel for sexual purposes. For an anthropologist to witness such a thing it poses an ethical dilemma; should one intervene or not. Not intervening might expose the boy to serious harm

as I had witnessed suspicious behaviour but not taken action upon it. In case I was dealing with organized crime, by intervening I could have put myself in grave danger too. It would also have meant that by 'saving' the boy, the man involved might end up in prison for his actions. I fully believe that the latter is what he deserved, and it is also according to the Cambodian law. However since both the man and the boy play equally important parts in my research, taking no action after witnessing this particular event (and others to come) is the best for collecting trustworthy data. After having discussed the aforementioned event with several people it was recommended I should not intervene next time, and rather call a child protection hotline who will deal with it. Realizing I have very limited powers in terms of changing the child sex industry helped me grow less sensitive to similar experiences that occurred later on.

Getting less sensitive to similar actions happening around me is something which came over time. The first time I stepped into a (In Cambodian terms, high class) club for a fun night out I was flabbergasted about the amount of local girls who appeared to be prostitutes. It was not easy not to care, but after a while you just start ignoring it. You're aware it is happening, and you know you can't do anything about it at that moment. However, should these girls approach one of my male friends; I would hope my friends would not even think about getting involved with prostitutes. It shows that in believing this, one is able to judge badly on the situation, and yet is able to put a blind eye to the situation at the same time.

2.5 Data processing

My data gathered in the field consists of interviews with multiple organizations, both local organizations and international organizations, related to my topic of research. I also gathered information through experiences and observations of daily life living in Cambodia, although not as much as I wished for. I lived with a Cambodian family and made Cambodian friends; some of my local friends provided me with valuable information for my research. Furthermore I collected additional information from researches and reports performed/published by organizations situated in Cambodia. Many of these reports weren't on the internet and only possible to collect by visiting the organizations.

In the process of going through each of these reports and interviews, I had to make difficult choices, which ones were useful for my research and which ones should I leave be. To make the data over seeable, I started to label reports as 'useful' and 'slightly useful but not of great importance subject-wise'. By doing so, I could eliminate a couple of them. I have coded the data I was left with by identifying its overall theme and divulged further on this said theme and added an outline. Within each

theme smaller subthemes had come up and I coded these manually before starting to write about each subtheme within the theme. I did this for most of my created themes because a couple of themes weren't that useful as I thought they would be. So I left those out. These were mainly themes focused on the work of organizations, but became irrelevant because of changing the research question in due course. I wrote down my findings for each theme and its subthemes, not paying much attention to grouping them into chapters. When I had finished doing so, I worked on chapter division and which research questions I was going to try and answer. Based upon my research questions and relevance of order in data I divided the chapters. This proved rather difficult to realize, as most of the data is interrelated. It seemed more like a cloud of information, and I found it impossible to subdivide it without putting the information out of context.

There are a few definitions I would like to explain. The people who make use of the sexual services are named in different ways; offender, perpetrator, sex user or sex buyer. I decided to use 'sex buyer' to refer to the men who make use of sexual services of child prostitutes. I would like to define prostitution as the exchange of sexual services for something of value, independent whether the prostitute or his/her 'owner' (in the case of trafficking) receives this. Child prostitution and regular prostitutes differ in the age of the prostitute, which is younger than 18 years old. I chose to use the 18 years of age as turning point for becoming an adult because this is the one used in the CRC. The CRC prescribes certain rights for children, seeing as my research is on one of these rights and for the coherence of the research this would be the best choice. I will make use of the words child prostitution instead of child sexual exploitation, because child sexual exploitation entails much more cases such as rape, which I will only discuss briefly. In chapter 5.2 I will discuss the usage of child prostitution and child sexual exploitation further. One last thing one will probably notice while reading my research is that I talk more often of girls in prostitution than boys. This is because girls seem to take a greater part in the sex industry than boys, especially in organized prostitution. Besides that, gender relations are influencing girls' possibility in becoming a prostitute much more than it does for boys. For the same reasons, boys are less often topic of research within child prostitution or exploitation.

2.6 Structure

In the process of analyzing my data and thinking of my research question I decided to divide my chapters in important themes, most of them answering a sub-question which in turn leads to better insight needed in order to answer my research question. Chapter three will give an overall introduction of perceptions on children and their characterizations, what I will call 'childhood thinking'. It gives the reader background information necessary to understand and shape an answer to the research

question. In chapter four I will get into more detail on the CRC and their usage of childhood thinking, distilled from the rights they have entitled to children. Before one can take a look at the gathered data this research has provided, it is important to consider the Cambodian and CRC perceptions of childhood thinking, in order to see the data in its entirety. In chapter four I will try to answer the first sub-question: *Which conception of childhood does the CRC entail?* The three major themes and chapters that follow concern Cambodian childhood thinking, and try to establish a complete picture. Chapter five discusses sexual norms, a theme which plays an important role in how child prostitution might be perceived. Here the second sub-question will be answered: *How are sexuality and sexual norms embedded in Cambodian society?* Chapter six describes familial contexts and is the second theme to be discussed. Familial context deals with cultural roles and attitudes within the family life. It will delve deeper in what role children play in Cambodian family life. Furthermore, it will answer the third sub-question: *How are family roles and its context related to child prostitution in Cambodia?* The last theme is concerned with organizational processes and demands of the sex industry. This last chapter is of relevance because this gives insight information about who behave according to or against certain norms of society and what is done about the wrongs in this industry; It provides information on how people act according to or against Cambodian society's norms and values in terms of child prostitution, and what is done by people and organizations in order to make it disappear. In order to touch on all these subjects the last sub-question goes as follows: *Which organizational processes are of influence in the demand and existence of child prostitution in Cambodia?*

CHAPTER 3

Childhood

Though most people will understand what you mean when you talk about 'children', the concept 'childhood' has different meanings in different places. For instance, the Dutch believe childhood ends when one reaches the age of 18 years. In certain parts of Africa, this part of perceptions of childhood is different. Boys become adult by going through a certain 'rite de passage'. Girls reach adulthood through marriage. Both cultures recognize childhood as different from adulthood, but attach different characteristics to childhood, such as when and how it ends. These differences show that various people can have a concept of childhood, but the conception can differ widely. For this very reason, it is possible that the conception of childhood followed by the CRC does not cohere with that of

Cambodia. If these conceptions are not coherent to each other, this might be a reason why implementation of particular rights is problematic. Chapter three will therefore give an overall introduction on thoughts about children and their characterizations, which I will call ‘childhood thinking’. I will examine the concept and conception of childhood, which will show that there are multiple constructions of childhood each leading to different standards of behaviour towards children.

3.1 Concept & Conception

David Archard (2004) distinguishes between the concept and the conception of childhood. According to him, the concept of childhood requires that children are distinguishable from adults in respect of some set of traits, whereas a conception of childhood is a specification of those traits. In simple terms; *“to have a concept of ‘childhood’ is to recognize that children differ interestingly from adults; to have a conception of childhood is to have a view of what those interesting differences are”*. (Archard 2004:27) Shanahan (2007) deals with this problem slightly different by discussing the difference between ‘children’ and ‘childhood’: Children are human beings and childhood *“denotes the state of being or the stage at which one is a child.”*(Archard 2004:21) Childhood is not a natural phenomenon but a socially constructed category, which is a set of cultural ideas that does not exist in a material sense. (Shanahan 2007)(Archard 2004) *“Images of children, attitudes towards them, expectations about them, understandings of who and what they are [...] are socially constructed.”* (Rogers, W.S. (2003) in Woodhead & Montgomery 2003:26) As a social construction, childhood can vary in time and place; therefore, it is culturally and historically specific. Thus, there is no singular childhood and childhoods are always changing and being reconstituted. (Shanahan 2007)

Shanahan (2007) challenges the relationship between adults and children as maintenance and points out that particular images of childhood are important to adults: *“Adults place increasing social and emotional value in children.”* (Zelizer 1985, in Shanahan 2007:415) She thinks that children help to constitute their own reality because *“children are not only shaped by culture, but they help to shape culture”* as well (Shanahan 2007:420). Therefore, childhood is also in part constructed by children. When looking closer at the relationship between childhood and adulthood it is often noted that they are each other’s opposites and there exists a relational status between the two, seeing as one cannot exist without the other. (Wyness, Harrison & Buchanan 2004)(Archard 2004)(Dunne & Kelley 2002, in Shanahan 2007) Alanen says that the *“difference between the two positions indicates the identity of each: the child cannot be imagined except in relation to a conception of the adult.”* (Alanen 1988: 56)

To summarize, the relational roles between adults and children provides information on how childhood is viewed in Cambodia. The acknowledgement of human beings who are not adults (yet) is depicted by Archard (2004) as ‘the concept of childhood’ whereas Shanahan describes this as what we

call 'children'. A cultural set of ideas about the differences and specialties of this group of human beings is what is called 'the conception of childhood' by Archard (2004) or 'childhood' by Shanahan (2007). When combined, one could follow Archard's (2004) claim about the contrast between the biological or natural on the one hand and the social or cultural on the other, which distinguishes both of these specifications. Further on in this research, 'the concept childhood' versus 'the conception of childhood' distinction will be used to describe these two distinct concepts.

3.2 The child

John Locke, an empiricist, describes the child as a 'tabula rasa'; a blank and empty nature which is shaped through the environment and experiences of the child. (Archard 2004) A notion often observed is that childhood is seen as a stage in the development of a human being, partly because children are seen as "*adults in the making rather than in the state of being*". (Brannen & O'Brien 1995 in Shanahan 2007:410) (Archard 2004) Archard elaborates on this by saying that "*Children are understood as 'becoming', a stage, rather than as 'being', a state.*" (2004:41) Wyness et al. (2004) and Alanen (1988) follow the assumption that children develop the necessary abilities and understandings of the social world during this period of childhood: "*Children are apprentice citizens rather than fully constituted members of the social world. Children's lack of status rules them out from being viewed as 'social'. Full social status is a precondition of citizenship*". (Wyness et al. 2004:84) Also Archard notes that terms of age is not the only thing that separates children from adults. He states that "*childhood is defined as that which lacks the capacities, skills and powers of adulthood*". (Archard 2004:39) The pedagogical developmental model claims that progress from each stage of development to the following one represents a passage from a simple to a more complex one. This does not only count for the passage of childhood to adulthood, but also for the different stages within childhood. Another important claim is that each stage is a necessary precondition of progress to the next. (Archard 2004)

There are multiple constructions of childhood leading to different discourses, of which two are especially powerful. One image depicts children as innocent and deserving protection; the other describes children as inherently bad and in need of discipline and socialization. This first discourse is based on the assumption that children are inherently good and when they behave badly this is because either they do not understand they're doing something wrong or because they are acting in response to mistreatment. (Rogers (2003) in Woodhead & Montgomery 2003) Shanahan adds that a child is sacred and should be showered with affection. (Shanahan 2007) Some researchers on childhood claim that this discourse has some sources in Christianity where children are seen as the nearest to God; having a purity which is derived from having arrived only recently into this world. If this is held true, growing

up is a process of degeneration, as we are growing away from our inherent innocence. Both Rousseau's and Locke's view on children strengthen the argument that growing up is a process of degeneration as both imply society corrupts children. (Shanahan 2007) Childhood should be a time of happiness, innocence, protection and measures "to separate them from all the concerns of the adult world". (Rogers (2003) in Woodhead & Montgomery 2003:23) Archard notes that this innocence is "an empty one", as the child cannot be tempted to sin because it has no understanding of wrongdoing. (Archard 2004:46) The other discourse visualizes children as essentially bad and in need of a disciplinary upbringing to correct their sinful behaviour. Children need to be civilized due to lacking in morality. This often called Puritan discourse on childhood suggests that if children are left to their own devices, they will resort to savagery. (Rogers (2003) in Woodhead & Montgomery 2003) A famous book depicting the Puritan discourse is "Lord of the Flies" by William Golding (1954).

Multiple writers speak of a modern notion of childhood. One can (and should) question the usage of the word 'modern' because in anthropology it is a dubious term. However, here the modern notion of childhood refers very often to childhood within a western context. Archard (2004) speaks of the 'modern conception' of childhood as a stage before and below adulthood, demanding its own distinct world, with the use of specific rights and responsibilities. It construes the child as someone who plays, and it depicts work as something only adults engage in. The modern notion of childhood makes a distinction between children and adults where children should be protected by adults. (Alanen 1988) According to Archard (2004), Western societies insist upon a distinction between behaviour demanded of children and that expected of adults. Appropriate treatment of children should be distinct from that of adults, as well as a division of roles and responsibilities of the two. Children are kept apart from the adult world of work and they learn about themselves and their surroundings in the separate space that formal education provides. Heywood identified helplessness and vulnerability as two essential attributes of children, whereas independence signals the end of childhood. (Heywood, C. 2001 in Shanahan 2007) Archard concludes: "*the modern child is an innocent incompetent who is not, but must become the adult*" (Archard 2004:50) because "*the child is not fitted to survive in our world, but sometimes his incompetent innocence reminds us how corrupt is our own fitness for this world*". (Archard 2004:48)

Besides the modern notion of childhood, Archard (2004) acknowledges that other cultures possibly possess a concept of childhood with a different relational status between children and adults which might not be implied in the same way as the modern conception. As mentioned before, notions of childhood can differ in multiple ways depending on time and place. This is due to different claims about the extent of childhood, its nature and its significance which make the divergence of people of the world with their notion of childhood. (Levine 2007)(Archard 2004) Notions of childhood can differ in multiple ways. One is where childhood seems to end, which in some societies might include rite of passage or initiation ceremonies to mark the end of childhood and beginning of adulthood.

(Archard 2004) Another one is the distinct dimensions on which a child can be seen as different from an adult. Furthermore there can be different divisions within the stages of childhood. Therefore one cannot claim that the so-called modern notion of childhood is universal and acknowledged by every society in the world.

3.3 Conclusion: Children & Childhood

This chapter has shown that acknowledging children as different from adults illustrates the concept of childhood while the conception of childhood is a social construction that entails the characteristics that make children different from adults, which can differ in time and place. A common notion is that childhood is perceived as a stage of 'children becoming adults' rather than a state of 'children being children', which implicates that children are going through a development in order to reach the state of adulthood. As explained above there exists various constructions of childhood. Each has its own belief/theory on what childhood entails and more specifically how children can be shaped into adults through developing certain skills and capacities that are still lacking in children. The conception of childhood is important because it is related to time and place, which means that the conception of childhood the CRC entails can differ from those in other places. How childhood is perceived in Cambodia and how it is perceived in the CRC might also differ. The difference between the two perceptions might be why implementation of certain rights in the CRC is difficult to pursue everywhere. This chapter has given a more theoretical background which will make it easier to derive the two perceptions held, after analyzing my data and the CRC.

CHAPTER 4

The CRC & Childhood

Chapter three has shown that childhood perceived as a stage is quite common. 'Children as becoming adults' implies a stage rather than a state of being as opposed to 'children being children'. The stage implicates that children are going through a development to reach the state of adulthood. Each conception of childhood entails an assumed best way of becoming an adult through developing the capacities of adulthood that children lack. This is also included in the CRC, considering the CRC

prescribes certain rights that children should have. In this chapter I will get into detail concerning the CRC and its usage of childhood thinking. This will happen through the means of a short introduction on human rights and its context in Cambodia. I will also focus on the views on childhood used in the CRC and what this means in practise. It is important to know this in advance before reading the data because one has to relate the data of the Cambodian perception of childhood thinking to the perception of the CRC. This chapter will try to answer the first sub-question: *Which conception of childhood does the CRC entail?*

4.1 Rights

It was in the aftermath of the Second World War that the International Human Rights were first codified and in the 1980's that children became central in discussions of inequality. (Burr, R. & H. Montgomery (2003) in Woodhead & Montgomery 2003) (Shanahan 2007) The Convention on the rights of the child was enforced in September 1990.

There are two theories in relation to children's rights; the 'will' theory and the 'interest' theory. The 'will' theory claims that only those capable of exercising choice can have rights, while the 'interest' theory claims that a right is the protection of an important interest, meaning that anyone who has important interests is allowed to have rights. (Archard 2004) Where some people might think that children do not need specific rights because their rights are already covered by the UN declaration, others might think that because children are seen as a distinct category of human beings, they should have distinct rights as well. It will make a huge difference in how we perceive and treat children by giving them additional legal rights, given the fact that they are not yet adults and are therefore in need of more rights to protect them from harm. (Archard 2004)

The distinction that Archard (2004) makes between moral and legal rights has a lot in common with the 'living rights' Hanson & Nieuwenhuys (Forthcoming) have identified. Hanson & Nieuwenhuys emphasize that law represents a translation of ideas of right and wrong that exist in the real world and are based on real-life experiences.(Forthcoming) These ideas of right and wrong are similar to the moral rights as defined by Archard.(2004) This is why moral rights can turn into legal rights and can therefore be called '*living rights*'. Important to this are the moral rights and ideas of right and wrong which form the foundation where rights are built upon. In the case of children's rights, these ideas give a lot of information on what is thought about children.

As noted before, childhood is often seen as a stage. The implication of different rights, duties and obligations considered along with the movement of the different stages of childhood reaching adulthood shows that what is thought about the sense of rights, duties and obligations, is developing

along with the development of the child. (Wyness et al. 2004) The former actually claims that the closer a child is to the status of adulthood the more seriously its views are taken. (Archard 2004)

4.2 The CRC

The CRC is the most widely ratified human rights document in the history of the United Nations. This means that many countries all over the world acknowledge the need of rights for children, seeing as children are the subject of these rights set down in the CRC. The rights given to children are rights that the UN thinks of as important to give to children in this day and age. (Archard 2004) The achievement of the highest possible level of health and well-being is at the very core of the CRC's aims. (Earls & Carlson 2001)

More than half of the articles in the universal declaration of the human rights have some overlap with the children's rights. The main differences between the two is that the CRC draws more attention to the protection of these rights and to what is done by whom to implement these rights, whereas the human rights consist more of statements with a lesser focus on how to implement these rights. The CRC states the following in the preamble; "*the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, need special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth*". (CRC, 1989: Preamble) With this statement, the CRC gives a clear image of how childhood is perceived already. The child is physically and mentally immature and therefore it needs special safeguards and care. This also shows in the fact that there are multiple articles making claims that rights should be in accordance with the age and maturity of a child. Implicitly, the CRC claims there exists different stages within childhood, each having a different kinds of strictness in the implementation of some rights.

Children's well-being plays an important role in childhood and children's rights as they both demand a certain level of normality which needs to be upheld. Because well-being entails a much larger range of conditions than health status alone, such as security and dignity, it is only natural the CRC includes the latter. (Earls & Carlson 2001) As noted before, children are often seen as adults in the making rather than as a state of being. This influences the discourse on the child's well-being which therefore is one of well-being and well-becoming. (Frones, I. 2007 in Ben-Arieh 2008) This current discourse has evolved from a focus on child survival to child well-being. Note that in contrast to the child survival and child well-being, well-becoming entails a future focus. (Ben-Arieh 2008) The CRC includes one article referring to survival and multiple articles referring to well-being with a focus on harmonious development. This focus on a harmonious development can be seen as part and parcel of the well-becoming of children, as it needs to fully prepare children to take care of themselves later

in life. (CRC 1989: Preamble) According to Ben-Arieh (2008), the CRC promotes a holistic view of child development and well-being, giving an equal weight to children's civic, political, social, economic and cultural rights, and stressing that these rights are interrelated, universal, and indivisible. According to Shanahan (2007), the main goal of the CRC is to protect the special status of childhood and that its success is in fact due to that special status of vulnerability and dependency of children.

It is often said that the core of the CRC consists four types of rights known as the four P's. The first P stands for provision rights. These rights enable children's growth and development; it includes rights to food, housing and education. The second P stands for prevention rights, which are rights concerned with putting systems in place that prevent abuse of children or infringements of their rights. The third P stands for protection rights and is concerned with protecting children against exploitation and abuse and it includes interventions once their rights have been infringed. Interestingly, protection rights are rights which are normally not given to adults. According to Archard (2004), children are prone to suffer these harms precisely because they are less capable than adults in defending themselves against mistreatment. In this regard, the CRC thinks of children as vulnerable, dependent and defenseless and therefore are more in need of protection than adults. The last P stands for participation rights, which enables children to have a say in decisions usually made on their behalf. It also includes the right to hold an opinion and freedom of a conscience. (Burr & Montgomery (2003) in Woodhead & Montgomery 2003)

One should note the friction between participation and protection rights, as participation rights represents children as active agents and protection rights represents children as potential victims of harmful treatment. (Archard 2004) Thus the CRC claims that children can be active agents but are also in need of protection. Burr & Montgomery recognize this friction and state that "*as long as children cannot fully participate, they are unlikely to be treated as equal to adults, and yet full participation is problematic because children are limited by their physical, mental and emotional competences*". (Burr & Montgomery (2003) in Woodhead & Montgomery 2003:167) However, according to Wyness et al. (2004), children's rights to provision and protection have priority over the rights of participation, which means that children are seen in the first place as in need of protection and secondly as active agents.

When taking a closer look at 'the best interest' principle formulated in the CRC, one could claim that the CRC demands that children are in need of the highest possible standards and not simply the minimum acceptable ones. With this principle the child's best interests are set above the interests of adults. (Burr & Montgomery (2003) in Woodhead & Montgomery 2003) While the best interests principle is a form of protective exclusion justified by the immaturity and incompetence of children (Haydon, D. & Scraton, P. 2000 in Shanahan 2007) (Wyness et al. 2004), it does state a general obligation that all adults have to protect and care for all children according to the child's best interest. It is actually a claim made on behalf of the child to "*activate the obligations and responsibility of*

adults in a society.” (Earls & Carlson 2001:162)

Overall, children are mainly in need of protection because they are more vulnerable, more dependent and more defenseless than adults are. Protection is needed for the well-being and well-becoming of children as future adults. The CRC sees children as ‘adults in the making’; their childhood consisting of several stages where each stage gives the child other capabilities and needs. Despite the CRC acknowledging children as active agents, within the developing status of the child their competences are still limited due to their physical and mental immaturity. Now one knows how childhood is conceptualized by the CRC, one could take this into account in reasoning why the implementation of children’s rights is or is not going well in certain societies by comparing the local conceptualization of childhood to the one taken by the CRC.

The CRC claims to be universal. The principle behind all human rights legislations is that these concepts are not negotiable at a local level. This means that all children everywhere have rights and all children are equally entitled to these rights. (Burr & Montgomery (2003) in Woodhead & Montgomery 2003) Although the CRC is in certain areas not very specific, leaving room for one’s own interpretations, there still is a fundamental criticism on the CRC that it supports a Western understanding of childhood. This can be agreed upon, for example, by the Western understanding of the child as an autonomous individual, while in many other societies this idea of a child simply does not exist because of a much more collective interest in children. (Burr & Montgomery (2003) in Woodhead & Montgomery 2003) (Wyness et al. 2004) Another important notion is that in the CRC, children are not mentioned to have any duties or responsibilities. As opposed to the CRC, the African Charter has included duties and responsibilities and therefore has different views on childhood. This proves that, although many countries have ratified the declaration, there are also many who have different views on childhood than the viewpoint taken by the CRC. The claim of the CRC as universal is correct in terms of ratification, as almost every UN country has ratified it and therefore should implement these rights. The CRC is not universal regarding certain specific interpretations and visions on childhood, even though the overall notion of children as a distinct group of human beings is accepted by ratifying the CRC.

4.3 The sexual child

Article 28 and 29 of the CRC include that a child has the right to be educated and to be prepared for life in its society. (The CRC 1989) However, there is no mention of providing sexual education for children in the CRC. (Archard 2004) There are many child right advocates who claim that children should have the right of sexual education and the privilege and responsibility of sexual behaviour. (Haroian 2000) On the other hand, an early explicit sexual education is frequently thought of as

resulting in premature or precocious sexual behaviour. (Archard 2004)

According to DeLamater, social institutions, primarily family and religion, are responsible for general perspectives and specific norms that dominate the way we express ourselves sexually. (DeLamater 1981) As indicated by Archard (2004), childhood is most often represented as a period of asexual innocence when in reality even pre-pubescent children are sexual human beings. Sexual behaviour of children can be in no way compared to adult sexual behaviour, because it does not have the sexual significance that adults have. (Archard 2004) (Haroian 2000) (DeLamater 1981) There are dangers in portraying the child as asexually innocent as this innocence can represent an aspect of male sexual desire. The child could become identified as the ideal woman; hairless, vulnerable, weak, dependent and uncorrupted. (Archard 2004) The ideology of the innocence of children might not protect them from sex but expose them to additional dangers of sexual behaviour and desires in others.

4.4 Conclusion: The CRC & conception of childhood

This chapter has shown us that having supplementing rights for children gives us some insight into how we perceive children and childhood. The CRC puts great emphasis on the protection of rights because children are perceived as vulnerable, dependent and defenceless. Furthermore, the development and well-becoming of a child is a central theme, stressing the view that children are perceived as adults in the making. Sexual behaviour is by most people preferably seen as something that children lack, while in reality children show sexual behaviour from an early age on. Though, children's sexual behaviour is not the same as that of adults.

In an attempt to answer to the first sub-question (*Which conception of childhood does the CRC entail?*) we can conclude with the following: Childhood is seen as a period in human life in which children are vulnerable, dependent and defenseless and therefore in need of protection-, prevention-, provision- and participation rights to guarantee their well being and well-becoming in adulthood. This is only one side of the comparison that I will make; the conception of childhood in Cambodia will be derived from the three following chapters and compared with the conception of childhood held by the CRC in chapter 8. In order to derive a conception of childhood held in Cambodia, one has to take in to consideration sexual norms, family context, organizational processes and processes of demand. When put into the context of child prostitution, sexual norms can tell us a great deal about how childhood is related to sexual behaviour perceived in Cambodia. The family context is important because it usually is the first place where a child gets socialized. The organizational processes and processes of demand in the sex industry are related to how people keep the industry alive. How these processes are

embedded in Cambodian society and related to child prostitution in Cambodia will be discussed in the following three chapters.

CHAPTER 5

Sexuality & Sexual norms

The previous chapters have constructed a theoretical reference which will be used to compare the analysis of the data with. This chapter will be focussing on sexuality and sexual norms in Cambodia. These can vary widely with that of other parts of the world and those mentioned in the CRC. A possible contradiction in sexual norms could be that some people think that children should have the right to be protected from child prostitution. Others might think that prostitution is not wrong but a means to make money in order to support their parents and family. What sexual norms are held in Cambodia and in what context will be discussed in this chapter. As mentioned before, the gathered data is divided up in three major themes. Sexual norms play a vital role in how child prostitution is looked upon and topics such as gender and virginity, which seem narrowly related to child prostitution in Cambodia, will be discussed. I will provide an answer to the second sub-question; *how are sexuality and sexual norms embedded in Cambodian society?*

5.1 History

Before I go into detail concerning the role of prostitution throughout the history of Cambodia, I will give a short overview of the recent events that seem to influence daily life in Cambodia.

The communist party of Kampuchea has been the ruling party in Cambodia from April 1975 to January 1979. (Hinton, A.L. 2005) The Khmer Rouge was the military army of the communist party of Kampuchea, led by Pol Pot. During the time of the Khmer Rouge regime one and a half million people (of Cambodia's eight million people) died from starvation, overwork, illness, malnutrition and outright execution. (Hinton 2005) According to Hinton, the collectivization during this period strongly undermined three key features that had been important in traditional life before the Khmer Rouge regime came to power. Family roles mostly disappeared as the division of labour separated family members for a long time. Villages lost their traditional composition of friends and relatives sharing a sense of identity as a new division was made of 'old people' (traditional farmers) and 'new people'

(people coming from the city). Finally, Buddhism was banned, which used to provide a social, moral and educational focus in everyday life. (Hinton 2005) Vietnam overthrew the Khmer Rouge regime in early January 1979 and the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) came to power. (Hinton 2005) They were confronted with many problems such as severely damaged infrastructures, a flood of refugees, the possible rise of famine and a lack of social services; there was a lot that had to be rebuilt from scratch.

The Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia and the signing of the Paris Peace Agreement (PPA) both happened in 1991. The PPA was a settlement giving the United Nations full authority to military matters, international guarantees, the repatriation of refugees and displaced persons and lead to the eventual reconstruction of Cambodia through the means of elections. (Final Act of the Peace conference on Cambodia 1991) In 1992 The United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) prepared an election to allow the various Cambodian factions that had been combating for power since the end of the Khmer Rouge regime, to become part of a new, democratically elected government. (Hinton 2005) In 1993, the elections were held resulting in a power-sharing agreement between the royalist party FUNCINPEC and the Cambodian's People Party (CPP). (Hinton 2005)

When the Khmer Rouge regime came to power in 1975 they prohibited prostitution. In the years prior to 1975 prostitution already existed in Cambodia but in such a small amount that it wasn't a 'sex industry' to speak of.² It wasn't until after the Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia in 1991 that the ban on prostitution was lifted.³ (Hughes 2000) (Cambodia: Post-conflict development) One often refers to the turbulent history of the Khmer Rouge as of influence on today's issues related to human trafficking and the sex industry in Cambodia. (Miles & Thomas 2007) During the Khmer Rouge regime societal structures and traditions, such as the centrality of the family and the Buddhist religion, were undermined.⁴ (Miles & Thomas 2007) For example, the new regime would provide for everything that was needed in order to make ends meet. Previously family served as a means of financial support, but with the regime providing for people's needs family life was no longer vital for survival. Families got divided and people that were brought up in the years of the Khmer rouge regime did not necessarily learn how to form close relationships or develop parenting skills.⁵ Other problems such as social inequality, poor access to land, limited resources for families to meet the needs of their children, low quality education, deficient social services and weakened institutions were aggravated by

² I refer to different documents by numbering them. The reference of these documents numbers can be found in the list 'Data Sources'.

Document 63, 68 and 73

³ Document 50 and 63

⁴ Document 2, 15 and 64

⁵ Document 38 and 48

the war, in their turn contributing to the trafficking and the sex industry that exists nowadays.⁶

When the UNTAC settled in Cambodia from 1992 to 1993⁷, prostitution increased rapidly and it seems this has also contributed to the overall demand for children.⁸ (Hughes 2000)(Cambodia: Post-conflict development) The increase of prostitution and child prostitution continued after the departure of the UN forces and the age of girls in prostitution steadily declined.⁹ (Hughes 2000) (Cambodia: Post-conflict development) (Cambodia NGO report 1999) Although the UNTAC has often been blamed for the existence of prostitution in Cambodia, it did not decline after they had left.¹⁰ The lack of decline suggests that there have been other changes that took place during that period that have contributed to the growth of the sex-industry to a size that was unheard until then. Reasons for this could be the growth of the sex-industry in neighboring Thailand, the upcoming tourist-industry or a cultural change in behaviour by searching sexual activity outside the family.

5.2 Child prostitution

It was not until the signing of the PPA in 1991 that the concept of human rights received enveloping attention in Cambodia. (Ledgerwood & Kheang 2003) (Final Act of the Peace conference on Cambodia 1991: Article 12) The universal conceptions of human rights were introduced during the UNTAC period, but the UN forces were limited in staff and resources and it turned out to be unsuccessful as the UNTAC human rights component was locally perceived as a threat and would be resulting in increased crime. (Ledgerwood & Kheang 2003) According to Ledgerwood & Kheang, after the formation of a new coalition it became clear that the leaders perceived the human rights in a way different from international standards. The politicians claimed that the human rights are not universal because every country has a different background of social, political and economic development. According to these politicians, priority should be given to overall societal well-being, social stability and economic growth, which leaves individual rights subordinated. The Cambodian Institute for Human Rights (CIHR) incorporated Buddhist teachings in order to advocate respect for human rights. Research indicated that local people found it fairly easy to recognize a link between human rights and Buddhist teachings. This resulted in locals seeing that human rights also stand for dignity and mutual respect. (Ledgerwood & Kheang 2003)

⁶ Document 2 and 44

⁷ <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/untacbackgr1.html> 21-02-2012

⁸ Document 15, 57, 68, 71 and 73

⁹ Document 73

¹⁰ Document 68

According to the CRC, everyone below the age of 18 is a child unless the national law recognizes that majority is attained earlier. The Cambodian law on suppression of human trafficking and sexual exploitation also holds 18 as the legal age of becoming an adult. However, data shows that Cambodian children are perceived as adults by its inhabitants earlier than the law acknowledges.¹¹ It is implied that they are seen as adults at the age of 16.¹² The CRC claims that *‘a child means every human being below the age of 18, unless under the law applicable to the child majority is attained earlier.’* (CRC 1989: article 1) Article 8 in the Debauchery Law (1996) states that having sex with minors under the age of 15 is illegal and should be punished. The law on suppression of human trafficking and sexual exploitation (2008) states in article 42 that sexual intercourse with someone under the age of 15 is illegal and she/he will be punished accordingly. One can deduct from these two articles that 15 is the age of consent to sexual activity, but it is not clear whether 15 is also the age of reaching majority.

Sexual exploitation and abuse of children is not allowed by law since the convention of the rights of the child was ratified by Cambodian government on the 14th of November 1992 and its optional protocols in June 2002 and August 2006. I will cite article 34 of the CRC in order to give their exact words on this right. *“State parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, State Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent:*

- (a) The inducement of coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity;*
- (b) The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices;*
- (c) The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.” (CRC 1989: article 34)*

But it seems that many people of Cambodian society don't recognize the rights of the child. Either because they are not informed or because certain behaviour towards children has been transferred from generation to generation and therefore accepted as being normal.¹³ A difficulty with this law is that one could interpret child prostitution as something different than sexual exploitation or abuse of children because there is an exchange of money or something else of value. In this research I will mostly talk of prostitution in the exploitative form. Trafficking, compulsory forces and lack of other options are at the base of the majority of prostitution in Cambodia. Although there probably are people that say they chose for prostitution as their job, one should question such claims because of the aforementioned factors. So though prostitution does not need to be exploitative, my research is focused on the exploitative forms of prostitution among children.

¹¹ Document 4 and 9

¹² Document 9

¹³ Document 11

The Cambodian law on suppression of human trafficking and sexual exploitation, which prohibits any form of prostitution, describes child prostitution as follows: “*in this law shall mean having intercourse or other sexual conduct of all kinds between a minor and another person in exchange of anything of value.*” (1996: article 23) ‘In exchange of anything of value’ is in article 34 of the same document, more explicitly determined by “*promising, providing or promising to provide anything of value to the minor, and intermediary, a parent, a guardian or any other person who keeps the child under supervision.*” (The Cambodian law on suppression of human trafficking and sexual exploitation 1996: article 34) So even if products of value are only promised, the sexual intercourse is interpreted as prostitution.

Public prostitution is not allowed by law but it seems a common practice.¹⁴ Remarkably, adults receive punishment for publicly soliciting him- or herself but this does not count for minors as they do not receive any punishment when doing the same. (The Cambodian law on suppression of human trafficking and sexual exploitation 1996: article 24) The law states that the procuring of prostitution is not allowed which includes organized prostitution and managing establishments for prostitution as unlawful.

Although these laws are quite explicit when prostitution is concerned, it seems to be widely tolerated; many people make use of the sex services of prostitutes, people are trafficked into prostitution and sometimes girls see no other option than to start working as a prostitute in order to survive after losing their virginity. The same goes for child prostitution, which is by some seen as an evil caused by Western values which has rooted itself in Cambodian society. Others claim that society does not approve of it although many people are somewhere involved in the process. For example, motor drivers who act often as key facilitators.¹⁵ When looking at the selling of children by their parents, this seems to happen in secret for the reason that it is not accepted by society.¹⁶ It looks like willing ignorance of child prostitution is not uncommon because even though different views are held about what is right or wrong, there are still people selling their children, people organizing the industry and people making use of their sexual services.¹⁷

There are boys and girls working in the sex industry, although many claim that it is mostly girls involved in the sex industry.¹⁸ (Cambodia: Post-conflict development) A possible reason contributing to this vision is that more attention is going out to girls in the sex industry, leaving boys

¹⁴ Document 4 and 50

¹⁵ Document 15, 68 and 78

¹⁶ Document 15

¹⁷ Document 5 and 50

¹⁸ Document 2, 4, 6, 9, 15 and 17

in this industry ignored. Within society there is the belief that rape doesn't happen to boys.¹⁹ Another reason given is that little boys are not always consciously aware of what is happening to them whereas girls have more knowledge about rape and sexual behaviour.²⁰ This view seems to contradict with the notion that girls do not have sexual needs and do not need to be informed of something they do not possess. This will be explained later in chapter five. Of course, it could be that knowledge of rape is perceived as another type of knowledge which is explained to girls only as they are considered to have a virginity which boys don't have. It is thought that boys dominate in a certain sector of the sex industry, namely the street based sexual services commonly used by foreigners, whereas girls are more involved in organized sex venues.²¹ This seems to cohere with the vision that girls are more often introduced to the sex industry by family members or a middle man while boys are more likely approached on the streets.²²

I would rather not spend much attention on age because it gives rise to many difficulties. This research is about minors in general being involved in sex work, but it seems that many children in prostitution are between 9 and 17 years old.²³ Sources rarely mention whether these children were saved at this age or have entered prostitution at this age and therefore I rather not rely on this type of data. Nevertheless, it seems clear that child prostitution happens to children and their age can range from very young to puberty. Another reason for not taking data about age too serious is that it is not easy to determine the age of a child in Cambodia. Many children are not registered and claim to have a different age than they have in reality. Although the government tries to register every person, many parents refuse to do so. Mainly in the rural and poorer areas, parents think that it is not important to register and it costs them money and time. If they don't take the effort to register their children, they have time to make money instead of having to pay money for registration.²⁴ There are some hands-on methods to help determine age categories; unfortunately these are not available for determining whether someone is 17 or 18 and therefore are of very little use to my research. In the case of determining whether someone is 17 or 18 years old, one has to rely on appearance which can be very deceiving.²⁵

¹⁹ Document 2, 28 and 43

²⁰ Document 6

²¹ Document 8, 53, 58, 68 and 73

²² Document 73

²³ Document 4, 5, 11, 12, 15, 28, 65, 68 and 73

²⁴ Document 10

²⁵ Document 67

Data shows that sex workers are looked down upon because of the nature of the job.²⁶ It is surprising then that the selling of girls into prostitution is a common practice.²⁷ People working in the sex industry are highly discriminated by society, which seems more the case in rural areas than in urban areas.²⁸ Only once is mentioned in the data that, as a result of media campaigns, discrimination has disappeared.²⁹ In order to limit discrimination, the term ‘entertainment workers’ is often used to refer to prostitutes.³⁰ Selling sex is not accepted, even in cases where women or children didn’t have any other option or were forced into sex work.³¹ This probably has to do with being a victim is perceived as wrong and a punishment for bad behaviour in a past life or earlier in this life. Not just society but also clients look down on prostitutes, as they are only useful to them for their sexual services. Rape of sex workers is therefore not uncommon.³² Even more worrying is that people think that HIV/AIDS comes from sex workers and not from general people; someone with AIDS is seen as an immoral person.³³ Discrimination of those sexually abused in society makes victims of the sex industry even more vulnerable for exploitation.³⁴

There is little known as to how male sex buyers are perceived by society, some claim that it is widely accepted because of their sexual urges, while others claim that the sex buyers are not perceived as good men.³⁵

The term ‘paedophilia’ is in Cambodian society often understood different than the Western description which entails: ‘*a person, especially a man, who is sexually interested in children.*’⁽³⁶⁾³⁷ In Cambodia paedophilia is usually understood with an emphasis on boys.³⁸ Similar patterns exist for homosexuality which is also rarely understood according to the Western description.³⁹ Both

²⁶ Document 13 and 15

²⁷ Document 50

²⁸ Document 4, 9, 13, 43, 54, 60, 63 and 65

²⁹ Document 12

³⁰ Document 10

³¹ Document 4, 9, 13, 43, 54 and 65

³² Document 13, 63 and 80

³³ Document 13 and 50

³⁴ Document 28

³⁵ Document 1, 13 and 68

³⁶ <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/paedophile?q=paedophilia>

³⁷ Document 28 and 34

³⁸ Document 28

³⁹ Document 28

homosexuality and paedophilia, understood in the Western meaning of terms, are common in Cambodia but not understood and recognized in the same way.⁴⁰

5.3 Attitudes

Different views are held on the openness of Cambodians in talking about sexuality; some claim it is something never discussed, others claim that it does happen, but seldom because of shame. That, however, is slowly changing. Still yet others claim that men especially talk a lot about sex.⁴¹ It is generally agreed on that if one talks about sex, it happens within the same gender group and that men talk more about sex than women.⁴²

Pornography and child pornography is prohibited by law, as stated in The Cambodian law on suppression of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. In reality, pornography seems to be contradicting with the restraint in sexuality because data shows that not only adults but also children are exposed to pornography as it can be found in public and private areas such as coffee shops and in homes.⁴³ (Miles & Thomas 2007) Pornography is considered to change gender relations, which in turn contributes to gender-based violence and rape; even among children and others who may not directly be exposed to pornography.⁴⁴ In short, pornography seems to contribute to sexual misbehaviours such as rape because pornography creates expectations in regard to the on-lookers sex-life and contributes to the use of sex workers.⁴⁵

Sexual education is something which does not seem to exist in Cambodia except when performed by NGO's working in this field.⁴⁶ Especially the poorest people are vulnerable in terms of sexual and reproductive health due to lack of access to information and services.⁴⁷ It seems that advertisement for condom use is quite common.⁴⁸ I regularly passed a large billboard displaying condom advertisements, which was placed next to an old decrepit building that I was told to house

⁴⁰ Document 28 and 34

⁴¹ Document 2, 4, 5, 9, 13, 15 and 58

⁴² Document 4, 9 and 13

⁴³ Document 46, 47 and 48

⁴⁴ Document 14, 47 and 48

⁴⁵ Document 5, 6, 14, 47 and 48

⁴⁶ Document 2, 5, 8 and 15

⁴⁷ Document 39

⁴⁸ Document 10

prostitutes. Furthermore, there were two 24h shops nearby where they sold a wide range of condoms, displayed next to the cash register.

Within Cambodian society, it is not usual to share domestic problems or similar information with each other and people would rather not get involved with each other's issues.⁴⁹ There seems to be a high value of conflict avoidance within Cambodian society. (Hill & Heng 2004)

Different views are held relating to what is proper clothing. On the one hand, dressing in a 'sexy' way is frowned upon. When talking about 'sexy' clothes Cambodians generally refer to short dresses or skirts, shorts and the exposure of arms. It is believed that all of the above are worn by women and girls in order to get men's attention.⁵⁰ However, there are also those that claim that television and internet have normalized these types of clothes, thereby removing the 'sexy' aspect.⁵¹ Strikingly, what I have noticed is that there is a double standard in clothing as the above mentioned belief that showing skin is bad seems to count for girls and not for men. Where women should be covered, men are allowed to show a lot of skin. One sees this in the streets where waiting tuk-tuk or moto-drivers very often pull up their t-shirt, thereby showing their stomach. Even in a public swimming pool for the local community I noticed that women are not allowed to swim in a bikini, they have to wear shorts and a t-shirt while men were not allowed to wear a t-shirt at all.⁵² The most astonishing was that there was music playing at the pool and at one moment a song was played called 'Don't want no short dick men' including the following lyrics sang by a girl:

*“What in the world is that thing?
Do you need some tweezers to put that thing away
That has got to be the smallest dick
I've ever seen in my whole life
I have ever seen in my whole life
Get the fuck outta here
Iny weenie tiny weenie
Shrivelled little short dick man”*

This song is completely in contrast with what is perceived as normal in Cambodia. This is a girl openly singing about the reproductive organ of a man. She has seen more penises and claims to be in a position to choose the man she wants. The message of the song, and it being played in a swimming pool where women are prohibited to wear merely a bikini couldn't lie further apart from each other in terms of cultural norms. In urban areas especially, these norms are changing, leading to a

⁴⁹ Document 2 and 58

⁵⁰ Document 48

⁵¹ Document 14

⁵² Document 20

more open attitude regarding sexual activity.⁵³ Along with this, the thought exists that the best wives are to be found in rural areas and not in urban areas.⁵⁴

If one compares the attitudes towards sexuality and the sex industry in the rural areas and urban areas, one will find that the rural areas are more conservative in maintaining their cultural values. This means that traditional gender roles, value of virginity, opinions on sexuality, etc. are more strongly held here than in urban areas where one seems to be less strict and more influenced by foreign attitudes.⁵⁵ This does not mean of course that this counts for everyone or everything, but this is an overall distinction made between attitudes in rural and urban areas.

5.4 Gender

According to the Cambodian law, (The Cambodian Constitution 1993: article 45) men and women are equal to each other, but in reality the Cambodian society is strongly hierarchical. Women hold a lower status than men, which seems rooted in cultural values and customs.⁵⁶

Although equal rights are promoted and women's rights have improved over time, they are still valued less than men, especially in rural areas.⁵⁷

Prior to the Khmer Rouge regime, women were seen as inferior to men but there were certain social restraints against violence.⁵⁸ These restraints disappeared during the Khmer Rouge regime and have led to the weakening of social and structural norms in post-Khmer Rouge regime society.⁵⁹ (Hill & Heng 2004) The high level of violence during the Khmer Rouge regime seems to have contributed to gender-based violence nowadays.⁶⁰

Although, 'Buddhism' practiced in Cambodia is a mix of Animism, Buddhism and Hinduism, one should keep in mind that Buddhism has a strong influence on gender roles in Cambodia.⁶¹ A girl is thought to be born as a result of bad karma; women and girls are therefore thought of to be unable to

⁵³ Document 14, 48, 58 and 65

⁵⁴ Document 48

⁵⁵ Document 8, 13, 15, 48 and 58

⁵⁶ Document 4, 43, 48 and 64

⁵⁷ Document 6, 7 and 15

⁵⁸ Document 80

⁵⁹ Document 80

⁶⁰ Document 15, 48 and 68

⁶¹ Document 43, 58, 64 and 68

achieve enlightenment. Girls cannot become monks; they have to suffer from their past illicit behaviour. (Hill & Heng 2004) Girls need to make up for their former wrongdoings by caring for their family and making sacrifices for the benefit of their family. This seems to result in women trying to provide for their families in any possible way in order to pay their respect.⁶² Boys can show their gratitude to their parents by becoming a monk for a certain period of time. A boy who becomes a monk gives his family a higher ranking in society. He and his family will gain a benefit, called merit, within Buddhism.⁶³

In Cambodian society, which is strongly connected with Buddhist beliefs, one must keep in mind that incest, abuse, and rape may be considered to be the result of bad karma that the victim must endure as a consequence of what she or he has done in his/her earlier or former life. It has been argued that, "*to achieve the tranquility necessary for enlightenment, a person must learn to accept quietly and completely the pain of this life. For some [Buddhist] children the pain of this life includes forced prostitution.*" (Bales, K. (1999) in⁶⁴) This belief could be an explanation to the apparent neutrality of some parents when their child enters the sex industry and the absence of community participation on measures implemented by social workers.⁶⁵ On the other hand, it is noted that the number of Buddhist organizations working to help the poor and educate people about human rights is increasing, which is in stark contrast with the above.⁶⁶

5.5 Marriage & Virginity

Prior to marriage, it is the man who needs to ask the girl or her family for permission marry him. Usually men marry at an older age than women.⁶⁷ The average age of (unarranged) marriages used to be around 20 years old but this has slowly changed to an average of 26/27 years old.⁶⁸ The bride price has a Khmer translation of the '*price of mother's milk*', which refers to the milk which the girl drank while growing up. The bride price is a transaction of the man to the family of the woman he's going to marry.⁶⁹ After marriage it is usual for the couple to live in the wife's house.⁷⁰

⁶² Document 43 and 64

⁶³ Document 43

⁶⁴ Document 68 (2001:41)

⁶⁵ Document 58

⁶⁶ Document 68

⁶⁷ Document 9 and 15

⁶⁸ Document 15

⁶⁹ Document 1

Although it happens less often than it used to, there are marriages which are arranged by the parents when a girl is still under aged.⁷¹ This could be understood in relation to the fact that children are perceived earlier as an adult than the Cambodian law implies (at 18). Arranged marriages may bring along different problems for women, of which one of them is that a man purposely marries a young virgin girl to sell her to a brothel afterwards to make money of her.⁷²

There are double standards for men and women in terms of sexual behaviour. The perception is held that men have sexual urges that must be fulfilled whereas women are supposed not to have these urges.⁷³ This supposed lack of sexual urges of women makes people believe sexual knowledge for women is unnecessary, creating an additional vulnerability for women.⁷⁴

“*Women are cloth and men are gold*” is a widely known Khmer proverb which signifies the views held on gender differences.⁷⁵ (Hill & Heng 2004) It is said, white cloth will lose its purity and whiteness it once had, once it has been muddied, whereas gold can easily be cleaned and will even shine brighter after cleaning.⁷⁶ This proverb contributes enormously in practise to the norms of sexual activity of men and women. Men don’t want a woman who is ‘used’ by others, they want a woman who is not touched or owned by someone else before.⁷⁷ For this reason, a woman’s virginity is a very important aspect of her value in society and her possibilities of marriage. Losing virginity includes losing one’s honour and the honour of the family. Thus, women should be a virgin prior to marriage, something which does not count for men.⁷⁸ Many men buy sexual services of sex workers, before and during marriage whereas a woman should be faithful to her one partner throughout her life; divorce is seen as something shameful and means the loss of one’s honour.⁷⁹

Boys are not considered to have virginity and honour to lose in the same way girls have.⁸⁰ For men is it socially accepted and even expected to seek out multiple partners, both prior to and during

⁷⁰ Document 6

⁷¹ Document 9 and 65

⁷² Document 4, 64 and 65

⁷³ Document 14, 28, 64, 65 and 80

⁷⁴ Document 64

⁷⁵ Document 1, 28, 64 and 80

⁷⁶ Document 1, 28, 64 and 80

⁷⁷ Document 15

⁷⁸ Document 2, 13, 48 and 58

⁷⁹ Document 4, 14, 15, 58, 64 and 80

⁸⁰ Document 28

marriage.⁸¹ Men can have multiple sexual relationships leaving their reputation unspoiled as such activities are seen to enhance masculinity as well as physical and mental health.⁸² Different thoughts are held on the acceptance of sexual activities outside marriage, as data has shown. Many men think it's normal to venture for sex elsewhere, but there are also those who go about looking for sex in secret, generally by using prostitutes. Additionally it is said the wives of these men are aware of their husbands' sexual escapades and even accept it.⁸³ This divide in acceptance and going about of sexual intercourse outside the marriage setting shows that although it might not be generally accepted, it surely is tolerated by society. Gender inequality plays a big part here; it is thought men have sexual urges that need to be satisfied whereas women do not have these sexual needs. Consequently, men having sex with other women, is tolerated but women having sex with other men is out of order.

Thus, unlike with men, a woman's value depends on her virginity. Her virginity is perceived as her freshness or newness which declines after losing it before marriage. (Miles & Thomas 2007) This holds for in- and outside the sex industry.⁸⁴ "*The Khmer word for sex work, srei khauch, means 'broken women', referring to a loss of reputation and virginity.*"⁽⁸⁵⁾ In the sex industry a lot of money is paid for sex with a virgin girl and her desirability declines by every additional man she's had. This makes her more affordable for the lesser wealthy sex buyers who still prefer a 'newer' girl above the 'older' ones, in which older is the measure of their time working in the sex industry.⁸⁶

Girls are expected to maintain their virginity until marriage to uphold the honour of the family.⁸⁷ Virginity is in Cambodia an important measure of a girl's value; if a girl loses her virginity before marriage she loses her (and her families) honour and won't be able to marry. Once a girl is not a virgin anymore she is seen as used goods and cannot become a respectful wife.⁸⁸ Even if the loss of a girl's virginity happened through rape or the sale of her virginity by force, the consequences for marriage opportunities remain the same.⁸⁹

At first sight, virginity itself seems more important than the girl's intentions of keeping or losing it, as she can't marry either way. But one needs to take a closer look at the perceptions of rape

⁸¹ Document 28, 64, 65 and 80

⁸² Document 64 and 80

⁸³ Document 14 and 15

⁸⁴ Document 65

⁸⁵ Document 64 (2005:22)

⁸⁶ Document 68 and 78

⁸⁷ Document 28, 55 and 64

⁸⁸ Document 28, 39, 48, 64, 65 and 80

⁸⁹ Document 64 and 65

in order to reach to a fully fletched conclusion. If a girl is raped or trafficked, she is often blamed for it with the implication that she has not made enough effort to preserve her sexual purity.⁹⁰ Another belief is that being a victim is wrong and meant as punishment for bad behaviour earlier or in a former life. Being a victim may mean loss of 'face', a common proverb for losing ones honour. (Miles & Thomas 2007) It seems that having a virginity means a girl is well-behaved, in this life and to a certain extent in her former life as well. (Since being born a girl is already a punishment for behaviour in a former life)

It is quite common that girls who have lost their virginity end up in the sex industry; this is especially the case when a girl's virginity was sold.⁹¹ Sometimes it is said that this is their own choice, but through their loss of honour and not being able to marry they usually have no other options.⁹² After losing one's virginity, prostitution is often considered as the only resource of an income because a girl won't be able to marry or has difficulties in getting another job.⁹³ In the case a girl is trafficked and her virginity is sold it is difficult to leave prostitution due to the discrimination and stigmatization that problematizes reintegration into society.⁹⁴ Because of the lack of other options to make a living, they stay in the sex industry.⁹⁵ That and the loss of the family's honour causes large numbers of rape cases to stay hidden from society because of the social stigma.⁹⁶ The perpetrator benefits from this lack of involvement of society and therefore he's not being charged for his deeds.⁹⁷ When perpetrators are not being punished for their deeds it contributes to a rise of rape cases, in turn leading to more girls being stigmatized for losing their virginity before marriage. (Hughes 2000) Sometimes in case of rape, a marriage is settled between the perpetrator and the victim. This settlement is 'restoring' the victim's social status as the marriage makes the sexual intercourse acceptable. As a consequence, the perpetrator's deed is justified.⁹⁸ Again, the perpetrator is not punished for his deeds by law. However, in these cases the victim at least has more opportunities in life and the perpetrator's deeds have a consequence that they might not at first have foreseen.

At the same time one needs to keep in mind that prostitution, as opposed to factory work, is

⁹⁰ Document 65

⁹¹ Document 1, 36, 50, 65 and 72

⁹² Document 11

⁹³ Document 1, 2, 6, 13, 23, 55, 58, 65 and 73

⁹⁴ Document 1 and 43

⁹⁵ Document 1, 11, 13, 55, 58, 65 and 73

⁹⁶ Document 58 and 65

⁹⁷ Document 58

⁹⁸ Document 80

an easy way to make a lot of money in a short amount of time.⁹⁹ The virginity of daughters in poor families is consciously sold for the quick and big sum of money so as to financially support the family.¹⁰⁰ As noted before, poverty is a widespread phenomenon in Cambodia. Surprisingly though, the selling of a daughter's virginity does not always happen just because of desperate economic needs but also in order to be able to buy luxury goods such as a television.¹⁰¹

The selling of virginity seems to be a big problem and contributor of young girls taking part in the sex industry.¹⁰² The high demand and high fee that is charged in the virginity trade have contributed to the declining age of virgins that are used in the trade to guarantee that they really are virgins.¹⁰³ The belief that a woman should bleed while losing her virginity is held as proof that she really was a virgin.¹⁰⁴ It is quite common for brothel owners to resell some young girls for virgins. This happens through the sewing of the hymen so that the girl will bleed when she is resold as a virgin. This practice can be done multiple times to the same girl.¹⁰⁵ Another technique is the insertion of a plastic bag with frozen blood that will melt and the bag will be pierced through the intercourse.¹⁰⁶ With these techniques brothel owners are making a lot of money and they even charge the services of non-virgins (sold as virgins) for a lower price than for actual virgins so that less wealthy men can be catered for.¹⁰⁷ Men have learned about these practices but want to be sure that they really have sex with a virgin. To insure this, they take matters into their own hands by raping young women and children. This way they don't have to worry about being deceived by brothels that (re)sell girls as virgins.¹⁰⁸

There are different reasons for men to intentionally search for virgins to have sex with. First of all virgins are an elite commodity for wealthy men who can afford to pay for a virgin girl. For a man to change a girl forever after being 'finished' with her is a way to show off economic power.¹⁰⁹

⁹⁹ Document 17 and 21

¹⁰⁰ Document 11, 60, 65 and 72

¹⁰¹ Document 11 and 60

¹⁰² Document 60

¹⁰³ Document 78

¹⁰⁴ Document 13 and 15

¹⁰⁵ Document 60 and 73

¹⁰⁶ Document 66

¹⁰⁷ Document 73

¹⁰⁸ Document 68

¹⁰⁹ Document 36 and 73

(Hughes 2000) Other reasons are related to fear, cultural beliefs and myths.¹¹⁰ A common reason to choose for virgins and younger children in general, is that they are more likely free from STD's.¹¹¹ (Hughes 2000) It is often believed that having sex with a virgin can cure diseases such as STD's and especially HIV/AIDS.¹¹² The “*notion of ‘purity’ as a restorative and protective force*”(Grillot, C. 2005 in¹¹³) is widely held in different forms such as beauty, rejuvenation, youth, good luck, vitality, power, strength, happiness, good health and a longer life.¹¹⁴ Other possible reasons for having sex with virgins is that they are sexually desirable and more exciting to have sex with because they are still inexperienced.¹¹⁵

5.6 Conclusion: Sexual norms & Child prostitution

This chapter has given us a broader understanding of child prostitution in Cambodia by placing it into its history and context of gender values and cultural norms regarding sexual activity. We learned that although prostitution already existed prior to the Khmer Rouge regime, something has changed the behaviour and possibly the mindset of people in the time after the Khmer Rouge regime, causing prostitution and child prostitution to grow into a bigger industry. Contrasting views are held regarding one's openness on sexual activity. The second sub-question ‘*How are sexuality and sexual norms embedded in Cambodian society?*’ can be answered as follows: There are contrasting views held on sexual norms and its change over time. However, it is clear that a divergence of sexual norms gender-wise has taken place which has resulted in extra vulnerability of women. Beside these contrasting views there is an overall difference in attitudes towards sexual behaviour of the two genders. It seems that men are in a position of sexual freedom and dominance whereas women seem to be suppressed and limited by cultural defined rules. Virginitly is a determining aspect of women's social value and their possibilities in life. Although child prostitution is prohibited by law, in reality it is a common practice which seems not to be accepted but tolerated by society.

¹¹⁰ Document 11 and 73

¹¹¹ Document 5, 58, 60, 68, 73 and 78

¹¹² Document 60, 68, 72 and 73

¹¹³ Document 73 (2006 :20)

¹¹⁴ Document 5, 11, 58, 60, 65, 68, 72 and 73

¹¹⁵ Document 68 and 73

CHAPTER 6

The family context

The previous chapter has shown that contrasting views are held on sexual norms and its change overtime, but that an obvious divergence exists in sexual norms in both genders, leading to extra vulnerabilities for the female gender. It seems that men are in a position of sexual freedom and dominance whereas women seem to be suppressed and limited by culturally determined rules. Much of the sexual norms are related to the family, the one you were born into or the one you've started. Therefore, this chapter will discuss the family context, analysing how familial customs might relate to child prostitution. Also, the role of children in the family will be discussed because the family is usually the first environment in which children are socialized. I will discuss the roles entitled to the different members of the family with special attention to the position of the child. Poverty and education will be discussed in relation to family choices leading to children becoming prostitutes. This chapter will focus on answering the third sub-question: *How are family roles and its context related to child prostitution in Cambodia?*

6.1 The family

In Cambodia families are set up as such, that men are part of the public sphere and earn money in order to support their family and women are part of the local sphere and take care of the household and children.¹¹⁶ Recently, women's participation in the public sphere has increased by fulfilling economic activities to support the family too.¹¹⁷ What is obvious though is that boys from an early age leave the family setting to go to school and learn how to make a living, while girls stay much more in the family space to help their mothers in the household and learn about womanhood.¹¹⁸ As noted before, a public versus local distinction exists in adulthood, but what is shown here is that this distinction is already implemented from an early age onwards. (Miles & Thomas 2007) There also seems to be a difference in socialization of children in gender.¹¹⁹ There are different thoughts on what gender parents prefer for their child; some say that families rather have a boy and others say families rather have a girl so as to

¹¹⁶ Document 2, 43, 64, 65, 73 and 80

¹¹⁷ Document 48 and 80

¹¹⁸ Document 58

¹¹⁹ Document 28

make money out of her.¹²⁰

The behaviour of women is closely related to the honour and reputation of her husband and the family.¹²¹ A good woman remains virtuous and conforms to various ideals to uphold the good name of the family.¹²² Until recently, girls in school were taught the ‘*chbab srey*’, which means women’s law in the Khmer language.¹²³ It presents ‘*moral principles for women instructing women to serve and respect their husbands at all times, and never to raise domestic problems outside the house.*’ (Licado 2007 in¹²⁴) This includes that women should be shy, obedient, submissive, speak softly and be well mannered at all times.¹²⁵ These moral codes influence a girl’s vulnerability and contribute to them being deceived into sex work.¹²⁶

Men are highly valued from infancy to adulthood.¹²⁷ Men are privileged in multiple aspects such as getting more food, education and sexuality just because they are men, and they are valued higher than women.¹²⁸ The man is the important head of the family who is supposed to make a living for the family.¹²⁹ It is claimed that for that reason a mother will breastfeed a boy much longer than a girl.¹³⁰

Cambodian culture entails a custom where mothers touch the genitals of their children as a method of showing affection and comforting the child without any sexual intent.¹³¹ A young child may therefore not recognize similar touching by others for the sexual act that it is.¹³²

There is a strong hierarchy based on age; the younger you are the less valued your opinion is and the more you have to show respect to older generations.¹³³ One must know that the gender

¹²⁰ Document 11 and 15

¹²¹ Document 64 and 80

¹²² Document 64

¹²³ Document 80

¹²⁴ Document 80 (2010:45)

¹²⁵ Document 64 and 80

¹²⁶ Document 43

¹²⁷ Document 12 and 34

¹²⁸ Document 9

¹²⁹ Document 2 and 43

¹³⁰ Document 43

¹³¹ Document 28 and 75

¹³² Document 75

¹³³ Document 2, 9, 39 and 43

hierarchy stands above the age hierarchy which means that a boy has to listen to his mother until he is considered an adult.¹³⁴ Children are seen as not having knowledge like adults have and are not encouraged to voice their own opinion, but to agree with adult perceptions and to honour their parents.¹³⁵ (Miles & Thomas 2007) Before they reach puberty, children are not held responsible for their actions because they are understood as not being able to understand their surrounding world before becoming an adult.¹³⁶ This conviction makes parents somewhat neglecting in terms of monitoring their child's safety and its verbal interactions.¹³⁷ This makes them vulnerable due to the gap between the children's world where they are not held responsible for their deeds, and the adult world full of preoccupations and responsibilities.¹³⁸

Children are considered as subordinate and interdependent to their elders and family and they cannot be seen as an autonomous entity.¹³⁹ Interestingly, it is also noted in the data that Cambodian children are more independent in comparison with Western children.¹⁴⁰ It seems that this is in contrast to the earlier mentioned interdependency but in my opinion, both features can exist alongside each other. Within the Cambodian culture a lot of value is placed upon those who take care of you, in return the parents should be supported by the child as soon as the child grows up. Therefore, children can be seen as interdependent during their childhood. But if one takes this interdependency in comparison with children, for example, in Europe, one could say that Cambodian children are much more independent than those in Europe where parents organize everything for their children. In Cambodia children do a lot more things on their own. With that in mind, one could say that Cambodian children are interdependent on their elders, just as many children anywhere in the world, but that a lot of value is placed upon this interdependency. At the same time, Cambodian parents are often dependent of their children as well, as they often provide some extra income to support the family. (Miles & Thomas 2007) Cambodian children are also independent as they take care of themselves in many situations where, for example, Western children are more taken care of.

There is a weighty obligation for children to support their parents in Cambodia.¹⁴¹ This

¹³⁴ Document 9

¹³⁵ Document 4, 11 and 58

¹³⁶ Document 58

¹³⁷ Document 2 and 58

¹³⁸ Document 58

¹³⁹ Document 58

¹⁴⁰ Document 60

¹⁴¹ Document 1, 4, 11, 14, 58, 63, 65 and 78

especially counts for (eldest) daughters who work at home or are send out to work outside of home.¹⁴² The obligation of having to take care of their parents and family often contributes to children ending up in the sex industry in order to make money.¹⁴³ This can happen through different forms of trafficking such as deception, virginity sale or parents purposely selling a child to a brothel.

In the case of girls being deceived into prostitution, girls feel obliged to provide for their families, and do not see themselves as free to leave without having an alternative source of income.¹⁴⁴ They stay in the sex industry and hope that their parents will never know about the real situation they got into, because of the shame and humiliation they will bring onto the family.¹⁴⁵ The reputation of a family is highly valued and seems even more important than rectifying a situation of sexual abuse, suffered by the family's child.¹⁴⁶ Another reason for trafficked girls in prostitution to stay in their current situation is that if she does not continue to provide an income for the family, a younger sister might be sold in her place.¹⁴⁷

Girls who are sold by their parents don't seem to blame their parents for their actions.¹⁴⁸ In the case of rape they felt like they had done something wrong and brought rape upon themselves, which they are taught by society to think of like that.¹⁴⁹ Being a victim is perceived as something bad and to be blamed for.¹⁵⁰ If a girl is a victim of rape, the family will lose face and the girl will likely receive punishment for ending up as a victim of sexual abuse.¹⁵¹

If one takes a closer look at the above one will notice that Cambodian culture contains a concept of childhood, because there is an obvious distinction and gap between expected behaviour of adults and that of children. It seems that this gap is a little too obvious in a way that it suggests that there is either childhood or adulthood and no overlapping area in which children are prepared for childhood. Noteworthy, children are not supposed to have their own opinion and definitely not allowed to have their opinion heard as they have to agree with adult perceptions.

¹⁴² Document 1, 4, 5, 6, 11, 31, 43, 57, 60 and 65

¹⁴³ Document 1, 4, 5, 14, 57 and 63

¹⁴⁴ Document 1, 5, 11 and 15

¹⁴⁵ Document 2, 10, 43 and 55

¹⁴⁶ Document 58

¹⁴⁷ Document 1 and 11

¹⁴⁸ Document 1 and 5

¹⁴⁹ Document 80

¹⁵⁰ Document 8

¹⁵¹ Document 8 and 80

6.2 Education & Poverty

Data has noted many times that people who did not have any education or only primary education are more easily cheated into sex work and more often end up in the sex industry.¹⁵² Education is not self-evident for many people in Cambodia. Primary education is generally available, also in rural areas. Higher education however is mostly only available in urban areas and not easily accessible for some.¹⁵³ Although primary education is free of charge, it is not compulsory and there are several factors contributing to limited enrolment and high drop-out rates. (UNESCO National Education Support Strategy Cambodia 2010-2013) A few of these factors are indirect costs of education, poor quality of education and limited financial recourses of families.¹⁵⁴

Lack of education is narrowly related to poverty. Poverty is for many a cause for limited opportunity to enjoy an education.¹⁵⁵ If a family has limited financial resources to survive they will prefer that their children (financially) contribute to the family rather than them going to school.¹⁵⁶ Begging is, for instance, one of the widely known activities to generate an income by children, which in the big cities is more present than well-rated jobs such as teachers.¹⁵⁷ The problem with begging is that the children don't get educated or learn skills, so when they grow too old to make a living by begging on the streets, many of them become sex workers to earn their living.¹⁵⁸ Lack of education contributes to unskilled people seeking for employment and ending up in the financial lower segments of society.¹⁵⁹ In their turn they end up having a poor family themselves due to lack of proper education and consequently lack of good work, making a full cycle in the poverty scale.

It has often been shown in data that at the primary level of education the ratio on boys and girls is about the same, but strongly differentiates the higher the education level gets.¹⁶⁰ (Hill & Heng 2004) (Rao & Pearson 2009) The higher the level of education, the more boys and fewer girls are found to enjoy an education. This partly has to do with poverty because poverty contributes to families

¹⁵² Document 10, 14, 17, 21, 44, 53, 58 and 68

¹⁵³ Document 2

¹⁵⁴ Document 44

¹⁵⁵ Document 8 and 68

¹⁵⁶ Document 44 and 68

¹⁵⁷ Document 10 and 12

¹⁵⁸ Document 10

¹⁵⁹ Document 15

¹⁶⁰ Document 2, 43, 63 and 64

making decisions on who to educate and who not, due to financial limitations. Poverty alone does not influence the amount of boys and girls that are educated, but along with social structures of gender it makes all the difference. A major belief is that there is no value in educating girls as they are more useful at home and should contribute to the family by working in the household.¹⁶¹ This has different reasons, ranging from girls to generate an income for the household to the fact that girls will marry and have to learn to take care of a family themselves.¹⁶² (Rao & Pearson 2009) Only once it is mentioned in the data that for families in rural areas it has to do with the fear of trafficking and rape that they don't want their girls to go studying in the urban areas.¹⁶³

The higher educated people are, the less easy they can be deceived into something. However they do have difficulties in finding jobs after graduating, although to a lesser extent than it is for the less educated people to find a job. When a student from a rural area has finished higher education or university, she or he cannot go back to their family because they are expected to earn money for the family to return the favour of paying for his or her education.¹⁶⁴ Due to the low quality of education in Cambodia, high education titles that have been rewarded do not necessarily mean that the person is capable. The educated Cambodians are not always educated well enough to get the jobs for educated people rather these jobs are filled by foreigners that do have the necessary skills and training leaving Cambodian people with minor jobs.¹⁶⁵ This means that there exists a large group of educated, but unskilled workers seeking for employment whose disparity, due to joblessness after finishing an education, makes them vulnerable to traffickers.¹⁶⁶

There are also other economic reasons for people to work in prostitution. There are a few who chose to do so freely, but with a lot of ready money available in the sex industry it makes it more attractive than working in a factory for instance.¹⁶⁷ Other girls slowly enter the prostitution in which they work in a factory where they are exploited or which closes down. They will start in the entertainment industry as beer-girls, karaoke-girls and slowly making the cross-over as sex workers.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶¹ Document 4, 6, 15, 64 and 73

¹⁶² Document 2, 43, 58 and 73

¹⁶³ Document 2

¹⁶⁴ Document 10

¹⁶⁵ Document 10

¹⁶⁶ Document 12 and 15

¹⁶⁷ Document 5 and 21

¹⁶⁸ Document 5, 6, 10 and 15

6.3 Parental trafficking

There are many cases known of parents selling their children, either their daughters' virginity or the child itself.¹⁶⁹ (Maureen Atwell 2008-2009) (Cambodia: Post-conflict development) Poverty is very often named as the main reason behind children working in the sex industry.¹⁷⁰ This usually happens to be able to support the family as it has become a means of survival. Parents would not turn to such drastic matters if they didn't need the money so badly.¹⁷¹ For some families it has turned into a lifestyle because girls from three or more generations have been sold into prostitution so as to care for the family.¹⁷² Poverty, debt and other financial difficulties are at the heart of turning to prostitution, but there are also cases known where girls are sold for luxury items such as a television or a motorbike to make their family life just more comfortable.¹⁷³ (Atwell 2008-2009)

It is seen as a daughter's duty to '*be sacrificed*' (¹⁷⁴) so as to support the family.¹⁷⁵ (Cambodia: Post-conflict development) The word 'sacrificed' implements that it is a special offer and not a normal thing to do. In that case the selling a child is probably not seen as normal and good, but as an unavoidable action for the sake of the survival of the family. This doesn't entail parents who do this for luxury items of course, but it does shed some light on the motivations of the parents. On the other hand, if poverty seems to be the main cause behind children working in the sex industry, where do all these men, who buy the sexual services from these children, get their money from? Poverty seems to contradict the existence of child prostitution.

It seems that within the trafficking a gender difference is apparent, more girls than boys seem to get trafficked for the sex industry.¹⁷⁶ Reasons for this could be the undervaluing of women and girls in Cambodian society, which exacerbates their vulnerability.¹⁷⁷ There is not much known about the thoughts of parents on the sex industry and their knowledge about the situation they send their children into.¹⁷⁸ Although there are children sold into prostitution by their parents, there are also many other

¹⁶⁹ Document 1, 2, 4, 12, 17, 50, 57, 60 and 63

¹⁷⁰ Document 1, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 17, 27, 34, 50, 53, 55, 58, 63, 66, 68 and 75

¹⁷¹ Document 4 and 8

¹⁷² Document 14

¹⁷³ Document 1, 11, 14, 15, 58 and 60

¹⁷⁴ Document 60 (2005:27)

¹⁷⁵ Document 57 and 60

¹⁷⁶ Document 43

¹⁷⁷ Document 43 and 63

¹⁷⁸ Document 5

things happening, such as deception, which make it only appear like parents are selling their children into prostitution. Deception plays a huge part in the trafficking industry; many parents are cheated and therefore non-purposely selling their child.¹⁷⁹

6.4 Conclusion: Family roles

This leads us to the following answer on the third sub-question '*How are family roles and its context related to child prostitution in Cambodia?*' Within the family context, poverty, education and child prostitution seem narrowly related because lack of education and poverty seem to contribute to each other leading to a vicious circle causing high risk families. Family roles divided among gender are from young age onwards entrenched in the socialization of the child. The family is closely related to women's sexual behaviour as their behaviour resembles the status of the family. Women's and girls' behaviour in special seem to stand for the family's honour. There is a strong hierarchy upon age that makes children subordinate to elders. Although children are perceived as interdependent of their family, they are also obliged to support the family, something which especially counts for the oldest daughters. The socialization of the child, especially the girl child because of the strong gender divergence, within the family makes them more vulnerable to child prostitution, which is reinforced through poverty and lack of education.

CHAPTER 7

Traffickers & Sex buyers

Chapter six has shown that besides in society there is also a strong gender difference within the family context. The family is closely related to women's sexual behaviour as their behaviour resembles the status of the family. The socialization of the child within the family makes them more vulnerable to child prostitution, which is reinforced through poverty and lack of education. These vulnerabilities and lacks are used by the traffickers, sex buyers and related to action for prosecution. Chapter six has shown a small insight in how people are deceived by traffickers but in this chapter I will discuss the involvement of trafficking in child prostitution more thoroughly. The sex buyers are the demand-side

¹⁷⁹ Document 1, 2, 9, 15, 24, 50, 57, 63, 66, 68 and 73

of this industry and their preferences and needs are of great influence of its existence. Therefore it is important to know who the sex buyers are, how they act and what they like. At last, problems of prosecution shall be discussed. By focusing on the traffickers, buyers and processes of prosecution I will try to discover, through insight about who adheres to or breaks certain norms of society and what is done about this shows how people act on this, the motivations that provide grounds for the existence of child prostitution in Cambodia. This chapter shall try to provide an answer to the fourth and last sub-question; *'which organizational processes are of influence in the demand and existence of child prostitution in Cambodia?'*

7.1 Trafficking

Although trafficking happens for many purposes, in Cambodia it seems that the sex industry is the primary one.¹⁸⁰ Trafficking is mentioned as the main cause for children ending up in the sex industry.¹⁸¹ The word 'human trafficking' is generally well known in society and associated with crime, but many ordinary citizens do not seem to have a real idea about the consequences of trafficking.¹⁸² The question is whether people know that selling their children is considered trafficking or if they know that many people can be traffickers, even if they are friends or family. Once is mentioned that the majority of society knows about deception for trafficking but that multiple grounds for behaviour interfere with this knowledge.¹⁸³ Poverty leads to risky behaviour in finding any job for an income. If someone offers them a job far away people have hopes that this is their chance for a better life. (Hill & Heng 2004) The broker does not always need to be someone unknown, often they are relatives, friends, boyfriends, neighbours or other well known people in the community they trust but who actually have connections with others in the sex industry.¹⁸⁴

When a broker approaches parents they will often lie to them and claim to offer their child a respectable job.¹⁸⁵ Other techniques are to offer to adopt or to marry a child.¹⁸⁶ When they take the child with them some amount of money will be given to the parents, which is by the parents often

¹⁸⁰ Document 31, 43, 64 and 75

¹⁸¹ Document 6, 14 and 24

¹⁸² Document 27

¹⁸³ Document 14

¹⁸⁴ Document 1, 2, 4, 6, 43, 63 and 66

¹⁸⁵ Document 2, 4, 6, 14, 43, 50, 63, 66, 68 and 72

¹⁸⁶ Document 55

perceived as their first loan and not as the received money for selling their child.¹⁸⁷ Parents seem not always to be aware of the wrong intentions of the trafficker.

According to the World Bank, in 2007 30,1% of the Cambodian population lived under the poverty line.¹⁸⁸ Poverty also causes people to take more risks and they are more exposed to additional risks due to poverty.¹⁸⁹ Possible additional risks are being illiterate, naiveté or lack of knowledge about certain aspects of society. Even if people are familiar with the risks of ending up in the sex industry, they still go with the broker because there is also a chance it really does contain a decent job.¹⁹⁰ Especially the poor, who are usually also the low educated people, are particularly vulnerable to trafficking. Because they are poor, they are in need of some extra income through another job. This need for money makes them more likely to take risks and easier to deceive.¹⁹¹ For that reason, traffickers usually go to poor, often rural areas where the educational level is low.¹⁹² People with a low education level are easier to deceive than people with higher education.¹⁹³

Traffickers are people who sell and purchase humans as commodities.¹⁹⁴ There is not much known about the motivation of traffickers, but it seems that poverty and the easy money making is a major drive.¹⁹⁵ Some people who have been trafficked become traffickers later on in life because traffickers make more money than the persons who are trafficked for sexual purposes.¹⁹⁶

Domestic trafficking for sexual purposes seems to happen mainly from rural areas to urban areas.¹⁹⁷ Rural areas are attractive sources because people live often in poverty and lack education which contributes to ignorance in the promises of good jobs or to taking more risks in hope of a better future.¹⁹⁸ Also law enforcement and the judicial system are far less developed in rural areas than urban areas, which involve a lower risk of getting caught for the traffickers.¹⁹⁹ In urban areas it is the

¹⁸⁷ Document 2

¹⁸⁸ www.data.worldbank.org

¹⁸⁹ Document 27, 39, 50, 53, 55, 57, 63, 66, 68, 75 and 80

¹⁹⁰ Document 4 and 27

¹⁹¹ Document 4, 9 and 39

¹⁹² Document 14 and 68

¹⁹³ Document 6, 10, 53, 66 and 73

¹⁹⁴ Document 15

¹⁹⁵ Document 6 and 27

¹⁹⁶ Document 13, 17, 25, 27 and 55

¹⁹⁷ Document 4, 6, 7, 15, 55, 63, 68, 72 and 73

¹⁹⁸ Document 68 and 73

¹⁹⁹ Document 68 and 77

homeless children and street children who easily become victims of trafficking.²⁰⁰

Provinces often mentioned as source-provinces for domestic trafficking are Kampong Cham, Prey Veng, Kandal, Takeo, Battambang and the slums of Phnom Penh.²⁰¹ Kampong Cham especially is noted because people from there seem to have a lighter skin which is perceived as attractive.²⁰² Destinations which are often mentioned are Phnom Penh, Sihanouk Ville, Siem Reap, Poipet and a little less often Koh Kong and Battambang.²⁰³ Poipet is widely known for its trafficking as it is close to the Thai border.²⁰⁴ Within Phnom Penh, the capital city, there are different hotspots where (child) prostitution is found. A few of them are Tuol Kork area, Wat Phnom, Central market, Riverside, street 51, 'the building', heart of darkness and a few other bars.²⁰⁵ Svay Pak, a village 11 kilometers from Phnom Penh (therefore also called K11), is the most notorious place for child prostitution in Cambodia, and it is said that almost every tuk-tuk driver in Phnom Penh knows where you need to go when you'll ask about Svay Pak.²⁰⁶ It seems that the selling of children in Svay Pak is so common that in this area there is no social stigma related to it.²⁰⁷

Not only is trafficking happening from rural areas to urban areas, this also counts for domestic migration. There is an increasing number of Cambodians who migrate from rural areas to urban areas in search for employment opportunities, education and chances for a better life.²⁰⁸ Uninformed and irregular migration, either domestic or across borders, makes people more vulnerable to trafficking due to lack of registration and social network.²⁰⁹ Especially women tend to migrate to urban areas which seems related to the modernization of Cambodia as the urban area is the place to build a 'modern life'.²¹⁰

²⁰⁰ Document 4

²⁰¹ Document 15

²⁰² Document 11

²⁰³ Document 15, 34, 53, 72, 73 and 75

²⁰⁴ Document 7, 8, 27 and 44

²⁰⁵ Document 14, 17, 18, 53, 54, 58, 60, 68, 72 and 73

²⁰⁶ Document 4, 14, 60, 68, 57, 72, 73 and 74

²⁰⁷ Document 17

²⁰⁸ Document 15, 23, 24, 31, 65, 68, 75, 78 and 79

²⁰⁹ Document 9, 15, 23 and 31

²¹⁰ Document 23, 75 and 79

7.2 Sex buyers

First it should be noted that in all sorts of data women were never mentioned as sex buyers, who therefore seem to be men only. I made the decision to distinguish predominantly in descent of sex buyers because this is important for the encounter of cultural influences in the existence of child prostitution in Cambodia. Important motivations are the reasons for men to buy sex services at all. The motivations of the largest groups of sex buyers have probably a great influence on the existence of child prostitution.

There are many reasons for sex buyers to get involved with child prostitution in Cambodia; some reasons are based on beliefs and others are related to the Cambodian context. The big growth of tourism, which has created an ideal environment for street based recruiting and grooming activities, has, together with poverty, created an environment of easy access to and compliant children.²¹¹ Other reasons for getting involved in child prostitution are their relative attractiveness, being disease-free, virginal status and they are easier to lure or coerce into sex.²¹² (Atwell 2008-2009) For foreigners there are multiple other reasons for coming to Cambodia to participate in child prostitution. Cambodia has often been portrayed as a country of impunity, a reason why perpetrators do not perceive the risk of being caught as a real or threatening one.²¹³ (Atwell 2008-2009) This is especially the case since the increase in prevention and reduction efforts taken on this industry in neighbouring Thailand.²¹⁴ Cambodia is also a poor country which makes it a cheap place to go to and buy the sexual services of children.²¹⁵ Beliefs coming along with poverty are that it is acceptable because they (the sex buyers) are actually helping poor people to support the individual, their family and the local economy.²¹⁶ (Atwell 2008-2009)

There are distinct types of sex buyers.²¹⁷ First is the situational sex buyer, sometimes called the opportunistic sex buyer, who does not have a true sexual preference for children, but will choose so if the opportunity arises. Second is the preferential sex buyer who has a definite sexual preference for children usually combined with an age and gender preference. They are systematic in their approach to acquire or seduce them. Only once is a third type of perpetrator mentioned; the virginity-

²¹¹ Document 44, 53 and 68

²¹² Document 4, 15, 65 and 68

²¹³ Document 44, 53, 68 and 75

²¹⁴ Document 44

²¹⁵ Document 44 and 73

²¹⁶ Document 68

²¹⁷ Document 55, 68 and 73

seeker.²¹⁸ This offender is not intentionally focussed on children, but has a great focus on virginity, which more often implicitly involves children because of the higher potential of them being virgins. As I explained before, I think that it is important to segregate different motivations in categories. Because the virginity-seeker has definitely a different motivation from the preferential sex buyer because he explicitly wants the virginity while the preferential sex buyer explicitly wants certain children and not specific children in state of virginity.

There are different ways and locations for sex buyers to get involved with child prostitution. There is non-organized prostitution which entails sex buyers searching for children in public areas such as the streets, markets, beaches or by joining NGO's and (voluntary) jobs with easy access to children such as schools, orphanages, child centres or shelters.²¹⁹ Non organized prostitution of children can happen in multiple ways. Some offenders approach children directly and offer them money in exchange for sexual favours. Others will make use of an intermediary who will find the child for him. Still others use sophisticated grooming techniques to gain access to a child. The term 'grooming' describes the methods and behaviours used by the offender to develop a relationship of trust, control and dependence with their intended victims.²²⁰ In this case the sexual favours of a child will be used over an extended period of time.²²¹ Western offenders may notice the difference with the Cambodian children, who usually go unnoticed in their environment, and know how to get their attention, to fulfil their needs, and how to please them. They usually seduce their future victim "*by attending to their immediate needs and developing a trust that causes the child to feel appreciative and indebted to comply with any request (even unusual) in order to satisfy their "guardian".*"⁽²²²⁾ Usually, the relation extends to the family, to prevent suspicion and enable access. Sometimes they even engage in a romantic relationship with the (widowed) mother to keep them safe from suspicion.²²³ To build trust, they provide the family with financial support, food, shelter, gifts, clothing, holidays and education.²²⁴ Implicitly, this generates a relationship of power which creates a dependency on the offender.²²⁵ The process of grooming is dual, it secures the cooperation of the

²¹⁸ Document 73

²¹⁹ Document 8 and 77

²²⁰ Document 8 and 53

²²¹ Document 53

²²² Document 58 (2005:20)

²²³ Document 53 and 77

²²⁴ Document 18, 53, 58, 75 and 77

²²⁵ Document 8, 53 and 75

victim and it reduces the risk of discovery or disclosure by the child and/or family.²²⁶ With creating an atmosphere of normality and acceptance, the offender enables himself to sexually abuse the child with impunity.²²⁷ The dependency on the offender leads sometimes to the acceptance of the abuse of the child and therefore no charges will be made in the event of an arrest or investigation.²²⁸

There is also organized prostitution which can be divided in direct sex venues and indirect sex venues. Brothels are a direct sex venue, as you only come there for sexual services. Within brothels, chances of girls being trafficked are the highest. Karaoke bars, discos and beer gardens are indirect sex venues as they offer alternative entertainment and contain the idea of a mere voluntary choice for the girls working there.²²⁹

When child sex tourism is discussed, one often refers to foreigners who come to Cambodia with the purpose of buying sex. Unfortunately, this term does often implement foreigners as Westerners and it does not include Cambodian tourists, people who travel from one village or city to another to have sex with children. Therefore I do not like to use the term child sex tourist because it has different implications.

There are different opinions about the descent of the largest groups of sex buyers. A difference is made between local perpetrators (Cambodian) and foreigners who are often described as Westerners. Only few make the difference between three different groups; locals, Asians, other foreigners.²³⁰ The distinction made is important because different views upon sex buyers involve different methods of action towards them. Besides that, it makes a difference in statistics using a dichotomy of Cambodians and foreigners or a trichotomy with Cambodians, Asians and non-Asians. The dividing made contributes to different statistics, so it should be thoroughly thought through. I would like to follow the trichotomy because there is definitely a difference between Asian foreigners and non-Asian foreigners as the Asians have a strong focus on virginity while non-Asians are not focused on virginity as such. These different motivations for consuming child prostitution seem important to me because of the different methods of action to reduce this. To refer to non-Asians would be too broad because many nationalities of certain other parts of the world aren't discussed within this topic of sex tourism. Therefore I'd like to refer to Westerners, as the non-Asian nationalities that are mentioned are situated in Europe and America. This leads to having three types of backgrounds of sex buyers; Cambodian (local) sex buyers, Asian sex buyers and Western sex buyers. This does not imply that in other parts of the world are no child sex buyers, but they are apparently not

²²⁶ Document 53 and 73

²²⁷ Document 53

²²⁸ Document 8 and 53

²²⁹ Document 78

²³⁰ Document 58, 72, 73 and 75

involved with or not of great concern within child sex in Cambodia.

It seems that Westerners prefer the public areas within non-organized prostitution while Asian and Cambodian men are more into organized prostitution.²³¹ Knowledge that many of these girls are trafficked and sold as commodities seems to have little effect on their decision.²³² Another common notion is that Asian men are usually more into girls and that many Westerners are more interested in boys.²³³ It is often noted that particularly Asia has a high demand for sex with virgins.²³⁴ Although Cambodian men also have preference for virgin girls²³⁵, especially Chinese men are known to travel to Cambodia for sex with virgins²³⁶ and Western men do not really have a demand for virginity as such.²³⁷

Often the belief is held that Westerners are the largest group of perpetrators while in reality they are only a small minority of the perpetrators.²³⁸ A possible reason for this is that Western perpetrators get more media attention and that Western governments are taking action to arrest and prosecute their nationals committing sexual abuse towards children overseas, therefore Western perpetrators are immediately more visible.²³⁹ Local media campaigns for example usually refer to Western men with a young girl, this also generates and upholds the idea that only girls are involved (and not boys) and that the perpetrators are mainly Western men.²⁴⁰ Another reason might be that Westerners have such a distinct look from Asians that they are more noticeable and easier to detect with suspicious behaviour on their part.²⁴¹ Because one often thinks that the main group are the Western perpetrators a lot of attention is paid to only a small part of the offenders while the more prevalent group of offenders is not targeted at all.²⁴² Although Westerners are not the majority of the sex buyers, they do have a high impact on the sex industry.²⁴³ They pay usually a lot more than the

²³¹ Document 53 and 77

²³² Document 50

²³³ Document 8, 15 and 68

²³⁴ Document 58, 60, 65, 68 and 78

²³⁵ Document 65, 68 and 73

²³⁶ Document 57, 58, 60, 72, 73 and 78

²³⁷ Document 65

²³⁸ Document 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15, 17, 19, 28, 34, 40, 58, 63, 68, 73 and 75

²³⁹ Document 44, 73 and 75

²⁴⁰ Document 34

²⁴¹ Document 75

²⁴² Document 28, 34 and 44

²⁴³ Document 14 and 68

local sex buyers and therefore they are to many an interesting solution for 'quick money'. For example, parents might send their daughter to the city to prostitute her to foreigners, but most of the girls end up in regular prostitution and not with wealthy foreigners.²⁴⁴ It seems that the largest group is in fact the Cambodians who have a high demand for young prostitutes, especially girls. (Cambodia NGO report 1999)

Although many interrelated causes are named as contributing to child prostitution, there are also thoughts that demand is the main cause because without the demand there would be no need for supply.²⁴⁵ (Hughes 2000)

7.3 Prosecution

A problem in the prosecution and punishment of traffickers, brothel owners and perpetrators is that they offer money to the victim or the victim's family not to file a complaint or withdraw this complaint.²⁴⁶ Reasons for accepting this money include: being intimidated by and afraid of the traffickers, encouragement from officials to a compensation settlement, the shame and loss of face it brings to open up within the community, the time and effort court takes.²⁴⁷ Reasons for officials to insist on a compensation settlement are that they get a certain percentage of it. These reasons all discourage people to report cases of rape and trafficking for child prostitution. In case that child prostitution happens with homeless children and orphaned children, they might protect the perpetrator from being arrested because he/she sees the perpetrator as certainty for income, a way to survive.²⁴⁸

Corruption and bribery is thus a problem related to the existence of the sex industry. That different officials, from police officers to court members, are paid off not to interfere is certainly not uncommon.²⁴⁹ It seems that the legal system is improving and bribery is happening less but also more secretly and there are still high ranked people who will buy their way out.²⁵⁰ More people involved in the organization of the sex industry, such as traffickers, brothel owners and perpetrators, get punishment for their actions and are sent to jail.²⁵¹ This improvement appears to be achieved through

²⁴⁴ Document 14

²⁴⁵ Document 14, 57, 60 and 75

²⁴⁶ Document 2

²⁴⁷ Document 9, 34, 44, 75 and 80

²⁴⁸ Document 58

²⁴⁹ Document 4, 11, 15, 17, 34, 50, 55, 58, 63, 68, 73, 75 and 77

²⁵⁰ Document 4, 5, 9, 11, 27 and 75

²⁵¹ Document 4

training of officials and law strengthening.²⁵² On the other hand, it is believed that brothel raids are often only for public show and the women and children are ‘bought back’ by the brothel owners and traffickers by paying ransom to the officials.²⁵³ (Hughes 2000) Others think that closure of brothels and prosecution of perpetrators only leads to the movement of such activities to somewhere else, turning it into a much more underground industry which is even harder to monitor.²⁵⁴

In the past, brothels were highly visible but this has recently changed.²⁵⁵ Brothels are not allowed by law anymore, so it became harder to find them and the ones that still exist have under aged girls at separated locations only brought in after request.²⁵⁶ In recent years, there has been a trend evolving out the closure of brothels namely that entertainment places also provide prostitution. Examples of these indirect sex venues are massage studios, karaoke bars, beer gardens and nightclubs where beside the entertainment the opportunity exist to buy sexual services.²⁵⁷ (Cambodia: Post-conflict development) It is also noted that children are found less in brothels and it has turned more into a non-organized, street based industry and that perpetrators are more moving into rural areas.²⁵⁸ Another change is that sex buyers will call the brothels or traffickers to say what they want, instead of them going to a place with children, and the child of his wishes will be brought to the location of the man. This practice makes it less visible too.²⁵⁹ The decline in visibility of this industry has brought complications because sex workers started working on the streets which is more dangerous as they are difficult to monitor, and organizations who try to help prostitutes have more difficulties reaching them.²⁶⁰

7.4 Conclusion: Influences on demand and the industry

This chapter has shown that trafficking is greatly involved in child prostitution but for all that, there seems a lack of knowledge about what trafficking really entails. Poverty and lack of education seems

²⁵² Document 5 and 9

²⁵³ Document 6, 50 and 54

²⁵⁴ Document 4, 55 and 57

²⁵⁵ Document 4, 8, 12 and 15

²⁵⁶ Document 4, 8, 15, 56 and 65

²⁵⁷ Document 4, 12, 15 and 17

²⁵⁸ Document 8 and 77

²⁵⁹ Document 17

²⁶⁰ Document 4, 12, 13 and 15

to serve as a major influence on taking risks and being trafficked. The sex buyers are (roughly) made up of three groups; the Asian sex buyer, the Cambodian sexy buyer and the Western sex buyer. The Cambodian and Asian sex buyers are most comparable as they both have a strong preference for virgins and for organized prostitution. The main difference between the two is that Cambodians are more involved in direct sex venues while the other Asians are more involved in indirect venues. The Westerners do not have a preference for virginity as such and are more preferential and situational offenders and they have a preference for non-organized prostitution. This distinction is based upon means, which does not mean that other preferences don't happen. Although much attention is paid to Westerners who are involved in child prostitution, it seems that they obtain only a small part of the industry.

The last sub-question “*Which organizational processes are of influence in the demand and existence of child prostitution?*” could be answered with the following; the trafficking industry seem to contribute to a great part of children in prostitution and is yet not very known to the ordinary people. Poverty and lack of education leads to people taking more risks for a job seem to contribute to easy and bigger amounts of trafficking processes. As these conditions often are found in rural areas these areas therefore serve as sources for trafficking to bigger cities. Although there are multiple backgrounds of sex buyers, the Cambodian men with their preference for virginal and young girls, seem to be the biggest contributor in demand. Prosecution is problematic because law is not correctly implemented leading to withheld of laying charges. Lack of and wrong implementation of laws and corruption leads to victims being unmotivated to start prosecution.

CHAPTER 8

Comparisons & Conclusions

As discussed before, I have tried to create a basis for the comparison of conceptions of childhood held by the CRC and the one that I've identified in Cambodia. By comparing these two conceptions, a clearer view is created of the similarities and contrasts in conceptions of childhood that provide difficulties in the implementation of the CRC in Cambodia. To conclude with I will answer the research question: “*Are Khmer perspectives on childhood and local conditions of influence in the implementation of article 34 on the Convention of the rights of the child in Cambodia?*” and discuss other influences found in the research.

8.1 The comparison

The fact that children have special rights that supplement the human rights gives us insight in how we think of children and childhood. The CRC only focuses on children's rights, so ratification of this convention by Cambodia entails their recognition of children as a distinct type of human beings apart from adults. It has shown that Cambodian culture contains a concept of childhood, since there is an obvious distinction between expected behaviour of adults and that of children, but one which is different than what is suggested in the CRC. How this concept of childhood differs from the one suggested in the CRC I will discuss below by comparing the different aspects of the CRC to what is happening in reality in Cambodia.

The CRC is based on what is otherwise known as the 4 P's: provision, prevention, protection and participation. Protection and participation contrast with each other; protections suggest a passivity of the child whereas participation entails the child as an active agent. What became obvious earlier in this research is that participation of children is something in contrast with the cultural habits in Cambodia. Prevention is also understood differently in Cambodia than is set down in the CRC. Astonishingly, in Cambodia ending up as a victim of any form of sexual abuse is perceived as one's own fault rather than something which is inflicted by someone else. This also counts for children, who are not protected from others, but subjected to their own behaviour.

The CRC states that the child is in need of the highest possible standard where the child's interest is prioritized before the interest of adults. This does not even closely seem to relate to the reality for Cambodian children as children are sold by their parents, sometimes intentional and sometimes not on purpose, to send them out for work. Reasons for parents to sell their children purposely are despair and luxury. In the case of despair, poverty and survival come forward as causes of child prostitution. Sending one's child out for work to 'save' the family seems for many families reasonable. This brings us to the next point of children and their duties.

The CRC entails only rights for children and does not mention any duties or obligations they need to adhere to. This is in sheer contrast with reality for many Cambodian children, who do have duties and obligations they should adhere to as defined by their culture. Cambodian children have the duty to support their parents. It is an obligation that shows honour to their parents. This especially counts for the (eldest) daughters who have to work at home or are send out to work outside of home. Within the family context poverty, education and child prostitution are narrowly related to each other. Lack of education and poverty are interchangeably keeping a cycle going of families turning to prostitution, and child prostitution in particular.

There is a strong hierarchy based on age; the younger you are, the less valued your opinion is. Expressing your opinion as a child is not appreciated as children are seen as not having knowledge

like adults have. They are not encouraged to voice their opinions, but to agree with adult perceptions and honour their parents. This makes children subordinate and interdependent to their elders and family and it withholds the development of an autonomous entity.

The development and well-becoming of a child is a central theme in the CRC, stressing the view that children are perceived as adults in the making. The focus on child development and well-being outlines the well-becoming of the child entails a future focus. Child well-being on its own doesn't necessarily entail a future focus and can be about child survival only. In Cambodia, there seems to be a big gap between childhood and adulthood. Culturally, it seems that not much attention is paid to the personal development and well-becoming of a child, although there is some recognition of children being adults in the making. An explanation could be that many people are still in financial difficulties and choose survival over a great future focus of the child's well-becoming. Although children do not seem to be stimulated to develop into an autonomous person, there is a future focus within the way roles in the family are devised. After primary school a girl traditionally has to learn about the work at home and often stays in the private sphere whereas boys are more often taking part in the public sphere, and enjoy higher education or learn skills. Both boys and girls are prepared for their roles as adults; boys as the provider of money of the family and girls as the care-taker of the family inside the home.

The CRC puts great emphasis on the protection of rights of children, as they are perceived as mentally immature, vulnerable, dependent and defenceless; it makes them in need of special safeguards and care. These convictions are also found in Cambodian society, though in a different way than the CRC formulates. Before children reach puberty, they are not held responsible for their actions because they are understood as not being able to understand their surrounding world before becoming an adult. Their mistakes are justified, because they are a child. There is a difference with the CRC though; it seems that this non-responsibility before puberty involves some lack of parental attention in terms of monitoring and verbal interactions. This would make them vulnerable because of the gap between the children's world where they are not held responsible for their deeds, and the adult world full of preoccupations and responsibilities. It seems that this distinction is a little too clear-cut compared to reality, in a way that suggests that there is either childhood or adulthood and no overlapping area in which children are mentally prepared for adulthood. Children seem to lack stimuli from their parents and surroundings in their personal development.

8.2 Conclusions

Are Cambodian perspectives on childhood and local conditions of influence on the implementation of article 34 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child in Cambodia?

After analysing my data I can positively say that Cambodian perspectives on childhood and local conditions indeed influence the implementation of article 34 of the CRC in Cambodia. Cambodia has ratified the Convention and therefore does recognize children as different from adults, but society's current conception of childhood is not coherent to the one underlying the CRC. It is especially the interaction between childhood perspectives and the local circumstances of poverty and gender inequality that leads to behaviour in discrepancy with article 34 of the CRC, with actions that most likely end in children becoming prostitutes. Because the effectiveness and legislation of the CRC is partly dependent on coherence in the framing of childhood, the implementation of the CRC is difficult in Cambodia.

In Chapter four I discussed the concept of 'living rights'; moral rights which are already maintained in society that turn into legal rights. Legal rights seem not to cohere with the cultural values that shape reality in Cambodia. Child prostitution is not allowed by law but Cambodian sex buyers who have sex with children do not seem to acknowledge the moral right that children should be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. That, or these men do not perceive their behaviour as sexual exploitation or abuse. This might be the case in non-organized prostitution when a man approaches a child on his own accord. Because the child agrees to do whatever the sex buyer might presume the child is acting on an entirely voluntary basis. Unfortunately, this doesn't have to be voluntary by definition; there might be enough other reasons for a child to be forced or feel obliged to accept even though no one has explicitly told him or her to do so since age hierarchy is an important aspect of Cambodian culture. This brings us back to the 'will theory' and the 'interest theory' of rights, discussed in paragraph 4.1. The 'will theory' states that only those capable of exercising choice can have rights. Girls who have lost their virginity and children who were trafficked into prostitution usually lack any choice in the matter of becoming a prostitute or not. In the case of the 'will theory', these children do not have rights. The 'interest theory' claims that anyone who has important interests can have rights. This means that also children with important interests have rights. Unfortunately, this does not (yet) seem the case for many children in Cambodia. On the other hand, prostitution of a child often leads to a more stable income for the family and one could argue that because of poverty, prostitution has become a right to survive? Or is it a possible right for the child to honour their parents? The latter could be the case because cultural norms of society place high value on children who support their parents. Obviously, this does not count for those who were trafficked into prostitution, which goes for the greater part of all child prostitutes.

Contradictions in cultural perceptions of what is right and wrong contribute to the industry of

child prostitution as well. Being a victim of sexual abuse or a child prostitute is perceived as wrong and the result of bad karma. Especially girls are perceived this way. When they have lost their virginity or don't meet cultural norms of what 'women should be' they are extra vulnerable for being lured into prostitution. The sex buyers, on the other hand, are not accepted by society but at least tolerated for their behaviour and perceived needs. These contrasting perceptions lead to some form of approval and demand of child prostitutes, as the Cambodian men are the main part of the demand, but at the same time disapproval in favour of the children because they sell sexual services. This discrepancy makes it difficult to implement article 34 because of the cultural preference for young prostitutes and male sexual needs being perceived as natural, while local childhood perspectives and conditions cause risky behaviour often leading to fulfilling the demand to generate an income. The perspectives on becoming a victim of sexual abuse as a result of bad karma and prostitution as a form of exchange might possibly influence the view that child prostitution is tolerated and not always perceived as sexual exploitation. When human rights were introduced, one thought that priority should be given to an overall societal well-being instead of individual rights. It could be possible that this perception is still present and combined with the above mentioned cultural aspects, it leads to a more tolerating view on child prostitution.

There is one thing that has left me with more questions than answers. Although poverty forces some to either consciously or not, turn to child prostitution out of pure financial desperation, it does not add up to the fact that so many local sex buyers are able to cough up the money for buying sexual services if poverty is the main reason behind the very existence of child prostitution. These local men, who are also part of families, seem to have money to spend on prostitution instead of spending it on their families. If this is true, poverty cannot possibly be the reason for the existence of child prostitution. Rather, the fault lies with financial priorities set by people that have evolved from unequal gender relations. One possibility is that poverty does not have such an important influence on child prostitution than is initially thought, but rather an excuse to hide cultural grounds that influence it. It could be that the local people do not accept the practices of child prostitution, but tolerate it and let it happen. When discussing topics like child prostitution with others, in particular with foreigners, Cambodians might be embarrassed of the real reasons behind the sexual practices and try to blame it on poverty. It might be easier to claim the problem is based on poverty rather than on cultural norms, especially if organizations working on this topic receive funding from other countries. I expect that poverty as a cause would gain more funding than the possibility of cultural grounds. These possibilities are just speculations though, but it would be interesting to do further research on the contradiction of poverty in the sex industry.

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Data Sources

As you probably have noticed, I gave all my sources a number. References for each number will be found below. The numbers with a – behind it were sources I did analyze but weren't recorded in the text. I have used multiple types of sources which I categorized in different categories.

I had 15 interviews with different NGO's who work on this topic or narrowly related topics. Some of them were local organizations; others were local institutions of a bigger international network of this organization. Because I usually spoke to one person working for each organization and only a few times with multiple people, I rather not claim that certain information comes from a certain organization as every person has their own experiences, perspectives and cultural background. Therefore I will not explain for the first 15 numbers which NGO belongs to the numbers mentioned from 1 to 15 but. The names of the NGO's in random order, to show their willingness in contributing to my research. I have talked with people of the following NGO's: ADHOC, APLE, CCHR Cambodia, Chab-Dai Cambodia, CHRAC, CPU, CWCC, Daughters, ECPAT Cambodia, Friends/ Child Safe Cambodia, Hagar Cambodia, OHCHR Cambodia, UNIAP Cambodia, VCAO, WHC

1. NGO
2. NGO
3. NGO
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5. NGO
6. NGO
7. NGO
8. NGO

9. NGO
10. NGO
11. NGO
12. NGO
13. NGO
14. NGO
15. NGO

The following category of sources contains informants in the informal sphere. When I told them I was in Cambodia for my research did many of them say something about it, some gave me advice and others took me around or I had longer conversations about the subject with them. Because of their privacy and possibly for their own protection I like to keep them anonymous. Other sources were my own observations living in Cambodia, meeting people, and observations made watching and interfering on the streets and markets.

16. –
17. Informant
18. Observations
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22. –

The last category is data obtained through the NGO's I visited or through some NGO libraries I was allowed to visit. These data include different researches and reports made by NGO's working on related topics. Also are there a few more literature-like data but because these were obtained from NGO libraries and with a specific focus on Cambodia I have used them similar as the other data sources.

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