In a world where there are few women politicians, Cambodia is still noticeable as a country where strong cultural and societal forces act to subjugate women and limit their political opportunities. However, in their everyday life, Cambodian women do try to improve their situation and increase their political power, not least via manifold strategies of resistance. This book focuses on Cambodian female politicians and the strategies they deploy in their attempts to destabilize the cultural boundaries and hierarchies that restrain them. In particular, the focus is on how women use discourses and identities as means of resistance, a concept only recently of wide interest among scholars studying power.

The value of this book is thus twofold: not only does it give a unique insight into the political struggles of Cambodian women; it also offers new insights to studies of power. Political scientists will find this book particularly useful because it extends the concept of resistance. However, it also creates a framework of analysis that will inspire researchers in other fields.
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POWER, RESISTANCE and WOMEN POLITICIANS IN CAMBODIA

Discourses of Emancipation

Mona Lilja
For my daughters Iris Lilja and Vera Lilja
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Göteborg, August 2007
Introduction

In a world where there are few women politicians, Cambodia is still noticeable as a country where strong cultural boundaries and hierarchies act to subjugate women and limit their political opportunities. Or in other words, the exclusion of women from the political spaces is often a result of the separation of women and men into two, mostly stereotyped, binary categories; a classification providing the basis for the hierarchization of the two sexes. While Cambodian men tend to correspond to the image of a politician, women often fail to convince as political actors and appear more like people of secondary status with less influence in public decision-making. This divide among the Cambodian population contradicts the most fundamental principles of democracy, namely that it is the people who ought to make the decisions, and that decision-making ought to be equally distributed among the people (Phillips 2000). Hierarchies as well as stereotypes hereby alter the principles of equality that democracy takes as its base. A democratic society is a society that attempts to include difference, and succeeds (Lenz Taguchi 2004: 202).

In recent years, contemporary debates about power have led to a demand for corresponding theories of resistance and change (see for example Amoore 2005; Duncombe 2002; Hardt and Negri 2004; Holloway 2002; Hoy 2004; Sharp et al. 2000). This book provides an exploration of the countless processes of discursive resistance in rela-
tion to power that operate in ways that shape the political possibilities, the identities and the practices of female politicians in Cambodia. In focus are micro relations of power and resistance appearing as discursive occurrences in daily as well as formal conversations. Resistance will be defined in a broad sense as a response to power; as a practice that has the potential to shake or negotiate, and which might undermine power (see for example Lilja and Vinthagen 2006).

This approach to resistance demands some groundwork in terms of unpacking the concept of power. I shall refer to power mainly in terms of stereotyping and hierarchization and how these are played out in a Cambodian context (see e.g. Derrida 1972: 41; Foucault 1991; Hall 1997b: 258; Hirdman 1988; Peterson and Runyan 1993). In what follows, I will show how discourses label and rank identities, create boundaries, reduce complexity, and then promote power-loaded images of identities to be invested in. However, while relations of power mark women’s political participation, the inextricably linked reply to these practices of domination not only takes the form of self-domination and subordination, but also of resistance. The observation is that Cambodian female politicians practice resistance by ‘playing’ with their identities, the images of identity, representations and discourses in order to alter stereotypes and hierarchies. Resistance will therefore be viewed as everyday occurrences that characterize the speech of women. This form of resistance should be regarded as an aspect of resistance existing alongside other forms of resistance such as revolutions, social movements, boycotts, and so on.

Hence, generally speaking, this work is about contending claims to political power. The book will, in broad strokes, expand on the research on power and resistance in two main sites of exploration. It will discuss the ways women comprehend and relate to what they experiences as the ‘dominant’ discourses on women and politics as well as the gendered power relations in Cambodia. This is done in chapters four and five. This exploration provides a ‘setting’, or a foundation for the following chapters dealing with resistance.

Subsequently, and more importantly, the book explores different ways in which discursive resistance is performed in order to map the
complexity and make visible the manifold strategies and practices existing. The aim is not only to reveal but also theorize resistance. With the above as a point of departure, the following question will serve as a guide for this book: in what sense can the ‘speaking’ of Cambodian female politicians be read in terms of discursive resistance? This question includes mapping the specific practices of resistance being carried out by female politicians. It also involves exploring how the women comprehend the power-loaded discourses that they seemingly resist.

Different forms of resistance become relevant, depending on our understanding of ‘power’. Power in terms of decision-making on national, regional or global levels is resisted by individuals, groups, organizations or movements using various forms of action (Baylis and Smith 1997; Bredgaard 2003; Chin 2000; Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz and Thörn 1999; Escobar 2000; Harvey 2001; O’Brien et al 2000; Richter 2001; Starr 2000). Many researchers direct their attention towards the work and impact of social movements and organizations, and at the same time the less visible but seemingly stronger mobilizations of people through the informal networks of transnational movements. Researchers of movement resistance have tended to focus on collective action, such as revolutions, strikes and boycotts; resistance has been analysed as actions that are violent or non-violent, confrontational or circumventing, rejecting or hindering (Amoore 2005; Lilja and Vinthagen 2006; Smith and Johnston 2002; Vinthagen 2005).

While the study of these kinds of resistance movements and actions composes a highly relevant research field, this book takes as its point of departure the notion of resistance as a discursive phenomenon. Hence, one of the basic assumptions in this work is that our conceptions of ‘reality’ are produced and sustained within discourses and through different representations. In my view discourses are themselves constructions, as well as being the means of constructing our notions about others and ourselves, and about relations between social actors, including hierarchization and stereotyping. Furthermore, as I consider power to be constructed and maintained through discourses, looking at resistance means looking at resistance against power-loaded discourses.
Resistance to ‘dominant’ discourses may also involve the practices of movements and social layers. For example, current power relations may be denaturalised by movements utilizing political dramatization, staging a scene with roles and a script and pointing out a situation as ‘unjust’, or some people as ‘victims’ and others as ‘perpetrators’ (Benford and Hunt 1995; Johnston and Klandermans 1995; Vinthagen 2005). This book, however, will not focus on movement action but the practices of resistance by individuals, namely female Cambodian politicians. The point of departure is close to that taken by Jana Sawicki in her book *Disciplining Foucault* (1999). She writes that, ‘For Foucault, discourse is ambiguous and plurivocal. It is a site of conflict and contestation. Thus, women can adopt and adapt language to their own ends. They may not have total control over it but then neither do men’ (Sawicki 1991). It also follows Foucault, by taking seriously his famous assertion that

Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it…. We must make allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it (Foucault in D. Hall 2004: 93).

Discourses are thus not fixed, but are produced through conflicts and contestations and they are therefore sensitive to resistance. Taking this as a point of departure I will read the ‘speakings’ – that is, the individual interviews and the notions and different representations expressed in those interviews – of Cambodian women politicians as sites of resistance. The motivation for using such a research approach is that the poststructuralist notion of ‘discursive’ resistance is a rather under-researched area, which is odd considering that the power/resistance couplet penetrates all our lives, making us all practitioners of subordination as well as of resistance. And as suggested by David Couzens Hoy (2005), the current world order motivates a rethinking
of the rhetoric of resistance in large. After the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and in an era of globalization where the concept of resistance is heard more often than ‘revolution,’ its connotations must be clarified’ (Hoy 2005: 6–7).

While many researchers have discussed the shape and structure of the relationship of power between men and women (see for example Holm 1993; Hirdman 1988; Kabeer 1994; McLaren 2002; Mies, 1988; Peterson and Runyan 1993) or the appearance of power (see for example Bachrach and Baratz 1972; Bourdieu 1986; Foucault 1991; Hindess 1996; Lukes 1974), those who use the concept of ‘resistance’ are less numerous. What primarily exists is researchers discussing separate practices of resistance in specific contexts. Among recent literature, The Global Resistance Reader by Amoore (2005) or the Cultural Resistance Reader by Duncombe (2002) hold sway. While the former focuses on social movements, the latter centres on broader cultural, individual or ‘everyday’ resistance exemplified by, for example, women shopping, (Fiske 2002: 267–274) or smoking (Frank 2002: 316–327) or identifying with other women (Radicalesbians 2002: 248–254). In similar fashion, the edited book Negotiating at the Margins: The Gendered Discourses of Power and Resistance (Davis and Fisher 1993), gives close attention to how resistance is played out in specific contexts, such as female college rock bands (Clawson 1993: 235–254) and the film The Battle of Algiers (Moruzzi 1993: 255–277), or by examining how family violence is constructed as a social problem in the dossier of Boston social service agencies at the end of the nineteenth century (Gordon 1993: 122–144). Beyond this, a number of books consist of detailed empirical examinations of resistance in specific contexts (see for example Dissanayake 1996; Gardiner 1995; Haynes and Prakash 1991; Jipson and Johnson 2001; Lenz Taguchi 2000; Seymour and Bagguley 1999; Sharp et al. 2000).

Over and above this kind of literature, some researchers have chosen to promote various well-known concepts related to resistance, such as performativity (Butler 1999), mobile subjectivities (Ferguson 1993), hybridity and mimicry (Bhabha 1994), identity politics (Cas-

Some of these concepts can help us to understand how Cambodian women’s use of discourses, representations, identities and images of identities can be read in terms of resistance. For example, not only does Butler’s outline of performativity help us to understand how resistance is performed in a Cambodian context, so does a focus on mobile subjectivities that illustrates how one might refuse to invest in power-loaded images of identity but might rest temporarily in different positions. Moreover, the concept of intertextuality might be related to the post-colonial concept of hybridity, that is, cultural mixings and crossovers that are powerfully interruptive, and which might serve as a tool to understand the resistance of female politicians (see for example Werbner 1997: 1). These outlines are all important aspects of resistance and, as will become evident in the following chapters, are all important means to describe how resistance is performed. However, as will be shown, they exist side-by-side, in new versions, with different ‘extras, as resistance is always ‘messy’, multiple, sliding and contradictory. In addition, other practices of resistance prevailed in the interviews and these have been added to those above to give a broader picture of how resistance is practiced in discursive negotiations of power. In this regard, concepts and phenomena like, concretism, universalism, frequent repetitions, silence and changed punishment and reward systems are used in this book to make visible the complexity of resistance and develop previous research on the topic.
Introduction

Since the main aim of the book is to map out different practices of resistance, I have no intention of commenting on the scope, the representation or the impact of the performances of resistance found in the Cambodian context, but only to map out possible ways in which resistance can be performed.

Resistance often arises from women’s attempts to handle different forms of domination. As will be seen, resistance is sometimes to be regarded as conscious strategies but more often composing non-reflective responses to stereotypes and hierarchies appearing within ordinary conversations. So, while resistance per se might not have been the original intention, many of these performances may still be labelled and interpreted as resistance since they are a response to power and may work against prevailing stereotypes and hierarchies.

Each individual is both the subject and the object of power – the subject is exposed to ranking and stereotyping at the same time as s/he promotes these repressive ‘truths’ – thus being both an agent exercising power and a ‘subaltern’ who has been subjugated and reduced to order by disciplinary strategies. Foucault labels this process disciplinary power, which is aimed directly at the soul, the mind, and finally the will of the subject (Foucault 1991: 170–194; Foucault 1994: 19–45). Taken together, the above suggests that power and resistance are not the dichotomous concepts that they are often implied to be. Instead, agents of resistance often simultaneously promote power-loaded discourses, being the bearers of hierarchies and stereotypes as well as of change.

In line with the above, this book explores how the ‘speakings’ of Cambodian women can be interpreted from the power/resistance couplet; this book is mainly built upon interviews with women who are representative in the sense that they all have a position within a political party, either as grassroots activists or as wage-earning politicians higher up in the party hierarchy. To me it seems that these women embrace a desire which becomes the very base from which they try to change the power relationship that contributes to few women obtaining political positions. Desire, in this context, is that which Braidotti (2003: 44) expresses as an ‘ontological desire, the
desire to be, the tendency of the subject to be, the predisposition of
the subject towards being’ (Braidotti 2003: 44). I thereby assume
that these women, who have taken the step towards becoming politi-
cal actors, want to be political subjects and thereby are interested in
making space for women like themselves within the political arena.
They might thereby be interesting movers in processes of power
transformation and interesting as agents of change.

While hierarchies and stereotypes will be defined as central and
the point of departure for the rest of the book, it is also recognized
that other forms of power exist, such as direct decision-making,
which is often labelled political power (see Allen 1998a). In this book,
the connections between direct decision-making and discursively-
created stereotypes and hierarchies will be acknowledged, though it
is the latter that seems to determine who is assigned the former.

PERFORMING RESISTANCE:
THE PRACTICES OF WOMEN POLITICIANS

When reviewing the interviews it seemed like the practices of resist-
ance were formulated from two prerequisites, namely: the construc-
tion of power and the construction of the discourse. Taking the con-
struction of the stereotypes and hierarchies as a point of departure,
resistance aimed, for example, to reload, nuance or create new images
and concepts. However, in order to do this the respondents, at the
next stage, used the construction of the discourse. A discourse is built
upon the repetition of different representations. Hence, the women
could use different sorts of representations, repeat them often or
more seldom, repeat them differently or mix discourses together, in
order to create manifoldness, nuances or upgrading different images.
In addition, as power-loaded discourses often are made 'natural', a
strategy of resistance was to deconstruct these discourses. In other
words, the construction of the discourse was used to negotiate the
very construction of power.

This work then makes visible how the constructions of power
and discourse create multiple strategies of discursive resistance. Be-
low I will provide a short detour to some of the findings made. The
Introduction

detour is divided into three different sections, namely: Discourses and Representations (Chapter 6), Identities and Images of Identity (Chapter 7) and Deconstruction (Chapter 8).

Discourses and Representations
Discussing how discourses and representations were used as means of resistance the analysis will centre on concepts such as hybridity, repetition/silence and concretism/universalism, which will be argued to be important components analysing discursive resistance.

Reviewing my field material, different aspects of hybridity stood out. First, it seemed that women politicians resist power-loaded discourses by mixing, or weaving together, different truths thus producing new hybrid ones. The image of the need-oriented, gentle, peaceful woman informed the image a female politician, creating a hybrid image of the ‘caring female politician.’ Thus, while the identity position ‘women’ of contemporary Cambodia seem repeatedly to contradict the image of a politician, the former still occasionally imbues the latter with meaning. The image of a woman politician was also connected by one respondent to Western notions of statehood suggesting that the concept of hybridity might grow in importance in a globalised world order.

However, hybridity can also be read in other ways. It can be pictured as the resistance of local actors to (power) interventions through reinterpretation. For example, as is suggested in chapter 3, the implementation of democracy in Cambodia has, as it seems, given rise to a ‘hybrid democracy’ through the interpretations of liberal democracy from local discourses of decision-making.

Recognising hybridity and hybrid democracy, the analysis in chapter 3 entail a discussion about the correspondence between discourse and practice. The hybrid discourse of democracy, where new notions of Western democracy mix with ‘old’ discourses of decision-making, seem to create various kinds of political practices. Considering the multiple and sometimes conflicting number of discourses and practices adds to our knowledge about discursive change and hybridity. I would like to argue that hybrid democracy, in this sense,
has an ironic character. This ‘democratic’ discourse does not correspond in forecast or predictable practices, that is what is said is not what is meant or what is done. There is a sliding between speaking and doing that may shake the cultural order.

In sum, the way hybridity applies is multiple, shifting and changing and it might involve interpretations, mixings as well as tensions between discourse and practice. Another finding that can be added to previous theories about hybridity as resistance is that the practice of blending different truths in itself seems to have resisting effects. To make hybrid ‘truths’ can be regarded as a status-providing performance, and it might thereby contribute to altering the hierarchies and stereotypes connected with the female sex.

Furthermore, I found that yet another resisting practice seems to be connected to the frequency of the repetitions of new hybrid positions of identity. Reading the interviews from the theoretical framework, the frequent repetition of sentences such as ‘women are good politicians’ seems to be resistance insofar as an attempt is made to establish a new ‘truth’ about the female gender. In this sense resistance is connected to time, and to how often the representation is repeated in time.

The other side of the coin is silence and denial. I found that most researchers regard silences a means to exercise power. In this book, however, silence is explored in terms of resistance. That is, while both power and resistance are performed through repetition in order to sustain or challenge different truths, denial and silence also occur as part of the discursive battle. As I suggest, silence and denial are seemingly used to suppress power-loaded discourses, while the subaltern refuses to internalize and forward these discourses.

In some of the discussions I experienced a tension between repetition (for example, repeating ‘women are good politicians’) and performance as resistance. Women’s bodies and how these bodies were positioned seemed to be in focus. I borrowed the concept of concretism to further develop the concept of, and make visible the nuances of, resistance. By concretism I try to show how actual representations, that is, women politicians showing their ability, might
be more effective than spoken representations. Concrete representations – performances, images, and such – are seen as ‘proofs’, and thereby have the ability to determine whether or not the spoken discourse is true or false. My conclusion, thereby, is that the look of the representations is important in the analysis of resistance. In this respect, universalism was used to further understand the impact of the concrete representations of women politicians.

**Identities and Images of Identity**

We can further add to the discourse of resistance by taking the concept of ‘identity’ as our point of departure. Discussing how identities and images of identity were used as resistance the analysis focus on aspects such as sameness, multiple identity positions and the ability to reload an image with status by association.

Women seem to dwell upon different images of identity to shake boundaries, shake the cultural order and negotiate or transform hierarchies and stereotypes. Amongst others, neither unexpectedly nor uniquely, ‘sameness’ was a continual theme expressed by the respondents. Sameness was explored through mimicry; some women tried to obtain the rewards and the appreciation that come from behaving optimally as the perfect politician. At the same time, however, these women seem to shake the cultural order and challenge the stereotypical image of women by performing an image of identity that been established and used mainly by men in a male-oriented political sphere. In fact, what I found was that women politicians compose not only ‘in-between’ representations but also ‘counter-evidences’, disputing the very discourse presenting men as natural politicians.

Another strategy of sameness included not only women becoming like men or assuming male-imbued knowledge, but on some occasions the respondents constructed an all-embracing human identity that included both men and women. It is a well-known observation that women behave ‘as men’ or claim themselves to be ‘humans’ within the political sphere. What I want to add is to make visible how these practices of resistance are linked to the construc-
tion of power, because what these women try to do is to erase the categorizing of men and women into separate types, which provides the very basis for the hierarchization of the sexes.

While some women talked in terms of changing themselves in line with the prevailing political (male) image in order to obtain access to the National Assembly, others expressed themselves in terms of alternating between different identities. There seem to be different political subject positions that Cambodian women may assume and speak from. For example, in the nexus between violence, memory and political legitimacy, identities such as ‘woman’, ‘politician’, ‘returnees’, ‘stayees’ and ‘patrons’ seemed to be imbued with different meanings and authority. Due to their legacy, different images of identity were sought, hailed or abandoned by women politicians. For example, one woman in a position of leadership tried, first and foremost, to correspond to the image of a (male) leader, while ‘hiding’ the fact that she was ‘a woman’. Several researchers have previously emphasized this sliding between different positions of identity, however, I would like to add the way this sliding between identities seems to be used by some Cambodian women in order to gain a greater authority over the discourses. The strategy would be to try to negotiate a low-status identity position while talking from another, high-status identity. This may be related to the way Foucault refers to some people as inhabiting a certain authority and the importance of including in the analysis those actors whose knowledge is recognized by the public at large (Foucault in Daudi 1984: 187; see also Said 1995: 21). However, as I have argued, Foucault’s outline in this regard must be extended, including not only persons but also different identities.

Another finding that I made, and that I think is highly interesting, not only from the perspective of resistance theory but also in terms of policy making, concerns how high-status knowledge can be put together and associated with low-ranking identities, thus reflecting status on the part of the latter. For example, one woman had only taught her female fellow-workers computing skills, thus forcing the male workers to ask the women to help them. Thus a divide between men-without-knowledge and women-with-knowledge appeared. By
endowing new, interesting and important domains with femininity and associating them with the female gender, women obtained new status. This argument is discussed in relation to Anita Göransson’s (1993) theory of fast-changing masculinity.

**Deconstruction**

Reading about deconstruction, I found that there are different researchers promoting different strategies of deconstruction. Most of them, though, seem to be about how to deconstruct novels more than speech-acts. I found that my respondents used different techniques to deconstruct what they experienced as dominating discourses. One aspect of this was that in different ways they unmasked the binary divide between the sexes or articulated alternative female identity positions, thus showing that the dominating gender is only one discourse among many. Moreover, by picturing an image of stupid men practicing child-care, one respondent challenged the gendered discourses as regards job sharing. The strategy was to change the subjects of the discourse, letting men and women turn up in the ‘wrong’ context. To me, this seems to be one of the more interesting practices of resistance, because the woman clearly used the discourses, and the stereotypes constructed through the discourses, to ‘re-categorize’ the cultural order, a deconstructing method that might still be accused of being caught in the logic of the opponent.

When talking about deconstruction, irony was also brought to the agenda. It seem to be used by the Cambodian women both as a collective practice – as a way for the subaltern to handle power relations while simultaneously recovering strength and experiencing affinity – and as way of changing the cultural order, mainly through the practice of sliding between confusing, ironic identities but also through, for example, twisting and exaggerating.

The resisting practices outlined above may alter hierarchies and stereotypes, and might also provide women with increased political power. Therefore, a study of resisting practices of female politicians should embrace an analysis of the connections between formal decision-making and discursive power, though it is the latter that seems
to determine who is assigned to the former position. And while discursive power changes, so also does the political space, its various subject positions and those inhabiting these positions.

**ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF STRATEGIES OF RESISTANCE: WHEN RESISTANCE UNDERMINES POWER**

As becomes obvious in the above, a single practice can be interpreted as an example of several different strategies of resistance, thus falling under several different categories. For example, the attempt to construct a new, superior, female political identity position can be discussed in terms of repetition or transcoding (reversing the stereotype), or as an example of woven discourses. Thus the different chapters that follow not only overlap but also complement each other. In the end the conclusion must be that resistance is always sliding and multiple, and that it involves both conscious and unconscious strategies.

The strategies accounted for in this research mostly seem to combine two approaches, attempting both to present alternatives, for example new truths or new images that contradict the dominating ones, and in some way to deconstruct prevailing stereotypes and hierarchies. For example, the introduction of the image of a superior Cambodian female politician composed a new truth, as well as challenging the earlier stereotype of a female politician by presenting a new and controversial image. Likewise, the strategy of sameness also embraces the construction of an alternative – ‘we are all the same’ – while simultaneously challenging earlier stereotypes. It also undermines the gender hierarchy by reducing the quantity of images into one.

As becomes clear from the above, different practices are also effective against different forms of power. Nonetheless, we can ask which strategies are the most effective. For example, does a strategy of difference or one of sameness have the greatest impact? While sameness undermines hierarchies by removing the categories that are being compared and ranked, it may even strengthen certain stereotypes, as well as conceal power relations instead of deconstructing them. For example, women disciplining themselves against a male norm may
hide the power relationship between men and women by denying the existence of the different images that the hierarchy is based on. They may also strengthen the stereotype of the (male) politician by accepting it and trying to become it. However, through this process of normalizing, they simultaneously redefine the female gender by recharging the appearance of being female with male qualities. Thereby, they may shake the existing cultural order of political subjects.

On the other hand, emphasizing a unique, superior, female political actor strengthens the divide between the sexes that the hierarchy rests on. However it might also upgrade the female image, negotiating the hierarchies and thereby constructing alternatives to the existing female stereotype.

Re-evaluating the possibility of different strategies to redefine power in terms of hierarchies and stereotypes, it becomes evident that different strategies have different advantages and disadvantages. As indicated above, many strategies involve the danger of not (only) challenging but also strengthening the relationship of power at stake. One example is irony, through which users may actually put forward a repressive hierarchical statement while simultaneously questioning it. How it is received and interpreted thus depends on the listener. S/he might choose to understand the dominant (preferred) meaning as it is expressed and/or read the ironic questioning of the very same statement. It is only to be hoped that the de-naturalizing questioning of the stereotype or of the hierarchical images is more effective than the damage caused by its repeating.

The double effect of many resistance strategies may be due to the fact that they sometimes constitute resistance by mere chance. This is because many ‘strategies’ of resistance seem to be about ‘accidental’ resistance, just being by-products, unintended spin-off effects, of women’s actions: in many cases, the practices of female politicians seem to be merely adjustments connected with performing in order to survive in a male environment. These actions seem, however, to have unintended effects of resistance. For example, the ironic subject that alters between many, often contradictory images of identity, may not be the result of a conscious attempt to negotiate power but
rather an adjustment to the harsh conditions of the political arena. Nevertheless, whatever the goal, the strategy of multiple identities tends to work as resistance. This applies to the woman who tried to talk from the more status-filled identity position of a leader, while hiding her female identity in an attempt to be taken seriously. She thus exchanged her low-status position for a high-status position, simultaneously altering the meaning attached to women by connecting the female sex with the position of a leader. In this book, the concept of resistance is thus used in a broad sense, including all practices that might have an emancipatory effect, considering the definition of power.

Moreover, a review of the interviews gives the impression that informants alternate between many, sometimes contradictory strategies of resistance. The effects of this in general must also be questioned. What sort of trust is created, and how convincing are the different strategies used if, as it seems, they contradict each other? The practices of normalization and the construction of a new, superior, Cambodian, female political identity are strategies that run parallel to one another and may undermine each other. The same pattern can also be seen on an individual level. For example, as stated above, one woman advocated that female politicians retain their female identity while simultaneously belittling this identity position by blaming it for women's low level of capacity. Ambivalence and inconsistency may undermine women's credibility. A more coherent strategy, used by all women, might be more effective in gaining political power. The contrary is also conceivable: manifold strategies, contradictory statements and multiple identities may confuse the opponent and shake the cultural order, as well as previously steady categories. It may create a richer world with fewer firmly rooted images as regards label and rank.

**WHEN RESISTANCE APPEARS AND CHANGE OCCURS**

Another aspect of resistance concerns the conditions for resistance, the very space for performing resistance. From the perspective of discourse theory, it must be primarily the existence of multiple
discourses that creates a space for alternative interpretations, woven discourses and hybrid or multiple identities. Likewise, the existence of multiple identity positions provides women with the possibility of performing identities from which they can negotiate/challenge prevailing discourses to a greater extent. It also provides women with the option of refusing to be pushed into proper sites of identity, and instead create their own hybrid versions of their ‘selves’. This reasoning becomes even more interesting as the current processes of globalization involve new discourses penetrating new arenas, thus allowing a multiplicity of competing truths to emerge.

The concept of subjectivity was taken on board to explain how conflicting images of identity, notions of discourses, representations or ‘not-fitting’ memories become potential sources of resistance, because as individuals try to sort the tensions between different subject positions, contradictory discourses and representations, new discourses and truths are given space.

The concept of women’s subjectivity can also help us to understand ‘interruptions’ in the processes of socialization and normalization that may result in the negotiations of power. As I suggest in the following chapters, new systems of reward and punishment create a space for resistance. Networking plays an important role here because if new sub-networks are established with their own systems of punishment and reward they provide arenas for new identities and discourses to be accepted and to flourish within a limited circle. New alternative discourses are given an opportunity to exist, being introduced to society and thereby increase in importance.

**STUDYING AND INTERPRETING RESISTANCE**

Feminist research has pointed out that, even in using the concept of ‘women’, notions of male and female bodies, their sexuality and histories, etc., are in some senses forwarded and maintained. Thus, entering a feminist discourse one easily gets trapped in producing, not only resistance, but also power. I have still chosen to use the category, not of ‘women’ but rather of ‘women politicians’ perfectly aware that this is not a uniform, homogenous category but an umbrella
concept for different individuals who define themselves differently and often have different interests. From the interviews it appears that what might apply to most of them is that they experience the same societal discourses about women, men and politics.

As stated previously, I believe that one way to increase our understandings of resistance is to interview women who have actually taken the step towards political involvement. These women mostly have on their agenda the desire and objective to resist the hierarchies and stereotypes that lead to few women holding political positions. Thereby they are also interesting as agents of resistance. How do these women try to create space for female politicians, and with what practices?

Field research was carried out in Cambodia in 1995, mid-1997, late-1997, 1999, 2002, 2006 and 2007. The first visit in 1995 included extensive research into the rural areas. 22 interviews were made with rural women in three provinces (Prey Veng, Kompong Speu and Siem Reap). I asked mainly questions about gender roles and women's decision-making within aid-programmes. In mid-1997 I returned to Cambodia and made a number of interviews with key persons with unique insights into the democratic functioning of Cambodia. I also attended different meetings with politicians and NGO workers in the run up to the 1998 election. These two field trips provide the thesis mainly with some contextual data about the Cambodian ‘setting’.

In late-1997, 1999, 2002 and 2007 interviews were made in Cambodia about the issue of women and politics. During these fieldtrips I meet 35 politically involved women from three of the main parties: the Front Uni Nationale pour un Cambodge Independent, Neutrale, Pacifique et Cooperatif (FUNCINPEC), the Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) and the Sam Rainsy Party (SRP). It is primarily these interviews that provide the foundation of this dissertation. However, I have also chosen to follow up these meetings with some significant others, that is, I have accomplished six additional interviews with male colleagues. Moreover, I have also gathered the views of eleven Cambodian NGO workers on the issue of women, female leaders, power, resistance and democracy.
Selection of respondents was done through ‘snowballing’ and includes the whole range of public actors, from members of parliament (MP), members of the senate down to grassroots activists. Although I have made a few interviews with female leaders in rural areas (for example, I interviewed two village chiefs) the main body of respondents came from urban Phnom Penh. Mainly, with a few exceptions, the interviewed were in an age of 40 or above. In some cases, I have met the same respondent several times. The method used was semi-structured interviews, where the interviewees have room to air issues s/he identifies as important, even though the subject has been framed and some questions formulated.

In the text below, the interviews will be used to illustrate the complex web of power and resistance. The point of departure will be that each interview is reflecting, reproducing, producing and/or changing the discourses of the society and that they constitute keys to understanding what processes are going on regarding the discursive struggle and transformation in society. Each interview will thus be considered as being both informed by as well as forming the social practices and ‘truths’ of the Cambodian society. This approach reflects Foucault’s way of conceptualising narratives and the individual as ‘an effect of power, and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is that effect, it is the element of its articulation. The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle’ (Foucault 1986: 234). However a fundamental assumption of this book builds on Foucault’s outline, namely that the individual is not only the object as well as the subject passing on the discursive power, but also resists this power through a number of discursive performances. As claimed above, the respondents are exposed to power-loaded discourses and react with practices of subordination as well as resistance.

While I haven’t seen or attended the places were resistance is actually practiced, what is analysed is not primarily the practice of resistance in itself. Neither will an outline of the discourses about resistance be presented, but the aim is rather to give an account of the various performances of resistance depicted in the interviews.
The book thus mainly embraces an analysis of the respondents’ accounts, not a run through of how resistance has actually been practiced. In addition, while being the receiver of the respondents’ descriptions I have become a part of the complex web of power and resistance because the narratives of the respondents can be read as attempts to present to me a more correct discourse about women and politics than the dominant discourse, to make me an fellow-sufferer or/and to make me forward a more emancipatory truth to a broader public. Thereby the analysis not only contains an analysis of women’s rendering of their resistance against others but also how the respondents practiced resistance against me, seeing me either as a fellow-player or an opponent, or both simultaneously.

Thus in sum, the book embraces an interpretation of the interviews of what resisting performances the respondents practice, while mainly leaving out how resistance is actually exercised in relation to those who stereotype, label and rank. It is about resistance embracing me as a listener and an analysis of resisting performances rendered in the interviews. Moreover, as this book uses interviews as its primarily source of information, a trustworthy analysis of the impacts and effects of various strategies of resistance will not be included in the outline. Finally, as there are, theoretically, an infinite number of readings of every text (or in this case interview) and the analysis made is only one of many possible readings, the text comprises an attempt to legitimate the presented interpretations, for example, by way of quoting.

NOTES
1 According to Ane Kirkegaard, hybrid/ity/isation ‘denominates a situation in which two or more species, traditions, discourses, social structures etc. are weaved into each other forming new species, traditions, discourses, social structures etc.’ (Kirkegaard 2004: 26).
2 The term subaltern is mainly used in postcolonial theory to refer to marginalized groups and the ‘lower classes’. For example, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak discusses the subaltern’s lack of agency (see ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ 1988b) and Homi Bhabha connects power relations to ‘subaltern’ groups. In this book,
Introduction

the term will denote those stereotyped and/or those assigned low status vis-à-vis other groups/categories.

3 In 1997 I interviewed 18 respondents. In 1999 I interviewed 18 respondents and had one group interview. In 2002 I meet with seven respondents. In 2007 I meet five employees and secretaries of the State at the Ministry of Women’s Affairs to get some feedback on my research results.

4 The interviews have been edited for clarity. This includes removing repetition and correcting grammar. I have also omitted certain fragmented passages that were difficult to make sense of. Due to the bad security situation, I have also taken measures to protect my respondents. First and foremost, the names of the respondents will remain secret. The interviews made in 1997 are labelled B, those made in 1999 labelled A, those from 1995 labelled C, those from 2002 labelled E and those from 2007 labelled F. In addition, all interviews are given numbers. Exposing the names of the female politicians could also mean to jeopardise these women’s positions, as they are highly dependent upon the goodwill of the political parties.
Theorizing power, theorizing resistance: The unpacking of identities, representations and discourses

From the poststructuralist perspective, a society without resistance would be either a harmless daydream or a terrifying nightmare. Dreaming of a society without resistance is harmless as long as the theorist does not have the power to enforce the dream. However, the poststructuralist concern is that, when backed by force, the dream could become a nightmare (Hoy 2004: 11).

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the basic arguments of a few selected researchers within the field of power. I will show how the critique of Robert Dahl’s power analysis seems to have created a chain reaction resulting in new ways of thinking on the topic of power. In this regard, researchers such as Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, and Steven Lukes entered the field and expanded the concept of power. Still, as we will see, Dahl’s outline of power as connected to actual political decision-making is related to the broader views of power that researchers such as Lukes and Foucault promote; below I will explain how. This chapter will also explore the identity-power and discourse-power couplets. I believe this discussion will prove to be a helpful basis for the analysis of power as well as resistance of Cambodian women politicians.
In everyday speech, the concept of power has a number of different meanings, and depending on the context the word inescapably shifts in content. The same goes for more academic analyses of power. Robert Dahl represents what has been called the ‘pluralist’ view of power, stressing an approach that aims to determine who actually prevails in decision-making. In his research on the local government in New Haven, he tried to establish who emerges in community decision-making. Identifying those who have ‘more’ power should, in his view, be carried out through the study of concrete and observable behaviour (Dahl in Lukes 1974: 12–13). The focus is thus on the study of actual behaviour within decision-making. Dahl’s main method was to identify those participants who had initiated alternatives to the decisions that were finally adopted, as well as those who vetoed alternatives initiated by others or proposed alternatives that were later refused. For Dahl, power can only be analysed ‘after careful examination of a series of concrete decisions’ (in Lukes 1974: 13). He thus implies that studying power is a matter of determining who the winner is: power is the capacity that makes it possible for one actor to have his/her interests realized against the will of others. Key words, according to Peterson and Runyan (1993: 45), reflecting Dahl’s theory of power are, for example, ‘force’ and ‘coerce’. Power in this understanding is frequently used in liberal forms of analysis where power is defined as a person’s ability to affect the pattern of an outcome against the desires of other actors (Kabeer 1994: 224–229).

This way of defining power as power over has received a lot of criticism. For instance, Lukes (1974) argues that the concept of power must be broadened, and he advocates a three-dimensional model of power. From his perspective, Dahl’s one-dimensional view of power fails to capture those aspects that exist outside the observable decision-making process. In a broader sense, any concept of power must explain the exclusion of certain issues from decision-making. Some
topics can be concealed as not being decidable. Lukes therefore refers to Bachrach and Baratz (1972), stating that a second aspect of power is its restriction of the subjects discussed. A conflict might not be observed, simply because the subject has not been allowed on to the agenda. Unspoken, accepted, undisputed procedures within institutions separate the decidable from the non-decidable. By this it is understood that power is exercised through the mobilization of biased norms, rules and procedures (Bachrach and Baratz 1972: 15–25, 29; Bachrach and Baratz in Kabeer 1994: 225, Lukes 1974: 16–18).

Lukes’ third aspect of power is that conflicts may not only be kept off the agenda, but also be suppressed in the consciousness of the parties involved. Both the dominant and the inferior parties in a relationship of power may deny that inequalities exist and explain their positions by referring to individual misfortune rather than social injustice. This aspect of power addresses the social and cultural patterns of the behaviour of groups and institutions. Existing power relations may appear to be so well established that the individuals involved are unaware of their oppressive effects and incapable of imagining alternative ways of acting. Conflicts are therefore prevented since neither of the parties can see or imagine alternatives to the present situation. In some cases they even value it as divinely ordained and beneficial (Kabeer 1994: 227–228). In other words, it is ‘power to prevent people, to whatever degree, from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognition and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things’ (Lukes 1974: 24). Lukes shows this through the example of the Indian caste system, where those lowest in rank often stay within the system, in spite of the implications of doing so.

The perception of what power is has thus changed over time, its meaning has been broadened and now also includes aspects other than the narrow definition proposed by Dahl. In particular, the concept of power acquired additional meanings when Michel Foucault entered the research field. Notions such as capillary and disciplinary power were introduced into the theoretical debate. Instead of asking,
‘what is power?’, Foucault focused on how and by what means power is exercised, comprehending power as the ‘interaction of warring parties, as the decentred network of bodily, face-to-face confrontations, and ultimately as the productive penetration and subjectivizing subjugation of a bodily opponent’ (Foucault in Habermas 1994: 63–64).

Thus, Foucault’s approach to defining power differs considerably from Dahl’s approach. While Dahl saw power as the possession of one individual, Foucault outlines power as something always exercised and circulating: ‘power is located at the levels of struggle and manifest in its effects’ (Haugaard 1997: 67). To Foucault, the individual is both subjugated and constituted through power and an actor disseminating it. Foucault also argues that it is the application and effectiveness of the power-knowledge regime that is important. Knowledge is linked to power, first because it assumes the authority of the truth, and secondly because it has the power to make itself true (Foucault 1994). In this view, knowledge has ‘real’ effects, as we act in accordance with our conceptions of ‘reality’ (S. Hall 1997a: 49).

In Foucault’s (1994: 44) analysis of power, the production of a discursive norm and its relation to Otherness is central:

Disciplines are the bearers of a discourse, but this cannot be the discourse of right. The discourse of discipline has nothing in common with that of law, rule, or sovereign will. The disciplines may well be the carriers of a discourse that speaks of a rule, but this rule is not the juridical rule deriving from sovereignty, but a natural rule, a norm. The code they come to define is not that of law but that of normalization.

The claim that there exists a norm and a contrasting difference accords very well with the precepts of feminist analyses of power. For example, Peterson and Runyan (1993) give stereotypes and androcentrism a prominent place in their theory of gender. Stereotypes imply a clear and distinct separation, generalization and reduction of what is masculine and what is feminine. Androcentrism, among other things, implies that men are the norm. Since men are consid-
ered to represent the normal way of acting, from which other ways of behaviour are seen as deviations, a hierarchy between the sexes is maintained (Peterson and Runyan 1993).

Foucault does not discuss disciplinary power in relation to gender, and some of his arguments do differ from those of Peterson and Runyan. While Peterson and Runyan, like Foucault, claim that the ranking and separation of individuals is in itself a form of power, Foucault takes the argument a step further and highlights normalization in accordance with the norm as one of the most important effects of power. According to Foucault, in this sense disciplinary power shapes and normalizes subjects who eventually turn into one homogeneous mass: we all become, speak, think and act in a similar manner (Foucault 1991: 177–184). Each individual action is referred to a whole that is at once a field of comparison, a space of differentiation and the principle of a rule to be followed (Foucault 1991: 182, Johnston 1991: 161). In other words, all humans are referred to a norm that may become, for the individual, an optimum towards which s/he strives (Foucault 1986: 241). Deborah Johnston sums this up by saying that disciplinary power can be perceived as a system of knowledge that seeks to know the individual as an object to be known in relation to others who can be known. Thereafter, those deviating from the norm are defined as abnormal. The abnormal is subject to corrective or therapeutic techniques that aim to reform, fix or rehabilitate it (Johnston 1991: 149–169). The thought is that non-conformity with the norm is punishable and that to be equal is to be the same. To be different is to be inferior (Foucault 1991: 177–184).² In this degradation of some practices and identity positions there is a violent element, or in the words of Bourdieu:

If there is a terrorism, it is in the peremptory verdicts which, in the name of taste, condemn to ridicule, indignity, shame, silence […], men and women who simply fall short, in the eyes of their judges, of the right way of being and doing; it is in the symbolic violence through which the dominant groups endeavor to impose their lifestyle. (1986: 511)
Disciplinary power thus normalizes behaviour by way of punishments. But punishment is in fact only one of two elements; the other is gratification. Punishment and reward are made possible by the definition of performance on the basis of the two opposed values of good and bad. In other words, all conduct falls within the field between a positive and a negative pole and is in line with the one rewarded or punished (Foucault 1991: 177–183). The modern subject is one that is subjugated and subordinated to an order by disciplinary strategies: ‘discipline makes individuals; it is the specific technique of power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise’ (Foucault 1991: 170). This image of power as fluid and mutable – imbuing us and our identities with meaning, while forming our practices – will permeate the analysis of this book and comprise the preconception and theoretical point of departure of the chapters to come. Still, in the following paragraphs, I will further explore and reconstruct the concept of power and how it is related to discourses, identities and images of identity. As I will suggest in the following sections, power is not meaning per se but must be connected to processes of making hierarchies and stereotyping. Thereafter, resistance as multiple, sliding and present in the everyday constitution of discourses will be addressed.

**POWER AND DISCOURSE: THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF THE ARGUMENT**

The concept of discourse has been promoted by Foucault, as well as by other twentieth-century philosophers and today remains at the heart of the discussions among many post-structuralist researchers. As I will discuss below, the concept provides us with an understanding of the production of ‘shared meanings’, which makes people who belong to the same society interpret the world in roughly the same way, and express themselves, their feelings and their thoughts in ways that will be understood by others. However, in all societies a topic may have many meanings and more than one way of interpreting or representing it.
A discourse consists of a variety, or a body, of different representations that circulate and create meaning regarding the very same topic. Foucault calls these statements working together a ‘discursive formation’ as they ‘refer to the same object, share the same style and support “a strategy…a common institutional…or political drift or pattern’ (Cousins and Hussain in S. Hall 1992: 44). Discourses are produced at several different sites and circulated through several different practices. As discourses form and are formed in the communication of daily life, they are not clearly defined processes but unstable, changeable ones; humans are exposed to discourses and, at the same time, play an active part in spreading their meanings (S. Hall 1997a). Discourses are related to power, as they may present stereotyped knowledge about a topic, rank knowledge or themselves be ranked in relations to other discourses.

In contrast to what is sometimes implied, poststructuralists do not deny the existence of world ‘out there’ (S. Hall 1997a: 44–45). According to Stuart Hall (1997a: 44–45), Foucault believes that ‘nothing has any meaning outside of discourses.’ Physical objects have no fixed meaning: it is only within discourses that objects gain meaning and become objects of knowledge. Judith Butler (1993), among others, stresses this view. According to her, talking about ‘reality’ is absurd since without discursive constructions we can neither think nor make any sense at all. A woman’s body is thus unthinkable without certain constructions, and the body itself only appears within the discourse (Butler 1993). So, since all that we can say about the ‘natural’ world is constructed by humans, it is not possible to separate or establish a distinction between a ‘real’ object and its meaning. Or in other words, ‘natural’ facts are also ‘discursive’ facts (Laclau and Mouffe in S. Hall 1997a: 70–71).

As it assumes the authority of truth, and because of its ability to form and regulate practices, the concept of discourse has been linked to the concept of power by, among others, feminist linguists. According to them, the power ascribed to language resides not only in what is said, or who gets to talk, but also in what is sayable at all (Ferguson 1993: 124). Language thus creates patterns of
thought and determines how we see the world. We are raised into a language that limits what we can think or say. As Gayatri Spivak argues, we only know the world organized as a language, and ‘[we] operate with no other consciousness but one structured as language’ (quoted by Ferguson 1993: 124). In line with this, Foucault, among other things, argues for a positive form of power, which concerns the truth-knowledge-power nexus. This power is ‘positive as opposed the negative perception of power as excluding and repressing. This form of power is positive by virtue of creating something new: it creates new realities and objects of truth’ (Haugaard 1997: 70–71). Thus, Foucault argues that power is not only negative and repressive, in what it seeks to control/repress, but also productive, in the sense that it constructs things and knowledge, and induces pleasure (Foucault 1980: 120; Foucault in Haugaard 1997: 65–95). This view is also pointed out by other researchers, such as Roxanne Doty (1996) and Judith Butler (1997).

In most cases, however, feminist readings of power do not equate discursive truth with power. Differently put, the meaning according to which we act, that induces pleasure or pain and forms our understandings of the world (and which is advanced through discourse), is not in itself power. Amy Allen (1998b: 457) discusses how to formulate a conception of power that is adequate for feminist theory:

If we accept that the feminist movement is engaged in one of the significant struggles of our age, then the conceptual framework of contemporary critical social theory should be to illuminate, among other things, women’s subordination. Given this requirement, it becomes crucial for critical theory to investigate what kind of a conception of power will allow us to fully understand male dominance and female subordination.

In this quotation power is connected to the fact that women often are subordinated to men, rather than equating discourses per se with power. Only the discourses embracing repressive, restricting or hierarchical elements comprise sites of power. This notion of power takes various kinds of discrimination as a starting point and thereafter views the hierarchies and stereotypes leading to these effects.
This is in line with what Lenz Taguchi (2004) expresses in a more modest way. Differences between humans will probably always exist, she argues. It is through differences we make sense of the world and gain knowledge as well as experiences, however, what is important (and what we can influence) is how these differences are valued (Lenz Taguchi 2004: 14). In this respect I agree with her. As soon as a hierarchy is established, if one of the categories is given a higher value than others, power is involved. However, power is not only a matter of different values, but poststructuralist feminism also implies a repeated questioning of the categories ‘men’ and ‘women’ (Lenz Taguchi 2004: 14–15). I suggest that this is due to the stereotyping of men and women. These categories are overgeneralized, oversimplified and naturalized, leaving us with the feminist desire to dissolve them, make visible how they can be transcended, and show that there are other categories, or at least that there are spaces for other categories to be developed.

In this book Foucault’s definition of power will be modified in line with the above reasoning because even though discourse forms identity positions and interrelations, imaginable conducts, and so on, to equate power with meaning per se becomes so broad that the concept of power loses its meaning. I will therefore use a more narrow comprehension of power to distinguish repressive, discriminating dimensions from discursive constructions in general. In this work I take as a point of departure those discourses that maintain gender stereotypes, and hierarchies that limit women’s claims to political identities. With this premise as a point of departure, resistance will be located.

**STEREOTYPES AND HIERARCHIES**

Difference matters because it is essential to meaning; without it meaning could not exist (S. Hall 1997a: 31). We know what black is only because we can contrast it with other colours. Types are thus necessary classificatory schemes out of which we make sense of the world. We distinguish one type because it is different from others, for example we come to know someone by ascribing him or her a
class, a gender, and so on (Hall 1997a: 31; Dyer in Hall 1997b: 257). Meanings are therefore relational, as it is the differences between concepts that provide the very foundation for creating meanings.

As Currier (2004: 90) explains, however, a dilemma for many poststructuralist critics is that the opposition seems to reduce a complex reality to something rigid and confining, and yet, for practical or political reasons it is necessary to continue to use that opposition as a framework for one’s thought. Stuart Hall and Richard Dyer both try to resolve this dilemma by separating types from stereotypes. The problem is, they argue, that the differences and the separation between different types often become exaggerated and over-emphasized. Stereotypes, in contrast to types, are not necessary for our ability to know the world. On the contrary, they reduce, essentialize, naturalize and establish our knowledge by exaggerating differences. As well as eliminating complexity, stereotypes also ignore interdependence and resist critical reflection by presenting what appear to be inevitable categories. Another quality characterizing stereotypes is that they fix boundaries and exclude everything that is classified as not belonging. Stereotypes lead to the establishment of normality (how we should think or act) and, by excluding other types and ways of thinking, is to be labelled power (Dyer 1993: 11–17; S. Hall 1997a: 31; S. Hall 1997b: 257; Dyer in S. Hall 1997b: 257; Peterson and Runyan 1993: 21–26). This idea can help us to understand Spivak’s ‘itineraries of silence’ – how certain narratives gain authority and coherence through the marginalization or exclusion of other experiences or knowledges (Moore-Gilbert 1997: 80).

The above outline of stereotypes can also be understood through Foucault, who argues that the production and maintenance of discourses is organized by a number of procedures, the best known being the prohibition of certain ideas. Some statements are kept out of the discourse since they represent the dangerous, the forbidden. Moreover, the separation of reason from insanity is yet another procedure that shapes the form of the discourse, since it results in the rejection of the ‘mad man’s’ speech. From the Middle Ages onwards the message has been the same: let us not pay any attention to the
fool (Foucault 1993: 7–9). Foucault labels the idiot’s knowledge ‘subjugated knowledge,’ as it represents low-status or even directly disqualified knowledge (1994: 21). An additional ranking procedure, mentioned by Foucault, is the separation of the true from the false. This composes the third and most important discursive system of exclusion. We all have a desire for truth, however while appearing tempting and universal, this truth hides the desire that created it (Foucault 1993: 14–15).

These processes might help us to understand stereotyping – the exaggerated boundaries which mark the sane in a limited, narrow, restricted sense, and frame the acceptable ‘self’ while simultaneously separating it from unacceptable naming. These narrow meanings, which are imbedded into interpretations and practices by individuals, play a decisive role in the organization of society. According to Thomas Hylland Eriksen (1993), stereotypes, among other categories, justify certain group’s privileges and thereby legitimate the unequal access to the resources of a society. Another aspect, related to this, is that stereotypes are used to define the boundaries marking ‘us’ from ‘them,’ which may, as history tells us, result in different violent or discriminating practices (see for example Bhabha 1994; Eriksen 1993: 24; S. Hall 1997b: 257–259). In line with this, stereotyping often makes it difficult for women to gain positions of power because positions within formal decision-making structures, though presented as gender-neutral, already contain certain values and normative significance. A political agent is generally conceptualized as active, autonomous, oriented towards public activities, engaged in meeting collective and not personal needs (see for example Brown 1988: 1–18; Monro 2005: 169; Petersson and Runyan 1993: 21–34, 58–73; Wendt Höjer and Åse 1999: 7–13), an image that does not correspond to the expectation of, for example, Cambodian women, who are often described as uninformed, easily scared and stupid.

Due to gender stereotypes women then have very limited choices of identity positions and are measured against a sensed normality, a stereotyped picture of what it is to be a woman. The most striking elements of this are that this stereotype is so widely spread, and that
there are few other female identities to adopt (Peterson and Runyan 1993: 58–73). In the end, stereotyped images of politicians, men and women result in an educated (male) elite obtaining access to power and resources. The poor and disadvantaged, those who do not live up to the political norm, are constrained by ‘structural and behavioral factors’ (Robinson 1998: 103).

Subordinated groups may also have chosen to perform a subaltern identity and thereby legitimize injustices by referring to their out-bid competence. For example, Cambodian women many times have difficulties in seeing themselves performing a political identity. This seems to be a pattern that directs the identification of other subaltern groups too. For example, Skelton (2000: 186–187) shows the relationship between knowledge, stereotypes and practices, analysing documentaries about black Jamaican criminals:

... we construct ‘regimes of truths’ (Foucault 1980), one in which not all black young men are criminals but dominant meaning systems suggests this to be so. We might punish them for what we believe to be true, and then it might come true as those that are assumed to be criminals and punished for it might decide that they should in fact become criminals. Consequently ‘regime of truth’ may lead to actual reality.

Hence, stereotyping controls the processes of identification, in regard to both Cambodian women and the black young men Skelton describes. In the end some groups become less represented in political institutions, being exposed to stereotyping discourses.

In addition, different stereotypes are assigned different statuses and in this sense relate to the construction of hierarchies (S. Hall 1997b: 234–235). As stated earlier, discourses construct norms to which individuals relate themselves and their actions, and these norms are perceived as guiding principles, optimums to be reached. Stereotyping, in this sense, relates to hierarchies and guide thoughts and actions by way of grading and the reduction of multiplicity. Different phenomena are assigned different values, in the sense that discourses separate right from wrong, bad from good, and what
ought to be said from what should remain silenced. It is a process in which borders are created and identity optiums produced, while other alternative images of identity are apparently rendered impossible. Thus in order to obtain status – to be rewarded and avoid disciplinary punishments – people tend to strive towards the same identities and promote the same knowledge. There is a norm of how and who to be, which becomes a guiding star, thereby reducing the range of images of identity.

For men and women, the norm often comes in the form of ‘stereotypes, which they are expected to invest in. Put in a different way, each gender is accorded its own ‘normality’, positions from which they are expected (and sometimes fail) to articulate their identity. As indicated above, I will use the concepts of a norm and that of normality in similar senses, denoting ambiguous concepts, including the desirable, the optimum norm as well as what is common or average (Ambjörnsson 2004: 21).

In relation to the above stated, it is important to note that there never exists only one norm to relate to. While female politicians may occasionally adopt the image of a politician ‘into which various characteristics of dominant masculinities (for example rationalism and individualism) are smuggled’ (Monro 2005: 169), they are also expected to correspond to an image of a perfect woman. Even in this regard there is a range of images to relate to; often there is not one image of a woman but several, and which to choose depends on context, time and location. According to Ambjörnsson, however, some performances give more rewards than others (2004: 28). There are many female images of identity, some of which are assigned more value. These are defined in relation to Otherness, to strange, low-status or ‘forbidden’ images of the female self. Not only is every woman disciplined and ranked in regard to different positions of female identity, but different groups are also compared and labelled in relation to each other, for example, men are generally assigned more status than women (Lenz Taguchi 2004: 11, 165).

To conclude, different norms as well as their relation to Otherness comprise a complicated network. In addition, one individual
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may feel torn between different images of identity built on class, race, sex, and so on. In this regard the concept of intersectionality has become popular (Brah and Phoenix 2004; Carbin and Tornhill 2004; Lykke 2003). Intersectionality is a concept that emanates from post-modern feminist theory, postcolonial studies, ‘black’ feminism and queer studies, nowadays prevailing within areas such as cultural studies, gender studies, and studies of the subject exist within psychology, sociology, or anthropology. Initially, however, the concept primarily acknowledged the positioning of some groups within a range of socio-cultural categories such as gender, radicalised ethnicity and sexuality. This notion emphasized and celebrated identity politics in various forms. Later, however, the concept has begun to embrace the existence of multiple and shifting identities, created in interaction with other positions of identity and in relation to the boundaries and conflicting notions of these identities (De los Reyes and Kamali 2005; De los Reyes and Mulini 2003; De los Reyes, 2002). Identities are thus viewed as multiple, hybrid and ambivalent, and the fact that they derive from a multiplicity of discourses in many cases implies fragmented and contradictory identities. Similarly, the power relations meeting these hybrid identities are also at different levels, multiply and fluently involving the stereotyping and ranking of, for example, women both privately and publicly.

The existence of multiple norms can be related to Foucault’s concept of disciplinary power, in which hierarchies and discursive borders guide the processes of identification of subaltern groups. As stated previously, punishments and rewards are distributed as different performances are measured in relation to what is considered good and bad. In other words, all conduct falls in the field between a positive pole and a negative pole and is either rewarded or punished accordingly. In order to be rewarded (with status and appreciation) and avoid punishments (mockery, low-status and shame) we all adjust to certain positions of identity and assume certain ‘what-you-SHOULD-think’ discourses. The rank in itself – a person’s position within the hierarchy – may be considered a reward or a punishment (Foucault 1991: 177–183). In this process one might be disciplined
against several, sometimes conflicting norms simultaneously, thereby creating inner tension.

Britt-Marie Thurén, who discusses the possibility of strong or weak power relations, has added nuance to this reasoning. According to Thurén (1996), mild sanctions (punishments) for breaking gender norms imply a weak organization of gender, while strong sanctions indicate strongly defined gendered positions. This may be true in some cases, but the argument should be developed further. Two alternatives can be suggested to Thurén’s proposal. First, since the most firmly established norms might also be the most invisible and naturalized, it may be that breaking them results in no sanctions. Being so secure, so well rooted, strong punishments may be unnecessary in order to maintain the norms. Secondly, punishments might be distributed as we break the weakest norms. Since people do not automatically correct themselves in line with the norms, strong sanctions may be needed in order to maintain them. This is in line with the argument that norms that have apparently not yet been established must be anxiously repeated in order to be maintained.

The separation between a norm, a normality and an Other is further strengthened by the discursive struggle between different truths. As Sean P. O’Connell states, ‘many of the world-views that are operative claim to be comprehensive and thereby seek to exclude not only other world-views, but also those adhere to them’ (2001: xii). This is probably partly due to the fact that a truth may be believed more if the agent succeeds in simultaneously rejecting and reducing the value of other discourses on the same topic. For example, democracy as a system of rule may become even more dominant if other forms of government are simultaneously denied. This kind of rejection of certain discourses limits the multiplicity of discourses and identity, promoting not many truths, but one single truth. In addition, as stated previously, hierarchies and stereotypes are often perceived as so natural that we are unable to see alternative truths or practices (see for example Brown 1988: 1). Stuart Hall writes:

The logic behind naturalization is simple. If the differences between black and white people are ‘cultural,’ then they are open to
modification and change. But if they are ‘natural’ – as the slave-hold-
ers believed – then they are beyond history, permanent and fixed. ‘Naturalization’ is therefore a representational strategy designed to fix ‘difference’, and thus secure it forever. (1997b: 245, emphasis in the original)

Summing up, this book will take as a point of departure the Cambodian context is influenced in a variety of ways by strong discursive boundaries, stereotyped images of identity, the stereotyped ranking of truths and non-truths, and the grading of different positions of identities and of individuals who repeat these identity positions. Stereotypes and hierarchies operate in a clearly restraining way, limiting the possibility for people to identify differently, but they also have discriminating effects, in terms of, for example, an uneven distribution of political power and resources. This will be discussed below, followed by an exploration of resistance of women politicians against these boundaries and gradings.

IDENTITY CONSTRUCTIONS AND POWER

In the light of the above, I propose not only that strong connections exist between discourses, stereotypes and hierarchies but also that the power–complex involves the construction of different positions of identity. Below, I will offer not only an interpretation of the processes of identification but also an outline of the complex and multiple connections between power constructions and how we form our selves.

I will not try to give a complete picture of the complex processes of identification or the person’s naming of her-/herself, but rather focus on putting forward theories of identifications, identities and images of identities that, considering my findings, are relevant for analysing the different practices of resistance performed by Cambodian women. The concept of identity is thus explored from this standpoint. Due to the nature of the research focus, which includes how Cambodian women use images of identity and their own identities as a means of resistance, it might seem to the reader that ‘identity’ is viewed as nothing but an instrument of resistance.
I would, however like to underline that my view of identity is broader and more complex than the more ‘instrumentalist’ approach to identity, that is, the view that identities are used by subgroups only to legitimatize their actions and mobilise people with the purpose to gain political power. ‘Rationality, modernity, and politics: this trinity is a recurrent feature of instrumentalism, and represents a closure of argument’ (D. Smith 2001: 54–56).

Discourses of identities offer positions (that is, provide images of identity) which humans take up and invest in. Media, advertising, film, and so on, are different medias providing us with information, telling us how it feels to occupy a particular identity position, for example, how does it feel being the street-wise teenager, the upwardly mobile worker or the caring parent (Woodward 1997: 14)? As will be elaborated below, these images are changeable, since they are constructed through the reiteration of norms and can therefore be destabilized in the course of this reiteration (Butler 1993: 10). In addition, if one image of identity starts to slide, other, contrasting identity positions transform. Identity may thus be defined as an invention ‘which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within representation’ (Hall in Parry 1994: 175).

Woodward writes that identity ‘gives us an idea of who we are and how we relate to others and to the world in which we live. Identity marks the ways in which we are the same as others who share that position, and the ways in which we are different from those who do not’ (Currier 2004: 2–4; Woodward 1997: 1ff). Hence, the discursive approach considers identification like all signifying practices, to be subject to the ‘play’ of differences. For instance, Bhabha suggests that identification is the transformation towards an image of identity, an image that is related to Otherness (Bhabha 1994: 44–45). Stuart Hall (1996: 6) expresses this slightly differently, writing:

Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions, which discursive practices construct for us. They are the result of a successful articulation or ‘chaining’ of the subject into the flow of discourses.
Identification is then the process of articulation, a suturing to a subject position, but there is never a total match between the articulation and the position (S. Hall 1996: 3). In addition, identification can be an ambivalent process, since at the same time as articulate an image of identity, you may want another one, or you may be longing to be in two places at the same time.

A woman’s identities are thus constructed through her participation in the systems of meaning through which she organizes her interactions, and through which she interprets her interactions with the world and others. An individual may identify with several images. These images of identity interact with each other, for example, the identity position ‘woman’ infuses political images of identity with meaning. Not only do the positions of identity permeate each other, however, but different performed identities may have conflicting elements – one’s gender, political, religious or sexual identity may be co-constructed out of contradictory or conflicting discourses – thus making it difficult to gather these identities into a coherent self. The identity position ‘women’ of today’s Cambodia repeatedly contradicts the image of a politician, the former still imbuing the latter with meaning. The shifting identities of women politicians are thus created in interaction with other positions of identity and in relation to the boundaries and conflicting notions of these identities (Stern 2005: 32). Identities are multiple, hybrid and ambivalent and the fact that they derive from a multiplicity of discourses in many cases lead to fragmented and contradictory identities. Kathryn Woodward exemplifies the ambivalence of the identification process. She cites a Serbian soldier, who contradicts himself in proclaiming first the massive difference between Serbs and Croats, and then the great similarity: ‘We’re all just Balkan rubbish’ (Woodward 1997: 1–109).

The identification process is formed by multiple mechanisms. For instance, one aspect of the identification process is that individuals long to fit, to ‘make sense’. Or in the words of Edkins and Pin-Fat (1999: 4–5), ‘The subject seeks a place in the social, a place that will confirm its existence as subject. It does this by asking what

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the social order wants of it, what is required. Therefore, the question of desire boils down to one simple question ‘what do others want from me’ rather than ‘what do I want’. Desire is thus central to what Althusser describes in terms of interpellation, or the hailing by which the subject comes to occupy a certain image of identity as women, consumer, Buddhist, citizen, for example Althusser exemplifies this subordination of the subject with a policeman who hails a passer-by who eventually turns and recognizes himself in the hailing. The interpellation, namely the production of a subject, takes place as the recognition is proffered and then accepted (see for example Edkins and Pin-Fat 1999: 4–5; Butler 1997: 2–6). Identities are then, as Stuart Hall (1996: 6) points out, ‘points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us.’ It is a combination of the hailing of the subject into a certain position and the subject investing in the position. Bhabha (1994: 44) writes that ‘the very place of identification [is] caught in the tension of demand and desire.’

The above process of identification is also constructed through multiple discourses of power. Different images of identity are placed on a sliding scale, and those assigned greater status more easily become an ideal to strive towards (see for example Lenz Taguchi 2004: 16). Hence, by a complex process of discursive differentiation and ranking, different images of identity are emphasized, images that individuals have to relate to and that easily become guiding stars for subjects to discipline themselves accordingly. During the identification or naming process, however, subjects cannot freely adapt to the hierarchies and occupy the images of identity at top rank. If we are expected to match (and are treated in accordance with) a certain image or stereotype, we often fulfil the expectations even if the image of identity assigned has low status. Subaltern women might ‘choose’ to assume a subaltern identity, partly due to mechanisms of punishments and rewards.

So we are hailed into our places in the societal hierarchies, but at the same time the process of becoming never ends. Identification may consist of a feeling of belonging or a longing to be. Occasionally,
it is possible to assume a more status-filled identity. Recognized as desirable, behaviours associated with certain positions of identity may be constantly repeated. The image of identity is then manifested in a superficial repetitive act, as reflected on a new surface, because, while striving to become, we repeat the codes of conduct associated with the desirable position.

Emanating from this line of thought is the notion that we are to a large extent prevented from creating totally new identity positions instantly, and are more or less restricted to the range of possibilities that discourses offer us. This is acknowledged by Friedman (1999: 240) who asserts that today one is able even (within limits) to choose a race, a gender, for example, but he also argues that

... choice is often an illusion. People are firm believers in free will. But they choose their politics, their dress, their manners, and their very identity from a menu they had no hand in writing. They are constrained by forces they do not understand and are not even conscious of.

This is not absolute, however; as will be discussed below, there are ways of producing new discourses or positions of identity.

‘The subject’ is a term used to describe the disciplinary construct formed by through multiple discourses of power (Dissanayake 1996: x). Still, Holm (1993) argues, an identification process is not necessarily a conscious choice, but it is something that you do. Having a female sex, it is more likely that you identify yourself, as a woman, with other women than that someone else does the work of identification for you (you identify me with other women). Presumably one is not a woman, but makes oneself a woman. One is an agent, not a docile object (Holm 1993: 81–82).

What I describe above is the tension between on the one hand the discourses and images of identity in a given context, and on the other hand the individual as a subject who ‘chooses’ to perform these identity positions. In this regard Lenz Taguchi (2004) writes about a new form of agency. According to her the subject is never decided, it is not a product of the discourses of society. Instead the subject
is constantly reconstituted, a process that includes an active and reflecting attitude and the possibility of resistance by identifying and questioning the discourses that hails us into certain positions (Lenz Taguchi 2004: 16). Thus, even though the discourses of a society frame the room one has to manoeuvre, there is a sense of agency from which resistance towards the pressure of hegemonic discourses might be played out. This rhymes very well with my theoretical point of departure. In addition, I will also argue that the room to manoeuvre for resistance, questioning of dominant images of identity, or performance of unexpected identity positions are made more possible under certain conditions (such as, for example, multiple conflicting discourses or tensions between different memories, discourses and identities or access to emancipatory networks).

**SUBJECTIVITY AND THE NEGOTIATION OF POWER**

When do individuals stand up against the stereotypes and hierarchies they are exposed to, refuse the hailing and choose to internalize uncomfortable images of identity? To explore the possibility to refuse to normalize in line with prevailing hegemonic ‘truths’ and images of identity, it is necessary to outline subjectivity in relation to the concept of agency.

Many researchers seem to equate subjectivity with identity (D. Hall 2004: 3). For example, Wendy Hollway (1998: 227) writes that she is ‘interested in theorizing the practices and meaning which reproduce gendered subjectivity (what psychologists would call gender identity).’ Donald E. Hall (2004: 3) disassociates himself from this definition of subjectivity, and as I do in this work, he uses the concept in a wider sense. The relationship between one’s identities and one’s subjectivity is thus one dimension to explore. In this regard Donald E. Hall can serve as source of inspiration. He argues that,

... identity can be thought of as the particular set of traits, beliefs, and allegiances that, in short- or long-term ways, gives one a consistent personality and a mode of social being, while subjectivity implies always a degree of thought and self-consciousness about identity at the same time allowing a myriad of limitations and often
unknown, unavoidable constraints on our ability to fully comprehend identity (D. Hall 2004: 3).

In this book I will explore the self as a topic for critical analysis; I will discuss how subjectivity becomes a locus of change as individuals make creative negotiations – negotiations that may in extension unsettle societal stereotypes and hierarchies – in their attempts to solve the tensions between different identities, images of identity, discourses and representations. Subjectivity is a concept that not only invites us to consider the question of how and from where identities arise, but also their interplay with each other, and the discourses and representations in any given society.

I will not claim a definition of the concept subjectivity or sketch an overview of the vast literature regarding the topic, but just make a brief outline for the purpose of my analysis. Women’s subjectivity, in the analysis below, will be connected first to the person’s conscious and imperfect awareness of her-/himself and, in addition, to the way she/he organizes her/his multiple identities into an understandable self-identity. Subjectivity involves a feeling of who we are in relation to and interaction with others, societal discourses, representations and the images of identity. Hence, the concept of subjectivity allows for an exploration of our identities: say that you have assumed and perform an identity of a ‘leftist’, in your political youth. When having your first baby this identity may come in conflict with your comprehension of ‘a good mother’ (for example, always at home making buns). Your thoughts about how you manage to compromise or fulfil these different images of identity constitutes your subjectivity (Woodward 1997: 39–42). Forming our selves is a process of self-reflection; we use our subjectivity to understand, interpret and act in the world(s) through which we are formed. Or in the words of Gagnier (1991: 8), ‘the subject is also a subject of knowledge, most familiarly perhaps of the discourse of social institutions that circumscribe its terms of being.’

Wimal Dissanayake (1996) argues that this subjectivity can be connected to agency. Following Paul Smith, he views the hu-
man agent as the locus from which action can be initiated to either reconfirm or resist discursive burden. The term agent thus ‘marks out a form of subjectivity where, by virtue of the contradictions and disturbances in and among subject-positions, the possibility of resistance to the ideological (that is, discursive) pressure is allowed for’ (Dissanayake 1996: x). These contradictions reflect not only how each person is hailed into conflicting identity positions but also how s/he tries to negotiate these. In the analytic chapters that follow, I will therefore take into consideration how contradictions provide clues to understanding ongoing discursive struggles and individuals’ attempts to negotiate power. Resistance is thus produced within the ideological context itself and the concept of agency is used in a broad sense to denote the possibility to oppose ideological and discursive boundaries (Dissanayake 1996: x).

Others who have studied the concept of agency include Kathy Ferguson and Judith Butler. While Butler views agency as ‘located within the orbit of the compulsion to variation of that repetition’ (Butler in Dissanayake 1996: xiv), Dissanayake argues that this outline of human agency comes close to Ferguson’s concept of mobile subjectivities, which composes multiple fluidity and temporary ‘places to stand and from which to act’ (Ferguson in Dissanayake 1996: xiv). Identities, according to Ferguson, are always relational, temporal, contiguous, temporary yet durable, simultaneously fragile and flexible” (Ferguson in Shands 1999: 91). Ferguson’s outline can be related to and understood in the light of Kerstin W. Shands’ (1991) concept of ‘hypertransgressive feminism’, which refers to how the use of spatial metaphors by feminist writers have changed over time, nowadays on slippery grounds avoiding anything that is associated with being stationary or even alludes to resting. Referring to Ferguson, Shands suggests that even within this extreme form of instability a new stability seems to lurk in the unhesitating [use of the word] always’ (1999: 91).

In conclusion, women’s subjectivities thus become the locus of resistance as women are hailed into contradictory, conflicting images of identity. In this work, however, I will broaden the above ideas and
argue that subjectivity is not only related to resistance in the process of negotiation between many conflicting images of identity, but is also encountered as individuals try to make sense of representations and feelings that do not fit or correspond to the dominating discourses or to the image of identity that they are hailed into.

The experiences of out-of-the-way representations or representations that directly contradict and question the dominant discourse can create space for alternative truths and creative, resistant solutions. The above pattern can be connected with the yearning to 'make sense'. Certain representations, memories and experiences do not fit into the dominating discourse. All explanatory statements are warmly welcomed, as the unknown and unexpected are perceived as dangerous and anxiety-ridden. Consequently, new explanations are sanctioned, that is discourses that make the supposedly abnormal normal and understandable. In spite of this a paradox exists, because the new and exciting are attractive at the same time as people are afraid of the unknown and the non-categorized and create new discourses in order to make sense of them, (S. Hall 1997b: 237). Therefore new truths might be accepted for precisely the same reason that others are rejected; they are provocative as well as challenging, tempting as well as repulsive.

To summarise and draw some conclusions, women's subjectivities become the locus of resistance as women try to make sense not only of conflicting identities and subject positions, but also of feelings and representations that do not fit with the hegemonic truths. In everyday life, in the process of organizing divergent representations or feelings, generally held discourses are deconstructed and challenged. Resistance is produced within the ideological context and the concept of agency is used in a broad sense to denote the possibility of opposing ideological and discursive boundaries.

It is important to emphasise, however, that women's subjectivities are to be understood as a key not only to agency and power transformations, but also to understanding the construction of power. Discourses are maintained because we are not only exposed to discourses but are also subjects and spread the dominating truths of society.
AIMS OF RESISTANCE

Embedded in the following chapters is the assumption that resistance are integral responses to existing effects, mechanisms and practices of power. The aim here is to further unpack and analyse the intricate, micro and everyday performances of resistance, based on the above exploration of the concept of power. The following sections include an outline of proper aims of resistance in relation to the construction of power. For obvious reasons it is not possible to render all nuances of resistance that prevail in the following analysis here, however an attempt will be made to show some patterns of resistance.

Before considering possible ways in which power may be resisted, it is important to explain some of the terms repeatedly used in this work. Discussing resistance, I am referring to concepts such as ‘shaken’ and ‘negotiated’. In using the idea of cultural orders being ‘shaken’, I am inspired by Mary Douglas’ claim (1966: 33–41) that people tend to protect the distinctive categories that they (we) arrange the world. In line with Douglas, I will argue that certain representations create confusion and insecurity or are threatening as we have to question the natural truths that we take for granted: that the cultural order becomes shaken. The concept of negotiation, on the other hand, is used to describe the practices of resistance by which women try to change the shared meanings of their society, with and within the existing discursive logic. Differently put, negotiating power implies resistance, where the existing discourses are both the means of resistance and the object to be resisted. From this, I want to explore what practices might shake or negotiate the cultural order, including its hierarchies and stereotypes. I believe that resistance might include the whole scale from shaking the cultural order to a total reversing of a hierarchical order.

As will become clear(er) in coming chapters, a single resisting practice can provide examples of several different ‘types’ of resistance, and will therefore be discussed in several different chapters of this work. In the end, resistance is always sliding and multiple, while the practices that alter stereotypes often differ from those that alter hierarchies. Stereotypes can be challenged, for example, by the construc-
tion of alternative images of identity or by making multiplicity and nuance visible. New representations may challenge the reductionism of earlier stereotypes and construct positive role models for identification. Bhabha argues that in order to negotiate stereotyped images one must change one’s comprehension of other images that are contrasted. When changing the meaning of ‘colonizer’, the comprehension of the ‘colonized’ is also transformed. These two are implacably linked and defined in relation to each other (Childs and Williams 1997: 131). The construction of alternative truths should thus be conceived as a nexus from which related images and stereotypes start to slide, possibly emanating into diversifying, emancipatory processes.

The above argument should be understood as an introduction to the ways discursive change can be accomplished, thereby transforming stereotypes. Hierarchies on the other hand can be disputed by a number of additional practices. As a hierarchy consists of at least two parts, one of which has more status than the other, one strategy of resistance against a hierarchy would be to change the relationship between the images. This can be done in numerous ways. For example, what if men and women weren’t even compared or defined in relation to each other? Dissolving the differentiation between men and women can be seen as a goal, as can also a more modest equality, where men and women are still defined in relation to each other but without one being ranked above the other.

Upgrading the status assigned to subaltern groupings also works against the making of hierarchies. Stuart Hall call this strategy ‘reversing the stereotype’ (1997b). The strategy of reversing the hierarchy, however, has been criticized by postcolonial researchers, suggesting that the negotiation is still caught up in the binary logic of the superior, and that even though the image of the ‘Other’ is positively loaded, the stereotype remains. Within postcolonial theory, therefore, positive stereotypes are still regarded as being an expression of power (see for example Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz and Thörn 1999: 26), however despite the critique, the strategy of recharging a low-status image with positive value works against power, or at least is an effective way of altering hierarchies.
Other ways to resist will also be discussed in the following chapters. An additional practice that may contribute to the altering of the binary and ranked relationship between two images is to add yet other images. In other words, just as multiplicity works against stereotypization, the existence of multiple categories and identities may also counteract the making of hierarchies. For instance, I would suggest that adding grey to a white and black dichotomy might dissolve the binary opposition; the introduction of a third part to a dual construction undermines the binary divide that provides the very base for the hierarchy. This will be discussed further in relation to Cambodia in the coming chapters.

Contrary to the strategies used to challenge stereotypes, hierarchies might also be altered by reducing the number of images, thus reducing the multiplicity. As will be argued below, sameness (that is men and women sharing the same identity position) is an additional strategy through which an equal footing may be reached. By merging ‘men’ and ‘women’ into one category, for example ‘humans,’ one escapes the possibility of the images being compared and defined in relation to each other. This gives rise to a paradox: one of the most frequently criticized effects of discursive, disciplinary power is that the multiplicity disappears as everybody normalizes towards one of many alternative types of individuals. Still, the reduction of multiplicity may also work against disciplinary power. Sameness is thus both an effect of power and a strategy that undermines it.

Taking the construction of hierarchies and stereotypes as a point of departure, I will argue that some practices might be outlined that might work against both simultaneously. For example it will be argued that strategies of silence might, at least theoretically, alter or shake prevailing stereotypes and hierarchies. The strategy of silence or denial can be used to weaken stereotyped and hierarchical images simply by not repeating representations that strengthen or maintain these discourses. Power might be diluted, say, as restaurant owners choose not to put up signs of women in skirts and men in trousers on the toilet doors, as this does not repeat the discourse that separates women and men into two categories. Refusing to pass on discourses may thus be a
resistance strategy. If you do not repeat a discourse you do not contribute to maintaining that discourse. In sum, an exploration of resistance is interested in what ‘truths’ are repeated and why.

Another point that will be discussed in following chapters is that deconstruction prevails as a strategy that may work against stereotypes and hierarchies simultaneously. Deconstructing ‘naturalized truths’ enables us to enter into a struggle over meanings. In this process both hierarchies and stereotypes may be shaken. As a deconstructing phenomenon, irony, in relation to silence, becomes a challenging option in relation to silence (see for example Seery 1990: 305–306; Rosenberg 1996: 4–16; Ferguson 1993: 30–1; Wahl, Holgersson and Höök 1998: 109–19). In the act of resistance, what becomes most effective: not to repeat a repressive discourse at all or repeat it with an ironic – deconstructing – touch?

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

The aim of this chapter has been to describe the basic concepts of the book by unpacking the nexus of discourses, identities, hierarchies and stereotypes. Resistance was also positioned in relation to power, and its aims and possible outcomes were discussed. Considering the construction of power, resistance by Cambodian women might undermine power by creating multiplicity, de-construct truths, changing or categories, fuse categories together or reloading categories with positive worth, thus negotiating or shaking prevailing stereotypes and hierarchies. This leaves the questions of with what practices of resistance with women produce these outcomes, and what role images of identities, identities, representations and discourses play in these processes of resistance. These questions will be discussed in the ensuing chapters.

NOTES

1 Here it must be clarified that Foucault in his treatment of power made substantial changes along his active years as a researcher and his approach to power can be read differently within the very same book (see for example Hindess 1996: 98–99; Lenz Taguchi 2004: 172). I will draw primarily on his outline of disciplinary power, but also discuss his outline of power-knowledge regimes.
2 Foucault’s concept of disciplinary power has been used by a number of development researchers analysing the relationship between the North and South (see for example Abrabhamsen 2000; Braidotti 1994; Johnston 1991). For example, Braidotti uses Foucault when describing how President Harry Truman in 1949 made a speech in which he declared the Third World to be underdeveloped. He used USA as the universal norm, a yardstick by which other countries came to be measured. Thus the capitalistic West was declared to be the modern, ‘developed’ ‘Self’, the ‘First World’ (Braidotti 1994: 21). According to Deborah Johnston, the Bretton Woods institutions define the characteristics of the abnormal: the backward, traditional societies, in opposition to the modern, healthy (Western) nation state. One may thus distinguish two different levels upon which disciplinary power works at. First, it seeks to identify the abnormal and unhealthy versus the normal, then it tries to rehabilitate it, through, for example, structural adjustment programmes. Johnston points out that the relevance of disciplinary power to the development of the South is to be found in the connection between development practices, for example aid, foreign missions, technical assistance and debt negotiations, and the emergence of the underdeveloped state as an object and subject of those practices (Johnston, 1991:149–169). If countries conform, they receive aid; if they refuse they may become isolated or boycotted. Hence, non-conformity is punished.

3 These images of identity are often thought of as subject positions: A subject position is always subject to some discourses, and there are an enormous number of them; they are, in their shape and nature, different, changing, and at times even antipathetic to each other. Hence, there can be a plurality of discourse-positions, depending on the various discourses that the subject is subject to (Dissanayake 1996: x). I will define ‘image of identity’ and ‘identity position’ in the same way: denoting ‘positions’ that one may identify with and perform (See, for example, Woodward 1997: 42, J.W. Scott 1992: 22–38; Romlid 1998: 29; Göransson 1993: 7).

4 There are different theories on this matter. For example, Judith Butler (1999: 142–143) writes that the … question of “agency” is usually associated with the viability of the “subject”, where the “subject” is understood to have some stable existence prior to the cultural field that it negotiates. Or, if the subject is culturally constructed, it is nevertheless vested with an agency, usually figured as the capacity for reflexive meditation that remains intact regardless of its cultural embeddedness. Contrary to this sketch, many believe that individuals are constituted by discourses, with no inner, true self providing a foundation for an agency. According to Butler (1999: 145) this doesn’t mean that the individual has no space for action, because to be constituted by discourses is not to be determined by them.
Hybrid democracy in a Cambodian context: A discursive construction with implications for women

In the wake of the ‘third wave of democratization’ (Huntington 1991) a rather large body of literature emerged (see for example Carothers 1999; Diamond et. al. 1988–89; Diamond 1999; Huntington 1991). Viewing the conditions of many ‘implemented’ democracies in the South, a number of researchers have started to question the notion of ‘new democracies’, instead discussing these countries in terms of ‘electoral democracy’, ‘competitive authoritarian’ or ‘hegemonic electoral authoritarian’ (Diamond 2002). Critical researchers state that new democracies are not democratic or in transition to democracy, but rather fall into the ‘political grey zone … between full-fledged democracy and outright dictatorship’ (Carothers 2002). This standpoint shall be seen as a reaction against earlier research that can be gathered within the so called transition paradigm, which, according to Carothers (2002), it is time of ‘letting go’. Hence, the literature on democratization and consolidation of third wave democracies has been preoccupied with the deepening and labelling of the democratic polities of many so-called Third World countries.

Another approach to political change is represented by Iris Young, who has used Homi Bhabha’s concept of hybridity to un-
understand both how Americans interpret their political history and how Americans of European descent think of the citizenship of Native Americans (Bhabha 1996; Young 2000: 238–259). Young’s research represents an attempt to understand processes of political change by taking as a point of departure the shared meanings of any given society, taking into consideration the existence of different discourses of decision-making and how these, when mixed, melt into something new. This approach to political change has not been used either within the transition paradigm or by its successors. It is still a fruitful method to analyse how similar institutions and regulations have been set up in country after country, with little or no consideration of local discourses on decision-making. The process of implementing democracy is affected by the culture found in different receiving countries. New hierarchies are created, as local notions of decision-making are woven together with new ‘democratic’ norms of leadership. Both traditional as well as introduced systems of decision-making are changed, as the old merges with the new. Not only is Cambodia a textbook case of the classic problems that new ‘democracies’ often are confronting, (see for example Ashley 1998; Öjendal 2003) such as corruption or high military budgets, but there are also a number of new challenges following from the ongoing processes of hybridity.

This chapter should be regarded as a background chapter that will contextualise the Cambodian setting in which Cambodian women politicians act. It addresses several areas, and aims to problematize the ‘democratic’ liberal polities of present-day Cambodia and what they imply regarding gender. It takes seriously the concept of hybridity, analysing how the newly implemented ‘democracy’ has been hybridized, understood and valued in Cambodia. The concept of ‘hybrid regimes’ is often used to describe countries that combine democratic and authoritarian elements (see for example Diamond 2002: 23). I will use the term slightly differently, to denote relations of decision-making in which a ‘democratic’ implemented discourse has been/is mixed with local discourses of decision-making (therefore not necessarily including, for example, authoritarian elements).
Before problematizing the Cambodian ‘democracy’, I will take a short detour over the debate surrounding gender and democracy, in order to contextualise the coming chapters. There are some frequently used arguments to why the number of women in politics should increase. The discussion has centred considerably on why women’s politicized identities ought to be taken seriously. First, uneven political representation – that is, middle-aged men handling state affairs for the rest of the population – implies the idea of a dichotomy between responsible, mature men as the natural power-holders and the rest of the population, as infantile beings in need of management. Therefore, political participation by subaltern groups has a symbolic meaning that dissolves the boundaries between the ‘wise’ and the ‘disordered’. Recognizing the ability and contribution of the subaltern groups then challenges the stereotypes (Phillips 2000). Secondly, if some groups are politically excluded, this will probably sharpen the processes of alienation, distance and disloyalty towards state authority. This argument maintains that a more equal representation creates a more stable nation and democracy. Thirdly, yet another argument pursues fairness and takes justice as a starting point, problematizing the striking dominance of men in political offices. From this perspective women’s contributions to the political sphere in terms of stability or by bringing ‘softer’ questions into politics should not be crucial for whether or not women are given space within the political field. Justice should be a sufficient reason for including politically marginalized groups such as women (Phillips 2000).

Another argument often put forward is that women in some sense form a shared ‘we’ with certain joint interests that ought to be represented in public politics (Yuval-Davis 1997: 119). Here it is important to point out that it is impossible to include all women in a joint identity as ‘women’ with the same aims and interests: we are all different subjects with different experiences. While this is true, many argue that the image of a ‘woman’ that women are disciplined against in certain senses still make women invest more time and effort in the domestic space than men. And as long as there are female
practices, these probably provide material for specific discourses that are mainly upheld and maintained by women (Holm 1993). There are also specific bodily circumstances that provide a base for common interests. It has for example been put forward that, even though women may have different views on the subject, gynaecological health may be of specific interest to them. In addition, the fact that women in general have less access to different institutions, such as political institutions, provides them with joint interests, such as greater access to the resources and institutions of society (Elofsson 1998: 77–80; Skeije in Elofsson 1998: 77–80).

But if women have common interests, why must these only be represented by women and not by men? Anne Phillips (2000) argues that when politics are constructed for (instead of with) a specific group, important aspects of relevance will probably be missed. It is only when people are part of the decision-making process that they acquire the possibility to highlight alternative solutions and reject the current order. The important point here is that the relatively great autonomy of a person nominated as a representative may lead to absent groups being discriminated against, because even though the representative guarantees that the party program is being followed, in fact this may not be the case. New problems, issues, interpretations and priorities often lead to other decisions than those promised. When this is accompanied by the severe under-representation of certain groups, this may have serious consequences for them (Phillips 2000: 58–60, 98). As we will see, the accounts outlined above have to some degree been used in Cambodia to legitimize women in politics.

Reviewing the literature in the field in the 1990s, not only are there arguments for why to include women into politics, but some often repeated obstacles for women's political participation can also be found. Among the issues mentioned are the gendered divide between the public and the private, and the abstraction of the individual and blind faith in the democratic institutions to implement equality. The first problem relates to the construction of liberal democracy. In an earlier period, the democratic system only embraced men with
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property, i.e. the main actors in the public space, while other groups were excluded from participating (Elofsson 1998: 77–80). An often-recurring idea was that women were represented through men. A strong division appeared between the female/private and male/public spaces, a boundary that in some senses remains even today. The important point here is that women, in contrast to men, often have the primary responsibility for the domestic space, which is a major obstacle in participating in public political activities (Elofsson 1998: 77–80).1 This applies to some degree to the Cambodian case, however, as will be argued below, the public–private divide needs to be problematized, as recruitment to the political arena is often made in the private sphere, between man and wife.

The idea of the abstract individual, which entails the denial of the existence of shifting identities, can help us to understand the divide between civil society and the political space. In the West, a strong dividing line has been constructed between civil society and the state. While human beings in civil society are understood as the bearers of multiple and changing identities, in the state they are expected to remove these identities and meet only as citizens, ‘that is, as equal bearers of formal and state-derived rights and obligations and being guided solely by the interest of the whole’ (Parekh 1993: 160). This abstraction of the individual makes it insignificant who rules or represents. The differences that are recognized within the state are not those between individuals and groups but between different opinions. In line with this, differences of gender, class and race are not taken into account by democratic institutions in present-day Cambodia, even though these differences are reflected in the absence of political power on the part of some groups, due to the low rank given to their identities.

Thus, shared discourses not only provide the foundation for the very existence of democracy; they also shape the form of the democracy, excluding or including certain groups with regard to political power (Phillips 2000). Today the formal structures and institutions of democracy are emphasized as the primary mechanisms in fulfilling the ideas of democracy. Unfortunately, the discourses
that stereotype, rank individuals and provide the very basis for the uneven distribution of power are not made visible or dealt with by ‘democratic’ institutions or regulations (for example by quotas) in Cambodia.

**DISCURSIVE DEMOCRACY: IMPLEMENTING LIBERAL DEMOCRACY IN A CAMBODIAN CONTEXT**

Democracy is often ranked above other practices of decision-making, as it is understood to contribute to the right of co-determination and increased control over one’s life. Phillips (2000) articulates two of the most essential features of democracy, namely that people affected by decisions should be given a part in the decision-making process, and the fundamental importance of equality. While emphasizing these two components, it should be stressed that both ‘people’ and ‘equality’ are tricky concepts that not only need to be problematized (for example, who are the people, and how will they exercise their power?), but their meanings are also dependent of the context because the democratic discourse varies in time and space (Dahl 1967: 3–24, 57; Phillips 2000: 40–43).

I would like to suggest, that for a democratic system to function, there must be an understanding, a shared idea, that democracy is a great political system. There must be a body of knowledge about what democracy is and how it should be practiced. When implementing democracy, the democratic idea is further reinforced by the creation of certain institutions and rules, which themselves contribute to the maintenance of the democratic discourse.

This implies that, in order to make a democratic system work, the state administration in some sense needs to make the population adopt certain ideas. Especially when implementing democracy in war-torn, former communist states such as Cambodia, the population must be introduced to the values and cornerstones of democracy in order for them to share the same democratic discourse. This was evident during the UN peacekeeping mission in Cambodia in 1993 in which one of the UN’s strategies was to change local norms and values towards a more Westernized idea of development. The UN
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initiated seven different programs, focused on the areas of the military, rehabilitation, civil administration, police, repatriation, human rights and electoral programs. The civil administration component aimed to ‘ensure a neutral political environment, conducive to free and fair elections’ (Doyle 1995; see also Heder and Ledgerwood 1996: 15; McGrew, Frieson and Chan 2004; Norrlind 1996: 9, 15; Öjendal 1993, 2003: 5). This included, for example, educating Cambodian administrative personnel in codes of conduct, management and civic education, and laying down operational guidelines. The human rights component had different functions. One was the exercise of general human rights oversight in all of the existing administrative structures. Another, the Civic Education Program, aimed to implant the ideas of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Cambodian society, to be developed ‘in a manner that is culturally sensitive and generally ‘accessible’ to Cambodians’ (S/23613 in Öjendal 1993: 4–8; see also Findlay 1995: 28–32; Heder and Ledgerwood 1996: 15). Implementation was supposed to be achieved through human rights awareness courses, published information and the establishment of a wide range of human rights groups. In promoting human rights and the idea of fundamental freedoms, the UN used traditional Khmer cultural media, such as singers, puppets, comics and local artists, in addition to radio and television. It was generally realized that the resources available would not be sufficient to create a rapid change in norms and values. Instead the UN hoped that, once they had started, there would be a snowball effect primarily via the media, the university and different organizations (Findlay 1995: 28, 63–64; Öjendal 1993: 4–8).

I would like to argue that the above is an example of an attempt to implement a democratic discourse in a society in order to build the foundations of a functioning democratic system. To summarize, a new discourse is presented to a population in order to make the political system work – a dominant discourse about the rightness of democracy legitimates democratic institutions – and the political system gains in sustainability. As suggested in the beginning of this chapter, however, in many of the Third World countries in which
democracy has been implemented, the democratic discourse is interpreted through already established discourses about decision-making. As will be concluded in the next sections this is very distinct in the Cambodian case (Ashley 1998; Chandler 1998).

THE CAMBODIAN INTERPRETATION OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

In the West the democratic polity was preceded, and thus influenced, by liberal reasoning. The individual became the system’s most basic element, and what was considered politically relevant was what happened in the public spaces. Other important liberal thoughts, reflected in the discourse of democracy, are the importance of the individual’s freedoms and rights and a strong divide between civil society and the state (Elofsson 1998: 77–80). Democracies in Europe, the US, Canada and Australia are all constituted along liberal lines and, as Bhikhu Parekh points out, have features such as

... individualism, elections, majority rule, multiple political parties, a limited government, the autonomy of the civil society, fear of political power and the familiar mechanisms for regulating it, the absence of mediating institutions between the individual and the state, the law as the central means of social regulation, the abstract state and its correlative the abstract citizen. (Parekh 1993: 166)

In addition, as stated previously, there is a heavy emphasis on the existence of different ideas (ideologies, policies, and so on), because not only is discursive homogeneity crucial in a functioning democratic system, pluralism and a plurality of opinions ought to exist too (Phillips 2000). Different conflicting interests are not a threat to the system or the democratic discourse, since there is a shared view of how to handle these conflicts, that is, an established ‘truth’ that democracy is the method of conflict resolution available to society.

Parekh maintains that different elements of this form of liberal democracy, such as the concept of the individual, the concept of right and the abstraction of the state, cannot be universalized. Nonetheless many institutions and practices of the liberal democracy have proved attractive outside the Western context too. The point here
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is that democratic institutions, ideas and practices are, and must be, valued from the specific cultural resources, needs and circumstances of each country (Parekh 1993: 172–173). And while it is impossible to transplant liberal democracy mechanically to new contexts, democracies are constantly negotiated into hybrid forms in the process of implementation.

To some degree the above considerations apply to the Cambodian case, where democratic components have been re-valued as well as negotiated from the local discourses of political and social life. While Parekh highlights the potential clash between the collectivism that appears in many countries and the individualism of liberal democracy, this is a debated issue in the Cambodian case. David W. Roberts (2001) for example, argues that:

[T]he organisers of the PPA [Paris Peace Agreement] missed several crucial issues in their attempts to democratise Cambodia. One of the most important was that they attempted to implant equality and individual choice in a society governed, and financed, through hierarchical inequality and group loyalties (Roberts 2001: 34).

Others, however, mean that Cambodia have ancient traditions of individualism and relative independence of peasants (Ovesen, Trankell and Öjendal 1996: 66–67), a pattern that may have been strengthened during the years of forced collectivism during both the Khmer Rouge era and the socialist state that followed it. This might, it has been argued, provide a good seedbed for liberal democracy (Norrlind 1998).

One component of liberal democracy that the Cambodians seem to request is the stability that is expected to come with democracy as a more peaceful way of solving conflicts. This becomes evident in a survey conducted by the Asian Foundation (2003), which reports that 24 per cent. of the respondents indicate that they will vote for their party of choice to keep the peace and 13 per cent. say they will support the party that their boss supports. These two voter groups seem concerned with the dangers of violence or the pressure of leaders (Asian Foundation 2003). Further to this, Roberts (2001) em-
phasizes that tensions are easily created in Cambodia when parties are defeated politically. This is due to the lack of any institutionalized or peaceful experience of how to handle such defeats (Roberts 2001: 32–34; St John 2005: 406–428; Öjendal 2003: 11). A respondent in my own research argued that while peace is one of the more important outcomes of democracy for the Cambodian people, they tend to vote strategically for stability, for example by voting for the major military power.²

As will be elaborated below (in Chapter Seven), the connections made between war, security and politics have implications for women’s political participation. Due to the fact that women are consistently considered weak and in need of protection, the idea of leader women protecting the villagers becomes a paradox; and, as suggested in Chapter Five, the image of a leader and that of a protector seem to be intimately connected and the women’s experience is that they are seldom viewed as political actors.

DOWNPLAYING PARTY PROGRAMS

Above I have described how some aspects of the liberal democracy are more or less accepted or integrated within the Cambodian society, for example individualism, the divide between the state and the civil society and its potential to solve conflicts. There are, however, also aspects of what is often understood as liberal democracy (Parekh 1993) that seems to be less asked for in the Cambodian context. According to several researchers, people’s right to have different beliefs and to express them officially is one of the cornerstones of a democratic system (Hadenius 1992; Phillips 2000), yet in Cambodia, political party programs are seldom discussed or political issues mobilized (Asian Foundation 2003). According to the Asian Foundation (2003) survey, obtaining material benefits prevails as the principal reason for many Cambodians to support their party of choice. In all, nearly two-thirds refer to the delivery of material resources by the party as one of their two main reasons for choosing a party. In contrast, just 28 per cent. of the respondents highlighted the party’s policies, views and ideology. The Asian Foundation concluded that
these results are far from surprising considering the parties’ lack of success in differentiating their messages to the public (2003).

In Cambodia as in many other countries, one explanation for the general lack of concern regarding different ideologies and party programs is that traditional patron-client relations seem to reflect political voting. According to Ovesen, Trankell and Öjendal (1996) such relations should be seen as involving two parts: vertical, as the patron is positioned hierarchically above the client, and many-stranded, in that the relations pertains to more than one sphere of life ( economical, social and political). The obligation of the patron is to offer physical protection, economical assistance and moral support in times of need. In return the patron is given political loyalty and labour supply occasionally (J.C. Scott 1977; Wolf 1969). According to Thion, patron–client relations have dominated Cambodian political life and formed ‘the backbone of the traditional political structure’ (Thion in Ovesen, Trankell and Öjendal 1996: 70–71). The current political discourse in Cambodia is also influenced by this earlier system (see for example Eastmond 2002; Öjendal 2003). Among other things, several respondents interviewed for my research in 2002 stated that they expected FUNCINPEC to lose in the 2003 election because they had failed to donate to the villages’ schools or bridges, or to make any other contributions while the CPP did. For example, one FUNCINPEC member of parliament complained that she was given no means to support or make contributions to her voters. She added that trying to make contact with the voters was of no use if she had no money to buy gifts for the villagers. Yet another woman said,

You must have a lot of money to run as a candidate. In other countries people give money to the candidate but in Cambodia it is the opposite. The candidate must have a lot of money. You must give money to the people to have them listen.4

Physical contributions are expected in return for offering political support. One female member of the parliament said, ‘a rich candidate is better than a poor. People vote for the person that they think
can do something for the village; to do it better, for example, build a school. Therefore, the political candidates should have money and deliver gifts.  

Also in the 1993 and 1998 elections, the Khmer voted to ensure a leader would reward them for their loyalty in much the same way as they would under the traditional khsae networks (Roberts 2001: 32–38, 204). People vote to improve their situation in Western countries too. According to Roberts, a core difference, however, is that they do not expect an immediate increase in their material welfare in the same way (2001: 204–205).

To summarize, party ideologies are generally not on the agenda in Cambodia. The main motives cited for voting are instead patronage-oriented (delivering the goods). Still, the democratic discourse seems very alive, because while many Cambodians may be unable to differentiate between the main parties, the vast majority feel that multiple parties are critical to a democracy (Asian Foundation 2003). The democratic discourse, as it was implemented in 1993, therefore still prevails, although it is not always interpreted or used in accordance with the original intention.

A FAMILY-ORIENTED POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The secondary status of political programs may also be due to Cambodia being rather family-oriented when it comes to political participation. The recruitment to political fractions has traditionally been carried out on the basis of family ties (Frieson 2001: 3), and

Women’s prominence in the economic sphere has no equivalent in politics. As elsewhere in Southeast Asia, high profile political roles for women in Cambodia are rare, occurring only when they dovetail with the careers of male spouses or fathers […] In the Khmer political realm, a woman’s authority is determined by her kin relationships with male power figures. Wives of male leaders are viewed as especially powerful. (Frieson 2001: 2–3)

In line with this, many of the female politicians I spoke to have a husband in the same party. For example, one female MP argued that
women and men are often in the same political party, stating that ‘I don't see any woman you know, who are in Sam Rainsy’s Party for example and the husband in Hun Sen’s Party or something. Both of them, husband and wife, are in the same political party.’ Another woman politician explained how she became politically active:

We joined together, husband and wife. It is especially common in Cambodia. But in other families, not mine, it is the man who joins one party and if the woman, as his wife, does not support him, he will not stay. There will be a conflict in the family if she does not agree with her husband…! It is common in Cambodia that the woman has to support her husband. If they have different meaning, I mean regarding political ideology, then they cannot stay together.¹⁰

One male NGO worker, who discussed the low attendance of female politicians at important meetings or workshops, also argued that close family connections were the main political network of many women:

And each time you ask: ‘how did you get here?’ You know, you get the answer that ‘it is because I am a wife’ or ‘because I know someone who know me and invited me and so on’. But never you get the response that ‘it is because of my work.’¹¹

There are probably many explanations for the family-oriented participation in the political sphere. For example, reversing the above argument, the family-dependent recruitment to the political arena may be due to the fact that there is a lack of political programmes or ideological standpoints that governs one’s choice of political party. It would also be possible to argue for the existence of an elite, a group in Cambodian society where it is generally accepted that women are working in politics and in which the husbands often help wives to gain advantages in terms of positions and so on.

Other possible explanations must also be taken into consideration, however. One may approach the problem by asking in what way female politicians in Cambodia make sense out of their double identities as women as well as national politicians. Maybe the symbolism
attached to politically active wives complements and enhances the image of the male politician (Yuval-Davis 1997: 44–46). Together the wife and husband may comprise a more complete political unit with the capacity to secure the nation’s needs both internally and externally. To bring their wives into politics may then be a way for husbands to add ‘soft’ values such as honesty and peacefulness to their image without losing any masculinity in the process. This may be one of the key reasons that politician’s wives and daughters become politically active. Or as Peterson and Runyan state,

> Being female is not always a disadvantage: when symbols of unity, compromise, or conciliation are sought, women may have an advantage over men. That is, stereotypes of women can work to the benefit of female leaders in situations where crises or transitions require a caring, ameliorative figure (Peterson and Runyan 1993: 69).

In this case, however, the effectiveness of the stereotype serves to reproduce the gender dichotomies, rather than altering them (Peterson and Runyan 1993: 69).

Moreover, the complementary construction of the family, in which the male is often considered the norm, is probably an additional reason for wives’ political engagement. For example, one female politician, who won a seat in parliament in the 1998 election, explained why she had become politically involved after the Pol Pot regime:

> I never wanted to become politically active. I had my children and my life in France. But my husband decided that he should travel to China and join the exile regime. What was I to do? Stay by myself in France? No, we Cambodian women are very family-oriented. So I went with him to China and became politically active.¹²

Ironically enough, the fact that this woman took an obedient and docile female identity seemed to force her to act as an active and independent female subject in the political sphere. The image of women as passive and loyal in this cases incited her to follow her husband to the political field were she was expected to act as a politician. She had to take on an active role in order to gain the status of
an obedient wife. In other words, the gendered expectations of wives as docile and finding their primary role in the family encouraged this woman to become a public non-family oriented political actor.

Now it may be worth mentioning that this does not apply for all politically active women and that the above reasoning might be somehow provocative for a number of women who fight for women’s political rights. It implies that women’s drive is not sufficient to motivate them to become politically active on their own. One respondent raised objections against the idea of women being pushed into politics due to traditional gender roles. She said, ‘some women think that way. But I can see that the women who are being elected now, they came with their own issues. Not because someone pushes them.’ Yet another woman reacted when I underscored that she and others where selected by the party committee:

Not select, we also wanted. Believe me, if you work with anything not from your heart you cannot do a good thing. If you only work for a position you only work and then do nothing. But if it comes from your heart, it means that it is because you also think it is good.

As women come to participate in politics through their families, there are a number of implications that follow. First of all, the distribution of political power along family ties undermines the ideal of democracy as a means of solving conflicts of interest in society, because interest, ideologies and party programs are given secondary importance to family loyalties and connections. Secondly, it questions the distinction made in many liberal democracies between the public and private spheres (Phillips 2000). As has been addressed, in the political context of Cambodia this division is blurred as the private sphere in some sense determines who has power in the public sphere. This makes it important for researchers to cross the borders between the two spheres. Thirdly, due to the family-oriented recruitment of women to the political arena, researchers as well as practitioners within the political field in Cambodia must critically assess the idea of an abstract political actor and engage in more complex analysis of the role and impact of different identities in terms of
family ties, gender, class and ethnicity (Lilja and Vinthagen 2006). This will provide us with more nuanced research in the field of power and politics, which, by extension, will most likely contribute to improved policy recommendations.

NOTES

1 Due to the public–private divide, one of the main questions in feminist debates concerning democracy has been whether or not liberal democracy is compatible with a deeper democracy including women and other marginalized groupings participating in public decision-making.


3 Interview No. 6D.

4 Interview No. 4B.

5 Interview No. 10B.

6 Khsae is the string of mutual gift exchange from elites in return for loyalty from villagers.

7 In addition, many of the institutions that appear democratic are not scrutinized to the same extent: as in the case of the Cambodian senate, the core role is in fact a matter of patterns of patronage and clientelism (Roberts 2001: 32–204).

8 Another trend is that many female politicians remain unmarried – either because no one wants to marry them or because single women have more spare time and control over their own means. One woman said, ‘In Cambodia single women work in high positions. Single women are much more motivated. When they are married they are more focused on the marriage. When a woman gets married she stays at home a lot. Then the men take her place. Children take a lot of time. Single people are more active.’ Interview No. 12B.

9 Interview No. 1A.

10 Interview No. 5A.

11 Interview No 11A.

12 Interview No. 1A.

13 Interview No. 2A.

14 Interview No. 16A.
The lack of (and longing for) a ‘third space’: The female gender and male politician

Departing from the interviews, this chapter provides a rough outline of the power-relations between the sexes, how the informants experience them, and how they appear within current research. It will discuss male and female images of identity, the obstacles and the opportunities for women’s political participation and how these relate to the (at times) violent history of Cambodia. In this respect, the analysis will reflect the intention of making visible conflicting notions of identity and ambivalent discourses. The final part of the chapter will address how the female politicians themselves try to handle the fact that their identities do not always correspond with the general idea of a politician. Is there a ‘third space’ where new interpretations and new political identities emerge?

WOMEN AS POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ACTORS
Santry (2005) concludes that in Cambodia the war, the widespread poverty and the lack of women’s rights lead to a ‘feminised poverty and women’s disempowerment’, and underscores the high proportion of men migrating to cities as a factor in women’s deprivation. Today, 50% of families are being cared for by a single female (Santry 2005: 210). The female share of the labour force (53%) is the highest in Southeast Asia, and women earn on average about 50% less than
men in the same occupation (Cambodian Human Development Report 1998: 23–27). Still, a study among civil servants showed that in Cambodia, women contribute more than their husbands to the household budget (CRD/KWVC 1999: 25). While men appear to spend some earnings on recreational activities, women seem to prioritise the welfare of their children (Santry 2005: 210).

In contrast with the gender roles in many other countries, women in Cambodia are considered to be very economical, and they are generally the holders of their family’s wealth and very active in the economic sector (Frieson 2001: 2; Norrlind 1996; Ovesen, Trankell and Öjendal 1996: 58–60). Their shouldering of economic responsibilities, however, is not reflected in their share of space in the political arena. Ledgerwood has suggested that while ‘Cambodian women were and are extremely active in economic affairs, it was not considered appropriate for women to be active in politics’ (1992: 15, Frieson 2001: 6). Frieson equally states that ‘in the political realm, women are publicly submissive to the male hierarchy rather than active and participatory’ (Frieson 2001: 3). During the UN-organized ‘free and fair’ election of 1993, only seven women were elected as members of parliament from totally 120 seats. Moreover, there were no female ministers or secretaries of state, although five women were appointed under-secretaries of state. The number of elected women in decision-making bodies increased a little in the national election of 1998. 14 women became members of the National Assembly from among 122 seats (CEDAW/C/KHM/1–3 2004: 34–35; Secretariat of State for Women’s Affairs 1995). Also after the 2003 election the number of women in the National Assembly increased. Women now hold 24 seats out of 123. In the newly created Senate, there are eight women out of totally 61 members (CEDAW/C/KHM/1–3 2004: 34–35). As a response to the low number of women in the National Assembly, the UN initiated Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against women expressed the following:

… the Committee expresses concern about the underrepresentation of women at all levels of political and public life, in particular in
The Lack of (and Longing for) a ‘Third Space’

Parliament, and the low rate of women’s participation in elections. The Committee is further concerned about the limited participation of women in the public administration and the judiciary at all levels. (Camnews 2006b)

The low number of women within formal decision-making processes has resulted in protests and various suggestions on how to increase the female share in political positions. A proposed quota of 30 per cent for female political party candidates and a similar figure for government was not accepted by the Constitutional Council. According to Ms. Ing Kantha Phavi, Minister of Women’s Affairs, society in general is not supportive of such quotas even though there has been a serious debate on the issue (Camnews 2006c).

In Cambodia, people seem to consider men to be the natural political actors. As will be concluded in the below analysis, women are often stereotyped, given a low rank or simply fail to correspond to the stereotype of a political actor. Who is a politician? What is politics? Who identifies themselves as politicians? Who are regarded as politicians? The answers are formed in daily conversations, within the discourse that makes up or constructs types and stereotypes, regulates conduct and forms identities, as well as deciding how things are thought about, practiced and studied.

The Stereotyped Notions of ‘Women’ and ‘Politicians’

Women are to talk slowly and softly, to be so quiet in their movement that one can hear the sound of their silk skirt rustling. While she is shy and must be protected, before marriage ideally never leaving the company of her relatives, she is also industrious (Ledgerwood 1992: 4).

This female image emerged throughout the interviews. Many respondents described women as shy, honest, gentle, active, hardworking, humble, economical and unenlightened (Norrlind, 1996: 22). One woman stated that ‘Women are born more close to their feelings. They are easily sad and scared. Men and women are born different.’ Ledgerwood (1996) describes this image as ‘the notion
of the ideal woman’, which many Cambodians relate to in various ways either as a point of reference or as gender symbolism to use in political rhetoric. The ideal woman is the ‘perfectly virtuous woman’ who controls her speech, is silent or speaks sweetly to her husband; she never disputes him even if he is angry and is cursing her (Ledgerwood 1996). This image is reflected in the *chbap srey*, a poem listing codes of proper ideal gender-appropriate behaviour in Cambodia. *Chbap srey* forms part of a whole series of *chbap* (rules) giving codes for women, men, monks, children, and other categories of people and it is well known in Cambodia and is taught in many schools. As an example, *chbap srey* stresses a woman’s responsibility to obey her husband, since he is her master (‘When you reach the world of human beings, you are to remember that you are the only personal servant of your husband and you should always highly obey your husband’). She should also carry out household tasks properly and respect her parents (see for example Ovesen, Trankell and Öjendal 1996: 35–36; Derks 1996: 6–7; Roeun 2004). The rules describe women as a subordinate group, expected to serve, follow and respect their male partners. *Chbap srey* has recently been under attack from CEDAW:

While noting the value of the cultural heritage of Cambodia, the Committee is concerned about strong gender-role stereotyping, in particular that reflected in the traditional code of conduct known as *chbab srey*, which legitimizes discrimination against women and impedes women’s full enjoyment of their human rights and the achievement of equality between men and women in Cambodian society. (Camnews 2006d)

In response, Ms. Ing Kantha Phavi, Minister of Women’s Affairs, explained that teaching children *chbap srey* is a matter of national identity (Camnews 2006e).

While Chbap Srey may just picture an image of an ideal woman, the discourse it reflects still seems to be highly prevalent within current Cambodian society (Roeun 2004). Petre Santry, for example, writes in her thesis that she found that in the 1990s most Cam-
bodian women were ‘subjugated to males and occupying a relatively low status, with many traditional ideas repressing their advancement’ (Santry 2005: 109). What she describes is a picture of gendered power relations that are multiple, working at different levels of society, permeating women’s lives and contributing to their low representation in education and public decision-making, proceeding to sexual exploitation and domestic violence.

Reviewing the literature as well as my interviews, it seems that in general the image of a Cambodian woman as mild, soft-spoken, shy and acting in an amiable manner, remains in contemporary Cambodia and influences the expectations by which women are measured. This reasoning must be nuanced, however, and the ambiguity must be made visible. Ledgerwood (1996), for example, states that in current Cambodia there is a pattern of keeping the traditional gender image alive, and Cambodians constantly refer to the image of the soft, quiet, gentle woman while describing women in their nearby surrounding. However, the gender imagery has an ambiguous nature, containing yet other images/values than the ‘traditional’ ones. The ideal woman, in contemporary Cambodia, can simultaneously be ‘a shy, quite and obedient servant, and a strong, manipulating, vocal village woman’ (Ledgerwood 1996: 139–151). In addition, new competing patterns have been introduced that overlap and intertwine with the image of a perfect woman found in classic Khmer literature. Possibly the most important of these competing images is the socialist discourse of the strong, hard working and brave ‘revolutionary woman’ (Ledgerwood 1996: 139–151). Consistent with Ledgerwood, Frieson argues that ‘the disjunction between the mythologized female role celebrating temerity and docility on the one hand, and hard-headed business acumen on the other, is a source of social tension and conflict’ (2001: 2–3).

While arguing for the existence of ambivalence and social tension, both Frieson and Ledgerwood underline that the ‘traditional’ stereotypical image of the perfect woman is highly visible in today’s Cambodia. For example, McGrew, Frieson and Chan state that ‘there is still a prevailing belief in the culture that [Cambodian] women are
more gentle and submissive than men’ (McGrew, Frieson and Chan 2004). Another example is the study of Aing Sok Roeun (2004), who interviewed thirty-six Cambodian women about the traditional and contemporary roles of women. She draws the conclusion that while elderly women tend to follow all the codes of *chhip srey*, young women follow *chhip srey* but ignore some of the rules (Roeun 2004: 73). Santry similarly states that the women she interviewed

... agreed that in order to find a husband and maintain a marriage they not only needed to honour their parents and be quiet and gentle, but also should be intelligent, advising and assisting their husbands in his endeavours, as well as generous and obedient (Santry 2005: 57)

This was also confirmed by one of the educated Cambodian women I spoke to. She blamed the fact that she was not married on the gap between her educated ‘self’ and the image of a Cambodian woman, stating, ‘I am too intelligent to be a Cambodian woman, I cannot be a Cambodian woman’. This implies how a ‘mentally weaker’ Cambodian woman is a highly present stereotyped image of identity, although not all Cambodian women are able or want to perform it.

A GENDERED HIERARCHY WITH POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

From the above it appears that the opposition between female and male gender in a Cambodian context, is often rather stereotypically formulated. It rigidly divides the normal from the abnormal and symbolically fixes clear-cut, apparently unalterable boundaries between men and women, and between masculinity and femininity. Taking the interviews as a point of departure, in the next coming sections I will try to show that this ‘stereotyping tends to occur where there are gross inequalities of power’ (S. Hall 1997b: 258). In other words, what becomes significant from previous studies, as well as from the interviews, is that while Cambodian women are often described as shy, gentle, uninformed and generally narrow-minded when compared with men, they are assigned a lower status. Negative comments are often made with reference to women’s inability to
leave the household sphere and gain an understanding of the public world. In this matter, the Cambodians use several expressions, such as the phrase ‘a woman cannot even go around her own stove,’ which the respondents used to illustrate women’s inability to leave the household sphere and become aware of a context outside of the house. It is precisely this isolation and a lack of education that are blamed for women’s perceived mental weakness. One woman said, ‘Women in Cambodian society are seen as inferior to men. They are considered mentally weaker. This view is stronger in the rural areas than in the towns. Women are not equals. Men see themselves as the intelligent actors.’ Yet another woman confirmed:

Mentally weak! Mentally weak, physically weaker…. But in fact right now this is little. But during my mother’s time and grandmother’s time it was very heavy. If you are living in Europe you cannot image our women in Asia. If we sit with many people we have to sit like this, pretend like this. Then the men say: “How good you are, how nice you are”.

According to Yvonne Hirdman, gender hierarchies are often created as the hidden, unintended, but often inevitable outcome of gender dichotomies (1988: 49–63). Binary thinking and the hierarchies that it nourishes, were transmitted and reaffirmed in the ‘speakings’ of Cambodian women, such as, ‘Some women in the countryside have the idea that women are mentally weaker than men. Women don’t think that women can be leaders. When we tell them that women are smarter than men, they say: Oh,’ and ‘Both men and women believe that women are mentally weaker than men.’ These quotations indicate that a hierarchy has been established that is maintained through discourse. Women are exposed to this discourse, and at the same time women perpetuate the very same discourse, being active subjects making possible its dissemination. As shown in the section on power (Chapter Two), those who occupy the lowest rank on the hierarchical ladder often play a part in sustaining the discourses that keep them there. By spreading ‘truths’ about their lack of ability, some respondents seem to reproduce hierarchical and stereotyped
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images of themselves. During a group interview the respondents agreed that:

We cannot take full responsibility; we are only women. Women always speak out less than the men. The men seem to dominate the women. We feel afraid to speak out and when we speak out we feel afraid that what we say is wrong because women don’t know how to speak..... Girls are weaker than boys, mentally weaker.\(^9\)

This quotation shows how women have assumed and speak from a subaltern identity. Both men and women thus play a part in sustaining a gendered organization of society, where activities, places, symbols, life-styles and the distribution of resources are all marked by the division and construction of the sexes.

In the interviews, the supposed differences between men and women, which easily slide into hierarchies, were pointed out as a contributing cause of the unequal distribution of political power. According to Nanda Pok, director of ‘Women for Prosperity’ (a Cambodian NGO), Cambodian women and men alike are longing for a strong leader, albeit one with a big heart.\(^10\) According to her, the image of a politician is informed by masculinity, because while strength is widely regarded as being a masculine characteristic, the stereotypical woman does not accord well with the image of a politician.

That the image of a politician is often associated with men was also expressed in other ways. For example, at a Phnom Penh-based workshop on the theme of ‘Women and Politics’, the participants attempted to identify the strong points of Cambodian women, agreeing that women ‘have the same capacity as a man’ (Women’s Media Centre 1997), a notion that was also reflected within other interviews about women and politics. One woman said, ‘women need to have more education and more experience than men, to become the same function’.\(^11\) Yet another said, ‘you see? We don’t have the same salary. We can do the same work as the men can do, but we don’t get the same salary’.\(^12\) In these quotations men are put up as a political norm that women are measured against (‘We can do the same work as the men can do’).
Several interviews repeated that people in general regard men as the optimum actors in a public setting, while the ranked and stereotyped image of women fails to correspond to the image of a politician. One woman described how she experiences low trust in women politicians:

They want to call themselves women’s parties. You destroy your possibilities if you call your party like that. [...] You call yourself a women party no one want to join you and the perception that women cannot be good leaders will remain.13

Likewise, Bo Chum Sin has investigated the issue of Cambodian women and leadership. She stated that approximately 80% of her 300 respondents believed that women are mentally weaker (goung sau) and less decisive than men, and therefore doubted that women’s political involvement would contribute anything to the public sphere (1997: 77). One male politician said,

One problem is that men do not think that women have any capacity. They think women are morally weak. Women should stay in home. Politics is the men’s work. [...] People in Cambodia don’t believe in women. This is especially the case in politics. Also in the National Assembly people don’t believe in women politicians.14

One discourse about politics thus defines women as non-political. Furthermore, the political sphere seems to be experienced by the respondents as a masculine-coded realm, and the role of the politician seems to be associated with men and with masculinity. These discourses imply naturalized ‘truths’. The fact that they are viewed as the natural is another aspect of power that makes the domination more steadily supported and thus unchangeable. Women are assigned primarily domestic responsibilities, while men appear to be allotted another role on a different level of society, since they are the main actors in the game of power and violence. This can be illustrated by quoting a male politician, who himself prevented his highly qualified wife from working:

Men don’t like their wives to become politicians, as then they would travel too much and spend time away from home. If the women...
would work away from home they would meet other men and make the husband jealous. If the woman is in politics she cannot take care of old and children. In that case the man don't like her to work.\textsuperscript{15}

This perspective is another in a range of representations that together constitute a discourse about domestic, non-political women. One point of departure of this research is that these kinds of discourses create apparent ‘truths’ that define who becomes politicians. From this it follows that, in order to study political decision-making, the analysis must embrace the relationship between discursive power – including the ranking and stereotyping of identities and the related making of a self – and formal, public decision-making processes. One of the few scholars to have made this connection manifest is Pierre Bourdieu (1986; see also Allen 1998a; Hindess 1996). He has argued that individuals with certain characteristics – for example, certain ways of talking, certain interests and knowledge – are accorded more influence. The characteristics, knowledge and ways of talking, and so on, that are ascribed high status create funds of capital that may be negotiated within each specific field or social context. This power game results in some individuals being rewarded with influence and resources, while others become marginalized (Bourdieu in Broady 1998: 13; Broady 1991: 165–194). Class power, in this view, is based on the control of different kinds of capital that the working classes do not possess (Branson and Miller 1991: 37–43). This reasoning bears a clear resemblance to Foucault’s theories of power, where discourses define what is right, sane and logical; that is, what ought to be rewarded (Foucault 1986). Accordingly, if you talk in the ‘right’ manner, have the ‘right’ education and have the ‘right’ knowledge, people pay greater attention to your views. Consequently, one side of the coin is that actors with the ‘right’ knowledge, who are seen as bearers of the optimum political norm acquire greater political influence. The other side of the coin is the exclusion of certain groups from public decision-making.

THE HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

The respondents, sometimes explained the gap between the image of a leader and the representations of femininity by referring to women’s
relationship to violence and suffering. The history of Cambodia carries with it memories of killing and destruction. In the period that followed after the Indochina war, including the USA’s bombings of Cambodia (aimed at destroying North Vietnamese troops entering the country), the Communist Khmer Rouge gained ground, seizing power by 1975 and forcing Cambodians into farming collectives in an attempt to create an agrarian utopia. More than 1.7 million people probably died of starvation, overwork, disease and execution before Vietnam invaded the country in 1979 and ejected the more radical communists from power (Hinton 2004). Shortly thereafter the Vietnamese established the People’s Republic of Kampuchea (PRK).

The PRK regime was supported by Vietnamese troops, supported in turn by the Soviet Union and therefore rejected by the West. It held on to power until the late 1980s, and carried out substantial political, economic and social reforms that moved the country some steps away from Soviet-style authoritarian planned economy. A national Parliamentary election was carried out in 1993 by the UN. The subsequent election in 1998 was preceded by a new outbreak of violence, when Hun Sen (CPP), the Second Prime Minister at that time, ousted First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh in a military coup. Nonetheless, the election was held and a new phase of stability entered Cambodia (Lizée 1999: 79–91).

While Cambodia has begun a new phase, politicians still seem to include stories of political violence into their narratives. Likewise, the UN has expressed its concerns about the killings preceding the different elections. For instance, in a resolution of May 2003 (E/CN.4/2003/L.81), the UN Commission for Human Rights was alarmed over the violations of human rights and political violence in Cambodia, including killings of political activists in the run-up to the election (Camnews 2003). In December 2005 the new UN human rights envoy to Cambodia said that in relation to the political practices of Cambodia, the human right situation in the country was concerning (Camnews 2005).

Political violence is still present, as reflected in the interviews and in the documents and books focusing on contemporary Cambodia
(see for example Hinton 2004; Kiernan 1985, 1993, 2002; A. Martin 1994). As will be pinpointed below, the ways of thinking and talking – the ways of constructing knowledge (discourses) – about the violent past in general and violence in relation to politics in particular, to some degree decides how political legitimacy is generated in the prevailing political culture of Cambodia. According to Bergström and Boréus (2000: 226), discourses decide not only what can be said but also suggest different subject positions, the who of saying what. In Cambodia, discourses of violence and politics permeate each other, creating a number of subject positions for legitimate politicians. The ‘caring, peaceful female politician’ and the ‘strong man’ are only two of the subject positions that women and men respectively are assumed to inhabit and speak from. Moreover, some subject positions create ambivalence, such as the woman leader from a patron family, who is expected to inhabit the subject position of a patron, a position that is usually associated with men and maleness. In the next section, the nexus between subject positions, political discourses and the discourses of violence will be further developed in relation to the concept of political legitimacy.

FEMININITY, VIOLENCE AND POLITICAL LEGITIMACY

The interviews revealed a range of ways in which gendered relationships have interacted with violence in constituting men as political actors while constructing women as non-political. First, as women are held to be shy and vulnerable, in some senses the notion of women in need of protection remains within Cambodian society (this is seen in many other countries too). Respondents occasionally stated that women must be protected, especially as they are seen as being easily exposed to both manipulation and temptation. When young women move outside the domestic space to perform factory work ‘the mothers worry about their daughters’ safety and are afraid they will make friends with bad persons’ (Santry 2005: 67). Yet another respondent told me that ‘a big problem with women and politics is that women cannot live by themselves in town.’

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The idea that women's fragility prevents them from engaging in political action was also expressed in different ways. One woman said, 'Women can't bear violence. They cannot lead and are too busy with their families.' In a workshop about women and politics at Women's Media Centre (WMC) the participants concluded that women in politics are 'easily frightened, are not brave, suffer from much oppression and can be selfish' (Women's Media Centre 1997).

Under insecure conditions, the increased demand for defence assigns leaders a special responsibility for local and national security issues, in which the defenders – leaders, guards and soldiers – are all men (see for example McGrew, Frieson and Chan 2004). As a result of the historical account and gender-biased traditions, maleness, violence and security issues have been entwined into the image of a politician. While men are considered to be the representatives of the outwardly public domain in spite of the fact of danger, women are assigned another, more passive and timid role. As women do not correspond with the image of a protector, the recruitment of women to leader positions becomes problematic. One female village chief recounted the difficulties of being a woman leader:

There is conflict in the village, and sometimes as a woman it's difficult to organize the guard at night. [...] For a male head of village it's easier than a female, because of transport and security. It's easier to leave home. [...] And also another family member told me, 'Please stop, because you're a woman. Please stay at home at night, not go around the village.'

Another woman emphasized the connections between the role of leader and that of a guard or soldier, carrying arms. She stated that for her, as a woman, it has been difficult to shoulder the responsibilities of protecting her village:

At that time I was appointed by the government at provincial level. They want me because of my education, reputation and how I worked. They wanted to see me become head of the commune, but at that time, as head of a commune, I would have to have a gun in my hand. At that time it was unsafe in my village and all over the commune, but it is not good for me to have a gun in my hand.
Summarizing from the above, women are often perceived and expected to be easily frightened, domestic-oriented and restricted in relation to carrying weapons or leaving their homes. Further to this, as women are considered weak and anxious, it is legitimate for them to avoid danger, and they are therefore expected to stay out of politics.

The socialization of women in line with the prevailing femininity thus provides women with difficulties in taking on leadership positions (‘Please stop, because you are a woman. Please stay at home at night, not go around the village’). Being those in need of protection, the idea of women as protectors becomes a paradox and women thereby lose political legitimacy. For example, one woman leader said,

In 1993 there were many women who wanted to be candidates. People in Cambodia do not believe in women’s capacity and therefore they are not selected as candidates. People do not think women can make it in politics. In CPP they believe in women as long as they have a lower position than the man. The woman is number two if the man is number one. Men and women do not believe in the capacity of women to create stability.¹⁹

This quotation reflects what the woman experiences as the dominant discourses about gender. She argues for a generally held image of women as incapable of creating stability and security in a traditional sense. This reasoning can be understood through the concepts of nationalism and the nation. The nation is often a gendered construct, since nationalism works hand in hand with the gender system to assign different national roles to men and women (see for example Stapleton and Wilson 2004: 45–60). While men are supposed to be the representatives and defenders of the nation, sacrificing their interests, their strength, and, if necessary, also their lives for the sake of the nation, women, on the other hand, should ideally take care of the nation’s internal relations, including relations with the nation’s past and future. They should act out the nation’s traditions as a way of keeping the links with the mythological past of the nation alive and of continued relevance. Also, in their capacity as the mothers and
child-raisers of future generations, women and their behaviour are pictured as crucial for the future of the nation. In all this, individual women become invisible, hidden behind a veil of national symbolism that pictures women as exemplary mothers and daughters of the nation (see for example Enloe 1989; Gilroy 1997; Mendieta 2003; Stern 2005; Yuval-Davis 1997). As such, they are seen as ‘the nation’s most valuable assets’ (Enloe 1989: 54). This objectification is manifested in Cambodia’s ‘gem’ program (‘Women are Precious Gems’) launched in 1999 by Mu Sochua (Cambodia’s former Minister of Women’s Affairs), to encourage Cambodian society to value women more highly, respect their rights and protect them from violence. Among other things, women’s declaration on the 92nd anniversary of International Women’s Day appealed to ‘all Cambodian families, both women and men together, to preserve and promote women, especially those with disabilities, and children as “valued precious gems”’ (Camnet 2002a).

The gem debate seems to picture women as both weak and fragile while simultaneously being strong, indispensable, caring mothers, as illustrated in the following extract from a speech by the Queen:

Women have strived against famine and illiteracy to improve their families’ welfare and increase their participation in national development. Women throughout the ages have achieved greatness and they should be acknowledged and honored [sic] so they become role models for Cambodian women today and in the future. In spite of the above effort, women still face constraints in their lives such as poverty, vulnerability to domestic violence, physical and psychological abuses, trafficking and family economic pressures. These pressures have caused a decrease in women’s and girls’ status, integrity and hopes and also have caused the break up of families, ruining their children’s future. (H.M. N.M. Sihanouk 2002 in Camnet 2002b)

Fragile, vulnerable, indispensable, striving caretakers, the foundation of society: these are all words that picture how women are described within the gem debate. There is ambivalence in the images of women as active-passive, hardworking, indispensable but still vulnerable. Similarly, women’s relation to violence is read in terms of, and is related to, both insecurity and security. While women are occasionally
addressed as children and stripped of any leadership abilities, they also symbolise peace and thereby gain political authority (see for example McGrew, Frieson and Chan 2004: iv; Lorentzen and Turpin 1998: 12; Yuval-Davis 1997: 107–113). One woman said,

Men have big egos. They can sacrifice innocent people to save their egos if they are afraid to ‘loose their face.’ More women in the government would create a change – a less violent and a more honest political system. Women behave better.20

Correspondingly, a recent report was stated that ‘Countering a culture of violence, women are at the forefront of promoting peaceful resolution of local disputes’ (McGrew, Frieson and Chan 2004: iv). Women thus lose authority as they are comprehended as vulnerable and exposed to violence with no ability to protect but in need of protection – almost child-like. At the same time their relation to violence adds to their political trustfulness by representing peace and, paradoxically, also a sense of security. Women’s perceived disconnection from violence thus both reduces and increases their political legitimacy. This resonates with the classical Victorian discourse that maintained that women bring fairness, peacefulness and humanity into the political field, while simultaneously implying that men do not (see for example McGrew, Frieson and Chan 2004), which in turn implies that female politicians in some senses might add some legitimacy to the regime in terms of stability.

VIOLENCE AS A REASON FOR FEMALE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Above, the Khmer Rouge era and the following political violence have been pointed out as contributing to the gap between the image of women and the image of a politician that often occurs in the interviews, however the Khmer Rouge era and the memories constructed from these times, has not only strengthened the gendered divide, which contributes to few women on political positions, but it has also created incentives for some women to join politics. One woman told her story:
Because you see, after Pol Pot there is a lot of educated persons who, especially the people who can speak highly of themselves, do not report to the authority or to the government that they know foreign language. That is because they had the experiences of Pol Pot. Because the ones who were educated got killed. So they say; oh I am the seller, I am the person this and that. [But] I told them the truth. That is why I was in prison. I was in prison. Just to wait for the death to come and be killed as the other.21

Despite the fact that this woman was in prison for many years, she managed to survive. In light of the events of the last decades, she concludes that no individual can side-step politics as insignificant, stating:

So, these are the things that made me get involved in politics. Understand? […] I got a scholarship from the Government in July but Pol Pot came so you see … So, at that time there was a lot of students involved in politics. But not me! I was selfish, selfish. Politics just the affair or work of our leader, I thought. We are simple; simple people no need to care about that. But it is not like that. When something happens, every citizen, every people is affected from this policy of the government. Because I reserved myself not to involve in anything, really. When my friends oh … 1970 they went to strike with the students, of workers, government officials against Lon Nol regime already. But for me: No! Everybody … I said no. It is not for me. My task must be to study not to try to play politics. That happened to me. This is my experience. […] We can help a lot. We can help, it doesn’t mean that you cannot help only yourself, your friends but the whole society. You are the whole society, you cannot separate, you cannot distinguish what is, there is no clear cut between you and the society, and you cannot. This is my own experience. I take this time with you and talk about my background. The reason why I participate now in politics; whereas before I was scared like the other women, like all the people. For politics is very dangerous especially in developing countries. You see you must accept that, it is very dangerous.22

Before the Khmer Rouge era this woman considered herself not interested in politics (‘I was selfish, selfish. I thought politics are just
the affair or work of our leader’). However the Khmer Rouge era made her realize that political actions affect everybody’s lives, or in her words ‘there is no clear cut line between you and the society’. Realizing that everybody is affected by political actions, she decided to become politically involved (‘The reason why I participate now into politics’). The political responsibility she experienced seems to be greater than the fear she felt (‘whereas before that I was scared like the other women, like all the people. For politics is very dangerous especially in developing countries. You see, you must accept that, it is very dangerous’). In that statement she connects fear with being a woman, implying that women have internalized traits such as anxiety and fear to a greater extent. In the end, however, she felt that politics can not be organized around the axis of gender any longer, and that women like herself must become involved in political issues. Thus, this woman, who experienced the Khmer Rouge period, tried to alter the sharp division between the genders by turning to politics. From her standpoint, the public sphere is the only means to accomplish peace, and there seem to be more women advancing the very same strategy. One woman said, ‘Women take part in politics partly because they have this feeling of revenge. After Pol Pot many died. Afterwards many felt a strong feeling of: ‘I want to make a change’’. This pattern can be understood through the concept of subjectivity, which I have outlined in Chapter Two. Subjectivity encompasses the thoughts and emotions that contribute to forming our sense of who we are (see for example D.E. Hall 2004; Woodward 1997). Women’s subjectivities becomes the locus of resistance; as women are hailed into contradictory, conflicting images of identity or trying to make sense of representations and feelings that do not fit or correspond to the dominating discourses or to the image of identity that they are hailed into. This can help us to understand the politically active women quoted above, who try to make sense of a gendered apolitical female identity, through memories of suffering and feelings of political responsibility. In the process, these women seem to prioritize, explain, question and reflect upon the identities they long to fulfil, in response to those they are hailed into. This implies that
agency is created as these women try to organize and negotiate their identities and the different images of identity they are hailed into, in their attempts to form an understandable self-identity.

MEN PROVIDING PROTECTION FROM MEN

While women’s disconnection with the exercising of violence might undermine their political legitimacy, for men, the pattern is occasionally the reverse. Their connection to violence in some senses reduces their political trustworthiness. One former female politician described the differences between the image of violent male politicians contrasted against the image of women leaders:

Women are emotional, yes. We are emotional. We want to avoid any fighting. We think about the long run. We don’t want to, you know, right away. We see the consequences. They think that we are emotional, unlike like men, who take steps, you know, right away, who decide right away. […] We turn these emotions into a process of negotiation, into collaboration. We trade on our emotions. You know we found peace during the emotional process unlike men. They are not emotional. They don’t cry. You don’t see tears in their eyes ever. They are strong and they fight. That’s why this country is fighting all the time; because they don’t have emotions.24

As indicated above, men are not only regarded as protectors by the respondents, but the violent history has evoked men as subjects that exercise violence: the armed forces, the soldiers, the bodyguards. Not only does masculinity relate to violence within the public sphere, but domestic violence, rape including gang rape, violence against sex workers and trafficking are major concerns in Cambodia (and most other societies). While today it is estimated that approximately one in four women experience violence in the home, there are some indicators suggesting that the number of cases are increasing (Ministry of Women’s Affairs 2006). Ms. Ing Kantha Phavi, Minister of Women’s Affairs, explained in a meeting with the Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against women that the ‘belief that men were the heads of families and had the right to discipline women and children with violence continued to be widely held’ (United Nations 2006). Thus
domestic violence ‘complementing’ public violence is fairly common. In line with this, a declaration was launched by the Ministry of Women’s Affairs that somehow pictures women as exposed to male violence, without mentioning men:

Cambodian women, 52% of the population, are concerned about violence against women and children and on behalf of all women we would like to appeal to leaders at all levels to: Recognize that the elimination of violence and discrimination against women and children is essential to develop a foundation based on respect for women and children’s human rights. The elimination of violence is the foundation for development on the basis of equality, equity and peace. (Camnet 2002c)

The above statement addresses violence while it ‘hides’ the perpetrators of violence. Nowhere are men referred to as those who practice violent behaviours. The quotation also describes how all women should appeal to the leaders, thus separating the women from the leaders thereby indicating that leaders are not women but men. In addition, the quotation put together women and children (Enloe 1990: 29) so that they seem to be one category contrasting with the violent/protecting men. Contrasting this image with that of the strong and powerful man gives added symbolic force to male, protective discourses and the image of the male protector.

One of the paradoxes that prevail from this is that men are implied to be violent, uncontrolled and destructive while at the same time being considered the protectors from violence. For example, in her speech on the 92nd anniversary of International Women’s Day on 8 March 2002, Mu Sochua addressed Hun Sen as the main protector against male violence:

On this occasion, on behalf of the Ministry of Women’s and Veterans’ Affairs and the Cambodian women network I also would like to thank you, Samdech Prime Minister for your intervention, coordination and advice in protecting the rights and worth of women and children as well as striving to eliminate violence against women and children. (Mu Sochua 2002 in Camnet 2002d)
The king was also pictured by the queen Norodom Monineath Sihanouk, as the protecting father of his daughters:

I am very glad about the effort made by government institutions at all levels, to enhance the status of Cambodian women regardless of belief, religion, race and class. These committed initiatives are informed by His Majesty's philosophy that women, whom His Majesty the King regards as his daughters, grand-daughters and great grand-daughters, are of great worth. He believed this in the past (The Royal People Regime) and still believes this today. (H.M. N.M. Sihanouk 2002 in Camnet 2002b)

Summing up, men are typically seen as those producing violence, but also as those providing protection from violence. Men thereby lose legitimacy due to memories imbued with violence, while in the next moment gaining legitimacy – for the very same memories – in the search for security. It seems like the memories of violence, evoked over time, and the association between men and violence, provide women not only with reasons, but also arguments, to become politically active. In this, Said’s outline of the interplay between memory and intervention might be interesting, however, it is difficult to say to what degree women use the invention of tradition – using collective memories selectively by manipulating certain bits of the national past – in a rather strategic way (Said 2005: 256–268).

THE AMBIVALENCE BETWEEN THE IMAGE OF THE SUPERIOR FEMALE POLITICIAN AND THE MALE POLITICAL NORM

So far, more obstacles than possibilities are pointed out in regard to women’s political participation. The ‘inferiority complex’ implies that some Cambodian women internalize the image of themselves as subalterns and pictures a low-status image of themselves that is contrasted against an image of the more capable male figure. A boundary seems to exist between intelligent, worldly, educated men and uneducated, mentally weak, gentle, uninformed women. According to the interviews, these gendered power-loaded discourses are reflected in the low number of women in political positions. Op-
posing discourses also exist, however, reversing the divide. Some female respondents in the Phnom Penh area emphasized that women make better leaders than men. This latter view claims that a female leader is more compassionate and understanding than a male one. Responsible, capable, good speakers, understandable and brilliant; these are the terms by which the respondents refer to female politicians and females are implied to be active, strong and knowledgeable. One woman said,

In NA [National Assembly] people are treated equally whether they are men or women. People respect politicians. They think women understand people better as they take care of basic needs, domestic duties, and so on, at the same time as they are politicians.²⁵

From this point of view, women are assumed to understand more clearly, for example, poverty and education, and their responsibilities in the home are thus seen as advantageous to their role as politicians. Or in the words of McGrew, Frieson and Chan, ‘the skills attributed to women in the domestic sphere are considered valuable in rebuilding the nation’ (2004).

Accounts such as these prevailed among a number of female NGO workers as well as female politicians. They constitute a new, alternative, ‘invented’ image that refuses to occupy the lowest rung on the evolutionary ladder. While some of Phnom Penh respondents acknowledged that women are superior to men as leaders, the same women later expressed another, contrary notion, in which men’s performances were seen as the norm. This was expressed by some of the respondents as follows:

[…] they say that women manage better than men. That’s because if they [women] are educated, if they control the household, then they [women] are better because we transfer our skills. […] You know, women can be leaders like men, but if you talk about politicians, the truth here is that women are not born to be politicians.²⁶

No, no, no … some of them [female politicians] make a very good speech. Capable of stirring a whole crowd. Better than men, you
know [...] we don’t have the same salary. We can do the same work as the men can do, but we don’t get the same salary.27

The cited women showed signs of ambivalence. For instance, one of the above quotations reveals how male politicians are placed as the political norm that female politicians ought to adapt to (‘We can do the same work as the men’). On the other hand, the very same quotation simultaneously states that women are better politicians than men (‘[female politicians] make a very good speech. Capable of stirring a whole crowd. Better than men, you know’). Thus the quotations reveal how these women combine two distinct discourses: women as superior and men as natural politicians. The quotes indicate how women might alternate between different values expressed in Cambodian society. The discourse about the excellent female politician might be a more recent, perhaps feminist, alternative that contradicts a more general discourse about the ‘male politician’ (it is all a matter of layers of meaning). As will be elaborated in the following chapters, the fact that women keep repeating the new image of a superior female politician may be because they feel uncomfortable, and want to resist the discourse of politics as a masculine issue. In this case, maintaining the alternative image of women as superior politicians can be seen as a strategy of resistance against the hierarchy between men and women.

CAMBODIAN FEMALE POLITICAL IDENTITY:
AN EMERGING PARADOX

As I concluded earlier, the lack of female representatives is partly due to the fact that the definition of a political agent as active, autonomous, public oriented, and engaged in meeting collective rather than personal needs, is often incompatible with the expectation of female manners (see for example Lenz Taguchi 2004: 13). This raises the question of how the female politicians themselves try to handle the fact that their identities do not always correspond with the general idea of a politician.

In general it seems like women politicians, first and foremost, try to relate to the different processes of normalization that they are
exposed to. As stated above, disciplinary power is corrective, aiming to reform, determine or rehabilitate the abnormal, and thus strive to normalize all in conformity with the same ideal model (Johnston 1991: 149–169). This pattern seems to be invoked in the identification process of some Cambodian female politicians. Some seemed to serve the disciplinary processes they felt in regard to an image of a ‘woman’. They argued that women must stay feminine within the political space. One female member of the parliament said that ‘women can be successful as politicians if they remain gentle, soft, quiet and, in addition, intelligent as men are.’ This woman seems to try to perform the more ‘traditional’ image of a woman also within the political space.

Others, however, argued that women must cease performing a female identity (including characteristics such as quietness and gentleness) and adapt themselves to correspond better with the outspoken norms of a politician. One female member of the National Assembly said: ‘Women must change themselves to fit the National Assembly. Women are too shy and timid. That is why they have a lower status than men. Women must be stronger and more outspoken.’ Yet another female member of parliament explained what kind of qualities a female politician ought to have to become successful saying, ‘I think to be successful within the men’s area, you know, because men dominate women a lot here in Cambodia, so if we are not outspoken, we are not seen, we’re just ignored.’ These quotations display how some women politicians downplay femininity, arguing that women must abandon certain feminine traits and adopt a more assertive and extroverted identity. This mirrors Foucault’s ‘refusal of becoming’: maybe the target now is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are (Foucault in Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982: 212). Is it possible for women politicians to refuse being hailed into place, to perform an image of a woman? Butler argues that the disciplinary apparatus and connected identities become an ‘abiding object of passionate attachment,’ thereafter stating that such a postulation may raise the question of masochism:
Certainly, we cannot simply throw off the identities we have become, and Foucault’s call to “refuse” the identities we have become will certainly be met with resistance. […] how are we to understand not merely the disciplinary production of the subject, but the disciplinary cultivation of an attachment to subjection? (Butler 1995: 243–244, emphasis in original)

Women’s attachment to a subaltern identity may explain why some respondents tried to perform simultaneously as a ‘woman’ and a ‘politician’ (see Chapter Eight). It may also explain why one of the respondents used the rhetoric of both positions, seemingly alternating between the two images of identity. She told me that female politicians ought to behave in a ‘proper’ female manner: ‘a good female politician must be strong but flexible. But she must also act as a Cambodian woman: being gentle and so on… She must keep her word. She must be brave and have competence.’ Later on the same woman pointed out that,

Women are quiet because they are shy. Men don’t like it when women are ‘chatty’. Women are raised to respect men and be quiet. This is the case with women in the National Assembly. Women in the National Assembly never use their rights or their ability 100 per cent.32

This woman seems torn between different values and identities.33 While first stating that a female politician must act as a Cambodian woman ‘being gentle’, in the next moment she implies that this means that the female MPs never use ‘their ability 100 per cent’. This can be interpreted as a compromise between the different images that the woman feels that she is being disciplined against. While she may gain rewards in the public space for being outspoken and loud, this contradicts the system of punishments and rewards that marks the identification process for the female gender. Both punishments and rewards can thus be distributed for the same achievement, as the woman politician is failing to correspond with the image of a woman but succeeding in corresponding with the norm of a politician. Being normalized and disciplined simultaneously against conflicting
images may thus manifest itself in contradictory and paradoxical statements. For female politicians it is a matter of performing and organizing the different images – that of a woman and that of a politician – into an understandable self.

Kathy Ferguson’s claim that the conflict between different norms and multiple images of identification makes change possible, helps us to analyse the above quotation. It is in the tension between different images that individuals come up with individual emancipating solutions to the discursive system that keeps women in inequality. The various gendered norms of the society are thus both conservative and emancipatory: the gendered order is maintained while at the same time becoming the source of creative interpretations and new practices (Ferguson in Holmberg 1993: 54). In this regard Bhabha (1999) describes hybridity as a form of in-between space – a third space – where new interpretations, new representations, new hybrid identity or subject-positions emerge. According to Bhabha this space is an ambivalent site where cultural meaning and representation have no ‘primordial [sic] or fixity’ (Bhabha 1994; see also Lenz Taguchi 2004: 208). According to Bhabha, the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments, from which a third emerges. Rather hybridity represent a third space, a space of resistance, which enable other positions to develop and new identification processes to emerge (Bhabha 1999: 286).

Let us examine this third space from the standpoint of female politicians in Cambodia. As suggested above, female politicians seem to experience ambivalence between two different images, that of a female identity and that of a (male) politician. Maybe the problem is not ambivalence between existing images but the lack of another image, an alternative identity that describes what it is to be a female politician. There is no such category in which to place such an individual, a woman who is a politician. There are no images, no discourses, no ideas about what a female politician may be, how she behaves, and so on. This creates confusion not only for the female politician herself but also for the voters. One female politician said,
In one way it is an advantage to be a woman. People just don’t believe that women can be politicians. Therefore everyone comes to listen to you. They want to see how a female candidate acts. They think, ‘is it possible? Can a woman really be a politician?’

Even though people in contemporary Cambodia are getting more and more used to female politicians, from the interviews one can draw the conclusion that Cambodian women are far from creating totally new positions or patterns of identification. If it exists, the third space is not utilized in full but the women rather try to manage by using the images that exist (for example, the image of a male politician or the female women). Can this be described as lack of a third space? or the existence of a weak third space?

The power relations composed by stereotypes and hierarchies in relations to processes of discipline and naturalizing might prevent new forms and positions from developing, resulting in a lack of this third space. The above must be adjusted, however, because as suggested, there is a stratum within the Cambodian society that tries to create an image of politically active women, a hybrid identity of a caring political woman. Why, then, isn’t this image of the superior woman considered by the women while discussing how to act and be within the political sphere? In some senses the superior female image, rather seems to compose a general, rather vague account of a potential, maybe-existing, should-theoretically-exist, female politician than it seems to be a description of actual female politicians or a factual image for identification. It seems like the women when discussing their action, relating themselves to possible identities, the images of a superior politician does not come into consideration. Instead the women seem to identify with the different images that they are normalized by, that are connected to disciplinary power and which others nearby have assumed. The superior female politician may be an image arising from a sensed need for resistance and it embraces a more general judgment of an abstract image. From this a number of questions become relevant to explain the action of female politicians. Studying women in politics in any specific context in-
volves considering: what role models exist? What images of identity exists? Of what character are they? What images are more concrete/general? What images are connected to disciplinary processes?

CONCLUSIONS

I have now established that many of the respondents experienced a hierarchy between male and female identities, in which women are often seen as weaker both physically and mentally, while men are given greater status, as well as being associated with the norm of a public person. As stated above, stereotypes reduce, essentialize, naturalize and fix complex social patterns and ignore interdependence. For example, Cambodian women are often described as uninformed, easily scared and stupid. Due to gender stereotypes, women thus have very limited choices of identity positions and are measured against a felt normality, a stereotyped picture of what it is to be a woman. This seems to reduce women’s opportunities to recognize themselves, and be acknowledged by others, as leaders.

Some respondents described how the image of a politician/leader in some senses, and particularly in some contexts, seems to overlap with the responsibilities of the soldier or the guardian, both traditionally male ‘positions’. Cambodia’s past might then have reinforced women’s positions as outsiders by placing leadership abilities connected to security issues in the centre. According to the respondents, the risk of being exposed to violence also results in fewer women entering the public sphere. In many cases, this is due to the impossibility of uniting the dangers of politics with the responsibility of caring for the old people, children, animals, and so on.

Due to the stereotypical notions of men, women and politicians, many experience a vacant space with no existing images of politically active women. No characteristics are assigned particularly to female politicians, simply because there exists no image of them. For female politicians today there seem to be only two dominant images available with which to identify: that of the male politician and that of the non-political woman. Or in other words, some women try to normalize against the image of a male politician while others behave
The Lack of (and Longing for) a ‘Third Space’

in line with the traditional image of women but in a new arena: the political arena. The absence of a third image of identity has a number of consequences. As long as there is no clear role model of how to be a female politician, there is no image for women to identify with, which results in less freedom of political action for women. Here, power deals with a limited space for action and stereotyped pictures of women as well as of politicians.

As stated above, the picture of a strictly gendered order and a lack of alternative resisting images must be nuanced because attempts have been made to transgress the boundaries arising for women in politics. Amongst others a third discourse exits. Some women established the image of a superior female politician inhabiting all the right qualities in terms of caring and knowing. A certain ambivalence characterizes the words of those women who promote this discourse, as they simultaneously tend to put up men as the political norm. In addition, the image of the superior female politicians seems to be used in a more abstract, general way of describing female politicians rather than providing the actual female politicians with a possible image of identification.

NOTES

1 Homi Bhabha (1999) describes hybridity as a form of in-between space, or ‘third space’, in which new interpretations, representations, hybrid identities or subject-positions are formed.


3 Interview No. 1C.

4 Interviews No. 2C, 18C, and others.

5 Interview No. 13B.

6 Interview No. 16A.

7 Interview No. 2B.

8 Interview No. 17B.
9  Interview No. 1E.

10 Nanda Pok, Women for Prosperity (an NGO dealing with women’s political rights), personal communication, Phnom Penh, May 1999.

11 Interview No. 13A.

12 Interview No. 1A.

13 Interview No. 2A.

14 Interview No. 14B.

15 Interview No. 14B.

16 Interview No. 12B.

17 Interview No. 14A.

18 Interview No. 13A.

19 Interview No. 12B, emphasis added.

20 Interview No. 18B.

21 Interview No. 16A.

22 Interview No. 16A.

23 Interview No. 2C.

24 Interview No. 2A.

25 Interview No. 11B.

26 Interview No. 2A.

27 Interview No. 1A.

28 Interview No. 10B.

29 Interview No. 9B.

30 Interview No. 8A.

31 Interview No. 12B.

32 Interview No. 12B.

33 Bhabha expresses this in terms of being in ‘the very place of identification caught in the tension of demand and desire’ (Bhabha 1994: 44).

34 Interview No. 4B.
Normalizing as a strategy of resistance

This chapter considers how the power-knowledge nexus described in Chapter Two makes its presence felt within the Cambodian context. Some knowledge is considered ‘truer’, more valued and more correct. How do female politicians experience and react towards hierarchies and stereotypes? In other words, how are different forms of knowledge assigned different statuses in a political context, and what are the strategies of resistance against this forming of knowledge hierarchies?

This chapter will also discuss how education prevailed as a strategy used by women to handle the fact that they might not overlap with the image of a politician or possess the ‘right’ knowledge. In the end, an ambiguous analysis of education appears as it shapes individuals but may also contribute to political power. It provides knowledge that enables people to become normalized, as well as forcing people to do so. It exercises power as well as grants it. From this reasoning it becomes increasingly clear that the concept of education in relation to power must be problematized.

ADAPTING TO THE NORMS OF THE READER

As claimed previously, one criterion for being assigned positions of power is often to know the predominant discourses, the knowledge or ‘truths’, to possess democratic skills and to talk in an educated
manner. What is important is also how you present your discursive knowledge: you must know how to package your message as well as argue for it. In this process the reader becomes as important as the writer, because it is the recipient of your discursive knowledge whom you must convince of your ability. This can be explored through the words of a Cambodian NGO worker:

The leader of a human rights organization, also specializing in women’s issues, said during one international seminar, she is Cambodian, well she said that there are 65 per cent women in Cambodia. During the coffee break I went to see her and said ‘where do you get this statistics from’. Because the national institute of statistics states that the population of Cambodia now is 10.8 [million] and there is a 52 per cent of women among the 10.8. […] And I tell you this short story because I believe that when women want to defend themselves they have to be credible. Very creditable means that you must work very hard. Each time you say something those are things that you say represent the power of truth. And every one will go around and check if you are right or not. If you destroy yourself by telling such a crazy things you are not defending women.¹

While most of the participants in this international seminar probably saw this woman as being well informed, this respondent did not. Assessing the knowledge of the woman from his perspective or knowledge, the respondent came to question her ability. Depending on the discursive context and the knowledge of the listener, the speaker’s messages are thus valued differently, which in the end reflects on her position and status.

After the above statement, the respondent continued the interview by arguing that women will probably gain more power if they inhabit, not only the right knowledge, but also the ‘right communication skill to communicate that knowledge to others.’² This can be understood through Foucault’s notions of discursive ranking. Different statements are assigned different values: that is, discourses separate right from wrong, the bad from the good, and what ought to be said from what should remain silenced. For a woman politician, what is important is, first, to define who the important listeners
Normalizing as a Strategy of Resistance

are, and secondly, to be able to assert herself as knowledgeable to that listener by putting forward the 'good,' the 'right'; what ought to be said. This was emphasised by yet another female MP who argued that you must 'know your issue' in order to stand up to the men of the political field:

[…] the hard thing is to know exactly your subject; what are you talking about. Is this really worth listening to? You have to really know your story. Then they can't say anything. […] Most of the time, when we really know our issues, men cannot fight. Because they say; 'you know this is an outspoken woman' and 'I don't want to argue with her.' But if you don't speak, you know, you cannot be heard and that's the only thing.³

Another female politician argued that it is important to learn how to speak and what to say in the National Assembly before actually doing it:

You see, even they [female members of parliament] don’t speak. […] in the presence of men or in public life, or big like that, they [female politicians] hesitate. Take me as an example: with my staff or with the people I speak a lot, but in the Assembly I have to think a lot before. Women very much like thinking before they do anything. […] you must have a very large knowledge, general knowledge, before you talk. So from my experience, I have to study the administrative. If you talk in the Assembly making nonsense, you can get nothing for the session, but you lose confidence. So, for me myself I won’t talk. It is a new world for me.⁴

This quotation implies that women politicians must adapt (by ‘study[ing] the administrative’) to the discourses of the political arena, and comprehend and be able to speak the right knowledge, the ‘truths’ (they must have ‘very large knowledge’). On the whole, it is important not to repeat those discourses defined as improper (‘making nonsense’).

This reasoning was extended by some respondents. Over and above the ability to repeat the political ‘truths’, they argued that women must correspond to the male political identity to participate
on an equal basis. Today, there is a gap between men and women that is well felt within the political space:

Men give the jobs to men. They know how men work. Men can drink as men and have fun as men. They have fun together. Women are not as fun as men, according to men. They are not seen as competent, as smart as men. Men are considered to take care of the women by forcing them to stay at home. It is also an obstacle that there are fewer women than men. Women feel uncomfortable when they are in minority. They would speak out more if they were more. Because men and women think differently. When women are fewer than men they feel unnatural. Also men feel uncomfortable if it is more women in a group.5

‘Strange’, ‘dull’ and ‘unintelligent’; that is how women are comprehended by men, the respondent argues. What is mirrored in the quotation, is the view that Cambodian men distributes positions of power to other men, as they are the normal, the understandable. This argument can be strengthened by referring to Robert Lundin (2003: x), who confirms that ‘the members of one’s own group [are] rated more positively than members in other groups’. This implies that to make sense to the power brokers, the women must possess a form of knowledge – a way of talking and being – that accords with the high-up men.

For the respondents, it became important to mirror the discourses of the appointees and the power brokers in the political sphere. Some women politicians depicted how the provincial power-brokers as well as the top leaders of the political parties are influential in the processes of recruiting political candidates.6 One woman said ‘The provinces recommend who should be the political candidates on the list. But in the end the decision is taken by a committee consisting of, for example, Hun Sen and Chea Sim.’7 One woman stated that,

They have a committee that they call central committee. They are the ones that select the candidates. Most of the people in that committee are men. So, women have less chance to, less opportunity to even vote. So first of all you have to prove to the party leader that you
Normalizing as a Strategy of Resistance

are capable. That you are able to get votes for the party. That you are popular, that you are well known. [...] You must be good speaker, you must be able to understand what is going on in the area that you are running.\(^8\)

It is thus important for the women to share, to have knowledge of and access to, the discourses of the leading men who appoint politicians to important positions. In order to get to know the discourse of those in power, one must have access to the sites and spaces in which these discourses are produced, presented and negotiated. In my interviews, one respondent mentioned seminars and workshops as places were women’s ‘awareness’ could increase.\(^9\) However, bars and brothels also were referred to as places were men spend time, create bonds, make decisions and create discourses: ‘Men they always meet each other and then they drink wine and then something to eat. [Then they talk] about the party, so secret information. Women do not do that.’\(^10\) Another woman stated that ‘One problem is that men make all the decisions at the pub or in brothels. Informal. To those places women can’t come. It was in the brothels that the lists of the candidates were decided in 1993’.\(^11\) Many of the spaces mentioned above are closed to women who are culturally restricted from being present in certain male dominated spheres. For example, men are expected to be promiscuous, and 60–70 per cent regularly visits prostitutes (Brown in Santry 2005: 124). Women, on the other hand must be chaste prior to marriage (Boua 1992: 19).

This segregation of the sexes, the different expectations and thereby also the different spaces for men and women impact upon public decision-making if women cannot get access to sites where important political discourses are produced and decisions made (McGrew, Frieson and Chan 2004: 13). Thus, by extension, the problem is not only that there are relations of power between the sexes – where forms of behaviour and knowledge associated with male politicians have a higher status and are more rewarded in the political sphere than those connected with female politicians – many of these women also seem to lack access to the knowledge of how to behave according to the norm, what to know and how to talk.
Foucault’s theoretical position, as outlined in Chapter Two, might help us to understand the above reasoning. Foucault argues that the discourse speaks of a norm that may become, for the individual, an optimum towards which s/he is striving (1986: 241). In this sense disciplinary power shapes and normalizes subjects who eventually turn into one homogeneous mass. Power, according to Foucault, is thus disciplinary: it normalizes and has the function of reducing gaps (1991: 182; 1986: 241; Johnston 1991). I suggest that for politically active women in Cambodia, however, the problem may actually be the opposite: since women are not a part of the disciplining process with respect to a political norm, they are faced with a big obstacle that prevents them from gaining political power. It is the lack of a disciplinary process, as defined by Foucault, that becomes the problem. In other words, since the different political ‘truths’ are created in male-dominated sites and since the image of the politician is informed by masculinity, some women fail to comprehend how one must behave and talk to be a ‘good politician’.

To be able to obtain a high ranking position, women first need to obtain access to the different ‘truths’ concerning how to behave and what to know as a trustworthy politician. Secondly, they must learn to correspond to this image and speak the right knowledge. The problem is double-edged as, first, there is a relationship of power based on the separation and hierarchy of knowledge and characteristics associated with the two genders and, secondly, it is difficult for women to obtain access to the look and features of the hierarchy, as they lack access to many male-oriented sites where knowledge is produced and maintained.

**EDUCATION AS A ROAD TO POLITICAL POWER**

Women should take part in politics to gain respect and status. But women must get education first, then they will be able to show their competence. It is a strategy.¹²

In the above quotation, it is argued that women must change through education, in order to be able to show their ability. According to
Burbules, education has become an instrument to spread ‘what every educated person should learn, should know, should be able to do’ (1996: 1). It is a tool to create and distribute a minimum average, a norm of knowledge that students should attain. In this sense, springing from the desire to give the student the same knowledge, the same ability, the school has often become an instrument for a disciplinary power that creates disciplined subjects (Azar 2002: 22): ‘The curricula of Third World universities homogenize Third World students’ (Johnston 1991: 166). Or in other words, the differences between students due to, for example, class, race or sex are suppressed, as students are expected to have the same knowledge, communicate in a similar educated manner, and behave according to the same norms and rules. As stated above, Bourdieu writes about different sorts of capital, such as cultural capital. Cultural capital can be described as cultural competence, that is, the capacity to behave in a way that is regarded as proper and promising, and is therefore rewarded with, for example, trust or public responsibility. Cultural capital can be obtained through education, which both maintains the legitimacy of cultural capital and ensures its convertibility (Bourdieu in Broady 1998: 11–20). Bourdieu might help us to understand the above citation and the fact that in Cambodia education has often been seen as a standard solution ensuring the inclusion of women in the political decision-making processes (Bo 1997).

For many this is the ultimate Foucauldian power, shaping docile bodies. While turning individuals into educated, norm-observing public servants, education might also provide such individuals with both a feeling of being able to communicate and an increase in self-confidence. In addition, as it will be argued, education may also enhance opportunities for the individual to reach political power and be considered a trustworthy political candidate.

Fairclough (2002), however, has questioned the idea that education normalizes people into, a right way to talk in the public space. He discusses the process of normalization while arguing that recent educational reforms require that the purpose of education must be called in question. Among many burning educational issues, he es-
especially questions the assumption that there exists a communication skill that is being transferable from one sphere to another. First of all, he claims that not all discursive practices are found in all contexts, and that, for example, knowing how to interview candidates for admission to a university does not mean that you know how to interview personalities on a television chat-show. A second argument is that there is no simple relationship between what is said and existing models/skills of how to say it (‘it is assumed [...] that discourse is a mere instantiation of such models’), but there are manifold models functioning in complexity, and creativity may have more impact than skills (Fairclough 2002: 7–8). Thirdly, Fairclough argues that the power dimension is lost because, although it is assumed that there is one generally accepted way of using language, in reality there is an ongoing battle between different contested ways (2002: 7–8). While the latter criticism may be fully justified, the former comments may be somewhat exaggerated. Fairclough does admit that we talk according to certain models, but he emphasizes the complexity of these models as well as the space for creativity in language. Nonetheless, education can probably provide the subaltern with some knowledge of how to speak within public (that is, the normalized talk, the disciplined language). Perhaps in practice education can even give a hint about the space for creativity and for questioning. At any rate, many Cambodian women experience an increased comfort and self-confidence in the political space after they received an education. This may be due to a number of reasons. First of all, it seems that education provides the subaltern with knowledge of how to talk and behave in the public arena, how to become a normalized, ‘well-functioning’ human being who can be trusted with political responsibilities. One female politician stated that on the whole, women politicians with education behave ‘properly’, however there are exceptions:

[...] I do not look down on women who are not educated. Some women are not educated but they still behave in a suitable way in dealing with people’s problems. Because of their experiences of the past they are hard working. [...] Especially when one holds a high position one must have knowledge.13
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Education, the respondent suggests, makes women ‘behave in a suitable way’, implying education to be a means to normalize people. Secondly, education provides the individual with useful all-round general knowledge that s/he may be able to put into practice in her or his role as a politician. One female politician said, ‘Even me I’m still thinking how I can improve my knowledge. […] I want to improve my skills in tourism, the economy, and the most important is foreign language. […] because then I can be a high-ranking officer in the ministry’.14

Finally, education is strongly associated with status in Cambodian society (Norrlind 1996: 25). One woman stated, ‘When you have education, people believe in you’.15 In today’s Cambodia there is a tendency to separate the educated and intelligent from the uneducated and so-called mentally weak, thus making education one of the main factors that matter when individuals are ranked and classified. Mental weakness is thus not viewed as a biological attribute but is explained by lack of schooling, and so on, just as intelligence can be acquired through education, experience or background. One woman said, ‘Women in the rural areas are not clever. They are mentally weaker than men. Women are stupid because they have no education; they stay at home and have no good ideas’.16 Another women said, ‘Education does not automatically give you intelligence. It also depends on other factors. You can get intelligence through experiences or from your background’.17

The status that is connected with education is probably due partly to the sharp border between those who have it and those who do not: the logic of hierarchies builds upon the separations between different categories. If all people were labelled educated, this border between the educated and the non-educated would disappear, and other attributes would probably become important in separating good politicians from bad ones.

By being ranked above others, the educated also seem to acquire a sense of self-confidence, which is regarded as an important trait in the public sphere. One respondent stated, ‘It is important that people sees you if you shall be a politician. People must believe in
you. Support is very important for a woman who wants to become a politician. Intelligence is also important. Self-confidence too and therefore education. Yet another woman said,

You have to have self-confidence. If you don’t believe in yourself you can’t manage to do anything. But when you get education you get self-confidence. Then you can manage to show people your capacity. Then people have to question the old idea that the woman is mentally weaker than the man. She gets a new identity.

This statement tells us how self-confidence facilitates the process of challenging stereotypes and hierarchies, how it creates agency. In this sense disciplinary power is itself a road to power. The self-confidence and the associated sense of agency that women acquire through the normalization processes have been emphasized as core values within the empowerment debate. Self-confidence, self-esteem and a feeling of an ’I’ in connection to a sense of agency, is often described as the cornerstones of processes of empowerment. Or as Rowlands summarizes it,

Empowerment cannot simply be equated with self-confidence and dignity; it is also what happens as a result of having self-confidence and dignity. Hence the need for a ‘sense of agency’ as an essential element of personal or collective empowerment (Rowlands in Erwér 2001: 246).

Similarly, Nadia Youssef emphasizes self-confidence as a starting-point for improving women’s societal positions. Through self-confidence women’s participation in decision-making increases and shows the way to empowerment, or the opportunity for women to realize their right to self-determination (Youssef 1995: 279–288).

The above thus makes it clear that disciplinary power not only gives us suppressed disciplined subjects, it may also lead to the subaltern being empowered. Everyday life becomes easier if one knows the informal rules of how to behave, which demands a certain level of normalization. As the quotations above suggest, education gives you the ability to act properly, which by extension contributes to contentment, self-confidence and possibly status and decision-mak-
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ing power. Moreover, from the experiences she acquired from her educational program in India, Gayatri Spivak advocates education as a means of being able to communicate with those in power (in Lundblad 2002: 39).

THE OPPORTUNITIES AND DIFFICULTIES OF NORMALIZING: CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

In the political realm of Cambodia, it seems that some identity positions are recognized as desirable and a person who conforms with this norm is rewarded by decision-making power or with a high-rank position. The citations indicate, that while striving to ‘become’, to imitate a particular subject position means constantly repeating the behaviours associated with it. The image of identity is then manifested in a superficial repetitive act, an image reflected on a new surface, because while striving to become, we repeat the codes of conduct associated with the desirable position. This repetition is an important component of the disciplinary process in which individuals becomes normalized. Disciplinary power has consequences for women’s political status, because some women try to correspond to the political norm in order to gain political power. In addition, for women, repeating a ‘male’ political image may also be read in terms of resistance against the subaltern female identity positions they refuse to perform. Therefore, as claimed previously, normalization may not only be seen as a modern form of power shaping docile subjects, it may also be viewed as a resisting act.

The subaltern adapting to the hierarchies or stereotypes in order to gain political power in some senses might maintain the power relation per se. They repeat the stereotype (of the male politician) that commonly works against women’s political participation. In spite of the fact that some individuals may gain political positions through normalization, the mechanisms of exclusion are then still effective and the cornerstones of the injustices of the political systems remain.

For many it is not possible to overlap with the optimum norm, only to mimic it. In other words, the Other is often incapable of
corresponding entirely to the standard norm. For example, the colonized can never become the colonizer, the coloured can never be white. Women trying to discipline themselves in the direction of the norm will probably fail. As Deborah Johnston (1991) suggests, rehabilitation to the normal cannot be fully attained, since the system rests upon the existence of both the normal and the abnormal. As suggested earlier, female MPs who adjust themselves to the standard behaviours of the political sphere are most likely to fail to overlap the norm completely. Instead, the normalized bodies of these female politicians might disrupt the cultural order by being ‘in-between’. In this sense, the hybrid identity of female politicians may be used as a form of resistance by disturbing our preconceived ideas.

Women’s mimicry of an outspoken, male-related political identity may lead to new problems emerging. While acknowledging a new image imbued with masculinity, the respondent no longer corresponded to the female gender. Their difference from the female norm may create confusion as well as scepticism from male colleagues. For example, one female MP that I interviewed described how outspoken, strong women were perceived in the National Assembly: ‘Sometimes, when you do like this (gesture of speaking), everyone looks at you: ‘so brave, so intelligent’, but not so nice to be around. […] Are you single too; no one will ask you to marry: ‘Oh I’m scared of a woman like that’. According to this statement, the phenomenon of the male gender in a female body fills male politicians with aversion, as well as admiration, double feelings indicating ambivalence over how to respond to a woman acting like a man. This can be explored through Bhabha’s concept of mimicry, which refers to how the colonised becomes like the coloniser, but not yet the same. The coloniser experiences menace as Otherness slides into sameness, and the coloniser sees traces of him- or herself in the colonised. This challenges the supposedly fixed knowledge about who is the coloniser and who is the colonised. Authority’s near-duplication comprises a powerful representation, and mimicry becomes a strategy to shake the constructed differences on which authority is based. As the Other disciplines him/herself towards the norm, the
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dichotomy of Otherness and Self, us and them, becomes dissolved (Bhabha 1984: 125–133; Bardenstein 2005; Bhabha in Childs and Williams 1997: 129–133; Prakash 1992: 16–17). In this sense, the body of the female politician becomes, as Braidotti expresses it, ‘an interface, a threshold, a field of intersecting material and symbolic forces, it is a surface where multiple codes (race, sex, class, age, and so on) are inscribed: it’s a cultural construction that capitalizes on the energies of a heterogeneous, discontinuous and unconscious nature’ (Braidotti 2003: 44). By showing up in the wrong category, performing wrongly, these Cambodian women challenge the old stereotypes and cultural boundaries and may be seen as threatening to the cultural order. New images emerge and old ones are negotiated; strong boundaries, stereotypes and hierarchies are undermined, and as claimed above, while new versions on an old theme emerge, hybridity becomes resistance, revealing the natural just as temporarily.

As stated above, challenging the cultural order through being different is, however, a resistance strategy that may be painful for the woman herself. As is revealed in the below quotation, intimidation, harassment and low status are integral parts of the punishment distributed to those who not adjust:

[The women who are accepted as political candidates] have worked very hard to get their base, you know, their voice heard. It was not easy for them, I know they struggled. They have a big face. [...] That means they are not shy. Even though they have been intimidated, even though they have been looked down on, even though they have been harassed. So you have to have a thick face.21

Hence, female MPs in Cambodia who change between identities using mimicry seem troubled. Resistance against homogeneous discourses is not always a light-hearted processes, but actions that may be punished. Or, as Judith A. Howard and Jocelyn Hollander conclude (1997) ‘women who challenge low performance expectations by contributing assertively to group discussions can experience a ‘backlash’ reaction because their behavior [sic] is perceived as illegitimate’. Disciplinary punishment, in this sense, has the function
of reducing gaps and is therefore intended to be corrective (Foucault 1991: 177–184).

Let us make some reflections in regard to the above. Women who do not correspond to the female gender represent the in-between or the ‘counter-evidences’ (see concluding reflections) that shake the cultural order. From the perspective of power theory, however, I would like to argue that this argument requires modification, because the difference not only shakes the cultural order, but in many cases may also be used to fix the normal and determine what is rational: in order to know what is normal one must contrast it with something abnormal, out-of-the-way. It is therefore only under certain circumstances that the difference becomes a potential source of change; only when it is impossible to ignore or hold the difference as ridiculous does the possibility of shaking the cultural order arise. In addition, as stated above, the strategy of normalization may create a number of new problems for the woman herself. For example, too great a normalization may complicate the very important communication with the voters. This would be problematic as many politicians saw themselves as the link between the people and the government. One respondent stated that ‘If I want to be a good politician I need to bring the information up to the people and bring the problems of the people to the government. […] You must be a link between the people and the government!’22

As will become obvious below, some respondents worried that the female politicians of today’s Cambodia have been too successful in adopting the political discourse, and thereby lost their ability to speak the discourses of the people. On these grounds, one respondent raised this concern about normalized high-ranking Cambodian female politicians:

I don’t think I’m convinced that they [female politicians] are good leaders because of, for example, in the NA if you talk about Ky Lum Ang, Ky Lum Ang, you know, if you talk about Prach Tan An, about Man Som An. These all come from FUNCINPEC as well as CPP. You know the problem with that? To me they are very convincing
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but when they talk to Cambodian women in the villages about this and that they are not convincing! Why? Because their vocabulary does not reflect their culture.\(^\text{23}\)

This respondent argues that women, by normalizing themselves in order to master the discourses of the political field, simultaneously may distance themselves from their subordinated identity and thus lose their ability to communicate with other subaltern groups, such as, women and rural people. The British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was also criticized on equal grounds (Peterson and Runyan 1993).

NOTES

1. Interview No. 11A.
2. Interview No. 11A.
3. Interview No. 8A.
4. Interview No. 16A, emphasis added.
5. Interview No 4B.
6. Interview No. 16A.
7. Interview No. 10B.
8. Interview No 2A, emphasis added.
9. Interview No. 11A.
10. Interview No. 12A.
11. Interview No. 18A.
12. Interview No. 17 B.
13. Interview No. 5E.
14. Interview No. 6A.
15. Interview No. 17B.
16. Interview No. 5B.
17. Interview No. 19B.
18. Interview No. 12B.
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19. Interview No. 17B.
20. Interview No. 16A.
21. Interview No. 2A.
22. Interview No. 6E.
23. Interview No. 11A.
Discourses and representations as means of resistance

In this chapter it will be argued that the construction of discourses is the key to understanding how one may resist power-loaded discourses. It is the fact that these discourses are constituted by time, instituted through the repetition of representations that creates the possibility of change. For example, according to Butler, failures to repeat ‘correctly’ open up the possibility of transformation (1999: 179). Below I will return to Butler’s theories, not only to recognize her outline about repetition and social change, but also to argue that social research has given too little attention to why we repeat representations. Taking the ‘speaking’s of Cambodian politicians as a point of departure, it will be argued, first, that repetition and silence are both important concepts for understanding resistance, and secondly, that an analysis of the impact of different sorts of representations – images, statements, and so forth – must be included into the study of resistance. Finally, the chapter will argue that not only are there manifold ways in which hybridity plays out, but also the making of hybrid truths might confer status, thus negotiating the hierarchies.

REPEATING DIFFERENTLY AND THE CONCEPT OF REVERSE DISCOURSE

One of the foundations of Butler’s theories of gendered identities is that to maintain a discourse we have to repeat it. This puts the
concept of performativity at the core of Butler's work. Inspired by Derrida's theory of iterability or citationality, she argues that gender is an identity constituted in time through the repetition of acts. Moi states that the foundation of gender performativity is that gender is something we do, not are – it is action, not a thing (1997: 103). The performance of gendered acts is at once a re-enactment and a re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established. This repetitive, and in some sense forced, ‘doing’ of gender, in Butler’s outline produces the fiction that an individual has a stable gender which they are just expressing it in their actions. Gender is thus a kind of repeated, largely forced enactment or performance, steered by disciplinary processes, that produces the imaginary fiction of a ‘core gender’ (Butler 1999: 178–179).

To Butler, performativity serves as the site for possible contestation of gender: it is precisely the fact that gender is repeated, performed and thereby maintained that opens up the possibility of change. If identity is constituted through repetition of behaviours and modes of self-representation, these repetitions can be the locus of change and every interval of repetition offers a place to locate and investigate change. In Butler’s words,

The abiding gendered self will then be shown to be structured by repeated acts that seek to approximate the ideal of a substantial ground of identity, but which, in their occasional discontinuity, reveal the temporal and contingent groundlessness of this “ground.” The possibilities of gender transformation are to be found precisely in the arbitrary relation between such as, in the possibility of a failure to repeat, a de-formity, or a parodic repetition that exposes the phantasmatic effect of abiding identity as a politically tenuous construction (Butler 1999: 179).

The remark about ‘the failure to repeat’ or the concepts of ‘de-formity’ and of ‘parodic repetition’ illustrates very well Butler’s thoughts about the possibility of transformations. Repetitions are the basis for change, which may occur as we fail to repeat according to the social norms of the discourses.
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According to Butler, reloading a concept or image with new meaning may happen accidentally. There is the risk of certain misrecognition when being hailed a name. Naming someone ‘Woman’, ‘Jew’, ‘Queer’ or ‘Black’ may be meant, and interpreted, as an insult. It may be an attempt to force an individual to invest in a certain stereotyped identity-position by treating him/her according to that stereotype. It is possible, however, that the person who is hailed ‘Women’, ‘Jew’, ‘Queer’ or ‘Black’ fails to hear what is meant, misreads the call or in other ways reacts ‘wrongly’. The attempt to produce the subject by naming it has failed (Butler 1995: 238–239; Butler 1997: 95–97) and a new meaning is accidentally produced for a word.

A similar reasoning has been mentioned by Foucault; reversed discourses (1981: 101; in Butler 1995: 236). Butler argues that there are textual movements in Foucault’s work when freedom from the normalizing oppression is pictured as the return of the body to a non-normalizable wildness. This is rarely seen in Foucault’s texts, however, and more often resistance appears in the shape of reversed discourses (Butler 1995: 236). Reversed discourses are used to describe how the subaltern claims the categories and vocabularies of the dominating force or superior norm, precisely in order to contest it (Butler 1995: 236). Butler agrees with Foucault that the subject is constantly in the process of being produced. It is the idea that the subject is never produced instantly in its totality, but repeatedly constituted in subjection, that enables the reverse discourse, namely the possibility of a repetition that repeats against its origin (Butler 1997: 93). Alternatively, in the words of Foucault, ‘Deviancy returns from abjection by deploying just those terms which relegated it to that state in the first place – including ‘nature’ and ‘essence’’ (Foucault in Parry 1994: 194).

Foucault uses the term ‘homosexual’ as an example of a reverse discourse:

There is no question that the appearance in nineteenth-century psychiatry, jurisprudence, and literature of a whole series of discourses on the species and subspecies of homosexuality, inversion,
pederasty, and “psychic hermaphrodism” made possible a strong advance of social controls into this area of “perversity”; but it also made possible the formation of a “reverse” discourse: homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or “naturality” be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified (Foucault 1981: 101).

The use of this term does not automatically result in a transcending of heterosexuality, or as Butler expresses it,

[…] it will be the same “homosexuality” which will be deployed first in the service of normalizing heterosexuality and second in the service of its own depathologization: this term will carry the risk of the former meaning in the latter, but it would be a mistake to think that by simply speaking the term one either transcends heterosexual normalization or becomes its instrument. The risk of a renormalization is persistently there (Butler 1995: 237).

Butler states that even though one adds new meaning to subaltern concepts, the actual words are still the same. The reverse discourse is thus always parasitic on the dominant discourse it contests, thus resistance appears as the effect of power, as a part of power itself (Butler 1995: 237).

The above exemplifies resistance geared towards transforming the meaning of a concept. The fact that meaning never can be fixed forms a powerful instrument to challenge, change or contest dominant delimiting discourses. In the process of renaming, deforming or parodying, the old meanings do not always disappear; on the contrary they might remain the same, and the new repetitions often turn out to be just attaching additional meaning. Therefore, in the production of meanings, the reader is as important as the writer. (S. Hall 1997a: 32–33).

Butler’s notion of out-of-the-way repetitions and the concept of reverse discourse invite us to analyse the interviews of the Cambodian women politicians. A stated in Chapter Five, women are ideally expected to stay at home and not expose themselves to the desires of
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men, with whom they might do something wrong. As Ledgerwood states, ‘The ideal Khmer woman […] is innocent and therefore vulnerable; she should not go out alone’ (Ledgerwood 1996: 414–415), however, for a female politician it is difficult to have such a limited freedom of movement. In the tension between the subject positions of the ideal Khmer woman and what is comprehended as a political subject position, some female politicians have tried to negotiate the meaning connected to women. It seems that repeating gendered norms slightly differently was a means to solve the tension between the different subject positions:

We train for women to provide them with skills that they can use in their work for being better politicians. But we ask them to never forget their identity as Cambodian women. Nothing in the law … nothing in, how do you say, in we are not suppose to go outside with a man, nothing. We just say that traditionally women stay home. But nothing says that we cannot go out and work.

First of all, the above statement argues that female politicians should simultaneously hold an identity as a politician and as a woman (‘their work for being better politicians. But we ask them to never forget their identity as Cambodian women’). In the quotation, in line with Butler, the female identity seems strongly connected to what women do, the performing of female gender (‘But we ask them to never forget their identity as Cambodian women. What Cambodian women actually do!’). The women are encouraged to do nothing but what women are expected to do. The quotation also implies, however, that this doing can be broadened and slightly redefined within the borders of what women can do. Women are not allowed to leave the home ‘to go outside with a man’. The informant, however, states that if women do not go ‘outside with a man’ but work/perform politics they should be able to go out, because there are no norms or laws that say that women cannot go out if she behaves properly. This is performing the context-specific female identity slightly differently, thus changing the content of the identity position without crossing the borders of what women can do, and making legitimate
and intelligible the new performance of the female identity within
the discourses and logic of the expected femininity.

This negotiation of different concepts can be further understood
if we make use of the idea of subjectivity, as presented in Chapter
Two. The woman quoted tries to organize multiple identities into
a possible political identity. Read from the theoretical outline, the
contradictions and disturbances in and among the different sub-
ject-positions (in this case woman and politician) seem to make
possible the negotiations of the very same positions. In this process
the woman uses her subjectivity to understand/interpret and act in
the social and political context through which she and other female
politicians are formed.

Cambodian female politicians try to redefine the concept of
woman by repeating it slightly differently, deviating from the opti-
umum of an ideal Khmer woman, however as stated above, the new
repetition can never be detached from the old meaning. Butler ar-
gues that we must consider the inversion of a word such as woman.
Here it is not a question of an opposition between the reactionary
and the progressive usages of the word. On the contrary, a reverse
discourse implies a progressive repetition of the reactionary in order
to create a subversive effect (Butler 1995: 242). Resistance therefore
appears as the effect of power, by using power-loaded concepts in a
new way. This would be the starting point for the critique against
the reverse-discourse theory forwarded by Benita Parry (1994), who
points to the discussions of nativism. Claiming ancestral purity as an
attempt to reverse discourse may end up in nothing but becoming
an Other that reflects the Western assumptions of selfhood, where
‘west initiates and the native imitates’ (Parry 1994: 175–177).

In sum, one respondent tried to negotiate the practices and the
freedom of movement connected to the female image of identity, by
repeating it somewhat differently. I want to underscore that these
kinds of negotiations are not unique for the Cambodian context.
To highlight this I want to link my analysis to the research done by
Naila Kabeer (2000), who describes how Bangladeshi women try to
‘feminize’ and normalize factory work by using some metaphors and
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analogies. In order to transform the perception of the factory work as forbidden, the women described the factory as a ‘home’, making it a ‘domestic’ space as well as applying a gender-related kinship terminology in order to de-sexualize the working relationship between men and women within the factory (Kabeer 2000: 92–99). This research illustrates the apparent messiness often spotted between different negotiated categories. In the course of conducting the interviews, I too became increasingly aware of the general leakiness, ambivalence and movability of categories, because, not only was the female identity negotiated to fit the outline of a politician, but concepts such as politician and politics were also under negotiation:

You know if you are NGO they say we don’t do politics. So I say that: I agree you cannot support any individual party but if you do it for everybody and go to every political party: you do politics. You talk to people to support your goal, what you want to do. That is politics! You go out and you tell people this is your idea and you need support: that is politics!2

This respondent starts off by giving her view of what is traditionally labelled as politics, namely to support a political party (‘You know if you are NGO they say we don’t do politics. So I say that: I agree you cannot support any individual party’). Thereafter, however, she tries to widen the concept of politics by outlining other practices that she also labels politics (‘but if you do it for everybody and go to every political party: you do politics. You talk to people to support your goal, what you want to do. That is politics! You go out and you tell people this is your idea and you need support: that is politics!’). Moreover, also the Women’s Media Centre in Phnom Penh appears to argue that politics is not only exercised in governmental institutions, but also something going on in daily life. By broadcasting different stories, they tried to broaden the meaning of the concept to include the strategies used in everyday village life. For example, one film that was televised described an attempt to realize a development project in a village. The negotiations and strategies used to get the project going were labelled as politics, and the concluding speech
argued that every single individual could perform politics. This is in line with the strategies of western feminists, who have entered into a struggle over meanings, trying to break the associations with the word politics and give it a new set of meanings in order to redistribute power more evenly. As stated by Peterson and Runyan, ‘Ungendering world politics also requires a reconceptualization of politics’ (1993: 165).

THE FREQUENCY OF REPEATING

Given both the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter Two and the above analysis, it seems that there are women in Cambodia who try to negotiate gendered norms, using the practice of altering repetitions and redefining concepts such as women or politics, yet reading the interviews revealed another strategy of repetition. As we will see, it is not only the accuracy of repetitions that matters, but also the frequency. The repetitions of the gestures, images or statements that together comprise the discourses of gender, are not regular, mechanical or analogous. The character of the discourses differs as the representations are reiterated often or more rarely. What does it mean if the respondents constantly repeat representations constituting a gendered discourse, or if the respondents repeat the gendered images more rarely? I shall discuss how the frequency of the repetitions can in some sense be interpreted as responses to the prevailing power relations.

Discourses seem to be more or less visible, that is repeated more or less often, depending on how ‘fixed’ they are. As Hillevi Lenz Taguchi writes, ‘a practice cannot be a normative discursive practice if we [do] not, as subjects, time after time choose to repeat that practice’ (2004: 173). As stated in Chapter Five, some women activists and politicians in Phnom Penh stated repeatedly that women make better politicians than men, but still refer to men as the norm. Among other things, the women repeated the perception that women politicians are emotional and understand the needs and feelings of others – a unique ability in their role as politicians, as it is argued:
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A good leader is a person with his/her heart in the right place and with an education. If women get an education they are better leaders than men, as they know more than men and have their heart in the right place.³

Women and men have the same ability, but sometimes women have more ability than men. Women are better politicians since they are smart. They are good at relations. They are good politicians since they are gentle and good at psychology and understand relations and other people. But education is necessary. Education makes women believe in themselves. This is important.⁴

In the National Assembly people are treated equally whether they are men or women. People respect politicians. They think women understand people better as they take care of basic needs, domestic duties, etc., at the same time as they are politicians.⁵

Women in Cambodia have a huge responsibility. They have the primary responsibility for maintenance, family, children, everything, but are still pointed out as unqualified to take decisions.⁶

Accounts such as these prevailed among a number of female NGO workers as well as female politicians. Taking discourse theory as a point of departure, one reading might be that the women are trying to negotiate their power relations – the stereotypes and hierarchies – by the repetition of a new ‘truth’. The restatements about female supremacy and the linguistic usage of setting up men as a norm (see Chapter Five), raises the question of whether the women’s repetitions of the image of a superior woman politician is to be read as resistance. It might be the most loudly voiced, explicit norm that is also the weakest. This norm must be anxiously repeated in order to be maintained. It seeks to be established as a ‘truth’, rather than already being steadfastly approved. Implicit in these repetitions is the concept of time: the frequency of the repetitions tells us about how power and resistance are practiced.

Resistance by repetition involves an on-going acknowledgement of the existence of an Otherness precisely in order to make space for this Otherness. This was reflected in the interviews where repetition
was mentioned occasionally as an important means to make space for women within political parties. One party member said, ‘Most of the political leaders are men. Sometimes they forget the female candidates. But the women must [remind] them: “Do not forget me”.’ Another woman politician said: ‘I keep reminding them: in every activity, if no women, the activity cannot work, because there are 60 per cent women in Cambodia.’ Considering that this woman needs constantly to ‘remind them’, the quotations imply that women are not spontaneously included into social or political work. The last of these citations highlighted that there are more women than men in Cambodia (‘because there are 60 per cent women in Cambodia’). Adding this statement she apparently refers to an established discourse to verify, ‘prove’ or make concrete her first outline of women as necessary participants of different party activities.

Yet another woman politician relayed a similar account, arguing that ‘the strategy is that we keep talking about how women are also human resources.’ This quotation also resonates with the above strategy of repeating (‘keep talking about’) as a practice to make space for women while simultaneously upgrading women’s status as politicians. At this point, however, it might be important to pinpoint that, as we repeat a discourse, an identical repetition is impossible, but each and every statement shifts somewhat (Lenz Taguchi 2004: 173).

While repetition is discussed in terms of resistance in this book, Bhabha argues that power is sustained with a comparable mechanism. He suggests the concept of fixity, whose key discursive strategy is the stereotype. Stereotypes are used in order to establish and sustain power relations, in the contest of power between colonizers and colonized (Bhabha 1994; Childs and Williams 1997: 124–129; see also Said 1995). In order to legitimate and justify the white ruling of the ‘irresponsible’, ‘uncontrolled’ natives, stereotypes have been repeatedly used. Stereotypes cannot be proved and so must be constantly reinforced by anxiously restating them. These constant repetitions are a sign of an actor, in this case the colonial power, trying to sustain their unstable power site (Bhabha 1994; Childs and Williams 1997: 124–129). According to Bhabha, the ‘space of the
Other is always occupied by an idea fixed: despot, heathen, barbarian, chaos, and violence. If these symbols are always the same, their ambivalent repetition makes them the signs of a much deeper crisis of authority (Bhabha in Childs and Williams, 1997: 129, emphasis added). Although the stereotypes need no proof for existing, at the same time, it is a dilemma that they cannot be proved. This paradox creates an ambivalent situation, which, among other things, ensures the stereotypes’ repeatability (Bhabha 1994: 66).

Butler (1997: 16) also talks about powers sustainability in terms of repetition, stating, ‘If the conditions of power are to persist, they must be reiterated; the subject is precisely the site of such reiteration, a repetition that is never merely mechanical.’ In line with Bhabha, she argues that the need for repetition at all reveals something, it is a sign that the repeated identity is not self-identical and that ‘it requires to be instituted again and again, which is to say that it runs the risk of becoming de-instituted at every interval’ (Butler 1991: 24).

Both Butler and Bhabha thus touch upon the very core question of the repetition issue: why do we repeat at all? While Bhabha interprets the repetitions as a sign of the crisis of authority and legitimacy, Butler, on the other hand, argues that repetition is an effect of power but also a key to emancipation: ‘The possibility of gender transformation [is] to be found […] in the possibility of a failure to repeat, a de-formity, or a parodic repetition that exposes the phantasmatic effect of abiding identity as a politically tenuous construction’ (Butler 1999: 179). While these are both important implications of the notion of repeating, this book argues for yet another angle, interpreting the constant repetition of emancipatory ‘truths’ in itself as a sign of resistance. In addition, like Bhabha, I believe the repeating tells us something about power. The politics of visibility – the strategy of maintaining and repeating a vision and an image of the competent, peaceful, Cambodian female politician – depends upon the invisibility of the disciplinary system in itself and how hierarchies and stereotypes are shaped in and through time and space (Weston 2002: 16). In other words, the fact that women are stereotyped and put into a hierarchy is not made explicit in relation to the repeti-
tions. Neither is it put on the table that power is being negotiated through the repetitions of statements in and through time. The very reasons for repeating are therefore hidden. In spite of this, the need to reverse the female stereotype and reload it with positive worth implies that women are commonly lowly ranked, because the image of the superior female politician is defined as different from something else. This ‘something else’ is not made explicit but is still present.

Resistance embodied as repetitions from different sites tells us something, not only about resistance but also about power. The image of the competent, peaceful female politician might reveal the ‘normality’ from which to view the new repeated image. If we need to be informed about the excellence of the peaceful, non-violent image of a female politician, that is not generally how we view female politicians. There is a hidden discourse about women politicians that is contested. Repetition, in relation to what seems to be hidden, thus makes for an interesting analysis that reveals something about power as well as resistance.

**WOVEN DISCOURSES**

The image of female identity repeated by the female politicians can be argued to rest upon processes of hybridity. Therefore, in the sections below, the usage of hybridity as ‘woven discourses’ will be discussed. According to Fairclough (1992), discourses not only represent the world but also comprise a practice that signifies, constitutes and constructs the world in meaning. Accordingly, while discourses reproduce as well as transform how we comprehend the world and how we act within it, they are constitutive in both a conventional and a creative way. For example, they work to maintain the relationship between, and the roles of, the student and the teacher, but simultaneously have a transformative potential to alter the very same relationship. From the above, Fairclough develops the concept of intertextuality with reference to the work of Kristeva. The main point made by the latter, who is inspired in her turn by Bakhtin, is that a text absorbs and is based on other texts from the past in terms of responding to, reaccentuating and reworking past
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texts. This intersection of different discourses simultaneously enables the continuity of the past and makes possible its transformation (Fairclough 1992: 64–65). The practice of creating hybrid ‘truths’ by relying on different discourses helps us to understand the practices of resistance in Cambodia. As suggested at the beginning, power consists of stereotyped or hierarchical ‘truths’. These ‘truths’, however, can be altered. One way of negotiating hierarchies and stereotypes is to weave together different discourses and thus create a new logical reasoning. As stated previously, Fairclough argues, however, that this possibility to create change by using old discourses in new ways is limited by power relations. Hegemonic relations limit the infinite possibilities of discursive practices that come from the idea of mixed ‘truths’:

‘The relationship between intertextuality and hegemony is important. The concept of intertextuality points to the productivity of texts, to how texts can transform prior texts and restructure existing conventions (genres, discourse) to generate new ones. But this productivity is not in practice available to people as a limited space for textual innovation and play: it is socially limited and constrained, and conditional upon relations of power (Fairclough, 1992: 102–103).

While it might be limited, there is still a possibility for the subaltern to negotiate power by mixing prevailing discourses in order to create more emancipatory ‘truths’. Within postcolonial theory, this practice is described in terms of hybridity and hybridization, two of the best-known terms associated with the attempts to theorize the ambivalence of the colonial aftermath. According to Werbner, we have to recognize the different interests of social groups in sustaining boundaries, resulting in some experiencing hybridity as disturbing, while for others it is revelatory (1997: 1–23). In line with this it may be appropriate to refer to Bakhtin’s key distinctions between unconscious, ‘organic’ hybridity and conscious, ‘intentional’ hybridity. The first implies the apparently natural evolution of all languages, involving the unreflective borrowing, exchanging and inventions through which culture has always evolved (despite the illusion of
boundedness). Intentional hybrids, on the other hand, are 'built to shock, change, challenge, revitalize or disrupt through deliberate, intended fusions of unlike social language and images' (Werbner 1997: 5). This cultural hybridity is able to shock and disturb by challenging the taken-for-granted.

Further to this, Bhabha, the post-colonial writer particularly associated with the concept of hybridity, reads hybridity in terms of resistance (Eriksson Baaz 2002: 62). He takes as a point of departure the confrontation between the colonialist authority and the 'natives', the colonizers and the colonized. He seeks to describe the construction of cultural authority within, for example, conditions of inequity, arguing that,

At the point at which the precept attempts to objectify itself as a generalized knowledge or a normalizing, hegemonic practice, the hybrid strategy or discourse opens up a space of negotiation where power is unequal but its articulation may be equivocal (Bhabha 1996: 58).

In this sense, hybridity implies that every concept the colonizer brings to the colonized will be interpreted, and thus reborn, in the light of the colonized culture (Childs and Williams 1997: 136). To illustrate the above, Bhabha describes the early dissemination of the Bible in India. A hybridised 'Word of God' was created as the Bible was translated into the many language of India. For example, vegetarian Hindus used notions of cannibalism (eating the flesh of Christ) or vampirism (drinking his blood) to create a new understanding of the Bible while translating it (Bhabha 1994: 102–122; Childs and Williams 1997: 135). By re-interpreting the insistent discourse of the colonizers, the colonized are able to resist, to shift power as well as question discursive authority. The process suggests that colonial discourses are never wholly under the control of the colonizer, as long-established classes and categories are conflated in the process of hybridity (Childs and Williams 1997: 136). Hybridity has been criticised for implying a notion of originary, of single sources that mix, as in the case of Haraway's 'cyborg', defined as a hybrid of a
machine and an organism, thus relying on an accepted binary, implying two stable, knowable identities from which the cyborg emerges (Wolfreys 1997: 2).

In spite of this criticism, the concept of hybridity might still help us to understand both the processes of change and the practices of resistance within a Cambodian context. In Chapter Three several examples of woven discourses were put forward, when discussing how new discourses of democracy are mixed together with local traditions of decision-making in Cambodia. Both the traditional system and that which is being implemented are changing, as old and new discourses are put together, supporting each other and thus creating new ‘truths’. In this sense, patron–client relations have tended to survive as an aspect of the new Western-implemented democracy, while political power within the democratic polity is often distributed in line with these relations. It seems to be a matter of reinterpreting the concept of a (Western, democratic) politician from a Cambodian context, assigning him/her high status and power from a local discourse of decision-making rather than in line with the more Western notions where a politician is primarily expected to represent the people and carry through the party program.

Another example, which I shall discuss further in Chapter Seven, regards Cambodian returnees who sometimes feel excluded from political decision-making because they did not suffer during the Pol Pot era. This reasoning is probably the result of several discourses being woven together, one discourse being concerned with leadership. What does it take to be a leader? What qualities ought one to have? Some state that to be a leader you must be a real Cambodian. But what does it take to be a real Cambodian? For some, to be a real Cambodian you must have suffered along with other Cambodians during the Pol Pot era. Together these different ‘truths’ are woven together to give a picture of what a leader ought to be. To be a Cambodian leader, one must be a real Cambodian, having had the same experiences as the people, having learnt from suffering and having suffered with the people. Different ‘truths’, different logics that support each other legitimize a new stratum of the population.
as leaders, while the old elite, those who left the country during the Khmer Rouge period, is sometimes marginalized from power.

From the above, I would like to argue that two different outlines of hybridization can be seen in relation to resistance. The first of these is that different discourses being woven together, supporting each other, indicates that hybridization is at work. By mixing different ‘truths’, politically underrepresented groups are able to base themselves on, for example, globalized Western discourses in order to negotiate the stereotypes or hierarchies that reduce their presence in Cambodian politics. Among other things, as previously suggested, women are trying to change the stereotyped image of themselves and the low status assigned to them by connecting a discourse about private qualifications, that is, women as emotional and caring, with a discourse about public decision-making, that is, the idea that decision-makers ought to have a dialogue with, and understand, the ordinary citizens of the country (see also Chapter Five). The conclusion that emerges from the blending of these different ‘truths’ is that women’s emotions and their ability to understand needs are essential for good governance and that women are indispensable in ensuring that the state’s duties are fulfilled. Together the different ‘truths’ are used to legitimize women in power. Thereafter, as we have seen, the new hybrid ‘truth’ was repeated in order to be sustained.14

These processes of transformation are probably growing in significance as we enter a new globalized world order (Thörn 2002: 126). For instance, one female politician focused upon the image of a ‘Western state’ in order to legitimize women’s presence in the political sphere. In her view, an ideal form of governance is typified by a caring state. This type of state however, is rare outside the Western context. The citizens of Cambodia have, for example, probably never experienced the nation-state as an important provider of personal protection. Still, this respondent draws on to this kind of state in order to upgrade the status of women politicians:

[Women are] capable of sensitizing the whole crowd. Better than men, you know, […] I think if Cambodia, I’m sure … if Cambo-
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dia were a democratic country like the Western countries, women would be brilliant in politics.\textsuperscript{15}

While arguing in favour of women's exceptional democratic qualities, this quotation draws on the idea of a democracy 'like the Western countries'. This female politician is utilizing a discourse, made accessible by the processes of globalization, to explain the greatness of women in politics, to create a hybrid image of identity. In other words, globalization might provide subaltern groups with discourses from abroad that they can employ to negotiate power sites, in this case the gender inequalities within public administration (see also Chapter Seven). These kind of discourses thus form a sort of capital that one may use to accomplish change and the conclusion is consistent with Ferguson's suggestion (in another context), that when 'social spaces are remapped, so are resident identities; prevailing subjectivities' (Ferguson 1993: 177). The emancipating practice of mixing different 'truths' in order to create new meaning locates resistance mainly in the writer of meaning.

Hybridization is more than the mixing of different 'truths' into new challenging knowledge, however. As noted above, there is a second aspect of hybridity: it may also involve the resistance of local actors by the way of reinterpretation. For example, as claimed in Chapter Three, the implementation of (Western) democracy in many Third World countries has given rise to a number of new discourses, in interpretations of a Western system of rule from the perspective of the local culture. This latter strategy embraces the power of resistance located in the reader who refuses to acknowledge the message from the producer in the way s/he would like it to be understood.

The twofold divide embodied in these two different aspects of hybridity appears to be a simplification, however, with respect to case of Cambodia. Apart from the outline of reinterpretation and the practice of woven discourses, the gap between discourses and practices also seems to run into a hybrid system of rule. Discourses shape our thoughts, with which we act in accordance: in this sense,
discourses form practices (see for example S. Hall 1992: 291). In the Cambodian case, the democratic discourse as implemented by the UN, in some senses is still strong. This is indicated by the fact that while many Cambodians may not be able to differentiate between the political agendas of the main parties, the vast majority (88 per cent), agree that ‘to have a democracy, there must be elections with more than one party competing’ (Asian Foundation 2003). In contrast to this, just 28 per cent of the respondents highlighted the parties’ policies, views and ideology as motives for voting (Asian Foundation 2003). That people stress the importance of multiple parties in spite this might be read as an indication of the fact that the democratic discourse, as it was implemented in 1993 still dominates, although it is not reflected in corresponding democratic practices such as those related to party programs and so on. The gap between discourse and practice creates a new system of rule that in itself can be understood as being hybrid. This creates a number of interesting questions: How can democratic discourses create corresponding practices? What does the gap between discourse and practice reveal about the democratic system and its hybrid nature? (Still all practices are a part of the discourse).

PERFORMING HYBRIDITY AS RESISTANCE

Above I addressed how repetition as well as hybridity makes sense in the light of resistance. Woven discourses are not only an emancipatory strategy in the sense that new ‘truths’ are produced, but the practice itself might raise women’s status and may thereby contribute to the altering of the gender hierarchy. One woman explained how women should act to become successful in politics:

Most of all they have to have a good educational level. […] Not high graduate you know, I don’t mean that. I believe to have an ability to understand what they read and what they hear. You know. That’s very important. Not just to...what they have heard or what they have read...not just to repeat, but also to understand, to analyse the whole concept of politics. […] You might be right, your ideas might be wrong, but you have grounds to say such things.\textsuperscript{16}
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This woman’s use of sentences such as you must ‘have grounds to say’ indicates that whatever ideas female politicians put forward, they must be related to and be argued in connection with discourses that are understandable and well-known to the reader – that is, to the past – thus proving that they mastered the discourses in full. Whatever ideas you put forward, these must be anchored within well-known ‘truths’. Moreover, the phrase ‘not just to repeat, but to understand, to analyse the whole concept of politics’ implies that to promote an idea you must be able to use the discourse by putting discursive facts together into a chain of arguments. By using and mixing discourses as the foundation for new texts or ‘truths’, Cambodian women may thus be accepted as successful politicians, which could in turn upset the hierarchy and challenge female stereotypes. For this respondent, status thus seems to be ascribed to the speaker when she succeeds in using already existing discourses and genres as cornerstones in the construction of new text – grounding her new ‘truths’ within the prevailing discursive logic. This can be interpreted in terms of hybridity, with the ability to create hybrid ‘truths’ giving a higher rank and altering stereotypes and hierarchies by way of resistance.

Silence and Denial as Resistance

Repetitions were interpreted above in terms of resistance: what do they tell us about silence, about non-repeating? According to Lynn Thiesmeyer, what is said is important, however equally important is what is left unsaid (Thiesmeyer 2003: 1). In line with this, in the below section I will argue that silence as a means of resistance should be given more attention within social science. Silence has often been solely seen as a means of power or an effect of power. For example, it is widely recognized among feminist researchers that one aspect of the power-relationship(s) between men and women is that men are often regarded as the most important actors and the most important topic to know about, while the reality of, for example, women and children is treated as secondary to the ‘main story’ (Peterson and Runyan 1993: 25). Women are thus ‘silenced’ throughout history and their lives, experiences, and so on are hid-
Feminist researcher Hanne Haavind has, amongst other things, put together a list of how women are presented within social science. She argues that men’s knowledge, or knowledge about men, is often presented as general knowledge about or of the population, while women in many cases are not visible at all (Haavind in Holmberg and Lindholm 1991: 214).

What feminist researchers earlier concluded regarding silence is today used and studied in other contextual settings by post-structuralist researchers such as Lynn Thiesmeyer. Her edited volume Discourse and Silencing: Representation and the Language of Displacement describes how subaltern groups are silenced, ‘defin[ing] silencing as a way of using language to limit, remove and undermine the legitimacy of another use of language’ (Thiesmeyer 2003: 2). It can be claimed that silence reflects the disciplinary power in any society, as ‘the action of silencing is accompanied by social and political judgments of what is acceptable and unacceptable’ (Thiesmeyer 2003: 1). Likewise, Kathy Ferguson has argued that the dominant ethnic group in any nation-state may try to strengthen its power by not making visible the other ethnic groups. This has been done, for example, by leaving out the history of the other groups in public museums. The silence surrounding these groups can be interpreted as a strategy of a superior group to strengthen its power, yet the exhibiting of these groups’ culture and history could equally strengthen them as subaltern. Henrietta Lidchi argues that ‘the politics of exhibiting means museums make certain cultures visible, in other words they allow them to be subjected to the scrutiny of power’ (1997: 189). What prevails from this quotation is that not only is it a matter of what is decided to be an important object of knowledge, what becomes visible, but at the next stage an even more problematic aspect is how the object or subject is made visible and the processes of stereotyping that may be involved as human subjects are transformed into ethnographic objects (Lidchi 1997: 190). From a feminist perspective, Haavind similarly argues that women when made visible often are presented in rather stereotyped terms (Haavind in Holmberg and Lindholm 1991: 214).
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The purpose of the above outline has been to make visible how silence primarily has been addressed either as a means of power or and an effect of power (see also Jaworski (ed.) 1997; Kronsell 2006; Lorraine 1990). As suggested above, however, resistance is also exercised through silence. A few researchers have explored this theme. Among them, Perry Gilmore, for example describes not only how teachers use silence to exercise power, but also how students adopt dramatically stylized ‘silent sulks’ to display anger in the power-resistance game between the teacher and student (1885: 139–161). The focus here is on the actual conversation (between teacher-student), where silence actually carries meaning and expresses something, that is, anger. Minh-ha, when referring to silence also seems to imply that it expresses something: ‘Silence as a refusal to partake in the story does sometimes provide us with a means to gain a hearing. It is a voice, a mode of uttering and a response in its own right. Without other silences, however, my silence goes unheard’ (Trinh 1999: 218; Trinh 1987: 5–22).

In this section it is argued that silence can be used as resistance, not to communicate something but to silence hegemonic discourses, simply by not repeating them; it is resistance by refusing to maintain power-loaded discourses. Addressing silence, denial may be a still more drastic approach. As is evident in the quotation below, silence and denial as forms of resistance aim at diminishing the impact of discourses of hierarchy and stereotyping by a process of disavowal. I asked a woman I met for a second interview to comment on certain stereotyped notions of women that had been expressed in several other interviews. The respondent replied first with refusal – she had never heard that discourse – and then, after a while, admitted in a roundabout way the ‘truth’ she was being confronted with:

I have never heard people say that women are mentally weak. Women are emotional, yes. We are emotional. We want to avoid any fighting. We think about the long run. We do not want to [act], you know, right away. We see the consequences. They think that we are emotional, unlike men, who take steps, you know, right away, who decide right away ... When they say women are weak, they mean peaceful, not weak, goung sau.17

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Although her first response is one of denial, at the end of the interview the respondent indirectly refers to and acknowledges the fact that she recognizes the dominant discourse that defines women as (mentally) weak:

That happens ... because they are not allowed to go to school up to [more than the] third grade. You only know how to read and write but then ... they stay at home and then they considered us weak because they do not provide the opportunity to go to school. And this perception is carrying it on, generation after generation. And it makes us women believe ourselves to be weak. But as you see, if women are provided with an opportunity to go to school – they are not weak.  

The denial (‘I have never heard people say that women are mentally weak’) can be read as a response to her perception of myself as an interviewer and how she understood my aims. She ends the interview by saying that I have low confidence in Cambodian women. Misreading the interview questions, her aim becomes one of altering my view of women and making it more ‘correct’ (‘When they say women are weak, they mean peaceful’), in this case by denying discourses that are inaccurate or uncomfortable to her. She does not want to pass on to me – a researcher with the power to present natural facts scientifically to a broader or at least an important audience – a stereotype which, by putting women last, defines them as less honourable and places them at the bottom of the hierarchy. When she in the end recognizes the existence of a stereotyped image of women as (mentally) weaker, she chooses to explain it in terms of a feminist discourse about women’s lack of schooling, thus promoting the need for change (‘They stay at home and then they considered us weak because they do not provide the opportunity to go to school. And this perception is carrying it on, generation after generation. And it makes us women believe ourselves that we are weak. But as you see, if women are provided with an opportunity to go to school – they are not weak’).

Refusing to pass on or acknowledge discourses may thus be viewed as resistance aimed at preventing those power-discourses from spreading. Lynn Thiesmeyer, quoted above, argues that power
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works through a similar strategy. Although her edited volume focuses on the type of silencing that operates through institutions (schools, courtrooms, political institutions, and so on) and how these promote certain kinds of knowledge while other kinds are neglected, it is the same phenomenon that is addressed (Thiesmeyer 2003: 10–11). One important difference may be that the silencing, according to Thiesmeyer, rather than trying to erase the unwanted discourse altogether, seeks to assimilate, filter and replace the unwanted discourse (2003: 13). Analysing the silence of the respondent quoted above, however, it seems that silence is a means of obliterating power-loaded discourses rather than taking on an assimilative function. Drawing on Foucault, it might be argued that silence and denial are strategies for those who refuse to be the subjects to perpetuate power-loaded discourses and act as a part of the net-like organization through which power is maintained.

Silence and denial can be considered in relation to the concept of irony. Rosenberg, Butler and Irigaray all describe irony as a form of resistance by the inferior to the dominant. As I will elaborate in Chapter Eight, the ironic utterance does not correspond to just one fixed meaning, but slides between conflicting connotations. What is most effective, then: not to repeat a repressive discourse at all or to repeat it ironically? Even though irony may deconstruct and denaturalize a statement, the statement simultaneously forwards, acknowledges and maintains a power-loaded discourse. For example, by exaggerating the sexual prowess of black bodies, one makes explicit the stereotypes of it, though the statement simultaneously involves the repetition and spreading of a discourse about the sexual capacities of black men (S. Hall 1997b). Is it therefore more effective not to repeat the discourse at all, not even ironically, but instead to keep silent or express counter-‘truths’?

CONCRETISM AND THE IMPACT OF DIFFERENT REPRESENTATIONS

Analysing discourses, the form of the representation – is it spoken, an image, a gesture, and so on – is seldom a part of the analysis. I pro-
pose, however, that different types of representations carry different meaning and have different impact in terms of resistance. This argument demands an unpacking of the relationship between discourse and practice, two closely related concepts, between which one may see a number of linkages. First of all, as Stuart Hall (1992) points out, discourses shape our thoughts, which we act in accordance with: in this sense, discourses form practices. For example, discourses about the Third World in opposition to the modern, industrialized West are deeply embedded in practices, that is, in Northern behaviour towards Southern countries. Or, as in Cambodia, discourses bring with them negative consequences, such as ethnic discrimination. A low-status stereotype of the Vietnamese minority is often employed, which might provoke hostility towards the Vietnamese community. These nationalist and racial discourses lead to ethnic discriminations of various sorts, as well as an uneven distribution of decision-making power, and of resources. In some cases, Cambodians have even used direct violence against immigrant Vietnamese people.

Secondly, discourses concern the production of knowledge through language. They are then themselves produced by a practice, that is, the practice of producing meaning (S. Hall 1992: 291). Finally, a third connection between discourses and practices is that all social practices entail meanings. Therefore, all practices have a discursive aspect. Every hijab-wearing woman constitutes a representation within a religious, sometimes nationalistic discourse, a discourse that she, by wearing the hijab, is repeating and upholding. She is one representation among several forming an Islamic discourse. She, acting from her identity, becomes a ‘living representation’ and a powerful means to strengthen a discourse. The above implies that images of identity can also be used to change or alter dominating discourses, for example, by strengthening alternative discourses.

This divide between discourse and practice invites us to return to the resistance by Cambodian female politicians. Cecilia Trenter’s outline of the concept of concretism is helpful for exploring how practices, as concrete representations, comprise means of resistance (Trenter 2000: 50–63). Among its impacts, concretism can strengthen a dis-
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course by making concrete what is expressed in more abstract terms. For instance, by exemplifying a historical account through giving it a face, a personal memory, the history becomes more concrete, more comprehensible for the reader. Concretism may also involve the art of making complex matters understandable. This can be illustrated by the way in which maps reduce countries, states, infrastructure and nations into a clear and well-arranged paper image, thus visualizing discourses and strengthening them, as well as containing their own stories about time and space (Trenter 2000: 57–60).

Concretism is a useful concept in analysing performances of resistance of Cambodian female politicians, because while some respondents argued in favour of the repetition of new emancipatory ‘truths’ as an effective strategy of resistance – for example, reversing a low-status image of women by restating the notion that ‘Women are good politicians’ – the effectiveness of this strategy vis-à-vis concrete action was at times questioned by critical respondents. When talking about repetitions as a possible strategy of resistance, one female MP concluded that ‘I don’t think it’s good to repeat. Because if you say something too many times, they kind of ignore it. It’s not a good strategy for me. In fact, I will not use that. I just do what I believe.’ The argument was that, while the repetition of new emancipatory ‘truths’ may be ignored, visible representations more easily disturb the maintenance of the andocentric social order. Or, as the old fairy tale about the child who cried wolf expresses it, if you repeat something too many times, people may stop listening. While the child keeps screaming, ‘the wolf is coming’, in the end nobody reacts. But as soon as people stop listening, the wolf appears. Repetition may thus have the undesired effect of being ignored as ‘just the same old story’. This type of cynical distancing may, however, be countered and disrupted by practical evidence, that is, by concrete representations. The MP quoted above also talked about the difference between just speaking and actual practice:

[It is] like the case of a woman, afraid to get divorced from a man and that man also says that; Oh this woman cannot get away from me, you know, she’s so submissive and all that. [Then] the only thing
is to just go. And they believe you. But if you don't go, they don't do anything. They just abuse you more.²⁰

This quotation implies that ‘abstract’ discourses about women’s political advantages may have more impact if they are made concrete by visible examples. The message is: do not talk about it. Just show them! Then they believe you! From this perspective, Cambodian women’s access to the political arena increases if the present-day female politicians constitute trustworthy images of women’s abilities:

They [women politicians] are so, so responsible because they are afraid of what they say; “a, women...they are the weak gender, something like that. They are weaker than men”. So, men always look at women.... So they want to prove that they can do that. So, sometimes they try double the men in order to make the party leader go: “Oh, you can, you can do that”.

Another woman said,

Like I said, this is a man’s world, and we have a long way to go. Action is the proof, you know. So, we have to do things that they cannot do. […] I have the impression that men are used to dominating. So they think that women are not really active like they are. So I think we have to show them, you know. We can do something in action so they can see.²¹

This woman talks about visible representations as a ‘proof’. This is a key term. The concept of proof implies that we believe that certain representations actually have the weight to determine whether or not a discourse is true. It is not enough stating that women are good politicians, but you must show them, you must prove your competence to gain legitimacy. But what must be showed? In what way must women appear as representations to prove their competence? How must they position their bodies? To what correct performance must she measure up?

A spoken discourse stating that women are as good as men probably has less impact than the fact that the majority of politicians are men. Male politicians are in themselves ‘proofs’ of the discourse of
the male dominance of the democratic arena. In another interview, the following view was expressed:

I believe that, I personally believe that the women become politically involved because they have some yearning, maybe they have been hurt for some reason. They have been what you called discriminated. [...] Becoming political is a kind of revenge, it is a proof of talent and skill that they are capable, that they are human resources that need to be given a value. So it is a demonstration. It is a fight back.\textsuperscript{22}

The use of words such as proof and demonstration could be seen as indications of the importance of political practices as concrete representations. In line with this logic, to be trustworthy a discourse must not only consist of statements but also be comprised of other more concrete representations, and as was articulated in the quotation above, concrete representations, such as women who have assumed a political identity and act successfully from it, are to be seen as means of resistance. As the respondent herself expressed it: ‘it is a fight back’.

Concretism, in this above analysis, is about using oneself, one’s body, as resistance. A number of researchers have addressed the body as means of resistance, including Butler and several others. For example, in the edited volume Negotiating at the Margins (Davis and Fisher (eds.) 1993) part one is called ‘Negotiating the Body and its Adornments’ and it deals with power struggles by exploring the body as a site of resistance. It shows, among other things, how women makes resistance by remaking their bodies surgically or by using certain clothes either to construct a resisting sexual identity or to negotiate the boundaries of the appropriate dress. These are all examples of how the body can be seen as a site for challenging practices, thus letting the body serve as a tool for resistance, and they are all examples of concretism as resistance.

Concretism should thus be considered a strategy of resistance that is used to alter hierarchical, stereotyping discourses about women’s political abilities. Concrete representations may contradict the spoken discourse so brutally that the latter must be questioned. One
example of this is when high-ranking capable female politicians visit rural areas where the dominant discourse describes women as non-political. As stated previously women’s election speeches attract voters precisely because these people have difficulties conceptualizing a female politician (‘Therefore everyone comes to listen to you. They want to see how a female candidate acts’) Another woman made a similar comment about people’s perceptions of female politicians: ‘they are surprised and accepting. To get more women to become politicians we need more female role models.’ It seems like female politicians in Cambodia, at least according to some, fail to correspond to any of the stereotypes of society, through which we give meaning to different representations. To understand this we can take as a point of departure Mary Douglas’s (1966) outline of ambiguous things, the ‘in-betweens’, which fail to fall neatly into any category, but instead appears threatening as they shake the cultural order. Taking Douglas reasoning a step further, I would like to argue that the women quoted above not only represent something ‘in-between’, but by their existence, they directly question and contradict the discourse of women as non-political. We can thereby surmise that divergent representations, from a resistance perspective, inevitably require an exploration. I want to highlight that this goes for other contexts as well. For instance, Ane Kirkegaard provides a colourful exploration of the discourses of white people in Zimbabwe in the sixties and their struggle to distance themselves from the wild and sexually licentious blacks, while representing themselves as sexually controlled (following the European principle of ‘one man one wife’). The discourse of the white civilization was frequently put forward publicly as political arguments, however it did not exist unchallenged but was constantly questioned, for example, by black politicians who leaned on the very concrete contradictory representations that ‘the Coloureds’ composed. As a group, the Coloureds were a result of the white peril and formed a discrete population group, which had no given place on the racial ladder (Kirkegaard 2004). Their existence made it possible to resist the white superior discourse, as they, in a very concrete way, represented an alternative ‘truth’, a conflicting
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discourse. Considering this, as well as the above quotations, it must be remembered that whilst doing discourse analysis, it is not enough to state that a discourse consists of different representations, such as sounds, written words, images, musical notes, statements and body language, but one must separate and discuss the different meanings and impacts of these representations.

universalism – role models

As it has been argued repetitions of ‘in-between-representations’ and the concept of concretism are important parts of the study of how discourses are created, maintained and resisted in everyday life. Moreover, the concept of concretism in connection to the concept of universalism can help us to understand and analyse women politicians as role models. It is easier to assume and identify with universal norms, that is feelings, situations and destinies presented in more general, universally recognizable manners (see for example Hamilton 1997: 101). To make use of a more universal but still concrete approach is a strategy sometimes applied by aid organizations in fund-raising for the Third World. Følkekirken had a television advertisement in which a black screen was accompanied by the sound of a baby crying and a voice asking, ‘What do you do when your baby is crying?’ The answer was, ‘you comfort it. Feed it. Give it love’ (Westerdahl in Trenter 2000: 50–63). The strategy was to refer to universal values and feelings by playing on the audience’s sympathy for their own children and thereby create feelings of solidarity. This was done by concrete representations that are easy to relate to. The idea is to get the giver to feel that s/he is not different from the aid receiver and thereby reduce the us-them dichotomy that often underpins stereotyping and alienation.

In the light of universalism, the concept of role model in a Cambodian context becomes more understandable. Some Cambodian women politicians referred to themselves as role models for other women, as they constituted a contrasting, competing image of identification. For women the discovery of political possibilities may be a result of watching female political actors: ‘I think this is coming out
a lot, because I’ve talked to a lot of educated women; they want to be involved but I think we are the examples, you know. (...) that gives them courage to see, well this is not only men, we have to have our voice to.’

An effective role model, however, should probably play on universalism, that is, act in what is understood to be a normal female manner, representing the dominant gender role, and thus act so that women can relate to the role model. Other women must be able to recognize themselves and their female identity in the role model and see how a female self can be combined with political activities. As claimed in earlier chapters, there is a risk when female politicians normalize towards a norm created by a Westernized and masculine perspective, because at the same time the female politician distances herself from the dominant female gender role, women in general will have problems identifying themselves with her. As she no longer represents a generally held ‘universal’ image of womanhood capable of creating the potential for identification, an us-them divide is created and her potential as role model is diminished. Thus concretism only works emancipatory under certain circumstances.

To sum up, Cambodian women that have assumed, and act from, a political identity that may concretize women’s political ability thus constituting examples for other women. Unfortunately, the capacity of female politicians in contemporary Cambodia is seldom recognized by surrounding women.

Women who have positions in politics create no networks or fight for women’s rights. These women only adapt to the parties and play by their rules. They play according to men’s rules. These women are dolls who only say and do what the parties order.

This discrediting may be a response to the prevailing relations of power and a way of resisting and distancing oneself from negative stereotypes about one’s identity. When analysing the practices of street-people in Texas, Snow and Andersson (in Howard and Hollander 1997) found that individuals tend to distance themselves from other people associated with the negative stereotype they themselves are ascribed in order to resist it. This may be the explanation for why some respondents, first emphasize the good qualities of fe-
male politicians in general, while simultaneously making degrading remarks about the serving female politicians, for example labelling them ‘token women.’ The strategy seems to be to construct a new image of female politicians while at the same time trying to distance themselves from the negative stereotypes and the people and practices that are associated with them in today’s Cambodia. Distancing may thus undermine the effectiveness of concretism, and the ability of the latter to transform the dominating discourses concerning women as non-political must be evaluated.

NOTES

1. Interview No. 2A.
2. Interview No. 2A.
3. Interview No. 4B.
4. Interview No. 12B.
5. Interview No. 11B.
6. Interview No. 18B.
7. Interview No. 5A.
8. Interview No 6A.
9. Interview No 2A.
10. Fairclough uses a more limited definition of discourse than that employed in this text, but some of his thoughts are still applicable to the discussion of this chapter.
11. Following Fairclough, three levels can be distinguished in which discourses have constructing effects: first, regarding different images of identity; secondly, in the relationships between humans; and finally, in respect of different belief systems (Fairclough 1992: 64–65). All these aspects are part of the power relations between humans and are dimensions where domination might be altered and resistance established. However, it seems important to point out that the overlapping and intertwining of the different aspects implies that it is in fact rather difficult to separate the above into clearly defined categories.
12. When Said discusses what role culture plays in resistance, he argues, ‘In the case of a political identity that’s being threatened, culture is a way of fighting against extinction and obliteration. Culture is a form of memory against effacement. In that respect I think it is terribly important. But there is another dimension of cultural discourse – the power to analyse, to get past cliché and straight out-and-out lies from authority, the questioning of authority, the
search for alternatives. These are also part of the arsenal of cultural resistance’ (Said 2003: 159).

13. As an answer to this critique, it can be argued that contemporary globalization make all cultures less stable and the processes of change are moving faster. Hybridity makes visible this tendency of change and instability characterized by global mobility and interaction (Thörn 2002; Hammarén forthcoming 2008).

14. This strategy combines two of Stuart Hall’s outlines of resistance. According to Hall, in regard to resistance, different strategies stand out. One involves attaching status to a popular stereotype, a transcoding strategy that Hall exemplifies with the new type of movie that suddenly emerged in the 1970s. In *Sweet Sweetback’s Baadasss Song* the leading character was described as a black hero exhibiting characteristics that formerly would have been regarded as negative but now were valued positively, in that he lived a violent life, made use of his sexual ability at every opportunity, handled quick money, ultimately getting away with everything (S. Hall 1997b: 270–271). In some sense, then, the binary structure of the racial stereotypes remains and the idea of the black hero can be seen as nothing but trapped in its stereotypical Other. Still, this would be a way of negotiating hierarchies.

A second way to resist involves rethinking, for example, ‘women’ or ‘black’ by expanding the range of representations and the complexity of the images of identity. This can be done by making visible out-of-the-way representations: black men looking after children or black women as political actors, and so on (S. Hall 1997b: 271–274). In this case it is a matter of changing the reductionism of earlier stereotypes by adding new meanings to a concept or image.

15. Interview No. 1A.

16. Interview No. 1A.

17. Interview No. 2A.

18. Interview No. 2A.

19. Interview No. 8A.

20. Interview No. 8A.

21. Interview No. 8A, emphasis added.

22. Interview No. 2A, emphasis added.

23. Interview No. 17B.

24. Interview No. 8A.

25. Interview No. 18B.

26. Interview No. 17B.
Identities as means of resistance

We live in a world where identity matters (Gilroy 1997: 301).

In previous chapters I have argued that discourses and representations are used to contest power. Representations occasionally consist of women performing certain images of identity. The images of identity that women are hailed into are also sustained through representations. My intention here is to reveal how women use their identities, and existing images of identity, to shake or negotiate the meaning of both self, and other, thereby changing the stereotypes and hierarchies that provides obstacles for women’s political participation. The chapter is motivated by linking the ‘speakings’ of Cambodian women to existing research regarding identity (as a means of resistance), in order to problematize, confirm and develop this research.

In a globalized world order, identity-based politics has become increasingly important. Today many social movements demand political representation of marginalized identities based on class, ethnicity, race or sex. By referring to their identities, subaltern groups stress their social, ethnic or sexual belonging and make identity the basis for political mobilization (Woodward 1997; Phillips 2000). Donald Hall, in his glossary, describes identity politics as follows:

Beginning with the feminist and anti-slavery movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, identity became politicized as
groups of disenfranchised individuals came to reflect on their common experience of oppression. For the first time, the social values ascribed to one’s identity became challengeable and changeable during that time period because they were newly perceived as human constructs (D. Hall 2004: 132).

Woodward (1997: 24) similarly states that ‘identity politics involve claiming one’s identity as a member of an oppressed or marginalized group as a political point of departure and thus identity becomes a major factor in political mobilization’. Reviewing the interviews, claiming a shared identity as a group appeared to be only one of many ways in which women used their identities or the existing images of identity as resistance. In this chapter identity politics is defined in a broader sense to embrace how women use images of identity and identities in their attempts to shake or challenge the stereotypes and hierarchies that they experience in the relations between men and women in a Cambodian context. I will theorize how identities or images of identity are created, negotiated, emphasized, exchanged or used as concretizing representations in order to create space for female political participation.

**Strategies of Sameness**

In the theoretical section, I discuss how we often are forced into a given normality, a norm that composes some kind of sameness. For political reasons, sameness has often been manipulated to create uniformity and to subordinate the individual to the group (as in the case of different fascisms). Also, when identities are seen as fixed, primordial and immutable, differences between identities might become perceived as a threat. Then ‘the safety of sameness, which a common identity is said to provide, can only be recovered by either of two options that have regularly appeared at this point in this dismal logic: separation or slaughter’ (Gilroy 1997: 310–313). In addition, as stated above, a strategy of sameness has also been adopted by aid organizations raising funds, as in the example of the donor organization that tried to create a fusion of us and them by letting the listener react to a baby’s cry (Trenter 2000: 60). The concept of sameness,
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however, is not only to be related to security or political manipulations but, as I will argue, can also help us to explore the discursive strategies of resistance promoted by the respondents.

As became visible in previous chapters there is a paradox or an overlap between what is presented as an emancipatory goal and the imagery of power. That is, for many poststructuralist researchers multiplicity – the existence of manifold images and discourses, as well as space to assume these discourse/identities – is seen as desirable. At the same time power often relies on the existence of multiple images and discourses. As hierarchies are shaped from the existence of several components of which one is given a higher value than the others, multiplicity is the very condition for a hierarchy to be created. Both power in this interpretation and my vision of an emancipatory project thus rest upon the existence of multiple images and categories. Negotiating stereotypes by creating multiplicity and nuances also means opening up the possibility for new hierarchies. Therefore emancipatory strategies occasionally produce (hierarchies) and reduce (stereotypes) simultaneously (see concluding reflections).

I argue, however, that one may consider the construction of power as the very key to emancipation. We cannot neglect the fact that power thrives on the presence of difference, in this case the separation between men and women, in which the latter run the risk of being poorly ranked or stereotyped. Therefore, removing the existence of two categories (in this case, male and female institutions or male and female politicians) can be seen as a way of undermining the possibility of creating hierarchies. This was reflected within the interviews with the Cambodian female politicians who tried to remove difference in favour of sameness, probably in order to avoid the power constructions that often go with difference. Women's concern about sexual differentiation was expressed in different ways. For example, one woman said, ‘Women are the same as men. Men are not more intelligent than women are, even if there are people that are convinced that this is the case.’ Yet another woman described how to make men understand the ability of female politicians: ‘the strategy is talking about women as also human resources. […] And when we
talk about women’s rights, then we also talk about equal rights. You need to talk about equality as well.\textsuperscript{2} The usage of meanings such as ‘also human resources’ implies first, that it is men who are usually referred to as humans while women are seen as different and secondly, that men are seen as the primary resource while women’s competence is belittled. For women to include themselves as humans, that is, being the same as men with the same capacity may be a strategy that makes them equally valued with men, which would erase the binary division of the sexes that provides the very foundation for hierarchies, and finally also ascribe women the same rights and resources as men. The latter may be favourable as men generally are more privileged in terms of status and capital. This is probably the reason why the Cambodian woman quoted above connects a discourse about ‘human resources’ and ‘equal rights’ with the female identity position. Women are humans, and women’s rights are the same as the rights that apply to all humans. Here too, different established ‘truths’ are raised, justifying women’s right to political power.

Women striving towards sameness were earlier analysed in terms of normalization (as discussed in Chapter Five, this can be done through education) and must be related to the feminist discourse about sameness, represented by among others de Beauvoir (1995). This discourse emphasizes that not only have women been treated as others but also a small group of Western men have come to represent ‘humans’. These assumptions, the reasoning goes, must be undermined in the light of that ‘we are all humans’ (see for example Currier 2004: 87; Holm 1993: 24–36; Moi 1997: 71–144; de Beauvoir 1995). As the above quotation reveals, however, men, maleness, and values and attributes associated with men, often become the norm and normal when striving towards sameness. Humanity is then defined in line with attributes and activities associated with men and masculinity while women are seen as the strange, excluded Other. This has been pinpointed by a number of researchers (see for example Lenz Taguchi 2004: 12). The Bowerman report published in 1972 presented some amazing research results. Psychologists, psychiatrists and social welfare workers were asked to describe three
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prototypes; a healthy and well-functioning man, a healthy and well-functioning woman and a healthy and well-functioning human. It turned out that while the man and the human were described identically the woman was described slightly different and was thus not pictured as a healthy and well-functioning human (Bowerman 1972 in Wetterberg 1990). These research results have in later years been repeatedly recognized and theories on the theme have been developed (see for example Peterson and Runyan 1993; Hirdman 1988). In line with this logic, drawing on sameness and humanity often turns out to be nothing more than a normalization process where, for example, women adopt the characteristics assigned to men and masculinity in order to avoid the stereotyping and hierarchies discussed above. In addition, as Currier states, ‘there is a danger that, in choosing between the strategies of sameness and difference, no challenge will be issued to the sex-specific characteristics of men, and furthermore, that the whole issue of inequality might be forgotten’ (Currier 2004: 87).

For the above reasons many are sceptical about strategies of sameness. The advocates of sameness often belong to the group that Kathy Ferguson (1993) labels ‘interpreters’. Ferguson argues that interpreters see inclusion as a point of departure and willingly draw on concepts such as right and humanity in an attempt to include the marginalized, setting aside differences as less important than the outlining of patterns and categories. For the ‘genealogist’ these sorts of strategies represent equality achieved at the price of sameness, and other values are more important. While seeking an end to the hegemonic subject the genealogist seeks to establish space for emerging differences and tries to break apart all units (Ferguson 1993: 1–35).

Dissolving the Gender Binary

As stated previously, there are very few neutral binary oppositions but gross inequalities of power are often to be found were dichotomies prevail (Derrida 1981: 41; S. Hall 1997b: 235, 258–259). How then may the relationship between hierarchical, stereotyped
categories such as men and women be transformed and by what means? As I have elaborated in previous chapters, categories are defined in relation to each other, and when redefining one category, contrasting categories also start to slide (see, for example Bhabha 1984; Berg 1998). Performing resistance might then mean reloading different categories with new meaning and thereby altering their relationships with associated images, institutions or categories. Yet another way to negotiate hierarchical opposites could be to introduce new categories to relate them to. Imagine having black and white, two extremes making you think of light and dark, evil and innocence. As Stuart Hall expresses it, black and white is a rather crude and reductionist way of establishing meaning. For example, in so-called black-and-white photography, there is actually no pure ‘black’ or ‘white’, only varying shades of grey’ (S. Hall 1997b: 235). As the grey tones are made visible the black and white dichotomy, the associations of yin and yang, good and bad and angel and devil are resisted and the dichotomy in some senses dissolved. By the entrance of other categories (colours) the relation between black and white is negotiated and/or deconstructed. Furthermore, as I have explored above, an additional strategy may be to fuse together different categories into one single unit impossible to rank. The strategy of merging two categories, for example men and women, into one may also be more successful if a third category is introduced. This pattern can be exemplified by Woodward’s (1997) discussions about Serbian and Croatian identity. As identity is marked out by difference, the Serbian identity relies for its existence on another identity (Croatian). While differences between the groups are often claimed, in relation to European culture the opposition between Serbs and Croats is overshadowed by another opposition: the Balkan culture in relation to European culture (Woodward 1997: 9–10). This example can help us understand the discursive production of the returning Cambodian subject. An image of a Cambodian who is still not really a Cambodian has been invented. An almost Cambodian whose biggest obstacle to full membership is to not have suffered during the Khmer Rouge era.
As stated above, Khmer Rouge represented a radical kind of Communism that promoted a new agrarian society based on the Angkor civilization. They ruled the country for almost four years. During this time they emptied the cities and forced their inhabitants to work as slaves. Schools and hospitals were eliminated. Millions of people died during this period partly through executions, partly by starvation and neglected medical needs.

From the interviews one may draw the conclusion that for some, the ‘real Cambodian’, who may inherit political power, is someone who has learnt from the Khmer Rouge period and knows what the people have experienced and how they have suffered, and thus has knowledge about suffering. One woman explained how before becoming politically active she had to learn to understand the people and their pain. Another woman said that ‘people say that all the women who lived abroad don’t know anything about our politics here. They are quite new to everything we are doing here.’ Yet another woman explained why she experienced some difficulties entering the political stage, saying that ‘since I lived in France I missed the Pol Pot period. This makes it harder for me to do a political career. I don’t know how people have suffered. I haven’t suffered like they have.’ Within this quotation a dividing line is constructed between the respondent as a returnee and ‘they’, the Cambodian people. ‘People’ includes both men and women who unite in one category distanced from the returnees (see for example McGrew, Frieson and Chan 2004). Representing the lowest rung on the hierarchical ladder the identity position of the non-Cambodian Other seems to invoke the similarities between the sexes. A ‘non-Cambodian Cambodian’ might then be used to alter the hierarchy between male and female political subjects, as men and women merge into one category of ‘real Cambodians’ in contrast to ‘non-Cambodians’. This is a matter of how the construction of new hierarchies temporarily overshadows others.

This reasoning can be further explored through the concept of time. Time must figure more frequently within the analysis of gender and power, Kath Weston (2002) argues. In our contemporary world it is forgotten that gender is a social relation imbued with time, not
a space to visit or a thing to be understood. While watching the gendered surfaces of bodies in action, we forget to make the temporality visible. This reasoning makes an even bigger point discussing wartorn societies such as Cambodia because, as concluded in previous sections, memories of violence and those exercising it influence who ill gain political legitimacy (see for example Eastmond 2002).

When it comes to returnees, the time-space nexus also becomes highly relevant. The very concept of a returnee carries with it the concept of time, although it enters by the way of background. This is just how time becomes implicit in space when we consider the Cambodian memorial tower made of skulls, the images of Khmer Rough victims soon to be executed or the preserved prison floors of the Toul Sleng museum in Phnom Penh. The concept of a returnee thus tells us something, not only about space, but also about space imbued with time – how a past of repeated journeys is classified as a marker of an important difference. Furthermore, those lacking certain memories – those who weren't present in the past – are accused of not inhabiting the ‘right’ memories (of violence and war) and thus lack access to becoming one of ‘us’. As I have shown, this is the case in Cambodia were returnees occasionally are offered a non-Cambodian identity, lacking the right memories to qualify as a real Cambodian. Again it is a matter of identities constructed from the nexus of time and space, a strategy that adds to the importance of temporality, the ‘now’ and a ‘then’ of what is repeated.

Lets draw some conclusions from the above. Gendered power-relations may be negotiated and altered in the course of establishing new images and discursive ‘truths’ (and new power relations) which, in the above case, highlight suffering and draw a line between so-called real and false Cambodians instead of differentiating along gender lines. By drawing on this discourse, a real Cambodian woman should be able to use her identity as one who has suffered, and thus distance herself from other male and female returnees, in order to legitimize her political presence. Returnees also try to include themselves in the category of real Cambodians, having suffered truly, in order to position themselves better. One woman said,
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So, listening to all these stories make me feel that I was part even though I was not here. My family, my relatives were here during this times. I don’t have any families left. My grandmother, my aunt, my uncle are all gone. But I was still decided to come back because I have good memories in when I was young of Cambodia. And I felt that what I was doing in the United States I can do it here for my own people, here in Cambodia.…

This woman has very strong feelings for her nation. The remark about being part of the Khmer Rouge era, the naming of all relatives who became victims under the Khmer Rouge era as well as the rhetoric of ‘my own people’ articulated in the interview could also (therefore?), in one sense, be interpreted as the respondent claiming her full membership as Cambodian. It can also be read through the concept of disciplinary power (see Chapter Two) and the fact that those images of identity assigned more value, in this case that of a real Cambodian easily becomes an optimum to strive towards. From this perspective, the above citation can be interpreted as a reaction, a way for the woman to handle the hierarchies and stereotypes that make people judge some as more ‘correct’ politicians than others. The quotation can also be read as resistance in the sense that the respondent tries to widen the stereotype of a real Cambodian by claiming her full membership even though she is a returnee.

MOBILIZING DIFFERENT IDENTITIES

An individual articulates different identities in different contexts, for example, politician, woman, Buddhist, Cambodian. Eduardo Mendieta (2003: 408) describes how these enter ‘into multiple alliances, or convergences’ and he argues that ‘we mobilize different images about our self’ and ‘what images is [sic] mobilized has to do with the nature of the threat and the aim of the mobilization’. Likewise, in her study of gender in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Gudrun Andersson (1998: 301) found that parallel constructions of identities became the basis for the strategies of women who were able to move between different identities. This fits very well with the call made in recent years for intersectionality and the necessity
of a theoretical framework that contains an acknowledgment of the existence of multiple, ambivalent identities (see for example Brah and Phoenix 2004; Carbin and Tornhill 2004; Lykke 2003; De los Reyes and Kamali 2005; De los Reyes and Mulinari 2003; De los Reyes, 2002).

This book takes seriously the emancipatory implications of the existence of multiple positions of identity, as noted above. As became obvious in Chapter Five, discourses about men and women are constantly drawn on to in order to separate responsibilities assigned to women from male dominated arenas like politics. Gender shapes how we think about politics and so politics itself is formed by our conceptions about men and women. Female politicians often seem to break the norm, which is a male politician acting in male institutions (see for example Phillips 2000; Peterson and Runyan 1993; Kabeer 1994). Therefore, women in the political arena must try to handle the fact that their female identities do not overlap with the generally held image of a politician. The interviews tell us about how politics for many women politicians becomes a matter of organizing their female and political identities into an understandable self. What is interesting in the context of women and politics, then, is how different identities are prioritized, overlap or mix.

While some women talk in terms of changing themselves to fit into the National Assembly, others expressed it in terms of moving between different images of identity. Prioritizing, performing and talking from one identity position (while obscuring others that one might perform) probably affect one’s ability to resist power-loaded discourses, since a major factor in resistance is who speaks. The authority and rank of the speaker and what identities s/he draws on as a speaking subject are important components when discussing the possibility of extending, maintaining or challenging discourses.

To analyse this further, it is worth returning to Foucault, who emphasizes that certain individuals have a larger influence over the discourse than others. This reasoning emanates from his rules or règles de formation, which illustrate how discourses are shaped and maintained. The first rule constitutes the specific social and cultural
contexts within which the discourse appears. The family, the social group, the working context and the religious community all have their specific borders, marking the boundary between insanity and reason. The second rule is the *instances de délimitation* (authorities of delimitation). Here Foucault is referring to people with a certain authority, whose knowledge is recognized by the public at large (in Daudi 1984: 187; see also Said 1995: 21). For example, having greater authority than others in the area of medicine, doctors are more likely than others to be able to establish or challenge medical ‘truths’, and so the reverse pattern prevails: for subaltern groupings it may be difficult to establish themselves and their knowledge as a norm.

The above arguments invite a return to the interviews, because while Foucault’s reasoning embraces the ability of certain individuals to affect the discourse, taking the interviews as a point of departure I would like to argue that this reasoning must be broadened and nuanced to deal with identity positions rather than individuals. Although Cambodian women in many cases prioritize a female identity position, occasionally they give weight to yet other identity positions in order to gain political power. Again it is a matter of subjectivity and how women organize the different identities they are hailed into. One woman argued that it is better to not perform a female identity but represent oneself just as a leader:

> [...] as leaders women have also some difficulty. But somehow not all people know what women can do; they always think that men can do better, than women. But, through my work as a minister, I tried to explain these issues. To be a leader I didn’t like to say, ‘I am a woman’. But as leader I had to do the job as a leader and not connect being a female with the job.\(^7\)

Reading this quotation in light of the theoretical framework, one may draw the conclusion that a woman in a position of leadership may be seen, first and foremost, as a leader while she is obscuring the fact that she is a woman (‘But as leader I had to do the job as a leader and not connect being a female with the job’). This can be seen as a response to the stereotypes and hierarchies that embrace
women as non-political (‘as leaders women have also some difficulty. But somehow not all people know what women can do, they always think that men can do better, than women’). Therefore, for this woman, it is preferable to talk from her leader identity. In this sense it is possible to use the hierarchies and the fact that one is hailed into multiple identities in order to move up the political ladder, because by emphasizing one’s (normalized) high-ranking identities, one may situate oneself as a more trustworthy actor. As is indicated in the quotation above, it should also be possible for this woman to negotiate the female low status identity by talking from a high-status leader identity (‘through my work as a minister, I tried to explain these issues [about what women can do]’). As a leader, she probably possesses the status and impact needed to maintain women’s capacity in a trustworthy manner, thus the trick would be to try to redefine a low status identity position while talking from another, high-status identity. This is to be read through Foucault’s outline of the authority of the speaker –according to the interviews, a politician has more authority to establish a new discourse than a woman has.

Yet another woman, representing a local NGO, discussed the possibility of moving between different identity positions. She separated the female identity position from the image of a politician, still arguing for women to be able to inhabit both. According to her, women must be trained to live up to the standards of a politician, in the end being able to switch between two different identity positions: that of a woman and that of a politician. This must be related to the processes of socialization towards the image of a (male) leader, discussed in Chapter Six. These women normalize or socialize themselves towards the male-informed image of a politician, still acknowledging their female identity. This can be interpreted as a strategy to move between identity positions in order to gain political power.

Even though these women may try to shift between different images of identity, the fact that women politicians are of the female sex seems to be a fact seldom overlooked. Many professions are by definition informed by masculinity and men, positions that are seen as the norm, the natural. The binary relationship between whiteness
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and blackness can help us to further understand the nexus between men and normal. While whiteness is seldom problematized, seen as a race or something that is used as a label, when race-issues are discussed it is often those who are called black or coloured who are in focus. Being white is not a race but the normal (Dyer 1997: 1–3; Fundberg 2003: 20; Wendt Höjer and Åse 1999: 8). Similarly, men as men are not problemized – they are normal. In relation to the normal, women are often given double identities when referred to as, for example, ‘the female researcher’, ‘the female doctor’ or ‘the female politician’, to mark the in-between difference, the Otherness these women come to embody.

THE ‘WOMAN PATRON’ AND THE IMPORTANCE OF A FAMILY IDENTITY

O’Connell (2001) restates what Butler (1993) pointed out in Bodies that Matter: in the construction of a gender identity, other possibilities are foreclosed. We could have taken another course, constructing or assuming other identity positions, now absent and unnamed. This possibility, and the appeal to that possibility, is important for anyone who seeks to disrupt the power relations at work, according to O’Connell (2001: xiii). What is interesting in the Cambodian context is when subject positions other than ‘woman’ open up for some women to assume. Often these are related to the women’s family background, and the ability to assume and act from a family identity rather than from a female image of identity. This was accentuated in different interviews. One woman explained how she became trusted as a village chief: ‘I am a knowledge person in comparison to other villagers and I have my reputation, because of my husband and my mother. She is one of the, not the rich, but medium families in the village’.

Another woman was hailed into an image of identity – an image constructed from memories of the past – and responded to the hailing by performing and internalizing the identity of a patron. According to my interviews, some key structures of social organization were temporarily destroyed during the Khmer Rouge era, among these the patron-client relations outlined
in previous chapters. In the aftermath of the Khmer Rouge period, people went back to their home villages to restore normality, partly based on memories of previous times. One woman from a traditionally dominant upper-class family returned as the sole survivor of her family. As the patron-client relations were re-established in accordance with what they used to be, the woman suddenly found herself expected to assume the position, role and ultimately the identity of a village leader. She recalled how when she returned to her village, of her family of forty people, only she and her sister were still alive. The villagers’ support became the starting point of her political career at the communal level. She describes why they selected her as a leader:

In my village my family has been very important in comparison to other families. My family is the knowledgeable family, and I have a better reputation. My parents liked to help anyone who had a problem and that is very important in Cambodia. The ones who got help don’t forget what help they got from my parents. Beside the job at the government my father also helped the authority by take some notes and solve some problem in the village. Beside the job at the government he also helped the society, the community that they come from. In Khmer society they will not easily forget that. For example my parents used to help someone, and those people always think of my parents and if the parents are not alive anymore then they think of the children.11

This quotation indicates how the villagers understood the woman as part of a patron family (‘My family is the knowledgeable family, and I have a better reputation’) and treated her accordingly, and thereby in some senses hailed her into a leader identity (‘my parents used to help someone, and those people always think of my parents and if the parents are not alive anymore then they think of the children’).

An image of identity related to the patron-client relationship was then performed and re-performed by her as seeking political legitimacy. In the end she built her power-base on reconstructed ‘clients’ from previous eras, leaning heavily on her, and others’ interpretations of pre-Khmer Rouge memories. In this case, the existence of
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a patron, emanating from a particular family, has clearly been more important to the villagers than the fact that the patron is a woman. It is all a matter of the ordering of identity positions, what identity one chooses to perform and what it means in terms of political power and legitimacy.

As argued in the theoretical chapter (Chapter Two), identities imbue and interact with each other. What becomes interesting in the context of gender and politics is thereby whether the different identities are prioritized, overlap or integrate. As discussed above, the interviews showed that it is possible for women to give weight to, or repeat, certain images of identities while downplaying others, a practice that can be interpreted in terms of resistance. Hillevi Lenz Taguchi (2004) mirrors this account of resistance while discussing the accessibility of new discursive understandings. She connects this access to the concept of desire, stating that obedient subjects who act according to given norms can feel a strong desire to act differently while given access to alternative ways or understandings (Lenz Taguchi 2004: 206). This can be regarded as resistance in the sense that the subaltern might disobey the hailing into ‘correct’ stereotyped and low-rank identities, but rather choose to challenge these by performing and concretizing other alternative images.

In conclusion, then, when considering women’s political power one must explore what political subject positions women are allowed to assume and speak from. For example, in the nexus between violence, memory and political legitimacy, images of identity such as wife, person who stayed, and patron prevailed as important. Analysing women’s strategies for reaching political decision-making, a number of questions ought to be considered; how do different identities intervene? What identities are given priority? How do female politicians signal different identities? And what impact does that have?

Performing as ‘woman’ as a strategy of resistance

We mobilize different identities in different contexts and according to the aim of the mobilization (see for example Mendieta 2003: 408; Woodward 1997; Zietkiewicz and Long 1999). This also goes for
some Cambodian women who strongly underlined their woman identity, apparently to negotiate gendered power relations. In doing this, they used the low-status female identity as a basis for forming coalitions as a political base from which to fight for access to political power or against other forms of discrimination. One Cambodian woman said,

*When women and men compete about who is going to be a candidate on the list it is a contest. Women are not as competitive as men. Therefore they lose. This has to do with women not being so violent. Therefore men win. Women in politics must create networks.*

In the above quotation, the woman sought a more coherent ‘we’ among politically active women drawing on the difficulties women experience when competing for a political position. This is consistent with Kathy Ferguson’s (1993: 181) recognition that identity politics always involves a notion of identity in the shift away from I to ‘What can we do about X?’

Likewise, some women try to legitimize their political presence with reference to a common experience and a shared identity. These women, and apparently the population in general, draw on a discourse about women’s ability to understand women and how this makes them valuable political actors. For example, a recent study shows that 92 per cent of Cambodians would like to see more women members in the National Assembly. 43 per cent of these see ‘helping women’ as the main reason for this.13 In line with the above, 88 per cent said they would favour public meetings in their area for women only to talk about their problems (Asia Foundation 2003). What is implied is that women, by way of their female identity, can understand and communicate with other women better than men can. One man said,

*More women should take part in politics because women are in majority. Women can have high positions in society because women know more about women than men does, women can help women better than men can. […] Women are better politicians than men. In society they are regarded as less valuable than men. If they get education*
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you become as good as men. Women can then be better politicians than men since they understand women who are the majority of the population. Women want female politicians.14

One woman said:

[The] CPP wants women into politics because it looks good. Therefore they involve women, not because of their competence. It is good with women because they understand women. Mostly it is women who vote. But it is not sure that they vote for women, but it might be like that.15

In line with the above reasoning, many female politicians stated that women’s issues are on their agenda. One woman said, ‘I have had a big women’s support. […] Important questions for me are women and children, domestic violence and that kind of questions.’16 A strong argument for some women with political ambitions has thus been that women have unique knowledge and insight into other women’s lives and only someone with similar experiences and interests can represent them (see for example Phillips, 2000: 6). One female party worker of FUNCINPEC argued that she had built her power on her ability to encourage women to come to meetings:

We are women. We have to know well about women. If we do not know we cannot lead women. When there is a meeting the leader always asks me to gather women and I can gather in two or three days, about 400 women.17

What was implied during the interview was that she, as a woman, better understands and communicates with other women and therefore can better persuade them to come to meetings. By referring to common experiences, a shared identity, she then tried to legitimize her political presence.

This kind of identity politics has become very common in recent years. Currier (2004: 87) states for example that the strategy of difference ‘involves the recognition of women’s particularity, usually with reference to the maternal role, and pursue [sic] equality through the recognition of this sexual difference.’ One conservative reaction to
this politicization has been to argue that strong sub-identities pose potential threats to national unity (Phillips 2000: 36). This critique implies that an individual who stays loyal to one identity cannot abstract this identity away for the good of the ‘masses’. It also implies that the subject is homogeneous and consists of only one identity, rather than being the bearer of multiple identities.

Let us summarize the above before moving on. Somehow, the women try to resist what they experience as an unequal distribution of status and political power between men and women by promoting a female ‘us’. Resistance is therefore seen as a response to the prevailing social order; ‘the social features that are being resisted [have] produced the shape that resistance takes’ (Hoy 2004: 3). Hoy might help us to understand why this is highly problematic. He draws on Wendy Brown as he discusses the resistance of teenagers who resist their parents and workers who long for a life without work:

These initial imaginings of freedom still presuppose and may even be constrained by the social categories and social identities (“workers,” “teenagers”) they are trying to resist. Thus, the teenager who imagines a world without parents is in fact still presupposing the subject identity “teenager,” and therefore the same social organization that is resented (Hoy 2004: 3).

By stating this, Hoy argues that the subjects that uphold ‘utopian imaginings of freedom’ might not be aware of how they, and the identities they perform, presuppose the patterns of oppression that they are resisting (Hoy 2004: 3). This seems also to apply to this case, where female politicians use their identities to try to resist the very oppression that the position of women underpins. That they thereby tend to strengthen the very discourse they want to resist, is a well-known paradox for many feminist researchers.

Let us reflect upon the above. Women with political ambitions have argued that only women can represent women (Phillips, 2000: 6). The argument is that women have particular interests and competences and therefore women must be employed to satisfy these needs and interests. Female politicians are also occasionally expected
to ‘be’ women, to share the female identity and inhabit the same experiences, interests and qualities as other women. This strengthens the reasoning of some feminist researchers who discuss how ‘women (literally) disguise themselves as women’ (Davis and Fisher 1993: 16). Or talk about ‘women “as women”.’ (Wendt Höjer and Åse 1999: 32). This implies that few women totally correspond with the image of a woman, but might play that role or lean against that image in negotiating their power-relations. This is to be related to Spivak’s concept of strategic essentialism, which denotes the way in which some groups, defined through their gender, nationality or ethnicity, might bring forward their group identity and thereby ‘essentialize’ themselves in order to achieve certain goals (Spivak 1993: 3–5; Lundahl 2005: 11–13). In this case the women seem to use the stereotype in order to get political power, and at the same time raise women’s status by acknowledging them and by picturing them as an important group that must be taken into consideration. The other side of the coin seem to be that punishments – that is, disrespect, anger, etc. – was now and then distributed to those women politicians who did not stay loyal to the woman identity (see Chapter Eight). Thus the politicising of a unified image of a woman is used to keep everybody in line and thereby probably functions to maintain the gender stereotypes.

CREATING NEW SYSTEMS OF PUNISHMENTS AND REWARDS

As previously mentioned, some of the women interviewed put forth a new concept of a high-status female politician while others have tried to mould themselves into the shape of dominant male politicians. Another approach was to create a female ‘we’ in order to negotiate gendered power relations. This approach was criticised above for strengthening the dichotomy on which the power relation rests. Reviewing the interviews, it appears that the strategy of creating a ‘we’ is also making possible the construction of new systems of punishments and rewards. I would like to argue that networking, in this sense, not only constitutes a base for political action but may also be a stimulus for women to break with the prevailing gender norms.
In Cambodia, female politicians engage in various forms of networking, which seems to shape the conditions for resistance. What will be argued for, in this regard, is strong connections between networking and negotiated systems of punishment and rewards. As stated in Chapter Two, different reward and punishment systems serve to socialize us and therefore we are more likely to invest in identities and images that are presented to us as the most suitable according to the system. It is likely, however, that more people would adopt other variations of identity if the passing of punishments and rewards were to work differently or disappear. The hegemonic status of ranked or stereotyped images of identity could thus be negotiated through changing an individual’s relation to the grading systems. In the interviews, networking prevailed as a highly relevant way to do this. The respondent below describes the different punishments women receive if they do not act according to the given gender norms, being put to shame and labelled ‘not a good girl’:

Women speak so little. [...] But women are not shy. It means that they don’t want to speak unless they have enough arguments. That they keep quiet doesn’t mean that they are shy. [...] But in the small group or small meeting they speak a lot, while in the public they are a little reserved. ... [Due to tradition] one sits like this, talks like that even when women smile they do not open their mouths to show their teeth. They speak so little and even if they do not really speak out, people say: ‘You are not a good girl or something like that’. And it’s a story from a long, long history. If you sit like this or do like that it is okay but with many people you must pretend to be quiet, smile like this otherwise people say ‘what kind of parents does she come from?’, or something like that. [...] So, maybe this comes inside the blood or something of women? But sometimes in small groups women talk and they show that they are real human beings. But in public they have to pretend. They must think a lot before acting anything. They must think. To get a good image. Even the smile is not like the others. [...] Men start to accept [female politicians] now. Because, even if they do not talk or speak their work is better from time to time. You see even though they don’t speak Man Som An or Im Run when you ask them to do something they are very
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responsible. And in small meetings they don’t care. They can speak very nicely, very well. Give good advice to the other. And contribute with very good ideas.18

This quotation reveals a number of things. First of all, it introduces us to the different punishments that are given to women who do not correspond to one female norm. The quotation reveals how these women are questioned and belittled (‘You are not a good girl’ or ‘what kind of parents does she come from?’). Secondly, it seems that these women try to compensate for their lack of public performance through hard work in other areas where no punishments are distributed to active women (‘even if they not talk or speak, their work is better from time to time’). Thirdly, the citation implies that men are considered to be human beings while women are not: the sentence ‘But sometimes in small groups women talk and they show that they are real human beings’ implies that women who are quiet are not human beings. As women stop living by the stereotypical female image of identity and start to talk and act (as men) they are suddenly included in the category of human beings.

Finally, the respondent reveals how she, contrary to others, appreciates it when her female colleagues speak out and she pays them her respect: ‘they can speak very nicely, very well. Give good advice to the other. And contribute with very good ideas’. Thus in contrast with the general public, this interviewee acknowledges the political identity performed by her colleagues and rewards them in terms of recognition. The notion of punishment and reward, as presented in the theoretical outline can help us to shed some light over these sentences. Reading the quotation through these concepts it will be argued that networks of female politicians give an opportunity for women themselves to distribute rewards to behaviours, for instance in terms of appreciation, that are not awarded by the rest of the society. The trick is to bypass the generally held system of punishments and rewards. If a woman belongs to an alternative group, maybe the affinity within this group makes the punishments from the remaining society tolerable. Within the new ‘we’, knowledge and identities
that are disparaged by society in general may be accorded a high status and thus be rewarded.

Networking thus provides a space for new identities that may be rejected by society at large, though can still be rewarded in terms of appreciation and status within a more limited circle (see Ferguson 2001). Networking, in this sense makes space for alternative identities to develop within the more limited circle. Other researchers have also discussed spaces for resistance, among them Margaret Kohn (2003), who argues in her book *Radical spaces* that different spaces becomes sites of resistance, as the nexus of the development of new identities and practices that seem democratizing. Moreover, if the network assumes a feminist tone, women might be able to distance themselves from hierarchical gendered discourses (see for example Holmberg 1993; Milwertz and Wei 2003: 14–16).

Hillevi Lenz Taguchi’s discussion of identity, I want to suggest, strengthens the above reasoning. Lenz Taguchi describes how, when attending a dinner with women of mixed backgrounds, she avoids positioning herself as a professional but emphases her identity as a mother in order to avoid being labelled an egoist, greedy or even disloyal the other women. However, eating dinner with her feminist colleagues she rather embraces her location in the category of career (professional) women. In this context being too dedicated a mother might result in scorn and contempt (Lenz Taguchi 2004: 105–106). These examples are good insofar as they show us how we change our actions according to the norms and the punishments or rewards we expect. The strategy of creating a ‘we’ can thus open up a new space for new identities and realms of knowledge that will not be punished within the new context. Multiplicity seems to undermine existing stereotypes.

**SUBJECTIVITY: THE KEY TO RESISTANCE?**

According to Habermas, Foucault’s theories could be acknowledged as a one-sided picture of the techniques of domination, as he focuses upon the techniques of power while omission the behaviour of the
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self and how power is negotiated (Habermas 1994: 85). This topic was also brought up by Foucault in a self-critique presented at Berkeley in 1980:

If one wants to analyse the genealogy of the subject in Western societies, one has to take into account not only the techniques of domination but also techniques of the self. Let’s say one has to take into account the interaction between those two types of techniques, the point where the technologies of domination of individuals over one another have recourse to processes by which the individual acts upon himself (Foucault in Habermas 1994: 86).

In his later work Foucault therefore reconsidered his theories by making reference to what he called ‘techniques of the self’. In brief, the techniques of the self involve the practices through which individuals inhabit subject positions. According to Foucault, these practices consist of such things as diaries or other ‘narratives of the self’ (Foucault 1988; Foucault in Nixon 1997: 322). This reasoning has also been elaborated upon in more recent thinking. Many researchers argue that self-reflection, the individual portraying of an image of oneself, proceeds through narratives in a process of making connections, developing a plot and giving meaning to different events. I may, for example, string together events where I can be seen as independent. By telling only these independent stories, I construct myself as an independent individual. Yet, perhaps there are other stories that can also be told about the same events, stories that I leave out, since they indicate a conflicting plot, not in line with the one I wish to promote (Stern 2001; see also Lenz Taguchi 2004: 209; Stapleton and Wilson 2004; Whitebrook 2001). We construct ourselves through the choice of different subject positions and the knitting together of certain memories, which are given meaning by the discourses of society. Even though the narrator, in this view, becomes more of an agent and is involved in the making of her/his self, the subject is still formed by the discourses of her/his surrounding. In the words of Sean Nixon,

This represents a shift from an attention to the regulating and disciplining of the subject to a more expanded formulation of agency.
‘Techniques of the self’ are still – it is important to underline – conducted within fields of power-knowledge and within the domains of a discrete number of discourses. They suggest, though, the putting into practice of discursive subject-positions in ways, which emphasize the dynamic nature of this process (Nixon 1997: 322).

As Nixon claims, the techniques of the self are realized within the web of the power-knowledge regime and, as it will be assumed in this book, are also at times marked by resistance. The gives us a hint of the complex processes of ‘self-making’. In order to further explore the intimate relationships between societal discourses and personal constructions of identity I will argue that we must also probe the notion of subjectivity. As discussed above (Chapter Two), it is from our subjectivities that we try to make sense of multiple, sometimes conflicting or overlapping, memories, identities and discourses.

Understanding Cambodian women’s ‘self-making’ in relation to resistance therefore entails studying the techniques of the self in relation to subjectivity. Amongst other things, the concepts are useful for analysing how the disturbances among different identity positions created for a particular female politician in Cambodia not only represented different desires but also became the breeding ground for resistance. While trying to solve the tension between different expectations and what she experienced as a proper identity position, her life became complicated. She grew up in a close relationship with her father, a man of high political rank. Her father took her everywhere and she listened and learned from his way of getting by in the world. For her, he and his life became the norm. He presented an interesting image; an idea of what one could be and do. His life became the model for an alternative identity, an alternative way of life, contrasting with the ordinary female destiny:

...because I’ve been involved with my father […] I wanted to be like my father, when I was young. […] But, because I was born a woman, a girl, I had, you know, by custom, to get married early. […] So, I had to get married at 17 years of age and I had to give up my life, you know.¹⁹
Women were at this time kept within strict boundaries defining the room for manoeuvre, dividing the possibilities from the impossibilities. There was a sharp border between the public man and the more domestically oriented woman. In the end the respondent assumed the identity position she was expected to inhabit: ‘[My father] wanted you know, like other parents at his time, that I should marry and just be at home...haha. [...] he probably didn’t think that I would get involved mentally. But I did, I did get involved very much’.20

When married she was put in another situation, in effect distanced from political life. Still she felt that the option of political participation was tempting. By knitting different memories together she reveals how multiple mechanisms of desire and power steered her identification processes. The quotations illustrate how identification can be an ambivalent process; at the same time as you articulate an image of identity, you may want another one, or you may be longing to be in two places at once (Bhabha 1994). In the end, this woman fulfilled her desire for a political career:

I feel like had to repress, you know, what I wished for, for a long time. [...] When I was in the US then it just came out, because it was like a free country, you can do everything you want to do. [...] That’s why I said maybe it not just happened, it just maybe a process, all along, you know. Finally it came out to be.21

First of all, this life story gives us a hint about the strong and important connections between politics, identity and subjectivity. It pictures how the identities we are assigned influence the person who makes the decisions within the public sphere.

Secondly, the quotations also illustrate how memories shape future expectations. It seems that memories are as much a part of the present as they are of the past (Stern 2005: 62). Bringing memories into personal subject formation this woman at last breaks free from the discourses that kept her within strict boundaries (see for example Edkins, Pin-Fat and Shapiro 2004; Passerini 1992). By acting according to an ‘unexpected’ image of identity, to which she was
introduced as a child, she shows how successful subject construction outside the discursive Cambodian boundaries may be possible.

Finally, the quotations above also reveal the tension between different memories, desires and images of identity, and in the end between a desired image of identity and the identity of a 'woman' that she was expected to perform. When she no longer felt the disciplinary pressure or the hailing ('in the US then it just came out, because it was like a free country, you can do everything you want to do'), she chose to perform an image of identity that previously, in another context, was 'forbidden'. Women's subjectivity might in this process be seen as the locus of resistance as the woman, when trying to organise her different desires and memories, and the existing images of identity in the end comes to challenge prevailing gender stereotypes.

It is also interesting how time and space in relation to identity steer the political participation. While a 'feminine' political identity has previously been a non-option in Cambodia, contemporary USA provides a space for such an identity. This space can be a powerful means to resistance by deconstruction. As stated above, one aspect of power is that different stereotyped and ranked 'truths' tend to be viewed as natural, as given by nature and thus as unchangeable and unchallengeable. Thus resistance, from this perspective, can be seen as a process, an operation that shows us that the different 'truths' about politics and politicians could have been constructed in a different way than they actually were/are. For example, one woman discussed how she became aware of possible alternative ways of acting locally after she had been abroad and obtained an insight into the practices of 'foreign' women:

I think that if all the women, not that they went for a long period of time abroad, but having seen that women outside have their ways, how other women behave, you know, how they struggle. They can apply that here too.\

This implies how just seeing alternative ways of acting may unmask practices and identities as merely constructed, which may be shifted
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to others, which are less power-loaded. Conditions for acting differently were created as this woman moved between different spaces and between different discourses. This is in line with call in recent years to revisit the concept of space (see for example Kohn 2003; Middleton and Woods 2000; Shands 1999; Soja 1996), or as Haldis Valestrand expresses it,

“Space” seems to be a magic word these days, and it turns up in almost every other title of contemporary discussions, be it as space itself or as innumerable other metaphors that may be associated with whatever one may imagine can have some kind of “spatial” meaning – directions, places, centers and margins, houses, caves, oceans, landscapes, travels, borders, bridges, fields, etc. (Valestrand 2000: 117).

When talking about her experiences abroad, in another foreign space, the woman quoted above acknowledged the differences within the category ‘woman’. By emphasizing the differences among women, the stereotyped understanding of women as homogeneous group might be undermined. Making visible the differences between and among women, the border between men and women might start to slide. Women might thereby deconstruct one difference, the one between men and women, by acknowledging the differences among women, or ‘the difference within difference’ (Hammarén 2008; Currier 2004: 4).

CONNECTING FEMALE GENDER WITH HIGH-STATUS KNOWLEDGE: GAINING A MONOPOLY OVER KNOWLEDGE

Power has previously been partly defined in terms of hierarchies and some individuals being given a low rank. Thus, for subaltern groups to raise their status seem to be a reasonable strategy of resistance. Anita Göransson (1993) has developed a theory of gender and power in which power bases such as households, organizations and companies are informed by power, control and authority. In addition, a power base is defined by discourses in terms of being male. Change occurs as new power enters or units develop. This is because in order for men to retain their dominant position, maleness must
change to fit the new order and maintain its superior role. It must be re-constructed in order to correspond with the new construction of power. Thus men's power owes much to the rapidity with which maleness is able to transform itself, with masculinity changing faster than femininity (Göransson 1993: 7; Göransson in Romlid 1998: 27–31). Out of this reasoning comes the theoretical conclusion that resistance may be achieved by redefining femininity faster than masculinity in order to correspond to new fields and organizations. By endowing new, interesting and important domains (power bases) for femininity and associating them with the female gender, women may gain new status. Reviewing the interviews it became obvious that some women tried to monopolize a newly introduced field, a resistance strategy that was made possible by technological globalization.

Globalization has drastically improved access for technological latecomers to advanced technologies. Technology and globalization go hand-in-hand as the latter unleashes technology, while at the same time technology helps to make globalization possible. Since computers can be interlinked across companies, countries and continents, information is no longer weighed down by geography or time. Technology changes how we do the work and organize it, and in nearly all cases the jobs created by it demand more education and training. In line with this, research shows that improved access to technology is increasing the demand for skilled labour in many low-income countries. From the above it follows that many computerized jobs carry status, especially in a Cambodian context where education and knowledge are highly ranked. In accordance with this, one Cambodian woman revealed how obtaining access to technological knowledge was a conscious strategy in renegotiating the current location of power. She said,

I try to teach all women at my department computer skills. They are going to know more than the men. Then the men will have to ask the women to help them. This will increase their self-confidence. Then they will enjoy their work and they will be able to get a better job.24

Through this the women will be in possession of new important knowledge. Men will have to ask women to assist them. Thus
there will be a divide between men-without-knowledge and women-with-knowledge. An attempt is therefore made to establish a new hierarchy through female monopoly over the new knowledge. Thus, in contrast to Göransson’s outline of fast changing masculinities, the possible new status of the Cambodian women will be due to the rapidity by which they succeed in adapting to the new technological conditions and how they manage to connect the female image of identity with technological know-how. In this way, this woman is attempting to re-construct femininity to fit the new order and load it with new value or content. The interviewee also revealed that this new hierarchy might transmit itself to other areas where women can gain new self-confidence. With the new self-image, a new enjoyment will be achieved and by behaving with self-confidence and contentment, women will be able to get new and exciting jobs (‘This will increase their self-confidence. Then they will enjoy their work and they will be able to get a better job’). What is noted is how agency is created as women gain self-confidence. This can be understood through the concept of empowerment outlined in Chapter Five.

NOTES

1. Interview No. 19B, emphasis added.
2. Interview No. 2A.
3. Interview No. 7A.
4. Interview No. 1A.
5. Interview No. 19B.
6. Interview No. 2A.
7. Interview No. 13A.
8. Interview No. 2A.
9. Interview No. 14A.
10. Judith Butler (1997) is one of a number of researchers who discusses Althusser’s concept of interpellation and the subject being hailed into different subject positions.
11. Interview No. 13A.
12. Interview No. 18B, emphasis added.

13. Others pointed to reaching gender equality (47 per cent), giving women power (16 per cent) and promoting development (13 per cent), (Asia Foundation 2003).


15. Interview No. 2C, emphasis added.

16. Interview No. 10B.

17. Interview No. 6A.

18. Interview No. 16A.

19. Interview No. 8A.

20. Interview No. 8A.

21. Interview No. 8A.

22. Interview No. 2A.

23. Göransson’s outline may be criticized for sustaining the old discourse about the passive woman and active man.

24. Interview No. 5B.
Deconstruction as resistance

In previous chapters I have pointed out how women politicians question what they experience as dominating ‘truths’ about women and politics. In this chapter I will try to make more explicit how resisting naturalized hierarchies and stereotypes includes deconstructing them – in other words, making visible the changeability of stereotypes and hierarchies is yet another way of contributing to their change. Deconstruction, discussed further below, is a strategy that is aimed at unmasking what is taken for granted; or in the words of Joanne Martin (1990: 340), ‘Deconstruction focuses on suppressed conflicts and multiple interpretations of a text in order to undermine all claims to objective “truths”’.

Theorists who deconstruct have traditionally used different methods to analyse texts. As will be discussed below, some of these methods of deconstruction could be transformed into everyday resistance in daily conversations. I will show how Cambodian men and women challenge stereotypes and hierarchies by deconstructing what they experience as the dominant discourses of gender, demonstrating their instability and pointing out that their ‘truths’, categories or images of identities could have contained other values. In this process I will myself deconstruct the very same discourses, discussing how notions of gender, politics and women within public decision-making are not static but open for negotiation. This will be consistent with Martin who states that:
Deconstruction is a particularly useful approach to study suppressed gender conflict in organizational contexts. Most organizations are controlled by men and by assumptions, for example about the legitimacy of authority, which in effect favour men. Women’s interests, therefore, often appear as contradiction, disjunctions, disruptions, and silence – signs of suppressed conflict (J. Martin 1990: 341).

Amina Jamal has used a similar approach regarding power relations in Pakistan. She too applies theories of deconstruction to show how women perform resistance in everyday life (Jamal 2005).

**DECONSTRUCTION AS A STRATEGY OF RESISTANCE**

According to Laclau and Mouffe, power, discourse and objectivity are related concepts. Objectivity appears as we forget that the world is created by ourselves and it becomes natural and unchangeable to us. In their view, objectivity becomes power when we ascribe it to the world around us, forgetting that it is socially created. From this perspective, deconstruction can be viewed as a process, an operation that shows us that the discourse could have been constructed in different ways. Deconstructing a discourse involves demonstrating how it could have contained other values; to reveal that a discourse is not of an unchangeably orderly nature but just one construction among other possible constructions is to open up for change (Laclau 1990: 33–41; Laclau in Jörgensen, Winther and Phillips 1999: 31, 44–5, 56). Some thoughts from Hillevi Lenz Taguchi can be added to this. Inspired by Patti Lathers, she states that deconstruction is not about ‘throwing away’ the normative understandings, but rather making possible other ways to understand while the original understandings are kept still visible (Lenz Taguchi 2004: 177).

Deconstruction can be accomplished in several ways. Amongst others, Jana Sawiki (1991) points out that Foucault’s theory of power in itself is a practice of deconstruction. By de-familiarizing and historicizing concepts that are made natural for us and that we take for granted, Foucault opens up a space for social change and agency. Thus, his research is to be seen as ‘an emancipatory strategy’ in itself.
Deconstruction as Resistance

(Haugard 2000: 67; Sawicki 1991: 100–101). Deconstruction, in this sense, takes as a starting point Foucault’s view of knowledge as always inextricably enmeshed in relations of power because it was always being applied to the regulation of social conduct in practice’ (in S. Hall 1997a: 47). Power then produces knowledge and identities, namely the classificatory systems that we live by. This approach to power, inspired by Foucault and thereafter promoted by Laclau, does not correspond to the theoretical point of departure of this book. This is because power is not viewed here as the processes through which meaning is produced per se; rather, the discourse must contain elements of hierarchy or stereotyping in order to be labelled power. It corresponds very well with the words of US-based Indian scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak:

[… the antisexist project of feminism bases itself upon the conviction that distinctions arising in social practice out of the declaration of a fundamental ontic difference are, more often than not, incorrect, because, like most declarations of difference, these involve a dissimulated ranking (Spivak 1993: 124).

The concept of deconstruction must therefore be situated in relation to the presently used concept of power. Deconstruction will only be classified as resistance if it is deconstructing stereotypes and hierarchies. This conflates very well with Derrida’s reasoning of stereotyping, ranking and the undermining of the very same:

[…] in a classical philosophical opposition we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence of a vis-à-vis, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.) or has the upper hand. To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment. To overlook this phase of overturning is to forget the conflictual and subordinating structure of opposition. Therefore one might proceed too quickly to a neutralization that in practice would leave the previous field untouched, leaving one no hold on the previous opposition, thereby preventing any means of intervening in the field effectively (Derrida 1981: 41, original emphasis).
Derrida also emphasizes the hierarchical order of many dichotomies and he pinpoints the risk of neutralizing these binary concepts. This should be avoided by the strategy of de-construction:

What interested me then, that I am attempting to pursue along other lines now, was, at the same time as a “general economy,” a kind of general strategy of de-construction. The latter is to avoid both simply neutralizing the binary oppositions of metaphysics and simply residing within the closed field of these oppositions, thereby confirming it (Derrida 1981: 41, original emphasis).

Practices of deconstruction can be viewed as resistance, and deconstruction might also open up the space for increased resistance when the constructions of power appear changeable. In regard to the latter, deconstruction is more to be seen as a condition for resistance.

Which processes of deconstruction prevail? The essays of Spivak have extended Derrida’s concept of deconstruction. Reading Spivak, we learn that the purpose of deconstruction is to reveal the assumptions, strategies and rhetoric through which, for example, political narratives are mediated. Spivak considers deconstruction to be politically enabling, as it generates greater awareness of excluded groupings, thus opening up the possibility of their own liberation. Among other things, she is interested in how the rhetoric or style of the text itself often interrupts and contradicts its own logical or thematic scheme. This rupture thus produces what she calls ‘cognitive failures’ (Spivak 1993: 124–141; Spivak in Moore-Gilbert 1997: 74–113). In addition, Spivak sees deconstruction as a way of subverting binary constructions (Spivak in Moore-Gilbert 1997: 74–113). One danger pointed out in relation to this practice, however, is that the reversal of dominant discourses often remains within a logic that is defined by the opponent or dominator. For example, loading the East with positive value in order to valorise it over the West may not actually work in an emancipatory way because, according to Spivak (in Moore-Gilbert 1997: 84–5), the reversal must be complemented by the displacement of the term in opposition: in other words, a position and its counter position just keep legitimizing each other. In regard to literature she emphasizes the need for distance:
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[...] emphasizing the literariness of literature, pedagogy invites us to take a distance from the continuing project of reason. Without this supplementary distancing, a position and its counter-position, both held in the discourse of reason, will keep legitimizing each other. Feminism and masculism, benevolent or militant, might not then be able to avoid becoming faces of each other (Spivak 1988a: 249–250).

In all, Spivak’s approach to deconstruction is rich in nature and her work derives from a multiplicity of ‘rules’ or strategies to deconstruct texts. Joanne Martin (1990) too has similar rules for how to deconstruct a text analytically. She suggests that one ought to search the text for binaries, for what is missing or silenced, for interruptions, contradictions, metaphors and double meanings, as well as map out what seems to be explicit as against what it is forbidden to express. In addition, she suggests that the subject of the text should be displaced by another or that a new text be constructed that contradicts everything expressed in the original text (J. Martin 1990: 24–6). Below I will discuss how some of these deconstructing strategies can help us to understand the ‘speakings’ of Cambodian women politicians.

THE CATACHRESTIC USAGE OF ‘WOMAN’

Previous chapters exemplify how, throughout the interviews, respondents try to expose discourses as merely contingent and changeable. For example, one woman questioned the binary distinction between the genders by constructing an all-embracing human identity, thus negotiating the dichotomy between ‘men’ and ‘women’. Moreover, as has been shown in a number of earlier chapters, some women attempted to redefine the relationship between the gender categories by constructing a new, superior, female identity. Yet others have casted doubt on the commonly believed notion that women are more stupid than men. One woman said: ‘Women are the same as men. Men are not more intelligent, even if there are people that think so.’ In line with what Lenz Taguchi suggests, this woman kept the old ‘truth’ visible (‘Men are not more intelligent, even if there are people that think so’) while suggesting an alternative notion about ‘women’ (‘Women are the same
Deconstruction here is about making visible other ways to ‘do’ gender and, as argued above, keeping the old, original understandings visible at the same time.

Also contradictory ‘interruptions’ within quotations can be argued to work in a deconstructing manner. One woman said:

The whole society thinks that women are more stupid. But we are not born mentally weaker. It is just old tradition and belief … Men look differently on women. Women can do as men can. This, men must accept. We are different but just as good as men are. Men should learn to see what women could do. Men must change their view of women.

This quotation reveals ambivalence between sameness and difference. While first putting up men as a norm (‘Women can do as men can’) and then arguing for sameness; women can do as men can, in the next moment the respondent put up women as different (‘We are different but just as good as men are’). There is an alternation between different, contradictory notions that in some sense questions the dominating discourse of women as mentally weaker. The quotation reveals the kind of contradictions that Martin argues in favour of, disjunctions that reveal something about the dominating ‘truths’ of gender.

In some senses the quotation above can be viewed as an attempt to make visible the gendered binary categories, to question them (‘Women can do as men’) as well as to construct new knowledge about women (‘women can’). We can understand this by using Spivak’s interpretation of the concept ‘catachresis’ that labels the creative misuse of an expression, thereby opening up a space for new possibilities. According to Moore-Gilbert, Spivak uses the concept of ‘catachresis’ as a method of deconstruction. According to him ‘catachresis’ is a more local, tactical manoeuvre, which involves wrenching particular images, ideas or rhetorical strategies out of their place within a particular narrative and using them to open up new arenas of meaning (often in direct contrast to their conventionally understood meanings and functions)’ (Moore-Gilbert 1997: 84). Spivak
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describes the catachrestic usage of a word as follows: ‘no other word will do, and yet it does not really give you the literal meaning in the history of the language, upon which a correct rather than catachrestic metaphoric use would be based’ (Spivak 2000: 14). According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2000: 34) the concept is tightly linked to the colonized and their transcriptions of something that traditionally exists as a feature of an imperial culture (hereby they exemplify with parliamentary democracy) (see also Helgesson 1999: 21–23).

However, I suggest that the concept of catachresis can be used to understand the image of ‘women’. As shown previously, the respondents have described how they experience that ‘women’ often are seen as mentally weak, gentle and shy. The catachrestic expressions in the quotation then denote the rhetoric practice by which women take and reinscribe ‘women’ with new features. It is a constant (but varied) repetition of numerous statements that slide and contradict each other. For example, the sentence ‘women can as men’ expresses a similarity between the sexes, while the woman in the next turn makes clear that ‘women are different’. This is all put in relation to the ‘fixed’ image of ‘women as mentally weaker’, which men must ‘change’, ‘learn’ and ‘accept’ to be wrong. Catachresis then shows the ambivalent, sliding inscription of characteristics, which do not agree with the ‘literal’ general Cambodian narrative of ‘women’. Thereby the women open up for new meaning. Several strategies tend to overlap here; it is a matter of repetition, deconstruction, reloading/reversing; sliding meanings that contradicts hegemonic hierarchical ‘truths’.

THE PRACTICE OF RE-CATEGORIZATION

While Joanne Martin (1990) suggests that the subject of the text should be displaced by another, Spivak writes about reconstellation – the manoeuvre by which a whole text is taken ‘out of its proper context and put... within alien arguments’ (in Moore-Gilbert 1997: 84). Both of these strategies aim to re-arrange text in order to make visible the assumptions, strategies and rhetoric through which discourses are mediated. Taking the interviews as a point of departure, I
promote the practice of re-categorization as another deconstructing strategy of resistance with the same purpose. In the quotation below, the informant assigns masculine qualities to some women while associating men with female practices. This creates an ambivalent situation, because, as difference slides into sameness, the gender stereotypes are clearly shaken: ‘Sometimes men are not so smart either. Sometimes a woman is smarter than the man. Then the man ought to take care of the children. Age and sex should not decide [who takes care of the children], but intelligence.’ The first sentence shows that the informant is a part of the very same discourse that she is trying to deconstruct: she is apparently accepting the discourse that women are not so smart, while simultaneously questioning it throughout the interview (‘Sometimes men are not so smart either’). This ambivalence indicates how she experiences the different ‘truths’ regarding men and women, and how she is a part of the very same discourse that she is questioning.

In the subsequent sentences, the informant is trying to re-categorize the generally accepted arrangement and order of the classificatory systems. As already noted, we understand the world we live in by classifying and organizing it into symbolic orders. We separate food, for example, into ‘raw’ and ‘cooked’, or ‘vegetables’ and ‘fruit’ (Lévi-Strauss in S. Hall 1997b: 236), categories that often become natural to us. Hence, we have assigned different food different positions within a classificatory system. What makes things interesting is when things fail to fit any category. As stated in a previous chapter, a substance like mercury, which is a metal but also a liquid floats ambiguously in an unstable, hybrid zone. According to Kristeva ‘matter out of place’ is breaking unwritten codes and thereby unsettling culture (1982 in S. Hall 1997b: 236; see also Stallybrass and White 1986). In the above quotation the informant is trying to change these naturalized codes and thus redefine the relationship between the sexes. What she is doing is presenting a new cultural order by pairing together unpredicted practices and persons into new categories. Instead of women-stupid-child-care, she groups together men-stupid-child-care. She thus de-naturalizes the dominant discourse by showing a
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possibility other than the one she assumes is often taken for granted. Re-categorizing is thus one form of deconstruction that resists and changes both existing hierarchies as well as stereotypes.

Moreover, in this case, the woman simultaneously deconstructs the discourse by allowing a subject to turn up in the ‘wrong’ context. This corresponds with Joanne Martin’s suggestion that the subject of the text ought to be displaced with another. The attempt also corresponds to another of Martin’s analytical deconstructing strategies by ‘focusing on the element that is most alien to […] a context (i.e., a pregnant executive)’ (J. Martin 1990: 355). In this case the respondent constructs ‘baby-caring-men’ as an alien category, thereby shaking the cultural order by deciphering implicit taboos. What may be problematic, however, is that, in deconstructing the gendered order, the woman seems to be stuck within the logic of her opponent: although it has been reversed, the dichotomous order in some sense seems to remain. Still, the re-categorizing outlined above will be considered resistance as it challenges and in some senses denaturalizes the gendered stereotypes as well as the hierarchy. In sum, the interview analysed above is one example of how the binary construction of gender was constantly highlighted and questioned by informants.

IN-BETWEEN REPRESENTATIONS PRODUCING DECONSTRUCTION

When reviewing the interviews, it seems, as contradictions may be the starting point for deconstruction. This was apparently the case as a male NGO worker tried to make sense of the concept of a ‘female employee’ and in this process simultaneously ended up deconstructing the concept of ‘woman’. He told this story to illustrate the obstacles and possibilities of women politicians:

[A] lady, a young lady that I recruited personally ... said: I’m very sorry because my husband has to move because his company is moving and he is going to work in Kompong Sum as an accountant. And I have to follow him, because I cannot trust him to go
there alone. He might have a second wife. And I want to be with my husband because I love him and he loves me, and so on. So I ask her, why should you follow him, and not the other way around? And she looks at me like this, because of this question. It is not accurate. As a women she has to follow her husband. And by asking this question, it means I do not know the reality of this country, of this culture, of this society. And when I saw her reaction, I said I know what you are surprised by, but look we are in an organization that deals with conflict resolution, okay. So, now we have a conflict on hand and it is a conflict from tradition in this society to believe that women have to follow their husbands, and so on... And I propose her, look, you ask your husband to reconsider the position, because you came here about only three months ago. Now you have proved your capacity and that you really have a lot of potential. And I have signed for training for you, including English training program that cost the organization thousands of U.S. dollar. Because I believe in you, because it is my policy to promote young women that are producing, and now because of some kind of a culture you are ready to get all these things done and not only are you ready to destroy your future with our organization but you destroy my credibility because I defend you at this position with the director of CDRI. I defend you with other colleagues of CCCR and I fight to get a budget to get you trained. All this is already committed and instead of you change a thing, why does not he have to change? It depends on what kind of a wife you are. He sees you as his wife. And she came yesterday to see me with a big smile. Her husband is waiting outside. She told me that her husband now is to change his job. You know he continues to stay in Phnom Penh ... this may not be a big story, a big story, a big deal but it just proves that fighting against, you know, the state, what the society believe, you can change.

In the story, the male NGO-worker explains how his experiences of out-of-the-way, ‘in-between’ representations create space for alternative ‘truths’ and creative resisting solutions. In the interview, he discusses what to expect of an employee; in this case not quitting after a few months when having been invested in. However, as he reflects upon, to demand this of a woman does not go along with the Cambodian culture. The account underscores how women are
assumed to follow the order of the stereotypes (‘As a women she has to follow her husband’). The explanations also imply a hierarchy; men’s jobs and lives are considered more important than women’s.

The woman is in some sense to be comprehended as an in-between; neither corresponding totally with the image of a ‘woman’, nor with that of an ‘employee’. This created confusion and lead up to the questioning and deconstruction of the naturalized stereotype of a ‘woman’. In the tension between different expectations (that of an ‘employee’ and that of a ‘woman’) he chose to treat the woman more like an employee than a woman, still noting that in this regard he acted against the Cambodian culture.

The deconstruction of the stereotyped and ranked image of a woman was forwarded to his employee. The dialogue between them probably revealed for the woman an alternative to the traditional way of acting and in the end she chose to stay at her position.

**Irony as a Strategy of Resistance**

Irony is another mode of deconstruction (Alvesson and Sköldberg 1994: 234–5). According to Ferguson (1993: 30), irony expresses an ambiguity between, for example, what is said and what is meant, while at the same time sliding between what is said and what can be understood. Either there is a gap between what is said and what is heard, or else two meanings may be involved, both simultaneously intended:

> Irony is about contradictions that do not resolve into larger wholes, even the tension of holding incompatible things together because both or all are necessary and true. Irony is about humor dialectically, about and serious play (Haraway in Ferguson 1993: 30).

Irony requires a solid ground of shared meanings in order to grasp the concealed intentions. Still, ‘reading irony is an ongoing process of interpretation: posing questions, making guesses, reflecting further, and inclining perhaps towards an answer’ (Seery 1990: 305–306).

Ambiguity and over- and understatement are all ironical strategies operating by either emphasizing the ordinary or by saying less, sug-
gesting that there is more to say. Irony may thus resist fixed meanings, confusing the opponent while appearing as the double of the slippage.

Lately, irony and jokes have been widely discussed as resistance strategies; however, Anna Johansson (1991) argues that they are often also used as a form of social control. She interprets her informants’ joking about the divergent, that which differs, as a way of saying: this is not how we do things here (Johansson 1999: 116ff). Irony may thus be a way of using and maintaining power relations. This is also how Bourdieu regards the issue, as elaborated in his concept of symbolic violence. Those who do not correspond to the standards of how to behave and be, are condemned in the name of good taste, belittled, disgraced, ridiculed and finally silenced (Bourdieu in Moi 1994: 5–10). Yet another argument often advanced against irony is that it ‘takes something seriously only to promote its trivialization’ (Seery in Ferguson 1993: 32).

As stated above, however, jokes and irony are also often discussed as forms of resistance and thus distinguished from cynicism, which may be accused of trivializing. Irony is considered political in the sense that it reveals hidden power effects and mechanisms by exaggerating, twisting or reversing the relationship between a statement and its meanings. Irigaray and Butler both argue that a constant ambivalent sliding between meanings confuses one’s opponent and resists hegemonic meaning. Irigaray suggests that women exercise mimicry, thus disrupting hegemonic formulations through ridiculous repetitions (in Ferguson 1993: 149). Butler, on the other hand, advocates parody as a way of disturbing the ordinary repetition of ‘truths’ (1999: 41–42). Rosenberg too argues that irony is a feminist resistance strategy that is often used in the theatre, for example in masquerade (1996: 4–16). Like Spivak, she talks about the importance of distance, which de-familiarizes the ordinary and thus makes it possible for us to question it. Distance is experienced by the viewer seeing the copy (the mimic), while at the same time recognizing the phenomenon copied, which seems unreal and alien. This ambivalence creates distance and opens up the possibility for change (Rosenberg 1996: 4–16). In all cases, I consider twisting a
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statement or giving it a double meaning to be forms of resistance against ranking and stereotyping discourses. This form of resistance ought to be used not as the only political form but also as a complement to other political gestures (Ferguson 1993: 30–1).

According to Wahl, Holgersson and Höök (1998), there are three different ways in which subaltern groups use irony. First, irony is a way of allowing the subaltern to live on in spite of being stereotyped and given a low rank. Irony becomes a means for them to distance themselves from the power relations they are involved in and thus manage to live with subordination and objectification. Secondly, irony is also a linguistic weapon of the underdog, consisting of hidden but still explicit protests against the prevailing hierarchies and stereotypes. This form of irony is used in a more obvious way to negotiate power relations. Eschewing visible protests, it calls hierarchies and stereotypes into question and makes them visible (Wahl, Holgersson and Höök 1998: 109–19). That is, ironic jokes might be a way of contesting and making fun of the ideas of masculinity that predominate in a society. While it constitutes a legal opportunity to say the unsayable and an indirect way of showing anger, the subaltern may ridicule and make fun of the superior part of the hierarchy. Ultimately, this would lead to the subaltern dethroning the superior by making mockery of his or her highly valued character and properties (Johansson 1999: 115–16). This way of negotiating power mainly concerns hierarchies.

Finally, Wahl, Holgersson and Höök discuss collective ironic practices as a way for the subaltern to handle power relations while simultaneously acquiring strength and experiencing affinity (1998: 109–19). This final form of irony might help us to understand a quotation from one of the staff members of a local Cambodian NGO, which uses television to work for women’s political rights. She described how the women would act while trying to obtain cheap broadcasting time during peak viewing hours:

When women are negotiating, men treat them like children. But women don’t oppose. Instead they are as sweet as pie. But they are
smart; they know what is going on. And when they leave the room, they secretly laugh together at the stupid men, who believe that women’s brains are severely underdeveloped.  

The question is thus whether this is irony. In one way it is. The women do act in accordance with men’s expectations, but for them the meaning of the act is different. The men’s interpretation of the performance is that women are mentally weak, however, for the women the actions have another meaning, showing that they are smarter than the men since they are fooling them and obtaining a better business deal. How they act, their own interpretation of the act and the men’s understanding of their actions all differ. There is ambiguity between what is said and what is meant, as well as between what is said and what is understood, however in the end, the relationship of power between the sexes has not dramatically changed, and no new meaning is given to the concept of woman. The profit gained is a good business deal and the increased self-confidence of, and affinity between, the women, something that in the long term may lead to changed power relations. In addition, the mockery of the men also has a lasting transformative potential, as it provides the women with a means to challenge the prevailing masculinity by making fun of it and thus contesting it. This kind of joke implies that, through mockery, the women are temporarily challenging – although not publicly – existing hierarchies and dominant social patterns. They temporarily refused to take the gendered norm seriously, while making fun of those who did, namely the men. By ridiculing their superiors, therefore, subaltern women dethrone them (Bachtin 1986). Anna Johansson seems to have experienced the same phenomenon while conducting field research in Nicaragua, where her informants parodied her as well as the men. She also points out that this kind of parody may be an indirect way of showing anger against superiors, an aggressiveness that women may not express explicitly, as it is not an expected role of women (Johansson 1999: 115–16).

Stereotypes can also be changed by way of irony, for example, through overstatements, because one makes explicit and de-familiar-
izes the stereotypical notions that otherwise remain hidden (see for example S. Hall 1997b: 274–275). This can be understood through Stuart Hall’s claim that the ‘racialized gaze’ often stereotyped black people sexually, however drastic exaggeration of the sexual prowess of black bodies could make explicit stereotypical conceptions concerning black maleness. Another example of exaggeration became evident when I interviewed the director of a Cambodian NGO that was fighting for women’s political rights. I asked her about the tensions between the NGO sector and the political sphere. What I was interested in was that there seemed to be stricter norms for how to behave in the political field than within the NGO sphere. The informant diverted her answer into addressing instead the implied criticism of the NGOs, connecting it with the human rights debate and thus trying to counter criticism using irony:

And they say that we are crazy!! Laughter! (…) They say to me, ‘You are crazy!’ I say ‘yes that is the role of the NGO: we drive everybody crazy. Because we have freedom of speech! We have freedom of movement’!

By throwing a new, different light on the word ‘crazy’ and loading it with another meaning, she tried to fend off the implied criticism, connecting the word with the rights to organize and to freedom of speech, won in 1993. To be crazy and to have the opportunity to drive people crazy were now being put forward as positive features. While using the same words as the critics but with a different, ironic meaning, she was thus seeking to escape the destiny of being labelled as crazy. She used the same word as her antagonist but exaggerated and re-loaded it in order to undermine the stereotyped criticism behind it. This kind of irony might exemplify what has been labelled ‘stable’ irony, which in contrary to more instable, post-modern irony, expresses obvious contradictions that signal an opposite meaning (Booth 1974: 234–244; Colebrook 2004: 16–21; Lilja, E. 1996: 36).

In some ways the above ironic utterance fits well into at least two of the categories outlined by Wahl, Holgersson, and Höök, above. While the woman was trying to distance herself from those
who ascribe her a low rank, she was using irony to make visible the shortcomings of their criticism. In addition, she addressed me as an accomplice, thus creating an ‘us against them’ situation, so that we could laugh together at the critics’ stupidity. Her actions seemed entirely conscious, thus corresponding to Wahl, Holgersson and Höök’s idea of irony as a deliberate strategy.

Does irony need to be conscious or even humorous? Although not expressed deliberately, contradictions often appear ironic (for example, to some it seems ironic when Bush states that he stands up for human rights). Thus from the outside something may seem ironic, even though this was never intended. Do multiplicity, incompatibility and duality therefore constitute irony in themselves? For example, as stated previously, some of my informants favoured an alternation between performing the image of a politician and the image of a woman. As shown in an earlier chapter, one woman favoured her identity as a leader, not telling anyone that ‘I am a woman’. Are these responses to power in terms of shifting identities ironic? In the quotation that follows, the informant repeatedly returned to how women may become more politically active. Analysing her image of a perfect female political identity from the standpoint of irony, one can argue that ultimately it has an ironic character:

We train, women from prosperity, we train for women to provide them with skills that they can use in their work to be better politicians. But we ask them to never forget their identity as Cambodian women.

The sentences ‘we … provide them with the skills so that they can use them in their work to be better politicians. But we ask them never to forget their identity as Cambodian women’ indicates that being a better politician is incompatible with being a woman, yet each female leader ought to be both. According to the above statement, female politicians may be understood as ironic subjects consisting of ‘contradictions that do not resolve into larger wholes’, and each woman would also be concerned ‘about the tension of holding incompatible things together because both or all are necessary and true’ (Haraway...
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in Ferguson 1993: 30). The above can be seen as women taking their first steps, moving towards what Kathy Ferguson's labels 'mobile subjectivities' that 'need irony to survive the manyness of things' (1993: 178). This approach also takes as its starting point the idea that hegemonic injunctions – that we ought to be in a certain way – must be negotiated. As stated in previous chapters, Ferguson's reasoning departs from the assumption that those who realize that the construction of limited, stereotyped positions of identity may result in discrimination choose not to invest in any single identity but slide between various dimensions (1993: 160–4). Hyphenated identities that range along particular axes of definition, such as used-to-be-working-class-now-professional, or divorced-mother-now-lesbian, mark the ordering trajectories across which mobile subjects roam as also moving. Mobile subjectivities locate themselves in relation to the moving trajectories of power and resistance via circumstances of proximity and distance, restlessness and rootedness, separation and connection (Ferguson 1993: 161). Mobile subjectivities therefore produce provisional identities, which are used by subjects who participate in the daily practices that mark gender, race, and class, but in an unpredictable way, 'on a slant'; moreover, by doing so they make a difference (Ferguson 1993: 160–164).

Mobile subjectivities are an interesting form of resistance, however, as stated above, the female MPs in Cambodia who were alternating between different identities seemed troubled, because resistance to hegemonic discourses is not always a light-hearted process but often attracts sanctions.

NOTES

1. This is consistent with Irigaray's outline of deconstruction. Irigaray promotes the concept of mimesis, which, according to Braidotti, resembles the strategic essentialism mentioned previously. The concept makes visible how repeating 'woman' as a negative stereotype but still slightly different, might call the concept into question and suggest that women actually are something other than the established view. The negative view must not be ignored though, but rather exposed and demystified (Braidotti 2003: 44–46; Braidotti 1997: 32–37). Braidotti concludes that mimesis is a process of constant renegotiation of the
forms and the content of female identity, a sort of inner erosion of the feminine by women who are aware of their own implication with which they attempt to deconstruct’ (1997: 35). Irigaray states that:

[…] to play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. It means to resubmit herself — inasmuch as she is on the side of the ‘perceptible’, of ‘matter’ — to ‘ideas’, in particular to ideas about herself, that are elaborated in/by a masculine logic, but so as to make ‘visible’, by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible: the cover-up of a possible operation of the feminine language. It also means to ‘un veil’ the fact that, if women are such good mimics, it is because they are not simply resorbed in this function (Irigaray 1991: 124–125).

2. Interview no. 19B.
3. Interview no. 17B.
4. Interview No. 17B.
5. Interview no. 11A.
6. Interview No. 1B.
7. Interview No. 2A.
8. Interview No. 2A.


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