Women’s Discursive Representation

Women as Political Representatives, Mothers, and Victims of Men’s Violence in the Mexican Parliament

Christina Alnevall
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Abstract
This thesis examines how Mexican women political representatives are constituted through parliamentary language in the national Chamber of Deputies during a time when compulsory electoral gender quotas are introduced. Women’s political representation has increased considerably worldwide, due to gender quotas or laws requiring guaranteed seats for women. Mexico, which is the case studied in the dissertation, is one example where a significant growth in the number of elected female politicians have increased due to an electoral quota law. However, despite this development women parliamentarians are still reported to face obstacles when in office. Drawing on the ‘representative claims’ theory and critical discourse studies, this study seeks to understand how constructions of women hinder as well as provide opportunities for female politicians. The dissertation develops a theoretical and methodological framework that makes it possible to identify and analyze the representative claims and the subject positions that are constituted by these claims.

The empirical section analyzes records of debates in the Mexican parliaments from two periods, one before and one after the implementation of the 2002 electoral quota law, which is a major change in the Mexican political system. The construction of the three subject positions women as representatives, women as mothers and women as victims of men’s violence are detailed. Focusing on the constitutive aspects of representation, as the dissertation seeks to understand how the construction of these three subject positions affect what female politicians can say and do in parliament.

Previous research on women’s political representation has offered a rich understanding of descriptive, substantive, and symbolic representation. This study broadens the field further by introducing the discursive representation approach, which contribute to the understanding of the obstacles women politicians (still) meet. The study uncovers how Mexican women are situated in a political context dominated by men, in which they constantly have to negotiate their presence.

Keywords: Political representation, gender quotas, gender, women in politics, discourses, critical discourse studies, critical discourse analysis, Mexico, Latin America.

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Christina Alnevall
To my son
Ludvig Alnevall
Tack


Min hemvist är numera genusvetenskapen vid Stockholms universitet. I denna frikostiga arbetsmiljö vill jag gärna tacka Elin Abrahamsson, Malin Ah-King, Fanny Ambjörnsson, Elin Bengtsson, Anna Bohlin, Anna


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Appendix

1 The selection of Journals (Diario de los Debates); year, month and date
Abbreviations

CDA  critical discourse analysis
CDS  critical discourse studies
CDMX  Mexico City (La Ciudad de México)
CEAMEG  Center for the Study of Women’s Advancement and Gender Equality (Centro de Estudios para el Adelanto de las Mujeres y la Equidad de Género)
CEDAW  United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
CEG  Commission on Equality and Gender (Comisión de Equidad y Género)
CIG  Commission on Equality and Gender (Comisión de Igualdad y Género)
Cofipe  Federal Code of the Electoral Institutions and Procedures (Código Federal de Instituciones y Procedimientos Electorales)
DHA  discourse-historical approach
FCDA  feminist critical discourse analysis
FDPA  feminist post-structuralist discourse analysis
IFE  Federal Electoral Institute (Instituto Federal Electoral)
INE  National Electoral Institute (Instituto Nacional Electoral)
InMujeres  Member of Parliament
MP  Member of Parliament
PAN  National Action Party (Partido Acción Nacional)
PAS  Social Alliance Party (Partido Alianza Social)
PRD  Party of the Democratic Revolution (Partido de la Revolución Democrática)
PRI  Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional)
PSN  National Society Party (Partido de la Sociedad Nacionalista)
PT  Labor Party (Partido del Trabajo)
PVEM  Ecologist Green Party of Mexico (*Partido Verde Ecologista de México*)
UN  United Nation
UNIFEM  United Nation Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
The lack of women in formal politics has not always been considered a democratic deficit, but there is currently an increasing focus on the presence, or absence, of women holding public office. One effective way to increase the number of women in elected bodies and ensure continued representation is to implement a legal requirement, which is often translated into electoral quota laws or laws requiring guaranteed seats for women in parliament. The purpose of such regulations is to establish a minimum number of women in legislative bodies. Although electoral quotas are, in practice, ‘gender neutral,’ these laws and regulations tend to have a female face since the intention is to compensate for women’s political marginalization, that is, when introducing such changes in electoral codes, there is inevitably an emphasis on women. Over the past few decades, there has been a striking change in political representation in many parts of the world. One of the countries with the fastest growing number of female elected representatives is Mexico, which currently is among the top ranked countries in the world (IPU 2020). However, the first quota reform in 1996 was non-binding and led to a decrease in the number of female legislators but was followed by compulsory quota legislation in 2002, and the percentage of female elected representatives has risen since that time.

Women’s presence in public politics is now recognized as a mainstream measurement of democracy and is, for example, part of the UN gender equality indexes. However, the tremendous increase in the number of female legislators in parliaments has not led to equal power distribution between female and male politicians nor to significant changes in factual politics or policy outcomes. Rather, women parliamentarians still face substantial obstacles within formal politics (Krook and Mackay 2010; Vidal Correa 2017; Baker 2019). In conjunction with attempts to understand the current rise in the number of elected female politicians and the testimonies of obstacles experienced while in office, scholars seek ways to further develop the understanding of such ongoing complex processes. Feminist institutionalist scholars have shown, for example, that changes in formal rules, such as electoral gender quotas, do not necessarily change informal
rules, i.e. norms, values, and ideas within political institutions (Bjarnegard 2013; Chiva 2018; Krook and Mackay 2010; Vidal Correa 2017). Other research shows, for example, how political parties work as gate keepers for women’s presence in politics (Caul 1999; Krook 2009, 2010; Murray et al. 2012). In line with a call to revive the research on women’s political representation, research on gendered discourses in public politics is commencing, seeking primarily to explore how women-friendly policy is framed along with the symbolic aspects of having more female politicians (Franceschet et al. 2016; Lombardo & Meier 2014; Verge et al. 2015). These studies seek to investigate the physical presence of women and women-friendly policy concerns.

What is not examined, however, is how discourses and linguistic constructions of women in parliamentary language place boundaries on what female politicians can say and do in parliaments. This book seeks to contribute by adding a discursive representation approach, using the representative claim theory, in which the constitution of women and female representatives are central to understanding how these linguistic constructions affect what female politicians can say and do.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate the discursive representation of women in Mexico, i.e. how Mexican women are constituted in parliamentary language and how this affects the agency and possibility for female elected representatives to exercise political power. This is examined during a period characterized by changes in the political system, when women’s political representation is under transformation due to the adoption of a gender quota law guaranteeing women political presence. Hence, the emphasis here is on the parliamentary language before and after the change in the electoral law, in order to investigate whether such a law makes a difference in how female representatives are constituted through language. To support this aim, the following overarching research questions are posed:

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1 I have chosen to use 'parliamentary language' in this study. This refers to the language that is used within the parliament, such as in speeches but also bill proposals, etc. (see Chapter 3 for an extended presentation of the empirical material). The parliamentary language is not separate from language “outside” the parliament but is in “constant dialogue” with the society, as Saward (2010) puts it.
How are Mexican women constituted by representative claims before and after the introduction of mandatory electoral quotas for women in the Mexican national parliament?

How can we understand the constitution of Mexican female representatives within these representative claims?

What implications for women’s political representation and their ability to formulate issues do these linguistic constructions imply?

Mexico is an appropriate case to investigate, since the country represents a general trend of adopting legal gender quotas in Latin America, the region with the most countries that have chosen to implement this kind of legislation to solve the problem of women’s underrepresentation in public politics. As such, Mexico and other Latin American countries are part of a wider group of non-Western states that have implemented quotas and have thereby seen a rapid change in the composition of female and male legislators in the parliament (Alnevall 2006; Franceschet 2011; Franceschet et al. 2012b; Krook 2009). The 2002 quota law secured the presence of Mexican women in the national parliament for the first time. Thus, it is an interesting period to examine, since the representation of Mexican women is under transformation and taking on new forms. By looking more closely at the representative claims made before and after the adoption of a mandatory electoral gender quota law, it is possible to analyze what claims for and about women are articulated and what portrayals of women are embedded in these claims. Thus, the time period chosen for this study is the period before the implementation of the quota law in the legislatures in 2002. The consecutive years between 1997-2003 are chosen to examine the upcoming change in the electoral law, which requires a longer time frame; a shorter period in 2006 is also examined. The latter period serves as a suitable comparison to the former and, thus can shed light on any changes in parliamentary language.

Theoretical and Methodological Approach

There is a renewed interest in the concept of representation that extends beyond the circles of feminist scholars, and it has been argued that we need to adopt a more dynamic concept of representation in a changing world (Saward 2006, 2010; Squires 2008; Wilde 2012). As part of this renewed scholarly attention, political scientist Michael Saward criticizes theories for
being overly focused on the political-institutional dimension of representation and neglecting representation in a broader sense (Saward 2006, 2009, 2010). According to Saward, we need to broaden the perspective to better capture the multifaceted daily politics of representation. To do this, Saward argues in favor of a focus on representative claims rather than on institutional features (Saward 2010: 5). Representation derives, according to Saward, from claims and not from fixed institutional presence, which has until today been the main focus within the research. From this point of departure, politics is about making representative claims, since “a representative claim is to claim to represent or to know what represents the interests of someone or something” (Saward 2010: 38).

Saward understands representation as a social relationship that is enacted in a constant dialogue and offers a definition of representation that focuses on an activity constituted through language (Saward 2010: 14). However, Saward is mainly interested in claims made by non-elected extra-parliamentary persons. One important case used to illustrate his arguments is the singer Bono, when half way through a concert, he starts to snap his fingers and says that every time he snaps his fingers, a child dies in Africa. According to Saward, Bono claims to represent the African children and, when doing that, he also shapes them as objects, i.e. they come to symbolize “the needs of debt-ridden societies” to Western politicians (2006: 309). In other words, according to Saward, “the thing represented is an idea of it, not the thing itself” (2010: 36). Judith Squires (2008) has elaborated further on the representative claims approach and places even more emphasis on the constitutive aspects. In line with Saward, her approach (the constitutive representation of gender) focuses on extra-parliamentary arenas, such as women’s agencies and feminist NGOs. Such a research design, Squires writes, will “draw attention to the disciplinary power exerted by new modes of governance over these forms of representative claims-making and the images of gender they produce” (Squires 2008: 200).

However, representative claims are, of course, also made within the parliament in the every day work of our elected representatives. Politicians not only claim to represent their constituencies but also other groups, which could be farmers, financiers, academics, etc. In other words, when the claim-maker (the politician) claims to represent a group, she or he shapes an object and in this moment also, by logic, forms her/himself. This becomes particularly important, and interesting, when politicians claim to represent certain groups, and the political representatives are identified as or identify themselves with this group, since the constitution of the subject also applies
to them. Thus, by moving the focus away from formal and informal structures and institutional presence, this study contributes to existing studies by adopting a constructivist linguistic approach. I thereby introduce discursive representation to the analysis of women’s political presence, since discourses, and the constitution of collective identities within these, contribute to how female representatives are constituted and thus how they are able to engage politically, that is, to formulate political problems and proposals. Furthermore, the portrayals that emerge discursively may enable female politicians in their work but these pictures may also backfire on them and diminish their authority and agency as politicians depending on how they are constituted. Thus, discursive representation contributes to research on political representation by adding to the ways in which politicians negotiate their positions and relationships according to how they are positioned through competing yet interwoven discourses. According to Judith Squires, research on women’s political representation has paid little attention to the ways in which representatives narrate identities and “constitute gender relations” (Squires 2008: 190). In this thesis, I argue that it is important to identify and discuss the representative claims made by our elected MPs and, by extension, the positions that are available for women in formal politics. Thus, seeing representation as constitutive, i.e. the ways (female) political representatives are constituted through language, forms part of politicians’ agency and authority but it also reveals what politics is made possible at a specific time.

The Case

In the 1970’s and 1980’s, Latin American countries began the process of transitioning to democracy. As part of the democratization process, women’s participation in the public sphere came in focus (Schwindt-Bayer 2018b). Mexico has seen rapid development in relation to women’s political representation over the last few decades. The last election (2018) resulted in women having a 48.2 percent representation in the Chamber of Deputies and 49.2 in the Senate, which places the country among the top countries in the world in relation to the ratio of women in parliament. In 2002, Mexico voted in favor of a national electoral reform that required at least 30 percent of the candidates for all political parties to be women.2 The law resulted in an

2 This recommendation was made mandatory in 2002 and raised the quota threshold to 40 percent in 2008.
upward progress in women’s descriptive representation in the Mexican Chamber of Deputies of 8.1 percentage points to 24.9 percent, when the mandatory quota was applied for the first time in 2003, and the number of female deputies has been rising ever since.³

Women’s political representation has been at the center of the Mexican women’s movement’s work, and the reform, along with the resulting numerical outcome, must be considered a landslide victory. Even so, research shows that Mexican female politicians have “limited access to the exercise of citizenship” and that “moving forward on a gender agenda /…/ is a risky activity in a male–dominated arena” (Ortiz-Ortega & Barquet 2010: 111). Thus, even though Mexican women have gained a greater political representation, they still experience the gender bias inherent in institutional structures, procedures and rules, (cp. Tremblay 2012) and there is a clear gendered division of labor in Mexican politics (Zetterberg 2018).

The empirical material in this study consists of the Journal of Debates (Diario de los Debates), which includes debates, interventions, propositions and bills, i.e. everything that is presented and discussed in Saint Lazarus Legislative Palace (Palacio Legislativo de San Lázaro), the permanent meeting place for the Mexican national Chamber of Deputies. The choice of material enables me to identify representative claims and thus to analyze parliamentarian language that can be found in public statements, since this is part of the greater civic interlocution. A discourse analysis requires substantial empirical material in order to give the researcher the possibility to identify traits, characteristics, qualities and features that are attributed to a group, in this case women. The focus of the research is thus parliamentary language, since this material is considered acts of public speech regarding women. To narrow the scope of the empirical material, I have chosen to focus on those areas that are frequently discussed in the parliament as well as those that are central to feminist theory, i.e. women are conveyed as political representatives, as mothers and as victims of male violence. These can also be translated into different subject positions that women inhabit. In a society shaped by subordination and marginalization, scholars have pointed to the importance of women being able to participate in politics and as elected representatives (see, for example, Phillips 1995; Mansbridge

³ In the House of Deputies, there were 403 votes for and only 7 against, and the Senate also voted in favor of the reform with 81 votes for and none against. A voluntary 30 percent quota was already adopted as part of the 1996 electoral reform as a suggestion for the political parties to include women in their ballots, but the Mexican political parties did not act in accordance with the legal recommendation, and the result in the 1997 election was instead a decrease in the number of female deputies.
1999; Dovi 2002), while others point to the fairness of women being elected (Squires 1996). Women’s role as the mother has also been central to feminist theory (see for example Firestone 1971; Rich 1995), not least in Mexico where motherhood has been discussed in terms of a mobilizing factor and springboard for women’s movements (Chant & Craske 2003; Craske 1999; Craske & Molyneux 2002). Another key issue within feminist theory is men’s violence against women, an act that affects women and cuts through all societies (see for example Brownmiller 1976; MacKinnon 1987; 2006). The emphasis on these three issues, which are central to feminist theory, connects my study to the important roles that are performed by women and also attributed to women. In addition, I have selected these three subject positions due to the fact that they span the public/private divide, a division that has been used to exclude women from the political sphere and is still crucial for what are to be considered political issues.

**Contribution**

This study falls under the research field of women’s political representation. It seeks to develop and complement existing research by adding a discursive approach and highlighting constructions of women, and by extension female representatives, in parliamentary language. The book introduces discursive representation as a research field and develops a theoretical and methodological framework based on the theory of representational claims and critical discourse studies (CDS). I contribute to the literature studying representative claims by analyzing claims made within the parliament, not extra-parliamentary claims, as has previously been the case (Piattoni 2013; Saward 2006, 2010; Squires 2008). My study discusses the implications for female deputies in their capacity as political representatives. Previous research on women’s political representation has offered a rich understanding of descriptive, substantive and symbolic representation and of the institutional aspects of representation. Thus, this study seeks to broaden the field further to include a discursive approach to contribute to the understanding of the obstacles women (still) encounter. This also speaks to the argument for choosing Mexico, with its numerical success regarding women MPs but with barriers that circumscribe their participation.

The empirical contribution centers around how Mexican female deputies are constituted in the parliamentary language during a period where they have achieved guaranteed political representation, which must be considered
a major change in the political system. Further, I will elaborate on previous research on women in Mexican politics that has resulted in knowledge on the relationship between women’s political representation and institutions (Piscopo 2011b, 2014, 2016; Zetterberg 2008, 2012), federalism (Vidal Correa 2017), legislation, political parties (Bruhn 2003; Zetterberg 2018), and the women’s movement (Ortiz-Ortega & Barquet 2010; Rodríguez 2003). Thus, existing research is complemented with new and different knowledge to discursive representation. Moreover, the study of the Mexican case culminates in a discussion on women’s political representation and how language works to position humans in different ways and what this means for the practice of politics.

Outline

In this initial chapter, I have introduced the research tasks I undertake in this thesis and presented the aim of the thesis and research questions. Chapter 2 provides an introduction and overview of research on women’s political representation and is presented together with a presentation of the ‘representative turn’ that situates my own research. Within the framework of this study, such verbal pictures have implications for women’s political representation and are further examined in this chapter. In chapter 3, the theoretical and methodological considerations that inform this study are outlined. The theoretical departure aims to bring together critical discourse theory with a feminist perspective in a discussion of the constitution of women through language. The first part of the chapter discusses critical discourse studies and subject positions, which include theoretical conceptualizations of key concepts from a feminist perspective. In the second part of the chapter, methodological considerations are outlined and the analytical questions that guide the empirical study are posed together with a presentation of the empirical material. Chapter 4 consists of a contextualization of Mexico. The chapter explains how the Mexican political system functions and provides a historical background to women’s roles in Mexican politics. Thus, the chapter provides an overview of the advancements in relation to women’s presence in formal politics and includes previous research.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 focus on the three subject positions that are at the center of this study: women as political representatives, as mothers and as victim of men’s violence. In these chapters, I find that in-groups (we) and
out-groups (they) are constructed differently in relation to the subject positions; i.e. women as political representatives, mothers, and victims of male violence. I also find changes between the two periods, for instance the increase in the use of the word gender, which come to impact the constitution of women representatives in different ways. The three chapters share the same design and present an analysis of the empirical results. Each chapter consists of two main sections. The first part is devoted to the period between the two electoral quota laws, 1997 to 2003, that is, between the time the first law was introduced recommending that the political parties include women in the ballots and the second law requiring 30 percent female candidates. The second section examines the final period of the legislature that follows the implementation of the gender quota law, i.e. 2006. In these empirical chapters, the two first research questions are answered. Chapter 8 is the final and concluding chapter and this is where I address the final research question. Here I summarize the empirical findings and discuss my results in relation to previous research.
2. From Political Representation to Representative Claims

Women’s presence in political assemblies has not only increased notably worldwide, but women’s political representation has also become one of the fastest growing areas of research on women, gender and politics (Krook 2009). Thus, research on women’s political representation has increased in line with the increased number of women in parliaments. The increasing empirical studies on the representation of women in parliaments have largely explored the composition of women and men in public office (descriptive representation), the outcome of (more) women in politics (substantive representation) and the cultural aspects of more elected women (symbolic representation). At the same time, there is a call for new and creative ways to conduct research and, as such, Michael Saward’s process-oriented approach that includes a focus on representative claims rather than institutional matters has gained significant interest among scholars (Saward 2006, 2010). The literature on political representation is extensive, and I present important theoretical and empirical research to inform about the contributions and nature of the research as it can be understood today. This overview serves as platform for my own contribution, and the chapter serves as a theoretical springboard. The chapter starts by examining theoretical and empirical research on women’s political representation, which is followed by a presentation of the “representative turn” and the representative claim approach. In doing so, the approach is also critically discussed from a gender perspective from which the representative turn is reconsidered.

Women’s Political Representation

There seems to be a common consensus that the World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 added new fuel to women’s movements and worked as an important springboard to put pressure on national actors. Scholars even speak about the phenomenon as a global gender quota fever (Dahlerup 2006a). When considering that more than 120 countries have
adopted gender quota policies and the majority of them appeared after the conference in Beijing, it might be a suitable description. The Beijing conference and the Platform for Action that was endorsed at the meeting also seem to have changed global norms regarding women’s political representation, and the platform is now seen as an important part of the agenda in most international human rights and development organizations.

Historically, processes have been put in place to mandate the inclusion of more women in politics worldwide. To increase the number of women in formal politics, the adoption of legal electoral quotas and “soft quotas”, i.e. recommendations to political parties to include more equal balance among its candidates, has resulted in significant changes. This contemporary transformation of political assemblies provides a wealth of opportunity to perform meaningful analyses. Hanna Pitkin is a pioneer in the research on women and political representation who authored the 1967 book The Concept of Representation (Pitkin 1967).\(^4\) Pitkin’s discussion on representation is still highly relevant and has a strong impact on today’s research, and her typology still shapes much of the research and should therefore serve as a starting point for the following presentation.

The aim of Pitkin’s book was to scrutinize the ways the concept of representation was used, how it was used in different contexts and what requirements were made in terms of the roles of representatives. In this sense, Pitkin saw representation in terms of authorization, i.e. a representative is someone authorized to act on behalf of others. However, Pitkin states that representatives are not only authorized but also accountable and, as such, researchers have shown the need to distinguish the substantive and the symbolic notions of representation. According to Pitkin’s definition, political representation is the activity of making citizens’ voices, opinions and perspectives present in the public policy making process and, in the words of Suzanne Dovi, representation “occurs when political actors speak, advocate, symbolize, and act on the behalf of others in the political arena” (Dovi 2006).

Normative Arguments for Women’s Political Presence

Women’s underrepresentation in public politics and the arguments for the implementation of different measurements to increase the proportion of women emanate from a long and lively debate primarily among scholars.

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\(^4\) For a feminist discussion on Hanna Pitkin’s book, see Sarah Childs’ extensive work (Childs, 2007, 2008).
This debate has, among other things, generated an array of normative arguments. Anne Phillips has completed theoretical work in the area of women’s political presence and identifies three arguments for increasing women’s presence (1995). The democracy argument highlights the positive effect of incorporating historically marginalized citizens, which would promote a more inclusive and vitalized democracy. The justice argument focuses on the fact that women make up half of the population, and due to this fact, their absence from the political sphere of power and subsequent lack of influence is unjust and should be rectified. The women’s interests argument states that women’s interests are more likely to be promoted by women as is demonstrated by historical precedent. The shared experience of historic marginalization leads women to engage in politics differently than men. Some scholars argue that the women’s interests and democracy arguments are linked since the increasing presence of marginalized groups in politics increases the legitimacy of these groups (Mansbridge 1999, 2005). In addition, a fourth argument is presented: the role model argument presented the positive consequences of women’s political presence and would lead to a challenge to historical a male dominance.

These arguments share the normative assertion of supporting an increased presence of women in political institutions, but they tell us less about what will occur when the number of women increases and rely instead on predictions. The democracy argument suggests that a level political playing field and equal proportions of women and men would create more democratic outcomes. A more equal representation of women and men would, in a liberal sense, be more democratic, but will not tell us whether policy will change to create more gender sensitive results. The second argument, the justice argument, criticizes the liberal assertions that women and men have equal chances or, as Drude Dahlerup puts it, “opportunities for men and women are seldom equal, since men have a privileged position in society” (Dahlerup, 2007: 75). Carol Bacchi, for instance, argues that political parties are unable to remove existing structural discrimination and therefore active measures, such as affirmative action, are needed to solve the unjust imbalance (Bacchi 2006). On the one hand, more women in political office would justly reflect the makeup of the population as a whole, but on the other hand, it can not be taken for granted that the policy outcome would become more just since structural discrimination might still be at work.

The interest argument has been intensely debated for decades and the core of the controversy concerns whether there are, in fact, objective women’s interests. Anna Jónasdóttir states that only women themselves can define
such interests (Jónasdóttir 1991). Based on the way society is organized today, Anne Phillips writes that women have special interests that are based on experiences of violence and harassment along with their exclusion from most arenas of political power (A. Phillips: 86). According to Iris Marion Young, women can share a female perspective independent of an essential female identity (Young 2000). Even though the interest argument is still present, many scholars today conceptualize it as a fluid process, where women’s identities are multifaceted, constituted not only by gender but also by ethnicity, class, age, sexual orientation, etc. A fourth argument, which Pär Zetterberg names ‘the role model argument’ (Zetterberg 2009a), is also raised. Zetterberg refers to Carol Bacchi’s work where she suggests that women’s presence in formal politics provides women with female political role models (Bacchi 2006). Politicians do not have to be male, and women’s presence would show that females are also active citizens in the public arena. This in turn would change our view on who can embody roles in formal politics. This research has provided us with an extensive understanding of women’s political representation. Nevertheless, in line with Pär Zetterberg (2009a), I suggest that empirically driven research would expand our knowledge. Where normative research questions fail to provide answers, empirical research might. From this perspective, we need to develop tools for analyzing women’s political representation to better understand what happens when women do take office.

Descriptive Representation

Research on descriptive representation has been the most prolific research area. Empirical studies in this domain look into the composition of female politicians holding elected office and legislative gender quotas. The composition of the legislature is highly visible (mainly because most countries register citizens according to two sexes) and easy to measure. Many of the descriptive representation studies are designed as comparisons between countries that try to explain and analyze similarities and variation in female representation. The effects of gender quotas, positive or negative, or no change, are the main emphasis in this research. Single country studies have tried to understand specific contexts (Alnevall 2011; Freidenvall 2006;  

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5 For research done on multiculturalism and/or intersectionality and political representation, see, for example, the European research project FEMCIT; http://wpms.computing.uni.no/femcit/
Hinojosa et al. 2018, Jones 2004; Verge 2010; Zetterberg 2009b), while others have analyzed regional specifics (Araújo & García 2006; Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2009, 2011, Hinojosa 2012), and still others have looked at the global development in relation to gender quotas (Tripp and Kang 2008; Dahlerup 2006a; see also the global data base on gender quotas: www.quotaproject.org).

In a global comparison, many developed countries have few female legislators, while some developing countries have seen dramatic increases in female representation. For example, Anne Marie Goetz and Shireen Hassim performed a comparison of African countries (Goetz & Hassim, 2003). Consider Rwanda where gender quotas were a part of the reconciliation process after the genocide that ended in 1994, and this has also been the fact in countries such as Bosnia and Iraq (Taarup Nordlund 2003, 2004). Longitudinal studies have also been done and show interesting results, for example, regarding direction, i.e. forces of resistance and forces for change, and timing, i.e. episodic, continuous and ‘critical period’ effects when it comes to women’s political representation over time (Hughes & Paxton 2008).

Pippa Norris (1993, 1997) sets out a model of parliamentary recruitment in Western democracies with an emphasis on political systems. This includes the electoral system, party system, legislative organization and party context, which includes party ideology and party organization. The model also takes into account supply and demand factors in the recruitment process. These incorporate social background and personal motivation. Other obstacles to overcome before being elected are the gatekeepers within the political parties, i.e. the internal recruitment process (cp. Freidenvall, 2006) and voters. In line with this, research shows that the electoral system, party lists and large district magnitudes (Schmidt & Saunders 2004) benefit the number of women elected to political offices.

Further, it has been shown that competition between parties may favor the number of women included in the ballot, that is, once one or several parties have picked up the issue of women’s political representation, other political parties within the same system tend to follow. This can be explained by electoral competition and the struggle for the votes (Caul 1999; Matland 1993; Norris & Lovenduski 1993). However, research also points to calculated efforts made by key persons within the party as one important factor when it comes to the number of women elected (Caul Kittilson 2006; Freidenvall 2006; Wängnerud 1999).
Today’s research on women’s political representation is headed in new directions and utilizes additional approaches. In comparison with the research cited above, this newer research has a more institutional application. This research focuses on topics such as legislative behavior (Franceschet & Piscopo 2008; Zetterberg 2008), electoral reform (Celis et al. 2011), party strategy (Murray et al. 2012), or political engagement (Zetterberg 2009a). Pär Zetterberg has also drawn attention to the relationship between gender quotas and political institutions. According to Zetterberg, gender quotas sometimes challenge ingrained attitudes and behavior among party gatekeepers, and they can change the way political parties select candidates. As a consequence, electoral gender quotas, as an institutional factor, are likely to provide gatekeepers and members of parliaments with different motivation and opportunities and are also likely to set processes in motion among political actors, both among female and male actors. Zetterberg demonstrates that gender quotas not only affect the institutional context in which they are adopted, but they can also contribute to changes in political institutions (Zetterberg 2013).

**Substantive Representation**

According to Hanna Pitkin, substantive representation means “acting in the interests of the represented in a manner responsive to them,” i.e. constituents promote issues which are of interest to that group, and a key concern here is studying whether women have an influence. Suggesting that more women in parliament are needed because it will make a difference in the depiction of women’s interests is problematic for at least two reasons. First, even if women are elected, it is no guarantee that women’s issues will be taken up. Second, we cannot assume that women’s interests are homogenous and therefore easy to identify. Nevertheless, researchers show that without the political presence of women, the women’s perspectives and experiences are not likely to be addressed.

Susan Franceschet, Mona Lena Krook and Jennifer Piscopo (2012a) show how empirical studies have focused on three types of factors when studying substantive political representation. First, they point to the proportion of women elected and the effect this has. When women reach a higher proportion of representation in government and reach a “critical mass,” some scholars argue that more attention will be placed on women’s concerns (Dahlerup 1988, see also Dahlerup 2006b) and they will be more able to form strategic coalitions. Childs and Krook (2008) use the concept “critical
actors” and defined the term as as: (m)ale or female, these legislators can be identified as those who initiate policy proposals on their own and often – but not necessarily – embolden others to take steps to promote policies for women, regardless of the number of female representatives present in a particular institution (2008: 734). Other scholars suggest that a higher number of women will make it more likely that men will become more gender sensitive (Bratton 2005). Thus, critical actors are more willing than their colleagues to represent women. The second aspect is the individual factors that could have an effect on the tendency of women to act on behalf women. Research shows that female politicians from left wing parties and those with a feminist orientation are more likely to promote women-friendly policy (Htun & Power 2006). Finally, institutional and contextual factors, such as party discipline, the presence of left wing parties in government and support from the feminist movement or women-friendly public opinion may also influence possibilities for women when they seek to translate policy preferences into legislative initiatives (Beckwith & Cowell-Meyers 2007).

Some scholars elaborate on the connection between descriptive representation and substantive matters when performing empirical studies. Susan Franceschet and Jennifer Piscopo distinguish between two aspects of policy responsiveness and state that these aspects need to be focused; substantive representation as a process, where women representatives change the legislative agenda, and substantive representation as an outcome, where de facto policy is an outcome (Franceschet & Piscopo 2008). Furthermore, Karen Beckwith and Kimberly Cowell-Meyers link descriptive and substantive representation by further developing the argument on critical mass, and the results of their research shows that the strength of the women’s movement and public opinion is vital for female legislators to gain influence (Beckwith & Cowell-Meyers 2007).

Several scholars argue that a higher degree of descriptive representation of women will lead to a greater substantive representation, i.e. a larger number of representatives of an underrepresented group will allow individuals in that group to act (Lovenduski 2005; Mansbridge 1999; Phillips 1995; Young 1990). Furthermore, case studies on women’s substantive representation show that female legislators prioritize issues related to gender equality and concerns such as childcare legislation, maternity leave policy and equal employment (Caul Kittilson 2005; Childs 2008; 2004; Franceschet and Piscopo 2008; Goetz and Hassim 2003; Lovenduski and Norris 2003; Schwindt-Bayer 2010; 2006; Wängnerud 2000).
But do women represent women, and is it important that women represent women? Scholars have discussed these questions to a great extent. Some researchers note that not just any woman will represent all other women as a group with special demands and/or interests, since some have a gender and feminist focus whereas others do not (Tremblay & Pelletier 2000; Waylen 2008). Thus, female political representation does not only require women legislators but a set of “critical actors” (Celis et al. 2008; Childs & Krook 2006). However, other research shows that women are more likely to be gender conscious, hold feminist views and drive a more women-friendly policy (Childs 2004; Tremblay & Pelletier 2000) or promote women’s issues than men due to the shared experiences of subordination that women face. Jane Mansbridge argues that the long history of structural discrimination makes women more likely to represent women’s issues (Mansbridge 2005). Furthermore, if female legislators are the predominant political actors putting forward women’s issues, it is likely that the old stereotypes will be reinforced and women’s issues will be seen as a side-project and afterthought (Franceschet 2005; Macaulay 2006).

Moreover, scholars note that women’s substantive representation differs in different political contexts (Beckwith & Cowell-Meyers 2007; Celis 2008; Celis et al. 2008; Franceschet & Piscopo 2008; Mackay 2008; Tremblay 2003, 2006; Waylen 2008). The origins of these differences vary. One explanation looks at the nature of the political parties and the party system (Macaulay 2006), while others find the explanation in the quality of democracy in the political system (Goetz & Hassim 2003). Furthermore, it is suggested that electoral institutions may affect the extent to which male legislators marginalize women, since certain configurations of electoral rules mean that male politicians may have more power to prevent women from acting according to their political preferences (Schwindt-Bayer 2010).

Recent research has started to challenge previous research on women’s substantive representation regarding universal definitions of “women’s interests” (Celis, Childs et al. 2014: 153–156). For instance, instead of starting from a notion of existing women’s interests, Beth Reingold and Michele Swers argue that we should examine what female legislators themselves say in policy debates. Such research benefits from an exploration of how ideology shapes the way elected officials think and pursue policy solutions (Reingold & Swers 2011). Yet another study conducted by Laurel Weldon is reluctant to link women’s oppression, exploitation, and discrimination to women’s representation but argues in favor of focusing on “women’s perspective” (Weldon 2011: 41). Weldon instead suggests that
women are designated as a group, as a collective, via social institutions and practices and need to take extra-parliamentarian voices, such as the women’s movements, into account. Karen Celis, Sarah Childs, Johanna Kantola, and Mona Lena Krook (2014) took inspiration from Michael Saward (2006, 2010) and broadened the focus from female legislators only to include both elected and nonelected female as well as male actors, who articulate women’s interests, in their study. These multiple voices contribute to the construction of group interests both before and during debates over the bill passage, they argue. An advantage of the study is that it avoids the problem of essentialism, and the research opens for the door to a more complex understanding of women’s interests.

The recent research thus develops new research questions and also a new research focus. For example, in order to strengthen the field of substantive political representation, Elin Bjarnegård (2009) turns the question towards the domination of men in politics. Drude Dahlerup and Monique Leyenaar (2013) also ask by what means and to what extent male domination in politics has been challenged, and they examine countries with a long tradition of democratic practices with a well-developed socio-economic structure and a history of male dominance in politics. This dominance has been contested by the growth in women’s parliamentary presence, women’s suffrage, and resistance and opposition by political parties in different ways. This is discussed throughout the book through single-country as well as cross-national cases.6

Symbolic Representation

Research on symbolic political representation has been under development in recent years and is not yet as extensive as the other theoretical approaches. The focus here is on how a symbol’s power can “evoke feelings or attitudes” (Pitkin, 1967: 97). Here, representatives are symbols that can evoke emotions about representation among the population and the reactions to that symbol are central to the research. When Pitkin uses a flag as a symbol, it is not the flag per se but “the symbol’s power to evoke feelings or attitudes” (ibid. 1967). Judith Squires writes that according to Pitkin, the criterion of symbolic representativeness is a feeling of being represented and Pitkin was critical of this (Squires, 1996: 84). One approach to examining symbolic representation is studying public attitudes towards representatives.

6 See also Gender & Politics Volume 14, issue 2, 2018, for several articles focusing on men’s overrepresentation in parliaments.
Thus, women are represented if they feel they are represented, regardless of who actually represents them. Some scholars argue that a higher percentage of women send “essential signals” to women citizens, and this perception of female legislators would guide them to get more involved in politics (Atkeson & Carrillo 2007), while others find that women’s presence only has a weak effect on women’s political engagement (Karp & Banducci 2008).

Zetterberg suggests that a gender quota in a public election may have an effect on women’s political activities and attitudes, since it signals that women are accepted as political citizens (Zetterberg 2009a). In national debates about the adoption of gender quotas, scholars also underline the symbolic role for governments in gaining domestic and international legitimacy (Dahlerup 2006a; Htun & Jones 2002; Krook 2006; Squires 2007). Symbolic representation is often tied to descriptive representation, but scholars argue that it can be understood as a dimension in and of itself (Lombardo & Meier 2019). Lombardo and Meier develop their argument by linking symbolic representation to constructivist aspects of the constituency. The presence of women in political campaigns and political office sets an example for other women, who might then view politics favorably and as an arena open to their participation (Caul Kittilson 2005; Phillips 1995; Schwindt-Bayer 2010 2018a; Zetterberg 2012). A discursive turn to symbolic representation has also been developed in other work (see Forest and Lombardo 2012; Lombardo et al 2009a; Lombardo et al. 2009b). Research on symbolic representation thus helps us to explain these variations in people’s view of governments. However, in comparison to descriptive and substantive political representation, few empirical studies have been made on women’s symbolic representation.

The Representative Turn

Researchers have sought new ways of approaching political representation in order to get broader insight and meet new challenges. Thus, there is a call for new and creative ways to conduct research. With his focus on the concept of claims in political representation, Michael Saward has challenged previous research and offers a basic analytical framework (2006, 2010). Saward’s work on representative claims provides a powerful argument for representation theory to take the dynamics of representation seriously. Saward argues that too much empirical research and theory have been
directed towards the *product* of representation rather than the *process*, where
the former analyzes representation as a static result of nomination and
election, and the latter would instead have a procedural focus. By placing the
“claim” at the center, Saward offers an approach that goes beyond elections.
At its core, representation is the practice of representative claims making,
and representation is not a relationship at precise moments but must instead
be thought of as a continuing process that evolves over time. Thus, language
is a process of articulating representative claims and constructs human
beings in particular ways. In other words, as Judith Squires states,
“representation should be understood as a constitutive practice”. When
politicians make representative claims on behalf of women as a group, they
also contribute to construct female collective identities, which inevitably
includes women politicians. In this manner, the way representative claims
are composed sets the framework for female political representatives. This
way of looking at political representation, as a dynamic process rather than a
static production of election, has inspired theoretical research (Celis &
Childs 2018; Wilde 2012) and empirical research (Celis, Erzeel, et al. 2014;

In his representative claim framework Michael Saward redefines the word
politics as “an ongoing process of making and receiving, accepting and
rejecting claims – in, between, and outside electoral cycles” (2010: 36).
Thus, Saward compares politics with art and speaks about the politician as
an artist or as “a maker of representations, as a portrayer of the represented”
(ibid. 2010: 16). According to him, we can only control what we see, and
this is a central point in his approach. Artists do not only mimic reality but
also organize and make reality visible for us, and our representatives do the
same; they present us with pictures of who we are and where we are going.
Representation is thus a dynamic constitutive process in which the “claims
to speak for also speak about” a given group (Saward, 2010: 49 emphasis
added). This means that the act of construction occurs, analytically speaking,
during the representation or in other words – in the speaking act. By making
representative claims, Saward states, “the maker constructs a particular view
of himself or another as a subject” (ibid. 2010: 48). The makers of
representative claims thus claim to speak for groups of people, such as
women in this case, but it could be indigenous people, lesbians, and gay
men, etc. The representative who speaks for or about a group of people does
not need to be member of the group; the crucial thing here is rather that the
person represents this group in the representative claim-making process and
puts forward something in the interest of that group.
Central to this approach is that elected and non-elected actors are part of the process of representative claims. This differs significantly from other theories on political representation. However, I argue that it is not necessary to include non-elected actors explicitly in a study. The reason is that elected representatives are responsive to the constituency and actors in society, and claims made by non-elected actors will be mirrored by those elected and will be accessible within political debates. If they are not, the claims are not (yet) part of public politics and should perhaps not yet be considered representative claims since, even though we have more complex societies today with more and diverse actors, it is the parliament that agrees on laws and regulations.

Representation is, according to Saward, a “dynamic process” of claim making rather than a “static fact of electoral politics” (Saward, 2010: 3), but in this sense, it is also unclear how to transform this into empirical research. My interpretation is that a study with this focus should span a continuum, and it is therefore preferable to perform a study over time in order to grasp the essence, in the sense that it would permit scholars to identify diverse and competing claims in debates. This study broadens the perspective further by applying a feminist focus to the representative claim approach that allows us to come closer to a broader understanding of women’s political representation and to include the formation of social identities from which representatives speak and act that are created within the claim making process. By taking this approach, we stretch the traditional understanding of the elected representative and include language as a fundamental component.

Representative Claims, Women’s Interests, and the Constitutive Representation of Gender

The concept of representative claims is, according to Michael Saward, about representing others and their interests (Saward 2010: 38). Judith Squires also writes that the “process of articulating interests” (Squires 2008: 188) involves putting forward representative claims. In other words, there is a translation of interests into representative claims. As mentioned, there is a high degree of debate over whether there are specific women’s interests or women’s issues, and researchers have long dealt with the question of defining “women’s interests” (Molyneux 1985). A central component in research on women’s presence in formal politics has thus been whether, and under what circumstances, female representatives act for the interest of
women. Scholars have theorized this along three lines: women’s traditional roles, women’s participation in the labor market and women’s possibilities to make changes in order to gain greater gender equality (Celis, Childs, et al. 2014: 153).

Much of the research on women’s political representation has focused on whether women make a difference for ”women’s issues”, which calls for a definition of “women’s interests” a priori in order to measure the actions of female legislators (Celis, Childs, et al. 2008; Celis, Childs, et al. 2014; Dahlerup 2014; Mackay 2008; Zetterberg 2008). Such predefinitions tend to mediate assumptions about the nature of ‘women’ as a group and run the risk of overlooking diversity among women. Some scholars have also argued that classifying women as a group with identifiable interests is essentialist since it indicates that women (and men) are born with certain attributes and qualities (Mansbridge 2005; Young 2000). According to Michael Saward, the focus on representative claims includes that “at the heart of the act of representing is the depicting of a constituency as this or that, as requiring this or that, as having this or that set of interests” (Saward 2010: 71). To see representation in this way means that it is a dynamic and performative process, and politicians “prefer to be seen as addressing preexisting, natural or fundamental interests that are already ‘out there’” (2010: 54). In this way, studies are able to deal with claims made by male deputies as well as claims made on traditional roles or those that have a conservative origin, something that scholars within women’s political representation have had problems recognizing since the focus has been on progressive women’s interests (Celis & Childs 2018).

Celis, Childs, et al. (2014) take inspiration from this theoretical innovation and use this as a starting point when they elaborate on how to study women’s ”interests”. They develop a research design that helps them identify women’s ”interests”, claimed by electoral and non-electoral actors, in different contexts and in different periods of time. According to them, the framework benefits the further research of normative visions of “women”, how these prevail in policy making processes and how the framework enables reflections on questions of “accountability and responsiveness to women” (Celis, Childs, et al., 2014: 172). The advantage of their approach, they assert, is that there is no need for the researcher to define women’s interests prior to investigation. Instead, interests are to be found in the ”representative claims”. Karen Beckwith also elaborates on women’s interests and political representation and makes a distinction between “interests”, “issues”, and “preferences” (Beckwith, 2011: 424). Beckwith
defines interests as more fundamental and related to major gendered social structures, while issues are strategic choices that focus on “components of interests”, such as policy initiatives. Preferences, in turn, form “a range of discrete, limited alternatives in relation to a specific issue” (2011: 424). In line with Beckwith, Saward is not only interested in “interests” but also in needs and preferences in search for the representative claim. Thus, women’s interests need to be operationalized, and this will be done in the next chapter, which deals with methodological considerations.

As a result of the challenges presented in the study of women in politics and the universal definitions of “women’s interests”, new ways of conducting research have been introduced to extend our knowledge in the field. Accordingly, Squires (2008) developed the approach “the constitutive representation on gender”, as an additional way to conduct representative research on women based on Saward’s ideas of claim making as constitutive. She elaborates on the idea that when representatives speak for and about women, they are “participating in the construction of feminine subject positions” (Squires, 2008: 192). According to Squires, “the process of articulating interests entails a form of claim-making, which inevitably contributes to the constitution of gender relations” (2008: 188). This in turn is defined as constitutive because it constructs human beings in particular ways and thereby, Squires states, “representation should be understood as constitutive practice” (2008: 192).

According to Squires, today’s research seeks to examine the number of women and measure the frequency of women’s policy concerns (and discuss the difficult question between these two), rather than “exploring the ways in which feminine identities are constructed by political discourses” (2008: 189). Thus, in the claim-making process, representatives construct portrayals of the represented in order to be able to represent them, and in this process, group identities are shaped and become a fundamental base for gender relations. In an article that is also consistent with Saward’s approach (2006, 2010), Celis, Childs, et al. (2014) propose that a focus on “representative claims” would move us away from exploring how to theorize and operationalize “women’s interests” prior the investigation.

During the last few decades, governments worldwide have prioritized, adopted and put into practice an increasing series of policies that both implicitly and explicitly seek to advance women's rights, dismantle gender-based hierarchies and widely promote gender equality and diversity.

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7 Saward also focuses on “the true character” even though he does not elaborate on this nor does he present a definition in his book.
focus on the process of claim making and the constitutive understanding of representation of gender enable us to stretch the discussion further, since these constructions logically favor particular policy solutions rather than others. Thus, the process of policy-making also involves a constitutive part since policy produces and reproduces gender relations. The way this plays out in practice is difficult to measure, but the benefit of researching the constitutive representation of gender is that it will provide us with new insights and provide a basis for discussion. Moreover, the research on women’s political representation has largely focused on institutional aspects, such as political systems, political parties as gatekeepers and internal recruitment processes as well as the embodiment of the representatives. The research on political representation would therefore benefit from a “representative turn” to encompass other aspects of the representative process, to understand the constitutive representation of gender within the process and to explore the ways in which identities are narrated by representative claims. This would provide us with new insight into political outcomes in the policy process.

Saward’s (2006, 2010) innovative approach to political representation and Judith Squires (2008) approach to gender have influenced me tremendously in my research and I fully subscribe to the constructivist portion of their work. I suggest that the representatives’ construct themselves and others within political language when putting forward representative claims. Saward, however, is not interested in the formation of social identities per se but, even so, his approach works as a great springboard for such research. I would like to push the argument further and say that these constructions of identities matter, since such positions tell us something about the agency individuals are given in this context. In other words, they contribute to shape perceptions of who and what representatives are, what they should be, and thereby what they should do or say. In the following chapter, I will present a discursive approach to political representation drawing on Michael Saward’s contribution on representative claims. In order to identify and analyze from the positions that are possible for Mexican female representatives, i.e., how they are positioned and position themselves in and through representative claims, I apply critical discourse studies through a feminist lens.
The previous chapter offered an overview of research on women’s political representation. The need for a revivification of theories on political representation resulted in the “representative turn,” and the representative claim approach was presented along with research that has been inspired by this theoretical development. This, in turn, was further elaborated upon from a gender perspective. Based on the call for more empirical studies into how social identities are constituted in relation to political representation, I argue in favor of the elaboration of a theoretical and methodological approach that can analyze the collective identities that are constituted within the representative claims. There is thus a requirement to develop a discourse analytical framework, since this is a suitable way to analyze the importance of language for the constitution of identities. Hence, the aim of this chapter is to develop such an analytical approach from which an analysis can be brought forward. To this end, critical discourse studies (CDS) is used. As I am particularly interested in the constitutive gender aspects in the representative claims and their relation to women’s political representation, a feminist discourse-analytical perspective works as a point of departure. Therefore, attention is drawn to the central concepts of CDS, and I apply the thoughts of feminist critical linguist scholars in order to grasp the gendered features in the analysis. This is followed by a presentation of the methodological considerations, analytical tools and empirical material.

The Study of Discourses

The study of discourses is the study of how language is used between people and how people make meaning through speech acts. In line with discourse

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8 The term critical discourse studies (CDS) is equivalent to critical discourse analysis (CDA). Instead of using CDA as an umbrella term, scholars today use CDS to a large extent (see van Dijk (2013) and Wodak & Meyer (2016a) for a discussion). I will use CDS in this study even when I refer to scholars that use the acronym CDA.
theory, this thesis considers language to be more than just the articulation of words. Language is better seen as a social phenomenon, and it is through conventions, normalization, conflicts and negotiations within a social space that the meaning of words are formed and established. The aim of discourse analysis is to map the processes of filling words and language with content, i.e. with a meaning that is comprehensible. In this way, language more than how we perceive the world, it is the spoken words that influence the way we think, speak and act. We use language and signs to communicate, to be understood and to create meaning in what we do. However, words or signs do not inhabit one “truth” but can change over time and across cultures. Thus, the way we understand and perceive reality at a certain time is not created in a vacuum but has to be analyzed in its context (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2002).

There are many ways to conduct research on language, and the scholarly work on discourse analysis is rich and includes many different strands (see, for example, Boréus and Bergström 2017 and Winther Jørgensen and Phillips 2002 for an overview). Discourse analysis has had a considerable impact on political science in recent years. Recent work has an increased focus on political discourses and how these position the groups of people that are targeted in policy-making processes (Carbin 2010; McKee 2009; for a theoretical contribution, see Wagenaar 2011). This research offers insight into how discourses contribute to policy-makers’ understanding of society, and by extension, insight into which policy is favored with regard to specific groups (see, for example, Carol Bacchi’s extensive work on discourses within policy making processes, 2009; 1999, and Bacchi and Goodwin 2016; Rönnblom 2011). What unites these studies is that there is no focus on what positions are made possible for the political representatives, i.e. the formation of collective identities within formal politics.

Discourse studies, regardless of the focus, are built on some common premises that are summarized as follows by Winther Jørgensen and Phillips (2002). The first premise for social constructivist research is that knowledge should not be considered an objective truth, and our reflection of the world is only accessible through the ways we perceive it and the ways we have learned to categorize the world. This means that knowledge must be open to questions and a critical view. The second premise (related to the first) asserts that the way we perceive the world is always culturally and historically marked. This means that human beings are considered changeable and are characterized according to the context in which they live. According to this premise the world is socially and discursively constructed and, in this way,
discourse analysis is an anti-essentialist approach. A third premise is the assumption that knowledge is closely related to but also affected by social processes. That is, knowledge is achievable through social interaction, where common truths are created and reproduced, and there is a constant struggle between what is truth and what is not. A fourth and last premise is that there is a connection between knowledge and social action. This means that in a particular society at a specific time, some actions will be normal, accepted and possible, while others will be unthinkable. Consequently, different worldviews generate different social actions, and the socially constructed truth will lead to different social consequences.

The aim of discourse analysis is to map the processes where we struggle to establish the content of those words and thus what they mean to us. In this way, language shapes the way it is possible to think, speak, and act. The concept of discourse is central in this dissertation. In a social constructivist tradition, I choose to define discourse as socially constructed knowledge that shapes, regulates and enables human experience (Karp and Banducci, 2008). Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak formulate a frequently cited definition:

CDA sees discourse – language use in speech and writing – as a form of ‘social practice’. Describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s), which frame it: the discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them. That is, discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it. Since discourse is so socially consequential, it gives rise to important issues of power. Discursive practices may have major ideological effects – that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997: 258).

Discourses are never isolated events but interrelate with each other in different ways. In line with Foucault (2002), I consider discourses to be thematically cohesive and knowledge producing. In this dissertation, the focus is on discourses relating to Mexican women in Mexican public politics and when knowledge about women is reproduced, it is interrelated with references to other themes or knowledge.
What distinguishes CDS in comparison with other discourse oriented methods and what is critical in critical discourse analysis? According to Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, there is a significant difference between discourse studies and critical discourse studies and this distinction is to be found in the “constitutive problem-oriented, interdisciplinary approach of the latter” (Wodak & Meyer, 2016a: 2, italics in original). An overview of CDS shows a variety of definitions of ‘critical’ discourses, but on a basic level, critical discourse is about analyzing the way power relationships are (re)produced discursively. According to Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, the aim of conducting critical research is to:

investigate and analyse power relations in society and to formulate normative perspectives from which a critique of such relations can be made with an eye on the possibilities for social change (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 2).

Critical discourse analysis is thus ‘critical’ in the sense that it intends to reveal the role of discursive practice in the social world such as unequal power relations. Furthermore, it rests on an aim to contribute to social change and, by extension, to contribute to more equal power relations in society (Fairclough 2010). In an early work, Teun A. van Dijk discusses the principles of CDS and emphasizes the aim of the research and position of the researchers. According to van Dijk, CDS research is normative and, by extension, also political (van Dijk 1993, 252–53). This is, van Dijk stresses, the researchers role, and the contribution of the research is to reach an understanding of reproduction of dominance through discourses (1993: 252).

The outcome of critical discourse analysis is to create a “critical consciousness” so that those most affected by injustice and those in a position to address this injustice may contribute to change these (Fairclough, 2001: 197). Thus, CDS helps us to gain insight into the way discourse reproduces (or resists) social and political inequality, power or domination.

CDS is chosen for this study as it provides ways to “go beyond mere description and explanation, and pay more explicit attention to the socio-political and cultural presuppositions and implications of discourse” (van Dijk 1993, 131). In this way, CDS is an excellent tool to study the interaction between language and social structures that reinforce constitutive aspects of gender and power relations in a society. In the following section, I describe CDS and how feminist scholars have developed the approach further in order to create a more gender sensitive approach. This theoretical framework is then applied as a tool for the application of the research.
Critical Discourse Studies

Critical discourse studies is “a type of discourse analysis research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in social and political contexts” (van Dijk 2001, 352). Thus, it seeks to show how ideological prepositions are hidden beneath the surface structures of language, and scholars working with CDS use different approaches to accomplish this. Even though CDS scholars seek to identify discourses that position people in different ways, they have been criticized for not being gender sensitive, and this has resulted in the development of theoretical and methodological advancements. Linguist professor Ruth Wodak explains:

A feminist perspective would claim that many social problems are inherently gendered, thus not viewing ‘gender’ or ‘sex’ as isolated variables, but as dimensions informing theory and methodology in all research (Wodak, 2008: 193).

In order to develop a theoretical and methodological framework that is able to deal with gender in empirical studies, sociolinguist Judith Baxter introduces feminist post-structuralist discourse analysis, a “feminist approach to analysing the ways in which speakers negotiate their identities, relationships and positions” (Baxter, 2003: 1). Central to this is an understanding of women’s status in a patriarchal world, in which women as a group are subordinated to men as a group.

According to Baxter (2003), gender difference is a dominant discourse among competing discourses and needs to be explicitly present when analyzing all types of empirical material. Baxter’s approach has been expanded further, for example, by Laurel Kamada’s work (2010) on hybrid identities of teenage girls and Paul Baker (2013), who analyzes media representations of gender. Linguistics scholar Michelle Lazar follows this track and emphasizes “the complex, subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, ways in which frequently taken-for-granted gendered assumptions and hegemonic power relations are discursively produced, sustained, negotiated, and challenged in different contexts and communities” (Lazar 2005b: 142) and has applied her approach, for example, to analyze the representations of “modern fathers” in ads in Singapore. Consequently, both approaches are characterized by the focus on power and unequal relationships between different groups in society, i.e. class, ethnicity, etc. but places gender at the
center. Accordingly, these approaches are aimed at revealing how language manifests, reproduces, and challenges power and hegemonic relationships.

Both Baxter and Lazar understand patriarchy as a form of hegemonic social structure to which people need to act and react. Lazar uses hegemony to explain this and believes the concept is useful since it grasps male dominance that is internalized in gender norms (Lazar 2005b: 148). Furthermore, Lazar understands the concept of gender to be an “ideological structure” that places people into “two classes”, women and men, that are based on subordination and domination. Furthermore, she understands “gender ideology” to be “hegemonic in that it often does not appear as domination at all, appearing instead as largely consensual and acceptable” (Lazar 2005b: 146–147). According to Baxter (2003) and Lazar (2005a), the consequence is that language contributes to the creation and reproduction of unequal power relations between social groups, and this can be manifested between social classes, between women and men, and between ethnic minorities and the majority, and so on. But, they argue, a male hegemonic dominant discourse prevails and is forceful in all societies. The elected representatives in the Mexican parliament are registered as female or male but not according to their socioeconomic background or ethnicity. Thus, a focus on gender is motivated.

Furthermore, power is a central aspect to CDS, since language is part of social power relations and has consequences for social identities and social relations. Political scientists David Howarth and Yannis Stavrakakis focus on power relations within language in an interesting way. According to them, languages:

> always involve the exercise of power, as their constitution involves the exclusion of certain possibilities and a consequent structuring of the relations between different social agents (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000: 4).

In this way, power is in focus even though power, as such, cannot be identified as a singularity but consists of several dimensions on different levels, i.e. there is no clear causality. Consequently, power relations and dominance produce hierarchies in which some have more power than others, and a powerful categorization of people is gender. Gender affects us in all social contexts and throughout life, and coexists with other collective identities and power relationships, even though we do not identify ourselves through pre-assigned categories.
Subject Positions

The term subject positions$^9$ has already been articulated several times in this dissertation and, in this section, I will take the opportunity to discuss the term further and further expand on my understanding of the concept. Subject positions are theoretical constructions that help us analyze social relations and discuss these in terms of agency and power. As mentioned the above section, gender is a fundamental division in our societies, and the constitutive representations that are made in representative claims are therefore worthy of investigation and discussion since these portrayals also, by extension, include political representatives. This does not mean that women, as in this case, in a world where they are underrepresented in the public arena and subordinated to men as a group, are passive, limited or powerless but should rather be understood as “a precondition for understanding the possibilities for action and change” (Baxter, 2003: 31).

For the purposes of this study, the constructions of women is at the center, since these are connected with the female body, which is the prerequisite for a gender quota law aiming to increase the number of female political representatives. Elected women politicians are consequently confined within discourses of femaleness.

In line with Judith Baxter, I start from the assumption that human beings are positioned as subjects based on a variety of discourses in a specific context. Baxter writes that:

/…/ individuals are never outside cultural forces or discursive practices but always 'subject' to them. Their identities are determined by a range of 'subject positions' ('ways of being'), approved by their culture, and made available to them by means of the particular discourses operating within a given discursive context (Baxter, 2003: 25).

Accordingly, subject positions are created in language and provide the categorized people certain agency to speak and act and thereby guide social relations. Thus, the subject positions give us guidelines for deciding what we should consider normal, sanctioned and desirable or what we should consider deviant, prohibited and repulsive (Sarup 1996, in Törrönen 2001). The formation of collective social identities is influenced by a number of social relations, which make the individual person fragmented, contradictory

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$^9$ Subject position is used interchangeably with collective identity and social identity (see Törrönen 2001 for a discussion of the terms).
and changeable. These positions may therefore vary over time and space (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 48–51). You may be in one position at work with your colleagues and in another position at home with your partner or children. Thus, the discursive construction of a "man" indicates the content of being a "man". A widespread way of describing men is to link "man" with, for example, “strength” and “football,” while "a woman" is connected instead to "passivity" and "care-taking." In this way, language provides some guidance to people who identify themselves as male or female, conditions which one more or less has to live up to if one wants to be considered a (real) man or (real) woman (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 50).

The concept of subject position serves to make it clear that we do not experience our structural positions in a transparent way, rather, we experience them through discourses. According to Anna Marie Smith, subject position is an “ensemble of beliefs through which an individual interprets and responds to her structural positions within a social formation” (Smith 1998, quoted in Tornhill, 2010: 49). Thus, to be “migrant”, “Caucasian”, “Latino”, “woman”, or “man” in a racist and sexist society, Tornhill explains, “entails being positioned within power relations and patterns of domination and resource allocation that are largely already in place, regardless of individual preferences” (Tornhill, 2010: 49). Consequently, on the emphasis on subject positions does not intend to clarify who can be said to hold power and to what degree. Rather, it is about how the creation of meaning cooperates and relates to dominating power structures. Such expectations place boundaries on what we consider problematic and what actions we believe are reasonable in response to these limitations.

When working with subject positions, Wodak and Meyer (2009, 2016a) create a set of criteria when selecting data. According to the researchers, data selection should include: specific political units (nation state, region etc.), specific time relating to important discursive events (that are connected with the investigated issue), specific social/political actors, specific discourse and specific fields of action. As I have described above, Mexico is chosen in this study, two time frames are selected before and after the gender quota law, a parliamentary discourse is chosen and the national Chamber of Deputies is the place relevant to the study. Therefore, Wodak and Meyer’s criteria have been met.

Feminist theory has examined the differing experiences and positions women have within society. In this study, three areas have been chosen and
these are translated into subject positions, which span the public/private divide. Thus, the emphasis is on Mexican women as political representatives, as mothers and as victims of male violence. Feminist scholars have pointed to the importance of having women participate in politics and women as political representatives (Phillips 1995; Mansbridge 1999; Squires 1996; Dovi 2002). It is appropriate to investigate women’s role as mothers since motherhood has been falsely labeled as an obstacle, i.e. standing in contrast to political participation (Pateman, 2005) and has been central to feminist theory (Rich 1995). In Mexico, motherhood has been a facilitator for women’s movements and a common mobilizing factor. Thus, this subject position is important for women to partake in society (Chant & Craske 2003; Craske 1999; Craske & Molyneux 2002). Another central area of concern to feminist theory is male violence against women, which affects women regardless of socioeconomic or geographic background (Brownmiller 1976; MacKinnon 1987, 2006). These three central issues of feminist theory connect my study to the important female subject positions that are attributed to women, performed by women and that, as my study shows, change over time. Mexican politicians must, one way or another, relate to these female positions and thus serve as an excellent subject for the core in this study. Mexico is not unique in this respect, but research instead shows that these positions are central to women and women’s movements in many parts of the world (Jaquette 2018).

Given the representative claim approach, elected politicians construct verbal images or portrayals of their constituencies when claiming to represent people. This is a process, and the constitutive aspect works when a claim is repeatedly articulated and normalized through language. Thus, when one makes representative claims for a certain group, one also constructs a particular view of oneself or another as a subject. In turn, such portrayals constitute collective identities or, in a discourse analysis, terminology subject positions. Linda Alcoff writes in an early work that

(i)n both the practice of speaking for as well as the practice of speaking about others, I am engaging in the act of representing the other’s needs, goals, situation, and in fact, who they are. I am representing them as such and such, or in poststructuralist terms, I am participating in the construction of their subject-positions” (Alcoff, 1991: 9).

What is important in this constitutive element of representation is that the constituency comes into existence within these portrayals. As mentioned
earlier, discourses intersect with each other and cooperate to give meaning. Furthermore, the construction of femininity is closely intertwined with the construction of masculinity, and vice versa, since the heterosexual binary is dominant in all societies and genders are shaped in relation to each other. Discourses about women and men do not only position them as separate groups but also as different units based on the strong heterosexual duality upon which our societies are based (see for example Connell, 2002, in particular Chapter 1).

When language and notions are linked to subject positions, norms for our identity and social acting are created (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 48–56) and these are thereby central for how we perform gender relations. The important point of departure for discourse analysis is the idea that through our use of language, we classify and interpret the world around us and this has consequences for people. By studying language, it is thus possible to analyze the subject positions that are created and negotiated in the political sphere as well as elsewhere in society. Central to such studies is the notion that language forms and informs collective identities, and these are a fundamental part of our lives. Collective identities affect us to various degrees at different times and in different spaces, and they offer us opportunities to speak and act at the same time they limit us. Thus, when making representative claims for and about Mexican women, collective identities are portrayed within this framework, which, by extension, also includes Mexican female politicians.

Critical Discourse Studies as a Method

Scholars working within the field of CDS use different approaches, since every study is unique and its aim and research questions guide the chosen framework. As mentioned earlier, the framework of CDS offers not only descriptions and interpretations of discourses in different contexts but extends the analysis and focus to explanations of how discourses work, (cf. Rogers 2003; Rogers et al. 2005) and this requires a “multidisciplinary and multi-methodical approach” (Wodak & Meyer, 2016b: 2 italics in original). This study has been inspired by the critical discourses approach that Ruth Wodak and her colleagues developed, which they have applied in different ways in empirical studies. Such studies have focused, for example, on discrimination against migrants and the construction of national identities (Wodak et al. 2009). Feminist post-structuralist theory is interested in
identifying the subject positions available for women in “competing social and political interests which sustain these versions” (Baxter 2003b: 31). Hence, such social and historical constitution of the subject is a precondition for understanding possibilities for action and change in a broader sense. Rather than focusing on the articulation of women’s interests, which is the main focus for research on women’s substantive representation, the central issue here is “how gender relations are constituted through representative claims making process” (Squires 2008: 188, italics in original).

Michael Saward’s theory of representative claims offers few guidelines for conducting empirical research, and he is deliberately vague but, even so, he emphasizes the active role of discourses in the creation of the social world. Therefore, his theory needs to be united with a set of methodical considerations that can cope with research on language and the construction of subjects within this as well as the unequal terms that are at play. A fundamental aspect of CDS is that discourses are a form of social practice (Wodak & Reisigl 2008: 383) and, as such, they contribute to the construction of social identities, social relations and a system of knowledge and meaning. In order to detect the construction of collective identities in the representative claims, I choose to work with the concept of subject position, which refers to discursively established ways of being human (Baxter 2003a) and corresponds with the research focus of CDS. Three female subject positions are of particular interest in the case of Mexico during this time, namely women as political representatives, as mothers and as victims of men’s violence, and the study centers on these.

CDS is both a theory and a method and helps researchers understand the relationship between language and society and provides tools to describe, interpret and explain such relationships. Thus, CDS not only offers “a description and interpretation of discourse in context, but also offers an explanation of why and how discourses work (Rogers 2003: 2; Rogers et al. 2005: 371). In order to grasp the constructions of social identities or, to use Saward’s terminology, “portrayals”, within the claim-making processes and to make these identities understandable in their context, CDS offers the theoretical and analytical framework we need to make Saward’s approach applicable to empirical research. Furthermore, a feminist perspective to CDS has been developed as an answer to the need to establish a gendered dimension to language and discourse studies (Baxter 2003a; Lazar 2005). In order to bridge the gap in the research on women’s political representation, I find it beneficial to combine the representative claims approach with CDS and the feminist contributions that derive from this to analyze the ways in
which people negotiate their identities, relationships, and positions (cp. Baxter 2003). In order to identify and analyze such constitutive features in parliamentary language, an analytical framework is developed below.

Methodological Considerations and Means of Realization

The research focus in this study is on the construction of women within representative claims regarding Mexican women. Thus, a first step is identifying speech acts about women and, therefore, the first step in sorting the material involves localizing discourses related to the female subject positions chosen in this study. Once this is completed, a second step is conducted in order to recognize the representative claims within these discourses. Thirdly, constitutive discursive strategies are located in the representative claims. Moreover, since I am interested in how Mexican women, or more specifically female politicians, are discursively constructed in the representative claims before and after the introduction of a electoral law that guarantees women political representation on a national level, a comparison is done and will be presented below including the choice of time periods. A comparison will not only determine whether the features of the subject positions have changed; it will also tell us something about the ways in which identities are narrated in representative claims in times of political change.

Discourses about Women

A first step is to identify discourses about Mexican women in relation to political representativeness, motherhood and violence in the material. In order to find sources of discourse relating to women, i.e. to isolate speech acts relating to women, I performed a search for the word “mujer” (Spanish for woman) in the empirical material by using the search tool in Microsoft Word. A search for “woman” (mujer) also results in hits on the plural form, “women” (mujeres). Accordingly, every time the words “woman” and “women” are present, it is marked in the text. The Spanish language is gendered in the sense that a ‘neutral’ way of speaking is masculine. For example, a group of women ‘they’ are called ellas (feminine form of they). If the female ‘they’ walk a male dog, the sex of the dog governs the language choice and ‘they’ becomes ellos (masculine form of they). Thus, to speak about women in Spanish, feminine markers have to be outspoken explicitly.
A search for *mujer* in the empirical material displays every instance of the words “woman” or “women” regardless of the context in the empirical material. The benefit of employing this search tool, i.e. to identify every occasion women are referenced, is that it enables me to include male politicians, all political parties and conservative politicians (cp. Celis, Childs, et al. 2014). In other words, there is no selection made prior to the initial access to the material. Another advantage of not selecting specific women-oriented issues, certain bill proposals or particular debates in advance and instead working with the material as a whole is that deputies who make representative claims in relation to women in other policy areas are included, and this first broad selection offers comprehensive knowledge of the empirical material.

**Representative Claims**

As mentioned earlier, Michael Saward calls for a revitalization of the concept of political representation and states that politics is about making representative claims and, by placing the research focus on these claims, the everyday process of representation is captured (Saward 2010). Thus, after the identification of discourses about women in the material, the representative claims need to be identified in relation to the selected positions that are in focus here: political representativeness, motherhood and women as victims of men’s violence. At this stage of the work, the material consists of all the occasions that women are mentioned and the next step is thus to locate the representative claims. However, all representative claims are not equally valid. Therefore, I apply three conditions to evaluate the representative claims for women. Thus, the following definition of representative claims has guided the selection:

- when something is directly constructed as being of importance to women, or
- presented as affecting women or issues that are directly or indirectly connected with women, and/or
- discussed or spoken of in terms of gender difference or effects.\(^{10}\)

\(^{10}\) These criteria are derived in part from Celis et al.’s five criteria in their search for women’s interests, which I consider important but insufficient for my study. These claims about women are; “1) directly constructed as being of importance to women, 2) presented as only affecting women, 3) discussed in terms of gender difference, 4) spoken of in terms of gendered effects, and/or 5) framed in terms of equality between women and men” (Celis, Childs, et al., 2014: 159). From my perspective, the second criteria, - claims that are presented as only affecting women – would leave out claims that would affect, for example,
The empirical material, at this phase, consists of all the sessions that include representative claims regarding Mexican women in relation to the selected positions, and these consist of communicated interests, needs and preferences in relation to Mexican women, that is, the speech acts involve something substantial about women as a group. After this selection, i.e. the choice of subject position and the subsequent extraction of representative claims, the material was again reviewed chronologically before approaching the next step.

**Discursive Strategies**

In order to uncover the constitutive aspects within the representative claims, I work with “discursive strategies”, which have been developed by Ruth Wodak and her research team and used, for example, in research on national identities. When considering strategies, this might make us think about outspoken goals and plans, and even manipulating. However, according to Wodak et al. (2009), strategies are certainly goal oriented but at the same time they can be routinized and conventionalized, and the degree of strategic intention varies between different communicative contexts. For that reason, Wodak et al. adopt Bourdieu’s definition of strategy:

> I want to re-emphasize that the principle of philosophical (or literary) strategies is not cynical calculation, the conscious pursuit of maximum specific profit, but an unconscious relationship between a *habitus* and a field. The strategies I am talking about are actions objectively oriented towards goals that may not be the goals subjectively pursued (Bourdieu 1993:90, cited in Wodak et al., 2009: 32).

Moreover, Wodak et al. (2009) emphasize that they do not agree on an equivalence between strategy and action. Rather, they see acts as realizations of strategies. In line with Wodak et al.’s approach, the aim of this thesis is not to seek the intentions of speakers but to deconstruct these subject positions to localize what versions of femininity are made available to Mexican female legislators and, by extension, the power relations that are existent in the representative claims.

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women and children, i.e. women as mothers or claims that are embedded in a broader setting for strategic reasons. The fifth claim, an interest that is framed in terms of gender equality, would appear when searching for criteria three and/or four.
Discursive strategies are systematic ways of using language where “a more or less accurate and more or less intentional plan of practices (including discursive practices) adopted to achieve a particular social, political, psychological or linguistic aim” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2000: 44). Such aims are part of the construction of social identities. Within the approach, a large variety of strategies are available, but as Wodak et al. emphasize, each study needs to select and develop its own framework in accordance with its aim and research questions (Reisigl & Wodak 2000:31-33). In their research on the discursive construction of national identity in Austria, Reisigl and Wodak (2000) present more than two dozen discursive strategies. Taking inspiration from their approach, this study employs strategies to correspond with the research aim and will be presented below. Accordingly, in order to localize constitutive aspects within the claim making processes, the focus is on the linguistic identity shaping components in the language. These are “parts of argumentation that belong to the required premises” (Reisigl & Wodak 2000) and these may be words, groups of words and groups of sentences.

Rather than following Wodak et al.’s use of nouns when terming the strategies, I follow Carol Bacchi’s approach of adopting a verb form to be able to “capture the active, ongoing and always incomplete processes that constitute” (Bacchi, 2016: 9, italics in original). In order to localize central constitutive aspects within the claim making processes, this study focuses on two linguistic identity shaping patterns that are consistent with this study. The first discursive strategy, referring, focuses on the presentation of actors carried out through social categorization, i.e. in-groups and out-groups. The second, agentializing, is a process of attaching, as well as withdrawing, agency from actors through language. In other words, it is about linking characteristics, qualities and features that give meaning to the group that is spoken about. Such characteristics, qualities and features overlap and work simultaneously to agentialize the subjects. Therefore, they are used as clusters of an analytical framework in order to identify agency in relation to Mexican women’s subject positions during a time that Mexico experiences major changes due to women’s political representation in public politics. I further develop the two discursive strategies that are at work in this study below.

**Referring**
The formation of in-groups and out-groups is fundamental in the construction of a ‘we’ and ‘they’. When we refer to ourselves or to others as
a group of people, we can do this in several ways, but the aim is the same: to
put people in the same basket. Regardless of how it is done, the references
categorize and function to include or exclude. Based on geographic
association, religion, ethnicity, ideology, etc., individuals categorize
themselves and others around them as belonging to the in-group or the out-
group, where

the in-group stands for the friends, community, and proximity with others.
The in-group constitutes a collective ‘we’ that considers the out-group, which
constitutes a collective ‘they’, as the enemy, or outsiders, who are to be held
at a distance. This relationship is a part of the social order in so far as ordering
means to classify and to separate (Månsson, 2005: 172).

This strategy is, in the term used by Wodak et al.’s, “references” (2012), or
as I have opted to use in this study, “referring”. The process of referring
divides people linguistically and indicates that both the speakers and the
group spoken about are members of the same group and thereby the in-group
also becomes linked to the topic spoken about. The most obvious in-group
markers are when referring to a group as ‘we’ or ‘us’. Likewise, ‘they’ and
‘them’ are markers that suggest an out-group and distance the ‘we’ from
‘them’. As argued by Van Dijk (1998: 267), ‘us’ and ‘them’ construct a
binary opposition in which positive characteristics are usually attributed to
the former and negative qualities are ascribed to the latter.

Speaking about people in certain ways, i.e. how they are portrayed in
language, dictates the constitution of the groups where some social identities
are emphasized as more relevant than others. People are thereby clustered
together and any differences within the group are disregarded. In discourse
theory, groups do not exist until they are created through language. To make
this happen, people need to speak about humans as a group or speak on
behalf of a group as representatives for the group. The representatives do not
need to be part of the group mentioned, rather, representation is, from a
discourse theoretical perspective, about the establishment of the group
(Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). The references made in the claim-
making process are also communicative commitments, which means that
these are also about accountability in the sense that the representative
constructs herself/himself as accountable to the group addressed in the
claim.
The nominalizations ‘we’ and ‘they’ are references to social actors as group entities but without quantifying them. Though an in-group and an out-group does not have to have an explicit ‘we’ or ‘they,’ this can also be done through collectivizing, such as in a ‘family’, ‘group’, ‘class’, ‘population’, ‘people’, and ‘nation’. Here, the setting indicates whether it should be understood as a ‘we’ or a ‘they,’ i.e. the context will dictate whether it is an in-group or an out-group.

As described above, Spanish is a gendered language in the sense that one needs to choose to use a male/neutral or feminine way of speaking. Therefore, a specific in-group can be formed in ways other than speaking about an explicit ‘we’. It can, for example, be done by saying nosotros (in the masculine, yet gender neutral way) or by speaking about nosotras to show that ‘we’ are only ‘we women’. It is also possible to mark the gender in the way the substantive or adjective is used. This can be done, for example, by saying ciudadanos (citizens in the masculine and gender neutral way) or by saying ciudadanás (female citizens) or, for example, honestos (honest in the masculine and neutral way) or the feminine way honestas, meaning that the honest people you are talking about are all females). In order to demonstrate further, I will provide an example from the empirical material:

**We are** half of the population and mothers of the other half! The world is changing and we women are adopting our leading role in these changes. / *Somos* la mitad del cielo y madres de la otra mitad! El mundo está cambiando y *las mujeres estamos* asumiendo nuestro papel protagónico en estos cambios.

In the quote above, an apparent in-group of women is created both through a “we are” that is linked to mothers and a “we women”. Accordingly, the references to people may include or exclude, create fellowship, distance or difference. In this quote, it is obvious that the reference creates a ‘we women in-group. Moreover, in making a group, generalizations are made and point to social actors that are not being identified or referred to as individuals but as a group. When speaking about people in a way that generalizes, these

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11 In this section, I have chosen to include the quote in Spanish and to highlight some words for emphasis. In the empirical chapters, the quotes in Spanish are presented in notes without bold text.
12 Literary: “half the sky”.
persons becomes stereotyped. Universal references in political language, such as ‘all women’ or ‘millions of women’, also indicate a generalization based on specific gendered problems or need. Such references are all-encompassing and, in this way, become classless and geographically unspecific.

To summarize, in order to identify references that constitute in-groups and out-groups in the material I look for obvious ‘we’ and ‘they’ language but also other inclusion and exclusion mechanisms in the language. The analytical questions that have guided me are:

- How are ‘we’ and/or ‘they’ present in the representative claims?
- What in-groups and out-groups are created?
- Who creates the ‘we’ and ‘they’?

**Agentializing**

The second discursive strategy that is in focus in the representative claim-making process is agentializing. Here, I employ a modified version of Wodak et al.’s concept of agentialization (Wodak 2012) and I adopt the verb form, agentializing, in order to pinpoint the process of constituting agents (Bacchi, 2016). Agentializing captures if and how a group is constituted as agents, i.e. what, if any, characteristics, qualities and features are linked and whether these can be related to agency, or lack of the same, when linked to women. This might be active or passive, good or bad, empowered or disempowered or ‘they’ might be placed in a positive or negative setting, which also associates with ‘them’ and consequently how ‘they’ are perceived. This discursive strategy is multifaceted in the sense that the descriptive features that are linked to persons can take different linguistic forms and aim to create an image of the person or group of persons.

Descriptions, i.e. characteristics, qualities and features, may take various forms. For example, when using the words “women abandon children,” ‘women’ are subjects of an active verb, i.e. they “abandon children” (where the objects suffer from the actions of these women). Van Dijk (2006: 373) describes this as “local syntax”, where the speaker uses active or passive verbs for a specific end. This is not only limited to verbs but also applies to other word usage. There is, however, a ‘common sense’ understanding that if women are not there for the children, nobody is there for them. Men, who logically could have looked after the children, are excluded. Thus, women
become responsible for the care of the children, i.e. an implicit actor. Moreover, a passive or hidden agent can be found, for example, in terminology such as “gender violence”. We can understand that there is an act of violence and this act has a gender dimension, but we do not know who is committing the crime or who is the victim. Consequently, actors are not only active or passive but are simultaneously explicitly and implicitly present in speech acts. This quote from the empirical material serves as a further example:

… the intra-familiar violence is a serious problem which does not discriminate by age, educational level or socioeconomic status; when violence breaks into the family, it usually is usually transformed into an everyday habit. … la violencia intrafamiliar es un problema grave que no distingue edades, niveles educativos ni grupos socioeconómicos; cuando la violencia interrumpe en la familia, suele convertirse en un hecho cotidiano.14

The female deputy uses the words “intra-familiar violence” when speaking about men’s violence against women. No actors are present in the wording, which means that both the victim and the aggressor are absent. We do not know anything about the transmitter or the recipient in this action. Moreover, the female deputy says, “violence breaks into the family.” Thus, the family becomes exposed to and the recipient of violence. In order to isolate the agentializing of Mexican women, the following analytical questions guide my review of the empirical material:

- How are the identified in and/or out-groups, i.e. we-them, constituted as agents or non-agents?
- What, if any, characteristics, qualities and features are linked to the identified in and/or out-groups, i.e. we-them?

The Empirical Material
The empirical material used in this study is the Journals of the Debates (Diario de los Debates)15, which will hereinafter be referred to as the

15 Before August 2001, the Journals are only available in HTML versions and are thus not able for download in file format. However, I have copied the texts from the web page and created word documents.
Journals, which are available on the Mexican Chamber of Deputies homepage.\(^\text{16}\) The Journals are the official circulation body of the legislative power in which the reports of the parliamentary debates are published. It also contains the date of the sessions, the agenda, a stenographic version of the discussions in the order they are developed and insertion of all the documents that are read, including bill proposals.\(^\text{17}\) Thus, the empirical material consists of “parliamentary language,” that is both verbal communications in the chamber as well as written material, such as bill proposals. In other words, the material informs us about what is communicated in the Chamber of Deputies, a public political language. However, what is communicated in meetings and other forums in the chamber is not available, since these are not public. I am aware that this presents a limitation, but I would argue that the selected material mirrors the greater whole since it is ‘produced’ in a parliamentarian context. Thus, what is communicated in the chamber is part of the parliamentary language and thereby suits the aim of this study, i.e. to analyze the representative claims made by elected deputies in the political system in Mexico. All Journals have been searched by using the initial search tool, woman/women (mujer), i.e. when women are an explicit focus in the material, and through the selection of representative claims, i.e. according to the definition above, resulting in the selection of 109 journals for 1997-2000, 122 journals for 2000-2003, and 30 journals for 2006 (see Appendix I for more information).

The empirical material in this study is extensive, which offers advantages and some challenges. Discourse analyses need a large data set in order to be representative (Hafsteinsdóttir 2015). Though a systematic review of a large corpus may be time consuming, it gives the researcher a comprehensive overview of the material and an opportunity to develop a deeper understanding. As mentioned earlier, the word mujer was used initially to find instances in the corpus where women are explicitly the focus. The second step was thus to find where in the selected material the representative claims were present. This selection led to the use of the above journals, which were downloaded and saved. The representative claims were marked in the texts and were then reread. These claims were used as the basis for the selection of quotes used in the empirical chapters. I have chosen not to limit my selection to a certain number of words before and after mujer, which is a

\(^{16}\) See: http://cronica.diputados.gob.mx/

\(^{17}\) The empirical material originally consisted of 462 journals published in 1997-2000 (243 in the LVII Legislature, 1997-2000, and 221 the LVIII Legislature, 2000-2003) and 35 journals published between January to April 2006.
methodological choice. Such a limitation would have narrowed down my possibilities to understand the context in which mujer was used. On some occasions, I reviewed a large number of pages to be gain a greater understanding. On other occasions, only a few pages were reviewed. The nature of the material guided my work in this regard. In 2006, the word género (gender) seemed to be more prevalent in my reading. This led me to also perform searches for género throughout the material in order to avoid missing anything of relevance and to gather knowledge about the ways the concept was used in the parliamentary language. This, in turn, led me to also perform searches for the concepts mother (madre), motherhood (maternidad), father/parent (padre) and violence (violencia) in order to grasp the context and minimize the risk of missing important aspects in my understanding. This new ‘run-through’ of the material did not contribute anything new, rather, it reinforced my understanding which was developed in the initial search for the term mujer.

In order to support my arguments and to be as transparent as possible, I will include quotes from the empirical material in the chapters when discussing the different subject positions. In this study, the focus is how elected political representatives speak about women rather than who says what. Therefore, the names of the deputies are not added to the quotes. However, I found it relevant to include the gender of the deputy and the party affiliation since research shows that it is mainly women who put forward women-friendly issues. Quotes are used throughout the empirical chapter in order to demonstrate and support my interpretations but also to achieve a good level of validity and reliability. I use quotes from female and male deputies to highlight the differences, but also the similarities. Especially during the later period, 2006, female and male deputies tended to put forward more similar representative claims. Before turning to the empirical chapters, in which this discursive analytical framework is employed, a contextualization of Mexico is presented in order to situate the study.
4. Situating Mexico

This dissertation is about gender and politics in Mexico during a period in which a mandatory electoral quota law that guarantees women at least 30 percent of the seats in the national Chamber of Deputies was being implemented. The following chapter aims to place the study against a broader political context. Development for women in Mexico has many connections to the settings and progress for women in other Latin American countries and links will therefore be made between the countries throughout the chapter when this is justified. The chapter proceeds as follows: First, the political system in Mexico and the political parties that were present in the national parliament during the period studied are presented. This is followed by an overview of Mexican women’s political representation in the national Chamber of deputies and the composition of gender and political affiliation in each legislature. Two institutional structures started during this time within the Mexican Congress: Commission on Equity and Gender and Center for the Study of Women’s Advancement and Gender Equality and an extra-parliamentarian organization, InMujeres, which aims to support the advancement of gender equality. Because of the mission of these organizations, they are presented in the first part of the chapter. After contextualizing the study in its institutional setting, I present a retrospective account of women’s situation in Mexican public politics.

The Mexican Political System and Political Parties

Mexico is a representative, democratic federal republic consisting of states that are free and sovereign in all aspects that concern their internal governance, which are united in a federation in accordance with the Federal Constitution (Constitution, arts. 40 and 41); as of 2018, Mexico consists of 32 federal states.\textsuperscript{18} The Mexican president is the head of state and the head of

\textsuperscript{18} Until 2016, Mexico City was called the Federal District (\textit{Distrito Federal} or only D.F.) but changed to Mexico City (\textit{La Ciudad de México}), and the state also goes by its abbreviation, CDMX (Gobierno de la Ciudad de México, 2018).
government. Legislative power is assigned to the Congress of the Nation (Congreso de la Unión), which consists of a two-chamber legislature consisting of the Senate of the Republic (Senado de la República) and the Chamber of Deputies (Cámara de Diputados). The first consists of 128 senators (senadores) who serve six-year terms using closed list proportional representation, with 32 members chosen from a single nationwide district and 96 members chosen from statewide districts. The Chamber of Deputies consists of 500 deputies (diputados) who serve three-year terms, and no member may serve more than two consecutive terms (a total of six years) as a deputy. A total of 300 deputies are selected from single member districts and 200 deputies are selected from five multi-state districts using a closed list proportional system.

There is a multi-party system, but three political parties dominate Mexican politics: the National Action Party (Partido Acción Nacional, PAN), the Party of the Democratic revolution (Partido de la Revolución Democrática, PRD) and the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI). The PAN is a right-wing conservative party. PRI was the only party during the one-party rule (which lasted for 71 years, i.e. from 1929 to 2000) and is historically a left-leaning party that has recently moved towards the center. In 1986, a splinter group of PRI formed PRD, which is a left of center party. Beyond these dominant parties, there are several minor political parties that operated during the time that is relevant to this dissertation. These are the Labor Party (Partido del Trabajo, PT), a labor party that is often allied with the PRD in conjunction with elections; the Ecologist Green Party of Mexico (Partido Verde Ecologista de México, PVEM), a minor party that was founded in 1993; the Convergence for Democracy (Convergencia por la Democracia), a social democratic party that today works under the name Citizens’ Movement and was formed in 1997; and the Social Alliance Party, (Partido Alianza Social, PAS) which defined itself as a humanist party and objected to its characterization as traditional right, center and left of center, though several members originated from the ultra-conservative Mexican Democratic Party (1990-1997). PAS did not succeed in gaining the minimum 2 percent vote tally in the 2003 election and the party was dissolved. During the time period, the Party of the Nationalist Society (Partido de la Sociedad Nacionalista, PSN) was also still in existence. It was a nationalist center-left party that formed part of the Alliance for Mexico (Alianza por México) in the 2000 election. In addition to PSN, the alliance included PRD, PT, Convergencia and PAS. PSN did not
reach the minimum 2 percent vote threshold in the 2003 election and dissolved.

Women in Mexican Public Politics

Most Latin American countries have adopted electoral quotas to increase the number of female elected legislators at all levels. There is a wide range of research on women in politics in Mexico focusing on formal as well as informal institutions (Baldez 2004, 2007; Piscopo 2011a, 2011b, 2014, 2016; Rodríguez 2003; Vidal Correa 2017; Zetterberg 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2012). Today, Mexico is one of the (2020) highest ranked countries in terms of women’s representation with its 4th place in the world ranking19 and has surpassed countries like Sweden, Norway and Finland, countries that have previously topped the list. In the election of July 1, 2018, Mexican women gained almost half of all legislature seats. When the new congress was inaugurated on December 1, 2018, it consisted of 49 percent women in the Chamber of Deputies and 51 percent in the Senate. Considering that Mexico is a young democracy, dating back to Vicente Fox’s victory in the 2000 presidential elections, which put a definitive end to 70 years of one-party rule, women’s advancement must be considered an extraordinary feat in comparison to other countries. Not only was “the prefect dictatorship,” as Peruvian writer Mario Vargas Llosa called the Mexican government20, put to an end, the election reflected a new plurality and competiveness between political parties in Mexican politics. The ruling party, PRI, proposed the changes in the Mexican political system after its rigged presidential election in 1998 in which Carlos Salinas was declared the winner. Thus, the Federal Electoral Institute (Instituto Federal Electoral, or IFE)21 and several electoral reforms were implemented in the 1990’s aiming to open the Mexican political system and, as a result, opposition parties made historical gains in the following elections at all levels.

Even though Mexico has been at the forefront of the adoption of gender quotas in public elections in Latin America, the country is also known for its machismo and an open misogyny among male politicians (Baldez 2004; Bruhn 2003; Rodriguez 2003 2012). In addition, the Mexican women’s

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21 Today, IFE has been renamed to the National Electoral Institute (Instituto Nacional Electoral, or INE).
movement has historically been relatively weak (Domínguez 2004). Before the 1980’s, women’s organizations were fragmented and ineffective, and the early Mexican grassroots mobilizations of the women’s movement revolved primarily around access to rights with a focus on social services that the state did not provide, rather than bodily integrity or legal reforms (Ortiz-Ortega & Barquet 2010: 120–121). Consequently, the advancement of women’s rights in Mexico in the 1980’s and 1990’s was not so straightforward, and the movement has had to confront the extreme difficulty of getting ‘women friendly’ issues accepted on the political agenda. It is against this background that a backlash following the first quota law occurred in 1996, leading to a decrease in the number of elected female politicians. The law was criticized and pressure was put on the state to approve an electoral law that would guarantee representation of women in the national public political sphere. Thus, during the time between the approval of the two electoral reforms, the proposal in 1996 and the mandatory quotas in 2002, women’s guaranteed presence in the parliamentary arena was on hold.

Today (2020), Mexico is ranked as one of the leading countries in the world regarding the number of women seated in the legislature, which is due to the adoption of a 30 percent gender quota for the legislature in 2002 and the following changes in the electoral law.22 Thus, Mexico adopted the mandatory quota for legislative office a decade after Argentina, which was the first country to ever introduce a quota law for women in 1991. All Latin American countries except Guatemala and Venezuela have adopted requirements for political parties to nominate a certain percentage of women candidates (by 2020). The electoral reform in 1996 included a suggestion for the political party, but these reforms were made mandatory in 2002, and the electoral quota law applies for both the plurality and the PR competitions. In 2008, the quota threshold was raised to 40 percent. As the following table demonstrates, due to the mandatory quota law that was applied for the first time in 2003, women’s representation in the Chamber of Deputies climbed from 16.8 percent to 24.9 percent. The increased electoral competition in Mexico pushed political parties to adopt a more women-friendly agenda and advance women’s representation through internal gender quotas. Even though the conservative party PAN did not follow the other two larger parties, PRI and PRD, by adopting party quotas, they have also advanced

22 In February 2014, Mexico passed a constitutional amendment to Article 41 of the Federal Constitution demanding that the political parties develop “…rules to ensure gender parity in the nomination of candidates en federal and local congressional elections” (www.idea.int). This led to a significant increase in the 2018 election.
women’s representation. The trend in the number of women in the Chamber of Deputies over time is shown in the following table.

Table 4.1: Women’s Representation by Legislator Sex - Mexican Chamber of Deputies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislative Term</th>
<th>Total seats</th>
<th>Female legislators</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988 -1991</td>
<td>(LIV) 500</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-1994</td>
<td>(LV) 496</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994 -1997</td>
<td>(LVI) 500</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997 – 2000</td>
<td>(LVII) 500</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 – 2003</td>
<td>(LVIII) 500</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003 – 2006</td>
<td>(LIX) 500</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006 – 2009</td>
<td>(LX) 500</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 – 2012</td>
<td>(LXI) 500</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 – 2015</td>
<td>(LXII) 500</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015 – 2018</td>
<td>(LXIII) 500</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>42.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018 -</td>
<td>(LXIV) 500</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>48.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IPU

The 500 legislators are divided between 300 deputies who are elected via plurality rule in single-member districts and 200 deputies who are elected via closed-list proportional representation (PR) in five 40-member districts (circunscripciones). The 2002 quota law is applied to primary candidates (propietario) rather than the substitute candidates (suplente) and prohibits parties from placing women’s names in the unelectable position at the bottom of the ballots by including a placement mandate for the PR lists. The core idea of gender quotas is that there should be a minimum percentage of women in elected positions and there are three types of quotas: legal candidate quotas (constitutional and/or legislative), reserved seats (constitutional and/or legislative), and political party quotas (voluntary). The Mexican law is thus a legal quota. The first law adopted required there to be

23 After the 2009 election, when sixteen female propietarios resigned their seats in favor of their male suplentes (so called “Juanitas”), the Mexico’s electoral court changed the law and stipulated that propietarios-suplente combination must be of the same sex (Hinojosa 2012).
30 percent women on the ballots, and the rank order of the candidates on the lists is regulated.\textsuperscript{24}

Within the Mexican Congress, there are two institutional structures that support women legislators who want to advocate for women’s rights: the Commission on Equity and Gender and the Center for the Study of Women’s Advancement and Gender Equality. The bicameral Commission on Equity and Gender (\textit{Comisión de Equidad y Género} or CEG)\textsuperscript{25}, consists of a women’s caucus of elected Mexican women legislators from all Mexican parties. The aim is to facilitate joint work, set priorities, develop strategies and work towards shared objectives among Mexican female legislators. The committee was created in 1998 as a special committee but has enjoyed permanent status since 2000. All members are female, and the committee can introduce and/or evaluate all bills that implicate women, women’s interests and women’s rights. The committee also has review (\textit{dictamen}) power over any bill introduced into the Mexican Congress. In this way, female legislators may introduce revisions to policy initiatives that might not initially appear to relate to women’s interests (Piscopo 2011:44).

The Mexican Congress also houses the Center for the Study of Women’s Advancement and Gender Equality (\textit{Centro de Estudios para el Adelanto de las Mujeres y la Equidad de Género}, or CEAMEG). This non-party research center started in 2005 and has two functions: advising legislators regardless of party affiliation or gender in the design of proposals that protect women’s rights and advancing equity and cataloging and reporting statistics related to women’s descriptive and substantive participation in the Mexican Congress. Thus, the center was active during the second period studied here. In addition to these two, the National Women’s Institute (\textit{Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres}, or InMujeres) was launched in 2001 in response to women’s demand for a national women’s office. In 1995, Mexico also approved the Beijing Platform for Action, but it was not until 2001, in accordance with the commitments made, that the National Women’s Institute (InMujeres) was established as the national body governing public policy on gender. Subsequently, every state in the Republic set up similar mechanisms to mainstream gender issues into public policies. InMujeres is a decentralized federal institution with an aim to promote and collect data on gender

\textsuperscript{24} For more detailed information about gender quotas, see: \url{https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/quotas}

\textsuperscript{25} Today, the commission is called the Commission on Equality and Gender (\textit{Comisión de Igualdad y Género} or CIG).
equality (Rodríguez 2003) but does not work directly with national legislators.

Getting There, a Retrospect of Mexican Women’s Advancement

The advancement of women’s rights in Mexico has been preceded by a wide range of events and institutional and political changes. In order to place the period studied in a broader context, a retrospect is needed. This historical overview not only traces the Mexican women’s movement, democratization and institutional changes but also puts Mexico in a regional setting, since there has been considerable interaction between Latin American countries regarding women’s rights. The collapse of authoritarian regimes in Latin America and other parts of the world gave the issues of rights and democracy a major boost in the 1970s and the 1980s. Since that time, Latin American women’s movements have been important actors in the democratic development of the region, and women have also placed a special value on what Hanna Arendt called the “right to have rights” (Craske 1999; Craske & Molyneux 2002; Molyneux 2001). After this period of transformation, the 1990’s became a landmark in the international human rights movement, and during the decade, many positive changes in women’s rights and human rights in general were achieved in a broader sense (Molyneux & Razavi 2002). This was especially notable in Latin America, where discourses of rights were deployed not only to improve formal legal rights but also to strengthen the democratic process in the region. The period of rapid political change that occurred in Latin America during the 1980s provided an opportunity for ‘new’ politics to emerge. The most significant regional development has undoubtedly been the development of women’s formal political representation, that is, the adoption of electoral gender quotas throughout the region, within which transnational networks have been crucial.

While Latin American women have been active partakers in local and national struggles and in debates that led the turn to democratic rule, they also engaged in the international arena. Mexican women gained the right to vote on October 17, 1953, which was late compared to other Latin American countries.26 This was a significant step forward but was insufficient to achieve gender balance in the national congress. Moreover, the first ever World Conference on Women was held in Mexico in 1975, and during the UN’s Decade for Women from 1975 to 1985, Latin American women’s

26 Yucatan was the first state to recognize women’s right to vote in 1923.
movements became increasingly involved in transnational networking (Keck & Sikkink 1998). The conference also acted as a catalyst for establishing a number of women’s offices all over Latin America, even though Mexico was the last country in the region to do so. During the 1990’s, a new regional collaboration developed in Latin American, and women’s movements created strong regional networks. They also participated in the UN’s women’s events and advisory committees. Feminist activism also became more international, a shift made possible by changes in communication technologies and people’s access to these (Lebon & Meier 2006).

According to Jane Jaquette, the women’s movement played an important role in the transition to democracy during the civil wars and peace processes throughout Latin America in the 1980’s and the 1990’s. Issues related to gender equality became part of the political agenda, family and labor laws were reformed, violence against women became criminalized and gender quotas were introduced in several countries. Furthermore, women’s offices or ministries were established in order to design legislation, monitor progress and initiate specific programs for women. However, as Jaquette states, the women’s movements in Latin America have lost momentum and are “unable to sustain their initial success” (Jaquette 2009: 1). The reason, Jaquette explains, is because the issues that were at the forefront over the past few decades have been addressed in constitutional reforms and new laws. Even though women-friendly policy has been institutionalized, the new laws are rarely implemented adequately. According to Jaquette, social norms have shifted towards a more women-friendly atmosphere, but the Catholic Church and conservative sectors of society have still made it difficult to make changes in laws regarding, for example, women’s reproductive rights (Jaquette, 2009: 1 pp.).

Across Latin America, men, the Catholic Church and the state have enjoyed a close relationship ever since the Spanish colonial state. Elizabeth Dore (2000: 6–14) explores the way in which this relationship has been ‘naturalized.’ Politics in colonial Spanish America, Dore states, was based on the idea that the legitimacy of the state derived from God, and the colonial state perpetuated a hierarchical social order, which was primarily differentiated by gender, race and official status. Within this autocratic state, a patriarchal system developed, where senior males exercised authority in the home, in the community and in the political sphere. Dore writes that “(s)enior men governed females and younger males in their households, a system that sustained the paternalist ideologies of the men who governed the nation and the community” (Dore 2000: 9).
It is difficult, and not desirable, to make any overall generalizations about state-gender relations in Latin America. Elizabeth Dore writes that the effects of the implications of legal reforms for women in the region vary along lines of nation, class and race (Dore 2000), and therefore, research on national levels can bring about more specific insight. However, Dore notes that there are some major turning points and continuities in the interface between state politics and gender politics in Latin America. There are, she argues, some common threads in Latin American history, which need to be highlighted in order to understand the context in which the particularity develops. The region has a history of colonialism, post-colonialism, authoritarian regimes and democratic transition, and the development of gender politics and policy show similarities across the Latin American countries (Alnevall 2006; Htun & Jones 2002). Maxine Molyneux emphasizes the historical reproduction of inequality and writes that “(t)he colonial state in Latin America was explicitly concerned to preserve and reproduce gender and ethnic inequalities as part of the system of rule” (Molyneux 2000: 39). Molyneux also writes that the states are responsible for maintaining the status quo situation and that states have largely served to perpetuate and enforce these unequal gender relations (ibid.). Ideas of gender difference were strongly rooted in Catholicism, which gave symbolic meaning to maternalistic constructs of femininity and underpinned the idea of separate spheres for women and men. These social constructs still represent the normative fundament upon which Mexican society is built.

On December 31, 1974, the decree modifying a few articles of the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States to reflect women’s equality with men before the law was published in the Diario Oficial. The modifications of the constitution did not result in any de facto changes but marked a rather symbolic, yet important, milestone. The First World Conference on Women was held in Mexico in 1975, which marked a watershed moment in the country’s history, since it gave rise to international commitments and placed discrimination against women on the agenda while revealing new challenges for the Mexican Government. Mexico’s participation in the subsequent United Nations conferences on women and its ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1981 led to the State’s implementation of new actions for the advancement of women. Various plans of action were implemented, national legislation was amended on a number of occasions and public policies with varying objectives were launched. In 1983, the Federal Government created the National Population
Programme, which gave rise to the National Programme of Action for the Integration of Women into Development. In 1985, the National Commission on Women was established as the body responsible for promoting and coordinating the aforementioned program through the relevant women’s committees in the different states of the Federation and in public and social organizations.

Over the last few decades, there have been numerous regional meetings between Latin American female politicians and activists. The feminist meetings, Feminist Encounters (Encuentros Feministas), have been tremendously important, and during these sessions, regular contacts were established across the region. These regional meetings were started in 1981 and held every two or three years, and there have been several sub-regional and national feminist conferences focusing on different issues. Those who initiated the meetings attempted to create regular forums where women in the region could exchange experiences, ideas and strategies for change. This was, and still is, fundamental in the development of the Latin American gender agenda (Pieper Mooney 2009). In the words of some participants, they were “springboards for the development of a common Latin American feminist language” (Sternbach 1992: 396). At the same time, the emergence of professionalized women’s organizations and networking at the national level led to changes in many areas. These national and regional networks were crucial in advancing specific campaigns, such as the struggle for electoral quota laws (Craske & Molyneux 2002).

International organizations and documents, such as the CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action, are important in the emergence of women’s rights in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America. These organizations and documents have been a central piece in the change of international norm systems regarding women’s role in society. A significant number of countries have ratified CEDAW27, a major body of international acts pertaining to women, and signed the proposal for gender equality contained in the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995. Thus, the women’s movements placed pressure on governments when referring to these commitments and part of the rhetoric was a push to hold the states accountable. Over the last few decades, women’s movements’ demands for greater state accountability have been backed by international definitions of women’s rights and the norms, which outlined states’ duties to incorporate a more gender sensitive agenda (Johnson, 2002). The change in the norms has also had something of

27 The Holy See, Iran, Somailia, Sudan and Tonga have not signed the CEDAW. The US and Palau have signed but not ratified the treaty.
a pendulum effect, giving new vitality to women’s movements worldwide, which often build their arguments on such international declarations, as is the case in Mexico.

In the mid-1980s, the growing presence of women in the public sphere resulted in a modest but important incorporation of women’s issues in the state’s policies, and state agencies were established to deal with issues regarding women. Violence against women was the first issue that formally appeared as a gender demand, that was addressed fully by the state (Ortiz-Ortega & Barquet 2010: 121). By this time, women were mainly engaged in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and these were relatively blooming, if compared with earlier ones, and they provided women with a ground from which they articulated concrete claims. According to sociologist María Luisa Tarrés, they functioned as a platform for action for women since women’s voices had been denied in established political parties (Tarrés 1995 in Ortiz-Ortega & Barquet 2010: 121). In 1991, the Women’s National Convention for Democracy (Convención Nacional de Mujeres por la Democracia) was held, with a goal to get more women nominated to political positions.

During the 1990s, women came to participate in the public sphere more extensively and in a more organized manner. In 1991, the National Women’s Convention in Favor of Democracy (Convención Navalional de Mujeres por la Democracia) also emerged and brought together women from different sectors, such as political parties and NGO representatives. The purpose of the convention was to push for women candidates in the year’s electoral process and to place gender issues on the political agenda. This was the first experience in bringing women’s demands to the forefront and seriously promoting women’s leadership (Ortiz-Ortega & Barquet 2010: 122). However, women lacked experience in party politics in terms of mobilization and raising demands, and the convention failed in its attempts (Barquet 2005). The growing women’s mobilization developed new strategies, and negotiations between women legislators and women’s organizations took place during the 1990s.

In the second half of the 1990s, women’s issues became more visible, and in this context, president Ernesto Zedillo (in office 1994-2000) finally decided to establish the National Program for Women (Programa Nacional de la Mujer, PRONAM). This was an important step forward for women in

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28 PRONAM later became the National Commission for Women Affairs (Comisión Nacional de la Mujer, CONMUJER) and this, in turn, transformed into today’s National Institute for
terms of empowerment, autonomy and their opportunity to engage in public politics (Ortiz-Ortega & Barquet 2010: 126). Legislators were also able to establish a bicameral Equity and Gender Commission (Comisión de Equidad y Género) in 1997. In 1993, the campaign Gaining Space (Ganando Espacio) was initiated and the claim for gender quotas was officially formulated in clear terms. This was the year that the national Equality Plan (Plan de Equidad) was presented and a 30 percent quota system for public elections was proclaimed. The process of introducing legislative gender quotas in Mexico moved very quickly, and in the 1997 elections, a recommendation to the political parties to increase the number of female politicians on the ballots was introduced in the electoral code. However, the political parties did not follow this recommendation, and the number of women was instead reduced after the election. The same year, 1997, female legislators from eight political parties, from left to right, attended a conference entitled Let’s Move Forward a Step (Avancemos un Trecho) and agreed on a five-point legislative agenda, which focused on ensuring freedom from discrimination based on gender, regulating the rights and responsibilities of family maintenance, prohibiting pregnancy tests for employment and ending the termination of pregnant employees, providing daycare in the workplace and implementing more aggressive programs to combat family violence (Tarrés 2006: 418, see also Piscopo 2011a).

On International Women's Day, on March 8, 1998, 1,300 women entered the National Congress of Mexico and collectively declared the opening of the Mexican Women’s Parliament29 (Parlamento de Mujeres de México, or PMM). This was an important symbolic moment. PMM has been held every year since then on March 8 in connection with International Women’s Day and several essential successes have been realized as a result. PMM started as an extra-parliamentary initiative but became a bicameral body within the Commission of Equality and Gender (Comisión de Equidad y Género).

29 The Parliament was based on a feminist initiative to create a dialogue between female legislators and women from civil organizations, and meetings have been held every year since then in connection with International Women’s Day on March 8. A few days after the first meeting in 1998, on March 11, it became an advising body to the bi-cameral Committee of Equality and Gender. Due to ideological division and the fact that InMujeres and other state agencies were working for social policy on gender issues, the last meeting took place in 2005. The opening of the Mexican Women’s Parliament in March 1998 was an important political landmark, which aimed to create a deliberative discussion about women’s issues in Mexico and functioned as a platform for eight years.
Nevertheless, Women’s Parliament is an open forum, with an aim to create a deliberative discussion regarding women’s issues in Mexico.

During this period, female politicians mobilized and sought inter-party coalitions of women to demand greater commitments to ‘women-friendly’ policies. All three major political parties, PRD, PRI, and PAN, are also in the process of adopting internal quotas and intra-party declarations for the advancement of women’s interests (Hinojosa 2012). In 1998, the Commission on Equity and Gender (Comisión de Equidad y Género) was established, which could review all proposals that were introduced in the Mexican Congress, regardless of whether they explicitly relate to gender. The same year, the Women’s Parliament (Parlamento de Mujeres) was launched and included women from all social domains. Men could not participate in this event but were allowed to attend as observers. In other words, the years between 1997 and 2003 represent a period of great transition for Mexican women and their political representation.

The joint work among Mexican female politicians continued and, in 2000, the National Women’s Congress for the Reform of the State (Congreso Nacional de Mujeres hacia la Reforma del Estado) was organized for the first time. This convention was initiated to allow female legislators to develop strategies to reach their goals. The event was held in the congressional chamber, where male legislators were not allowed to attend. Prior to the National Women’s Congress, Mexican female political candidates signed a document of shared goals named, Towards a Legislative Agenda for Equity (Hacia una Agenda Legislativa por la Equidad). This document was followed by a Pact Among Women (Pactos Entre Mujeres)30 with the subtitle, A Little Way Further for the Full Citizenship of Mexican Women (Un Trecho Más por la Ciudadanía Plena de las Mujeres en México) in 2003. The agreements focused on greater budgetary allocation for women’s programs, violence against women, promoting sexual and reproductive rights, enhancing women’s political participation, ending discrimination and ensuring the equitable distribution of family responsibilities (Piscopo, 2011a: 172).

In 2000, the ruling party for over 70 years, PRI, lost power to PAN, and Mexico entered a new political era. This brought about new possibilities for women to organize and shortly after the elections, the leading feminist activist Patricia Mercado launched a political party with an emphasis on feminist demands, Mexico Possible (México Posible). However, Mexico

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30 This pact was later renewed in 2009.
Possible only gained one seat in the Chamber of Deputies in the election of 2003 and one municipal presidency, and the party did not survive very long. But even though the party was short-lived, it proved to be an opening in the political atmosphere. Adriana Ortiz-Ortega and Mercedes Barquet note that PAN’s electoral victory and the appearance of a new feminist political party “provided an opportunity to respond and capitalize on the international importance of gender issues” (Ortiz-Ortega & Barquet 2010: 129).

Political scientist Victoria Rodríguez’s research shows that for Mexican female politicians, networking is a recent phenomenon, and women do not have a long history of working across party lines. According to her, the new, more open political climate in the 1990’s and the 2000’s led to a new civic culture that grew and triggered new forms of activism and political participation in Mexico (Rodríguez, 2003: 5). Groups of people, such as women, independent agrarian organizations and indigenous people, mobilized and pressed to have their demands met, and as a consequence, the organization and mobilization of women became a part these changes.

Before the congressional election in 2000, Mexican women politicians signed a document “Towards a Legislative Agenda for Equity” (Hacia una Agenda Legislativa por la Equidad) containing common goals for women. This led to the convention of a National Women’s Congress for the Reform of the State (Congreso Nacional de Mujeres hacia la Reforma del Estado) in September of 2000, which allowed female legislators to meet and establish common plans for the upcoming legislature. This was not the first meeting or pact, but these two events marked a new trend of collaboration among women in Mexico. In 2003, María Luisa Farrera Paniagua, who serving as president of Mexico’s Federal Electoral Institute, said in a speech: “A constitutive characteristic of this new political practice is the pact among women. Before our partisan or ideological differences separate us, there is a common path that we can walk along together” (Piscopo, 2011a: 173). This collaboration, however, comes with a price, and female legislators tend to concentrate on issues such as “equal employment, freedom from violence, and nondiscrimination”, while reproductive rights are given a low priority and abortion is never mentioned at all (Piscopo 2011a: 174). It is in this

31 Another example of mobilization is the Chiapa uprising of 1994, including Subcomandante Marcos’ speeches and public experiences and Comandante Ester’s speech to the Congress in 2001, where she says; “My name is Ester, but that doesn’t matter now, I am Zapatista, but that doesn’t matter either. I am Indian, and I am a woman, and that is all that matters” (Loaeza, in Rodríguez 2003:5).
context that the three female subject positions that are examined in the following chapter take place.
5. Mexican Women as Political Representatives

This chapter addresses Mexican women as democratically elected political representatives and how they are constituted through the parliamentary language in the Chamber of Deputies before and after the introduction of the electoral gender quota law. In the representative claims regarding women as political representatives, different aspects contribute to form this female subject position and these features will be analyzed in this section of the dissertation. The chapter is designed as follows. I start by contextualizing Mexican women as political representatives. The contextualization contributes to a more comprehensive understanding and works as a platform when the two discursive strategies, referring and agentializing, are analyzed and discussed. This analysis first addresses the period from 1997-2003, which is followed by the selected period in 2006. These two periods are then compared and the chapter ends with a concluding discussion. In this chapter, I convey my finding that, during 1997-2003, Mexican female legislators constitute themselves as an obvious and outspoken ‘we women’ across party lines. As such, they also establish themselves as potent and strong actors, while male legislators instead picture women as already victorious in this fight, i.e. male deputies portray female deputies with agency in the past tense and not in a contemporary setting. Female legislators, on the other hand, emphasized the ongoing battle and the structural barriers that circumscribed their partaking in the public sphere. Thus, female and male deputies ascribe Mexican women as actors and their agency in opposing ways. A comparison with the period selected after the implementation of the gender quotas, 2006, shows that a ‘women we’ is no longer that common, and the concept of gender (género) has become a notable part of the language when speaking about women’s political presence.
Contextualizing Women as Political Representatives

The political arena has traditionally been a male domain and even though legislation has guaranteed citizens equal opportunity to be represented in political assemblies, these positions have been filled with privileged men. Due to women’s underrepresentation in the Mexican Parliament, electoral gender quotas were introduced in the 1997 public election. As mentioned earlier, the recommendation did not result in an increase in the number of women, but rather the opposite: the proportion decreased from 17.2 percent to 16.8 percent. Since the recommendation did not have a positive outcome on the number of women elected, the electoral reform was approved in 2002 requiring a 30 percent nomination quota for female politicians on the ballots. In other words, there is an explicit focus on women presence within the Mexican congress during the time between these two modifications of the electoral law. After implementation in the 2003 election, the percentage of women rose from 16.8 percent to 22.8 percent. Thus, the quota law resulted in a relatively large step up in numbers for Mexican women.

The initiative of the electoral law, Reforms to the Federal Code of the Electoral Institutions and Procedures Regarding Gender Equality (Reformas al Código Federal de Instituciones y Procedimientos Electorales en Materia de Equidad de Género), was presented on November 9, 2000, by a female PRD deputy. The law, which was a joint effort between the Commission of Governance and Public Security (Comisión de Gobernación y Seguridad Pública) and the Commission of Equality and Gender (Comisión de Equidad y Género), passed on April 30, 2002, with only 7 deputies voting against the initiative32 (Gaceta Parlamentaria, April 30, 2002). According to Lisa Baldez (2004), Mexican female deputies used different lobbying strategies to convince male colleagues to vote in favor of the quota law, which were conducted outside the chamber. This can explain why there were few chamber debates that explicitly focused on electoral gender quotas before the law passed. In an interview conducted by Baldez in July 2002, María Elena Chapa, a PRI deputy, explains the situation as follows:

We strategically divided the negotiation among ourselves. It is more difficult for our male colleagues to say no when it is women from other parties who sit down with them to convince them (of a particular position). It was an

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32 These 7 deputies were from the conservative party, PAN. Moreover, none of the senators in the Senate voted against the law (Gaceta Parlamentaria, April 30, 2002).
organized campaign, and there was much less resistance. To one’s own female colleagues, it is much easier (for a man) to say “here come those annoying women (*esas latosas*) again”. If a woman from another party comes, well then they refrain from making a judgment. In all parties, (our male colleagues) are immersed in a culture that we cannot ignore (Baldez 2004: 247).

In other words, much of the negotiation was conducted outside the parliamentarian debates. Even so, when reading the empirical material, it is obvious that Mexican women’s presence in the political sphere is highly existing in the parliamentary language. This is especially notable in sessions that focus on, for example; the Mexican Women’s Congress, which organized its first meeting in September 2000, the International Women’s Day on March 8, which is celebrated annually, and the commemoration of the Anniversary of Women’s Suffrage that is celebrated on October 17 every year. In other words, in sessions which topics emphasize women but do not necessarily relate explicitly to the gender quota.

When analyzing the empirical material regarding Mexican women and political representation, certain aspects emerge more clearly than others. First, there is a difference between how women are spoken about as political representatives before and after the quota law, which I will elaborate on further in this chapter. It also confirms Piscopo’s (Piscopo 2011a) result that it is mainly female legislators who place women’s political representation on the political agenda. Moreover, when reading the material, it strikes me that Mexican women frequently are related to the concepts modernity and democracy. These concepts have positive connotations and when linking them to women’s political representation, they are framed in a progressive setting. As Stuart Hall writes, “(e)ssential to the idea of modernity is the belief that everything is destined to be speeded up, dissolved, displaced, transformed, reshaped” (Hall 1997:17). In other words, modernity and democracy move in a direction towards something new and better. This progressivity thus stands in contrast to Mexico’s past as an undemocratic state. Women’s (increased) presence in the public political sphere thus becomes equated with modernity and democracy, and the overrepresentation of men becomes, at least implicitly, outdated and undemocratic. In other words, there is a linguistic link between women and the “new” modern democratic Mexico. This is manifested in the following statement made by a female deputy (PRI) when speaking about the anniversary of Mexican women’s vote:
A modern Mexico that is steadily moving towards greater democracy, which is reinforced by a more egalitarian and an increasingly pluralist society, a tolerant and participatory society, would not be that without a firm, conscious, responsible, and determined participation of Mexican women (October 16, 1997, female deputy PRI).33

In the quote, it is obvious that modernity and democracy are closely linked to women’s participation in formal politics in a distinguishable way. Women’s partaking in the Mexican public sphere is not new but has been central in the feminist struggle for decades. Since Mexico was in a process of democratization in the time period I review here, democracy per se is a core concept in the public rhetoric. By associating their presence in the public sphere to modernity and democracy, female politicians use concepts that have a special connotation to the Mexican people to put pressure on the state (and on men) to work in favor of legal measures to increase the proportion of women in the political sphere.

According to Nikki Craske (2005), the position of women was used in the national project of the Salinas administration (1988-1994), to create a “modern” Mexico that was democratic and progressive. Despite this, the Mexican state was slow to respond in comparison to other countries, both in terms of the establishment of an autonomous institute for women and the state’s engagement in the debate on electoral quotas. At the same time, there was a continued emphasis on women’s traditional role as the gender responsible for reproductive work and, with that, “the reinforcing of cultural stereotypes that see women as self-sacrificing and community oriented” (Craske 2005: 119). Modernity and progress were key words during the Salinas administration but during his presidency, the language of modernization and democracy was a part of his attempt to promote a more externally oriented economy (Craske, 2005: 126). In this way, the concepts of modernity and democracy were already part of the political semantic even though their history is related to economic progress rather than women’s issues, which might make them even more desirable. When comparing the period of 1997-2003 to the parliamentary language in 2006, women’s political representation is no longer a central issue, which of course is due to the adoption of the gender quota law and its implementation in the 2003 election.

33 El México moderno que avanza con firme voluntad hacia una mayor democracia, que se refuerza por convertirse en una sociedad más igualitaria, que es una sociedad cada vez más plural, tolerante y participativa, no sería tal sin la participación firme, consciente, responsable y decidida de las mujeres mexicanas (October 16, 1997, female deputy, PRI).

We make references to people when we speak, and in this process, we create social categories based on the groups we believe people belong to. A ‘we’ forms an in-group with which you identify, while a ‘they’ generates an out-group as the ‘other’. People form in-groups based on a range of characteristics, based on age, geographic association, profession etc. Gender is a basic categorization of human beings, and in the female subject position of political representativeness, this way of sorting has special significance since gender quota legislation aims to increase the number of women, i.e. they are inevitably categorized by their sex in this process. Below, I will provide examples from the empirical material showing how Mexican women are referred to in relation to political representation. The creation of a ‘women we’ in relation to political representation is a logical connection for female deputies to make since male politicians would not speak about ‘we women’. Even so, male deputies are still able to make representative claims in relation to women’s political presence in the parliamentary language by speaking about and in favor of women’s political representation.

The most efficient way to create an in-group is to speak about a group to which you identify as ‘we’. This way of categorizing a group sends a message that the persons in the social category have something in common, such as “we female politicians”, for example. If female deputies speak about a ‘women we’ in a general way, they not only include themselves, but they also incorporate the female part of the constituency, that is, an unspecific ‘women we’ that embraces all Mexican women. For example, in a session celebrating the anniversary of Mexican women’s suffrage, a female deputy (PAN) makes a statement and refers to all female legislators as ‘we’. According to her, women work together, in the past, in the present and in the future, i.e. she points to a timeline that points to a continuum. The female deputy (PAN) says:

This means that we women learn to work together without being an obstacle for ourselves, constantly retaking the essence of the feminist discourse to establish trust and solidarity with our gender. The space that each of us women have here is not only a personal triumph, because if it was, it would only last for three years (length of each term in the legislature, author’s remark). This space has been conquered for the woman. To preserve it and

34 The gender identity of the deputies may of course differ from what is registered.
expand it must be our commitment in favor of those who come after (Cámara de Diputados de Mexico, October 16, 1997, female deputy, PAN).35

The female deputy (PAN) clearly formulates a ‘women we’ and this in-group is in need of a common language, i.e. a “feminist discourse” to create fellowship among them. She discursively forms a platform in which women’s membership is based on comradeship and a common good. The female legislator (PAN) notes that women need to build female alliances beyond the legislature’s three-year terms, i.e. it is important for the future generations as well. Thus, there is a need “to establish trust and solidarity with our gender” in the current legislature and for the coming years. By linking references to a ‘we women’ that are attributed with positive values and attaching these to a timeline that stretches from the past to the future, the deputy (PAN) consolidates a female group. Van Leeuwen (2008: 77) describes how discursive temporality can be represented in different ways in language. Framing a statement with time periods, he states, can function authoritatively and thus give legitimacy. Seeing the quote in this way, the female deputy (PAN) forms a strong and potent in-group of ‘we women’.

In a session that celebrated the anniversary of Mexican women’s suffrage, a female deputy (PRI) also verbally constitutes the group of women as a ‘women we’ in relation to female political representatives. The female legislator (PRI) states:

We women always want the prevalence of a secular state at all times, which is the one that can guarantee the condition for our free performance in public and private life. We want a state that does not want to confine us to the private domain of the family and we say that we want to be voted for because we are willing to represent the broader interests of the sectors of the population, because we are going to give back, through our management as elected representatives, the actions for the development of women. It is possible that only then we can have the strength to push laws with the capacity to influence the design of them, with coordination, enforcement, and valuation of public policies. It is possible that only so can we move forward with greater equality in electoral laws. It is possible that with a broad social

35 “Esto supone el aprender a trabajar juntas sin ser para nosotras mismas un obstáculo, retomando constantemente la esencia del discurso feminista de establecer la confianza y la solidaridad con nuestro género. El espacio que aquí tenemos cada una de nosotras, no es sólo un triunfo personal, porque si así fuera sólo duraría tres años; este espacio se ha conquistado para la mujer y conservarlo y acrecentarlo ha de ser nuestro compromiso en favor de las que vienen detrás” (October 16, 1997, female deputy, PAN).
support, we can increase the federal budget for women and consider the outcomes in a transversal way. We may push laws that eliminate violence and discrimination of women. It is possible that if we direct our priority efforts to favor women, we can find meaning in their vote. It is possible, in short, that if we understand our commitment to all Mexican women, we women politicians, we may have a higher sense to the individual role to be voted for (Cámara de Diputados de Mexico, October 18, 2001, female deputy, PRI).

In the statement above, there is an outspoken ‘women we’ and a clear in-group based on female deputies. The interdependence between the ‘women we’ and a women-friendly policy in the quote also legitimates women’s presence in the political sphere, i.e. the female ‘we’ is related to promises and prosperity for Mexican women. The legislator (PRI) states “if we (women) understand our commitment to all Mexican women”, which indicates that the female legislator wants women deputies to identify themselves with other Mexican women rather than, or in addition to, party affiliation. Thus, the female deputy reminds her female colleagues of their gender identity and the need to be part of this gendered in-group. Moreover, the female deputy (PRI) says that women in Mexican politics, through “greater equality in electoral law” and voting, would benefit all Mexican women as a group, and in doing so would enable women to make changes. Implicitly, she is also stating that only women legislators’ work in favor of women-oriented issues. The way the female deputy (PRI) refers to women politicians with certain characteristics, such as strong, capable and promoters of change, also links them together to a ‘we women’, something I will return to later in this chapter. The deputy also links women to time as in the previous quote by referring “at all times”, which indicates there is a timeline

36 Las mujeres hemos de querer en todo momento la prevalencia de un estado laico, que es el que puede garantizarnos la condición para nuestro desempeño libre en la vida pública y privada. Queremos un Estado que no nos querrá confinar al exclusivo ámbito de la familia y digamos que queremos ser votadas porque estamos dispuestas a representar los intereses más amplios de los sectores de la población, porque vamos a devolver, a través de nuestra gestión como representantes populares, acciones a favor del desarrollo de las mujeres.

Es posible que sólo así podamos tener la fuerza para impulsar leyes con capacidad de incidir en el diseño, coordinación, ejecución y valuación de políticas públicas. Es posible que así podamos avanzar con mayor equidad en las leyes electorales. Es posible que teniendo un amplio respaldo social, podamos lograr que se incremente el presupuesto de la Federación para las mujeres y las contemple en una línea transversal de sus partidas. Es posible que impulse leyes que eliminen la violencia y la discriminación para las mujeres. Es posible que si orientamos nuestros esfuerzos prioritarios a favorecer a las mujeres, podamos encontrar sentido a su voto. Es posible, en suma, que si entendemos nuestro compromiso con el conjunto de las mujeres mexicanas, para nosotras las mujeres de la política, tenga un sentido superior al protagonismo individual el ser votadas (October 18, 2001, female deputy, PRI).
and a past in relation to a “secular state” that is the precondition for women’s “free” lives. The female deputy (PRI) verbally constructs women politicians as representing women and thereby makes women politicians accountable to a female constituency by referring to women as political representatives, i.e. “we want to be voted for”, “we are going to give back”, and “with a broad social group, we can increase the federal budget for women”. In this way, it is not only a ‘we’ among female deputies that is constituted but also an all-inclusive ‘women’s we’ is that embraces all Mexican female citizens.

The formation of a ‘women we’ also becomes explicit in the following quote, where a female legislator (PVEM), in a session in which modifications of tax policies is discussed, positions women as a group in relation to men as a group when highlighting the historical benefits men have inhabited. She says:

> We women participate passionately and legally in this year's elections, with the same feeling of capacity and dignity that the constitution and the electoral law grant to male citizens, and as such, we (women) went out to vote and several of us acceded to various positions. The hope that citizens have in this LVII Legislature (1997-2000, author’s remark), we women share among us. We (nosotras, which means we women, author’s remark) refuse to accept that democracy is a huge men’s club and we stand up for the situation women have, which is impregnated in all of her social, personal and political life (Cámara de Diputados de Mexico, December 4, 1997, female deputy, PVEM).37

In this quote, Mexican women are verbally constituted in relation to and in opposition with Mexican men, and this categorization does not only constitute ‘we women’ but also creates a ‘male they’. Thus, there is both an inside and an outside of the group. It is, I would state, an extraordinary act to organize and create a female ‘we’ platform that is not based on party affiliation or alliances but is instead based on gender, and as such, has to be understood as grounded in women’s exclusion and marginalization.

37 “Las mujeres participamos apasionada y jurídicamente en las elecciones de este año, con el mismo sentimiento de capacidad y de dignidad que la Constitución y la Ley Electoral conceden a los ciudadanos varones y como tales, salimos a votar y varias accedimos a diversos cargos La esperanza que los ciudadanos tienen en esta LVII Legislatura, la compartimos nosotras. Nos negamos a aceptar que la democracia sea un gran club de hombres y afirmamos que la condición de individuo que tienen las mujeres, permea toda su vida social, personal y política” (December 4, 1997, female deputy, PVEM).37
However, the conceptualization of women as a group creates a ‘we’ and this relationship, the in-group, has to be formed and reformed since no real ‘we’ exists. In other words, a ‘we’ is a linguistic construction that has to be manifested over and over again.

At another session with the topic, “World Women’s Movement”, one female deputy (PRD) refers to the Mexican National Women’s Congress that had recently been created and launched in order to constitute a ‘women we.’ The female deputy (PRD) says:

For those 500 women gathered for our righteous demands, demand for the end of violence, for non-discrimination in every way, because never again a decision made without us. For the rights to health, for an equal education, on September 28, 29 and 30 the National Women's Congress was held in our country, in which the Party of the Democratic Revolution has proven to be one of those who have pushed the creation of a national body where women have a platform in which they can carry out their own initiatives (Cámara de Diputados de México, October 30, 2000, female deputy, PRD).

In the statement, a ‘women we’ is referred to and shaped in relation to male political dominance – “never again a decision without us.” For fairness and “non-discrimination,” female lawmakers work together, and a circle of women for women is created. In other words, female deputies constitute a ‘women we’ in-group when invoking policy changes and male dominance.

In October 2000, the opening meeting for the new National Women’s Congress was on the agenda in the Chamber of Deputies and several female legislators spoke. One female deputy (PT) linked Mexican women’s capability of cooperating and the ability to respect the differences between them. She says:

(t)he National Women's Congress is an apparent expression that regardless of ideology, we women are able to discuss, have a dialogue, construct consensus and respect differences when the aim is to build bridges towards

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38 “Por esas 500 mujeres reunidas por nuestras justas demandas, demanda por el cese a la violencia, por la no discriminación en todos los sentidos, porque nunca más una decisión tomada sin nosotras. Por los derechos a la salud, por una educación con equidad, los días 28, 29 y 30 de septiembre se realizó en nuestro país el Congreso Nacional de Mujeres, en el que el Partido de la Revolución Democrática ha demostrado ser uno de los que más han empujado la creación de una instancia nacional en el que la mujer tenga un ámbito en el que pueda realizar sus propias iniciativas” (October 30, 2000, female deputy, PRD).
The quote demonstrates how women are regarded by the female deputy (PT) as having a unique gift to overcome traditional boundaries that elected representatives traditionally have, i.e. that of political denomination and ideological domicile. She says that “we women are able to discuss, have a dialogue, construct consensus,” which must be understood in contrast to men who the female deputy does not ascribe the same competences. Women are thus characterized by their capability to cooperate. This capacity for collaboration does not only benefit female deputies’ joint work, since the female deputy (PT) speaks about “better conditions for our sisters”, which includes all Mexican women.

Mexican women’s position as political representatives contains a clear and outspoken ‘women we’ before the introduction of a gender quota law, which the above quotes demonstrate. The way an in-group is created among Mexican female politicians is also noteworthy in comparison to their male companions, who do not work across party lines in such an explicit and organized way (Rodriguez 2003). In addition, these references to women form a group beyond party lines and include female deputies from all political parties. At the same time, female legislators from all political parties make references to a clear and outspoken ‘women we’ in the Chamber of Deputies during this time. In other words, there is a distinct in-group created among female legislators in the parliamentary language during this time, before the introduction of gender quotas, which also includes all Mexican females. The ‘we’ demonstrates a fellowship and a common history, and it promises a joint future. The discursively constructed ‘women we’ also creates an out-group, a ‘men they’, even though it is not explicitly stated, since there are always those who are outside of a group.

**Agentializing (1997-2003)**

We have seen that when female deputies speak about Mexican women’s partaking in the public political sphere, they constitute a ‘women we’

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39 El Congreso Nacional de Mujeres es una expresión evidente de que independientemente de las ideologías, las mujeres somos capaces de discutir, dialogar, construir consensos y respetar las diferencias cuando el fin es tender puentes hacia mejores condiciones para nuestros semejantes (October 10, 2000, female deputy, PT).

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through linguistic references, and this ‘we’ separates females from males as ‘we’ also inhabits an outside, that is, a ‘they’. The verbal creation of an in-group based on a ‘women we’ includes all female political representatives despite party affiliation and thereby forms an alliance among female legislators and in relation to a female constituency. When looking at agentializing, i.e. what characteristics and features are attached to Mexican women in relation to political representativeness, three aspects are central. First, Mexican women are spoken about as a prerequisite in public politics in order to include women-oriented politics. Second, women are portrayed by female deputies as fighters in an ongoing battle for their rights to take part in the public political arena, while male deputies constitute women as winners of this fight, which is already achieved. Third, female legislators are pictured as cooperative and thus (more) suitable to work for a common good.

A female legislator (PRD) makes an intervention in a session under the theme “World Day for the Fight Against Violence” on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. The session starts with a speech made by a male deputy (PAN), who speaks about violence in general and emphasizes violence in the streets but also violence within families. However, he does not address men’s violence against women. When it is the female deputy’s (PRD) turn, she commences her speech by suggesting one minute of silence for Jéssica Yadira and all women who have been victims of violence. Jéssica was a 16-year-old girl that was raped by three men earlier the same year but whose testimony was later questioned by the authorities. The aggressors’ relatives then threatened Jéssica and her family. After that, Jéssica committed suicide. With this as a starting point, the female legislator (PRD) takes the opportunity to pinpoint the need for more women in politics when she says:

Only then (with more women in politics, author’s note) will we be able to stop the entire system of maltreatment, power abuse, negligence, control and domination of women that after all has its beginnings in the private sphere. It reaches the state institutions and fosters degrading situations where we women are excluded and discriminated such as in the academic, the labor, the economic, and the political areas (November 25, 1997, female deputy, PRD).40

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40 Solamente así estaremos en posibilidad de detener toda la secuencia de maltratado, abuso de poder, negligencia, control y dominio hacia la mujer que si bien es cierto tiene sus inicios en los núcleos privados, llega hasta las instituciones del Estado y fomenta situaciones
The female politician (PRD) underscores the sentiment that there is a “system of maltreatment” of women in all areas in Mexican society, and as a consequence, she states, there is a need for more women in formal politics so that the prevailing situation can be changed. In the quote, male politicians are implicitly pointed out as failing to engage in and push for policy issues concerning women’s situation, since the female legislator (PRD) calls for more elected women politicians. The quote demonstrates a belief that women may change or at least stop the ongoing situation in which women are discriminated against if they are (more) present in public politics. Hence, the female deputy (PRD) indicates that women are necessary contributors to the legislative work in order to favor women’s situation and address marginalization. In other words, Mexican women are linked to a positive and powerful force for Mexican women. The female legislator (PRD) pictures women in central positions within Mexican society, as the ones that would take the responsibility and as the protagonists in the wellbeing of Mexican women. Instead of focusing explicitly on men’s over-representation and supremacy, the female deputy (PRD) speaks about women as “excluded and discriminated” against. Similarly, she pinpoints the maltreatment that female deputies suffer within the political arena without explicitly naming men. Thus there is a link in the quote between describing women as agents and refraining from identifying men as the bad agents. Women (female deputies) have to negotiate with men (male deputies) in order to make legislative changes. The fact that men are not named as perpetrators needs to be understood in this context.

The need for more women legislators within Mexican public politics in order to change the prevailing situation was articulated when a female deputy (PRI) presented her conclusion at the inauguration of the National Women’s Congress that took place in 2000. She says that there is a need to emphasize the most important parts of the meeting, which the quote shows, is centered on the marginalization of women. The female deputy (PRI) says that there is a need of more women in order to:

(b)uild a legislative agenda in order to mobilize and advance the participation of women in economic and social development, to consolidate a culture of equality in full exercise of their civil rights, such as political, social,
reproductive health, education and human (rights) (October 10, 2000, female deputy, PRI).

In the quote, the female deputy (PRI) presents a picture where the marginalization of women not only occurs in the political sphere but in all areas and at all levels of Mexican society, and because of this, there is a need to overcome this subordinate situation. It is notable that female legislators indirectly claim that they do not have faith in their male political colleagues to work in that direction, and women politicians are pictured as being the key actors in a process, i.e. female legislators push forward issues concerning Mexican women.

At the same time, Mexican female legislators portray themselves as part of an ongoing battle, i.e. they place themselves at the center of action. This is articulated as an ongoing “battleground” and a “fight”, in which Mexican women are the protagonists and, as ‘fighters’, they hold the capability to make changes but also to resist. For example, a female deputy (PT) says in relation to the anniversary of women’s suffrage:

On October 17 we celebrated the anniversary of one of the most important achievements in the struggle of women for gender equality. The 47th anniversary of the constitutional reform that gave Mexican women the right to be recognized as citizens with the right to vote and be voted for. /... / The struggle for recognition of our political and civil rights is linked to the struggle we now take for the defense of a gender perspective. The same fight that we take for achieving expanded levels of participation and representation of women in politics life /.../ (October 19, 2000, female deputy, PT).

In the quote above, Mexican women’s struggle for participation in public politics is, according to the female deputy (PT), an ongoing battle where

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41 Construir una agenda legislativa que permite impulsar y avanzar en la participación de las mujeres en el desarrollo económico y social, en consolidar una cultura de la equidad en el ejercicio pleno de sus derechos cívicos, políticos, sociales, reproductivos, de salud, educativos y humanos.
42 El 17 de octubre celebramos un aniversario más de una de las más importantes conquistas en la lucha de las mujeres por lograr la igualdad entre géneros. Se cumple el 47 aniversario de la reforma constitucional que otorgó a las mujeres mexicanas el derecho a ser reconocidas como ciudadanas, con el derecho a votar y ser votadas. /.../ La lucha por el reconocimiento de nuestros derechos políticos y ciudadanos está vinculada a la lucha que damos por la defensa de una perspectiva de género. El mismo combate que damos por lograr que se amplíen los niveles de participación y representatividad de las mujeres en la vida política /.../ (October 19, 2000, female deputy, PT).
Mexican women are fighting on behalf of women. The reason groups of people consider themselves fighters must be understood from a bottom-up view in which the group experiences marginalization and suppression. Speaking about a group of people as potent and forceful not only creates a group but also creates a common direction. In other words, female deputies are verbally ascribed to be actors that fight their subordination, which frames them as holding agency. In the quote, the female deputy (PT) also underscores the defense of a gender perspective, which, at the time, was relatively new in the Mexican political vocabulary, something I will come back to later in this chapter.

Women are also referred to as fighters in the following quote, where women’s movements around the world is the topic in a session where a female deputy (PAN) characterizes women as pushed aside as they are not able to partake in society in a way that gives them “a fair and free say”. Even so, they are spoken about as fighters in a speech. She says:

And I say fight, because women are not yet given the rights or the opportunity to participate in a fair and free way in the areas that have always been reserved for men. /…/ Today we women are half the population of our country and yet we have neither half of education nor half of the power, nor half of wealth nor half of employment. Our rights have been established in laws and regulations. But they mostly remain aspirations, yearnings and desires (October 30, 2000, female deputy, PAN).43

The above quote describes Mexican women’s lack of presence in political life, that is, women’s positions are not fully accepted or legitimized, but rather they have to fight to be recognized, and words like “struggle” and “fight” are part of the vocabulary regardless of the ideological domicile of the female politicians. Women are thus constituted as subordinate due to discriminatory structures and as fighters struggling for change. Moreover, the female legislator (PAN) speaks about women as “half of the population”, i.e. equal to men in numbers, but, even so, they are unequal when it comes to the opportunity to fulfill their rights as citizens since laws are seen by the

43 Y digo luchar, porque aún no se le ha dado a la mujer el derecho ni la oportunidad de participar de manera equitativa y libre, en esferas que siempre han sido reservadas para los hombres. /…/ Hoy las mujeres somos la mitad de la población de nuestro país y sin embargo, no tenemos ni la mitad de la educación ni la mitad del poder ni la mitad de la riqueza ni la mitad del empleo. En leyes y reglamentos han quedado establecidos nuestros derechos. Pero la mayoría siguen siendo aspiraciones, anhelos y deseos (October 30, 2000, female deputy, PAN).
female deputy as “aspirations, yearnings and desires”. In other words, the female legislator (PAN) constitutes Mexican women as subjects when speaking about women as political actors and social structures circumscribe their possibilities.

As stated earlier, diputadas (female deputies) are the main advocates for increasing the number of women in the political sphere. However, male deputies speak about Mexican women and their participation in the public sphere and the achievements that women have gained, which stands in contrast to the way Mexican female politicians speak. Women focus instead on struggles and what has yet to be accomplished. Thus, male deputies tend to picture Mexican women as winners of a struggle while female deputies see women as fighters. This Janus face, i.e. double-faced, places Mexican women in two different positions, one in which the interests and needs are already accomplished and one that is unequal in comparison with men, where women are fighting for their rights. In the following quote, a male legislator (PRD) speaks in relation to the celebration of International Women’s Day and focuses on Mexican women’s struggle and success rather than the ongoing struggle that female legislators envision. The male deputy (PRD) says:

The woman has been in a constant struggle against social inequalities. It was only the last century that the rights of women began to be discussed and defined. The struggle has paid off. With the re-foundations of the private and public life, from a feminist and gender perspective, women and men are learning new ways of relating and valuing ourselves (March 5, 2003, male deputy, PRD).44

It is a progressive and cooperative picture of Mexican women depicted by the male deputy (PRD) and a tribute to Mexican women’s struggle for change. However, the male deputy (PRD) also speaks as if Mexican women have already won the struggle and the transformation of the private and the public has already been actualized. Women are thus pictured as winners of their struggle against discrimination and subordination. Women’s achievement is expressed another way when a male deputy (PAN), who was

44 La mujer ha estado en una constante lucha contra las desigualdades sociales. Fue apenas el siglo pasado que los derechos de las mujeres empezaron a ser discutidos y definidos. La lucha ha dado frutos. Con la refundación de la vida privada y de la vida pública, a partir de la visión feminista y de género, mujeres y hombres estamos aprendiendo nuevas formas de relacionarnos y de valorarnos (March 5, 2003, male deputy, PRD).
also the Government Secretary at the time, discusses migration at a session and refers to “women’s struggle” as a success story. The Government Report (Informe de Gobierno) is discussed in the Chamber of Deputies and the deputy speaks about the National Women’s Council and the council’s preoccupation with the increasing number of female migrants. The male deputy (PAN) says:

… in this plural efforts made within the National Council for Women, who are concerned and backed and supported by the government, seeking to promote better gender conditions in the struggle that women have undertaken with such success, and which is expressed and represented in all political parties and is an important space for discussion, decision-making and decision impulse in the National Women’s Council and of its Comptroller (September 12, 2000, male deputy, PAN).

In the quote, the male legislator (PRI) states that women are looking for “better gender condition” in the struggle, though he does not specify what this means during his speech. In his statement, “gender” seems to be a concern only for women, since there is an emphasis on women as the only participants in this “struggle”, and men are not referenced in the speech. Moreover, according to the deputy (PRI), women’s struggle has started with a “great success” and this struggle has succeeded with the help of the government. Consequently, he connects the achievement of the struggle women are fighting with the governmental institutions and nothing achieved by the women’s movement itself. The male deputy (PRI) delineates a political system in which women “express and represent themselves” and where they have an “important space for discussion” in the Women’s Council. In this way, the male deputy (PRI) separates women and men in the political sphere and places women in a special position, where they become political actors, at the same time he speaks about their struggle as a success story. Thus, Mexican female politicians are constituted by the male deputy (PRI) as successful. In the above quotes, Mexican women are diminished in

45 /…/ en este esfuerzo plural que hacen en el seno del Consejo Nacional de la Mujer quienes están preocupadas y con el respaldo y el apoyo gubernamental, buscando por impulsar mejores condiciones de género en esta lucha que han emprendido con tanto éxito las mujeres que se expresan y se representan en todos los partidos políticos y que tienen un espacio muy importante de discusión, de toma y de impulse de decisiones en el seno del Consejo Nacional de la Mujer y de su contraloría (September 12, 2000, male deputy, PRI).
their role as (political) actors and implicitly diminished by male legislators, while men are implicitly made into the ordinary and as agenda makers.

In the material reviewed, women are verbally constituted in relation to political representation as having a predisposition for cooperation. When female deputies speak about themselves as political actors, they picture women as capable of collaborating and forming alliances across traditional party lines, which is also a way of creating an in-group as has been demonstrated earlier in this chapter. The way most democracies are executed, elected parliamentarians are members, with few exceptions, in a political party and work in line with the party’s program and mission. Inter-party alliances are rare (Lovenduski 2010), and Mexican female deputies are distinct in their vocabulary when speaking about their cooperation. In line with this, a female deputy (PRI) says of the National Women’s Congress:

For the decades that women have concretized their work and struggled for the rights of half of Mexico, but also in situations related to their interests and needs they have exhibited unity and strength. We remember in the Mexican political history the conquest of the vote and full citizenship in 1953, and the constitutional equality in 1974. More recent legislative examples where women from all parties have sit by the table and put aside differences and seeking agreements that is what unites us: the law of harassment and sexual harassment, the Cofipe reforms, Federal law against domestic violence, among others. We know how to work together for the good of women (October 10, 2000, female deputy, PRI).

In the quote above, the ability of Mexican women to work together is central as are the achievements women’s political networks have accomplished for women. Thus, the female deputy (PRI) describes female politicians as a potent in-group that deliberately addresses public claims jointly, and she defines this work as strong and forceful. In other words, this cooperation and

46 Cofipe is the abbreviation of the Federal Code of the Electoral Insitituions and Procedures (Código Federal de Instituciones y Procedimientos Electorales).

47 Hace varias décadas que las mujeres han concretado su quehacer y la lucha por los derechos de la mitad de México, en situaciones vinculadas a sus intereses y necesidades han dado muestra de cohesión y de fuerza. Recordemos en la historia política Mexicana la conquista del voto y la ciudadanía plena en 1953, así como la igualdad constitucional en 1974. Ejemplos legislativos más recientes, donde mujeres de todos los partidos nos hemos sentado a la mesa dejando de lado las diferencias y buscando las concordancias, aquello que nos une: ley de acoso y hostigamiento sexual, reformas al Cofipe, Ley Federal contra la Violencia Familiar, entre otras. Sabemos trabajar en conjunto por bien de las mujeres (October 10, 2000, female deputy, PRI).
ability to work side-by-side for the good for all Mexican women depicts female legislators as powerful political subjects. The verbal construction of Mexican women as potent political actors is put forward by female legislators over and over again.

The capacity for collaboration is also emphasized when a female deputy (PAN) speaks in the same session as the above statement when she describes women’s determination to work beyond party affiliation through the National Women’s Congress and says:

Last September, a national congress took place in Mexico City with the primary objective to create a meeting of women with different expressions, policies and participatory experiences, and to ensure the inclusion of their proposals in the process of political reform and even transition, which is outlined in our country (October 10, 2000, female deputy, PAN).  

The female politician (PAN) describes women legislators as cooperative and able to act for comprehensive legal changes based on a particular group, i.e. women, beyond ideological strongholds, which is extraordinary in public politics. The above quotes demonstrate that female deputies from different political ideologies, from left PT to conservative PAN, join a distinctive collaborative language in which women are pictured as cooperative and potent. Mexican female politicians are thus depicted as allied across political party lines throughout the material studied here, which is an interesting phenomenon in the political machinery where politicians are expected to primarily support their own political party. As stated above, alliances across party lines are exceptional both within and outside legislatures (Lovenduski 2010:83). However, there is a disparity in Mexican female legislators’ joint work in that the cooperation centers on several policy areas concerning a particular group and lasts over multiple legislative sessions, and it is also formalized through commitments and agreements. As Jennifer Piscopo (2011a) observes in her comparative research on substantive political representation in Argentina and Mexico, there is an important difference between the countries when it comes to partnership among female deputies from the different political parties. While there is a low rate of collaboration

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48 El pasado mes de septiembre tuvo lugar en la ciudad de México un congreso nacional con el objetivo primordial de lograr la confluencia de mujeres de diversas expresiones, experiencias políticas y participativas, para asegurar la inserción de su propuestas en el proceso de transición política y reforma de estado, que se perfila en nuestro país (October 10, 2000).
in Argentina, there is a “coordinated, collaborative effort among Mexican female legislators” (Piscopo, 2011a: 169), which confirms the portrayal of collaboration and cooperation. This picture marks a difference between how Mexican female and male politicians work and act as political representatives. In order to overcome a male norm and dominance within the political sphere, female politicians need to create a picture of themselves as different to men. At the same time, their position as political representatives becomes gendered since they cooperate on the basis of gender, which differs from men’s presence. They are elected within a masculinist norm system that comes without an outspoken gender.

To summarize, during the time period before the implementation of the electoral gender quotas, Mexican female deputies constitute women politicians as forceful and potent political subjects that work for better conditions for women. Male deputies, on the other hand, talk about women’s presence in the public arena and their achievements as a success story. They highlight a women’s victory, which does not correspond with how their female colleagues refer to the same process. Instead, female deputies describe themselves as oppressed. In other words, Mexican female politicians speak about themselves in relation to political representation as fighters in a struggle and thus ascribe themselves the ability to act and react to a male norm. Thus, male legislators reduce the importance of women’s ongoing struggle and thus diminish the legitimization of their struggle for increased representation in political bodies. By speaking about Mexican female politicians in this way, male deputies try to withdraw women’s strength and agency while female deputies emphasize the same.

2006

After the implementation of the modified electoral law in the 2003 election, which corresponds with the women’s movement’s demand for gender quotas in national public elections, the representative claims regarding women’s political representation no longer have the same status and therefore do not have an obvious presence in the parliamentary language, which is notable in the review of the empirical material. In this section, I continue the focus of the previous sections and emphasize how women as political representatives are constituted by focusing on the processes of referring and agentializing. When reviewing the material, it becomes apparent that the concept of gender (género) stands out more and somehow changes both the way women are
referred to as well as the linguistic construction of women as agents. There are two sessions in particular during the period reviewed in 2006 in which representative claims are made in relation to women as political representatives. This is the session where article 26 of the constitution, which concerns Mexican agencies that are in charge of the protection and promotion of human rights, is debated on February 2 and the session relating to the celebration of International Women’s Day, which is celebrated on March 9 in the chamber.

**Referring**

As stated above, in 2006, the quota law is no longer pending legislation and there is no legal change regarding women’s political representation that is an explicit focus in the material. However, the use of gender as a reference is a part of the linguistic change that I will demonstrate below. The concepts of gender and gender equality were already present in the material during 1997-2003 but become more significant in the later period (2006). In 2006, there were also male deputies presenting bill proposals that were signed by female deputies, which means that men indirectly become part of creating a ‘women we’.\(^\text{49}\)

On February 2006, a male deputy (PRI) presents a bill proposal regarding article 26 in the Mexican constitution that addresses access to the public sector. The bill proposal aims to make this legislation more gender sensitive in order make it easier for women to participate. The proposal is written and signed by a PRI female deputy but presented in the Chamber by a male party colleague. The presentations are represented by the following paragraph:

> Therefore, the balance is positive (women’s presence is society), but it is still not enough, because discriminatory acts persist against our gender, so we (women, author’s remark) will continue to fight for a fairer society with equal opportunities. We women are the strongest moral and material support of families, as we have contributed to the country's productive progress. As (female) legislators we cannot afford to let go, we must eliminate the huge social gaps and continue to fight to remove the barriers of those who oppose these legitimate demands (February 2, 2006, male deputy, PRI).\(^\text{50}\)

\(^\text{49}\) The reason male deputies present bills and proposals that women have signed is difficult to know, but I have noted it in the material. It could, however, be interpreted as a strategy to get more attention or to show that the bill or proposal also has male supporters.

\(^\text{50}\) Por lo anterior, el balance es positivo, pero a n o es suficiente, porque persisten actos discriminatorios contra nuestro género, por esto seguiremos luchando por una sociedad más
In the quote above, a “we women” is explicitly spoken (even though it is a male deputy who presents it), and “our gender” is equivalent to ‘we women.’ In other words, the term women becomes synonymous with gender in the language and a ‘women we’ is translated into “our gender.” In the quote, the ‘women we’ is present in several phrases, such as “we have contributed to the country’s productive progress” and “we must eliminate the huge social gaps and continue to fight”, and a clear ‘women we’ in-group is created.

Another example is when gender equality is in focus, where there is an unclear usage of the concept of gender and it has a female connotation. Even so, a male deputy (Convergencia) becomes part of the formation of a ‘we women’ in-group when he speaks in relation to International Women’s Day. He says:

A central aspect to consider is that gender equality should not only be expressed in legislation, but that the laws should also have the necessary instruments for its exercise, designing clear mechanisms that ensure effective gender equality in the daily reality of female workers. From the legislative sphere, it is necessary to recognize that we have a pending task to ensure that all women have access to full citizenship, which is not limited to the issuance of the vote, or even to the possibility of being voted for (March 9, 2006, male deputy, Convergencia).

In this quote, gender equality becomes equivalent to women and women’s situation. By referring to gender equality, the male deputy (Convergencia) speaks about women and women’s situation but does so without explaining what gender equality actually means in these particular circumstances. The
use of the term gender thus tends to exclude Mexican men, who by logic would be included in the term “gender equality”. Moreover, the male deputy (Convergencia) states that Mexican women do not yet have access to their citizenship rights beyond their right to vote and be voted for, but there is a need for “designing clear mechanisms that ensure effective gender equality in the daily reality of female workers”. However, the male legislator does not elaborate further on this topic, and he does not emphasize the double workload that female legislators highlight in the domestic sphere nor Mexican men’s responsibility of shared parenthood, for example. The statement: “From the legislative sphere, it is necessary to recognize that we have a pending task to ensure that all women have access to full citizenship” points to the female population and does not include male citizens. Consequently, the statement made by the male deputy (Convergencia) makes gender about women and women’s concerns.

In conjunction with International Women’s Day, a female deputy (PRD) speaks about gender equality, which is associated with female citizens only in the quote. However, the quote does not reference a ‘women we’ as the protagonist instead referencing the parliamentary group to which the female deputy belongs. In other words, women’s rights are linked to gender equality, and the driving force is the political organization. The female deputy (PRD) says:

Last year on March 8, the position of my parliamentary group was to recount the progress in the country in relation to gender equity and women’s rights. It also mentioned some figures that show that much remains to be done to achieve equal opportunities for women and to eliminate the discrimination and violence that Mexican women still experience (March 9, 2006, female deputy, PRD).  

In the quote, gender becomes equivalent to women, or at the very least, the male half of the Mexican population is not mentioned. The female deputy (PRD) does not speak about a ‘women we’ but instead she depicts a generalized group of women. In other words, when using the concepts of

52 El año pasado, el posicionamiento de mi grupo parlamentario con motivo del 8 de marzo consistió en hacer un recuento de los avances que hay en el país con relación a la equidad de género y los derechos de las mujeres. Asimismo, se mencionaron algunas cifras que muestran que falta mucho por hacer para lograr la igualdad de oportunidades para las mujeres y eliminar la discriminación y la violencia que siguen viviendo las mexicanas (March 9, 2006, female deputy, PRD).
gender, gender equality and equal opportunities it seems to be more difficult to speak about ‘we women.’ Rather, women as a group are transformed into a generalization. This is also done in the previous period, even though gender equality has no central place in the parliamentary language at that time.

References to a ‘women we’ are still present in the parliamentary language but are partly rephrased by the use of gender, a concept that includes both women and men, although it is obvious that the term sometimes replaces ‘women’. However, the obvious separation between an all female ‘women we’ that was the case before the gender quota legislation, i.e. 1997-2003, is somewhat dissolved when male deputies, at least implicitly, become part of the creation of the in-group by speaking about women in a general way.

**Agentializing**

Between 1997-2003, the representative claims in relation to women’s presence in formal politics emphasize the need for women in politics as a prerequisite for pushing forward women-friendly issues, i.e. as women advocates but also as cooperative and thus able to work across party lines. Moreover, female legislators pictured women as (more) cooperative and therefore (more, or at least not less) capable of engaging in politics. At this time Mexican women were ascribed status as political subjects and were attributed with agency by female deputies, which stood in contrast to how male deputies spoke about women as having already won the whereby women’s agency was placed in the past rather than in the present. At the same time, women were spoken about as circumscribed by social structures.

In 2006, Mexican women are spoken about in relation to political representation as active and strong political actors, which does not necessarily need to be within political parties, and women are linguistically placed side by side with men. I will give some examples from the corpora. For example, a female deputy (PRI) gives the following picture when speaking in relation to the celebration of International Women’s Day in 2006:

> The progress of the women's struggle has been the result of the efforts of all those who participate in it. It is not the product of one group or of one political party. No one, no one can adjudicate it as a personal triumph or achievement. What we must clarify and acknowledge is that every day more and more men join in this struggle, convinced that the only way to advance
and improve the situation in the world is to achieve equality between men and women. The struggle of women is not a war between the sexes nor is it a historical revenge against men. It is simply the search for what we legitimately deserve: equality between genders. Insofar as society is more egalitarian and women participate more in decision-making spaces, the situation in the country will improve significantly, not because we have the magic formula, but we do have a different conception of things and we complement each other. I appeal to all women and men fellow legislators to take the struggle of women as their own (March 9, 2006, female deputy, PRI).  

In the statement, the focus is still on women’s situation and rights even though the concept of gender is present. The focus on gender equality in the quote is oriented towards cooperation between Mexican women and men rather than oppositional units. Wording like “more men join this struggle” and “it is not a war between the sexes” are present and suggest that women and men are linguistically placed as more equal political subjects. Whether this is an actual political practice cannot be answered here, but the vocabulary indicates a switch in the political language, and a linguistic focus on gender relations and the political language suggests collaboration between women and men, at least in theory.

The use of the concepts gender and gender equality moves the focus from women as a group to the interrelation between women and men and, in that, the conflict between women and men is downplayed. At the same time, the female legislator (PRI) emphasizes women’s “different conceptions of things” and a heterosexual dualism where women and men are linked with different characteristics. The female deputy (PRI) also ascribes Mexican women and their (political) achievement to the women’s movement since this “is not the product of one group or of one political party”. In other

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53 El avance que ha tenido la lucha de las mujeres ha sido producto del esfuerzo de todas las que participamos en ella; no es producto de un grupo ni de un partido político. Nadie, nadie puede adjudicársela como triunfo o logro personal. Lo que sí debemos aclarar y agradecer es que cada día más y más hombres se suman a esta lucha, convencidos de que la única forma de avanzar y mejorar la situación mundial es logrando la igualdad entre hombres y mujeres. La lucha de las mujeres no es una guerra entre los sexos ni es un revanchismo histórico contra los hombres; es simplemente la búsqueda de lo que legítimamente nos merecemos: la igualdad entre los géneros. En la medida en que la sociedad sea más igualitaria y que las mujeres participemos en mayor medida en los espacios de toma de decisiones la situación del país mejorará significativamente, no porque nosotras tengamos la fórmula mágica, pero sí tenemos una concepción diferente de las cosas y nos complementamos: Hago un llamado a todas y a todos los compañeros legisladores a tomar la lucha de las mujeres como propia (March 9, 2006, female deputy, PRI).
words, she pictures women as autonomous agents that are in possession of their own success.

Prior to the election in 2003, in which the new electoral law was applied for the first time, Mexican women’s position as political representatives was spoken about as an ability to cooperate with other women for the sake of all Mexican women as well as women’s potency and strength as political representatives. In 2006, the parliamentary language differs in some aspects. Women’s political representation is, as stated above, no longer at the center of Mexican female representative claims in the same way. However, on March 9, 2006, International Women’s Day was celebrated and was one of the themes in the sessions in the Chamber of Deputies. For example, a male deputy (Convergencia) was one of the listed speakers. In his words:

We believe that in order to consolidate the national project that we seek, it is essential to incorporate women from all areas in the national work with equal opportunities and conditions. It is not possible to speak of democracy, development and justice while half of the population continues to be marginalized from opportunities. Much of the sociopolitical and socioeconomic backwardness that Mexico suffers is due to the late incorporation of women in the political, economic and cultural progresses (March 9, 2006, male deputy, Convergencia).

In the quote, the male legislator (Convergencia) clearly makes a connection between the presence of women in the public arena and the fulfillment of Mexican democracy when he affirms that it “is not possible to speak about democracy” when “half of the population (women, author’s remark) continues to be marginalized”. Moreover, the male deputy (Convergencia) says that the country suffers due to women’s late inclusion in the public sphere, vocabulary that female deputies used before the adoption of the gender quota law. This statement stands in contrast to the way Mexican male deputies spoke about Mexican women in the previous period as having already achieved their goal, for example, when a male deputy (PRD) speaks about women’s fight and says: “The struggle has paid off. With the re-

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54 Creemos que para consolidar el proyecto de nación a que aspiramos es indispensable incorporar a las mujeres de todos los ámbitos en el quehacer nacional en igualdad de oportunidades y condiciones. No es posible hablar de democratia, desarrollo y justicia en tanto la mitad de la población continúa marginada de las oportunidades. Muchos de los rezagos sociopolíticos y socioeconómicos que México padece se deben a la tardía incorporación de las mujeres en los avances políticos, económicos y culturales (March 9, 2006, male deputy, Convergencia).
foundation of the private and public life, from a feminist and gender perspective, women and men are learning new ways to relate to each other and value ourselves (March 5, 2002). The PRD male deputy is saying that Mexican women have already accomplished their goals and women and men are living more equal lives. Thus, this quote from 2006 demonstrates that the male legislator (Convergencia) embraces the representative claim that female deputies expressed previously and recognizes the problems that Mexican women have faced.

In the same session, the celebration of International Women’s Day, a female deputy (PAN) speaks about women’s participation in the public sphere and she speaks in the past tense, even though she emphasizes that there is a need for more changes for “the benefit of women”. The female deputy (PAN) says:

The woman has had a fundamental place in Mexico’s transition towards democracy, their firm claim of political morality and to awaken the citizens’ conscience to establish a plural, inclusive, and participatory democracy. Today is another occasion to reflect on the progress that has been made, demand changes and continue looking for alternatives to take more firm steps and accelerate the benefit of women (March 9, 2006, female deputy, PAN).

The female deputy (PAN) portrays women’s struggle for a “plural, inclusive, and participatory democracy.” Thus, women’s participation in the transition towards democracy in Mexico is at center but she also emphasizes the need to take “more firm steps and accelerate the benefit of women,” that is, there is more to do regarding women’s participation. The first quote demonstrates a change in comparison to the period before 2003 in that a male deputy speaks about women’s subordination as a deficit in Mexican democracy. The other quotes made by female deputies continue to constitute Mexican women as a central part of the development and progress of the Mexican political sphere. In other words, both female and male politicians constitute Mexican female legislators as political agents that have fought for and

55 La mujer ha ocupado un lugar fundamental para que México transitara a la democracia, su insistencia en la reivindicación de la moral política y despertar la conciencia ciudadana para establecer una democracia plural, incluyente y participativa. Este día es una ocasión más para reflexionar sobre los avances conseguidos; exigir cambios y continuar buscando alternativas para dar más pasos firmes y acelerando el beneficio de las mujeres (March 9, 2006, female deputy, PAN).
achieved fundamental progress, that is, such a portrayal implies agency and decisiveness. At the same time, in relation to the concept of gender, women become more invisible independent agents, which might also generate a diminishing degree of agency as women but an increasing degree as (masculinized) political subjects. In other words, this can also be understood to indicate that women are moving towards a norm that is already set within public politics.

Concluding Discussion

During 1997-2003, women’s presence in the Mexican political sphere was low in terms of numbers in an international comparison, and a reformed quota law requiring a minimum of 30 percent women on the ballot lists was pending. At the same time, Mexico was undergoing a transition to democracy, from one party rule to a multi party system. During this time, the creation of a ‘women we’ is important for Mexican female legislators and a construction of a ‘we’ enables women to use language to construct an (new) experience of belonging. At this time, Mexican women have not experienced a strong and vital movement and thus do not have an established in-group among women. To make joint efforts to challenge and change the prevailing male dominance within formal politics, i.e. political institutions that are characterized by a culture of traditional masculinity (Vidal Correa 2017), seems to bring together Mexican female politicians. The “we” is established through their communicative commitments through agreements and “women’s pacts” (Piscopo 2011a; 2016) even though this relationship has to be created and recreated since the construction of ‘we’ is a neverending process since the ‘we’ is constituted through language. Mexican female deputies claim a ‘we’ based on their womanhood, and this is central when requesting equal representation and participation in public politics. When constructing a ‘women we’ in-group, women are referred to as a group that is positioned against men as a group and, in this way, an in-group and an out-group are established.

Before the introduction of guaranteed political representation for Mexican women in the national congress through a gender quota law, women’s position as political representatives is clear in the sense that Mexican female legislators, regardless of party affiliation, linguistically create a ‘we women’ among themselves. Even though the reference to women as a group does not necessarily lead to common ideas and joint politics among women, that is,
there is no causality between the two, it shows recognition of a shared position and history among women, and this commonality is manifested through a shared consideration about the need for political dialogue about gender relations. The quotes show a recognition of a common history among women as being subordinate, from which the need for a dialogue emerges. The manifestation of a ‘women we,’ i.e. the creation of an in-group, works as a platform for a common language and joint political action. A ‘women we’ is, nevertheless, also problematic in the sense that women, as a group, are complex and multifaceted and female legislators are mainly recruited from privileged groups. In other words, a constitutive ‘women we’ obscures differences and hierarchies within the group of women and intersections such as class, race, and sexual orientation may be masked.

In the representative claims, Mexican female deputies also constitute themselves as potent political subjects aiming to work for better conditions for Mexican women, an ongoing fight they are undertaking jointly. At the same time, male legislators hardly speak about women’s presence in, or rather absence from, the public political sphere before the approval of the gender quota law, and when they do speak of women’s presence, they declare that women have already achieved victory and success. By doing this, male deputies withdraw the strength and potency that female deputies ascribe to themselves and fail to acknowledge the discriminatory social structures that female legislators bring to light. Moreover, before the modification of the electoral law, Mexican female politicians constitute themselves as qualified political representatives with skills that allow them to work together across ideological boundaries for the common good of Mexico and for Mexican women, which further distinguishes them from their male colleagues. Thus, in the parliamentary language, there is a clear ‘women we’ among female deputies at the same time they depict themselves as cooperative, collaborative and potent fighters and key figures in the process to move towards modernity and democracy. In other words, Mexican female deputies constitute themselves as different and progressive in relation to male politicians, while male deputies do not attribute their female colleagues the same way instead emphasizing women’s status as agents in the past tense through, according to male deputies, their achieved victories.

As we have seen in several of the quotes provided above, women are described as qualified and cooperative, as well as being able to overcome differences among party affiliations, revealing a contrasting approach to the traditional male approach of conducting public affairs. By exhibiting an
ability to cooperate, female deputies not only show new joint political pathways, they also display men’s inability to place policy concerns at the center and overcome ideological barriers. In this way, gender becomes an incisive dimension to the ‘doing’ of politics. Moreover, the quality of democracy traditionally rests on the idea that party systems are structured and stable in an environment where the main actors have ideological commitments. These form the basis for competition among parties and understandable and well-established links between parties and their constituencies (Luna & Zechmeister 2005: 391). The formation of a ‘women we’ and a women’s alliance across party lines that are jointly formulating and pushing policy concerns is not entirely explicable within such parameters, since these move beyond the axis of competition. Mexican female politicians move beyond typical party competition and, by logic, they consider gender to be more important than ideology in some cases. Moreover, female legislators might meet the requirements of their constituency, but since they collaborate with other women deputies and create pacts and sign commitments rather than standing in lockstep with their male party colleagues on an ideological basis, the traditional competition between political parties is also challenged.

Members of parliament generally work in line with their political party and the party agenda, but within the Mexican democratic machinery, women’s networking cuts across established formal and informal rules. It expresses a shift in expected activities in public politics, but also proves that some issues seem to be more important than party affiliation and party discipline. These have a commonality: women as a gendered group and women-oriented policy. Thus, networking and claims based on gender are strategically driven since the aim is to push for policy changes and to serve as an answer to male domination and a masculine oriented political culture. The need to organize and create platforms across party lines must be interpreted in relation to women’s marginalization and as a result of a lack of recognition and acknowledgment.

When studying the Mexican parliamentary language in 2006, i.e. after the approval of the gender quota law, some similarities emerge but I also note an essential change. The use of the concept gender is notable. Gender, by definition, also includes men as a group, which means that the terminology can embrace both women and men. This neutral and unspecific concept has no inherent reference to a specific gendered group, therefore, when using gender, no in-group or out-group is specifically at work, or at least not at first. The use of gender in parliamentary language might lose the strategic
impact that an explicit ‘women we’ may generate if the concept includes both women and men instead of serving as a substitute for women.

In the material reviewed from 2006, the concept gender (género) is used in the representative claims regarding women’s presence in public politics. This use of language is relevant in the construction of identities, since it focuses on a more flexible understanding and moves beyond a binary gender system, at least in theory, and creates opportunities for women and men to negotiate transformative changes. Thus, agency within the parliamentary language has somehow shifted in this period. The concept of gender denotes that both women and men are included and part of the transformation, though this may not be the case, e.g. when gender is synonymous with women. On the other hand, gender is relatively new to Mexican political vocabulary in the period studies and there is therefore a risk that the understanding of the concept is synonymous with ‘women’ instead of an understanding of the social construct of gender identities, as we could see in some quotes. In other words, gender equality introduces new and non-essentialist ways of approaching social relations, but at the same time, there is a danger that the concept inherits old ways of thinking and conceals unequal hierarchies.

When Mexican women’s political representation is spoken about in the Chamber of Deputies, it is mainly female legislators who do so both before and after the approval of the gender quota law, i.e. “the bulk of women’s representation in Mexico was carried out by diputadas (female deputies, author’s remark)” (Piscopo 2011a:162). Thus, Mexican female politicians are the main proponents in speaking about women as political representatives from the podium in the chamber, and male legislators’ voices are strikingly silent during the period between 1997 to 2003. However, after the gender quota legislation guaranteed Mexican women presence in the national congress, it can be noted that male legislators speak about women as political actors in a way that is not notable before the approval of the law. The introduction of the concept gender in the representative claims regarding women’s political representation is directed towards gendered relations rather than focusing on women as a group. Such a linguistic change may lead to a new and different political discourse. At the same time, the implementation of the gender quota law eroded Mexican female legislators’ tendency to linguistically unite around women’s political representation.
6. Mexican Women and Motherhood

In this chapter, the representative claims regarding Mexican women and motherhood are in focus and I examine the way women are constructed in the parliamentary language before and after they were guaranteed 30 percent representation in the national parliament by law. In these claims, various aspects contribute to form the female subject position in relation to motherhood, and these will be identified and analyzed throughout the chapter. The chapter is designed as follows. In order to situate Mexican women and maternalism in a national context, the chapter starts with a contextualization. This presentation then serves as a basis when the two discursive strategies, referring and agentializing, are identified and analyzed, which in turn are examined in a comparison before and after the introduction of the legislation. The primary findings in the chapter center around how Mexican female legislators construct themselves during 1997-2003 as an apparent and outspoken ‘we women’ when referring to women and symbolic maternalism but in a general way when speaking about de facto motherhood. Female deputies ascribe multiple roles to Mexican women, as mothers that include other identities, such as single mothers and working mothers. Male deputies, on the other hand, associate women with domestic and caregiving responsibilities, excluding women from the public sphere by indicating that they should take their responsibility for caregiving. Thus, female and male deputies describe Mexican women as actors in different ways. These results stand in contrast to the period after the implementation of gender quotas in 2006. By this time, the parliamentary language has changed in two fundamental ways in relation to the representative claims for Mexican women and motherhood; mothers and fathers are present in the language and male deputies make representative claims as parents. Thus, motherhood as a subject position becomes more diverse.
Contextualizing Motherhood

Mexican women have not always been a visible part of public life. The collapse of military rule in the 1980s and return of civilian governments were accompanied by a deepening reconstruction process in Mexico. In this process, which has played out over the last few decades, women in Mexico have become increasingly incorporated into the labor market. However, Mexican women are still underrepresented at all levels of power in society, and to a higher degree than Mexican men, they are involved in reproductive work and caregiving. Historically, motherhood has been an important base from which women act together in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America. Political scientist Nikki Craske writes that “(m)otherhood offers a particular entry into politics and has significant cultural value which allows a power base for women” (Craske 1999: 9). Thus, maternalism has a unique presence in Latin America, and scholars point out a fundamental difference between regions: “while female politicians worldwide commonly confront structural barriers and cultural expectations related to their assigned caretaking roles, female politicians in Latin America can draw on a long history of political activism grounded in maternalism to claim a space in public” (Franceschet et al. 2016: 30). Speaking about and referring to motherhood is therefore neither new nor exceptional but a part of a public (political) discourse about women in Mexico.

As early as the 1970’s, the expression supermadres was coined and referred to female politicians’ experiences of motherhood. Elsa Chaney (1973) explains how women in Latin America entered the political sphere as an extension of their domestic role together with a language that coincided with such experiences. Employing such a vocabulary is therefore nothing new in a Mexican context. In order to understand the position of motherhood in Mexico, the gendered features marianismo and machismo, which are closely related to femininity and masculinity, need to be addressed (see for example Craske 1999; Domínguez 2004; Piña-Watson et al. 2014; Schwindt-Bayer 2010). Marianismo is complex and can be traced back in the history of the Latin American region and is closely connected with the Catholic Church. Moreover, marianismo is intimately intertwined with the virtues of the Virgin Mary (in Mexico, she is known as the Virgin of Guadalupe – Virgen de Guadalupe), such as humility, purity and obedience. Machismo, on the other hand, includes a number of attributes but can be summarized as masculine cultural expressions. This can be exaggerated male pride, which is manifested as a reinforcement of traditional
masculinity, but it also includes the traditional role as head of family. These cultural expressions are deeply grounded in the cultures of Latin America and, as researchers show, have consistently been reinforced by the Catholic Church (Quiñones Mayo & Resnick 1996).

The cultural expressions of marianismo and machismo are vivid parts of today’s Latin America. They are underpinned by a very clear notion of a separation of masculinity and femininity. These ideals demonstrate cultural trajectories where women and men are separated to a great extent through a gendered division of work and responsibilities, but they also guide how women and men are to behave properly according to social codes. Norms regarding gender roles do not only restrict citizens’ agency, they also work as a cognitive base for expected choices in life and dictate how activities are carried out. Researchers show that the two different spheres, the public and the private, are very much reserved for each sex (Chant & Craske 2003; Domínguez 2004; Dore 2000; Gutmann 2007; Molyneux 2000). Machismo has almost the opposite meaning to marianismo and inhabits characteristics such as virility, fearlessness and toughness (Craske, 1999: 11). This ideal image of masculinity has been reinforced by a political tradition marked by populism, paternalism, corruption and hierarchical structures in Mexico, which in turn is highly connected with the autonomous and strong leader, el caudillo.56 Even though the concepts of marianismo and machismo are seldom explicitly named in the empirical material that is analyzed here, or in Mexican society in general, they are omnipresent.57 However, they are both important in the understanding of gendered relations in Mexico, especially in understanding of motherhood.

Mexican women frequently find themselves dismissed from work because of pregnancy or even because of changes in civil status, i.e. when they get married (Franceschet et al. 2016). During the 1980’s, in response to the economic crisis, Mexico lowered the protection for domestic industry, 

56 *El caudillo* is usually described as a political or military leader at the head of an authoritarian power. The term translates into English as leader or chief. *Caudillo* was the term used to refer to the charismatic populist leaders among the people. It exists at all levels in Latin America, at the local, national and regional level. Earlier presidents in Mexico were renowned for single-handedly picking governors, judges and union leaders. This was known as *el dedazo*, approximately “the hand picker” (see Monsivaís 2006).

57 Marianismo is never explicitly referred to in the empirical material studied though machismo is mentioned on a few occasions. For example, at the session on November 21, 2000, a female (PAN) says: the historical machismo that has characterized us, has also held back indigenous women in a very significant way (in Spanish: el histórico machismo que nos ha caracterizado ha puesto en rezago también a las mujeres indígenas en forma muy especial (November 21, 2000).
reduced food subsidies, privatized state companies and liberalized trade (Bruhn 2003). Many of these measures resulted from internal decisions but were also the result of international pressure for stabilization and structural adjustment of the Mexican economy. This economic crisis was followed by two more, in 1987-1988 and 1994-1996, which placed tremendous stress on Mexico’s political and economic system. According to Rodríguez (2003), the economic crises led to millions of Mexican women, particularly those from low-income families, starting to take work outside the home for the first time. Households were forced to use innovative strategies for survival, and the male members of the family were no longer the only breadwinners. As a result, traditional family patterns regarding the source of income were no longer the only option, even though this new situation did not change women’s domestic workloads (Rodríguez 2003:56). So while both female and male deputies speak about Mexican women as having two or even three work venues, including household work, I have not found calls for Mexican men’s participation in domestic work.

Unlike the focus in the other chapters on political representation and violence against women, motherhood is not a policy area in Mexico and there are therefore no obvious pieces of legislation or specific debates in the congress that focus explicitly on this. Even so, there are some policy areas that are closely linked to women and motherhood, i.e. childcare and teenage mothers. The access to institutional childcare for children from the age of 43 days to four years was established as a right for working women in the formal sector already in 1973. In 2002, preschool education was made mandatory for children between three and five, a policy that was designed to meet children’s needs rather than their parents’ needs. Thus, when performing a search for “women” in the empirical material, no debates regarding preschool education appear and I therefore determine that they were not explicitly linked to motherhood or to women’s participation in the public sphere. After this reform, preschool coverage increased, and by 2007-2008, universal coverage of four and five-year-old children was achieved, while it had risen to 34 percent for three-year-old children. (Staab & Gerhard 2011: 1084-5). However, most preschools are public institutions and run only half-day programs, which means that they do not match parents working schedules. The other area where motherhood is discussed in

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58 The economic crisis of the 1980s altered Mexico’s course of development and ended the longest period of sustainable economic upturn. When the oil price dropped in 1980-1981 and the rise in international interest rates brought growth to a brisk halt in 1982, new economic strategies became necessary (Bruhn, 2003).
parliament is the high number of child and teenage pregnancies, which, according to the Mexican government, is a huge problem in Mexico (ENAPEA 2016). Considering that of all women who gave birth in Mexico during the time period reviewed in this study, 1997-2003 and 2006, 16.3 to 16.8 percent were under 20 years of age (INEGI 2019); this is a tremendous problem for young women in Mexico (Jiménez & Villa 2019). This is discussed several times in the Chamber of Deputies during the two periods I focus on in this study. As discussed in Chapter 3, my search in the empirical material has focused on “women”. However, I also performed a search on mothers in order to make sure that I did not overlook something. In summary, there are no specific debates in which representative claims regarding women and motherhood exist, rather, they are scattered in the empirical material.


As stated earlier, the way we refer to ourselves and to others indicates an inside and an outside of a group and points out who belongs and who does not belong to such units. As we have seen in the previous chapter, such references can be done in several ways and in different settings, but they are all part of the formation of subject positions. The establishment of a linguistic ‘we’ can be done explicitly by referring to women as ‘we women’, but when such explicit ‘we’ is not part of the language, a ‘we’ can implicitly be formed by referring to women in general. Both ways shape an inside and an outside of a group based on gender even though they differ in their constitutive strength. In the introduction to this chapter, I explained that maternalism and marianismo are historical and cultural features that are present in Mexican society, and the focus in this section turns to how references contribute to the construction of women’s position and motherhood. I will show how female Mexican deputies refer to women and maternalism, and by doing so, manifest an in-group through the parliamentary language. This in-group is established in two ways: women are referred symbolically in terms of motherhood, as an explicit ‘we women,’ but they are also referred to as de facto mothers, which is done implicitly.

As mentioned earlier, motherhood as a symbol has a significant value in a Mexican context. When Mexican female deputies refer to symbolic maternalism, an explicit ‘we women’ is used, which is done, for example,
with the heart of the family-as-nation metaphor. Such references bring women together discursively, and an explicit gendered in-group of women is constituted. Symbolic maternalism thus works as a link between all Mexican women in the parliamentary language. For example, in the following quote a female deputy (PRD) says:

We are half of the population and mothers of the other half! The world is changing and we women are adopting our leading role in these changes (October 30, 2000, female deputy, PRD).  

In the statement above, the symbolism of motherhood becomes apparent. The reference to a ‘women we’ as “half of the population and mothers of the other half” not only places women as part of the Mexican nation but at the very center of it (a PAN female deputy also speaks about women as half of the population). The use of ‘we’ in the quote also operates inclusively, since it claims a belonging to the nation and brings Mexican women together verbally. Thus, the collective pronoun simultaneously reproduces an idea of national community (cf. Wodak 2009:45) and a common female subjectivity. In the quote, a distinct in-group of ‘we women’ is thus brought together based on the symbolism of maternalism. This ‘we women’ group is, according to the female deputy, also embracing a role as leaders in times of changes and she thereby also creates a relationship between motherhood and women as leading persons within Mexican society. In other words, the female legislator (PRD) refers to motherhood and embraces all Mexicans women as potential leaders.

When a female deputy (PRD) speaks in the chamber about the agreement “Let’s Move Forward a Step” (Avancemos un Trecho), which emphasizes the need for a joint effort to advance women-friendly policy. She says:

It was then possible to establish five basic points with the purpose of initiating the attention of the fundamental questions for which we form the majority of this country and we are, besides, the mothers of the other half of the nation (September 24, 1997, female deputy, PRD).

59 “¡Somos la mitad del cielo y madres de la otra mitad! El mundo está cambiando y las mujeres estamos asumiendo nuestro papel protagónico en estos cambios.” (October 30, 2000, female deputy, PRD)

60 This was signed by female politicians from different political parties on June 23 1997.

61 Se lograron establecer entonces cinco puntos básicos con el propósito de iniciar la atención de las cuestiones fundamentales para quienes conformamos la mayoría de este país y somos, además, las madres de la otra mitad de la nación.
These above quotes not only place women at the center of the Mexican nation, they also place motherhood at the heart of women’s involvement in politics. Research has shown that the notion of maternalism carries significant cultural and political currency, and the justification of the role of motherhood has historically led to the emergence of new rights and “cuts across class and ethnicity” (Craske 1999: 2–3). Invocations of a ‘women we’ and maternalism thus allow women to build alliances despite differences, and lining up behind an identity can encourage shared identification and mobilize forces for transformation.

Another way of referring to Mexican women as symbolic mothers is when a female deputy (PAN) places women at the center of the family and, as such, they are spoken about as being a prerequisite for a good common future. By taking the point of departure in motherhood, and the caring and nurturing of the shared well-being, a female in-group is constituted even though the female deputy (PAN) does not use ‘we.’ This is a session celebrating the anniversary of female suffrage and she says:

We can happily say that the Mexican woman is still the pillar of the family, and therefore an excellent basis for the heritage of the nation, but we also know that our Mexico has begun to change and at this stage the woman plays a major role to give direction to this change, which will not happen without the participation of women (October 19, 2000, female deputy, PAN).

The deputy (PAN) refers to Mexican women as “still the pillar of the family,” indicating that this is adequate for the present time as well as in the past tense. Thus, the quote leaves no doubt that Mexican women, according to the deputy (PAN), carry the role as the core of the family, at least symbolically. The deputy also pinpoints the change that Mexico “has begun to change” and women partake in this transformation. Hence, the ‘women we’ consists of women that are mothers, workers, but also change-makers. Moreover, motherhood is, in the quote, positively linked to the future prosperity of the nation and its wellbeing. This in-group is based on positive connotations to motherhood.

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62 Felizmente podemos decir que la mujer Mexicana es todavía el pilar de la familia, por lo tanto una magnífica base del patrimonio de la nación, pero sabemos también que nuestro México ha comenzado a transformarse y que en esta etapa la mujer juega un papel transcendental para darle rumbo a este cambio, que no se dará sin la participación de las mujeres (October 19, 2000, female deputy, PAN).
In the following quote, several associations between motherhood and the nation are also made. This is a session that focuses on the need for creating a “women’s commission” (comisión de la mujer). Several female deputies speak in the session and, among others, a female deputy (PVEM) takes the floor. She speaks about Mexican women as mothers with a focus on women’s limited access to public life. She says:

/.../ it places us women as a hegemonic part of the family, a place where the necessary moral and cultural values for the internal and external development of each individual in society are conducted. Thus, we women are an active part of all social processes and we require sufficient means to develop in each and every one of our tasks. That is why we have to fight as representatives and give voice to our gender, for obtaining the guarantees that stimulate our growth, fighting for a social security environment, getting a space in educational institutions, competing for better jobs and better remuneration, fighting the violence to which we have been constant victims and protecting our health and that of our families (September 24, 1997, female deputy, PVEM).

In the quote, Mexican women are discursively situated in a juxtaposed position as mothers, as carriers and as mediators of morality and the common good for the country. By referring to women as carriers of the nation’s good as mothers, together with an outspoken ‘women we,’ “we women are an active part of all social processes”, the female legislator (PVEM) creates a ‘women we’ in between the public and the domestic sphere.

The other way of referring to Mexican women as mothers is as de facto mothers. However, no clear ‘we women’ is present but women are instead spoken about as mothers in general terms, which creates an unspecific yet inclusive in-group based on factual reproduction since only women may carry children. In the following quote, a female deputy (PRI) refers to

63 /.../ nos ubica como parte hegemónica de la familia, lugar donde se transitan los valores morales y culturales necesarios para el desarrollo interno y externo de cada individuo en la sociedad. Así, tenemos que nosotras las mujeres somos parte activa de todos los procesos sociales y que requerimos de los medios suficientes para desarrollarnos en todas y cada una de nuestras labores. Por ello hemos de pugnar nosotras, como representantes y voz de nuestro género, por la obtención de las garantías que estimulen nuestro crecimiento, luchando por un ambiente de seguridad social, consiguiendo un lugar en las instituciones educativas, compitiendo por mejores trabajos y mejores remuneraciones, combatiendo la violencia de la cual hemos sido víctimas constantemente y preservando nuestra salud y la de nuestras familias (September 24, 1997, female deputy, PVEM).
Mexican mothers’ situation enclosed in a patriarchal setting when she presents a proposition “Teenage Maternity” (Maternidad Adolescente) aiming to investigate the situation of poor adolescent mothers and their options to access education. She speaks about these young women in particular, but also about motherhood in general and says:

For women, this means, to a greater or lesser extent, that their sex continues to condition their future, attributing to them the obligation to be mothers and, if married, also to care for the home and the husband. / … / However, when marrying or starting a life as a couple, they are bound to depend on the will of a man and when seeking to protect them in their vulnerability to pregnancy, they are in fact excluded from the possibility of exercising their rights. (October 1, 2002, female deputy, PRI).

The female deputy (PRI) refers to women in general, both by emphasizing “for women” and by creating an out-group by saying “their sex” instead of pinpointing ‘our’ sex, which could have been an option. Although the representative talks about women/mothers as them, a community is still created since a ‘women we’ is constituted in relations to men’s (husbands’) supremacy (“the will of a man”) and how this limits women’s autonomy. Based on these general references to Mexican women, the deputy (PRI) creates a female and a male group based on a patriarchal society in which women are restricted to the confines of domestic practices. Moreover, the general ‘women’ group in the quote is based on the fact that some Mexican women face certain difficulties related to giving birth and becoming mothers, i.e. de facto motherhood. In that sense, the female deputy (PRI) distances herself from these women and an out-group is created. This might indicate that female politicians do not want to or cannot identify themselves and create a ‘women we’ based on difficulties related to marital status or de facto motherhood.

Another example is when a female deputy (PRI) speaks about the quality of the childcare centers while in session and points out that these places are vital for Mexican working women while referring to de facto mothers in a

64 Para las mujeres, esto viene a significar que, en mayor o menor medida, su sexo sigue condicionando su destino, atribuyéndoles la obligación de ser madres y, en caso de ser casadas, también de atender el hogar y al marido. /…/ Sin embargo, al contraer matrimonio o comenzar una vida en pareja, se les conmina a depender de la voluntad de un hombre y, al pretender protegerlas en su vulnerabilidad por el embarazo, en realidad se les excluye de la posibilidad de ejercer sus derechos (October 1, 2002, female deputy, PRI).
general way without including herself, i.e. there is no explicit in-group created. As part of her statement, she says:

It is a valuable and essential provision of social security in Mexico, a historic union achievement, for the mothers who need to work (and) often are supporters of the family economy (January 29, 2003, female deputy, PRI).65

The female deputy (PRI) speaks about working mothers, and even though she is herself working (since she is a deputy), she does not speak about ‘we women’. It could be that the female deputy does not have children and therefore does not include herself in the group of women that use the service provided by the Mexican state. Even so, the female deputy (PRI) targets a specific group by referring to “the mothers who need to work”, i.e. mothers who, in comparison with other mothers, have to work, and these mothers “often are supporters of the family economy”. This means that mothers, as a group, are not a homogenous group but are instead a multidimensional group.

In this section, references to women and motherhood have been my focus. Examples from the empirical corpus show the ways Mexican politicians refer to women as mothers, both symbolically and as de facto mothers, and such references fabricate a Mexican gendered in-group but also an out-group. Historically, symbolic motherhood as a collective base is nothing new and has served as a common springboard for women to act politically in Mexico. When speaking about women as an explicitly female in-group, the subject position of maternalism becomes gendered since the premise for inclusion is based on womanhood. As such, the linguistic creation of an in-group based on symbolic motherhood must be understood as resistance to existing exclusion and marginalization. However, it can also be interpreted as a position of counter-power and a need for recognition for reproduction and caretaking of children.

To construct the ‘we’, enables women to use language to construct a (new) sense of belonging. The “we” is established through their communicative engagement, and this relationship has to be created and recreated since there is no final “we”, it is always in the process of creation. At the same time, de facto motherhood is constructed around references to a

65 En este sentido, consideramos que el servicio de guarderías. Es una prestación valiosa e imprescindible de la seguridad social en México, una conquista sindical histórica, para las madres que tienen la necesidad de trabajar a menudo como sostenedoras de la economía familiar.
‘they’, which means that an out-group based on female parenthood is present in the language. References made to a “women they” in relation to the need for supporting the family economically and the call for of childcare expose differences in resources and social background among mothers. Thus, differences and hierarchies within the group of women are not included in a ‘women we’.

**Agentializing (1997-2003)**

In the empirical material, the notion of motherhood is part of the construction of femaleness, which includes social norms and values that operate both implicitly and explicitly in society. When analyzing this position in terms of agentializing, some aspects become more noticeable than others. Throughout the material reviewed for the 1997-2003 period, female deputies link women to different roles in relation to motherhood, but they also connect these with the structural barriers that limit women’s access to the public sphere, that is, reproductive tasks such as taking care of the household, children and other family members. At the same time, due to their responsibilities in the domestic sphere, women have agency in this arena. In other words, women are portrayed as agents but are simultaneously constrained by a double workload and social structures. The analysis shows that male deputies mainly speak about women in two ways in relation to motherhood: first, women are linked to different roles in relation to motherhood and second, motherhood is linked to the household. This is done without placing women in a broader social context, which female deputies do, and agency is therefore rather disconnected from mothers by male legislators. Yet the representative claims made by both women and men share the absence of a dual parenthood, i.e. men are not linked as parents and partakers in the responsibilities of the household. In this way, Mexican women are constituted as the primary or even the only parent and caregiver.

Female deputies speak about Mexican women’s multiple roles in the Mexican society in relation to domestic work. To illustrate this I will present some examples from the corpora. In a session dedicated to International Women’s Day, a female deputy (PRI) points out women’s different roles in society. The female legislator (PRI) says:

> I would like to request, in a more forceful and respectful way, that the memorial of women should be carried out in concrete actions of law claims.
We are talking about the year 2003, in which we are discussing here in many occasions and negotiating the rights to women. We are talking about women who have double and even triple working hours, who have a role that they have to cover as mothers, as wives, as workers (March 5, 2003, female deputy, PRI).66

In the quote, the female legislator (PRI) describes the multiple roles of Mexican women, “as mothers, as wives, as workers.” and she also speaks about “double” or “triple” workload, that is, women work both inside and outside the household. In other words, the female deputy (PRI) places Mexican women as mothers and workers in a broader social context and in relation to each other. The female deputy (PRI) uses the words “forceful” and “respectful” and says that the memorial of women “should be carried out in concrete actions of claims in the law”. That is, women are spoken about as agents who carry out multiple tasks, but the heavy workload needs to be targeted as a women’s rights issue by law makers. Thus, “double or even triple working hours” limit women’s possibilities to fulfil their engagement in both spheres. At the same time, she links the “actions” to a time axis, “the year 2003”. Linguistics professor van Leeuwen (2008:77) describes how time can be represented in discourses in different ways. According to van Leeuwen, a time indication can function authoritatively and thus legitimize the work. In other words, the time reference may be understood to be the female deputy’s (PRI) suggestion that the discussion should have reached further.

Another female deputy (independent) similarly attributes women with multiple roles, as mothers and as wage earners, and also pinpoints the different faces of motherhood: as single, divorced, abandoned and widowed. In other words, the female deputy (independent) places motherhood in a broader social context. The proposition she speaks about relates to affordable housing, and she is highlighting Mexico’s transition into a democracy. However, she states that democracy will not be fully realized if women are not part of every sector in society and that includes to making it easier for low income women, who are often the single breadwinner in the

66 Yo quisiera solicitar de una manera más contundente y respetuosa, que la conmemoración de la mujer se diera en acciones concretas de reivindicaciones en la ley. Estamos hablando del año 2003, en el que estamos discutiendo aquí en muchas ocasiones el regatear los derechos a la mujer. Estamos hablando de las mujeres que tienen doble y hasta triple jornada de trabajo, que tienen un rol que tienen que cubrir como madres, como esposas, como trabajadoras (March 5, 2003, female deputy, PRI).
Women have tolerated all kinds of violations of labor contracts, because in most cases their (women’s, author’s note) economic contribution to the household is very important or even the only one. In the latter, women are heads of the family, alone they maintain the home, they are single mothers, divorced, abandoned or widows. Although it is accepted that the volume of female-headed households in the country may be strongly underestimated, data shows that these have increased steadily in recent years. / ... / It is currently estimated that deliveries of Mexican teenage mothers are about 450,000 per year (November 12, 1998, female deputy, independent).67

In the quote, women are spoken about as heads of families as well as single, young and divorced mothers. Such a description extends the notion of women as mothers in the traditional nuclear family setting and as non-wage workers, and women are simultaneously linked with other social positions. Thus, the female deputy (independent) highlights Mexican women’s multiple roles, and by ascribing such characteristics to Mexican women, the deputy also gives a great deal of agency to women as a group. This creates a more diverse picture, but it also points out relational gendered aspects even though men’s presence or responsibilities are not present in the statement, at least not explicitly. Consequently, men are pictured as being absent in many households where children are born, whether it be physically (women are “single mothers, divorcees, abandoned”) and/or economically (women are the only contributors to the household economy). Thus, women are spoken about as being the persons mainly responsible for the household and the wellbeing of children. The same depiction appeared in an earlier quote when a female deputy (PRI) talked about women’s conditions and their future and linked these to motherhood and marriage. In both these quotes, motherhood is a responsibility for women of all ages that determines the direction of their lives, since these roles include social norms and values,

67 Las mujeres han soportado toda clase de violaciones contractuales laborales, por ser en la mayoría de los casos muy importante o única su aportación económica al gasto familiar. Estas últimas son las mujeres cabeza de la familia, por sí solas mantienen el hogar, son las madres solteras, divorciadas, abandonadas o viudas. Aun cuando se acepta que el volumen de hogares dirigidos por mujeres en el país, puede estar fuertemente subestimado, los datos muestran que éstos se han incrementado paulatinamente en los últimos años. /.../ Se estima actualmente que los partos de madres adolescentes mexicanas son alrededor de 450 mil al año (November 12, 1998, female, independent).
and we can also see that marriage obligates women to include “care for the home and husband.” Thus, women have agency within the domestic sphere but the obligations that come with motherhood diminish their possibilities to get access to the public arena.

Moreover, in the quote above, the female deputy (independent) also says that 450,000 young Mexican females give birth annually and thereby shows that this is not a singularity but a common situation in Mexico. Even so, speaking about women as single mothers, as young or old, and as breadwinners highlights the difference between women and men and their intended positions in society when becoming parents, since these positions are not linked to men or a dual parenthood. I would also like to highlight the line in the quote where the female deputy (independent) refers to mothers; “they are single mothers, divorced, abandoned or widows”, which I will come back to later. In other words, she does not create a ‘we’ with these groups.

To be linked to the family and to household responsibilities places women in a position where they are tightly linked to other persons, family members, and they have responsibilities beyond themselves; women’s place in the family becomes ‘natural’ and obvious. The quote below demonstrates how a female deputy (independent) contextualizes women’s position as mothers, wives and wage workers, where she portrays women as multitasking agents who are hard-working with high capacity. In this session, the female deputy (independent) presents a bill concerning women’s situation in the labor market pointing out how women are stigmatized due to their gender. She says that the present Mexican Federal Labor Law needs to follow the Constitution, which, according to the female deputy, says that women and men are equal before the law. The female deputy (independent) says:

These provisions avoid only address part of the discrimination, but in reality, the everyday life that women suffer is in fact that they do not have the same possibilities as men… /…/ The attributes of motherhood and marital status are often stigmas that prevent them (women, author’s remark) from being hired and have been the cause of firing (April 23, 1998, female deputy, independent).68

68 Estas disposiciones evitan sólo en parte la discriminación, pero en la realidad, la forma cotidiana que sufren las mujeres es en el hecho de no tener las mismas posibilidades que los hombres… /…/ Con frecuencia el atributo de la maternidad o el estado civil son estigmas que
In the quote, motherhood and marriage are interlaced with women’s possibilities to engage in the labor force. According to the female deputy, (independent) parenthood and matrimony are obstacles for women in the labor market. Since the deputy assigns these problems only to women when speaking about the Labor Law, it is presumably not a problem for the male population. At the time the deputy speaks, women’s engagement in the public arena has changed in Mexico and more women are working also outside the household, but even so, the role of ‘public citizen’ seems to be confined in a male setting.

As mentioned in the beginning of this section, male deputies also speak about women’s multiple roles in relation to motherhood, but they do so in a slightly different way. In the following section, I will provide some examples. In 1998, a male deputy (PRI) presents an initiative to reform the Mexican Federal Labor Law and the Federal Civil Code and says that its purpose is “to guarantee women's equal employment and the protection of their physical and mental integrity in family life”. He argues the following:

In the aspect of work, it should be noted that the incorporation of women into economically active life is a growing reality. Currently, more than four million mothers are heads of families, representing a quarter of Mexican households. In addition, today more than 30% of the economically active population is female, which has meant that in the last decade their participation in the economy increased almost 50 percent (September 24, 2002, male deputy, PRI).

The male deputy (PRI) speaks about the high level of single mother households in Mexico, and the aim of the initiative is thus to secure women’s situation as wage earners and as the party responsible for the welfare of other people. Moreover, the male deputy (PRI) says that single
mothers are dependent on their income, and the legislation needs to match reality. In the quote, Mexican women are constructed as the primary caregiving parent, but at the same there is a parallel position in which women are the breadwinners of single-parent households. Even though the aim of the bill is to protect women who do not share the economic responsibility for the household with a partner/other parent of the child or children, the motivation for the reform does not include a contextualization nor does it include men’s responsibilities to the domestic sphere. In other words, the male deputy (PRI) does not place women’s situation as mothers in a broader social context and in relation to other duties. By failing to do this, it is easy to place the ‘problem’ on these women instead of elevating it to a social and political issue. Thus, the Mexican mothers that the male deputy (PRI) refers to are spoken about as agents that can change their situation.

Another example is when a male deputy (PRI) speaks about women as mothers when introducing a bill on migration. In the presentation he says:

/…/ the number of women in Mexico who are heads of families and support their homes entirely, whether as single mothers, abandoned mothers, widows or jointly responsible, is of a proportion of almost 20 of almost 100 households. That is to say, a working woman sustains one of every five Mexican families economically. The previous places women as heads of households with the responsibility not only for the economic support of their homes but also for the education and formation of their minor children if there are any, or for the other gender who are economic dependents, such as younger siblings, parents or non-working elderly adults or even in some cases incapacitated or non-productive spouses (August 30, 2002, male deputy, PRI).

The male deputy (PRI) speaks about women as breadwinners and signals that women, to an increasing degree, are both single parents and wage earners. Thus, women are responsible for the education of the children as

71 /…/ número de mujeres en México que son jefas de familia y sostienen íntegramente sus hogares, ya sea por ser madres solteras, abandonadas, viudas o responsables solidarias, es de una proporción de casi de 20 de casi 100 hogares, es decir una de cada cinco familias mexicanas, es sostenida económica por una mujer trabajadora. Lo anterior deposita bajo la responsabilidad de las mujeres jefas de familia, no sólo la carga del sostenimiento económico de sus hogares, sino que además deben hacerse cargo de la educación y formulación de sus hijos menores de edad, cuando los hay o de otro género de dependientes económicos como pudieran ser hermanos menores, padres o adultos mayores no trabajadores o inclusive en algunos casos cónyuges incapacitados o no productivos (August 30, 2002, male deputy, PRI).
well as economic supporters of the family and other relatives. The male deputy (PRI) does not place women’s multiple roles and responsibilities in a broader context. On the other hand, the male deputy (PRI) portrays women with the multiple roles they perform, and thus creates a picture of a group with high potency and capability.

Another male deputy speaks about women and motherhood and links the idea that women carry their gender into the public arena. The male deputy (PRD) speaks at a session celebrating the anniversary of women’s suffrage and says that the right to vote and run in public elections has changed the life of Mexican women. He says:

> Not only were their civil rights expanded, but women also sought to form a new conception of motherhood (November 7, 2000, male deputy, PRD).

In the quote, women’s presence in the public political sphere is linked to motherhood, and the male deputy (PRD) emphasizes the changes Mexican women had to make in order to combine their engagement in the public sphere and reproductive work. Thus, women are also depicted as having several parallel roles, but the deputy also positions women as primary caregivers.

In the following quote, a male deputy (PRI) presents an initiative that aims to reform preschool education, and he considers “the educational process as a key element in the development of societies, which promotes the elimination of poverty, unhealthiness and illiteracy, and the achievement of the dignity of man” (October 18, 2001, male deputy, PRI).

In the presentation, he speaks negatively of the number of children within the childcare groups and links this to women rather than to parents, which indicates that this is not good for the children. The male deputy (PRI) says:

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72 No sólo fueron ampliados sus derechos civiles, sino que además trató de formar en la mujer una nueva concepción sobre la maternidad (November 7, 2000, male deputy, PRD).

73 Prior to this quote, the male deputy (PRD) also mentions the first Mexican women elected in his speech, Rosa Torres (1890-1973). She was a famous feminist and who, among other things, organized a campaign for family planning already in the early 1900 but he does not mention her contribution to the development of women’s rights in Mexico.

74 al proceso educativo como un elemento clave en el desarrollo de las sociedades, que promueve la eliminación de las condiciones de pobreza, insalubridad y analfabetismo y el logro de la dignidad del hombre (October 18, 2001, male deputy, PRI).
Children are, to a lesser extent, in the care of their mothers, who are gradually entering the labor market, while increasing the number of single-parent families headed by women or men, which forces them to look for new service options that respond to these realities. /…/ The urbanization, the modernization and the incorporation of women in the labor market are associated with family transformations and conflicts. In high-migration areas, kindergartens have large groups ranging from 40 to 45 children. However, the zero- to four-year-old of those who work within the informal sector of the economy are not covered by the childcare system and later, even though they have kindergartens where they live, their mothers lack time to "leave them and pick them up" (October 18, 2001, male deputy, PRI).75

It the statement, the male deputy (PRI) depicts women as being in charge of the children. He pinpoints mothers’ lack of time to pick up the children, so the preschools should be situated close to where people live. The male legislator (PRI) states that women’s participation in the public sphere, and their “abandonment of the family,”76 is the cause of society’s decline. This is thus seen as the root cause and the explanation for the degeneration of the Mexican nuclear family. The statement is normative and serves as a marker for women to take the responsibility for children’s well-being and their own. The male deputy (PRI) places the responsibility on women, since they do not have time to drop off and pick up from the preschool, and he thereby circumscribes women’s agency within the public sphere. Political scientist Victoria Rodríguez confirms that leading Mexican male politicians officially declare that women should be at home taking care of children and serving their husbands (Rodríguez 2003: 249-256). A female subject position is thus inscribed with practical responsibility for the children by the male deputy (PRI), but it is also emotionally intertwined with guilt.

Women’s responsibility and presence in the household is also a topic in the following statement. A male legislator (PAN) is concerned about a resolution regarding Labor Law and the Social Security Law in a speech.

75 Los niños están cada vez menos tiempo a cargo de susmadres, que cada día en mayor número se incorporan al mercado de trabajo, mientras aumenta el número de familias monoparentales encabezadas por mujeres u hombres, lo que obliga a buscar nuevas opciones de servicio que respondan a estas realidades. /…/ La urbanización, la modernización y la incorporación de la mujer en el mercado de trabajo se asocian con las transformaciones y los conflictos familiares. En zonas de alta migración, los jardines de niños cuentan con grupos numerosos que van de 40 a 45 niños. Sin embargo, los hijos de cero a cuatro años de quienes trabajan dentro del sector informal de la economía, no están contemplados por el sistema de guarderías y más tarde, aun cuando cuenten con jardines de niños en el lugar donde viven, sus madres carecen de tiempo para "dejarlos y recogerlos" (October 18, 2001, male deputy, PRI).

76 “Abandonado de la familia.”
According to the deputy (PAN), the concern centers around women’s participation in the public sphere and that it must be done without affecting the family or women’s notion of motherhood. The idea of women’s role in the family becomes an essential part of Mexico’s identity as a free and democratic country. The male deputy (PAN) says that:

Speaking of the problem of equality between men and women is an aspect that has been widely discussed. However, by the very nature between the sexes, it is not possible for them to have the same treatment, since women have been given the wonderful grace of being procreative. /…/ Accordingly, it is necessary to find new mechanisms to enable women to continue to develop outside the home, without affecting their motherhood or the family, issues that should be defended if we really want a free and solid Mexico, for what strengthens a country’s greatness is its people (October 23, 2001, male deputy, PAN).

In this quote women are linked with reproduction, which in turn is related to the well-being and prosperity of the country. By saying, “if we really want a free and solid Mexico”, the male deputy (PAN) states that the country’s future is not only in the hands of women (as mothers), they are a prerequisite for the future of Mexico. The statement’s focus on motherhood and the household also reinforces masculine patriotism, since it places the male deputy (PAN) in a moral position of wanting the best for Mexico.

There is a duality when speaking about women and motherhood. Both female and male deputies constitute women as multitasking subjects, but female legislators give women agency while highlighting the ways women are limited by social structures. Male deputies, on the other hand, tend to link women to traditional norms and values and thereby diminish women’s agency. According to Nikki Craske, the new political ruling elite during the Salinas era (between 1988 and 1994) created a new, modern Mexico where the citizen became equivalent with the worker and the consumer, and these citizens were all male. For women, the development had another ambiguous

77 El hablar del problema de igualdad entre hombres y mujeres es un aspecto que ha sido ampliamente discutido; sin embargo, por la propia naturaleza entre los sexos no es posible que tengan el mismo trato, lo anterior en virtud de que a las mujeres se les ha dado la maravillosa gracia de ser procrearoras. /…/ En consecuencia, es necesario buscar nuevos mecanismos que permitan a la mujer seguir desarrollándose fuera del hogar, sin que ello implique una afectación a su maternidad ni a la familia, aspectos que deben ser defendidos si de verdad queremos un México libre y sólido, pues lo que fortalece a un país es la grandeza de su gente (October 23, 2001, male deputy, PAN).
shift: they were expected to work outside their homes but “they were also expected to continue their reproductive role” (Craske 2005: 127). The quotes that I have presented in this section reinforce Craske’s observations, i.e. many women face a double workload when they engage in work outside the domestic sphere. Ensuring that reproductive and domestic work is carried out, i.e. the organization of the household, seems to be a female responsibility.

In the representative claims relating to women and motherhood, women’s capacity for acting as mothers is central, i.e. nurturing and caring for others but also being responsible for taking care of the domestic work. This creates a picture of Mexican women as wage workers and multitaskers. The verbal construction of women as capable of handling multiple roles gives them agency in the domestic sphere but also depicts them as capable and competent. At the same time, female deputies speak about a society in which household responsibilities generate structural barriers for women’s access to and participation in public life. By making this assertion, female legislators show how women’s agency in the public sphere is circumscribed. On the other hand, men’s participation and responsibilities in the domestic sphere are not linked to women’s double workload or limited access to work wages.

The subject position of motherhood during this time needs to be understood from different angles. Mexican women are portrayed as the “pillar of the family” and as mediators of a high moral ground. Thus, the female subject position is attributed as having the potential to affect children’s education but also the potential to bring such values to the public sphere. At the same time, women are constituted as multitaskers and as overworked subjects. These female experiences, caregiving and working hard, are also used to portray women as more suitable to be politicians and to run the country (which is discussed in chapter 5). There is a duality in this. On the one hand, the ability to manage many issues at the same time constitutes women with great agency, while on the other hand, the heavy workload serves to limit women, at least in relation to women’s ability to participate in the public sphere. According to Maxine Molyneux, women have made inroads into traditional male areas, but “this has not implied an erosion of gender roles as such; rather it has required a redefinition of women’s place within society as a whole, one which has added on to, rather than eliminated, their traditional gender responsibilities, while leaving men’s largely untransformed” (Molyneux 2000: 222 footnote 7). In other words, by not being constituted as mutually responsible for caregiving and domestic
duties, Mexican men get access to political agency in a way that women do not.

2006

Before the binding gender quota law, female deputies constituted a ‘we women’ by referring to themselves as mothers in a symbolic way, but not when speaking about de facto mothers. The references made to motherhood in 2006 are mainly done in relation to de facto motherhood, but men are also referred to as fathers and grouped together with women as parents, a notable change in the language. The characteristics and features that are linked to women as mothers differ between women and men deputies. Mexican female legislators tend to link women in their role as mothers to social barriers that limit their agency. In the following section, I will show how the subject position of motherhood in 2006 has changed slightly and comeingles with challenging views on women’s social roles in society.

Referring

In 2006, Mexican women are still referred to as mothers, and as such, they become linked to the family and children in particular. However, during this period, men are explicitly referred to when speaking about mothers. In other words, a dual parenthood appears in the parliamentary language and Mexican women are no longer linguistically constructed as the only or primary parent. Thus, explicitly referring to “mothers and fathers” (madres y padres) becomes part of the parliamentary language in a more noticeable way. In the following, I will present some quotes from the corpora in order to illustrate this shift in language. The existence of representative claims in relation to motherhood is, however, widespread in the material, and there are no specific sessions that stand out.

A male deputy (PT) seeking to change the existing Fiscal Coordination Law (Ley de Coordinación Fiscal) in order to strengthen elementary education and to allocate funds to childcare centers. Even though the word “women” is not present in the quote below, it is used both before and after the quote in the material. According to the male deputy (PT), these preschools aim to:

Initial education consists of care, pedagogical and social acts. Each one of these fulfills a very important function in the formation and education of
infants. The assistance fulfills the task of providing children with an education space while mothers or fathers develop their daily activities. This aspect is relevant today because the characteristics of our country force many mothers and fathers to join the labor market; which is why they look for an educational institution where they leave their children for care taking and where they also receive pedagogical training (January 11, 2006, male deputy, PT). 

In the quote above, women and men, as mothers and fathers, are referred to on equal terms in relation to children and labor, and this is done in a general way and thus addresses all Mexican parents regardless of gender. In addition, the quote demonstrates three other differences in the parliamentary language compared with the previous period. First, preschools have not been a topic that has been linked to women’s partaking in the labor market. Second, the education of children is linked to the public sphere rather than to their mothers. Third, it is a male deputy who puts forward the bill. The references made to mothers and fathers create an in-group of parents, which differ from the ‘women we’ that was prevalent in the previous period. These linguistic changes thus indicate that the female subject position of motherhood is destabilized and under transformation.

In line with this, a male deputy (PVEM) presents an initiative regarding the Federal Law of Radio and Television (Ley Federal de Radio y Television), which he suggests should be more closely related to children’s rights and their education. In one part of the motivation for the initiative he says:

In particular, with regard to childhood and adolescence, they (the radio and the television, author’s remark) have faced the open hostility of educators, fathers and mothers, researchers /.../ (March 16, 2006, male deputy, PVEM).

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78 La educación inicial tiene ámbitos de acción tales como el asistencial, el pedagógico y el social. Cada uno de estos cumple con una función muy importante en la formación y educación de los infantes. El asistencial cumple con el cometido de brindar a los niños y niñas un espacio de formación mientras las madres o padres desarrollan sus actividades diarias. Este aspecto cobra relevancia hoy en día, porque las características de nuestro país obligan a muchas madres y padres a incorporarse al mercado laboral; a partir de ello buscan una estancia educativa donde dejen a sus hijos para que cuiden de ellos y además reciban formación pedagógica (January 11, 2006, male deputy, PT).

79 As mentioned in chapter 3, I have performed searches in the material for 'mothers,’ 'motherhood' and 'kindergarten’/’pre-school’ (kindergarten/guardería).

80 En especial, en lo referente a la niñez y adolescencia, han enfrentado la abierta hostilidad de educadores, padres y madres de familia, investigadores… (March 16, 2006, male deputy PVEM).
The most significant aspect of the quote is that the male deputy speaks about fathers and mothers. In Spanish “parents” (padres), that is a male version of parents, could be used by the deputy (PVEM) to include both fathers and mothers (padres y madres). Hence, the male deputy (PVEM) chooses to explicitly speak about both female and male parents. In other words, there is an obvious in-group created on the basis of dual parenthood.

A male deputy (PRI) presents a bill in April, 2006, regarding reformations and additions of various provisions in several laws, which include the General Education Law, the Federal Labor Law, the General Health Law and the Social Security Law (Ley General de Educación, de la Ley Federal del Trabajo, de la Ley General de Salud y de la Ley del Seguro Social). The aim is to help reinforce the basic principles of non-discrimination and to harmonize federal legislation with the guidelines on discrimination. The male deputy (PRI) says that the bill is based on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and is explicitly focused on the situation of Mexican women. Moreover, the bill concludes that:

· Women's wages are lower than those of men;
· Women continue to be a minority in management and decision-making positions;
· Women continue to assume the double burden of family and professional obligations; and,
· In general, women's opportunities are limited to a narrow range of the so-called "female jobs" (office work, services, sales and professions at the middle management level) that generally receive a lower salary and are less valued than the traditionally “masculine” jobs (April 6, 2006, male deputy, PRI).81

These four points create a complex picture of the situation for Mexican women and are presented by a male deputy (PRI), which in and of itself is a

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81 Los salarios de las mujeres son más bajos que los de los hombres;
· Las mujeres siguen siendo una minoría en los puestos directivos y de toma de decisiones;
· Las mujeres continúan asumiendo la doble carga de las obligaciones familiares y profesionales; y,
· En general, las oportunidades de la mujer quedan limitadas a una franja estrecha de los denominados “empleos femeninos” (trabajo de oficina, servicios, ventas y profesiones a nivel de mandos medios) que en general reciben un salario inferior y son menos valoradas que los empleos tradicionalmente “masculinos” (April 6, 2006, male deputy, PRI).
change from the previous period where almost all representative claims, especially those that problematized women’s situation, were presented by female legislators. When it comes to parenthood, the bill references “mothers and fathers” (madres y padres) and confirms that the language has shifted. Thus, the male deputy (PRI) creates both an in-group of dual parenthood but also an out-group of women and mothers and places these roles in a context in which women have a “double burden of family and professional obligations.”

However, there is still language placing women as the ‘pillar of the family’ and relating women to the wellbeing of the nation. For example, a female deputy (PRI) presents an initiative to make a change in the constitution in order to add gender equality into a clause relating to democratic planning. The female deputy (PRI) says:

We women are the strongest moral and physical support of the families, as we have contributed to the productive progress of the country. /.../ As federal deputies (diputadas means female deputies, author’s remark) we must be the guarantors of the interests of the nation, and let us not forget that we women, today more than ever, play a major role in the political life of the country, since day by day we are in charge of laying the solid foundations of the progress and of the national culture (February 2, 2006, female deputy, PRI).82

In the quote, the female deputy (PRI) first refers to women and places them at the center of the family but also at the heart of the society. References to women in relation to symbolic motherhood were something we also saw in the previous period. In this quote, the female deputy (PRI) refers to a clear ‘women we’ that “are the strongest moral and physical support of the families” and thus the standard-bearers and supporters of the Mexican community.

During the period reviewed, the parliamentary language is in a process of change, and deputies make references to fathers and parents (padres) instead of referring only to women as mothers. Such linguistic patterns opens the door to a broadening of what can be seen as traditional gender roles. At the same time, symbolic motherhood is still present, even though it is less

82 Las mujeres somos el soporte moral y material más firme de las familias, ya que hemos contribuido al avance productivo del país. /.../ Como diputadas federales debemos ser las garantas de los intereses de la nación, ya que no olvidemos que las mujeres, hoy más que nunca, jugamos un papel trascendental en la vida política del país, ya que día con día nos encargamos de fincar los sólidos cimientos del progreso y de la cultura nacional (February 2, 2006, female deputy PRD).
significant in the parliamentary lanugage. The next section will further explore representative claims in relation to women as mothers. It will also highlight the existence of a multifaceted yet changing constitutive representation of motherhood, and I will explore both a continuum and changes.

**Agentializing**

Mothers are more closely linked to words such as ‘working mothers’ (*madres trabajadoras*), ‘abandoned mothers’ (*madres abandonadas*), ‘single mothers’ (*madres solteras*) and ‘teenage mothers’ (*madres adolecentes*) in 2006. The material shows that these social positions are present during 1997-2003, but they are more central in the latter period. These additional describing words, the noun modifiers, depict a more comprehensive situation, and the portrayals of women as mothers become more factual in the sense that they correspond to the way Mexican society is organized and the different roles women are assigned.\(^3\) As such, agency is more clearly included in motherhood, since there are spaces that include movement within which women can negotiate their situation. When the representative claims include contextualization or problematization, I would assert that the portrayals of women become more complex. In the following section, I will provide some examples from the corpora.

In a session, a male deputy (PRD) presents a bill that concerns the rights of single mothers (*los derechos de las madres solteras*). He problematizes the situation of single mothers, particularly young mothers, and focuses on the state support that is needed for this group. He says:

> Currently more than four and a half million women are categorized as single mothers. One part is the so-called single mothers in a strict sense. However, there are others who, although they are legally married, or widowed or divorced, in fact suffer equal abandonment and violence, are single de facto, which is why they must be subject to protection and special considerations (April 27, 2006, male deputy, PRD).\(^4\)

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\(^3\) This appeared first when I searched for *mujer*, but to verify that my observation was correct, I also performed searches for mothers. These are not claims made explicitly on behalf of women (but of mothers). Even so, it shows a difference in the language, which I consider notable.

\(^4\) En la actualidad más de cuatro y medio millones de mujeres entran al concepto de madres solas; una parte son las llamadas madres solteras en estricto sentido, sin embargo existen otras que, aunque se encuentran legalmente casadas, o son viudas o divorciadas, en los hechos
In this quote, women’s position as mothers is problematized and a more complex portrayal emerges, and by that, the situation of these single mothers can be discussed in the political arena. Thus, single mothers are at least implicitly linked with agency. The male deputy (PRD) speaks about single mothers that may be abandoned or suffer from violence, situations that when brought into the public debate can be targeted by politicians and authorities. There is also a linguistic shift in which women are increasingly linked to work and welfare, such as social security, compared to the observations made in the material for the previous period. For example, a female deputy (PRI) speaks about the Mexican Federal Labor Law and makes comparisons with other countries in order to problematize the existing law in Mexico. One of these comparisons is the dual parenthood situation in Poland, and the female deputy (PRI) says:

Even more recently and for the specific case of the subject in this addition initiative, I will refer to the reality of Poland, whose Codes of Work and Family Welfare guarantee equal rights for women and which concerns are to meet family needs (February 2, 2006, female deputy, PRI).  

The quote demonstrates a focus on women in relation to labor and welfare rights, and Mexico is compared with other countries, in this case Poland. Franceschet et al. show (2016) that women in Latin America are challenging the relationship between motherhood and participation in the public sphere. Maternal ideals are no longer as existent in the parliamentary language even though “historically maternal identities have provided cultural narratives that legitimated women’s public roles” (Franceschet et al. 2016: 4), and this is still a part of contemporary ideals. Using virtues related to motherhood is still politically forceful in 2006, but the political language is changing regarding gender roles.

A notable debate in the Chamber of Deputies during this period comes in the aftermath of a public statement that sitting President Fox (PAN) makes, which consisted of the following: "75% of Mexican households have a
washing machine, not one with two feet and two legs, but a metal washing machine." This statement was severely criticized from many directions in Mexico. The following statements display how both female and male deputies highlight the repressive language President Fox uses in referring to women and the strong wording that is used, which is uncommon in the Mexican parliamentary language. Women in Mexico (and elsewhere) are closely related to domestic work and caregiving, which is very much about taking care of children, i.e. motherhood, and the way the president speaks about women is important for the way women are characterized publically. A female deputy (PRD) says:

"Your expression, President, denigrates women; is disqualifying women for household work, to consider us by this as subordinate, objects of the house, owned by the family. Be careful, Mr. President. We female deputies and the Mexican women want you to address us with respect (February 2, 2006, female deputy, PRD)."

The female deputy (PRD) strongly rejects the statement made by the Mexican president and, on behalf of all Mexican women, calls for his respect. The proclamation made by the Mexican president displays the open misogyny that is present in Mexican society, where the division of roles by gender is central and household work is traditionally carried out by women. Thus, the massive verbal resistance made by Mexican female deputies displays a partly new position for women to publically oppose men (the president). The female deputy (PRI) demands that the president respect Mexican women and household work. Another female deputy (PRI) says in relation to the President’s statement:

"I want to tell you, that in this country, we cannot allow women to be treated the way you treat us. I am a working woman, I am a woman of struggle, I have a business, and thus you treated me in my campaign as if I were a "housekeeper." I’m a woman, I am a woman, I am a mother, I am everything you want, but I have never degraded women; I fight for women, I fight for all..."
the women in this country who are trying to get ahead. We have fought, Mr. President (February 9, 2006, female deputy, PRI).88

The two female legislators declare that President Vicente Fox disgraces women and the caregiving tasks that are related to the household, which are primarily conducted by women. They also state that women are united against discrimination and men diminish them based on their sex, and by extension in this particular context, women’s socially assigned responsibilities of household work and caregiving. The quotes following the Mexican president’s controversial public statement are examples of a forceful stand against patriarchal norms. In this particular debate, a male deputy (PRD) speaks out against the statement made by President Fox. Even though he does not speak about women as mothers directly, he stands up for women against the president’s degrading word choice. He says:

These apparently irrelevant statements are the clear expression that the President of the Republic fostered a culture that determined that women were excludable, where pejorative assessments of women are made in a family environment, probably filled with such stereotypes. But it must be remembered that he is the president of the Republic and, as president of a country, of a society that aspires to achieve justice and equality, these expressions denote that he fully agrees, that he tacitly accepts that Mexican society remains a macho, patriarchal society that, through language, among other things, "invisibilizes," humiliates and stereotypes women and submits them to the dictates of man (February 9, 2006, male deputy, PRD).89

88 Quiero decirle que en este país no se puede permitir que se trate a las mujeres en la forma en que usted nos trata. Soy una mujer de trabajo, soy una mujer de lucha, tengo negocio, y así ustedes trataron en mi campaña que yo era una “cocinera”. Soy una mujer, soy mujer, soy madre, soy todo lo que ustedes quieran, pero jamás he denigrado a la mujer; luchó por la mujer, luchó por todas las mujeres de este país que están tratando de salir adelante. Hemos luchado, señor Presidente (February 9, 2006, female deputy, PRI).
89 Esas expresiones, aparentemente intranscendentes, son la expresión clara de que el Presidente de la Republica mamó una cultura que determinaba que la mujer era excluible, donde se hacen valoraciones peyorativas de la mujer, un medio familiar, cultural probablemente lleno de esos estereotipos. Pero hay que recordar que Él es el Presidente de la Republica y como Presidente de un país, de una sociedad que aspira a la justicia y a la igualdad, esas expresiones denotan que Él está plenamente de acuerdo, que acepta tácitamente que la sociedad mexicana siga siendo una sociedad machista, patriarcal, que a través del lenguaje, entre otras cosas, “invisibilice”, humille y estereotipe a las mujeres y las someta a los dictados del hombre February 9, 2006, male deputy, PRD).
The male deputy (PRD) points out the responsibilities of the president, and in his role as president, it is not permissable for the president to express discriminatory views on women. Furthermore, the deputy articulates very clearly the machista culture that exists in the country and severely impacts women. The focus in the quote, apart from the reprimand of the president, is the portrayal of women in a patriarchal society and the need to change macho culture in line with society’s aspirations for “justice and equality.” This statement is interesting in relation to President Fox’s diminishment of women and the household work that he linguistically links them to, since the male deputy (PRD) defends women and pinpoints the patriarchal environment within which women navigate. To summarize, the characteristics that are present in the representative claims in relation to motherhood in 2006 are linked to social structures in a more observable way. This depicts a more complex reality in which Mexican women are spoken about as active agents within the public sphere, and they are not only linked to caregiving and household responsibilities but are placed in a broader context that includes their roles as mothers alongside other social identities and experiences. However, references made to women and motherhood are linked to female attributes, and the references still create a gendered inside and outside even though the clear in-group that is constituted in the previous period is dissolving.

Concluding Discussion

In the representative claims regarding women and motherhood in parliamentary language during 1997-2003, there is a clearly defined ‘women we’ among female politicians, which is twofold. On the one hand, when speaking about symbolic motherhood, there is an explicit ‘we’, but when speaking about de facto motherhood, the ‘we’ is not spoken about in general terms. Historically, motherhood has been a mobilizing referent in Mexico, and as such, can be considered a re-conceptualization of traditional discourse. By speaking in terms of maternalism, Mexican female politicians speak to a female constituency and linguistically create a common base both among other female politicians and among Mexican women in general. It is thus a starting point for unity among all women regardless of class, ethnicity and ideology. The discourse of motherhood must therefore be seen as an inclusive unit, a political platform, which enables resistance and movement. As such, it is a strategic gambit for women to turn the language.
of feminism into a public language, but it is also a feminization of the political language that can be used to counter the monopoly men hold and male-defined politics. The private is often seen as contrary to the public, but women are seeking to move, both physically and semantically, between the two. Hence, the discourse regarding motherhood needs to be understood in the context of a patriarchal society where women are trying to break historically established norms and ‘offer’ something new and different apart from contemporary public politics. The discourse about maternity works as a platform for power negotiation. Motherhood also has temporal aspects, that is, a shared history and future that unify and create a common base from which women may act.

In 2006, the parliamentary language has slightly changed in relation to the way women are referred to in the position of motherhood. In these representative claims, female deputies still create an in-group based on a ‘women we’, but this becomes indistinct, since men are also spoken about as parents and a shared parenthood is more present in the language. Research on women in politics in Latin America shows that women are challenging the relationship between motherhood and politics even though its impacts remain an important factor (Franceschet et al. 2016). While female politicians have “developed diverse responses to maternalism, their access to public office remains profoundly shaped by structural constraints and cultural narratives that privilege traditional feminine ideals of caretaking” (ibid 2016: 1). This study confirms this observation but also shows that there have been some changes in the Mexican parliamentary language.

However, motherhood does not always unify in the real world since women’s social and economic situations differ considerably in Mexico. In 2006, the parliamentary language depicts a more complex position regarding motherhood in which social contexts are more visible in the material, such as ‘working mothers’ (madres trabajadoras), ‘single mothers’ (madres solteras), and ‘abandoned mothers’ (madres abandonadas). The emphasis on motherhood as a symbolic metaphor is not that central, but maternalism becomes more linked to women’s social condition. During 1997-2003, differences along socioeconomic backgrounds are not that evident in the material, and I believe one reason may be that the united efforts for a community based on motherhood is important in the creation of pacts among female politicians and their constituencies. Mexican women therefore unified around symbolic motherhood, an abstract role with positive connotations and not around de facto motherhood, which is diverse and linked to other social identities such as single and abandoned. A one-
dimensional position of a mother as caregiver who is responsible for the domestic tasks is challenged by the other roles that women as mothers inhabit, such as single mother and family breadwinner, and this becomes more distinct in the parliamentary language in 2006. This position places women, and thus female politicians, at the intersection between the public and the private, a locus that is not occupied by male politicians.

There is, I would argue, a difference when female politicians speak about themselves as bringing female features into politics, as something good and progressive versus when male political representatives present a perception of maternalism linked to the household and ascribe the responsibility of caregiving to women. Women use maternalism as a strategy to extend their agency. As such, Sylvia Chant notes that motherhood is “a source of power, and more particularly a basis for political participation, identity, resistance and/or transformation” (Chant & Craske 2003: 10).90 Leading Mexican male politicians have officially declared that women’s place should be in the home, taking care of children and serving their husbands (Rodríguez 2003: 249–256), Comisión de Equidad y Género 1998, PMM 2003). When considering this, it is noteworthy that it was not until 1974 that the legal clause, which made Mexican wives responsible for the domestic work and domestic management, was repealed. Gender roles, rights and duties remained inscribed in laws that upheld the normative order within the home (Molyneux, 2000: 53).

Social constructions of identities are not purely random but reflect the institutions and structures around them. Employing motherhood for political mobilization is strategically useful since it relates to women’s lives, or at least a majority of women’s lives, and may thus attract women. This has been described in Mary Talbot’s (2010) investigation of the Westminster parliamentary system where she describes it as a masculinist community of practice, evolved over time and dominated by men. Parliamentary work is characterized by long irregular work hours and a highly confrontational debating style. Such masculinist communities, Talbot notes, have “become naturalized as simply professional practices” (2010: 196). According to

90 Motherhood exists in many cultural contexts as national female images. Mother Russia, Mother Ireland and Mother India are perhaps the most widely known examples. There have also been more personified symbols, such as Evita Perón in Argentina and Marianne of France. There are no such symbols in Mexico, but the image of Virgin of Guadalupe90 is a strong religious and national symbol. The former first lady of Mexico, Marta Sahagún de Fox, chose to adopt what can be interpreted as a religious image combined with a role as the mother of the nation when shouldering the position as the president’s wife (Alnevall 2004). However, though she tried, she did not reach a status as a national symbol.
Talbot, the presence of women in leadership positions is seen as both extraordinary and unnatural. In such circumstances, women find themselves in a double bind. On the one hand, in order to acquire respect and recognition, women must show leadership qualities, such as strength, authority and decisiveness. These virtues may be received as traits that are traditionally perceived as masculine. At the same time, women leaders must cope with the prescriptive female gender stereotypes, which suggest that women should demonstrate warmth, sensitivity and humbleness. I argue that, in this perspective, Mexican female legislators use motherhood in the public political sphere to balance this dilemma. It is however important to emphasize that the ‘women we’ in relation to motherhood is created in a general symbolic setting not in relation to ‘abandoned’ or ‘working’ mothers, for example. In this respect, the ‘women we’ does not consist of class, ethnicity or age. In other words, women representatives can be constituted as virtuous mothers but not de facto mothers, especially not with features that might weaken them.

In her historical overview, Elisabeth Dore (2000) notes that the state of colonial Spanish America encouraged basic education for women so they could more effectively moralize and educate their children. “Motherhood became a civic responsibility that only enlightened women could fulfill” (William E. French, quoted in Dore, 2000: 14). Thus, gendered characteristics have been inscribed in rules and values for a long time. The change in the parliamentary language in 2006 destabilizes this notion of motherhood through the convergence of other social positions, such as “working mothers” and “teenage mothers,” and by using gender to include relational and constructivist aspects. The changes in language that are observed between the two periods show that maternalism becomes less central in the parliamentary language even though it is still present. Thus, female politicians are constituted less in relation to the private domain, as mothers, and in a more gender ‘neutral’ way. But since the political persona historically is male, another interpretation is that women need, or feel the need, to fit into that image. This linguistic transformation also parallels the introduction of a gender equality discourse. In other words, there are both continuity and change in the intersection of women, motherhood and politics. Thus, the position for women as political representatives has slightly changed towards a more gender neutral position. But it can also be understood as a masculinization of women’s position, i.e. that traditional female features do not fit in public politics and that female politicians have to adopt the (male) norms and values that are already at work.
7. Mexican Women as Victims of Violence

The verbal construction of Mexican women as victims of violence is the focus of this chapter. In the representative claims regarding women as victims of violence, different features contribute to form this female subject position, and these aspects will be analyzed and discussed in this section. The chapter commences with a contextualization of violence against women in Mexico in order to place the analysis in its setting. This is followed by an analysis of how Mexican women are referred to in the representative claims, and this is followed by a focus on women as agents within these claims before the implementation of the gender quota law, i.e. between 1997-2003. This reveals the way women are referred to in a general way without an explicit ‘we women’, which means that all Mexican women are constituted as potential victims of men’s violence. At the same time, there is no counterpart present. Thus, men as aggressors are not identified in the language. Parallel to this, male deputies characterize Mexican women as vulnerable, a portrayal to which female legislators do not contribute. These findings are then compared with corresponding material from 2006. In the latter period reviewed, Mexican women are still spoken about in a general way in the representative claim making process, but the language has changed in two fundamental ways: men become more visible and women are no longer spoken about as vulnerable.

Contextualizing Violence Against Women

The UN report *The World’s Women 2010* concludes that; “(i)n all societies, to a greater or lesser degree, women and girls are subjected to physical, sexual and psychological abuse that cuts across lines of income, class and culture” (2010: 127). Growing awareness of the global problem of violence against women has led to several United Nations resolutions seeking to prevent acts of violence and national laws have been adopted in many countries. Despite the increased legislative efforts, studies show that violence against women is increasing. According to a recent UNICEF report,
“(t)here is a growing body of evidence from research that suggests that violence against women is highly prevalent, with an estimated one in three women globally experiencing some form of victimization in childhood, adolescence, or adulthood” (UNICEF 2000: 3; see also World Economic Forum 2017). Even so, the report finds that the occurrence of violence against women and girls is underreported. Moreover, violence and sexual assault are primarily committed in the home, a place where people should feel safe, by men with whom the women have a close relationship (United Nation 2010: 131).

According to the UN, Latin America is the most violent region in the world, and Mexico is among the top of this ranking (UNODC 2014). Violence related to organized crime, which is often linked to drug cartels, is an enormous problem in Mexico and mostly affects the male population. Violence against men is not a focus of this study, however, one statement stands out in particular as it poses violence against men in contrast to violence against women. A female deputy (PAN) highlights the fact that violence against men is mainly carried out in the public sphere while women are victims of violence in their own homes. The female deputy (PAN) says:

Men cry for a halt to violence in the streets; while women plead: No to violence in Mexican households (October 30, 2000, female deputy, PAN).

In the quote, it becomes apparent that the female deputy (PAN) considers that both women and men speak about violence, but they talk about different areas. This corresponds with an analysis of the empirical material in this thesis in which female legislators are the protagonists in placing men’s violence against women on the public political agenda.

Men’s violence against women has been a central issue for the women’s movements in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America for decades, but it was not until the 1980s and the 1990s that it received a major focus in public politics (Staudt & Montoya 2009). Campaigns were carried out and included statements that called for the need for research, raising public awareness and lobbying. Women’s movements’ also demanded greater state accountability, and they were backed by international legal definitions of domestic violence as a violation of women’s human’s rights. In 1994, Mexico signed the Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Sanction, and Eradicate Violence Against

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91 Los hombres claman cese a la violencia en las calles; mientras las mujeres suplican: No a la violencia en los hogares mexicanos (October 30, 2000, female deputy, PAN).
Women in Belem Do Pará alongside several other Latin American countries. The Law for the Assistance and Prevention of Intra-Family Violence was only ratified by the House of Representatives for Mexico City in 1996. Since it is a local legislative body, it could only enact laws for certain subjects and only for Mexico City. However, in November 1997, the President of Mexico, Ernesto Zedillo (PRI), endorsed a national reform initiative in the area of intra-family violence. Under the law, physical or psychological violence perpetrated within the family was considered a crime punishable by six months to six years in prison and the law explicitly stipulates that rape was a crime that could occur in the context of a marriage.92

During the period I focus on in this study, several federal laws were or had just been adopted to comply with institutional human rights treaties, as the Law on Assistance and Prevention of Domestic Violence (1996), the Decree to amend the Civil Code and Criminal Code (1997), which refers to domestic violence and rape, and the Federal Law to prevent and eliminate discrimination (2003).93 The passage of a law may change the focus of policy makers and thus the political language, but one has to consider that the first two laws were implemented before and at the beginning of the time studied. During the period chosen for the comparison, 2006, there is a new law working through the legislative process, the General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence. This federal law came into force on February 2, 2007 but had an influence on the political language in 2006, which I will return to.

Women in Mexico have been subjected to violence in various forms, from femicide94 to violence in close relationships. The high level of crimes committed towards women is confirmed by Amnesty International (2012), and the organization considers that more than 34,000 femicides occurred between 1985 and 2009.95 According to Yu Liu and Thomas M. Fullerton, who have looked closer at violence against women and social status in Mexico, the killings of women are “frequently more brutal than male homicide cases” (Liu & Fullerton 2015: 4272). There are few studies done

92 The law was later modified in February 1 2007 to Ley General de Acceso de las Mujeres a una Vida Libre de Violencia.
93 Ley de Asistencia y Prevención de la Violencia Intrafamiliar (1996), el Decreto para reformar el Código Civil y el Código Penal, que se refiere a la violencia intrafamiliar y violación (1997), and Ley Federal para prevenir y eliminar la discriminación (2003).
94 Femicide means the killing of females by males, because they are females.
95 The rate of murdered men is much higher than that of women, but the violence men suffer from has other causes, such as street violence, violence between criminal gangs and murders related to drug trafficking.
on men’s violence against women in Mexico, and there is not much detailed information available on femicide. However, a recent article provides data that can be applied and shows that women are more likely than men to be victimized in their homes and by relatives compared to men (Liu & Fullerton 2015: 4262). In a study of men’s violence against women done by the UN, El Colégio de México and the Mexican Government, we read that;

/…/ women are three times more likely than men to die by cruel means, such as hanging, strangulation, suffocation, drowning, immersion and stabbing. Women are also three times more likely to be murdered by poisoning or burned with chemicals or fire. In short, it is a form of death directly and literally at the hands of the aggressor (ONU Mujeres, 2011: 71, translated from Spanish by the author).

The violation and killings of thousands of women in the border town of Ciudad Juárez have triggered national and international anger and resulted in organization both on the global and local level. Even though the unsolved femicides have received widespread media coverage, this has only resulted in a limited response from the Mexican government and police (Staudt & Montoya 2009: 187). This negligence indicates that the issue of men’s violence against women has a low priority in Mexico during the time period studied.


Violence against women is an enormous problem for Mexican women, as is evident in the introduction to this chapter. In this section, I will present how a ‘women we’ is not explicit in the representative claims regarding women and violence in the parliamentary language during 1997-2003. Thus there is a constituted overall in-group that is based on generalizations. In addition, the referential ‘they’ in relation to the abusers and instead the perpetrators are verbally veiled in the language. When speaking about men’s violence against women, Mexican politicians refer to Mexican women in a general way and as an undefined yet homogenous group. Such an all-inclusive group

96 The studies do not include violence against domestic workers and, as far as I know, there are no such studies.
may encompass all Mexican females, and the vocabulary used constructs all Mexican women as potential victims of violence. At the same time, it is difficult to encapsulate the entirety of the problem when men are not explicitly addressed. In the corpora, I have found two ways of referring to women as victims of violence, by speaking about “all women” or large numbers of women, thus a general reference, and by using words like gender violence, intra-familiar violence, etc., which do not identify victims or aggressors. Below, I will present examples of how such references are manifested and how this can be understood.

When referring to women generically as victims of violence, an undefined group is created. No individual or group is explicitly identified, and all women may be victims of men’s violence. This is the case throughout the material reviewed. The following statement shows a numerical generalization by referring to statistics when a female deputy (PVEM) speaks at a session when the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women is celebrated in the Chamber of Deputies. The legislator refers to statistics in order to pinpoint the magnitude of the problem:

/…/ one in three (women) suffer some kind of intra-familiar violence, we learn that it is the fourth leading cause of female mortality /…/ (November 28, 2000, female deputy, PVEM). 97

The female legislator (PVEM) speaks about large-scale numbers when referring to women and violence in order to point out the high frequency of the crimes but also the “fourth leading cause of female morality.” By referring to women as victims of violent acts that affect an indefinite large number of women, the legislator expresses the notion that all Mexican women may be exposed to violence, and they are all potential victims of violence even though they may not have experienced it personally. Women are referred to as victims of violence with other members of a family that excludes men. In other words, a generalization is used to show that violence is an enormous problem for women in the Mexican society. Violence is therefore not circumscribed to a specific targeted group of women, rather, the generalization suggests that it occurs regardless of one’s social and economic background. At the same time, there is no clear in-group created

97 /…/ uno de cada tres (mujeres) sufre algún tipo de violencia familiar, las lesiones son la cuarta causa de mortalidad femenina /…/ (November 28, 2000, female deputy, PVEM).
and thus no ‘women we.’ In this way, female deputies do not identify themselves linguistically as victims of men’s violence.

When an initiative from the Commission of Justice is presented, which is signed by numerous female deputies from all political parties, a female deputy (PAN) speaks in session. The initiative aims to make changes in the Civil Code and other laws in order to include necessary measurements regarding violence against women. The female deputy (PAN) points out that violence is not individual but collective when she says that “millions of women” are affected, but their situations are anonymous. By using an undefined but large-scale number of women, an all-inclusive group of ‘women’ is manifested. She says:

The exercise of sexuality is a practice of freedom, and rape is a crime against sexual freedom. There is no person who can force another to do something that the other does not want and that is what we want to make clear and sanctioned through this legal initiative. There is still a lot to do, but first we have to create a law that defends all those millions of women who live in anonymity and who are continually victims of that authoritarian tradition of subjection of man to woman (December 2, 1997, female deputy, PAN).  

Thus, there are a great number of women, “millions of women,” affected by men’s violence, according to the female deputy (PAN). This creates a group of women that may include anybody in Mexico, including oneself. In this quote, men are spoken about explicitly even though they are not made accountable for the violence. The focus is rather on changes in the legislation in order to protect women. When honoring the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, a female deputy (PRD) also uses “millions of women” to describe the magnitude of women affected by violence. She says:

Today we are in the middle of the debate about the reform of the State, it is opportune that we should not forget to consider that a real project of the nation must begin by reviewing the way in which power relations are

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98 El ejercicio de la sexualidad es un ejercicio de libertad y la violación es un delito contra la libertad sexual. No hay persona que pueda obligar a otra a hacer algo que no quiere y eso es lo que queremos que quede claro y sancionado a través de esta iniciativa de ley. Falta mucho por hacer, pero primero tenemos que hacer una ley que defienda a todos esos millones de mujeres que viven en el anonimato y que son víctimas continuamente de esa tradición autoritaria del sometimiento del hombre a la mujer (December 2, 1997, female deputy, PAN)
exercised in the family, from relationships between couples, to the daily violence that millions of women in our country suffer from (November 24, 1997, female deputy, PRD). 99

The female deputy (PRD) points to the large number of women victims in her speech but does not speak about a ‘we women.’ To make references to women as victims of violence in massive numbers is thus to generalize. In this way, women as victims of violence may be everywhere in Mexican society. In the following quote, a female deputy (PRD) also speaks about the “millions of women” victims and ascribes female legislators as representing them in the political sphere. At this session, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women is celebrated. In relation to this, the female deputy says:

I would like to tell you, ladies and gentlemen legislators, that this is not the case. Our interest, we deputies (female, author’s remark) who represent millions of women in our country, is to carry out an act of justice, not only to remember all those women who have lost their lives because of violence either at home, in the street, as is the case of the more than 200 young women killed in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. The systematic violence that thousands of women and girls suffer daily in our country, takes many forms, that is, it is a problem that has different faces (November 25, 1999, female deputy, PRD). 100

The female deputy (PRD) also speaks about this enormous group of women who suffer from violence and the female legislators that represent them. In other words, the female legislator instead constitutes a ‘them’ and the ‘we’ includes women politicians. When referring to women in the representative claim about women as victims of violence, no ‘we women’ in-group is created nor an explicit out-group of a ‘they’, but women are referred to as

99 Hoy que nos encontramos en medio del debate en torno a la reforma del Estado, es oportuno que no nos olvidemos de considerar que un verdadero proyecto de nación debe comenzar por revisar la manera en que se ejercen las relaciones de poder desde el ámbito familiar, desde las relaciones de pareja, desde la violencia cotidiana que padecen millones de mujeres en nuestro país (November 25, 1997, female deputy, PRD).

100 Yo quisiera decirles, señoritas y señores legisladores, que esto no es así. El interés de nosotras las diputadas que representamos a millones de mujeres de nuestro país, es realizar un acto de justicia, no sólo para recordar a todas aquellas mujeres que han perdido la vida por causa de la violencia ya sea en el hogar, en la calle, como es el caso de las más de 200 mujeres jóvenes muertas en Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. La violencia sistemática que padecen a diario miles de mujeres y niñas en nuestro país, adoptan muchas formas, es decir, es un problema que presenta diversas caras (November 25, 1999, female deputy, PRD)
victims in a general way. The constitutive aspect in such parliamentary language turns Mexican women into a homogenous group in relation to violence and, in this way, violence can occur anywhere and all Mexican women are presumptive victims. As victims of violence, women are also interrelated through their vulnerability. Violence and vulnerability work in conjunction with each other, i.e. as victims of violence you are vulnerable and need protection. By referring to women in general and not as ‘we women’, this exposure is not directly applicable to female politicians. At the same time, violence against women is spoken about without explicit perpetrators since men are excluded. In other words, the references made to women as victims of violence are based on generalizations of women as victims of male violence.

In the representative claims regarding violence against women, it is common to use words like “domestic violence,” “intra-familiar violence,” “family violence” and “gender violence” (violencia intrafamiliar, violencia familiar, violencia domestica, violencia de género). These concepts are ‘neutral’ in that they do not identify women as victims of men’s violence. The words “violence against women” (violencia contra las mujeres), which is another way of addressing the problem, make the victims present while excluding the aggressors, even though it is ‘common knowledge’ that men are the perpetrators. Thus, the parliamentary language gives few explicit suggestions about who the victims are and no suggestions about who the aggressors are. In other words, the language works as a de-personalizing mechanism.

Referring to men’s violence against women as “intra-familiar violence” places the acts within the family, but the language reveals nothing about the victim and the perpetrator other than the fact that they are part of the same family. For example, a female deputy (PT) highlights violence in a speech at a session focusing on the International Women’s Day; she says:

/…/ la violencia intrafamiliar es un problema grave que no distingue edades, niveles educativos ni grupos socioeconómicos; cuando la violencia interrumpe en la familia, suele convertirse en un hecho cotidiano /…/ (November 28, 2000, female deputy, PT).  

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/…/ the intra-familiar violence is a serious problem which does not distinguish by age, educational level or socioeconomic status; when violence breaks into the family, it usually transforms into an everyday habit /…/ (November 28, 2000, female deputy, PT).  

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In the quote, the female deputy (PT) speaks about “intra-familiar violence,” saying that violence “breaks into the family” rather than pointing out that, as statistics show, it is a male member of the family who is most likely to be the offender. There are no references made in the statement and it is therefore difficult to know who is the victim and who is committing the crime. Violence becomes anonymous and something that comes from the outside and takes place in the family. The family is seen as an isolated and closed unit in which violence occurs. Thus, the language works as a de-personalizing mechanism.

Despite the legislative advances in Mexico in relation to violence against women that were presented earlier in this chapter, Amnesty International reports that the government of Mexico fails to protect women from various types of violence (2012). Thus, even though official statistics show that men perpetrate the vast majority of violent acts against women, Mexican men are rarely named as perpetrators, and men are not explicitly identified as the aggressors who commit the actual crimes. In other words, there is no obvious identification of an out-group in relation to the women who suffer from violence. When reviewing the material from 1997-2003, it is notable that, in Mexican parliamentary language, men’s violence against women is most often spoken about in ways that obscures the victim and the perpetrator, but especially the perpetrator. Men and women are both veiled in the language in different ways, and no in-groups or out-groups are constituted. At the same time, the quotes above show that violence is a daily routine in Mexican society and can affect all women regardless of socioeconomic background. Moreover, the parliamentary language links violence against women to the ‘domestic’ sphere and indicates that men’s violence against women is primarily conducted within the private sphere. In other words, women are victims within their homes, a place where individuals seek love, safety and security, but it is also the place where violence is perpetrated. Thus, the parliamentary language relating to women who suffer from men’s violence moves between the public and the private, and thereby between what has traditionally been seen as the political and non-political.


In the previous section, we see that female deputies refer to women and violence while no obvious ‘we women’ is created. Phrases like “millions of
women,” “everyday violence” and “daily occurrence” indicate a general and all-encompassing problem in which all Mexican women are potential victims. Even so, the words ‘men’s violence against women’ are not explicit in the parliamentary language but are mostly concealed in concepts like “gender violence” and “intra-family violence”. That is, words relating to the victims of these crimes become abstract, but this also applies to language about the perpetrators.

During the period between 1997-2003, the material shows that female deputies are primary the ones making representative claims regarding violence against women. However, male deputies speak about Mexican women as vulnerable and in need of protection, and in this way male legislators construct women as vulnerable, i.e. as objects of men’s protection. In other words, male deputies diminish Mexican women as autonomous agents, while female deputies constitute women as victims whose agency is circumscribed by the violence from which they suffer (even though the perpetrators are not pinpointed). Moreover, Mexican female legislators do not speak about women as vulnerable. However, as victims of violence, women become vulnerable since these two aspects, violence and vulnerability, exist simultaneously. Male legislators, on the other hand, do not speak about women as victims of male violence, but they do however speak about women as vulnerable. Moreover, vulnerability is closely related to protection since the concepts have an interdependent relationship. Jon Barnett and John Campbell, who research knowledge and climate change, describe vulnerability this way:

/.../ vulnerable entities are defined in terms of their opposites in the binary: things that are vulnerable are not powerful, large, robust and knowing, but are weak, powerless, and fragile and naïve. /.../ These characteristics imply then that the large and powerful can and should act to help the helpless from their predicament since vulnerable cannot by definition act to help themselves. Thus vulnerability discourses are a form of knowledge/power: they represent the world in ways that serve the interests of power (Barnett & Campbell, 2010: 163).

In other words, to speak about other persons as vulnerable denotes a power relation within which the speakers imply a hierarchical order between themselves and the group they are talking about. The linguistic constructions of women as vulnerable in this material take various forms. For example, in a session when the National Development Plan is discussed, a male deputy
(PAN) presents the position of his party in relation to the topic. He speaks about the former government and states that it did not allow “social growth,” but his party has committed to:

(t)he determined and unrelenting struggle that we have made over many years to repair the enormous injustice committed against children, women, indigenous groups, the vulnerable groups /…/ (September 21, 2000, male deputy, PAN).102

In the quote, a large portion of the population is defined as in need of protection and men are indirectly pointed out as the group to protect them since men are the only group not present in the quote. The quote is not directly related to violence, but by verbally labelling women, in combination with other social groups, as vulnerable over and over again creates a position where women inhabit a general vulnerability, i.e. they become ‘vulnerable citizens’. It situates women and other groups as dependent and vulnerable. Additionally, the male deputy (PAN) does not explain what this vulnerability means or what it relates to during his speech. Thus, no solutions to the “problem” are put forward and no suggestions are given for how to solve the situation. The deputy never articulates what these problems consist of or what or who is causing them, and the chain of logic is incomplete. Thus, there is no identification of what causes the need for protection. This way of speaking diminishes women and other groups, and they are constructed as fragile and weak, which means that they are also deprived of agency. According to Nikki Craske, protection has long been a part of the Mexican state. She writes that the state “explicitly included women in many aspects of legislation, (but) there was a tendency to see them as needing protection rather than seeing them as autonomous political subjects” (Craske 2005: 125). Consequently, (imaginary) male protection has a history in Mexico.

An initiative is presented by a female deputy (PRD) regarding amendments to the second article of the constitution, the purpose of which is to protect individual freedom. When presenting the initiative, the female legislator speaks about vulnerability, not only in relation to women but also in relation to other groups, such as children, ethnic minorities, migrant

102 La lucha tenaz y sin tregua que hemos realizado a lo largo de muchos anos, para reparar la enorme injusticia cometida contra la niñez, mujeres, grupos indígenas, los grupos vulnerables /…/ (September 21, 2000, male deputy, PAN).
women, sexual orientation, etc. These statements differ from the male deputies’ statements however, since the deputy (PRD) has explains the situation in relation to every group that she speaks about. When speaking about women, for example, the deputy (PRD) says:

Women are vulnerable, among other things, in labor and social relations where physical force can be used against them, plus the added possibility of being sexually abused (April 27, 1999, female deputy, PRD).\textsuperscript{103}

In other words, vulnerability is placed in a context where women experience physical and sexual abuse. Thus, instead of being vague and indirect, the female legislator (PRD) explains surrounding factors that relate to how women are exposed to mistreatment. Describing women, and others, as vulnerable in this way places the focus on relational aspects, that is, vulnerability is related to other factors and other people. Vulnerability is not (only) about protection but about the changes that are needed in a society in order to create safety.

Female legislators do not speak about Mexican women in need of (male) protection, but they instead highlight the difficult situation that many women experience. When female deputies speak about women’s situation, it is in more general terms as can be seen in the following example when a female deputy (PVEM) gives a speech during a session that honors the anniversary of women’s suffrage; she says:

Women have always occupied an important place in our world and even more so today. Notwithstanding this, many women even today are unjustly subjected to poverty, marginalization, violence and abuse and ignorance (October 18, 2001, female deputy, PVEM).\textsuperscript{104}

Even though the female legislator (PVEM) does not specify or explain why Mexican women are in these disadvantaged positions, she highlights different aspects that make women vulnerable in Mexican society.

\textsuperscript{103} Las mujeres son vulnerables, entre otras cosas, en las relaciones laborales y sociales en donde puede utilizarse la fuerza física contra ellas, además de la posibilidad adicional de ser abusadas sexualmente (April 27, 1999, female deputy PRD).

\textsuperscript{104} Las mujeres siempre hemos ocupado un lugar importante en nuestro mundo y más aún en la actualidad. No obstante a ello, muchas mujeres aun hoy se encuentran injustamente sometidas a la pobreza, la marginación, la violencia y el abuso y la ignorancia (October 18, 2001, female deputy, PVEM).
As seen above, male politicians link women and other groups with vulnerability. The only group that is not included is privileged men, i.e. themselves. Consequently, they are indirectly pinpointed as the potential protectors of these “vulnerable” groups. For example, a female legislator (PRI) comments in a hearing regarding the presentation of an analysis of a governmental report on domestic policy made by the Governmental Secretary:

We appreciate the explanations linked to the participation of women in national life, especially those that have to do with migration /.../ This explanation, Mr. Secretary, with respect to the human rights of migrants, allows us to discuss the challenges that you mentioned in the National Women's Program and that have to do with the participation of women and not only those linked to a profound poverty, such as indigenous, peasant or marginalized women, but the defense of women’s rights: human rights, civil, social, reproductive, the ones regarding health, education and so on, and move beyond what has been constituted by the present government as the goals for the National Women’s Program. That is, it has to be angled towards the problems faced by women, like family violence /.../ (and) to create a legal initiative, with a federal character, to protect the rights of women, boys and girls against family violence. (September 12, 2000, female deputy, PRI).

At the time this statement was delivered in the Chamber of Deputies, 2000, two laws had already passed, the Law on Assistance and Prevention of Domestic Violence (1996) and the Decree to amend the Civil Code and Criminal Code (1997), which concerns domestic violence and rape. Even so, the female deputy (PRI) asks for a “legal initiative, with a federal character, to protect the rights of women”. Female deputies turn to the state and require governmental commitment and engagement. A female deputy (PRI) speaks about the need for political responsibility and the function they

105 Agradecemos la explicación vinculada a la participación de las mujeres en la vida nacional, sobretodo aquellas que tienen que ver con fenómenos migratorios /.../ Esta explicación, señor Secretario, de respeto a los derechos humanos de los migrantes, nos permite abundar sobre los retos que usted mencionaba del Programa Nacional de la Mujer y que tiene qué ver con la participación de las mujeres y no sólo aquellas vinculadas a una profunda pobreza, como son las indígenas, las campesinas o las marginadas, sino la defensa de sus derechos: derechos humanos, cívicos, sociales, reproductivos, de salud, educativos y demás, e ir más a lo que ha constituido para el presente gobierno los retos del programa Nacional de la Mujer. Esto es, la vinculación con los problemas que tenemos las mujeres de violencia familiar /.../de echar a andar una iniciativa de ley de carácter federal para protección de los derechos de las mujeres, los niños y las niñas contra la violencia familiar (September 12, 2000, female legislator, PRI).
have to take as national legislators in order to make political decisions to address the problem of men’s violence against women. She points out the role of the government and says:

/…/ our role as an institution is that of being responsible for reviewing, designing and implementing actions that contribute to solving the problems of society and creating the necessary tools for women victims of any kind of violence, to stop being mere passive subjects of what happens in the private sphere and to become real social actors, to be able to transform the current public reality regardless of how overwhelming it may be (November 28, 2000, female deputy, PRI).

The female legislator (PRI) speaks about political representatives as responsible, though passively, for the safety of women who are victims of violence. This statement calls for the policymakers to take action and be responsible for the policy outcome and to “become real social actors.” By extension, the quote shows a link between Mexican women and the state when it comes to men’s violence against women but men, as aggressors, are not present. The quote includes women in general terms and excludes all men at the same time. Moreover, Mexican women become the passive agents within the criminal acts and, simultaneously, female legislators are the active agents when putting forward the representative claims regarding violence against women and make themselves accountable to the female population. Thus, the female deputy (PRI) criticizes the idea of the family being viewed as an isolated unit and disconnected from broader social power relations that exist in society.

Another female legislator (PRD) also places women in relation to the state in terms of men’s violence against women when she speaks in a session with the topic The International Day of No to Violence Against women. She says:

The elimination of violence against women is still a pending issue in governments around the world. Violence against women is not only physical

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106 /…/ nuestro papel como institución y responsables de revisar, diseñar e instrumentar acciones que coadyuven a solucionar las problemáticas de la sociedad y de crear los instrumentos necesarios para que las mujeres, víctimas de cualquier tipo de violencia, puedan dejar de ser meros sujetos pasivos de lo que sucede en el ámbito privado y se conviertan en verdaderas actoras sociales, con capacidad para transformar la actual realidad pública por avasallante que ésta sea. (November 28, 2000, female deputy, PRI).
but also moral, which is noticeable in most cases by those who suffer from it. Violence can be defined as any action taken and deterioration of the integrity, physical, sexual, psychological or patrimonial stability. Its main victims are: women, children, the elderly and the disabled. /.../ Many women conceive and tolerate the use of violence within the family, mainly because of economic dependence but also because of fear, abandonment of dignity and self-esteem (November 28, 2000, female deputy, PRD).

In this speech, the female legislator makes the state responsible for the protection of women. The female legislator (PRD) identifies all family members as victims of violence but still gives no hint of who is committing the crimes. She also gives several explanations for why women remain in relationships in which violence is present. Altogether, Mexican female deputies tend to turn to the state to seek safety for women, which indicates that the situation is not manageable without the support of the state body. Belonging to a group that is defined by male legislators as vulnerable is problematic in several ways. When speaking about women in terms of vulnerability, the logical consequence is that men point to themselves as the protectors. Men thereby inhabit superiority. Men’s patronage might also have a positive connotation for some people since it might link with a traditional way of performing masculinity even if this protection can be fictitious. This imposed protection leads to dependence or a sense of dependence. This in turn might obligate people to act according to the social rules connected with these. When male deputies define themselves as protectors and patrons, a superior male position is formed in the political sphere in which men become the agents and women’s agency becomes circumscribed. As a consequence, women can easily be seen, and see themselves, as weak and vulnerable, while men turn into strong, tough and rational beings.

When male deputies speak about women as vulnerable, a linguistic division between women and men is created where women are depicted as passive citizens with limited capability to protect themselves, while men

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107 Hoy en día erradicar la violencia contra la mujer sigue siendo un gran pendiente de los gobiernos en el mundo, la violencia que se ejerce contra las mujeres no es exclusivamente física sino también moral, la cual es perceptible en la mayoría de las ocasiones por quien la sufre. La violencia puede definirse como toda acción ejercida e deterioro de la integridad, estabilidad física, sexual, psicológica o patrimonial. Sus principales víctimas son: mujeres, niños, ancianos y discapacitados. /.../ Muchas mujeres conciben y toleran el uso de la violencia que se ejerce en el interior de la familia, principalmente por dependencia económica pero también por miedo, abandono de la dignidad y la autoestima (November 28, 2000, female deputy, PRD).
become, in contrast, active and able to act. Sociologist Bryan Turner argues that the construction of an active-passive axis is central to citizens’ agency and fundamental to determining whether citizens are portrayed as a subordinate person or as an active political actor (Turner, 1990). A language that constructs “passive citizens” generates boundaries to which people have to relate. Moreover, “active citizens” are put in a privileged position within which they do not have to create agency, since it comes with the advantaged situation, and they are freer to set their own agenda. Protection is latent in all relations where violent acts are committed. As such, there is a (gendered) logic of a masculine role of protector in relation to women, which sheds light on the sorting function where men become the protectors and women the protected. In this protective image, men become (even more) masculine, and in that position men’s privileges are secured. Conversely, if men were to acknowledge themselves as perpetrators, they would forfeit their privileges. In this way, men’s talk about protection is central to the public debate around gender relations. At the same time, as is demonstrated earlier in this chapter, female deputies do not create a ‘women we’ in relation to violence. If they were to do so there is a potential that they would lose their agency when trapped in the vulnerable position male deputies impose on them.

2006

In 2006, references made to women in relation to violence remain the same in the parliamentary language in comparison to the previous period studied. Mexican deputies still refer to women as victims of violence in a general way and no direct ‘women we’ is present, i.e. this particular subject position becomes de-personalized. However, in 1997-2003, men are not referred to as perpetrators but are excluded from the parliamentary language. This changed in 2006, and men are referred to as perpetrators, which displays a crucial difference. Another notable change in the latter period studied is that male deputies no longer include Mexican women when speaking about vulnerable groups. A slightly more complex picture is thus put forward when speaking about Mexican women as victims of men’s violence. There are two sessions in particular that focus on men’s violence against women in 2006. In both sessions, held on February 2 and April 26, a legislative initiative is discussed, which is titled “General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence” (Ley General de Acceso de las Mujeres a una Vida Libre de Violencia).
Referring

In the material reviewed for 2006, general references to women as victims of male violence is still prevalent, but references to women as vulnerable has been phased out of the parliamentary language. The references to women as victims take different forms as the following quotes from this period demonstrate: “violence against women,”108 “(t)he maximum expression of violence against women is undoubtedly the femicide,”109 “a woman who is victim of domestic violence,”110 or “acts of violence committed against women constitute violations of their fundamental rights.”111 In these quotes, women are spoken about as victims of violence in general terms, and violence is not attached to a particular group of women, rather, all Mexican women become presumptive victims of violence. A further example is when a female deputy (PRD) speaks in connection with the observance of International Women’s Day in 2006; she says:

Much remains to be done to achieve equal opportunities for women and eliminate the discrimination and violence that Mexican women still experience (March 9, 2006, female deputy, PRD).112

The female deputy (PRD) refers to Mexican women in relation to violence in general terms, and no ‘women we’ is present. It would have been possible for the female deputy (PRD) to use the wording: “that we Mexican women still experience” (que seguimos viviendo las mexicanas) but she instead generalizes women as a group beyond herself and her female colleagues. The female deputy does not establish a verbal ‘we women’ in-group or an out-group, and this is predominantly the case in both of the periods studied here. Consequently, all Mexican women including the female deputies may be potential victims but without specifying the in-group.

When the legislative initiative “General Law on Women’s Access to a Life Free of Violence” is presented and discussed for the first time, three

108 “violencia contra las mujeres”, see for example the session in February 2, 2006.
109 “La expresión máxima de la violencia contra la mujer es sin duda el feminicidio” (February 2, 2006).
110 “una mujer víctima de violencia doméstica” (March 7, 2006).
111 “los actos de violencia cometidos en contra de las mujeres constituyen violaciones a sus derechos fundamentales” (April 26, 2006).
112 Falta mucho por hacer para lograr la igualdad de oportunidades para las mujeres y eliminar la discriminación y la violencia que siguen viviendo las mexicanas (March 9, 2006, female deputy, PRD)
female deputies from the two parties, PRI and PRD, jointly present it and the motivation starts as follows:

In a brief historical tour, we find that women have been abandoned, violated and faced discrimination against their fundamental rights. The man has been able to exercise full control over the woman, making decisions about the aspects that concerned her, since she has been considered as inferior being, being marginalized from all legal protection and at the mercy first of the father and then of the husband; placing her in a hierarchical position of subordination as a mechanism of power to exercise control and maintain a dominant position over her. Thus, it was enough to observe the legal texts where the defense of their guarantees was practically non-existent; noting that she was ignored as a subject of rights; for that reason many decrees were modified not only in our country, where the inclusion of the article 4o. of the Constitution established legal equality between men and women (February 2, 2006, female deputies, PRI and PRD).113

The language in the bill marks a new way of addressing men’s violence against women. Women are still referred to in general terms, with rights that are not met, but men are pointed to as subordinators of women and as being the origin of the problem, both in marital relations as husbands and in the family as fathers. In this quote, the neglect of the government is also obvious. Moreover, the title of the of law also guides the language in the Mexican Chamber of Deputies, and “a life free from violence” becomes predominant when speaking about men’s violence against women. This new vocabulary encompasses all forms of violations, physical as well as psychological, but also includes harassment of women and moves the focus from individual women to a social meta-level. However, there is still no

113 En un breve recorrido histórico, encontramos que la situación de la mujer ha sido en general de abandono, de violación y de discriminación a sus derechos fundamentales. El hombre podía ejercer sobre ella un dominio pleno, tomando decisiones sobre los aspectos que le concernían, pues era considerada como un ser inferior, quedando marginada de toda protección jurídica y a merced primero del padre y después del esposo; ubicándola en una posición jerárquica de subordinación, como un mecanismo de poder para ejercer el control y mantener una posición dominante sobre ella. Así, bastaba observar los textos legales en donde la defensa de sus garantías era prácticamente inexistente; advirtiéndose que se le ignoraba como sujeto de derechos; por ello se modificaron muchos ordenamientos no sólo en nuestro país, donde la inclusión del artículo 4o. constitucional, establecía la igualdad jurídica entre hombres y mujeres (February 2, 2006, female deputies, PRI and PRD).
explicit focus on men as aggressors in the vocabulary, which may be understood as a strategy for ensuring passage of the bill since Mexican women are still in a minority in the Chamber of Deputies.

The “General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence” is presented again on April 26, 2006 by a female deputy, but still as a joint bill which was now put forward by several deputies from different political parties. This is a new version of a bill that was first presented on February 2, 2006, which expresses the term “aggressors”, which are objects of treatments in form of “reintegration”. Both bills are a joint work between the Equality and Gender Commission, Justice and Human Rights Commission, and Governance Commission. The female deputy who presents the bill says:

It is a bill that aims to establish the coordination between the three orders of government for the prevention, protection, assistance and eradication of violence against women and girls, as well as to establish the necessary measures for the social reintegration of the aggressors, and promote the integral development of women and their participation in all spheres of national life (April 26, 2006).114

In this quote, aggressors are explicitly referred to even though men are not pinpointed. Even so, perpetrators were not present in the vocabulary before this period. However, there are still times when men are not spoken about as abusers explicitly but are implicitly indicated as abusers. For example, at a session on February 23, 2006, a female deputy (PVEM) presents an initiative to change Article 1 of the Mexican Constitution, an initiative which pertains to individual human rights and assurances that these rights shall be granted by the Mexican state, which is signed by male party fellow. She says:

According to the First National Survey on the Dynamics of Household Relations, 47% of Mexican women suffer violence and seven out of ten families suffer intra-familial violence. Alcoholism, economic problems, unemployment, the autonomy of women and lack of family planning are the

114 Se trata de un Proyecto de Ley que tiene por objetivo establecer la coordinación entre los tres órdenes de gobierno para la prevención, protección, asistencia y erradicación de la violencia contra las mujeres y las niñas, así como establecer las medidas necesarias para la reinserción social de los agresores, y promover el desarrollo integral de las mujeres y su participación en todos ámbitos de la vida nacional (April 26, 2006, a joint bill).
main triggers of violence and discrimination against women (February 23, 2006, female deputy but male deputy signing the bill, PVEM).\textsuperscript{115}

It is not explicitly stated that men are the aggressors in the quote, but we can assume, through historical and contextual knowledge, that men are the perpetrators even though the term “intra-familial violence” is used. The quote also shows that a high number of women are affected by violence. There are also different explanations for why men are violent, and this is explained in terms of unemployment, alcoholism, etc., but is not explicitly linked to men per se, but is left unlinked to any particular group. However, even though men are not explicitly targeted in the quote, statistics show that men are the violators (United Nations 2010). Women’s autonomy is also among the explanations for why men use violence, thus the cause is attributed to women rather than men when no further problematization is presented. The word aggressors, i.e. implicitly men, are more visible overall in the language since men are referred to explicitly when speaking about violence against women in 2006. When addressing men directly in public language relating to violence against women, it becomes easier to claim responsibility, but it also becomes easier to raise questions about gender roles, which include machismo and violent behavior.

\textbf{Agentializing}

During 1997-2003, Mexican women are ascribed vulnerability by male deputies in the representative claims regarding violence against women, which undermines women’s autonomy and agency. The term “vulnerable groups” is still used in 2006 to a great extent, but women are no longer included in this group. The Commission of Attention to Vulnerable Groups (\textit{Comisión de Atención a Grupos Vulnerables}) defined “vulnerable groups” in 2003,\textsuperscript{116} and according to the commission, “(t)he concept of vulnerability applies to those sectors or groups of the population that due to their age, sex, marital status and ethnic origin are in a risk condition that prevents them from entering development and access to better welfare conditions” (United

\textsuperscript{115} Según la Primera Encuesta Nacional sobre la Dinámica de las Relaciones en los Hogares, el 47\% de las mujeres mexicanas padecen violencia y siete de cada diez familias sufren violencia intrafamiliar. El alcoholismo, los problemas económicos, el desempleo, la autonomía de la mujer y la falta de planificación familiar son los principales detonantes de la violencia y discriminación contra las mujeres (February 23, 2006, female deputy but a male deputy signed the bill, PVEM).

\textsuperscript{116} To my knowledge, there exist no definition prior to this one.
Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2010). The definition includes the word “sex” but does not pinpoint “women” as a targeted group. This definition seems to have consequences for the parliamentary vocabulary. The following example does not explicitly relate to men’s violence against women but demonstrates the new and different way of using the concept vulnerability, which is worth examining in this context. The male deputy (PVEM) presents an initiative regarding elderly people’s rights; He says:

Gender, as article 3º part V of the Law indicates, is a set of roles, attributions and representations that are made based on sexual difference. That is to say, there are the values and meanings that each society gives to the sexual difference. Sexual difference, being male or female, does not cause inequality by itself, but at the moment when society gives a value to this difference, the situation changes and in most cases produces inequalities. These inequalities also occur in the group of older adults. The feminization of aging has become, in recent decades, a challenge for the dignity of older adults. By living longer than men, women face not only the condition of being elderly but also what in this society means being a woman. This makes women doubly vulnerable (February 2, 2006, male deputy, PVEM).

In the quote, the male deputy (PVEM) does not victimize women linguistically but rather highlights the complexity of inequality based on gender. Rather, the statement made by the male deputy (PVEM) describes elderly women as suffering from social inequalities and become vulnerable through this exposure. The quote shows a change within the Mexican parliamentary language, a new way of linguistically constructing women, not only in relation to vulnerability but also situated in a social context that

117 (e)l concepto de vulnerabilidad se aplica a aquellos sectores o grupos de la población que por su condición de edad, sexo, estado civil y origen étnico se encuentran en una condición de riesgo que les impide incorporarse al desarrollo y acceder a mejores condiciones de bienestar.

118 El género como bien indica el artículo 3º fracción V de la Ley, es el conjunto de papeles, atribuciones y representaciones que se hacen en base a la diferencia sexual. Es decir, son las valoraciones y significados que cada sociedad le da a la diferencia sexual. La diferencia sexual, el ser hombre o mujer, por sí misma no provoca desigualdad, pero en el momento en que la sociedad le asigna un valor a esta diferencia, esta situación cambia y en la mayorías de los casos produce desigualdades.

Estas desigualdades se presentan también en el grupo de las personas adultas mayores. La feminización del envejecimiento se ha convertido en las últimas décadas en un reto más para la dignidad de las personas adultas mayores. Al vivir más que los hombres, las mujeres enfrentan no sólo la condición de ser ancianas sino también lo que en esta sociedad implica ser mujer. Esto nos convierte a las mujeres en doblemente vulnerables (February 2, 2006, male deputy, PVEM).
subordinates women. Another example of a more complex picture is demonstrated at a session on March 7, 2006 when a female deputy (PAN) gives a speech; she says:

Domestic violence finds its origin in the patterns of unequal relations, in which there is an abuse of power sustained in the patriarchal figure. It is also true that, culturally, it still retains the role-play and abuse of power between men-women (and) adults-minors /…/ (March 7, 2006, female deputy, PAN).119

In the quote, the unequal relationship between women and men is at the center, and men are also explicitly pinpointed. Thus, gender relation is problematized and the aggressors are highlighted, and the female subject position in relation to violence and vulnerability is in transformation.

Between 1997-2003, Mexican women turned to the state to demand assurances of their safety, and this remains the same in 2006. In a dictum from the Bicameral Commissions on Equity and Gender on Governance and on Justice and Human Rights, with a draft of a General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence presented on April 26, 2006 we read the following:

(P)rotect the right of women and girls to live a life free of violence (and) (t)o establish the bases of coordination for the prevention, protection and assistance to women and girls in order to eradicate the violence against them (April 26, 2006, it is not explicit who is presenting, but it is signed by a number of deputies, both female and male).120

At another session concerning the joint initiative by PRI and ORD “General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence,” the following statement is made in relation to the presentation:

119 La violencia intrafamiliar encuentra su origen en patrones de relaciones desiguales, en las que hay un abuso de poder sustentado en la figura patriarcal. También es cierto que culturalmente se mantiene todavía el juego de roles y de abuso de poder hombre-mujer (y) adultos-menores /…/ (March 7, 2006, female deputy PAN).

120 (p)roteger el derecho de las mujeres y las niñas a vivir una vida libre de violencia (y) (e)stablecer las bases de coordinación para la prevención, protección y asistencia a las mujeres y niñas con objeto de erradicar la violencia que se ejerce en contra de éstas (April 26, 2006).
A State that does not take into account the new dynamics and characteristics of a social conflict is not able to fulfill the mission for which it was constituted; In the case of violence against women, it is the responsibility of the latter to ensure its protection through legislation and public policies that allow the enjoyment of their rights in conditions of security, equity and dignity (February 2, 2006, female deputies, PRI and PRD).\textsuperscript{121}

Not only does the proposed law include the words “women’s access to a life free from violence,” this phrasing is seen all throughout the period studied in 2006. The words exclude the aggressors but include all Mexican women, regardless of background and domicile, with a desire to seek a life free from violence. At the same time, the wording “women’s access to a life free from violence” indicates a multidimensional area of concern in order to reach a goal. However, the wording is also vague and problematizes the situation.

The state and its legal functions are also explicitly addressed in the following quote, which is presented by a female deputy (PRD) when speaking about Public Security (\textit{Seguridad Pública}):

\begin{quote}
We need to see that, indeed, there is not a moment when the sun goes down without the presence of the extreme violence that we are each suffering. And, indeed, we (deputies, author’s remark) are responsible for the construction of state policy /…/ (March 2, 2006, female deputy, PRD).\textsuperscript{122}
\end{quote}

In this quote, the female deputy takes responsibility as a legislator for the policy making process. This might be to remind her fellow deputies in the Chamber of their tasks and responsibilities as legislators and there is thus a direct link between violence, legislation and policy makers.

In summary, even if there is no outspoken ‘women we’ in relation to women as victims of men’s violence in 2006, I have shown that women are more frequently depicted as actors in the material reviewed from 2006 in comparison to the period between 1997-2003. The fact that men speak about

\textsuperscript{121} Un Estado que no toma en cuenta las nuevas dinámicas y características de un conflicto social no es capaz de cumplir con la misión para lo cual fue constituido; en el caso de la violencia hacia las mujeres, corresponde a éste garantizar su protección a través de legislaciones y políticas públicas que permitan el disfrute de sus derechos en condiciones de seguridad, equidad y dignidad (February 2, 2006).

\textsuperscript{122} Necesitamos ver que, efectivamente, no lo hay en el momento en que no tengamos cada día que amanecer con la violencia extrema que estamos cada uno de nosotros sufriendo. Y, efectivamente, somos corresponsables de la construcción de la política de Estado /…/ (March 2, 2006, female deputy PRD).
violence against women and that men are pinpointed as aggressors in 2006 shows an important linguistic change where the focus is extended from women to both women and men. Violence becomes interrelational, and both the victims and the aggressors are present in the language. Women are thereby converted into visible actors who can make someone (men) accountable for the aggression they experience in a more direct way. By explicitly speaking about men as aggressors, agency is given to the victims, i.e. to women. To summarize, in 2006 Mexican female deputies still speak about women in relation to violence against women in general terms. Thus, there is no explicit in-group created, i.e. no clear ‘women we’ is present. However, by speaking in general terms, all Mexican women may be victims regardless of social status, geographic location, age, etc. De-personalized references are still used in 2006 when speaking about men’s violence against women when terms such as gender violence and intra-family violence are used. There is, however, a notable difference in that men are identified as perpetrators and this is laid out, for example, in the motivation for a legislative proposal. The title of the bill, “General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence,” marks a change in the way violence is spoken about, and “women’s access to a life free from violence” becomes predominant in the speech acts during this time, an all-encompassing formulation that includes all Mexican women.

Concluding Discussion

During 1997-2003, the subject position of Mexican women as victims of men’s violence contains interrelated characteristics. When referring to women as victims of violence, there is no obvious in-group created and there is no explicit ‘women we.’ Simultaneously, women suffering from men’s violence are not referred to as ‘they’ and there is no apparent out-group made, rather, women as victims are spoken about in general terms that include generalizations. Thus, all Mexican women may be victims of violence, however, female politicians do not personally identify themselves as suffering from violence, or at least not the politicians who put forward representative claims in the Chamber of Deputies during this period. Violence against women is almost exclusively committed in close relationships (UN 2014), hence, men as perpetrators and abusers become invisible in the public political discourse. In the parliamentary language during 1997-2003, the perpetrators are obscured by the use of passive
phrases and terminology such as “gender violence” and “intra-family violence” that obscure references to both the victims and the aggressors. A depersonalized language takes away the subject and thereby the agency, which is thus localized in outlets other than in the criminal acts.

The representative claims regarding women as victims are mainly put forward by Mexican female legislators before and after the implementation of a gender quota law, even though there are some notable changes in 2006. When analyzing the empirical material, no ‘women we’ is constituted; women as victims are instead spoken about generically. It emerges clearly in the parliamentary language that violence is a huge problem in Mexico and needs to be considered and addressed as a public problem. When referring to women as victims of men’s violence, the word ‘women’ is used generically and the victims thereby become depersonalized. In this sense, the term comes to represent all Mexican women. Such a reference creates a “sameness and homogeneity” and is linguistically a way of “constructing imagined communities” (Reisigl & Wodak 2000: 56). Hence, Mexican female deputies create a non-specific group of women, which means that all Mexican women are potential victims of violence. This also to female politicians, something I will return to further on.

In the material reviewed, female politicians do not speak about themselves in terms of male protection rather they do so in terms of being in need of protection from men’s violence. Before the implementation of the electoral quota law, male deputies spoke about women as vulnerable and clustered them together with other groups that where identified as vulnerable, such as children, peasants, elderly, disabled persons, etc., i.e. persons in need of protection. Thus, male deputies verbally construct themselves as the only group not included, as protectors. Violence, vulnerability and protection work side by side in the construction of gender. As discussed earlier in this dissertation, femininity and masculinity should not be seen as single logics but are interdependent. The relationship between violence, protection and vulnerability needs to be seen as interdependent and, as we can see in this chapter, these factors work side by side. Political scientist Maxine Molyneux discusses the problematic developments in Latin America between women’s roles in the family and the struggle for citizenship rights. According to her, the intertwined relation between women and the family led to Latin American women acquiring a range of social rights and entitlements designed to protect the family. Molyneux explains that since the 1980s and 1990s, while many Latin American countries carried out the process of reforming women’s legal rights, equality and
protection were combined and women were seen as needing equality as a consequence of their responsibilities within the family. The individualization of women’s rights from the family remained a contested issue (Molyneux, 2000).

Violence is always relational and complex and affects people in different ways. Lauren B. Wilcox elaborates on vulnerability as a consequence of violence when theorizing on violence and international relations (IR), and rearticulates the relationship between bodies, subjects and violence. According to Wilcox, conventional IR is based on two interrelated stories, violence and the subject’s vulnerability to violence. In a society, the autonomous subject is, according to Wilcox, defined in opposition to the dependent subject. While the autonomous subject can “take care of himself without making claims on others for survival or protection” (Wilcox 2014), the vulnerable subject is linked to women, children and the elderly, and discourses relating to dependence and victimhood (ibid). In this logic, only men are autonomous, whereas women are always attached to children and men (Brown 1995: 148). Violence in close relationships reproduces constructions of gender. This, in turn, produces images of women that must be protected from “bad men” by “good men” (Young 2003: 13–14). In this way, the image of the “good men” produces a picture of a more caring masculinity. In this “good men” image, men do not seek to dominate or suppress others. Rather, this protectionist role is created as a responsible and honorable role (Young 2003: 4). This logic of masculine protection calls for subordination of those in the protected position. There is thus an unequal power relationship between the protected and the protectors.

Defending the community or the country has historically been seen as the ultimate duty of the male citizen. Membership in a community has also been linked to the ability to take part in armed struggles, most often for national causes. It has been reserved for men and associated with maleness, i.e. engaging in war and violence has historically been part of constructing masculinity. War, violence, and autonomy and the link between them are widely studied within international relations. However, there are few scholars who have looked closely at protection and vulnerability, especially from a gender perspective in parliamentary language. Political scientist Iris Marion Young has taken up the challenge and suggests the presence of a particular gendered “logic of masculinist protection” that is associated with the male head of household position as a “protector of the family, and by extension, with masculine leaders and risk takers as protectors of a population” (Young 2003: 3). Young also writes that the protector is brought
into alignment through chivalry, since the protector’s role model is fashioned out of a “courageous, responsible, and virtuous man” that protects women and children (Young 2003: 4). These “good men” can only appear in a virtuous light if we assume that there are bad men outside. Central to the logic of masculinist protection, Young continues, is the subordinate position of those in the protected position. The protected should not only rely on the protectors but must not question their benevolence. This becomes very evident in the Mexican public political language during 1997-2003. Furthermore, the logic of masculinist protection operates to elevate the protector to a position of superiority and to reduce others to a “position of grateful dependency” (Young 2003: 13). In this logic, women who turn down the offered protection risk being dominated by other men and thus remain unprotected. The women pinpointed as protected must thereby trade some liberty and autonomy in order to achieve protection. These forms of noble male protection “express and enact concern for the wellbeing of women, but they do so within a structure of superiority and subordination” (Young 2003: 19). This chapter is about men’s violence against women, but I argue further that the construction of women as victims needs to be linked to discourses about women’s vulnerability and men’s presumed protection since they are part of the same logic. Consequently, the absence of women in “vulnerable groups” in 2006 is an important change in the constitutive aspects of Mexican women.

Female deputies’ demands for a world without violence are put forward over and over again in the material, which indicates that it is a pending issue. Even though it changes in 2006 and male deputies speak about men’s violence against women in the Chamber of Deputies, female legislators are the advocates for the inclusion of men’s violence against women in the Mexican parliamentary language both before and after the implementation of the electoral quota that guaranteed women representation in the congress. Sociology professor Nira Yuval-Davis has stated that women’s belonging in the nation-state is dualistic; women are always to some extent included in the general body of legislation but there is always a separate one, which legislates specifically for female citizens (Yuval-Davis 1997). The lack of political status undermines the fact that no perpetrators are present, and gender-neutral language makes the aggressors invisible when talking about men’s violence against women. Female Mexican deputies’ speak about women as victims of extensive violence, but since the language is diffuse and imprecise, female victims of violence lose their configurations Mexican women are constructed as victims of violence but are also the only visible
part in these criminal acts since men are not pinpointed. Violence is, however, always relational.

The use of a general ‘women,’ as stated above, establishes a collective, which, in turn, creates greater relevance for transformation and state intervention, such as changes in legislation for example. Mexican female legislators turn to the state for legal protection, an administration in which a majority of elected representatives are men with a long history of established male norms and dominance. This might be the way we can explain why Mexican women do not construct a ‘women we’ but instead speak about women in general terms when it comes to men’s violence against women. It may also rationalize why female legislators do not pinpoint men as perpetrators, since they are a majority with whom they must negotiate within the machinery of the state. Thus, Mexican women are constructed as vulnerable the same time female legislators are unable to highlight the relational and criminal condition with the aggressors. The consequence of the construction of women as vulnerable and in need protection stands in contrast to women as autonomous political subjects.

In the language relating to men’s violence against women in the material from 1997-2003, the terminology used does not inform who is responsible for committing violence against women. Wording such as “gender based violence”, “gender violence”, “family violence”, and “intra-familial violence” is often the terminology used. The use of the concept “gender” is problematic since gender cannot commit violence, so in this sense, men are protected by not being named and women as victims disappear. The use of the passive voice, such as “violence broke into the family” or “violence against women” also contributes to the concealment of the actual abusers. Passive wording also excludes men from the crimes committed. An alternative way of verbalizing the crimes is to name the perpetrators and to situate violence within a discourse of domination and equal legal rights. Debby Phillips and Dorothy Henderson show how the language used to describe male violence is part of the problem, since the way in which “an issue is discussed becomes how we think about it” (Phillips & Henderson 1999: 116). According to them, due to the way politicians fail to identify the male in male-perpetrated violence against women they reproduce “the socio-historical context of low arrest, low prosecution, and relatively light sentencing of male batterers and male rapists” (Phillips & Henderson 1999: 121). This in turn undermines women’s possibility to be acknowledged as victims of male violence when they are looking for help and medical attention at hospitals. When men are not held accountable, a language that
obscures men’s responsibility for their actions, pervasive cultural images of men’s violence against women, are reinforced. Violence becomes depersonalized and by extension it also loses its political potency.

When legislators use gender-neutral language, the perpetrators not only become invisible but the differences within the group of women disappear. Migrant women are, for instance, particularly vulnerable to sexual violence. They are not spoken about explicitly in the sessions in this study and turn into “invisible victims”. As Carrie L Yodanis writes:

/…/ when men dominate family, political, economic, and other institutions both in number and in power, the policies and practices of these institutions are likely to embody, reproduce, and legitimate male domination over women (2004: 657).

Women not only become subordinated but also invisible in the state machinery. When (female) deputies do not speak about men as perpetrators but instead use gender-neutral language, it can be due to fear of not being able to enforce men’s violence against women as a policy issue. It can also be understood as a situation where the male norm is so established that it is difficult to think and act outside of this norm, at least in public politics. On the other hand, violence is a tool for men to keep women out and thereby maintain male power and control within male-dominated institutions. Confronting men in public political debates may come at a high cost for women. Thus, the visibility of men as perpetrators in 2006 is new and indicates increased agency in the female subject position of women as victims.

123 Amnesty International launched a report on migrants in Mexico in 2010; Mexico: Invisible victims. Migrants on the move in Mexico. The report was published on April 28, 2010.
8. Conclusions

As presented in the introduction of this book, the aim of this study is to investigate the discursive representation of women in Mexico, or more specifically, female elected representatives, during a period characterized by significant changes in the political system. In this concluding chapter, I will highlight and discuss this book’s contribution and key findings. This study seeks to add to the literature on women’s political representation in two ways, and this final chapter will focus on these two main contributions: the theoretical and methodological contribution to the representative claims approach, and based on the empirical conclusions, the contribution to research on women in politics in Mexico. Thus, the book aims to advance the knowledge of how women’s political representation can be analyzed through parliamentary language and the construction of collective identities within this. These contributions are not independent of one another, of course, but I will try to examine them separately so that I can emphasize the importance of each more clearly. However, before turning to these, I will present the empirical findings of this study. Thus, the first part of the chapter will summarize the results and discuss these across the different subject positions analyzed in the empirical chapters. The second section is dedicated to the theoretical and methodological contributions and the empirical contributions. In other words, the last segment demonstrates how the discursive representation approach contributes to research on representative claims and women’s political representation and, finally, how this book contributes to the body of literature of women’s political representation in Mexico.

Empirical Findings

The major concern in this book has been the ways Mexican female deputies have been constituted discursively before and after the implementation of a mandatory electoral quota law, and this corresponds with the empirical questions that were posed in the introduction. To investigate this, the
empirical chapters have examined three subject positions that are central to feminist theory and are identified in the empirical material: women as political representatives, as mothers and as victims of male violence. Thus, the different chapters have revealed how Mexican women are constituted within representative claims made by parliamentarians. Mexico is chosen as a case study as it is an example of a country where gender quota legislation has led to a rapid change in the number of women in the national parliament, in a region where most countries have adopted similar solutions to guarantee women political representation. The first time the mandatory quota law was implemented was the 2003 national election. The empirical material has been systematically analyzed and covers these two time periods: a period before women were guaranteed presence in public politics and a period after the enactment of quota legislation in order to examine whether guaranteed political representation changes the ways Mexican women in general, and female deputies in particular, are constituted through parliamentary language. The analysis shows that there are changes as well as similarities in how female deputies are constituted in the three subject positions. Each empirical chapter ends with a discussion that highlights the most important conclusions. In the following section, I will elaborate on two main findings that span these chapters.

In-groups and Out-groups

The first conclusion I want to draw attention to is that Mexican female deputies constitute themselves as a ‘women we’ in some positions and in relation to some features, while they do so more generally in others. Such in-groups and out-groups are significant in terms of the way they are constituted. This analysis shows that a ‘women we,’ i.e. an in-group, is constituted in relation to political representation and symbolic motherhood, while in relation to de facto motherhood and victims of male violence, there is no clear in-group. This divergence will be discussed below.

During the time period studied, political representation is, understandably, a central issue to female deputies since the adoption of electoral gender quotas is pending in the earlier period and implemented in the latter period studied. This analysis uncovers how Mexican female deputies speak about themselves as a clear ‘we’ when speaking about women as political representatives. This in-group is created by and for female legislators regardless of ideological background with an aim to work towards joint goals. At this time, formal and informal pacts have been
established among Mexican women politicians, and the empirical material shows that the struggle for guaranteed women’s representation unifies women politicians linguistically. After the implementation of the electoral quota, a ‘women we’ is still prevalent but is not as central as before, which is logical since Mexican women have been successful in their demand for gender quotas.

As political representatives, Mexican female deputies establish a well defined ‘women we’ position, which shows that it is important to constitute an in-group among female legislators when constituting women as political representatives. The analysis shows that this is also the case in relation to symbolic motherhood. However, two parallel motherhood images exist simultaneously: symbolic motherhood with its positive implications where female deputies frame themselves together with all Mexican women and de facto motherhood that predominately includes socio-economic aspects to which female deputies do not identify. Symbolic motherhood phases out of the parliamentary language in the latter period, and the female caregiving features that are linked to this position phase out as well. This indicates that public politics is a male-defined sphere where traditional female attributes have no obvious place. Mexican women politicians have to navigate within this context, and the phase out of motherhood features can be seen as a strategy to ‘fit in.’ Constituting themselves as symbolic mothers works as a female strategy for political mobilization, as Mexican women politicians did when demanding quotas. But these attributes do not seem consistent with the acceptable range of attributes in the public political arena after the quota law.

Historically, motherhood has been a springboard for Mexican women to act and organize politically (Franceschet et al. 2016; Craske 1999; Rodríguez 2003). Symbolic motherhood centers on women’s contribution to the public sphere as “moral guides” with motherly experience. In other words, this ‘women we’ has a political force since women position themselves in opposition to male politicians, who are burdened by corruption and poorly maintained office, and offers ‘better’ representatives with other experiences who are linked to qualities of caregiving and consideration. In this way, Mexican women elevate female virtues from the private sphere to the public sphere and, as a result, juxtapose them against male traits of masculinity, and machismo. The positions in which female deputies constitute a ‘women we,’ as political representatives and symbolic mothers, come with affirmative connotations such as capacity, cooperation and caregiving and have an inherent dimension of agency. These values are
formulated so that they may contribute something specific (from the private sphere) to politics and the public arena. The verbal construction of a female political persona that emphasizes characteristics that relate to the private sphere carries features that traditionally ‘belong’ to women. As such, female politicians do not compete with men on ‘their’ terms but bring something new to the public political arena.

After the quota legislation is enacted, the language changes slightly and symbolic motherhood becomes less central as a feature linked to women. Instead, references are increasingly made to mothers and fathers, and male deputies also speak about parenthood. This transition from a ‘we women’ in-group based on symbolic motherhood towards a ‘we parents’ group is a fundamental change in how Mexican women have created themselves as a gendered group in the public sphere. Portrayals are created in relation to de facto motherhood both before and after the quota was adopted, but they are not that prominent and have changed slightly. After Mexican women gain guaranteed political representation, women and de facto motherhood are give a more problematized picture. Thus, when deputies, both female and male, speak about women as mothers, they are to a greater extent linked to characteristics such as “working mothers,” “abandoned mothers” and “single mothers,” i.e. additional nouns are linked to motherhood. These wordings are more closely correspond to how the Mexican society is organized and the factual division of gender roles and duties but, as described above, do not form a base for a ‘we women.’ However, such portrayals include a notion of the social structures and relational aspects that are at work.

This analysis shows that de facto motherhood is not linked to an obvious ‘we’ before the quota law. Mexican women are constituted as heads of household, as the sole breadwinners and teenage mothers, but a ‘women we’ is absent. This is done without associating men and their responsibilities to the family setting, at least not in direct relation to women’s explicit responsibilities. Thus, Mexican women are constituted as the persons in charge of the private economy but also those who nurture and care for children and relatives, tasks that are associated with the domestic sphere. As such, women are portrayed as the primary caregivers but also those responsible for managing the domestic sphere. In other words, a dual parenthood is not created when speaking about de facto motherhood. However, another interpretation is that if female politicians were to constitute themselves as a ‘women we’ based on de facto motherhood in conjunction with other collective identities, such as abandoned, teenage/young or single, this would call attention to socio-economic status...
and class, which would expose differences in resources and social background. This, in turn, would also call attention to the need for different policy solutions. The position of de facto motherhood does not seem to be able to capture this. It seems to be difficult for female deputies to identify with these underprivileged positions, which these different positions of de facto motherhood connote. Rather, female legislators need to constitute themselves as strong and authoritative. Thus, public politics seems to require a certain kind of (image of) politician; symbolic motherhood provides agency, while de facto motherhood does not.

The last empirical chapter centers on Mexican women as victims of male violence. There is no outspoken ‘women we’ nor a ‘they’ in the parliamentary language before the quota law, i.e. there is no in-group nor out-group present. Instead, female deputies refer to women as victims in general terms, that is, they do not identify themselves with this group, but at the same time, they turn Mexican women into an all-inclusive group in relation to violence, and all women become presumptive victims of men’s aggression. At the same time, men are not verbally identified as perpetrators, and the absence of references linguistically conceals not only the victims but also the aggressors. In parallel with this, male deputies constitute Mexican women, along with other groups such as elderly, children and disabled, as vulnerable before the quota law. Vulnerability is closely related to protection since the two concepts go hand in hand. Mexican male deputies constitute women as in need of protection, but it is unclear from whom or from what women need to be protected since this is not explicitly stated or clarified. In other words, male deputies construct women as in need of protection implicitly, and privileged men are the the protectors since this group is the only group not targeted in the statements.

Thus, female deputies do not speak about a ‘women we’ when talking about men’s violence against women and female deputies do not picture themselves as an included in the group that suffers from men’s aggression, even though statistics show that many of the female deputies might be exposed to violence. In other words, female politicians are not able to constitute themselves as victims of violence. If female politicians would have created a ‘women we,’ that is, an in-group, in relation to male violence, they would also be ascribed a position that denotes them as vulnerable, which would diminish their authority as political representatives and constitute them as fragile. Thus, the position of women as victims of male violence shows how discourses shape the conditions for politics, which in turn creates the ways it is possible to speak. In other words, the way women
(and men) are constituted through parliamentary language creates obstacles for elected representatives, and as a result, the conventional role of politician stands in conflict with ‘weak’ social identities, such as being a victim or belonging to disadvantaged groups such as underprivileged mothers.

From Women To Gender

Another key finding in this book is that the concept of gender becomes more salient in the parliamentary language over the timeframe that is studied, which uncovers a linguistic shift. However, this change needs to be discussed further since it differs between the subject positions and needs to be understood in different ways. Gender is sometimes equated with women, other times it refers to both women and men but is also used to highlight gender equality or a lack thereof. This occurs in all three subject positions, which means that they linguistically move away from a female position to a gender position, with an emphasis on gendered relations. However, this would require a focus on both women and men when using the term gender. But this does not seem to be the case, at least not in the empirical material analyzed in this study. In other words, it is not a given that the use of gender automatically leads to a focus on relational aspects. However, the introduction of gender together with the removal of the ‘women we’ might lead to a reduction in the empowerment the creation of a group identity can create.

Mexican men are included in the parliamentary language as fathers and parents in a new way in the latter period, which, to a certain extent, changes the picture of women as primary caregivers – at least linguistically. In other words, motherhood is somewhat reframed into parenthood and, by that, also compatible with the traditional male coded political leadership. Hence, when female politicians become less linked to maternalism, with its emphasis on caretaking and domestic management and female and male deputies are spoken about in terms of being parents, political gatekeepers might see greater strategic value in recruiting women to run for office. On the other hand, the positive and caring connotations that (symbolic) motherhood brings into public politics are phasing out, and this shows what is feasible and what characteristics are prominent in this arena.

The references made to women as victims of men’s violence are slightly different after the electoral reform. Women are still mostly referred to in

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124 To analyze the usage and content of the concept, gender has not been the aim of this study but would be interesting to investigate further.
general terms and in passive phrases. However, what is notable is that men are occasionally referred to as perpetrators. Moreover, male deputies also speak about violence against women, that is, men make representative claims in relation to male violence against women, which is a notable change. However, women are still not referred to directly as victims of violence but words like ‘gender’ and ‘family’ indicate that it is within close relationships that violence occurs. Hence, after the quota legislation, representative claims have changed in part but partly remain the same. Even so, men’s responsibility as aggressors or the constructions of Mexican masculinity in relation to violence against women do not have an explicit focus in the parliamentary language and instead center around the victims, i.e. around women. At the same time, when reviewing the material, words like ‘gender violence’ and ‘family violence’ and ‘sexual violence’, become more present. These terms include relational aspects to a higher degree, even though no actors are present. In other words, the use of gender and other concepts that indicate relational aspects do not fully shed light on the perpetrators or men’s responsibilities.

This study shows that Mexican male deputies make representative claims in relation to women after the introduction of a gender quota law that guarantees women a presence in the parliament, though on a small scale. This is done in relation to all three subject positions and can be interpreted in different ways. Firstly, the legislation made Mexican women an indelible factor in public politics and, as such, male politicians inevitably need to relate to women politicians as a group. In other words, there seems to be a growing acceptance of women as political actors in public politics. Another interpretation is that the increasing use of the concept of gender forces (male) politicians to think beyond women-men as polar opposites, and thereby start to speak about women and policy that is mainly directed to them. In conclusion, the development of the use of gender can be understood in two ways: women as a group is losing the political potency that a ‘women we’ inhabits, but at the same time, the concept of gender also offers new possibilities to focus on gender relations and the power relations that these bring about.
Discursive representation: Theoretical and Methodological Contributions

As Michael Saward (2006, 2010) and Judith Squires (2008) have suggested, the political language includes valuable information about which identities are constituted and how. This is the starting point for this study, and a theoretical and methodological approach is developed to guide empirical research. This dissertation has illustrated the usefulness of bringing critical discourse studies (CDS) to the representative claims approach in order to identify and analyze the formations of collective identities. Through the application of an analytical framework, this dissertation has offered a demonstration of how discursive representation in parliamentary language can be studied. Thus, even though scholars who use the representative claims approach argue in favor of an extra-parliamentary focus for empirical studies (Saward 2006; 2010; Squires 2008; de Wilde 2012; Gora and de Wilde 2019), this book shows the potential offered by performing research within parliaments. Politicians continuously make representative claims and the portrayals that are created within these affect what the political representatives, female deputies in this case, can say and do as politicians. Regarding the theoretical and methodological development in this book, the analytical approach and the empirical analysis have shown how a group (Mexican female representatives) is constituted within representative claims. Furthermore, the use of a feminist perspective acknowledges a discussion about gendered power relations and female legislators’ agency when in office. The approach does not portray women as powerless or as victims, but reveals the mechanisms of power in the daily politics of representation.

The benefit of working with a discursive analytical framework, with its emphasis on representative claims, is that this approach not only includes female politicians or feminist political representatives but also groups that are generally not included in research on women’s political representation, such as non-feminist women, male politicians and conservative political representatives. In other words, the analytical framework opens up the field to include groups other than those usually regarded as representing women (Celis and Childs 2012; Celis et al. 2014; Celis and Childs 2018). The empirical chapters have offered an analysis of a specific context, representative claims made in the national Chamber of Deputies, and I hope the study can be instructive in other settings and timelines and function as a springboard for further studies based on a discursive approach to political representation.
Furthermore, the introduction of a discursive approach offers an additional dimension to theories on political representation as well as new insights into empirical studies. Even though the number of elected women has increased worldwide, women still encounter difficulties once they occupy elected office. When women enter politics, they are often confronted with a firmly established masculine culture, which might constrain women legislators’ political work in different ways. There has been increased attention given to the inner workings of parliaments and to how the ‘rules of the game’ are gendered in institutional settings. Feminist institutionalist scholars have shown that changes in the formal rules do not automatically modify informal rules, such as norms, values and ideas within political institutions (Bjarnegard 2013; Krook and Mackay 2010). According to feminist institutionalism, political institutions are gendered and shape political life, since “gendered institutions are crucial for understanding power inequalities in public and political life” (Mackay 2011: 182). This approach takes various forms when looking at diverse empirical data. However, researchers are engaged in analyzing formal and informal ‘rules-in-use.’ In her comparative analysis on Argentina and Chile, Susan Franceschet shows that formal and informal institutions structure the legislative processes and thereby influence how female legislators can act, and as a consequence, enable or obstruct positive policy outcomes for women (Franceschet 2011). Her study also shows that female legislators who break informal rules have to pay a higher price than men since they challenge gendered norms and conventions (Franceschet 2011). There are also scholars engaged in discursive institutionalism (DI) who shed light on the way institutional contexts shape discourses and how discourses may change parts of a broader institutional setting through “strategic framing” (Freidenvall & Krook 2011). However, an approach relating to discursive political representation adds to the knowledge of women’s status within a parliamentarian context and shows that language matters. This holds especially true if we consider that the way people are constituted has an effect on their agency and possibility of engaging in politics. In this sense, the results in this book are also about the ‘rules of the game’ in public politics, since the book focuses on what is possible for (female) politicians to say and how they may act. The constitution of social identities is not a neutral process but is circumscribed by prevailing norms and values in a specific context. In the following section, I will discuss how this can be understood in relation to Mexican female representatives.
Empirical data presented in previous research suggests that the presence of elected female representatives makes a difference in elected bodies, especially non-conservative women politicians (Celis et al. 2008; Dovi 2006, 2010; Lovenduski & Guadagnini 2010). The empirical findings in this study confirm that women make a difference since women are the protagonists when making representative claims in relation to ‘women’s issues.’ Moreover, research has shown that conservative women act on different issues and articulate other conceptions of what is in “the interest of women” and thereby challenge the public discourse about women’s interests (Schreiber 2010). The conclusion in this book points in another direction, namely that there are no significant differences between conservative and left(-ish) Mexican female representatives when making representative claims in relation to Mexican women in the Chamber of Deputies, at least not in the subject positions that are at center of this study (but this does not speak to how they actually act or vote in particular policy areas).

In other words, Mexican female legislators constitute a ‘women we’ with links to similar characteristics and features regardless of political ideology. Thus, there seem to be some unifying female aspects around which women politicians can construct themselves verbally. Research shows that Mexican female legislators came together early to exchange strategies and make common plans; they also formed cross-party working groups and organized multiparty conventions (Bruhn 2003; Piscopo 2011a, 2016; Tarrés 2006). In this way, the pacts that have been made among Mexican female politicians must be considered to be an explanation for why women from left to right make similar representative claims. In other words, my research confirms earlier studies and sheds new light on how Mexican women are constituted within these claims and these positions are, by extension, significant in what female legislators can say and do in the political sphere. This study also shows that male deputies make representative claims to some extent after the implementation of the quota law, which is significant. The correlation between this change is and women’s guaranteed presence in the political assembly cannot be med decisively; this study can only confirm the change. Even though Mexican male deputies start to speak about women, the empirical material shows that Mexican female legislators are the predominant group when it comes to emphasizing women’s issues in the Mexican parliament. Consequently, women are the ones who generally articulated the subject positions available to them. In other words, the conclusion that can be drawn is that (privileged) women have the power to (re)negotiate their positions, but within hegemonic male discourses.
Contributions to the Study of Women in Mexican Politics

Previous research on women’s political representation has largely focused on an analysis of the effects of formal and informal processes. Such case studies have been done on Mexico explaining the process of implementing obligatory quotas the public elections and the advantage of informal networks among female politicians. Moreover, research focuses on candidate selection prior to elections and how the institutional design of federalism have shaped structures and how this has effected women and how political networks, clientelism, and political capital have influenced women politicians, while others have analyzed political recruitment processes and the role of political parties (Baldez 2004, 2007; Piscopo 2014, 2016; Rodríguez 2003, 2012; Vidal Correa 2017; Zetterberg 2009b, 2008, 2012, 2018). Comparative studies have explained the representation of women in politics in Mexico and elsewhere and have focused on the effects of the quota regulation, barriers for women in politics and determining whether Mexican women represent women (Araújo & Garcia 2006; Htun & Jones 2002; Krook & Zetterberg 2014; Piscopo 2011a). Hence, this book contributes to the research on women’s political representation in Mexico during a time of political change when Mexican women are first guaranteed a presence in the political system.

In her influential book on women in Latin American politics, Elsa Chaney (1973) found that the experiences of motherhood were translated into women’s roles in the political sphere. According to Chaney, this was characterized in two ways: women in politics are more feminine than feminist and women will think and act differently from men based on their experiences of motherhood and as caregivers. According to Franceschet et al. (2016), women in Latin America still use motherhood to define their policy-making expertise even though this has changed and women are now challenging the relationship between motherhood and politics. Today, women use their professional credentials to a greater extent to justify their careers. Even so, Franceschet et al. write, “scholars must acknowledge the continued resonance of motherhood” in order to understand women’s presence in politics today (2016: 31). The analysis in this book shows that motherhood needs to be divided into symbolic and de facto motherhood in order to be fully understandable. Mexican female deputies constitute themselves as ‘good’ politicians, able to cooperate and bring female virtues into the public political sphere when creating a ‘women we’ around
symbolic motherhood, but de facto motherhood is not a base for a ‘women we.’ De facto motherhood intersects with other identities related to socio-economic status, ethnicity, age, etc. To create a ‘women we’ across these axes might call for a problematization of the social conditions for Mexican mothers and, by that, political solutions. The increasing use of mother and father and parents shows a linguistic change towards a dual parenthood, which might lead to an increased focus on shared responsibilities and, by extension, social changes.

The introduction of the concept gender to the Mexican parliamentary language also demonstrates a semantic change over time. Gender includes an increasing focus on the relational aspects in society, but this study shows that the concept is sometimes used as equivalent to women or is used without emphasizing the interpersonal features, i.e. the concept loses its built-in potential. However, in order to fully understand the usage (and the outcome) of the concept of gender in the Mexican political context, a more comprehensive investigation will be needed than what is reviewed in this study.

This book shows that the implementation of guaranteed political representation in Mexico for women through electoral quotas situates female politicians in a position where they move away from an apparent ‘women we’ based on political representation and symbolic motherhood. Thus, they displace themselves from the nexus public/private to a more gender-neutral language. Here, the focus on gender relations can be elaborated upon, but at the same time, such linguistic preferences might dissolve the strength that a ‘women we’ inhabits and the potency for changes in politics that a link to the private sphere might inhabit. After implementing the quota legislation, features relating to symbolic motherhood diminish. Thus, Mexican female legislators move towards a position in which they gain credibility and agency on masculine terms. This is what Carole Pateman calls the “Wollstonecraft’s dilemma” (1988, in Baker 2019: 4), which means that women can be accepted as equal and as political actors only insofar as they act like men. The diminishing of a ‘women we’ alongside a gender ‘neutral’ language indicate a masculinization of everyday politics.

Concluding Remarks

Can a feminist critique be articulated outside the patriarchal and sexist discourses they are questioning? I would state that in everyday political
representation, or to use Saward’s terminology, in the representative claims (Saward 2006, 2010), dominated groups have to negotiate their positions within dominant discourses. This book shows that Mexican female legislators position themselves in a male dominant political sphere. Thus, the construction of collective identities needs to be understood within a theoretical framework that acknowledges gendered power relations and domination. Hence, subjects are determined by the power relations in which they are situated, regardless of where and when. Gender is constituted in different ways by a variety of actors in the representative claim process. These constructions have implications for the types of gender relations that are at work in Mexican politics, and power is present in the formation of collective identities of femaleness throughout the study. Placing the findings in this study in relation to previous research sheds new light on the complexities of women’s political representation, and the focus on Mexico provides new country-specific (single case) knowledge. Moreover, the book shows that Mexican women struggle to navigate around the various obstacles that exist in the discourse of what a politician is – an authority that (by nature) has agency. Women, as a group, have the advantage of not fitting into a masculine rationale but have to relate to this, i.e. they constitute themselves in relation to this even though it might limit their opportunities doing politics.
Appendix

The selection of journals; year, month and date (*Diario de los Debates*)

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the website. Therefore, there are references to the website before that date.

Även om kvinnors politiska representation har ökat avsevärt över hela världen de senaste decennierna, framför allt med hjälp av könskvotering eller lagar som kräver garantierade platser för kvinnor i parlamentet, möter kvinnliga parlamentariker fortfarande stora hinder när de är i tjänst. Samtidigt uttrycks ett behov av förnyelse inom forskningen om politisk representation i en föränderlig värld. I linje med denna anmodan undersöker följande avhandling hur diskurser och språkliga konstruktioner av kvinnor i det parlamentariska språket sätter gränser och skapar möjligheter för vad kvinnliga politiker kan göra och säga som politiker. Genom att introducera diskursiv representation som analytiskt fokus analyseras konstitutiva aspekter av politisk representation och hur dessa påverkar kvinnliga parlamentariker. Syftet med avhandlingen är därmed att undersöka den diskursiva representationen av kvinnor i det mexikanska parlamentariska språket och då mer specifikt kvinnliga politiska repesentanter.

Empirisk forskning om politisk representation undersöker ofta institutionella aspekter snarare än att se representation som en process. Avhandlingen tar avstamp i statsvetaren Michael Sawards teori om "representative claims", i vilken språket är centralt och ses som konsituerande. Utgångspunkten utgörs således av uttalanden från politiker i

Utöver teorin om ”representative claims” som politisk representation, utgår avhandlingen från kritiska diskursstudier och feministisk teori. I detta teoretiska ramverk inbegrips också skapandet av ett ‘vi’ (in-groups) och ett ‘dem’ (out-groups), samt hur egenskaper, kvaliteter och sädrag som tillskrivs kvinnor konstituerar dem på vissa sätt. I avhandlingen utvecklas en teoretisk och metodisk ram som gör det möjligt att identifiera och analysera representativa påståenden och de subjektspositioner som skapas genom dessa. Tidigare forskning om kvinnors politiska representation har gett en bred och djup förståelse för deskriptiv, substantiell och symbolisk representation. Denna studie breddar fältet ytterligare och bidrar därmed till förståelsen av de hinder kvinnliga politiker (fortfarande) möter.

Tre subjektspositioner står i centrum för denna studie: kvinnor som politiska representanter, som mödrar och som offer för mäns våld. I de empiriska kapitlen visar jag att ett ’vi’ och ett ’de’ är konstruerade på olika sätt i förhållande till de olika positionerna. Avhandlingen synliggör att kvinnliga parlamentariker konstituerar ett ”vi”, dvs en inkludernade grupp, i förhållande till politisk representation och symboliskt moderskap medan det i relation till de facto moderskap och som offer för manligt våld inte finns någon tydlig vi-grupp.

Under den tidsperiod som studeras är politisk representation, av förklarliga skäl, en central fråga för kvinnliga politiker eftersom beslutet om kvotering till allmänna val är aktuell. Det tydliga och uttalade ’viet’ i relation till politisk representativitet skapas av och för kvinnliga parlamentariker oavsett ideologisk bakgrund. Även i relation till symboliskt moderskap, vilket har positiva konnotationer i Mexiko, skapas en tydlig vi-grupp, som gradvis försvinner efter kvoteringslagstiftningen införs. I relation till de facto moderskap (som inkluderar kollektiva identiteter såsom ”ung moder”, ”övergiven moder” och ”ensamstående moder”) skapas emellertid inget ’vi’. Detta indikerar att traditionella attribut såsom moderskap inte har någon självlklar plats i offentlig mexikansk politik, men att symboliskt moderskap ändå kan fungera som en gemensam politisk plattform utifrån vilken kvinnor
kan agera. I relation till positionen som offer för mäns våld konstitueras ingen vi-grupp, vilket tyder på att mexikanska kvinnliga politiker placerar denna identitet bortom sig själva. Att inte skapa ett ’vi’ kring denna subjektposition kan tolkas som att kvinnliga politiker inte kan konstituera sig som ’svaga’ och/eller sårbara. En möjlig tolkning är att politikerrollen inbegriper föreställningar om (maskulin) styrka och makt, något som skulle äventyras av en identifikation med sårbara och underprivilegerade positioner.


I stort utgör studien ett bidrag till tidigare forskning om kvinnors politiska representation på framför allt två sätt. Metodologiskt och teoretiskt bidrar den med formulerandet av ett konceptuellt ramverk. Dessutom kan studien ses som ett empiriskt bidrag till tidigare forskning om kvinnor i mexikansk politik, där ett fokus på representativa anspråk visar hur diskursivt konstituerandet av kvinnliga politiker skapar ramarna för vad som är möjligt att formulera. Sammantaget visar studien hur mexikanska kvinnliga politiker befinner sig i en politisk kontext av manlig dominans, inom vilken de förhandlar sin närvaro.
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