

Intersectionality and Social Movements

A discourse analysis of intersectionality within the Zapatista
movement



LUND
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Abstract

The Zapatista movement is a multilayered movement fighting unequal power structures and oppression. The movement has from the beginning incorporated a large number of women, both as members and as supporters. However, does the Zapatista movement recognize the multiple axes of oppression that women within the movement face? The aim of this thesis is to uncover how the theoretical ideas behind the concept of intersectionality are understood and embedded within the texts produced by the Zapatista movement. The theoretical framework of this thesis is based on the feminist theory of intersectionality, and the methodological framework that guides this research is a discourse analysis of two texts from the Zapatista movement. The findings reveal that, even though the concept of intersectionality is not directly referred to in the text, the theoretical ideas behind the concept are recognized and understood as the multiple layers of oppression faced by women are clearly discussed and acknowledged.

Key words: intersectionality, social movement, discourse, Zapatistas, oppression

Words: 9919

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1 Introduction

The Zapatista movement is a complex movement fighting for the rights of the indigenous population in Mexico. Fighting for increased democratization, indigenous rights and against the increasing globalization that the world has experienced, the Zapatista movement resembles a social movement with many layers. Another fight, although not as apparent, within the movement is the fight for women's rights by the indigenous women. Approximately one-third of the combatants within The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (in Spanish; Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, from now on EZLN) and about half of the supporters of the Zapatista movement were female at the uprising in 1994 (Kampwirth 2002, p. 84). Furthermore, from day one, the Zapatista movement publicly stated their position on women's rights through the Women's Revolutionary Law, which is more than any resembling organization in Central America has previously done (Kampwirth 2002, p. 112). However, how does a social movement such as the Zapatista movement use theories of intersectionality to understand the multiple layers of oppression the women within the movement faces? This thesis will use discourse analysis to uncover the way that the Zapatista movement understands and acknowledges the idea of intersectionality within its arguments.

1.1 Background of the Zapatista Movement

On January 1st, 1994, the EZLN, mostly constituted of Mayan people, declared war on the Mexican government (Ávila 2011). As a symbolic gesture, this was on the same day that Mexico stepped into the order of the "First World" through the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (Gilbreth and Otero 2001). The Zapatista social movement is a multilayered movement due to its complexity, why it is difficult to give one clear explanation of its development. It is an anti-neoliberal and anti-globalization social movement (Khokhar 2013), and it can be argued that it came about as a response to the changes in the international political economy that had taken place since the 80s, including the increase of globalization. However, it was also a social and indigenous rebellion acting as a response to the long history of repression of indigenous people by the Mexican

government. This led the Mayan people to fight for increased democracy and social change (Kampwirth 2002, p. 83-84), demanding the rights to a decent life, education, healthcare, adequate food, work and land (Ávila 2011). Hence, the 1994 Zapatista rebellion had several causes, but in the end, it was an indigenous rebellion sparked by years and yeast of frustration due to economic inequality and political repression experienced by the Mayan population of Chiapas (Kampwirth 2002, p. 89). Even though the EZLN is only part of the Zapatista movement, the two may be used interchangeably during this thesis.

1.1.1 Women within the Zapatista Movement

Throughout time, female combatants have been incorporated into several armed rebellions in Central America, and with the Zapatista rebellion, the case is no different (Kampwirth 2002, p. 84). However, what was different with the Zapatista case, and why the high number of female combatants and supporters is interesting, is the gender structures embedded in the Mayan culture. The Mayan gender roles are highly patriarchal, and women tend to have a second-class status with a low level of self-determination (Kampwirth 2002, p. 85), why it is surprising that such a large number of women defied the traditional gender barriers and joined the EZLN.

The first expression of the feminist agenda within the Zapatista movement was the Women's Revolutionary Law which was published on January 1st, 1994, the day of the Zapatista uprising, in the booklet *El despertador Mexicano* (Kampwirth 2002, p. 112). The law goes beyond merely asking women to join the battle, by incorporating actual demands on women's rights jointly developed by Mayan women (Kampwirth 2004, p. 113). An interesting aspect of the law is that it reaches into both the private and public spheres of society. By directing the demands to different actors in society, and not just the state, one could argue that the Women's Revolutionary Law catches the general gender imbalances in society and recognizes that the gender inequality embedded in the system is not just a governmental problem but is grounded in larger structural issues.

1.2 Significance of Topic

The Zapatista movement is a topic that has been highly discussed. Much previous research has been conducted on the movement and its different aspects, especially its connection to democratization and political economy. This thesis will take another strand and will examine how the Zapatista movement understands and

recognizes the idea of intersectionality. Since such a larger number of women are affiliated with the Zapatista movement, it is interesting to explore how the movement understand the multiple burdens that women face, and how these ideas are incorporated into their arguments of structural injustices. The Women's Revolutionary Law reflects an effort by the women to address the structural injustices embedded in society that directly affect women. Therefore, it is of importance to examine how explicit gender-related oppression is addressed by a movement that is, first and foremost, a movement about injustices due to race and class, and not an expressed feminist movement. It is important to emphasize that this thesis will not discuss the practical aspect of strategies implemented by the Zapatista movement due to intersectional oppression. Instead, this thesis takes more of a philosophical standpoint and discusses how the theoretical ideas of intersectionality are embedded within the arguments of the Zapatista movement.

It can be argued, that since theoretical ideas of intersectionality are often used to understand the multiple axes of dominance that are imposed on minority women in contrast to more privileged women, most often referring to white women from the middle- and upper-class, it is of interest to switch the single-mindedness and instead center on minority women in contrast to minority men. This may contribute to the larger academic debate by exemplifying how social movements use ideas of intersectionality within their discourse to include a larger array of individuals and groups who are facing different forms of oppression.

1.3 Specific Aims and Research Question

The aim of this thesis is to shed light on how the Zapatista movement has embedded the idea and understanding of intersectionality into their arguments. This is done through a discourse analysis of two texts produced by the movement. The research question that guides this thesis is:

- *How are the theoretical ideas of intersectionality understood and embedded within the arguments of the Zapatista movement?*

1.4 Disposition of Thesis

The next chapter will discuss the theoretical ideas of intersectionality based on previous literature written on the topic. Furthermore, there will be a definition of the concept of social movement. Chapter three discusses the methodology that has

been used to guide the analysis. Chapter four contains the analysis of two chosen Zapatista documents, as well as a joint discussion on intersectionality within the Zapatista movement. Finally, chapter five will comprise a conclusion of the findings of the research.

2 Theoretical Framework and Discussion of Previous Literature

This chapter will account both for the theoretical framework that has guided this thesis, and the previous theoretical literature on intersectionality. The theoretical framework is based on previous literature on the theoretical ideas of intersectionality. Due to lack of research resembling the research done in this thesis, I have chosen to combine the section on previous literature and the section on the theoretical framework. The reasoning behind is that most existing literature either takes a theoretical approach on intersectionality, as seen below, or a practical approach on intersectionality. The theoretical work that has been done on intersectionality has assisted me in developing a theoretical framework. However, the research done on the practical aspects of intersectionality appears rather irrelevant to this study, since this study aims at uncovering how the idea of intersectionality is embedded in the thoughts of the Zapatista movement, and not how the movement practically implements strategies of intersectionality. Furthermore, this chapter will entail a discussion and definition of the term “social movement”. Practically it is important to state that even though the words “oppression”, “discrimination”, “marginalization” and “domination” have slightly different meanings, they are used interchangeably throughout this thesis.

2.1 Theory of Intersectionality

The concept of intersectionality reveals the multiple dimension of discrimination that individuals and groups may face due to the interaction of systems of oppression (BRIDGE 2013, p. 29). The theory of intersectionality is a feminist theory coined by the feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) and is mainly used to understand the multiple axes of dominance imposed on minority women (Lépinard 2014). It is of great importance for social movements to adopt a holistic strategy that recognizes that inequality is based on many different identities, such as gender, class, race etc. By adopting such a strategy, fragmentation is avoided

while, at the same time, strong coalitions are built, pursuing human rights for everyone (BRIDGE 2013, p. 29).

Crenshaw (1989) uses the concept of intersectionality early on to develop a black feminist critique of how race and gender often are treated as “mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis” (Crenshaw 1989, p. 130). She argues that the single-axis framework, only viewing discrimination from one axis, either gender or race, undermines black women as the discrimination in question is only seen from the privileged members of the discriminated group, in this case, the white women or the black men. When focusing only on the most privileged unit, there is a reinforcement of the marginalization of the multiple-burdened, which skews the way discrimination is understood. Furthermore, by neglecting to focus on all units of a discriminated group and only use the privileged part of the discriminated, the examination of the concepts sexism and racism becomes one-sided and the arguments built on experiences that only represents a part of the larger discriminated group, reducing the complexity of the phenomenon (Crenshaw 1989). Crenshaw takes her point of departure in a critique of both feminist theory and antiracist politics, why she uses her discussion to underline how the single-axis framework increases marginalization of black women. In her ending discussion, she concludes that to make any progress in liberating black people of racial subordination, theories and strategies that are to mirror the needs of the black community has to include an examination of sexist discrimination (Crenshaw 1989), otherwise one could argue that only the privileged part of the black community will be liberated. The same goes for feminist theory which requires an inclusion of racial issues before all women can be liberated. Hence, both for anti-racist politics and feminist theory it is essential that they acknowledge the intersectionality that some of the movements’ members experience (Crenshaw 1989).

Intersectionality rests on a bed of four main ideas as summarized by Lépinard (2014) “(1) The intersection of at least two axes of domination, such as race and gender, constitutes a social category with a specific experience of social life; (2) oppression is not experienced in a segmented but in a unified way, because social relations are interlocked rather than simply added one on top of the other; (3) this experience of a complex form of oppression shapes subjectivity and a specific standpoint and specific political interests; and (4) these political interests have been denied or misrepresented by theories or policies and need to be restored to the political agenda” (Lépinard 2014, p. 878). Hence, it can be argued that intersectionality should be considered within social movements when a part of its constituents belongs to multiple-marginalized groups such as the women within the Zapatista movement, who are marginalized both by race and gender. Crenshaw argues that intersectional oppression is not merely adding up

the oppression due to race and the oppression due to gender, since the intersectional oppression is greater than merely the sum of two axes of oppression, why any analysis not concentrating on the intersectional aspect of oppression, cannot truly address the way in which black women are oppressed (Crenshaw 1989, 140). Even though intersectionality, as discussed by Crenshaw, focuses on the intersectional aspect of oppression between gender and race, the term can also refer to “the critical insight that race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but as reciprocally constructing phenomena that in turn shape complex social inequalities” (Collins 2015, p. 2). Therefore, it is possible to use the feminist theory of intersectionality in a broad array of intersectional issues, the important part being, that there is an intersection of at least two axes of domination. In the case of this thesis, there are three axes of domination, which are that the women within the Zapatista movement are both women and indigenous and poor, hence oppressed due to gender, race, and class. It can be argued that by not implementing an intersectional analysis to an indigenous social movement, one would be deceived into thinking that all indigenous people are similar and oppressed on the same premises, which is not the case. Therefore it is important to acknowledge that some parts of a marginalized group may be marginalized in more than one way, making them extra vulnerable.

An important term that relates to the issue of intersectionality is *kyriarchy* which has been developed by Schüssler Fiorenza. The term refers to the “interlocking and multiplicative systems of domination and submission” (Kwok 2009, p. 191), and acknowledges the fact that women are not only oppressed due to gender but that women facing various reasons for oppression are oppressed in an interlocking way and not in several separate ways. Hence kyriarchy encapsulates the essence of intersectionality, that oppressive systems are interconnected and should be analyzed that way.

Thus, the theoretical framework that is surrounding this thesis is based on the feminist theory of intersectionality. The theory was initially developed to stress that women of color were oppressed on various axes, why the theory is seen as a critique of feminist theory often viewing women oppression from the perspective of the most privileged part of the group, most often white women. It is also a critique of anti-racist theory that often argues on behalf of the most privileged part of that group, most often black men. Therefore, women of color were disregarded both in feminist theory and antiracist theory as the groups within the domains were viewed as a homogenous unit. In this thesis, the focus of intersectionality coincides more with the critique of anti-racist theory, since the Zapatista movement is a minority movement oppressed foremost due to race and class. However, the women within the movement are also facing oppression on

the axis of gender. Therefore, I argue that it is important that the theoretical notions behind intersectionality are embedded within the ideas of the movement. If this is not the case, the group may be degenerated to a homogenous group where the privileged part, the men, may be benefitted on the expense of the less privileged, the women. Furthermore, when dealing with gender oppression, a form of oppression due to social structures so heavily embedded in society, it is of great importance that the understanding of the double oppression faced by women is incorporated into the movement. Otherwise, these structures will assumably be reinforced within the movement itself.

2.2 Social movement

The Zapatista movement is referred to as a social movement, why it is important to distinguish the definition of such. A social movement will in this thesis be defined as “an organized set of constituents pursuing a common political agenda of change through collective action” (Batliwala 2012 p. 3). The Zapatista movement did not directly try to affect the electoral democracy by gaining official power, instead they wanted to change the social structures from below (Khokhar 2013). Despite this, I argue that they did try to affect the political environment and the skewed social justice that this environment produced. Furthermore, the above definition of a social movement is based on these seven characteristics: “1) A constituency base or membership that is mobilized and collectivized; 2) Members collectivized in either formal or informal organizations; 3) [...] Continuity over time [...]; 4) A clear political agenda i.e., the constituency has a shared analysis of the social/structural conditions that have disempowered them, and the changes they seek to make in these structures; 5) Collective actions and activities [...]; 6) Use a variety of actions and strategies [...]; and 7) Clear internal or external targets they will engage in the change process [*these can for example be the movements own members or communities, the state, international institutions etc.*.]” (Batliwala 2012 p. 4). I find that this definition covers all the aspects of a social movement that I consider important. Furthermore, the Zapatista movement fits into all the above-mentioned characteristics, why I argue that it is possible to categorize them, amongst other things, as a social movement. In this thesis it is stated, however, that the Zapatista movement is not a feminist movement.

A feminist movement incorporates all the above-mentioned characteristics of a social movement, and in addition to that, they have certain feminist features which other social movements do not have such as “1) Their agenda is built from a gendered analysis of the problem or situation they are confronting or seeking to

change; 2) Women form a critical mass of the movement's membership or constituency [...]; 3) They espouse feminist values and ideology [...]; 4) They have systematically built and centered women's leadership in the movement [...]; 5) The movement's political goals are gendered; 6) They use gendered strategies and methods [...]; and 7) They create more feminist organizations [...]" (Batliwala 2012 p. 6). By defining the characteristics that signifies a social movement and the additional ones that signifies a feminist movement, it can be argued that the Zapatista movement is a social movement, however not a feminist movement.

3 Methodology

This chapter entails a discussion of the methodology applied, the methods used for data collection and the limitations this study.

3.1 Discourse analysis

The analysis in this thesis takes the form of a discourse analysis. A discourse can be understood as “a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)” (Winther Jorgensen and Philips 2002, p. 1). The reason for choosing a discourse analysis is that the aim is to uncover how the Zapatista movement recognized the theoretical ideas of intersectionality within their texts. By uncovering underlying ideas and themes in a text, my aim was to discover the social world is understood by the Zapatista movement. This is a constructionist approach within the ontological debate, as constructionism prescribes that social phenomena are created through social interaction and that not one objective truth can be established (Bryman 2012, p. 33). Hence, I found that a textual analysis that takes its ontological standpoint in constructionism, such as discourse analysis would be appropriate. Within the field of discourse analysis, several approaches can be distinguished. Central for most of them is that they take a social constructionist standpoint. Social constructionism takes the position that knowledge should not be taken for granted and knowledge should not be treated as one objective truth. Instead, the way that we view the world is bound by social processes. Furthermore, it finds that people are made up of the history and culture in which they are embedded, and the way that the social world is understood is shaped and reinforced by social processes. A discourse, then, is a social action that produces the social world (Winther Jorgensen and Philips 2002, p. 5-6), and the way one understands social reality is through language (Winther Jorgensen and Philips 2002, p. 8-9).

This thesis is inspired by Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory. “Discourse theory aims at an understanding of the social as a discursive construction whereby, in principle, all social phenomena can be analysed using discourse analytical tools” (Winther Jorgensen and Philips 2002, p. 24). A main idea of the discourse theory is that discourses and the meanings of things are

never completely fixed and therefore there are continuous struggles within the social sphere about how to define and understand the world (Winther Jorgensen and Philips 2002, p. 24).

Even though Laclau and Mouffe use a more theoretical and abstract approach than a practical approach to discourse analysis, it is still possible to use some concrete tools from their approach to perform analyses of empirical material (Winther Jorgensen and Philips 2002, p. 49). This part will account for the practical tools borrowed from discourse theory to execute the discourse analysis in this thesis. The first important concept is *nodal point*. A nodal point is a central sign which other signs will be arranged around (Winther Jorgensen and Philips 2002, p. 26), this means that the meaning of the other signs is dependent on the relationship between the nodal point and the sign. The nodal point in this discourse analysis will be intersectionality. It is essential to mention that I am not only referring solely to the term intersectionality since it may be embedded implicitly within the texts rather than explicitly. The next concept used in the analysis is *elements*. Elements are signs that may have various potential meanings; their meanings are still to be fixed (Winther Jorgensen and Philips 2002, p. 27). The elements analyzed in this thesis are in relation to gender, class, and race. Hence words such as man, women, male, female, indigenous, poor, but also words such as oppression and dominance. The way that the elements receives their meaning, and become *moments* is through *articulation* which is “every practice that established a relation between elements such that the identity of the elements is modified” (Winther Jorgensen and Philips 2002, p. 28). Hence, elements receive their meaning depending on how they are put in relation to other elements and the nodal point. The analysis performed below will investigate the relationship between the elements and the nodal point intersectionality. Furthermore, there will be an examination of the connotations of words relating to the aforementioned elements and intersectionality. It is important to note, that the discourse analysis in this thesis has only used some of the tools developed in discourse theory. I find, however, that these are sufficient to come to a conclusion on how the Zapatista movement understands and acknowledges intersectionality within their texts. Additionally, “discourse theory suggests that we focus on the specific expressions in their capacity as articulations: what meanings do they establish by positioning elements in particular relationships with one another, and what meaning potentials do they exclude?” (Winther Jorgensen and Philips 2002, p. 29), a focus I argue has been incorporated in the analysis presented below.

An important aspect of the discourse analysis is that the aim is not to discover the objective truth since there is no objective truth. The aim is not either to discover “the reality behind the discourse”, or to judge what is true and what is false in the statements. Instead, the aim is to work with what has actually been

stated and discover similarities and differences in and between statements (Winther Jorgensen and Philips 2002, p. 21).

3.2 Data Collection

The data used to perform this discourse analysis is two documents produced by the Zapatista movement. The documents have been sampled through a purposive sampling strategy which is used when the researcher wishes to strategically sample units that are relevant to the research question (Bryman 2012, p. 418). The chosen documents have been selected based on certain criteria. The first document is a *communiqué* which can be argued to be a formal statement that is outwards directed. By choosing such a document I found that it possible to analyze the formal ideas of intersectionality within the movement. The second document is a letter published by the EZLN to the women within the Zapatista troops, written by Subcomandante Marcos, who is a front figure and has often been seen as the public face of the Zapatista movement. This document is less formal, as it is directed to a group within the movement. I found that by choosing documents that differ in formal status, it would be possible to see whether the understanding and acknowledgment of intersectionality would differ depending on the formality of the context. It is important to state that in the second text chosen for analysis, it is only the first half of the text that relates to the topic of intersectionality why the focus of analysis has been on this part. Both documents are written in a direct connection to women, more specifically in relation to the International Women's day. Choosing documents that are related to women can both be a limitation and an advantage. It can be argued that there in these documents automatically will be a focus on women, why a discussion on intersectionality most likely will be present. On the other hand, the Zapatista movement is such a complex movement, with various aims, that had one chosen documents that had no relation to women, it is likely that the idea of intersectionality would not be discussed. Since the aim of this research is to grasp the philosophical understanding of intersectionality as it is viewed by the Zapatista movement, it is only natural to choose documents with a higher chance of the ideas being discussed.

When choosing to use documents as sources it is important to be aware of the context and purpose surrounding the text. It can be argued that a written text is more a statement of the author's worldview than a factually based documentation and that all texts are a product of its time and surroundings, why one needs to bear in mind the bias of each text. When analyzing the documents, I have at all times considered the "contextual integrity" behind (McLennan and Prinsen 2014, p. 82-

83), meaning that I have been aware of the context in which the text was written. However, as the methodological framework is a discourse analysis, these considerations are already embedded in the thought behind the analysis. Furthermore, when conducting a discourse analysis, the aim is never to reach an objective truth, instead, the aim is to examine the texts for what has actually been stated and analyze these statements within their context.

3.3 Limitations and Delimitations

The first limitation is the language barrier between the researcher and the Zapatista movement. The original language of the Zapatista documents is Spanish, a language I do not comprehend well enough to execute academic research in. Hence, the documents analyzed have previously been translated into English by an unknown external translator, which may have caused some of the original meaning to be lost. This language barrier has also limited me to the number of available documents, since not all documents have been translated, why I have had a smaller array of documents to sample from.

Another point worth noting is that since approaches to discourse analysis are based on a social constructionist perspective, where reality and truth are socially constructed, and no objective truth can be found (Jorgensen and Philips 2002, p. 21-22), the findings of the research can be argued as also being subjective and constructed by the reality that the researcher herself is embedded in, hence the replicability and generalizability is weak. Had another researcher done the exact same research, the findings may have come out completely different.

A delimitation is that only two texts have been analyzed. It would have been interesting to analyze a larger number of documents to enhance the strength of the conclusion. However, due to the scope of this thesis, this was not possible. I found that, based on the discourse analysis requiring a substantial and detailed analysis, it would then be better to choose fewer documents and analyze them more detailed, than choosing a larger number of documents which would then be treated more superficial. Further research on the topic could focus on how the understanding of intersectionality by the movement may have changed throughout time.

4 Analysis

This section will entail a discourse analysis of two texts relating to the Zapatista movement. Based on the methodological framework described above, both texts have been analyzed focusing on the relationship between the nodal point, intersectionality, and the elements arranged around the nodal point, such as race, class, gender, and words in relation to these. Furthermore, a specific emphasis has been on connotations of words and underlying ideas of the texts. In section 4.3 there will be a combined discussion of the analyses where a joint argument, relating to intersectionality within the movement, is made. All texts have been analyzed according to the same guidelines and structure. The structure of the analysis is as follows:

1. Formalities of the text including
 - a. Author
 - b. Recipient
 - c. Context
2. How is intersectionality addressed and recognized in the text?
3. How is the power relation between men and women presented in the arguments?
4. Conclusion of analysis

The part is in relation to the official framework of the text. The next part relates directly to the concept of intersectionality and incorporates issue such as recognition and understanding of intersectionality, the importance of addressing the issue and on what level the issue is discussed. The last part regards the power structures presented in the texts.

4.1 Analysis of EZLN communique on March 9, 1996

1. Formalities of the text

The author of the text is the EZLN and the receivers of the text are clearly stated in the first four lines

“To the people of Mexico:
To the Peoples and governments of the world:
To the national and international press:

Brothers and sisters:”
(EZLN 1996)

This introduction states indicates that the text is both written as an external and internal source. External as it communicates to the world outside of the movement and internal as it also addresses its own members in the fourth line “brothers and sisters”, including both women and men of the movement. It is not formally known that “brothers and sisters” is directed at the internal members, it could also be directed to other people that the Zapatista movement identifies with, such as other indigenous people, poor people or people oppressed in other ways. However, I argue that the blank line between the first three stated receivers and the fourth could indicate an invisible line between external and internal receivers. Furthermore, an argument could be that directing the text to the national and international press, is a way of directing it to people throughout the whole world, using the press as a connection link. Hence, on one hand, the external receivers are both formal and informal actors in all arrays of the world, while, on the other hand, the text is an internal piece of communication as well.

The text is written as a *communiqué*, a statement, in connection to the International Women’s day in March 1996. Since the text is written as a statement, it should be understood and read as an official text entailing official views and ideas of the Zapatista Movement.

2. How is intersectionality addressed and recognized in the text?

Even though the concept of intersectionality is not directly used in the text, there are several references to an understanding of it. The first example of an understanding of the intersectional oppression that women face is expressed in line 11 and 12. The first part of the sentence goes as follows:

“Doubly humiliated, as women and as workers [...]”
(EZLN 1996)

In the first part of this sentence, the Zapatistas recognizes that first of all, women carry an intersectional burden of both being women and being workers. Hence, the intersectionality of two axis of oppression, one being due to gender and one due to class. In the next part of the sentence, a third oppressive axis is added; the one of race:

“[...] the Mexican Indigenous women are also humiliated because of their color, their language, their culture, their past. A triple nightmare that forces the Zapatista Women to take a weapon and add their ‘Enough is Enough!’”
(EZLN 1996)

These quotes exemplify how the Zapatista movement understand the issue of intersectionality. They recognize that women are not only facing oppression on the axes of gender and class, the one of race is also added, why they are fighting a triple oppression by both being women, workers and indigenous.

An interesting observation in the way that the argument is built is that the primary arrays of exploitation that are mentioned are gender and class, and then the one of race is added backing the hardships of the first two. By being a movement that primarily is about race, ethnicity, and class, one would have thought that these would have been positioned as being the primary lines of oppression that the women are facing, and that gender would have come as the third aspect. By building their argument in this specific way, one could argue that the movement finds that the oppression that women experience due to their gender is viewed as being higher on a scale of “oppression difficulties” than the one they experience due to their race. Furthermore, these quotes also illustrates how the understanding of intersectional oppression is embedded in the core issues of the movement. By stressing that women are both oppressed due to their gender, class, and race, they implicitly stress that the men in the organization are double oppressed due to their class and race. Hence, intersectionality is not only significant in relation to the women in the movement but is present as an overall issue affecting every member of the group.

Intersectionality is clearly embedded in the quotes above. However, these are not the only parts of the text discussing this subject. In the quote below, the argument of intersectionality is developed further by explaining some of the actual mechanisms through which women are facing multiple forms of oppression.

“The women Zapatistas, soldiers and non-military members, struggle for their own rights as women. They also confront the macho culture that the Zapatista men act out in various ways.”
(EZLN 1996)

This quote does not explicitly discuss the various dimensions of oppression that women Zapatistas face, instead they only emphasize the oppression that is due to their gender. However, seen in the context that the Zapatista movement itself is a movement confronting the oppression people experience due to race and class, it

becomes implicit that the women are facing oppression due to gender as an extra oppressive force. Furthermore, this quote is of particular interest since it stresses that the women are fighting a macho culture within their own movement. Hence, The Zapatista movement acknowledges that the oppression that women confront due to their gender is not solely due to external forces, it is an issue prevalent within the movement. The stressing of *Zapatista men* instead of merely *men* in general distinguishes the oppression that women are subject to due to gender, from the oppression they are subject to due to race and class, since the former is reproduced within the movement while the other two are seen as coming from an external force, which all Zapatistas are subject to. In this way, the argument, once again, plays on the external/internal relationship that was found in the introduction. It could be argued that by placing responsibility for gender-oppressive structures within the movement, the argument for the recognition of intersectional oppression becomes stronger, since the movement is willing to include themselves as partly to blame for the problem, enhancing the underlining of the importance of the issue. Thus, there is a recognition for the need of intersectionality within the text, and the strength of the argument is increased by including the movement itself as part of the problem.

The issue of intersectionality is discussed on a deeper level than had it only been recognized as an issue. Various times throughout the text is there a discussion on how women are facing more hardships than men due to the extra sphere of oppression that they are confronting. This is seen in the above quotes as well as in the one below:

“The women Zapatistas are not free by the fact that they are Zapatistas; they still have a lot for which to struggle and gain.”
(EZLN 1996)

In this quote, there is a clear division between the men and the women in the Zapatista movement. The quote indirectly states that the men have reached some sort of freedom by becoming Zapatistas. Arguably it is the unified struggle against unequal power structures and the self-exclusion from the capitalist society that has freed them, a freedom that women have not reached. It can be argued that the reason that women are lacking behind in their quest for freedom is that they always also have to fight the patriarchy as opposed to the men. If this quote is read in relation to the former, what could be underlined is that since the Zapatista women not only have to fight the same battle as the men, they also have to fight a battle due to gender against both external *and* internal forces.

Furthermore, by stressing that it is the women Zapatistas that *still have a lot for which to struggle and gain*, it is indicated that the fight for women’s rights is not seen as a struggle that includes the whole movement. Instead, it is

recognized that it is the women that have to fight, implying that gender equality and women's rights is something that women have to fight for themselves and is a goal for the women but not the movement as a whole. It may be so that the fight by the Zapatista women is more difficult because they are not as unified as a movement as when fighting the external battle based on race and class.

Hence, the issue of intersectionality is discussed on a deeper level than only recognizing the problem. However, there is not a profound discussion on how the different axes of oppression reinforce each other. In the last quote, it is insinuated that the battle of oppression due to gender is more difficult than the one due to race and class, by stating that the women are still to gain the freedom that the men have gained.

3. How is the power relation between men and women presented in the arguments?

Within the text, there is no direct reference to the power balance/imbalance between men and women. However, there are indirect references to how women are thought upon by the movement, which can give an indication of whether they are seen as subalterns or equals to men. This is visible in the quotes below:

“We, the Zapatista men and women, celebrate the day of the woman who struggles, of the woman with dignity.”
(EZLN 1996)

“Our companeras Zapatista soldiers, insurgents and militia members, and our companeras in the base communities of the EZLN have demonstrated that dignity has a special place among women”
(EZLN 1996)

“Today we want to salute all the women who struggle everywhere, so that nowhere is being a woman a shame, a nightmare or an adornment.”
(EZLN 1996)

Two words that are of great importance to the quotes above are *struggle* and *dignity*. In the first quote, the emphasis is on the women who *struggle*. This could lead one to think that the celebration of women is only in relation to a certain group of women. However, in the light of the former quotes, where it has been stated that the strength of the oppression women face due to gender is massive, it could be argued that all women struggle against this oppression why the women identified in the text are *all* women. Furthermore, the word *dignity* can be related back to the word *struggle*. Hence, the women who struggle are also the women with dignity. This equalizing of the concepts can be done because there is no *and*

between *woman who struggles* and *of the woman with dignity*. Furthermore, the comma between the two links of the sentence is not an enumeration comma why it is safe to suggest that the *woman of dignity* refers back to the *woman who struggles*. In that case, with *woman who struggles* being a representation of all women, and *woman with dignity* equaling the *woman who struggles*, it could be argued that all women are seen as women with dignity. The word *dignity* has many positive connotations to it, why the overall view of women by the Zapatista movement appears positive. To further develop that argument, quote number two underlines that the movement understands dignity as being especially connected to women. The last quote uses *to salute* in relation to women, which once again is a word with positive connotations embedding the same understanding as *acknowledge*. By wording their greeting to the women this way, one could argue that there is a respectfulness towards women embedded in the text. Furthermore, it is more clearly addressed, by the wording *everywhere* and *nowhere*, that all women throughout the world are acknowledged.

The last part of the sentence uses words with very negative connotations in relation to the word woman. This is not done to express the movement's view of women. Instead, it could be argued, is this done to implicitly express how women are generally thought of in the oppressive society in which they live, and that these are the marks that women are fighting to relieve themselves from. The following quote develops the thought of the oppressive force that women are facing. Furthermore, the quote further stresses how it is not only indigenous women who are facing oppression due to their gender, but that that is a hardship of every woman:

“In the long chain of humiliations that the powerful construct to make itself powerful, the humiliation of women is repeated in all parts of society.”
(EZLN 1996)

The essence of this quote is that women in every social layer of society are being oppressed. By using the term *the powerful* the oppression against women is moved onto a more structural level. It can be argued that the powerful refers to the general oppressive forces in society, where social injustices are created because the people in power want to regain that power on behalf of the ones that they see as subalterns. Thus, the oppression of women is part of the system of domination that enforces every aspect of oppression that people are facing.

Hence, women are viewed with dignity, which I argue implicitly includes respect, and they are mentioned in relation to words with positive connotations. On the other hand, the words that are used to express what they are fighting against are words with very negative connotations. Furthermore, the structure that

systematically oppresses women due to their gender is the same oppressive force that oppresses people due to race and class.

4. Conclusion of analysis

In conclusion, intersectionality is not directly referred to in the text, however, the thought and understanding of intersectionality is implicitly embedded throughout the entire text. Furthermore, the importance of the ideas behind intersectionality is recognized in the arguments of the movement. In quote number one and two, it becomes evident that the movement views everyone within their group as being intersectionally oppressed, and that women are triple oppressed due to both their race, class, and gender. Hence, the movement sees themselves as a movement made up of intersectionally oppressed individuals, some on two axes and some on three. Moreover, it is acknowledged that the oppression that women face due to their gender, is not only due to external forces but is also reproduced within the movement itself. The general view of women is presented as being positive and respectful, and there is a large recognition of the hardships that women, on all levels of society, face. The last point to note is that it can be argued that the Zapatista view the dominant structures in society, the powerful, as reproducing the oppression that all women are confronted with.

4.2 Analysis of letter by Subcomandante Marcos

1. Formalities of the text

The author is Subcomandante Marcos and the recipients of this letter are the *insurgentas*, both the ones who have been, the ones that are, and the ones that will come:

“INSURGENTAS! [...]

“To those who have fallen,
To those who are following,
To those who shall come”

The first word *insurgenta* is a feminine form of the Spanish word *insurgente* which means insurgent. Hence, it is very clear that this letter is directed to the women in the Zapatista troops only. The text is written as a letter in the context of the International Women’s Day in March 2000. The formal status of the texts is somewhat lower than the first, as this is a communication between Marcos, a front

figure, to the women in the Zapatista troops. Furthermore, it could be seen as a limitation to the study that Marcos is the sole author as some might argue that it would make it less credible and that the thoughts expressed in the text could be based on his individual thoughts instead of the general thoughts of the movement. However, by writing as a leader to a group of subordinates within the frame of the movement and by being published by the movement, I find that his arguments can stand as the arguments of the movement.

2. How is intersectionality addressed and recognized in the text?

Once again, the concept intersectionality is not explicitly used in the text, however, the understanding of the concept is embedded within the text as seen in this quote:

“I know each and every one of these difficulties [difficulties of the guerilla life, my note], and I well know that, for the women, they are double. Not because we impose them like that, but rather because of things that come from other parts and other times.”

(Marcos 2000)

In this quote, there is a clear reference to the double burden that women are facing, by first expressing that there are difficulties for everyone who enters the guerrilla life, and then specifically point out how these difficulties are doubled for the women. In the second part of the quote, there is a reference to the structural oppression that is forced upon women. First, it is stated that the oppression imposed on women are not purposely done, and secondly, it is stated that the oppression is due to *things that come from other parts and times*. It can be argued that social structures are exactly that, *things that come from other parts and times* and that continues to be reinforced until the structures are broken and new ones are developed. Hence, in this sentence, it is argued that the double oppression enforced on women is due to prevailing social structures. The next quote explains the cultural aspect of the intersectional oppression that women face:

“In addition to confronting a particularly harsh environment, the insurgentas must also confront a cultural code which, beyond the mestizo-indigenous division, determines “spaces” (I mean attitudes, places, duties, work, responsibilities and the multiple etceteras added by a society built on exclusion) which are not for women.”

(Marcos 2000)

This quote emphasizes how the insurgentas face both difficulties due to race, implied in the *mestizo-indigenous division*, and due to gender, implied in *cultural*

code [...] which determines “spaces” [...] which are not for women. Within this part of the sentence, there is an implication that, once again, it is the society, including social structures, who decides what is and is not for women, and therefore society is to blame for the double oppression that women face. This is done by the wording *added by a society built on exclusion.* By studying this statement, it could also be argued that Marcos is making a reference to the fact that society is to blame for all exclusion, not only the exclusion of women. Hence, society is also to blame for the exclusion that the indigenous population face due to race. The following quote contains heavy references to the importance of recognizing that intersectionality is also an issue within the Zapatista troops, and not only something that is embedded within the villages or cities:

“If, in the indigenous communities and in the cities, women must confront a world where being male is a privilege that excludes those different (women and homosexuals), in the mountain and as troop commanders, they must confront the resistance by the majority of the insurgents to take orders from a woman.”

(Marcos 2000)

This quote is interesting on more than one level. First of all, it clearly recognizes that women in general face a world where being a woman is equal to being less privileged. Secondly, it states that this social reality is also present within the indigenous communities. Thirdly, it acknowledges that even within the troops of the movement, a movement that clearly wishes to fight unequal power structures, this double oppression of women is reproduced due to the male members' resistance towards women. Hence, this quote paints a picture of a movement that is facing difficulties with changing the external structures they oppose, even between their internal members. However, by recognizing this fact, the movement undoubtedly admits to the importance of raising questions of the intersectional issues.

Intersectionality is in this text, as in the former one, not only recognized as an issue. It is also discussed how the intersectional oppression is reinforced within the movement itself, and how the double oppression is due to structural injustices that have for long been embedded within society. Throughout the text, there are several examples of the recognition of the special oppression that women face due to their gender. However, in this text, there is much less of a discussion of the various axes on which women are oppressed. This text mostly plays on the women being less privileged than men. One reason for this may be that this text is to a large extent addressing the oppression that the women within the military troops face, and not as much what the indigenous women as such, face. Hence, it may reflect more the picture of internal oppression imposed on the female combatants. However, throughout the text, there are also, as we have seen

especially in the second quote, references to the structural forces that create oppression in general.

3. How is the power relation between men and women presented in the arguments?

This text displays a clearer picture of the power relations between men and women, as seen below:

“The male will invariably think that he can do it better than his commander, if it is a she, a woman”

(Marcos 2000)

Once again, there is a reference to the internal relationship between men and women within the military section of the movement. An interesting wording in this quote is *invariable*. By using such a word, a generalization of all men is presented, which reveals a very strong “them against us” relationship between the genders within the movement. Nevertheless, in the quote below, another picture of women is painted:

“But, if the part least exposed now to the glare of outside spotlights is the insurgent troops, the insurgentas add one more shadow to that of the ski-mask they wear: they are women. And I should say, they also add a superior level of heroism to ours, the men. We might not understand it (in spite of regulations and statutes, of the revolutionary law of women, of talks and statements), but we shall not let it go unrecognized”

(Marcos 2000)

The first part of the quote is another example of how women, in all positions, are always carrying one more burden than men due to their gender. The more interesting part of the quote is the second sentence and the wording of that; *they also add a superior level of heroism to ours, the men*. The word *superior* is a word that often has negative connotations to it in the way that it ranks something or someone as being better or of more worth than someone or something else. However, in this context, it has a positive connotation to it since it is combined with the very positive loaded word *heroism*. In this context *superior* only reinforces the strength of *heroism* and when *superior level of heroism* is connected to women, which is implicit in the word *they*, a very positive picture of women is painted. Furthermore, not only are women portrayed in a positive way, they are also, for once, situated above men. This is the first time in the two texts that have been analyzed, where not only is the intersectional oppression faced by

women recognized, it is actually used to switch the gender roles so that women are positioned above men.

4. Conclusion of analysis

In conclusion, this text does not use the term intersectionality explicitly. However, as with the former text, ideas behind the concept are embedded in various places. It is recognized that it is structural injustices within the society that attribute to the oppression that women face. These structural injustices are so heavily embedded within society that they reach into the movement itself, why the oppression of women is also reinforced here. However, the movement does recognize this fact, and thereby acknowledge the importance of addressing intersectional oppression. Even though oppression and a degrading view on women may be present in parts of the movement, due to structures hard to break, a positive view on women is painted, where an attempt is made to switch the roles of men and women, positioning women over men due to their heroism.

4.3 Joint discussion of analyses

The two texts analyzed in this thesis has both points where they are common and where they differ. In neither of the texts is the term intersectionality used explicitly, however, both texts contain the core ideas of intersectionality which is that there are multiple dimensions of discrimination, domination, and oppression that people may face due to the interaction of oppressive structures. The focus of this analysis has been on the intersectional oppression faced by women, and how elements in relation to gender, race, and class are constructed around the idea of the nodal point intersectionality. By having intersectionality as a nodal point and then use elements concerning gender, class, and race, these elements receive their meaning, and becomes moments, through the articulation that takes place when the elements are constructed around the nodal point and in relation to each other. Hence, the word “women” receive its meaning based on the relationship between woman, man, gender, poor etc. and through the word’s relationship with the nodal point intersectionality.

Especially in the first text, the multiple oppression faced by women is discussed. In the second text this issue is also dealt with, however, the focus in the second text is more on how the structural injustices embedded in society also are reinforced within the movement itself, why there is less of a discussion of the various axes of oppression which women are confronted with. An interesting aspect revealed in the chosen construction of sentences in the first text is that it

seems that the primary arrays of oppression of women are due to their gender and class and that the oppression due to race is seen as an additional array of oppression. By composing the argument this way, it can be argued that in relation to the Zapatista women, the primary oppression they face is due to gender and not race. Thereby, gender oppression comes across as being an oppressive force of particular strength in all parts of society. This thought is once again reinforced in the last quote where it is stated that *the powerful* humiliate women in all layers of society. Therefore, women, in general, are always facing oppression due to their gender, and the other axes of oppression they may be confronted with are the secondary. In both texts, there is a clear reference to the fact that it is society, and the structures embedded within, that is to blame for the oppression that people face, not only oppression due to gender but oppression in general. Thus, there is a discussion of the power structures within the society and how these structures oppress people on various axes. The general picture painted of women is, in both texts, positive and filled with respect. This is in particular done by using words with positive connotations such as *dignity* and *heroism*. When studying the elements in relation to each other it becomes evident that they are often constructed ways that clarify how the thought of intersectionality is embedded in the text, even though this is done in an implicit way.

The Zapatista movement acknowledges intersectionality as an important issue and finds that of the multiple patterns of oppression that women are facing, the one due to gender may be the most oppressive. Furthermore, as implicitly stated in the first text, they acknowledge that all members of the movement are victims of intersectional oppression, men on the axes of race and class, and women on the axes of gender, race, and class. They discuss the issue on several levels, both in relation to the structural injustices embedded in society as a whole, and in relation to how *the powerful* reinforces these structures to stay in power, and also how these structures are so heavily embedded in society that they reach all the way into the movement itself.

5 Conclusion

Through this research, a discourse analysis has been conducted where the focus has been on how the theoretical ideas of intersectionality are embedded in the arguments of the Zapatista movement. The nodal point intersectionality has not been explicitly expressed in the texts, but the theoretical ideas behind the concept are implicitly embedded throughout both texts. The theoretical framework that the thesis has been based on is the feminist theory of intersectionality. The discourse analysis has been guided by analytical tools borrowed from discourse theory, namely the concepts of nodal points and elements. The aim has been to investigate how the theoretical ideas of intersectionality are embedded within the texts by constructing the analysis around the elements in relation to intersectionality. The research has taken a constructionist standpoint within the ontological debate, which is natural since the methodological framework has been a discourse analysis, which takes its stance in social constructionism.

The theory of intersectionality can assist in explaining the oppressive nature that multiple marginalized groups, such as minority women, may face. It stresses the importance to include various perspectives and dimensions of marginalized groups, including the perspective of multi-marginalized individuals. If intersectionality is disregarded, social movements can degenerate into a homogenous unit which may benefit the privileged part of the group at the expense of the less privileged.

The way that the elements, concerning gender, class, and race, in the two texts are constructed around the nodal point of intersectionality, hence the relation the elements have to each other and the nodal point, stresses that the ideas behind the theory of intersectionality are embedded within the Zapatista movement. The movement acknowledges the intersectional oppression that women are confronted with both due to gender, race, and class. It is recognized that the hardships that women face are more difficult than the ones men face because of the extra oppressive force women are up against. Throughout the texts, there are several examples of the understanding of the various axes of oppression that women face due to both gender, class, and race. However, it is also recognized that the group as a unit is intersectionally oppressed due to class and race. Furthermore, there is a general idea arguing that it is the unequal power structures embedded in society that reinforces oppressive behavior, both externally and internally within the movement.

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