

“We do not know which is more dangerous, the crime or the State”

Power discourses of feminicides and violence against women in Mexico

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<p>This thesis studies the discourses of power and anti-violence activism related to feminicides in Mexico. Feminicides are defined as killings of women because of their gender. Although feminicides have existed throughout the history of Mexico, the issue became a focus of attention among the masses nearly 30 years ago because of the wave of violence in Ciudad Juárez. Today, according to the official data of the State, three women are victims of feminicides in Mexico daily. However, the number is most likely substantially higher given the underreporting of feminicides and that some states still do not distinguish them as separate crimes from homicides. It is estimated that approximately ten women are killed as victims of feminicides in Mexico every day.</p> <p>The theoretical framework for this study is rooted in the Foucauldian scholarship of power. More precisely, Michel Foucault’s theory of power as relational or productive and the idea of power being everywhere but nowhere, in particular, imposes the principal understanding of how violence is implicated in multiple structures of power relations. The study was conducted in the form of semi-structured interviews, with data being gathered by interviewing six feminist activists who are working against feminicides in Mexico. After this, the interviews were analysed with methods of discourse analysis.</p> <p>The study finds the total of five main discourses with their sub-discourses: 1. Structures (Patriarchal culture and Deficient understanding), 2. The State (Politics and Impunity), 3. Truth (Bending truth and Clash of genders) 4. Pervasive violence, and 5. Women’s networks. The results of the analysis suggest that the power related to violence against women comes indeed from everywhere: power comes from structures of the society, from education, from the State and the law (and impunity), from the truth (or what we accept as truth), from non-State agents such as criminal organisations and women themselves. They are all connected so that even criminal organisations and politicians are interweaved in the same network of power, and in the case of Mexico, not even very far from each other. Women themselves exercise power through relations, networks and cooperation and this is the dimension of power that women consider their most important asset. To keep themselves secure in a potentially hostile environment, activist women maintain a set of safety rules and regulations that they follow in their everyday lives.</p> <p>In conclusion, power influencing violence against women is located deep in the patriarchal structures and practices in Mexico. This is why it is challenging to tackle the problem of continuing gendered violence in Mexico: it does not have any centre. This means that also globalised networks of organised crime, as well as the overall patriarchal culture, influence on discourses that power and gender-based violence are given. Also, it is noteworthy that power should not be considered only oppressive or dominating as that interpretation would give women only the role of passive victims. Women also possess power that they exercise through social relations and collective activist networks. In sum, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of feminicides and violence against women in Mexico. Furthermore, through the unique interview data, the results collect valuable information on all the main challenges that are hampering the activists’ work against violence.</p>			
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1 INTRODUCTION

La inseguridad al caminar en las calles, la violencia en el noviazgo, la ignorancia, los prejuicios, la misoginia cultural, son parte de una cotidianidad vivida por una sociedad deformada. Por eso, ninguna mujer queda exenta de ser víctima de feminicidio o desaparición. (Guerrera, 2018, p. 19)

The insecurity to walk on the streets, domestic violence, ignorance, prejudices, the cultural misogyny, they are all part of everyday life in distorted society. Therefore, no woman is exempt from being the victim of femicide or disappearance. (Guerrera, 2018, p. 19)¹

Approximately 10 women are killed daily in Mexico (Vela, 2019). The number of woman-killings, *feminicides*, is most likely substantially higher due to underreporting of cases and insufficient statistics. Violence is endemic in the country that is tormented by the war on drugs, kidnappings, corruption and impunity. While most of the attention has been caught by drug-related struggle, violence against women in Mexico has not received similar global spotlight.

Most of the homicide victims in Mexico are men. Although feminicides are narrower as a phenomenon, they should be taken a closer look at because of their nature. Feminicides make visible those forms of violence that are rooted in gendered power structures, not only in Mexico but all over the Latin American continent. Many studies on violence in Latin America prove how feminicides are more common in regions where homicide rates of men are also high (Bejarano & Fregoso, 2010, p. 7). There also seems to appear a comparatively new tendency of increasing feminicides even in countries with falling homicide rates. On a global scale, the proportion of feminicides continues to rise although overall murder rates fall (United Nations, 2019).

This project was conceived during my time living in Mexico. I spent a six-month study exchange studying international relations in the *Universidad Popular Autónoma del*

¹ From Spanish to English translated by Laura Pylvänäinen.

Estado de Puebla in Puebla in fall 2015. This was followed by an internship in the Embassy of Finland in Mexico in Mexico City in spring 2018. While I was living in Puebla and Mexico City, I noticed how common disappearances and murders of women were, and especially those of young women my age. Poles on the streets and newspaper pages were filled with posters of missing women or news of women's murders. The incident even has its own word in Spanish, unlike my mother tongue has. As a guest in a foreign culture, the surrounding violence felt striking and I became eager to understand the phenomenon better.

This thesis aims to study the discourses of power related to feminicides in Mexico. This way the research has its roots in the social sciences with a strong feminist approach. The study was conducted in the form of interviews, with data being gathered by interviewing feminist activists that are working against feminicides in Mexico. After this, the interviews were analysed with methods of discourse analysis relying on the theoretical framework of power by Michel Foucault.

Discourses shape and are shaped by power relations around us in societies, social institutions, social relations. People do not simply name things but conceptualize them and give them meanings. This way discourses can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between, for example, social classes or genders. (Fairclough, Mulderrig & Wodak, 2011, p. 358.) No major change in society is likely to happen without paying close attention to language or other forms of semiosis (Kramarae & Lazar, 2011, p. 233). The form and character of State authority and control regarding violence against women can be observed and understood with the concept of power (Cooper, 1995). At the same time, the whole field of power is wider than that because "the State is no longer the sole sovereign power responsible for abuses against its inhabitants" (Domínguez-Ruvalcaba & Ravelo-Blancas, 2010, p. 194). This means that also globalised networks of organised crime, as well as the overall patriarchal culture, influence on discourses that power and gender-based violence are given. Also, it is noteworthy that power should not be considered only oppressive or dominating as that interpretation would give women only the role of passive victims. Women also possess power that they exercise, for instance, through social relations and collective networks. (Radtke & Stam, 1994.)

Activism is one channel of power and resistance exercised by women, which is a central notion throughout this study as the informants are anti-femicide activists working against gendered violence. Globally feminist movements to end violence against women started to gain a foothold during the late 1960s and early 1970s. These movements shook the conservative societies and public sphere, announcing that private is political, thus expanding the grip on 'political' issues. (Naples, 2003, p. 165.) A similar resurgence of feminism and activism was seen in the whole region in Latin America, as well as in Mexico. Starting from the 1970s, feminist activism and women's movements in Latin America were focused on social justice, more inclusive citizenship and gender inequalities. (Lebon, 2010, p. 3)

In Mexico, feminist activism has gone through institutionalisation which has amounted to an extensive number of feminist NGOs advocating women's rights from different perspectives. Women's movement in the country began during the student revolt in 1968, which afterwards led to the foundation of the first women's rights group, Women in Solidarity Action (*Mujeres en Acción Solidaria*) in 1971. The group debated women's rights for their bodies and challenged issues such as sexuality and reproductive rights. Today, feminist activism in Mexico is divided into various political spectrums: in addition to women's movements and feminist NGO's working against gendered violence or abortion prohibitions, there are movements of indigenous women, rural women and domestic women, only to mention few. During the 1990s, feminist activism went through the processes called institutionalisation and professionalisation. In one decade, a number of NGOs (non-governmental organisations) originated in women's rights movements or activist groups, which offered women access to the public institutional sphere and political institutions that were earlier seen as masculine establishments. (Yin-Zu, 2014.) Although institutionalisation of feminist activism increased women's political power and also influenced in the academia, as gender studies programs were established in the universities as a result of feminists' demands, afterwards professionalisation has not avoided criticism. Lebon (2010) argues that while NGOs have increased their access to resources and power, at the same time popular movements and community-based women's groups have fewer opportunities for advocacy and lobbying because the gap between the two has grown. In this thesis, four of the interviewees represent some NGO while two are more independent, 'community activists.'

1.1 Previous research of feminicides in Mexico

A considerable amount of literature has been published on feminicides in Mexico. These studies have been for the most part located geographically to the Northern border of Mexico in the city of Ciudad Juárez, where feminicides were first recorded as a separate phenomenon at the beginning of the 1990s. Existing research recognises the critical role played by the transnational economy and free trade on the emergence of gendered violence on the border of the United States and Mexico. (see e.g. Gaspar de Alba & Guzmán, 2010; Kruszewski, Payan & Staudt, 2009; Mueller & Simmons, 2014; Olivera, 2010.) Such approaches, however, have failed to address the reasons why violence against women and feminicides are so common in other states of Mexico as well. Also, considerable literature has grown up around the themes of anti-violence activism, human rights, resistance, and social change of women in Mexico, especially in the context of transnational advocacy. Kathleen Staudt (2010, 2014) and Melissa W. Wright (2010a, 2010b) have with distinction studied how activist networks function by the Northern border and interviewed activists. Both have indicated how easily both victims of feminicides and activists fighting against gendered violence are stigmatised. Wright (2010a; 2010b) proposed how in a conservative country like Mexico the form of ‘mother-activism’ is the only socially accepted form of resistance.

The language of feminicides has been studied by Miranda-Villanueva and Tiscareño-García and (2020) as well as Alcocer Perulero (2014). Both studies examined what kind of discourses or framings feminicides are given in the press. Alcocer Perulero (2014) found out how victims of feminicides are morally sanctioned and blamed for the murder in the newspapers. The frame analysis by Miranda-Villanueva and Tiscareño-García (2020) analysing 360 journalistic texts in Mexican national newspapers found similar victim-blaming narrations, although in a lesser extent than those of the perpetrator’s justification. According to this study, male reporters blame the victim more than female reporters that contextualise feminicides more as social issues. Although extensive research has been carried out on feminicides in Mexico, no single discourse study focusing on power exists in which the data would be based on interviews. Activist interviews provide valuable information on power and power relations in the framework of violence as they are the first-hand witnesses of feminicides working closely with families of victims. Many of the

activists themselves have experienced violence in their circle of acquaintances, which for many has been the reason to start their activism.

1.2 Femicide or feminicide

Femicide means the misogynous killing of a woman by men and can be considered as sexual violence. The prevailing argument is that while men are murdered more often than women, women are more likely to get murdered because they are women (Radford, 1992, p. 10). Some motivations behind femicides can be hatred, contempt, pleasure or a sense of ownership of women (Caputi & Russell, 1992). To understand the origins of femicides it is important to define them as sexual violence. It is not only about the pleasure of men, as the narrow definition suggests; sexual violence is targeted to women to increase men's power, dominance, and control over women. While many consider rape as the most extreme form of sexual violence, femicide should be remembered to be part of this category as well. When femicides are redefined as sexual violence, it allows us to use multiple tools to analyse the underlying power relations between men and women in the context of women killings. (Radford, 1992, p. 3.)

Femicides appear in many different forms: it can be racist (white men killing black women), homophobic (men killing lesbians), marital (husbands killing their wives, also called 'intimate femicide'), committed by a stranger outside a home or serial or mass femicide. However, the forms of femicides vary a lot in different cultural contexts. (Radford, 1992, p. 7.) Most often femicides are perpetrated by male family members, friends or acquaintance, which includes the paradoxical idea: while patriarchal societies are in favour of heterosexual couples living in the same household, homes are the most lethal places for women (Caputi & Russell, 1992; Radford, 1992).

It is not rare to hear how a victim of femicide somehow earned her death, how they are somehow to blame. This still prevalent discourse blames the victim and makes her responsible for the actions of a perpetrator for example by the way they dress up or behave. (Radford, 1992, p. 5.) Caputi and Russell (1992, p. 17) describe femicides as a backlash of feminism. They do not claim they are a fault of feminism or that they happen because

of feminism but they argue that terror against women intensifies when patriarchy and male supremacy are challenged or threatened.

When glimpsing through the feminist literature around femicides, one cannot avoid noticing that often instead of femicide authors may use the term *feminicide*. These two terms are strikingly similar and very often used as synonyms. The difference between the two is a cause of great debate in the feminist community and can be traced to linguistic and cultural differences. The most common and best-known definition for femicide emerges from the works of Diana Russell and Jill Radford, particularly from their book *Femicide: The politics of woman killing* (1992), although Russell has discussed femicides already in the 1970s. This is the same definition already explained above: that femicide is a hate crime against women because they are women (Radford & Russell, 1992). However, a Mexican feminist anthropologist Marcela Lagarde y de los Ríos has challenged this definition by introducing another term better contextualized in Latin America, *feminicide*, which translates from its Spanish version *feminicidio*. She validates her choice by arguing that femicide is in Spanish *femicidio*, which is most often understood solely as a homicide of a woman, which is not the whole truth. This is why Lagarde de los Ríos started using the word *feminicidio/feminicide* to emphasise the motivations behind the murders. According to her, *feminicide* has a larger meaning: it is an extreme form of gender violence culminating in the murder of girls and women. *Feminicide* means state crime and genocide against women, “and it occurs when the historical conditions generate social practices that allow for violent attempts against the integrity, health, liberties, and lives of girls and women.” (Lagarde y de los Ríos, 2010.)

According to Lagarde y de los Ríos (2010), *femicides* still exist because authorities are unable to prevent them and rule of law too weak to prosecute and administer justice. Fregoso and Bejarano are also in favour of the term *feminicide* over *femicide*. *Feminicide* recognises that the murders of women and girls are happening because power structures allow them to happen. They emphasise the two sides of *femicides*: it is both private and public phenomena when private individuals, as well as State, are involved when *femicides* occur. The third point of Bejarano and Fregoso is the complex nature of *feminicide*: it is in interaction with social, political, economic, and cultural inequalities, whereupon gender is not enough when analysing motivations behind murders. (Bejarano & Fregoso, 2010, p. 5.)

Although femicide is perhaps more common and older term, from now on this thesis uses the term feminicide. One of the main reasons is that feminicide is widely used in Mexico, which is the country where my research takes place, and as a researcher, I want to respect its cultural and linguistic context. Bejarano and Fregoso (2010, pp. 3–4) came to the same conclusion highlighting that by using feminicide over femicide they marked their discursive perspective “as transborder feminist thinkers from the global South.” As a knowledge, concepts, and theories may change when they travel to other geographic contexts, this thesis wants to set its roots in Mexico by using the term feminicide. This is one way of supporting the idea that Latin America is not only “a field of study” but also a place where theory is produced and reversing the hierarchies of knowledge, which often flows from North to South (Bejarano & Fregoso, 2010, p. 4).

The definitions offered by Radford and Russell and Lagarde y de los Ríos are quite similar by their principal meaning. Yet feminicide is more politically loaded as it includes the role of State and judicial structures and demands the responsibility of the State to protect women. The work of activists can be considered as political action within the frames of civil society. Feminicide, therefore, is more useful for this research that examines power around feminicides through the interviews of female activists.

Another central term throughout this thesis alongside feminicide is the concept of patriarchy. The notion has been created by feminists to capture the apparent all-pervasiveness of women’ oppression at the hands of men. It is a system of male power that dominates all aspects of life. (Lloyd, 2005, pp. 74–75.) As Kate Millett (1991) points out, power has historically been clustered in male hands in society: in the military, industry, technology, science, political office and finance. In most radical cases patriarchy may have been used as an excuse for violence, because “traditionally, patriarchy granted the father nearly total ownership over wife and children, including the powers of physical abuse and often even those of murder and sale” (Millett, 1991, p. 33). However, later Millett rectifies that patriarchy is not normally connected to force, because it is integrated deeply to the social systems through the force and violence is not even needed to carry out the domination of women.

1.3 Research questions

This study explores the discursive relationship between power and feminicides in Mexico through interviews with six female activists who are working against feminicides. The main aim of the study is to scrutinize which discourses power is given in the accounts of first-hand witnesses of violence in their country. In this thesis I thus intend to focus on the following questions:

- 1. What discourses of power are constructed around feminicides among Mexican activists that are working against gendered violence?**
- 2. How do the activist women exercise the power they possess and avoid becoming targets of gendered violence themselves in a potentially hostile environment?**

It is hoped that this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of feminicides and violence against women in Mexico. Furthermore, the results will collect together valuable information on all the main challenges that are hampering the activists' work against violence. However, it is not the task of this thesis to examine the causes of violence or suggest practices to prevent it. The reader should bear in mind that the study is based on the interviews of activists and discourses are formatted by them.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is structured in the following way: first, chapter two contextualises the country case. The reader is familiarised with the historical, socio-political and statistical context of feminicides and violence against women in Mexico. Chapter three introduces the theoretical framework of this study. Chapter four is concerned with the methodology used for this study. This chapter explains why discourse analysis was chosen as the research method and how the semi-structured interviews were conducted. Chapter five analyses the results of discourse analysis representing all the power discourses found. This is followed by chapter six, the last chapter, that presents the key findings of the research and discusses the significance, contribution and limitations of the study and suggests some implications for future research.

2 FEMINICIDES IN MEXICO

To understand the context of this study it is essential to take a look at historical and the political background of feminicides in Mexico. Hence this chapter aims to establish the context of the topic by giving a review of the most important developments of violence against women and anti-feminicide activism in the country.

The year 2019 was the most violent year of Mexico on record after starting the collection of such data in 1997. The murder rate of 35,558 murders was in the news all over the world and questioned one year earlier elected president's Andrés Manuel López Obrador's (also known as AMLO) capability to manage the security landscape of Mexico. According to most news outlets total of 1,006 of the murders were classified as feminicides (McDonnell & Sanchez, 2020).

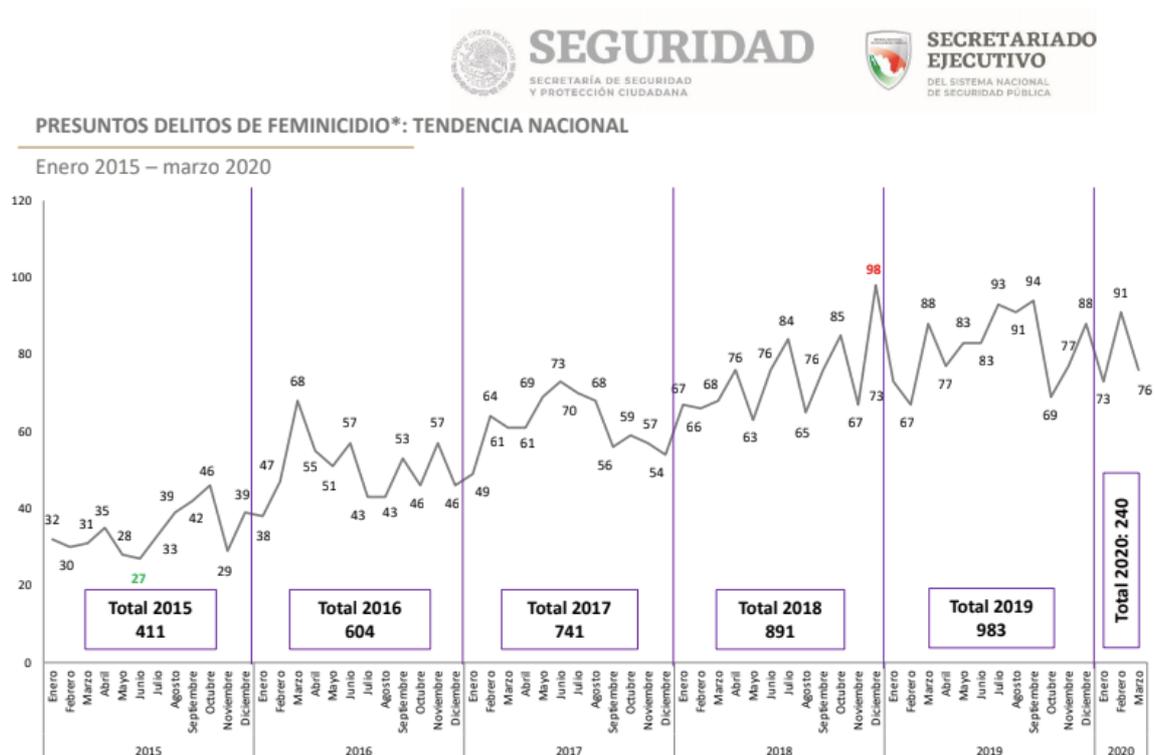


Figure 1: The statistics of feminicides in Mexico according to Ministry of Public Security. The statistics show the number of feminicides between January 2015 and March 2020. The total in 2019 was 983 feminicides. (Secretariado Ejecutivo del Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública, [SESNSP], 2020)

The murder rate is slightly lower in the official records of the government (*Figure 1*). According to the Ministry of Public Security of Mexico, in 2019 there were 983 feminicides in Mexico. This means that according to statistics, nearly three feminicides were committed daily. The states that encountered most feminicides were Veracruz (157), México (122), Ciudad de México (68), Nuevo León (67) and Puebla (58). The number has been increasing every year. In 2015 there were 411 feminicides registered in Mexico, which means that in four years the number of confirmed cases has more than doubled. Besides, during 2019 total of 413 women were kidnapped. (SESNSP, 2020.)

The statistics of feminicides are incomplete because many Mexican states do not separately count feminicides and counting measures are different. The numbers of feminicides have been formalised since 2012 when feminicide appeared to country's federal penal code (Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres, 2019). The law recognises feminicide as the killing of a woman because of her gender. To categorise the crime as a feminicide within Mexico's federal criminal code, some of the following is required: a victim displays signs of sexual violence, a victim has received previous threats, evidence of earlier harassment or violent episodes, deprivation of woman's freedom, romantic or otherwise confidential relationship with the assailant or the forced exposure of a woman's body in a public place (Comisión Nacional para Prevenir y Erradicar la Violencia Contra las Mujeres, 2016).

Criminal codes of feminicides can be divergent between states. Interpretation of law regarding feminicides can be confusing. For example, in addition to feminicides, in 2019 total of 2,822 women were victims of intentional homicides (in 2015 number was 1,735) (SESNSP, 2020). If numbers of feminicides and intentional homicides are counted together, approximately 10 women were killed daily in Mexico in 2019 (Vela, 2019). The number of feminicides in Mexico is most likely substantially higher given the underreporting of feminicides and that some states still do not distinguish them as separate crimes from homicides.

Although feminicides have existed throughout the history of Mexico, the issue became a focus of attention among the masses nearly 30 years ago. The wave of violence in Ciudad Juárez in the state of Chihuahua came into the spotlight of local, national, and international press after murders started in 1993. The relatively small city near the US border faced two types of violence: serial killings of young women and assassinations of men by

gangs working closely with organised crime and drugs. Through the past decades these feminicides have been depicted in popular culture in diverse ways: in films, travel diaries, soap operas, and journalism. Events have gained attention internationally also because of their geopolitical location. Ciudad Juárez is situated right next to El Paso, a city of the United States on the other side of the border. Many of the women were from low-income families, dark-skinned, and as young as 17 years old. Many bodies were found raped and tortured before being killed. (Gaspar de Alba & Guzmán, 2010; Socorro Tabuenca Córdoba, 2011.)

The attention of Ciudad de Juárez grew so extensive that even today the relatively small Northern town is emphasised on existing literature. Much of the previous research on feminicides in Mexico has focused on the transnational/binational nature of the city and how its geopolitical location has influenced on murders (see Kruszewski et al., 2009; Mueller & Simmons, 2014). This approach mostly examines the feminicides through socio-economic lenses. Several studies, mostly by American scholars, have evaluated how after the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), trade, criminal organisations, and violence have been in the interplay on the border causing impunity and then again, more violence (Gaspar de Alba & Guzmán, 2010; Mueller, 2014; Olivera, 2010). These studies explain that more *maquiladoras* (foreign-owned factories) were built in Juárez as a consequence of increasing trade over the border. Maquiladoras offered employment opportunities for women living in poverty. The population of the city increased rapidly, especially of young women migrating to the region hoping for financial stability. At the same time, illicit markets run by criminal organisations and drug cartels grew more intense: more and more guns were trafficked to the South and drugs to the North. All these changes of social, economic, and political dynamics escalated violence along the border and created the conditions for all types of violence, including feminicides. According to Mueller, when economic forces gathered young women in one location, they became “victims of these consequences of globalization” (2014, p. 144).

Mercedes Olivera (2010) performs a similar series of ideas about neoliberal dynamics and economic-political crisis on the border but also discusses the changes between the dynamics of men and women. While many women got employed in *maquiladoras*, men were suffering from a lack of job opportunities. This changed the traditional dynamics between men and women after women were not economically dependent on their

husbands anymore. However, the patriarchal culture and social roles for men and women still existed. Olivera explains that this independence of women and the breakdown of traditional family influenced the self-image of men, which led to aggression towards their wives and children because of the insecurity of men. The conclusion of Olivera is similar to Monárrez Fragoso (2010, p. 63), who argues that the purchasing power of women allowed them to challenge the patriarchal system in Ciudad Juárez and with their own money they could do things they couldn't do before: buy cars and go out dancing.

Today feminicides are reported in all states of Mexico. When feminicides have spread all over the country, no generalisations of victims can be made. They represent different ages, though most killed women are in childbearing age. They are from different social and socio-economic classes from rich to poor, the majority of the victims still representing lower classes. Feminicides are not rare in indigenous communities either. Unlike in Ciudad Juárez in the beginning, these days most victims are killed in their own homes, though some bodies have been found along roadsides or other public places. Victims are married and single, pregnant or non-pregnant, some of them have been kidnapped, some of them killed right away. Only two things they all share: 1) most often they are killed by someone they knew, such as their partner, ex-partner, a relative, co-worker or a friend, and 2) they all have been mistreated and intimidated before being killed and they all faced fear and humiliation. (Lagarde y de los Ríos, 2010; Olivera, 2010.)

One of the reasons why feminicides still keep increasing in Mexico is systematic impunity. Country's impunity rate has climbed to astonishing level: 93 per cent of crimes were not reported or not investigated in 2018, estimates Mexico's statistics agency (Instituto Nacional de Estadística Geografía e Informática, 2019). The same holds in the investigation and prosecution of feminicides. According to these statistics, the most common reason not to report a crime for police was the lost time (31,7 per cent). The second most common reason was the distrust of authorities (17,4 per cent). According to the same survey, 67,2 per cent of Mexicans consider insecurity as the biggest concern in the society. This is followed by unemployment (32,8 per cent) and an increase in prices (28,1 per cent). Domínguez-Ruvalcaba and Ravelo-Blancas (2010) suggest that in the case of Ciudad Juárez three reasons maintain the state of impunity:

- 1) The relationship between the Mexican government and organised crime.
- 2) The politicians are more concerned about the city's reputation than the safety of their citizens and challenging impunity.
- 3) Absence of dialogue between human rights organisations and the government, and human right organisations' focus on formal, governmental channels, which does not take into consideration the economic and political influence of organised crime.

These views get support from Carmona López, Castro Rodríguez and Gómez Caballero (2010, p. 171), who also call attention to the lack of transparent investigations and credibility. If some cases get resolved by authorities, the investigation is rushed and the result often does not satisfy the bereaved.

Activists and human rights defenders have played a crucial role during past decades to observe and witness State actions and press for recognition of femicidal violence in Mexico. One form of organising is through Citizens Observatories (*Observatorios Comunitarios*) that resemble citizens watch groups that cherish citizen's participation and democracy. In Mexico, the most important and largest observatory dealing with femicides is the *Observatorio Ciudadano del Femicidio OCNF* (Citizen's Observatory on Femicide), which represents over forty civil society organisations from nearly twenty states. These civil societies include women's rights groups, indigenous women's organisations, human rights groups, legal-defence groups, academic groups, and religious communities. The most important mission of OCNF is to provide up to date information on the situation all over the country and collecting data of all femicides witnessed. (Bejarano & Fregosa, 2010, pp. 25–26.)

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have also been demanding loudly accountability from federal, State, and local authorities. Many of the grassroots organisations are founded by family members of the victims of femicides and disappearances. This way family-activists channel their anger and pain into political action. They also educate families on judicial and legal processes and file complaints against government corruption and negligence. Some of the most well-known organisations are *Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa* (That Our Daughters Return, founded in 2001) and *Justicia para Nuestras Hijas* (Justice for Our Daughters, founded in 2002). (Bejarano & Fregosa, 2010, p. 27;

Lagarde y de los Ríos, 2010.) Thus far, previous research has demonstrated that this type of *mother-activism* is the only socially acceptable form of activism in a conservative society like Mexico (Hansen, Mueller & Qualtire, 2009; Staudt, 2014; Wright, 2010a, 2010b). Initially and still today victims were blamed and shamed in public to attack the anti-femicide movement, which is named as a *public-woman discourse* in academia. Femicides were not discussed with respect until mothers stood out demanding justice for their daughters. Mother-activists have had a better chance to get their message through due to their emotional experience that reinforces the mothers' assertions that their intentions lie not in the political realm but their experience as mothers. (Wright, 2010a.)

Even mother-activists have not avoided defamation of their work in Ciudad Juárez. Victims and families both have been bashed and stigmatised by "hegemonic discourses" from the community and authorities that have blamed them for ruining the city's image. Some politicians have implied that families aim to profit politically with their daughters' deaths and by denouncing the murders in international forums they were discrediting their region (Socorro Tabuenca Córdoba, 2011, pp. 121–133). All this hostile public talk has led to intimidation and harassment of victims' families from State authorities. Despite all the violence and manipulation efforts they face daily, they continue their fight for justice. (Bejarano & Fregosa, 2010, p. 30; Lagarde y de los Ríos, 2010.)

Although research is largely focused on the Northern border of Mexico, femicides and gendered violence are an issue nationally throughout the country and feminist activists are working in all states. Demonstrations and rallies are held regularly and many are active on social media. Feminist statements against violence can be found online with hashtags #NiUnaMas ('not one victim more') or #NiUnaMenos ('not one woman less') that have become the slogans of the feminist movement everywhere in Latin America. Occasionally some femicides receive more public attention in which case some killed women end up as faces of the movement.

In February 2020 this happened with two high-profile cases, femicides of Ingrid Escamilla and Fatima Aldrighetti when their murders prompted dozens of protesters to the streets of Mexico City. On the 9th of February, a 25-year-old woman named Ingrid Escamilla was skinned and killed by her alleged partner in Mexico City. Some of the forensic photographs of her mutilated body were leaked and published in the media with

headlines hinting that it was a ‘crime of passion’ as a reference to Valentine’s Day, which sparked controversy among Mexican women. To counter the ghastly pictures of Escamilla’s body circulating in social media, a Twitter campaign emerged. People started posting beautiful images of landscapes with Escamilla’s name and similar hashtags so that people searching for leaked photographs would find other content instead. (McDonnell & Sanchez, 2020.)

Only a few days after Escamilla’s murder, the nation was shocked by the case of 7-year-old girl Fátima Aldrighetti who was kidnapped, tortured and murdered before her body was wrapped in a plastic bag and left next to a construction site in Mexico City. On March 9, 2020 tens of thousands of women took part in a nationwide women’s strike. Women’s purpose was to disappear for 24 hours from schools, workplaces and public places for #UnDíaSinNosotras (‘a day without us’) as a reminder of how a society without women would look like and as an honour for murdered women. (Martínez & Sieff, 2020.)

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this study is rooted in the Foucauldian scholarship of *power*. More precisely, Michel Foucault's theory of power as *relational* or *productive* and the idea of power being everywhere but nowhere, in particular, imposes the principal understanding of how violence is implicated in multiple structures of power relations.

As *gender* provides a framework for the construction of power relations in this study, the notion of gender is also defined in the following chapter. Judith Butler's ideas of gender are in line with Foucault's ideas on power: both power and gender are produced through interplay and performance and they are not naturally given. When gender is included in an analysis of power, it allows a researcher to see the exercise of power in places where formerly only passive victims of power were seen (Radtke & Stam, 1994, p. 13). Power is not simply oppressive or constraining but also enabling and liberating. Together, Foucault's approach on power and Judith Butler's feminist conceptualisations of gender work as a theoretical framework and thus, the starting point for the analysis of the constructions of power.

Throughout this dissertation, the term *violence against women (VAW)* will be used to refer to feminicides and violence experienced by women in Mexico. Therefore, after conceptualisations of power and gender, it is necessary to discuss what is the phenomena we call violence against women or gender-based violence. VAW can be defined in a variety of ways, also because the law and social sciences define the phenomena differently. In this study, VAW means physical, mental, or any other kind of violence to women at least partly because of their gender.

2.1 Power

Power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society. (Foucault, 1978, p. 93)

The literature on power is lavished with varying concepts of power and disagreement over how power should be understood. Insofar as feminist researchers have been caught on analysing power it is because they are eager to understand and challenge the unjust and biased power relations that influence women's everyday lives all over the world. As the theoretical interest of power in this research is aroused by feminist posture, the Foucauldian approach to power is chosen as the theoretical framework. Especially the ideas of power as *productive* and *relational* are probed in this chapter.

The well-known French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926–1984) studied extensively concepts of power throughout his work. Foucault's main legacy is the idea that the disposition of power and its social orders are not stationary and forever still constructions (1978). By power, he does not mean institutions or mechanisms that make States superior to citizens or modes of subjugation or domination. Instead, Foucault describes power as constantly changing sporadic, omnipresent force relations. As he puts it, "power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (1978, p. 93). Foucault does not see power as something one holds or shares but something to be exercised through interplay. Power is not a privilege but tactics or techniques that get activated in interaction because power is "exercised rather than possessed" (Foucault, 1977, p. 26). No one can escape power as Foucault considers everyone exists "inside" power (1978, p. 95). When power is omnipresent, it does not have any centre; it is multiple, not monolithic. Consequently, all power relations in society join a network in which every source of power is connected and dependent on each other. This notion of power as micro-practices that flow from the grassroots towards the top has been criticised for dismissing State-centred and economic political orientations (Fraser, 1989, p. 26). However, Foucault's idea is to understand politics through everyday life: family, schools, social sciences, and medicine are, in fact, part of political phenomena. This way Foucault has been inspired by the earlier attempt to broaden the boundaries of the political arena (Fraser, 1989).

If power is solely seen as fragmenting and multiplying, the dominant and oppressive nature of patriarchal power may be difficult to perceive. However, if it is acknowledged that women, too, have power, it does not assert that this power is always symmetrical to men (Hollway, 1996, p. 74). This is a dimension of power that Davina Cooper (1995)

calls *relational power*. It approaches power as an unequal relationship between social classes and groupings. When seen through relations, power is concerned with domination and subjection (Foucault, Gordon, Marshall, Mepham & Soper, 1980, pp. 200–201). The prevailing question in this approach is, who form the relations. Do power relations exist between individuals, social groups or can it contain amorphous orders such as capitalism or patriarchy? In this study relational power is considered something that can exist between all of them.

Relational power discusses the notions of agency, resistance, and domination, not forgetting patriarchy (Cooper, 1995, p. 9). Many feminist scholars have criticised conceptualising gendered power as domination as it treats women infantilising as passive victims that are lacking agency. Power as domination or inequality fails to recognise the power that women have (Lloyd, 2013.) This inquiry on power seems to approach power as ‘negative’ and inherently pessimistic through operations like interdiction, denial, or censorship. “Power in this view, just says no. It says no to what are defined as illicit desires, need, acts and speech”, writes Nancy Fraser (1989, p. 27). This criticism leaves space for another interpretation of Foucauldian power, as even according to Foucault, power is more effective when it says “yes” and produces things, pleasures, knowledge, and discourse (Foucault et al., 1980, p. 119).

This more optimistic approach is called *productive power* (Cooper, 1995). As Foucault presents, power relations are produced and sculpted through different actors in social practices. Additionally, power always creates the potential for defiance: “Where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault, 1978, p. 95). Power relations and resistance are not the only products of power. Power and knowledge are also profoundly intertwined and therefore Foucault uses them together as a concept of power/knowledge. Under Foucauldian perception of knowledge, power produces knowledge and in fact, there does not exist any kind of power relation without connection to knowledge (1977, p. 27). This is why feminist scholars have drawn inspiration from Foucauldian thought of productive power by applying existing methods for research that aims at revealing concealed power dynamics. They argue that researching by any method possible is a political act that fosters the power/knowledge alliance. (Ackerly & True, 2013.) Feminist thinkers have challenged what is counted as knowledge, who are the people who know things and what kind of tests these truths or people need to pass to be legitimate truths or ‘knowers.’ Harding

argues (1987) that research has tended to exclude women, intentionally or unintentionally. Voice of science and knowledge is traditionally masculine and women are not seen as agents of knowledge. This has multiple consequences: history is written from the point of view of men (of dominant class and race), while experiences and knowledge of women are disregarded and topics considered worth of researching are chosen by men following their interests. By participating in the knowledge-producing processes women have gained access to power to some extent.

Although Foucault does not deny that power sometimes takes oppressive forms of dominance or repression (1978, p. 12) he does not comprehend power as fundamentally repressive because repressive power is ultimately fragile (Foucault et al., 1980, p. 59). Power is primarily productive and then it gets its strongest form:

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. (Foucault, 1977, p. 194.)

Indeed, power produces reality, objects, and truths, also power subjects individuals. Therefore, this forms a spiral of power in which individuals are created as subjects by subjecting them to power. In her review of the Foucauldian concept of power Davina Cooper (1995, p. 2) adds that if power is omnipresent it also is inevitable, which means domination and inequality cannot be avoided. Like Cooper, many feminist scholars prefer to deviate from this idea of Foucault by dismissing the presence of domination and focus on the productive side of power. To be able to analyse negative phenomena of power efficiently, I consider power and domination attached but instead of domination being power, I follow Foucault's idea that domination is rather a secondary product of power, and productivity and prohibition can be manifested simultaneously. For example, denying homosexuality is the other side of the coin of producing heterosexual subjects, explains Cooper (1995, p. 16).

As mentioned earlier, some of Foucault's concepts on modern power have been criticised for not taking into account the role of States or other forms of top-down power. We will see later in this thesis how essential a specific tool for analysing the role of rule over

individuals and social groups is and this is why the likewise Foucauldian concept of *bio-power* is necessary to include in the theory. Bio-power operates on the level of the population. It subjugates bodies and controls populations through medical, pedagogical, and demographical interventions, such as migration policies or birth control. Bio-power is based on discipline and control over life. As in earlier centuries, the ultimate punishment used to be death, now the punishment is targeted over the human body and life. “One might say that the ancient right to take life or let live was replaced by a power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death”, Foucault frames it (1978, p. 138). On the other hand, the control over bodies is described another way in *Discipline and Punish* (1977) in which the mechanisms of power are imagined in the practices of prisons or hospitals. This type of surveillant discipline that Foucault calls *panopticism* is a form of power relations in which the target is the obedience and utility of the body.

Because, without any physical instrument other than architecture and geometry, it acts directly on individuals; it gives ‘power of mind over mind’ (Foucault 1977, p. 206)

A central action of policing is constant surveillance in space that allows observing and disciplining of individuals. This means that the object of surveillance has to act constantly as if he was under observation.

2.2 Gender

The focus of this thesis is in power discourses, which makes power the most central concept. However, as power is examined concerning gender in the context of gender-based violence it is necessary to clarify what gender exactly means through the feminist viewpoint. While a variety of definitions of the term gender have been suggested, this paper will use the definition by Judith Butler (1999) in her best-known work *Gender trouble* that was originally published in 1990. Butler’s ideas of gender, including gender and power, share common grounds with Foucault’s ideas on power, which makes Butler’s thoughts reasonable in the context of this thesis. By applying Foucault’s allegation on the productive nature of power to gender, Butler explores how the division between genders is ultimately an exercise of power.

By applying Foucault's thesis on the productive nature of modern power to gender, Butler (1999) examines how the theoretic division between a socially constructed gender and presumed biological sex, ultimately constitutes the illusion that the subject's gender is grounded in a fixed and binary biological essence. However, Butler considers this as 'exclusionary' and 'self-defeating' as this creates a matrix in which other identities cannot endure. Gender intersects with other discursively constituted identities such as race, class, ethnic, sexual, or religious, and by concentrating only on gender these other features are disregarded. Butler builds her ideas on gender to the similar idea that all our notional divisions are products of power and therefore, in principle, fluid. This way gender is not naturally given, but a rather discursive product of modern power.

In this sense, gender is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes, for we have seen that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence. Hence, within the inherited discourse of the metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing –. (Butler, 1999, p. 33)

In her theory of gender performativity, Butler argues that gender is not passive, biological fact or natural state of 'being'. Instead, she redefines gender as an active and performative way of 'doing.' Human beings 'do' their genders visible instead of 'being' some gender. Sex is a term used when talking about the biological features of a person, gender is defined by cultural constructions. These two do not have a clear connection with each other because "gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex" (Butler, 1999, pp. 9–10). When gender is constructed through various acts and performances, Butler claims that without all those acts there would not be gender at all. This leads to the radical conclusion of gender identity – or as a matter of fact, absence of gender identity – that is often quoted in feminist queer theories: "There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results" (Butler, 1999, p. 33).

According to Butler the whole distinction between gender/sex, masculinity/femininity, heterosexuality, or differences between genders are products of power that are constantly produced and maintained social performances and discourses. She rejects the idea of two,

binary “natural” genders as the whole concept of sexuality is an institutionalised performance that aims for control and coercion of reality. Even the category of “women” as a subject of feminist studies is another category produced through our culture and conceptions; the term ‘women’ does not denote a common identity (Butler, 1999, pp. 5–6). This is also a weakness I have to take into consideration in the conclusions of this thesis as my research object is power in the context of the ‘category of women.’

2.3 Violence against women

When power manifests itself as male dominance and female subordination in patriarchal social order it becomes violence against women (VAW). Although the central argument in this thesis is that power is represented as diffuse and patriarchy is in interaction with other power structures, due to the topic of this study it is necessary to define and discuss meanings of violence against women. Violence against women is also called as gender-based violence (GBV) or gendered violence. The exact meaning of GBV is violence directed against a person because of their gender, which means GBV does not exclude men or non-binary people. However, the majority of victims are women, and also in this thesis, gender-based violence and gendered violence are used as synonyms to violence against women.

Violence against women is a tricky concept to define because the law defines it very differently than social and political sciences do. When man-made laws focus on concrete acts such as rape or battering, academia takes into account also psychological dimensions (Radford & Stanko, 1996, pp. 65–68). In this thesis, the definition of VAW is wider than physical violence. It includes both physical and mental dimensions of it and threats of violence, hence it is not restricted by judicial terminology. Additionally, VAW has been renamed over and over again depending on the context, time, and culture. Sexual violence, rape, incest, sexual abuse, woman battering, woman killing, sexual harassment, and hate speech against women, just to mention few, are all used both as synonyms to VAW or as sub-categories of it. In this thesis, VAW covers all the above-mentioned forms of violence and any other kind of violence or threat of violence that happens to women at least partly because of their gender. (Weldon, 2002, pp. 9–10.)

Hanmer (1996, pp. 8–10) on the other hand defines violence against women from the women's point of view. Women's most common explanation of violence concerning men is ending up to uncomfortable situations without any possibility to avoid it happening. When a woman is in the situation, she is unable to control events and the outcome. With strangers, violence is most often limited to behaviour and physical actions. With known men such as partners or family members, the scale of violence and control is even wider. Control may appear as an exertion of economic control or limiting woman's freedom to go to work or move outside the household.

The United Nations identifies the role of States in generating violence against women. The UN defines also VAW as physical, sexual, or psychological violence occurring either in the family or within the general community, but the third dimension of VAW is violence "perpetrated or condoned by the State" (United Nations General Assembly, 1993). In its Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993), the United Nations defines VAW as something that happens inside homes in the form of battering, sexual abuse of children or marital rape, dowry-related violence, female genital mutilation, or other harmful practices. Outside homes VAW can take forms of sexual abuse or sexual harassment, intimidation or harassment at workplaces or schools, human trafficking, and forced prostitution. Although these are common forms of VAW, violence against women is not limited to these. For example, violence and threat of violence are often reinforced by degrading and belittling behaviour by men, which has a great influence on women's lives, their self-esteem, and their sense of security (Kelly & Radford, 1996).

Some motivations behind violence or threat of violence may be a display of male power and preserving male supremacy but also an urge to punish a woman for perceived transgressions (Caputi & Russell, 1992; Kelly & Radford, 1996; Radford, 1992). Often oppression of women aims for controlling women (Radford, 1992). At the same time, patriarchy is in interaction with different types of power structures and personal characteristics, such as race, age, religion, class, or disability. The combination of these crossing characteristics may shape women's experiences if they face violence (Radford & Stanko, 1996, p. 65). For example, women from higher class may have privileged access to wealth and resources, such as private transport that offers some protection in comparison to public transportation. Also, class (or race, age, religion, disability, or any other attribute) constructs the experience of women when they make complaints of sexual violence:

“While women from all backgrounds are open to abuse, class influences the amount of respect a woman is accorded when dealing with professionals – –. Middle-class women are likely to receive more respect and be taken more seriously.” (Hester, Kelly & Radford, 1996, p. 5)

The consequences of violence against women are more than the harm caused to the individual in question. The phenomenon has spread out in societies influencing to behaviour and lives of those who do not face or witness violence directly in their lives. The existence of VAW and awareness of it restricts women and their rights as citizens in democratic societies. When women are aware of the risks, they may change their behaviour by not saying their real opinions to avoid provoking men, avoid staying alone with men in private spaces or avoid walking alone in dark streets (Weldon, 2002, p. 10).

One psychological dimension of gender-based violence is a complex process called *silencing*. In a world in which language and words are powerful tools shaping the world, silencing is usual especially when women are trying to make sexual violence visible by telling their experiences of it. In feminist research silencing means various ways of keeping women quiet by contesting their experiences, questioning their knowledge, and denying their reality. Kelly and Radford (1996) name it as *nothing really happened* -discourse. If a man is following a woman in a street, all her emotions of fear can be invalidated afterwards with a simple “nothing really happened” -phrase as long as physical violence, so-called ‘real’ or ‘serious violence’ does not occur. This discourse has existed so long that even women themselves often use it after intimidating events. Other tactics of silencing may be strategies of inclusion and exclusion, which can prevail in different power structures or their exposure to oppressive powers in personal, social, or institutional levels. For example, in Mexico prevails social silence that allows those who have committed feminicides still walk free without punishment. (Lagarde y de los Ríos, 2010.)

Weldon (2002) points out that studies focusing on VAW do not claim that violence against men does not exist or is not important. However, the natures of the phenomena are very different. The violence posed for women happens in different circumstances and because of different actors than violence posed for men. VAW intertwines to the complex

causalities of power structures, women's position, and socio-economic dependence on men, which is the reason why assaulters of women are most often people from the family or other people women know beforehand, whereas men are mostly assaulted by strangers, although also mostly male. (Weldon, 2002, p. 10.)

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research design

This research is a qualitative research conducted as semi-structured interview research. Qualitative methods and interviews are windows into the everyday worlds of activists, and they construct realities that represent the informants' voices. At the same time, they minimize, at least as much as possible, the voice of the researcher. (Ragin, 1994, pp. 43–45.) The data is analysed using discourse analysis to examine the range of power discourses associated with feminicides in Mexico. Besides, the research sets its roots deep into the traditions of feminist research. As a researcher, I want to create an intellectual and practical space for women's experiences and voices to be heard and listened to. These methodological approaches allow women to become "active participants in the social construction of knowledge, empowerment, and social change" (O'Neill, 1996, p. 131). The lodestar of this research is the idea expressed by O'Neill.

Importance is placed upon the woman's own story, her descriptions, feelings and meanings. Documenting women's experiences through lifespan narratives/biographies becomes political when contextualized within feminist theory/methodology. (O'Neill, 1996, p. 131)

Harding has created a series of suggestions on how to produce balanced feminist research (1987, pp. 6–10). These will be applied through this research. The first she suggests is the utilisation of women's experiences as empirical and theoretical resources, which is the core of this thesis. Harding also emphasises writing science for women and recognising the position of the researcher herself/himself. Instead of trying to approach the research topic fully objectively (with *strong objectivity*) and denying own prejudices or emotions, the researcher should aim for reflexivity. Traditionally research is considered as value-free, impartial and dispassionate. According to Harding (1991, p. 144), objectivists demand the elimination of all types of social values and interests of a researcher, research process, and results. However, Harding suggests that not all values or interests have the same impact on research results. Therefore, she claims that the researcher does not need to make her or his own cultural beliefs or characteristics invisible but rather use them as part of the empirical evidence (Harding 1987, p. 9). This is what feminists have pursued

for decades: they have challenged, and in some cases, even rejected the traditional criteria for value-free research calling out research not being completely value-free in the first place (Levesque-Lopman, 2000, p. 105). If the opposite happens and a researcher claims he/she is objective, while he/she is not aware of her/his personal, professional and structural position and fails to take it into account when analysing the results, she/he may keep reproducing the dominant knowledge with its gender, class and race biases (Naples, 2003, p. 3). Feminist research is also about problematising the knowledge we already have, asking the same questions again and not taking existing information for granted (Levesque-Lopman, 2000).

This type of open dialogue between the research topic and researcher, so-called *reflexivity of social science*, I am pursuing in this thesis as well. This means I try to be aware of and open up my choices and my position as a Western, White woman researching experiences of Mexican activist women.

Next, I will introduce my data-collecting process using semi-structured interviews. Secondly, I will explain my method of analysis, discourse analysis. At the end of this chapter, I reflect on the validity and ethical considerations of my work.

4.2 Data collection: Semi-structured interviews

Interviews as a research method are a long-established tradition for qualitative research and there are many ways to conduct interview research. The simplest way to determine an interview is to define it as a guided conversation (Blee & Taylor, 2002, p. 92). This study utilises semi-structured interviews, which is different from structured interviews (also called as standardised interviews). Semi-structured interviews have become principle means of feminist research because it requires the active involvement of women themselves constructing the data and it often is about the women's experiences and lives (Levesque-Lopman, 2000).

While in structured interviews researcher asks the same, preestablished questions from each informant in the same manner, semi-structured interviews allow more space to improvise if an informant provides an interesting comment or says something that the

researcher wants to hear more about. (Blee & Taylor, 2002, p. 92; Mills & Mullany, 2011, p. 100). A semi-structured interview provides a chance to ask more open-ended questions and makes the whole interview setting more flexible. This type of research interview emphasises the world of experience of the informants and their definitions of things (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2001, pp. 47–48). A fruitful way to gain more insight are follow-up questions like “and then?” or “could you tell me more about that?” (Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 113). The researcher should pay attention to her/his word choices and let informant describe and name things and phenomena as much as possible (Laine, 2010, p. 38).

Semi-structured interviews are useful especially when creating ideas or theories about complex processes that cannot be asked straightforwardly in the form of a survey. Although the analysis process may not be as concrete as in survey research, the data collected with interviews is excellent when analysing and looking for feelings, emotions, motives, life histories and interpretations of complex phenomena. (Klandermans & Staggenborg, 2002, pp. 15–16.) Also, interviews allow a researcher to gather more in-depth information about the research topic and allows the researcher to approach and listen to people that perhaps otherwise would not be recorded to history books. This is why interviews are excellent for social movement studies as well as feminist research. Interviews let those people speak who institutional structures or media may ignore because often the most visible ones are wealthy and influential individuals of societies. Sometimes this may lead to a situation in which the interview itself can have a radical impact on a woman’s life if an interviewee comes from a culture in which her background, religion, family or community prescribes her silence in some way. If someone asks her opinion and thoughts on life it can be a completely new social situation for her. (Chase & Reinharz, 2002, p. 225.)

Activist women, on the other hand, are most likely more used to express their opinions. Researchers coming outside of the activist communities can also provide some new important perspectives of social movement participants. (Blee & Taylor, 2002.) With activists, it normally is not problematic to get them to speak: because they are committed to their cause, they gladly share their views. However, the researcher has to make sure that informants stay focused on the themes and types of information the researcher is looking for (Rupp & Taylor, 1991).

During the interview process, it is essential to aim for collecting new data through all the interviews instead of verifying the researcher's conjectures. The researcher conducting interview research should maintain the same grip and interview technique throughout all the interviews. Johnson (2002, p. 112) reminds that there is a possibility that at the beginning of the interview project a researcher is very open for new information and new topics appearing. After many interview sessions, a researcher has collected a large body of knowledge and may start to feed some of these facts unconsciously back to the informants. In this case, exploring new information may turn into verifying the assumptions the researcher may have formed through the early interviews. Often the later interviews tend to be more in-depth concentrating on specific topics that the researcher has found out through early interviews. Then data collection and verifying may become intertwined. However, a researcher should strive for exploring instead of verifying until the end of the last interview.

4.3 Conducting the interviews

For this research, I interviewed six anti-femicide activists, who I found in multiple ways. First, I searched for different human rights and especially women's rights organisations working against femicides in Mexico. I approached the organisations with an e-mail in which I introduced myself and requested for an interview with some of their experts or activists. At this point, I did not set any strict limits or requirements for a suitable informant as long as they consider themselves as activists. After this first e-mail round, I did not receive very many answers, which is why I sent a reminder message to all the same addresses and also approached organisations through their Facebook sites. Few representatives of organisations replied and agreed to participate, mostly through their Facebook page, while few denied. Most of the over 50 e-mails were never answered. In the end, I found three activists for interviews through this e-mail round. The fourth person was found through one of these people when I was asking for recommendations and contacts for other informants.

Next, I explored through social media (Facebook and Twitter) and Spanish speaking online media sites looking for accounts, press releases and news with keywords such as *feminicidio* (femicide), *femicidio* (femicide), *violencia contra las mujeres* (violence

against women) and *activista* (activist). This is how I found names of suitable people and approached directly some activists that had been active online or given interviews for newspapers about the issue. Unfortunately, many of the people contacted never replied at all or stopped replying after first agreeing to participate in my study. Finding suitable informants turned out surprisingly challenging and slowed down my work substantially.

Finally, I found the fifth informant willing to participate through Facebook. She had given an interview for an online paper about activism and feminicides and I approached her through Facebook. I also found a femicide database that was maintained by one activist alone and I sent her a comment on her site asking to contact me. This is how I found the sixth informant. This type of targeted participant request is often used in interview research covering social movements because some individuals have particular experiences in social movements for which their experiences are important to include. Social movement researchers look for informants who are knowledgeable about the topic and can either strengthen or revoke the prevalent narratives and hypothesis of the topic. (Blee & Taylor, 2002, p. 100.)

Already when I first contacted the people, I told them their personal details would not appear in my research, which is why I do not reveal which organisations they represent. This is first and foremost for the safety of my informants. Another reason for this is that I believed my informants would be more open and honest during the interviews if they can trust that their identities will not be uncovered and they cannot be recognised from the text. To guard the respondents' anonymity, interviewees' real names are not used but their responses are separated with codes P1, P2, P3, P4, P5 and P6, the letter P referring to 'participant'. The analysis chapter includes a lot of citations. This is due to the goal of this study, which is to reflect the interviewees' thoughts and experiences. This research will use their wordings to give them their voice in this study.

Although detailed characteristics of the informants cannot be revealed, some basic facts can be told. The informants are aged between 24–63 years and their average age is 45,7 years. All of them have been working as activists for 3–38 years although this is based on their estimations on how many years they have been considering themselves as activists. Many of the women had personal experiences that had turned them into activists. Many had campaigned or engaged in activism first as free time activity until it became

their paid employment. Many have been working on a wide field of human rights activism before they specialised in women's rights and feminicides. Four of the informants represent some women's rights organisation. Two of the informants are not part of any formal organisation or movement; they are a freelance journalist and an online activist. The informants are from five different cities in the following four states of Mexico: Jalisco, Chihuahua, Baja California and Mexico City.

Before the interviews, I familiarised myself with research already published around the issue and set the themes and questions that would be discussed during interviews (see Appendix 3: Interview structure). The first interview was conducted already in May 2019, the rest between January and February 2020. Four of the interviews were done in Spanish and two in English. We agreed on language in advance and I allowed the informants to choose. Both languages included some benefits: I believe that in Spanish, the mother language of informants, expressions are more vivid and language richer. However, conducting even two of the interviews in English lightened the following workload of this thesis, transcribing and translating, as I only needed to translate four of the interviews.

The interviews were done via Skype. The connections worked quite well as only one of the interviews was occasionally disrupted because of bad connection and interviewee's voice vanishing sometimes. The interviews lasted between 28–78 minutes and the average length was 59,5 minutes. All the interviews were recorded and later the recordings were transcribed word for word, but still emphasising the substantial content and omitting unnecessary expletives. Because there are no set rules for transcribing, the level of detail depends upon the methodology and theory used in research (Mills & Mullany, 2011, pp. 110–111), which is why I did not transcribe gestures, tones of voice or pauses of speech as they are not relevant in this study. In total there are 357 minutes (5 hours 37 minutes) of interview recordings and 60 A4 pages of transcribed material.

The original question pattern (see Appendix 3) worked well and did not go through that much modification. The research focus broadened from activism to power relations during the analysis when I noticed those discourses were standing out from the data. Even though interviews included a lot of talk about activism, power discourses were richer and academically more interesting. The questions in which social media and its usage were discussed turned out quite unnecessary in the end as it did not show up any clear

discourses, unlike I had predicted. This only displays how some researcher's preconceptions may be completely wrong. Interviews had a positive and relaxed atmosphere despite the serious topic and I felt the informants seemed very open and outspoken. I felt honoured that some of them shared very personal and delicate experiences with me although we barely knew each other.

In semi-structured interviewing the analysis and interpretation are ongoing processes and therefore each interview is a different experience and already part of the analysis process. Changes in direction or additions can be made during the data-collection process, as well as some things can be abandoned if recognised as unfruitful for the research. The first interviews are the ones in which the researcher is creating the idea of the most important themes to cover (Blee & Taylor, 2002, p. 110). As noted earlier, my interview structure did not see radical changes during the interview process. The biggest change was that during the last interviews I tried to ask more and more simple questions such as "why", "what do you mean", "can you tell me more about that" for additional reasoning and answers were often very intriguing.

4.4 Data analysis: discourse analysis

Without discourse, there is no social reality, and without understanding discourse, we cannot understand our reality, our experiences, or ourselves. (Hardy & Phillips, 2002, p. 2)

Discourse analysis explores the relationship between language and the reality that is constructed through it. It is not interested in language or language's structure itself but rather the meanings inside of it or what is done with language and how. Jokinen, Juhila and Suoninen (2016, p. 14) define discourse analysis as research of linguistic usage that analyses in detail how social reality is built in different social practices. Therefore, the starting point of discourse analysis is the conclusion that social reality is produced through discourses in social interactions and the researcher is interested in this process (Hardy & Phillips, 2002, p. 3). A broader perspective has been adopted by Jørgensen & Phillips (2002, p. 1) who argue that discourse is a "particular way of talking about and understanding the world." They describe discourse analysis as a series of interdisciplinary approaches in which theory and method are intertwined, which allows that discourse

analysis can be used widely in linguistics and social sciences. Language is not merely a passive channel or tool but rather an active ‘machine’ or fluid ‘material.’ Instead of only transmitting the message language generates and constitutes the social world, which means language also shapes social identities and social relations. Thus, the relationship between language and society is multilayered and intertwined (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Mäntynen & Pietikäinen, 2020).

Social constructionism sets a theoretical frame for discourse analysis in many ways. A research topic and form of a research question, development and usage of analytical tools and the understanding of the relationship between the researcher and research topic are all issues that are influenced by the tradition of social constructionism. The object of study in discourse analysis is first and foremost the linguistic processes, meanings, and social realities they build. While doing the study researcher also participates to this process of constructing social reality. This kind of connection between social reality and the construction of meanings is a unifying factor for all studies that are based on social constructionism. (Jokinen, 2016, pp. 201–203; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 4; Mäntynen & Pietikäinen, 2020, p. 8.)

Discourse analysts do not evaluate how discourses reflect or reveal distinct phenomena as the construction of reality is the key (Hardy & Phillips, 2002, p. 5). This view is supported by Suoninen (2016, p. 186) who writes that language users are not observed as ‘informants’. There is no need to name reasons for actions or phenomena. Instead, the research focus is on means that actors use to describe phenomena or their causes. However, discourses are not floating in a vacuum because language is a social action that is connected to institutional and social practices (Burr, 2003, p. 75). As said, in the centre of discourse analysis are meanings and realities and how they are generated. Truth, on the other hand, is irrelevant; it is not important which version is the most truthful but the weight of different versions (Mäntynen & Pietikäinen, 2020, pp. 5–6). Everyone knows some topics that can be debated from different angles: climate change, forests, motherhood or taxation, just to mention few. In an intense conversation all the arguments related to motherhood, for example, can be true but all of them rely on some discourse, whether the standpoint is positive, negative or neutral. When the weight of versions goes ahead of truth and meanings construed, one can see how discourse analysis is attached to power, change and production of knowledge. At times there exists a constant struggle of which

discourse gets most space and who defines the ‘truth’. (Mäntynen & Pietikäinen, 2020, pp. 5–40.)

Discourse analysis is a fruitful method when researching power relations, exercise of power or resistance in society. When language, knowledge and action in social and historical contexts are intertwined in the way they are in discourse analysis, research is not the only examination of language and texts but also of structures of society, power relations, institutions and actors (Mäntynen & Pietikäinen, 2020, pp.13–14). Michel Foucault, who was discussed earlier in chapter 2, is prominent not only because of his concepts of power but also because of his work on discourses and discourse analysis concerning power and truth. Foucault had a huge influence on the popularisation of the concept of ‘discourse’. According to the Foucauldian discourse, analysis discourses are more than just produced meanings or ways of thinking and talking. They are mechanisms to exercise power because discourses build our understanding of reality and knowledge of our surroundings. This way discourses also shape the object of speech. (Fairclough, 1992; Foucault et al., 1980; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Mäntynen & Pietikäinen, 2020.)

Collectively, the studies of Foucault outline the critical role of power as a primary category of discourse analysis and the intimate relationship between discourse, knowledge and power. This tight connection between power and discourse makes discourse analysis as a beneficial method for this research. Power is not the property of particular agents and it does not belong exclusively to actors like State or individuals. Foucault does not comprehend power as something to be possessed but something to be exercised through drawing upon particular discourses. (Burr, 2003, pp. 67–68; Foucault, 1977, 1978; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 13.)

Foucault’s work has been followed by critical discourse analysis (CDA), which is another significant, more linguistic orientation focusing on power, ideologies, and political in discourse research. While the Foucauldian analysis focuses on the interplay of power/knowledge and construction of power, CDA is more concerned with the role of discursive activity in shaping and sustaining unequal power relations. CDA is a problem-oriented disciplinary research movement with a group of different approaches. All the approaches share the same interest in the semiotic dimensions of power, abuse, injustice and change in society. Change can be considered both political-economic or cultural.

CDA aims to make visible and criticise the connections between the discourses of texts and social processes. (Fairclough, 1995, p. 97; Fairclough et al., 2011, p. 357)

CDA is based on discourse analysis and started developing when ‘traditional’ discourse analysis was considered inadequate for researching power and change. The most prominent pioneers in critical discourse analysis such as Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak and Teun A. van Dijk have identified the ideologies and power relations inculcated and reproduced through different discourses. They are also interested in how discourses can be resisted and struggled in social interactions. They ask why some specific ways of producing reality create those discourses in power and how these processes contribute to social and political inequality, power abuse or domination. (Burr, 2003, p. 171; Fairclough, 1995; Fairclough et al., 2011; Hardy & Phillips, 2002, p. 20; Mäntynen & Pietikäinen, 2020, pp. 18–19.)

According to Fairclough (1992), Foucault’s ideas on power underestimate people’s power and resistance and do not perceive enough the notions of struggle and change. Fairclough remarks that although Foucault does not ignore elements of resistance, in his work “the dominant impression is one of people being helplessly subjected to immovable systems of power” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 57). This way power exists at the same time with resistance but brings no change because “he gives the impression that resistance is generally contained by power and poses no threat” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 57). Another criticism of Foucault’s discourse analysis is also orientated to its ‘abstract’ nature. Critics consider that it is not anchored in a close analysis of particular texts (or text transcriptions of speech) and therefore lacks practicality (see Fairclough, 1992, p. 37; Fairclough et al., 2011, p. 361).

Critical research can be described dissident and critical researchers are eager to grasp, reveal and in the last resort resist social inequality (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 352). Therefore, the researcher engaging with CDA need to be aware of their role and the nature of CDA that rejects the possibility of “value-free” science. Critical discourse analyses are also affected by social structure and produced in social interaction. Van Dijk approaches the notion of power through the idea of social groups and minds. Power is not only manifested through knowledge or physical force but also money or authority. To understand critical studies’ idea of (social) power, one has to understand the notion of control: groups have

power if they can control minds and acts of other groups or people belonging to other groups. This way some social groups, institutions or their leaders may become controllers of some specific discourses, which leads them to gain more social power. A fundamental way to reproduce dominance is controlling people's minds. (Van Dijk, 2001, pp. 356–357.)

This study has its roots in the Foucauldian discourse analysis. The main purpose of the study is to recognise and describe power discourses around feminicides. Criticism of power relations or the dimension of ideology and resistance are not the focus of this study. However, they are in the background and I find many ideas from CDA useful for my goals; therefore, discourse analysis used in this study has gained some inspiration from the traditions of critical discourse analysis as well.

4.5 Discourse analysis in practice

In my discourse analysis, I emulated the following model. First, I transcribed all interviews and read them through carefully to get an overall view of my data and its main themes. I took some notes of the prevailing ideas and potential categories. Then, I read again looking for repeating themes, ideas, expressions and exact words, and this time writing down all those expressions and quotations that seemed meaningful. During this whole process, I kept my research questions in mind and let them guide me and help me choose what things to look for. However, I did not exclude interesting ideas only based on research questions and I was allowed to include things outside of them. This face was, metaphorically speaking, somehow like raking leaves with a very coarse rake.

Expressions and words that were repeating in the material were patriarchy, patriarchal society, machismo, misogynist culture, structure, State, government, politics, patriarchal government, authorities, government official, victim, victimization, truth, impunity, justice, trust, responsibility, community, to understand, gender, network, collective, disappeared, organised crime, polarisation and privilege. These were some of the keywords that were leading my analysis process alongside the research questions.

There were also other words appearing in the material throughout the interviews but as they are words connected directly to the research topic they could not be used as grounds for a separate discourse. These are words such as *violence, security, Mexico, women, women's rights, men, killing/to be killed, problem* and *activist*.

When I had read interviews a few times and written down all that I found valuable I started lumping together some ideas. I organised notes so that similar ideas, meanings and expressions were piled into their stacks. I started grouping and combining ideas until all of them had some sort of group. To identify discourses, I started posing questions for my material. My analysis questions were the following: What is told about feminicides and violence against women? How feminicides and violence against women are described? What different words are used to portray the phenomenon? What kind of things are associated with and compared with feminicides? Where is power located? What is the role of activists themselves? How do women describe their position and achievements? I split paragraphs, sentences and even words to different discourses. Here I will offer one example of my process. In this paragraph, the informant was talking about perceptions of feminicides in Mexico. She said the following:

They [Mexican people] don't understand them [the phenomena of feminicides]. They don't see the difference, why they [the government] say feminicides instead of homicides. They really just think that they [killed women] are prostitutes being killed, not any women. That those women were doing something wrong and then were killed. But they don't understand the gender, all the social problems of feminicides. It's very difficult to understand if you have an education level of 5th or 6th grade in Mexico. You go with what media says and we in Mexico say that also with what the church says. -- Church or television educates you in Mexico. (P1)

This example is exceptionally rich in terms of different discourses. The informant raises many different angles that can be divided into separate discourses. First, she starts to talk about a faint understanding of Mexicans (*they don't understand, -- they don't see the difference*), which she later connects to low education level in the country (*education level of 5th or 6th grade in Mexico*). Mexicans are not accused of their lack of knowledge but instead, the speaker has quite a neutral attitude towards them. She links the reason behind lack of knowledge to a larger picture. She explains in a short sentence that

femicides are the outgrowth of *gender* issues and *social problems*, which she connects to a broader context, meaning structures in the society that influence femicides. Therefore, here we have seen already discourses of 1) knowledge and 2) structures of the society or, as I name the discourse, patriarchal structures. However, the paragraph contains even more. The informant tells that the people in power call *femicides as homicides* and gives an assumption that government is also behind the belief that killed women would be *prostitutes* or other women that *have done something wrong*. She suggests the government is modifying words and thereby defining the truth. The third discourse surging would be the discourse of 3) truth. Finally, the informant brings out the role of *church and television as educators* in Mexico. According to her, people in Mexico do what they are told to do in the church or on the television. In the context of this specific paragraph I would call this 4) authority discourse. However, in my final analysis, the role of religion and media was not peculiarly perceptible, and I attached this discourse belonging to the discourse of patriarchal structures.

Initially, the research focus was on the security of activist women and their agency. However, upon deeper familiarisation with the interviews, it was clear that the analysis should take into consideration the larger scale of gendered violence in the society because the activists did not constrict themselves to talking about their role. This influenced the research questions and they were revised during the process. Overall, the analysis consisted of several repeated phases, with the recurring comparison between data, theory, research questions and my interpretation. During the analysis, I looked for repetition and variation in the interview data, arguments and counter-arguments explicit and implicit meanings, tones and emotions behind the message. Some of the themes were overlapping so I tried to draw clear distinctions between different discourses. Also, some of the discourses were not very informative, dominant or relevant for this study and those were discarded.

4.6 Validity and ethical considerations

Validity means the capability of the chosen research method and data to answer the research question. One of the most important skills of a researcher is to reflect own choices and interpretations and understand how much selections may influence received answers and conclusions. The researcher may understand meanings of some sentences, words or idioms differently than an interviewee. This possibility is even greater when the researcher and informants represent different cultures and speak different languages as their mother tongues. The researcher should aim for transparency and give a detailed description of each step taken during the process. For example, the conditions and places in which data has been collected should be told truthfully. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara, 2004, pp. 216–218.) During this study, I aspire to explain thoroughly decisions and measures I have taken and the reasons behind them.

In feminist research, the biggest debate around research ethics has been around the use of informants, especially when the informants are from a less powerful group than a researcher (Mills & Mullany, 2011, p. 114). Because in this case, it is impossible to form any clear description of power relations between researcher and informants due to geographical and cultural contexts and their differences, I content to make sure my actions do not exploit the informants in any manner and that the research does not pose informants under any kind of danger. During this research, all the identities of informants are removed and no one except the researcher herself knows who they are. In his research confidentiality means active attempt to remove all elements or details that might reveal the identities of the informants in the research (Berg & Lune, 2012). The informants are aware of confidentiality. Also, they do know that the interviews were recorded. The data collected will be treated with confidence and kept in a safe and secure location. Also, the data will be used only for this research. It is worth to mention that all of the informants are over 18 years old and they all have participated free from force or any kind of constraint or coercion. This all information has been delivered for them in the form of informed consent form both in English and in Spanish (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2) that they have agreed and signed before the interviews.

Another question around feminist research and social movement research is about giving voice. One central element of those branches of research is about enhancing the visibility

of marginal or vulnerable groups. How this type of research can be conducted impartially without succumbing to advocacy research? Can a researcher avoid being partial? This is a question I touched upon briefly in chapter 4.2 emphasising the importance of transparency in feminist research. Ragin (1994, p. 45) reminds that researchers can treat their subjects objectively and neutrally in a similar way as journalists are. Keys for objective research are presenting both good and bad sides of things, avoiding oversimplifying, being wary of people's rationalisation processes, remembering to examine events from different angles and maintaining scepticism (Ragin, 1994, p. 45).

Often social science research benefits from mixed methods that combine interviews for instance with participant observation or documentary evidence (Blee & Taylor, 2002, p. 111). I am aware my research is solely leaning on the interviews from my informants. Therefore, this study is only a reflection of interviewees' personal views based on their stories and experiences, analysed through the selected theory. The limitations of this particular study will be discussed more profoundly after the analysis and conclusions in chapter 6.3.

5 ANALYSIS

The following part of this study moves on to outline in greater detail the analysis of the research. The initial categorisation of the discourses included over ten different themes, many of them overlapping. I started organising the discourses from the macro-level towards micro-level. The first discourses found were ‘patriarchal culture’ and ‘pervasive violence’ because conceptual frames and ideas related to these two were repeated through all interviews. Through the patriarchal culture discourse, the activists described how deeply the presumptions of gender, gender roles and attitudes towards women are entrenched in the culture and social order. The discourse of pervasive violence, instead, described how widespread violence is in all its forms in Mexico. These both discourses are quite abstract and could have been combined. However, I found it more worthwhile to distinguish the two because patriarchal culture discourse focuses on attitudes and cultural features of women, while pervasive violence discusses multifariousness of violence mentioning issues such as disappearances, the drug war and criminal organisations and their connections to gendered violence.

Soon I noticed that the discourse of patriarchal culture was attached to another discourse. When the informants talked about patriarchal attitudes, they often emphasised that they are difficult to change due to educational reasons. The change is difficult as long as people do not understand or see those structures limiting or oppressing women. This formed a logical pair for the discourse of patriarchal structure. Therefore, the next discourse was called ‘deficient understanding’ and these two (patriarchal culture and deficient understanding) were mapped under the headline ‘structure discourses’. This is not only because the informants mentioned the word ‘structure’ multiple times but also because of the meanings they gave for machismo, religion’s role or knowledge gaps of individuals: they are deeply in the habits and beliefs of Mexicans and very slow to change.

The next discourse is formed around the institutional level and named as the ‘State discourse’. This was separated into two sub-discourses: the discourses of ‘politics’ and ‘impunity’. These discourses are shaped around the institutions as objects of speech: the informants located the responsibility of feminicides to the politicians and legal instruments,

which according to them, allow violence to continue because of the State's incompetence to stop it.

Discourse number six is called 'women's networks', which uncovers the role of women and their collectives. This discourse emphasises women's agency and their cooperation and locates the action to the micro-level.

After forming these above-mentioned discourses there was still a lot of interesting ideas emerging from the interviews that did not belong clearly to any other discourse. Many of the activists told how their credibility is often tested and they are accused of exaggerating and lying. They told how victims are often blamed for their murders in the public conversation, and how the officials are reluctant to use the term 'femicide' and rather call all murders homicides. After reading through all this data multiple times I realised all of these are connected to the notion of truth, which forms the last discourse. In this discourse, the underlying idea is that power is clustered for those who can get their message through and this way can shape the dominant truth. Many informants also told about the more aggressive manner of attacking women's message. Some men consider the attention of violence against women exaggerated and constantly incite the juxtaposition between men and women. Although all the truth discourses are quite belligerent, this type of men-against-women position was standing out from the data. Therefore, I decided to split the truth discourse into two sub-discourses: the discourses of 'bending truth' and 'clash of genders'.

Consequently, the data formed eight discourses split under five main discourses. To make it easier to follow the analysis, I will explore all the discourses in the following order:

1. Structures (Patriarchal culture and Deficient understanding)
2. The State (Politics and Impunity)
3. Truth (Bending truth and Clash of genders)
4. Pervasive violence
5. Women's networks

Guided by the research questions I will endeavour to find out what meanings these discourses construct around power, femicides and activists' role.

5.1 The structure discourses

The participants, on the whole, use the words *patriarchal*, *patriarchy*, *machista*, *macho*, *structure*, and *society* constantly in multiple different contexts, as a filler word to describe several phenomena. The meanings are more abstract trying to explain that there are some larger issues with power relations in society. Femicides and violence against women in this discourse are only one embodiment of these structures in society that are deeply rooted in culture and Mexican social order. Oftentimes informants link lack of education to the structures. They explain that these problems are hard to change as long as the populace does not understand underlying structures. Therefore, structure discourse has two sub-discourses connected, representing the two sides of the same coin: the discourse of patriarchal culture and discourse of deficient understanding.

5.1.1 Patriarchal culture

Words *patriarchal* and *machista* are repeated through all the interviews. The participants use those as synonyms: *machista society* is given similar meanings as a patriarchal society. Machismo and adjective *machista* are more popular expressions in Latin American countries used for exaggerated masculinity and masculine culture, often linked with emphasised gender roles and strong family values. Every man in the street in Mexico knows what macho culture means, though they might not judge it. Instead, the result might be different if the same person would be asked what patriarchy means. Some vocabularies suggest the Spanish word *machista* means male chauvinist. However, in this study, the original word macho/machista is used as it has its cultural weight and meaning. Male chauvinist as a word needs women and gender as a counterpart whereas machista means more than just male supremacy. In the interviews, macho culture was linked to conservatism, misogyny, religion, and the traditional family. I consider this as an interesting example of linguistical and cultural differences. While in some cultures some words and expressions are deeply rooted in everyday speech, in other countries the same words do not even exist in a similar meaning. One interviewee summarizes the meaning this way:

Mexico is a highly machista country that keeps having all those structures and whole culture based on masculine power. (P2)

In the interviews, patriarchal structures are considered as something that clears space for the culture of male violence. One participant says that patriarchal culture in Mexico “defends and naturalises feminicides.” Patriarchal society and macho culture are framed negatively, as something that both men and women should aim to change. However, change is a complicated task as long as the problem is not recognised. One of the interviewees says, “the first challenge is *convincing* women and men that they have to change their culture”, which narrates the difficulty of the process. It is hard to make a change if people cannot locate any roots of the problem or perhaps even do not comprehend there exists a problem. Patriarchy is given the meaning of origin of all problems linked to women’s safety: as long as patriarchal society is not overthrown, nothing will change.

Patriarchy is described in the interviews as something that is hanging over society influencing every individual and institution alike, as a structure chaining the society. Some institutions that are directly called patriarchal or machista are for example the legal system, media, and church. The position of the church and the Catholic religion comes up only in one interview. The interviewee suggests that the church has an influential position in society and that both, church and television are the ones educating the nation. According to her, gender is not a topic to discuss within a religious context. In Mexico, the church prefers traditional, conservative family values that support patriarchal power structures. Likewise, one participant added that patriarchy flourishes in a legal system where “judges do not understand, how it is like to be a woman in a machista country like Mexico.” Patriarchy is invisible and ubiquitous in all the decisions and acts of individuals and institutions. It is a common thread connecting many feminicides but still media and public debate focus on curiosities and scandals instead of figuring out the actual problem.

Right now, the discussion focuses on details. A girl was killed because of his jealous boyfriend. A woman was killed by someone from organised crime. We need to take the discussion further so that we can intervene in the structural causes of violence against women. (P5)

The discourse of patriarchal culture includes the firm opinion that this culture should be changed. However, when people have grown up in such a society, they do not necessarily know anything else. “They [Mexicans] are educated in machista society”, says one

participant, while another one adds, how machista culture makes it more complicated to approach women to teach them their rights. However, the need for observing and recognising the structures dictating everyday life is called out.

5.1.2 Deficient understanding

The discourse of deficient understanding comes up occasionally in the data when structures were discussed more. This discourse suggests that insufficient knowledge about the relationship between gender and violence is the reason why patriarchal structures can be maintained in a society. When talking about ordinary Mexicans, the tone of this discourse is not inculpatory but simply declaratory. Education and things you learn in a society when growing up are deeply connected to the structures of society. According to one of the women, gendered education is one starting point for the problems shaping macho culture.

Question: So you mean it is all about attitudes?

P1: No, education. If you get educated as a girl, not as a human being. Or as a boy, not as a human being, that's how the first problems start.

Most informants say that concepts that are mostly misunderstood are feminicides, gender, and structures in society that allow violence against women. In all cases, the informants reported that many Mexicans are confused about the whole term feminicide and why it is needed and why using the word homicide is not the same thing. Using the word feminicide is sometimes considered as taking a stand and pointing out that women's lives are more valuable than men's lives and for that reason, the occurrence has to be highlighted with its term. This type of discourse has a similar idea to the clash of genders discourse, which will be explained further in chapter 5.3.2. The difference is the tone: through the discourse of deficient understanding, bewilderment is sincere and honest, deeply meaning the person does not understand the meaning of gender. In the discourse of clash of genders, however, the speaker is intentionally looking for conflict.

Many women point out in the interviews that deficient understanding is not only among normal people as also officials in agencies, courthouses, and police departments, as well

as journalists, lack a full understanding of the role that gender plays in the context of violence. According to interviewed women, this leads to a situation in which gendered violence is not prevented effectively or taken seriously. One of the women who works as a lawyer educates occasionally officers in different State bodies:

When we are training the officials, they do not understand all those structures that are naturalising violence. Then we are answering discussion that is completely hostile and complicated. – – We have judges who do not have gender perspectives in human rights or any gender mechanisms. (P5)

Noteworthy is that she says in Spanish *jueces y juezas*, meaning both male and female judges are put in the same line. Therefore, the criticism is not directed only at men. She finds it important to highlight this detail by mentioning separately feminine form of the word too. In the frame of discourse analysis, I consider this good to mention as then this kind of criticism is for officials in general regardless of their gender.

5.2 The State discourses

Discourses related to the State are distinguishable; during the interview process, this discourse started to take a strong shape starting from the first interview. The State discourse is divided into two sub-discourses: to the discourse of politics and discourse of impunity. These discourses locate the power and responsibility of feminicides one step down from patriarchal structures, which is a more abstract notion. The State still can be viewed as an abstract idea, but unlike patriarchal structures, the State has institutions and employees that can be considered as actors. A commonality between both State discourses is that they both were given negative meanings and described with stern words.

5.2.1 Politics

The words *State*, *government* and *authorities* are key terms in political discourse. Adjectives connected with State and government are *passive*, *indifferent*, *negligent*, *reluctant*, *ignorant*, *patriarchal*, and *machista*. According to informants, the government and authorities of Mexico are passive and State as an institution useless for its citizens and their

security. Public policies aiming to prevent feminicides are simply not working, says one of the women. Overall the work of activists is considered more complicated immediately if it requires collaboration with the State because work with authorities is considered inefficient. Activists mention that they should be receiving protection from the State and they tell about protection mechanisms that have been promised to them. However, they work poorly. These following quotations give some examples:

The work of authorities has been very neglectful. The mechanism to protect journalists and activists does not serve many purposes. (P5)

None of our complaints was clarified, they are in the archive. -- Why they did not investigate, well, because the authorities actually do not have the desire to investigate. (P6)

In the quotations above the State gets meanings such as indifference. Authorities are neglectful and they have no desire to investigate. These experiences are about flaws of cooperation and tell mostly how complex the relationship is between the Mexican state and the third sector. In the next quotation, an interviewee takes one step forward. She relates the absence of protection directly to the murders accusing the State of the murders of her colleagues. The State can be interpreted as violent in its passivity.

If the aggressor is not a powerful person, together with the State, in that case, the State might feign to protect me. This type of pretending and slowness in which the Mexican state operates is the same that has caused so many murders of defenders in our country. (P2)

Worthy of attention is how she makes a deduction that a powerful person is someone working with the State. She does not say directly that a powerful person would be someone working in the service of the State as an official or politician (but she does not exclude that option either). She says a powerful person is someone working with the State, therefore positioning power as something that needs the support and approval of the State. The same person also supplements the idea of tense relations between activists and State. According to her, the State does not endure any type of criticism:

There are people [working for the State] who do not have the capacity or maturity to understand that questioning implies improving. For them it [activists' work] does not mean improvement, it is criticism. It is destruction and then comes the consequence against us, which is aggression and repression. (P2)

She uses words such as *capacity* and *maturity* in a way in which the meaning of the message becomes slightly arrogant or contemptuous. This seems to expose the hardships between the State and activists. According to her, the State does not understand their message that is *questioning* and trying to *improve* the activities of the State. Instead, the State understands those messages as *criticism* trying to *destroy* the State, which leads to aggression and repression targeted from the State against the activists and feminist organisations. What we do not know based on this experience is what kind of content and language these *questioning* messages from the activists exactly include.

Aggression, repression, and domination are common words through the interviews. They are given some concrete meanings as well. Mostly they are used in the context of politics and political atmosphere meaning more psychological violence than physical violence. One of the women called it as *institutional violence* that is pursued to spread fear. Frightened people are easier to control, she says. Many interviewees described aggression and repression as different kinds of dependency relations that create relative strength, especially in between of activist organisations and the State. Many of the organisations are dependent on the funding they receive from the State. The influence of the State is wider than that: even if the funding does not come from it, the State can intervene and cut funding from other sources as well. Their examples draw a picture of the State as an angry animal that should not be irritated or it bites. Another State's measure to limit the power of activists is restricting their freedom of speech. "You cannot say to the government that..." is an expression heard multiple times. This discourse suggests between the lines that if a person crosses the line and says something unwanted, something bad happens. One of the women can even name some of the topics considered banned to talk about: "abortion and sexual problems", she says. By sexual problems she means homosexuality. Interesting is that she uses the euphemism *sexual problems* instead of homosexuality even in the interview in which she knows she can express herself freely.

The political sphere is told to be *divided* and *polarised* in Mexico. These two words are offered as an explanation for some of the State's aggression in many interviews. Dividing lines go through right-wing politicians and progressive politicians. "If you're progressive, you better be careful", one of the women states, which suggests right-wing politics and politician are the ones inciting violence against progressive-minded people. When women are talking about divided society, they are re-creating the division themselves. This is a clear example of social construction that is made real through discourse and language. They are talking about us and them and positioning right-wing politics and progressive politics as opposites. This also poses an assumption that right-wing politics is reactionary. Women locate themselves as supporters of progressive parties although they do not say it out loud like that. This would not be as obvious if they would talk about, for example, right-wing politics and left-wing politics instead of progressive politics as a counterpart of rightism. One of the women adds that populist leaders representing right-wing politics in other countries are considered sinister for the whole region. The president of the United States, Donald Trump and the president of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro, are such leaders she considers misogynist. In contrast, the president of Mexico, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), is rarely mentioned by name and almost every time in a neutral way. Only his ardent supporters are given negative meanings by one of the informants. However, AMLO represents left-wing party Morena and in fact, is the first leftist president of the country in over 80 years. He has been in power since December 2018.

5.2.2 Impunity

The second State-related discourse is the impunity discourse, which is connected with the judiciary of Mexico. All of the women raised their concern that the State most of the time fails to penalize criminals in Mexico – especially those who have committed a femicide. As we saw in the previous pages, the discourse of politics is described as passive. In contrast, according to impunity discourse, the legal system in Mexico is almost completely non-existent and given meanings of weakness. There is no justice or justice made truth, the interviewees say. Instead, impunity is the prevailing condition that allows violence against women to continue because no perpetrators are held responsible for their actions. The whole constitution is described as machista, which does not protect victims of gendered violence. If the legal system gets any active role, it gets it negatively favouring men, as interviewee 2 frames it: the legal system protects and patronizes assailants,

and judges even favour aggressors. Most times when the impunity discourse appears, it gets meanings of non-existence with expressions such as *without any consequences, nothing happens*:

...in a country of impunity. It's a disease, and you can go to any person with any kind of intention without any consequences. (P4)

There is such a clear message of impunity. It seems that if one kills someone, nothing happens. There is a lot of impunity, corruption of authorities, and crime. (P5)

The first interviewee compares impunity with a disease. The next one draws a parallel between impunity, corruption, and crime. This way she says that these three are either co-existing or that impunity causes or allows corruption and crime to spread.

Other elements of a strong democratic State are also missing, many of the women comment when they talk about impunity in Mexico: accountability of authorities and trust. They are not missing only in courthouses but also in police stations. This has created a feeling for the women that they are left alone and that it is not worthwhile to trust police investigating cases or judges to convict criminals. Therefore, many aggressors are never taken to court in the first place. When the law is not enforced, it decreases citizens' trust in both, the government and authorities. Moreover, the legal system is described as a slow and bureaucratic institution: if justice will ever be served, it will be a long rigid process. The long legal process is a particularly heavy burden to carry for a prolonged time for family members of murdered women demanding justice, reminds one of the women. Another one sums up where does the impunity surge: from the patriarchal structures:

What this all shows is the patriarchal justice system that makes women over and over again preys in this labyrinth of impunity. (P6)

5.3 The truth discourses

Discourses related to truth reveal power relations that are intertwined between truth and knowledge. These discourses ask who has the power to define and control the truth. These discourses also name several mechanisms in use to shape the reality and meanings that people consider as truth. In the interviews, interviewees talked about truth from many perspectives: how it is shaped through media and politics and how eventually ordinary people on the streets and online end up talking about feminicides and violence. This discourse examines the different means of how the thing that we consider as truth is constructed and how some truths become more dominating than others.

This chapter could consist of only one large part about the discourse of *bending truth*, discussing how truth is constructed when talking about feminicides and gendered violence. However, when analysing through all material discussing dimensions of truth, one feature stood out repeatedly from other truth discourses and it was more practical to separate it to its discourse. This sub-discourse carries the name *clash of genders* and follows after the sub-chapter of bending truth discourse. In the discourse of the clash of genders, truth is shaped using strong juxtaposition between genders, often in an aggressive manner or misogynist tone.

5.3.1 Bending truth

The discourse of bending truth is a discourse about prevailing discourses around feminicides in Mexico. All women report this same issue that makes activists' work a lot harder: the spread of misinformation and groundless allegations. This is done through various mechanisms. Lying is the most straightforward method and the easiest to recognise. More subtle ways are changing some facts, changing the message, modifying words used, disparagement of violence, blaming women themselves or simply denying the existence of any problem.

Reality can be shaped through word choices. Many women tell how State authorities prefer to talk about homicides instead of feminicides. Women say it is meant to distort the

statistics, and according to them and many other activists, the statistics of feminicides in Mexico are flawed as they include only a fraction of all feminicides. “So statistically the government is *lying*”, says one woman. When feminicides are not recognised and counted, it enables some people and stakeholders to refer to the numbers and tell how gendered violence is not a grand problem in the country. If the phenomenon is not named and compiled into statistics it changes our understanding of what is reality and truth.

A second threat is very intellectual. They tell there are no feminicides, that is not true and that women are not being killed because they are women and she must have been doing something wrong. (P1)

Manoeuvring with the categorisation between homicides and feminicides hides the problem of feminicides. The informants express their concern that the ministries and public authorities do not understand how important it would be to make the problem visible. This type of denial of a problem spreads from the politicians to the public as well. When politicians are not talking about feminicides, the public is not talking about them either.

This is why I focus on victims. – – My job contributes to making the problem visible. The Republic wants to eliminate the crime of femicide. (P4)

In this quotation, the interviewee explains how the government would like to erase femicide from the interpretation of the law. This way she means that the government is not willing to get involved with the actual problem and its causes but aims to hide the issue and pretend it does not exist. She was motivated by this lack of transparency and information when she started her online activism by setting up an online map in which she locates the feminicides. In the map, one can see the details of the event and information about the victim. She says she wants to respect the memory of the women and make them visible. She points out that even correct statistics of feminicides would not be enough. The victims need to be named and remembered too:

Something very important is to name the victims so that they are not seen only as a number. (P4)

Denial and twisting words and truths among politicians and in media lead to a situation in which the work of many human rights activists and social workers is hindered. When there are mixed versions of the overall truth and situation, the *credibility* of women trying to convince the nation to act against feminicides is stretched to the limit. A few respondents tell how their work is constantly under the microscope and their organisations' credibility is under pressure. When their message is not taken seriously, they face denigration and disparagement.

They do fake media or they are trying to make society think that we are the problem like we are criminals. – – They tend to distract us, not to silence us but distract us. (P3)

According to the previous interviewee, she does not feel the pressure of being silenced. Then again other informants report that stakeholders have tried to silence them and that way disturb their work. Also, some of them tell how they have been accused of exaggerating the amount and seriousness of feminicides if they have shared their information in public. The informant also says that the blame is turned against activists instead of the perpetrators. Human rights activists are described as *problems* or *criminals*. This type of message means the government is lying and twisting the truth against human rights defenders flagrantly changing the discourse for their benefit. This view is echoed by another informant who finds it deeply disturbing. The State government finds multiple reasons why feminicides should not be talked about openly:

Because of this frightens women and tourism. And if they keep killing women, they make me responsible because I have been telling the aggressors what to do. This upsets me a lot because I am not responsible for the death of any woman. (P2)

Most of the informants mention *victim-blaming* as one commonly used method to shape and disturb the conversation about feminicides. By victim-blaming, the participants mean language that is shifting the blame on a victim by looking for reasons why she was killed instead of why the aggressor attacked. Here one may see how powerful tool language can be: by shifting a little the construct of a sentence the actor is a victim, not a criminal. Here are examples of this kind of language:

A lot of people think it's the truth. They think that they must be some hookers or something. She was doing something wrong, she was the one that provoked the violence. And that goes back to the patriarchal government --. (P1)

-- how the victim was responsible that she ended up dead. She walked outside at night and because of that she was killed. Or she travelled alone and was killed. Or she went dancing and drinking alone and got killed. They keep holding the victim responsible for what happened and they keep justifying the aggressor. (P2)

In this type of discourse, women are told to provoke men whose violent action is completely left outside the conversation and not taken a critical look at all. In this case, not only remarkable is what is said and how is said but also what is not said or even mentioned; it does matter whether one says "a woman was attacked because..." instead of "a man killed a woman because..." Even though the result of the event is the same, the actor is different and this version explains events in a different way. One informant added that sometimes media takes this type of fading of perpetrator even further and the whole event of violence is erased. Women are simply *found dead* or they *confront their death* instead of *being murdered* or their *murderer attacking*. Noteworthy is that many women mention that generally accepted idea in Mexico is that murdered women would be mostly "*hookers*" or "*prostitutes*". When people validate their argument by calling a victim a prostitute it gives a strong message that her life would be less valuable and the problem of gendered violence less important. Therefore, this kind of degrading use of language tells something about the attitudes and human rights perceptions of some people and stakeholders.

5.3.2 Clash of genders

The discourse of the clash of genders takes a stand on the dimensions of truth. What separates this discourse from the previously discussed discourse of bending truth is that in this discourse the truth is shaped by the contrasting situations between men and women. Many women repeated the expressions they have often heard as a counter-argument such as "what about men and violence men face" or "femicide is a privilege." When the

focus is over and over again turned from violence against women to violence against men, it inevitably changes the impression of the matter among the public.

Interviewees say that security generally speaking is widely discussed in Mexico. Thinking of personal safety is instilled into everyone's daily routines in Mexico. However, not everyone understands why feminicides do have their exact term and why feminist activists demand intervening. Gender and what role it plays in violence is not recognised very well and some actors are taking advantage of this blind spot. Connection with security and gender is often denied. Those denying the problem may belittle the issue using the argument that still statistically men are killed much more than women. However, that conversation is a completely different one, as violence against men has very different roots and causes compared to violence against women.

Many say that feminicides are not really a problem because so many more men are being killed daily and by criminal organisations. It is easier for them to say they were killed because of a security problem, not because they were women. The conversation is constantly taken into security generally, not about gender. (P3)

An interviewee maintaining the feminicide map online says she is often asked why there is not any map of men that are killed. This type of argumentation seems like a quarrelsome, confrontational debate in which the discourse of equality is used against women. People using this type of adversarial argument are often looking for conflict between genders instead of aiming for constructive discussion and solution. This unnecessary talk side-tracks the debate and directs the attention to a different topic, the interviewees say. It takes space from the women who are working to get their message through.

Even two of the participants broach an occasion that drew attention in February 2020. A right-wing deputy of Nuevo León called Juan Carlos Leal Segovia called feminicide as a '*privilege*' and its classification should be eliminated. According to Leal Segovia, the law favours women and discriminates murdered men as long as feminicide exists as a legal term. He said that "violence has no gender" and the Constitution should treat everyone equally (see Colín, 2020; Gutierritos, 2020). This type of language exploits the

conversation and takes it completely in the wrong direction while increasing tensions between men and women.

Feminism as an ideology and movement has often a negative reputation because of the above-mentioned hostile talk. Three of the interviewees mention that in Mexico feminists are sometimes called '*feminazis*', alleging that feminists would want to exterminate men. Feminism is often understood as a radical movement that is against machismo and therefore also hostile against men.

5.4 Pervasive violence discourse

Violence in all its variety sticks out from all the interviews as its discourse. Femicides are often compared to other forms of violence in Mexico. The informants are aware of the multitude of violence in Mexico and do not undervalue other forms of it. Instead, they often mention how multidimensional problem violence is in today's Mexico. The discourse of pervasive violence highlights both how many shapes violence has in Mexico and how different forms of violence are intertwined together. When outlines of violence are not clear, it is even harder to tackle the problem. It is complicated to understand violence in Mexico when it is so widely spread and found on so many levels in society.

Although the interviews focused on feminicides, other forms of violence and crime were mentioned here and there: *disappearances*, *organised crime*, and *criminal organisations*, *drug trafficking* and *the drug war*, *economic power*, *politics* and *the State*, *prostitution* and *child pornography* were some of the forms and sources of violence mentioned frequently. Especially the words *disappeared/disappearing* (in Spanish *desaparecidos/desapariciones*) have a very strong emotional burden as this is a grave issue these days. "In Mexico, we say that it is worse than getting killed", one of the women says because often kidnapped people are tortured before killing and families are extorted.

In this discourse violence is discussed with melancholy: everyone, including all women and human rights defenders, is after all in a very vulnerable position, and danger can be behind every corner, even accidentally. For some of the threats, one can be prepared but especially organised crime and criminal organisations are described in awe.

So if there was an attack, we could do nothing. Criminal organisations are more of a threat than political factors. (P3)

Many informants end up comparing and building layers between different forms of violence. The cause of murder may be a relationship between perpetrator and victim, gender, or a coincidence. Risks are different depending on the status of an aggressor. People with money or political power as well as authorities are often linked with organised crime. For that reason, very few dare to report to police if they are threatened or attacked. This has an impact on the investigation of feminicides as well. Here are some examples of the complexity of violence:

A violent partner belonging to organised crime is hard to get in front of the court. Then you have two problems: the fact that he is a violent person and the fact that he is a criminal. (P3)

We do not know which is more dangerous, the crime or the State. (P5)

Those who investigate disappearances and accompany the victims are confronting big risks. – – For all of this all depends on who is the aggressor of the girl. – – If he is a person from organised crime or economically or politically powerful person, then the defender is also under the risk. (P4)

Above informants are comparing different forms of violence and explaining how they overlap making the overall situation more dangerous. One of them compares the perils between a violent partner and a criminal while another one draws similarities between crime and the State. The third one reminds that a person may be dangerous if he has something to do with organised crime or economic or political power. The discourse of pervasive violence makes the listener very cautious, perhaps even distrustful of all the dangers and violence surrounding women in Mexico.

Some of the women shared some personal stories too. One of the women had lost many family members, many of them politically active: her mother and grandfather had

disappeared, and her dad and uncles were murdered. Although these cases have never been fully resolved, according to her, violence is extensively produced by authorities (including those working in legal instruments), criminals, and those committing feminicides. Another woman tells about women's rights defenders that had lost their lives. One of them had been murdered recently:

Sadly a week ago one of our colleagues was killed in Juárez. We don't know if it was because of the activism she does or because she was a woman. (P3)

The comparisons between different forms of violence are extended to the work of activists. Two of the women remind that different types of activism have different types of threats. Activism against feminicides is not even the most dangerous work, they say. If an activist is working against organised crime or with families of the disappeared the dangers are more serious. Also, threats against environmental activists are mentioned. In February 2020 two monarch butterfly activists were found dead in Michoacán. Families believe they were murdered by drug cartel members because reserve guides were hindering cartel's work by not letting them roam free in the region of butterfly sanctuary ("Mexico violence", 2020). One of the interviewees says regional differences inside Mexico are wide too. She says living and working in a state where femicide as a crime is well recognised is making her work much safer. This is not the case everywhere in Mexico, and risks are higher there where the position of femicide is still highly disputed.

5.5 Women's networks discourse

The most forceful power resource used by female activists is their cooperation and support. In women's networks discourse key words are *network*, *cooperation*, *women*, *friends*, *collective*, *feminist groups*, *social support*, and *community*. All women tell they are part of an extensive network that has been formed to provide social support, physical security, and knowledge from women to women, especially from female human rights defenders to other defenders. This network is not merely symbolic; it is very precisely organised. If any of the network members are threatened, it triggers a chain of security measures or *protocols* as women describe it. These measures are a group of actions done

immediately in an intimidating situation. They make sure the aggressor is not able to trace and approach the woman or her family.

A collective of defenders provides social support and a feeling of being part of a community. Many women tell they try to avoid talking about their work or threat of violence that is constantly following them at home with their family members. Instead, they talk about their safety more with other women and female activists, which offers strength and support. In this network, women can share information that can help everyone to sketch their risk analysis. Other women are considered both as colleagues and friends. They can be trusted when it is about one's own life, unlike the State:

It's been clear that the protection is our own duty, ours, women's, not the State's. -- For this reason, we say that the State doesn't take care of me, but my friends do. (P2)

This is the only discourse that gets meanings of security, protection and help for the women. They consider other women as their assets and power resources. It portrays women as actors combining their power and praising for collectivism. Other women and the network are described as familial and trustworthy. This discourse includes a glimpse of hope that the change is doable as long as it is reached together:

The women have learned in Mexico that when we reunite as a collective, we are much more powerful -- Because in some way all the pressure that we women have created in this country during the past 20 years has started to break many patterns and ways of thinking. This already permits people to at least discuss how we can prevent and stop the violence. (P2)

Overall, this discourse celebrating the power of women and collaboration between human rights defenders stands against individualism. It sends a message that survival requires group power and no one should act alone or be left alone. Women are not portrayed as heroes fighting against villains for a safer society. Instead, they are represented as rational, careful, cautious, and logical.

Rules and coherence matter because those who go solo may jeopardize other women in the network. Women also described the most important safety rules they have in their work in the organisations. Most of them are somehow regulating that activists should never stay alone when working: they should never work alone in the office and they should avoid driving on their own from place to another. Instead, the employers prefer that the women would move around in pairs. One of the most important rules for many is letting the colleagues know your location, time of departure and arrival and if possible, the route as well. Although some rules apply mostly during working hours, security must be a priority in the free time too. One of the women said that she does not walk that much in public places with her children because she does not want strangers to know they are from the same family. She, as a quite well-known public figure in the town, was worried about her family's safety and considered keeping a low profile in public as the best way to protect her family.

5.6 Summary of analysis

In this chapter, I have presented all discourses of power that appeared through interviews. In total five main discourses could be divided into eight sub-discourses. The discourses cross the society from the macro-level towards the micro-level. The structure discourses and pervasive violence discourse look at power at the macro-level while women's networks discourse enables the researcher to observe power possessed by women activists themselves at the micro-level. The last discourses related to the State and truth can be placed somewhere in between; they can be analysed through both levels.

Many of these discourses are overlapping, sometimes even in one sentence. This demonstrates how power is spread out in society through many fields of life. It is constructed through social relations and culture, institutions of government, knowledge, and concepts of truth, education, different forms of violence, and personal networks. These are all influencing the work that female activists are doing against feminicides.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The following, the final part of this thesis moves on to reiterate the research problem and summarize the key findings of the analysis. It will also discuss the contribution of this study to research on feminicides in Mexico, reflect its limitations and suggest implications for future studies.

6.1 Discussion of key findings

This study set out with the aim of assessing the different power discourses regarding feminicides in Mexico. My research frame was based on the theoretical framework of power by Michel Foucault and gender as performative by Judith Butler. The research was implemented by interviewing six female anti-feminicide activists that work against gender-based violence in Mexico. The interviews were semi-structured and conducted through Skype online. After transcribing and translating the material it was analysed with the methods of discourse analysis. The research questions that guided this study were the following:

- 1. What discourses of power are constructed around feminicides among Mexican activists who are working against gendered violence?**
- 2. How do the activist women exercise the power they possess and avoid becoming targets of gendered violence themselves in a potentially hostile environment?**

I asked these research questions from my interview material and sought answers for my research problem. The leading idea of this thesis is that power, gender and truth are made visible through language and discourses. They do not simply 'exist', but they are produced through intercourse, both through words and acts. The focus of this thesis is on words that are used to depict power. Besides, I wanted to understand how anti-violence activists themselves navigate in a society that can be dangerous for them.

The study found the total of five main discourses with their sub-discourses: 1. Structures (Patriarchal culture and Deficient understanding), 2. The State (Politics and Impunity), 3. Truth (Bending truth and Clash of genders) 4. Pervasive violence, and 5. Women's networks. Overall, as a researcher, I found it surprising that all the interviewees focused quite much on power in the structural and institutional level. For example, no one described power as something males as individuals possess. Everyone comprehended that power influencing violence against women is somehow deep in the patriarchal structures and practices in Mexico. Power was considered, as Foucault comprehends it, omnipresent: "power is everywhere – – because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault, 1978, p. 93). This is why it is challenging to tackle the problem of continuing violence in Mexico: it does not have any centre. According to the discourses found, violence-related power comes indeed from everywhere: power comes from structures of the society, from education, from the State and the law (and impunity), from the truth (or what we accept as truth), from non-State agents such as criminal organisations and women themselves. They are all connected so that even criminal organisations and politicians are interweaved in the same network of power, and in the case of Mexico, not even very far from each other. Interviewees could even name discourse of its own for this omnipresence of power, which formed a separate discourse called pervasive violence.

Another important finding was that women described power through collectivism also when talking about the power that women exercise. Feminist research often emphasizes the power that women themselves have using words such as *struggle*, *fight*, *resistance*, *oppression* or *domination*. However, the interviewed women described their power through *networks*, *cooperation* and *solidarity*, which someone could call 'soft power'. This is an example of relational power by Foucault (Cooper, 1995). Power is used through relations and networks, and this is the dimension of power women considered their most important asset. For them, helping other women is not a question of fight but responsibility: "We have to do something. Unless we do not do something, no one will" or "the State will not protect us, we need to do it ourselves", they said. By all means, women described their activities with determination and hard work but overall, the discourse of women's networks was more neutral than I expected. Rather, women seemed to be worried about the complexity of violence in their country, perhaps even a bit numb and frustrated. Women's resistance was given meanings of intelligence and cautiousness instead of anger and fierceness.

Therefore, the power that activist women exercise is power through cooperation in the feminist collectives and human rights defenders' networks. Although activists mentioned that they sometimes march in demonstrations or write about feminicides in their social media accounts, their biggest asset is the group power among other activist women. Working with large collectives or organisations grants them credibility in the eyes of others, as well as confidence, security, and information. If any member in the collective is threatened, the risk analysis is conducted, the security mechanism is activated, and the woman is helped to escape and hide from the aggressor. Obviously, other sources of power are connected to the work of activist women. Their positions as coordinators or lawyers in organisations or as a journalist provide them with some authority to advocate women's rights. The third way to exercise their power is through their voice spreading the information they have. The activists told how important it is to make visible the issue of feminicides and that is exactly what they are doing through their work. Their goal is to raise awareness and teach people what role gender plays in society. One of the women highlighted, that they do not want to "fight with anyone but to get people to understand this" and that they want to "provoke people to think." Some of the activists discuss feminicides in social media in their accounts, while some of them are not active online at all due to security reasons.

The safety measures of activist women are based on rationality, self-discipline and orderliness. All women that worked professionally against gendered violence have a set of rules that they are committed to following every day. For example, they always have to tell the time of their departure and arrival if they are moving around during their working day. They always make sure they have enough battery in their phones in case of emergency and some of them have two mobile phones. They are never allowed to stay alone in the office. They prefer to travel with a colleague if possible and use the organisation's car when going for example to the court so that their private car's number plates do not reveal any information on the workers. They try to use different routes every day so that their movements cannot be predicted and have their vehicles examined regularly in case of sabotage or violations. The most important is to avoid situations in which they are alone and vulnerable. Views on this type of regulated lifestyle are varying. Some of the activist women did not consider that they had changed their behaviour remarkably, mostly because they are so used to their routines and rules and they are an inherent part of their

everyday life. On the other hand, some other activist women say that they live very different life compared to other women and that they have needed to modify their routines a lot because of their and their families' safety.

These results seem to be consistent with concepts of power represented by Foucault. All the power discourses can be examined as relational, productive or both. As Foucault has said, power is not something one holds or shares but something exercised through interplay (1977, 1978). Foucault is not interested in who has power because power is embedded in all human relations: the State, the law, knowledge and truth, and individuals are connected in this power-producing community. Power is always omnipresent and produced in every point and relation in society. Foucault does not ask what power is or who has it but how power works. As we have seen in both Foucault's theory and discourses identified in this research, power, truth and production of knowledge are intertwined tightly together in the context of feminicides and they are impossible to differentiate to separate units. In Mexico, feminicides also intertwine with other forms of social and political violence. Overall, this study strengthens the idea that power around feminicides is a complicated coil in which different forms of power spiral, reproduce and strengthen each other. The results of this study also correspond to previous accounts in research on hardships that Mexican women encounter when trying to tackle violence: victim-blaming, impunity, criminal organisations or the lack of understanding what role gender plays in the context of violence (see e.g. Bejarano & Fregosa, 2010; Lagarde y de los Ríos, 2010).

Additionally, the discourses of structures (especially of patriarchal culture) and discourses of the State can be observed through the Foucauldian concept of bio-power that is based on discipline and control over life (Foucault, 1978). When bio-power or 'power over mind' is used, individuals feel constantly surveilled. This feeling of constantly being under observation sets restrictions for citizens limiting their freedom. For example, activist women described the ways they should dress not to be labelled as 'prostitutes' in public, which would stigmatise them and aggravate their work. There is a set of unwritten rules in Mexico that women are ordered to obey.

6.2 Limitations of the study

It is necessary to reflect on the limitations of this thesis. For instance, the validity and reliability of the study could have been increased by conducting more than six interviews. However, taken into consideration the number of commonalities in the discourses of the interviewees, it can be assumed that many similar conclusions could be drawn, if the study would be repeated. However, identical findings most probably would not occur. On the other hand, there is also a possibility that if other six interviewees would be studied with similar means, the results and conclusions could be different. All six interviews were extensive for their length thus making them sufficient for this research. However, broader research could be further implemented by interviewing more informants, also to gain more information from different regions in Mexico. Still, I believe that results shown in this study are raising genuine problematics that complement earlier research.

Another notable weakness is related to the compilation of the interview structure and cross-cultural context of the study. I did not carry out any test interviews before conducting them. Furthermore, the cross-cultural and multilingual aspect may influence my interpretations of this study. The cross-cultural element adds “layers of complexity to the already-complex interactions of an interview” (Patton, 2002, p. 391). Different interpretations of the surrounding realities may appear when the informants and the interviewer have lived under different cultural influences. Although I consider that as a researcher, I had sufficient prior knowledge from the culture of the respondents due to my experiences in their country, misconceptions are possible. However, these types of cultural dimensions were taken into account during the interview phase, as well as the recognition of potential language barriers with interviewees. Language differences make discourse analysis – using words as its data – even trickier (Patton, 2002, p. 392). Two of the interviews were conducted in English and four in Spanish. Neither of the two is my mother language, and none of the informants spoke English as their first language. This may influence some of the interpretations, for example, on tones or idioms. Fortunately, I felt confident through the interviews and transcribing process and believe the false impressions are minor.

Personal reasons may also influence the results. Interviewees’ responses may be distorted for various reasons. For instance, interviewees can offer that kind of responses they

believe the researcher would like to hear (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 257). In my research, I did not show the questions in advance to the informants so that they would not know the whole question pattern in advance. I hoped this would help to gain more spontaneous reactions. However, they did know the overall setting of the study that had been handed over for them before the interviews (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2), which may have influenced their responses. Other reasons shaping the answers may be personal bias, anxiety, politics or simple lack of awareness or emotional state of a person at the interview moment. (Patton, 2002, p. 306.) In this study, a high level of awareness may cause the results quite a lot: the women interviewed for this study are all well-educated and very aware of the issue of feminicides. I wonder what the discourses would be like if informants were regular Mexican women who have not studied topics such as violence against women or feminicides. Also, this research has approached women as one, homogenous group without paying specific attention to features related to race and ethnicity, age, class, ability or sexuality that may shape the experiences of women.

I am aware that there exists a contradiction in the research composition regarding the theoretical framework used. Gender was defined through Judith Butler's theory (1999) on gender as performative. At the same time, on the practical level, the study does not succeed to take into account gender as performative very well. In the literature, as well as in the interviews, violence against women as a phenomenon is still mostly discussed through the binary conceptualisation of genders, and often gender is confused with biological sex. In this study as well, gender as performative has been aside while the focus has been more in the concepts of power. Within the limits of the extent of this thesis, it is not possible to analyse both, power and gender with similar profundity. However, to understand the context of the work, the definitions of both gender and violence against women were essential to construct.

It is noteworthy to remember that although women's experiences can be said to be gendered because their lives are influenced by their gender – and their gender is shaped through their experiences – we should not assume that two women have identical experiences. (Chase & Reinharz, 2002.) Also, as Lloyd (2005, p. 76) reminds, the Foucauldian approach on power is not sufficient to examine the continuities and connections between dispersed manifestations of power and specify how they are influencing each other. The reader should bear in mind that the study is based on narratives of activists, and therefore

they do not represent the absolute truth or formulate the whole picture of causes of feminicides. Explaining the causes of feminicides is another research problem that this thesis does not engage with.

Finally, it should also be indicated that the analysis and results of this study are affected by the interpretations and choices made by the researcher, both consciously and unconsciously. My background (such as education, work experience, personal characteristics, personal values and interests) may possess opinions or perspectives that have been formed under some certain culture or ideologies that I am not aware of myself. Therefore, the results and the meanings given to discourses might be different if the same data would be analysed by someone else and therefore the results of this study are one research alternative rather than absolute truth.

6.3 Contributions of the study and implications for future research

This thesis has raised important questions about the nature of power in the context of feminicides in Mexico. As Radford and Stanko (1996) highlight, by identifying, naming and working around the problem of gendered violence we can address the problem in current society. Structures maintaining violence can be exposed only by making power discourses visible. Therefore, this study has contributed to the social scientific and feminist discussion on violence against women and different forms of power that are connected to the phenomenon.

This type of feminist interview research that combines discourse analysis, activist interviews and theories of power has not been conducted before in the Mexican context, which is why the study is to fill this void in research. Although there has existed research about activists and feminicides in Mexico, this thesis has provided a deeper insight into the dimensions of power that influence on feminicides and violence. Through the voices of the interviewed women, this study illustrates experiences of the prevailing situation in Mexico. The results of this study reveal that the discourses of activist women and victims of feminicides are similar to the ones found in the researches of Staudt (2014) and Wright (2010a, 2010b) who have studied activism in the Northern border of Mexico. Like Wright and Staudt have discovered, stigmatisation and public humiliation of women who raise their voice about violence against women and blaming the victims were also found in this

research. The results of this study also widen the field of actors around violence compared to studies of Gaspar de Alba and Guzmán (2010), Kruszewski et al. (2009) and Mueller and Simmons (2014) who pointed out that transnational economy and free trade were the principal causes of violence on the US-Mexico border. In this study, the economic factors remained in the background and they were mostly associated with organised crime or economic power attached to political power. Money and trade did not receive similar importance in this study. Instead, impunity, inactive government and organised crime have been recognised as sources of gendered violence earlier in the studies of Gaspar de Alba and Guzmán (2010) and Olivera (2010) who argued that criminal organisations and violence have been in the interplay on the US-Mexico border causing impunity and creating more and more violence.

Several questions remain unanswered at present. There is abundant room for further progress in determining power that exists in Mexico. Further study should be conducted to map the causes of feminicidal violence and ways to prevent feminicides. Also, the same research design could be used with different informants. How the discourses would look like if the same methods would be reused interviewing for example ordinary, non-activist women or Mexican men? Also, a similar study could be conducted in another Latin American country to see what kind of regional differences there are among the continent as feminicides are a problem in many countries. I consider the role of women themselves and the power that networks hold would be worthy of further study. What are the mechanisms that add the power of women's collectives? Furthermore, many women described several threats they have faced during the years they have worked against violence. This violence against anti-femicide activists and women's mechanisms they use to keep safe would be another interesting topic for an investigation.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Informed Consent Form

You are being asked to take part in a research study concerning harassment and threats of activists who are working against feminicides in Mexico. This study is being conducted by Master level student as part of her Master's thesis in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Helsinki, Finland.

You have been selected to take part in this research either because a) you have been active in social media about the issue of feminicides, b) you have been interviewed about the issue for some publication, magazine or newspaper, c) you work actively with some NGO or women's rights movement that works against feminicides or d) someone recommended you for the researcher. Your participation is important to this research and I appreciate you taking the time to help.

In the interview, you will be asked about your activism against feminicides and your experiences related to activism and violence. As a researcher, I am interested in challenges female activists working against feminicides may encounter in Mexico.

Your responses will be kept confidential by the researcher, and no one else will hear or see them. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings and transcription are kept in a safe place and destroyed after the study is done. When the results of the study are shared, it will not include individual identifying information such as the real names, cities or organisations that participants represent. I will do everything I can so that no one outside the study will know that you have participated and so that your privacy is protected.

Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to provide any information that you do not wish to provide. The questions do not have right or wrong answers. You can jump over any question that you do not want to answer. If at any time, you decide not to continue, you may simply say so and the interview will be terminated.

By signing below or sending a reply e-mail stating that you agree with all this, you indicate that you have read what is being asked of you and that you consent to participate.

Your name (in block letters)

Date

Your signature

APPENDIX 2: Formulario de Consentimiento

(Spanish version of Informed Consent Form)

Le estoy pidiendo que participe en un estudio sobre acoso y amenazas de activistas que trabajan contra los feminicidios en México. Este estudio está realizado por una estudiante de maestría como parte de su tesis de maestría en la Facultad de Ciencias Sociales de la Universidad de Helsinki, Finlandia.

Ha sido seleccionado para participar en esta investigación porque a) ha estado activa en las redes sociales sobre el tema de los feminicidios, b) ha sido entrevistado sobre el tema para alguna publicación, revista o periódico, c) trabaja activamente con alguna ONG o movimiento de mujeres que funciona contra los feminicidios, o d) alguien se recomendó para la investigadora. Su participación es importante para este estudio y agradezco que se haya tomado el tiempo para ayudar.

En la entrevista se le preguntará sobre su activismo contra los feminicidios y sus experiencias relacionadas con el activismo y la violencia. Como investigadora me interesan los desafíos que pueden enfrentar las activistas que trabajan contra los feminicidios en México.

La investigadora mantendrá la confidencialidad de sus respuestas y nadie más las escuchará ni las verá. Las entrevistas serán grabadas y transcritas. Las grabaciones y las transcripciones se guardan en un lugar seguro y se destruyen después de que se realiza el estudio. Cuando comparto los resultados del estudio, no incluiré información identificable como los nombres reales, las ciudades o organizaciones que representan los participantes. Haré todo lo posible para que nadie fuera del estudio sepa que usted participó en él y para proteger su privacidad.

Su participación es voluntaria. No tiene que proporcionar ninguna información que no desee proporcionar. Las preguntas no tienen respuestas correctas o incorrectas. Puede saltar cualquier pregunta si no quiere contestarla. Si, en cualquier momento, decide no continuar, puede simplemente decirlo y la entrevista finalizará.

Al firmar este documento o enviar un correo electrónico de respuesta que indica que está de acuerdo con todo esto, está diciendo que ha leído lo que se le está pidiendo y que está de acuerdo con participar en el estudio.

Su nombre (en letra de molde)

Fecha

Su firma

APPENDIX 3: Interview Structure

English	Spanish
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS	PREGUNTAS DEMOGRÁFICAS
What is your name, age city, profession and how long you have been an activist against gendered violence?	¿Cuál es tu nombre, edad, profesión, y cuánto tiempo has sido activista contra la violencia de género?
WORK AND THREATS	TRABAJO Y AMENAZAS
Could you first tell me more about your work against feminicides and violence against women?	¿Podrías decirme más sobre tu trabajo contra los feminicidios y la violencia contra las mujeres?
How would do describe the biggest challenges in your work?	¿Cómo describirías los mayores desafíos en tu trabajo?
What impacts your work has had on your life?	¿Qué impacto ha tenido tu trabajo en tu vida?
Have you ever faced any kind of pressure, threats of intimidation related to your work? Why? What kind of? From whom?	¿Alguna vez has enfrentado algún tipo de presión, amenazas o intimidación en tu trabajo? ¿Por qué? ¿Que tipo de? ¿De quien?
What do you think, what is the goal of these threats or hate speech?	¿Qué piensas, cuál es el objetivo de las amenazas o el discurso de odio?
Has anyone ever tried to silence you?	¿Alguna vez alguien ha intentado silenciarte?

<p>SURVIVING THE THREAT OF VIOLENCE</p> <p>How have you coped with these types of threats or difficulties?</p> <p>Do you talk about your security with someone? Who?</p> <p>Do you discuss about safety issues related to your work with your colleagues?</p> <p>Do you have any rules or instructions related to safety in your work?</p>	<p>SOBREVIVIR A LA AMENAZA DE LA VIOLENCIA</p> <p>¿Cómo has enfrentado este tipo de amenazas o dificultades?</p> <p>¿Hablas de tu seguridad con alguien? ¿Quien?</p> <p>¿Discutes sobre temas de seguridad relacionados con tu trabajo con tus colegas?</p> <p>¿Tienes algunas reglas o instrucciones relacionadas con la seguridad en tu trabajo?</p>
<p>INFLUENCE OF THREATS</p> <p>Have you needed to adjust your behavior or actions somehow because of security issues?</p> <p>Has the pressure or threats from the outside influenced operations of your organization?</p> <p>How would you evaluate the role of authorities and the State in relation to security of activists? How is the relationship between NGOs and authorities?</p>	<p>INFLUENCIA DE LAS AMENAZAS</p> <p>¿Has modificado tu comportamiento o acciones de alguna manera debido a problemas de seguridad?</p> <p>Y la presión o las amenazas externas, ¿Han influido en las operaciones de su organización?</p> <p>¿Cómo evaluaría el papel de las autoridades y el estado en relación con la seguridad de los activistas? ¿Cómo es la relación entre las ONG y las autoridades?</p>

<p>LANGUAGE, SOCIAL MEDIA AND MEDIA</p> <p>Are you in social media? Why/why not? In which platforms?</p> <p>If yes: have you ever received any hate mail or threats via social media?</p> <p>Have you received any hateful e-mails?</p> <p>If yes: What kind of things you publish on your social media accounts? What would you not publish on your social media accounts in relation to your safety?</p> <p>In more general level, how would you evaluate the way how feminicides are discussed in media?</p> <p>What is the general opinion of Mexicans about feminicides?</p> <p>How would you evaluate the way the position of women in Mexico is discussed in Mexican media?</p>	<p>LENGUA, REDES SOCIALES Y MEDIOS DE COMUNICACIÓN</p> <p>¿Estás en las redes sociales? ¿Por qué/por qué no? ¿En qué plataformas?</p> <p>En caso afirmativo: ¿Has recibido alguna vez mensajes de odio o amenazas a través de las redes sociales?</p> <p>¿Has recibido algún mensaje de odio a través de correo electrónico?</p> <p>En caso afirmativo: ¿Qué tipo de cosas publicas en tus cuentas de redes sociales? ¿Qué no publicarías en tus cuentas de redes sociales en relación con tu seguridad?</p> <p>En un nivel más general, ¿cómo evaluarías la manera en que se discuten los feminicidios en los medios?</p> <p>¿Cuál es la opinión general de los mexicanos sobre los feminicidios?</p> <p>¿Cómo evaluarías la manera en que se discute la posición de las mujeres en México en los medios mexicanos?</p>
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<p>What is the general opinion of Mexicans about position of women in Mexico?</p> <p>How would you evaluate the way feminism is discussed in Mexican media?</p> <p>What is the general opinion of Mexicans about feminism?</p>	<p>¿Cuál es la opinión general de los mexicanos sobre la posición de las mujeres en México?</p> <p>¿Cómo evaluarías la manera en que se discute el feminismo en los medios mexicanos?</p> <p>¿Cuál es la opinión general de los mexicanos sobre el feminismo?</p>
<p>PERSONAL MOTIVATION AND FEELINGS</p> <p>Unfortunately, some of the activists who have been raising their voice about the issue of feminicides have been murdered. How do you feel about it?</p>	<p>MOTIVACIÓN PERSONAL Y SENTIMIENTOS</p> <p>Desafortunadamente algunos de los activistas que han levantado su voz sobre el tema de los feminicidios han sido asesinatos. ¿Qué opinas de eso?</p>
<p>BIGGER PICTURE IN MEXICO</p> <p>In general, what are the biggest threats women's rights defenders face in Mexico?</p> <p>Do you consider the working environment as dangerous for human rights defenders working against feminicides in Mexico? Why?</p>	<p>UNA IMAGEN MÁS GRANDE</p> <p>En general, ¿cuáles son las mayores amenazas que enfrentan las defensoras de los derechos de las mujeres en México?</p> <p>¿Consideras que el entorno laboral es peligroso para los defensores de derechos humanos que trabajan contra los feminicidios en México? ¿Por qué?</p>

<p>Who or what activists working against feminicides should be afraid of or worried about?</p> <p>How would you describe the current atmosphere for discussion about feminicides in Mexico?</p> <p>FINAL QUESTIONS</p> <p>Is there anything else you feel I should know, or you would like to share with me?</p> <p>Do you know anyone who could be an interesting person to interview?</p>	<p>¿Quién o qué activistas que trabajan contra los feminicidios deben temer o preocuparse?</p> <p>¿Cómo describirías el ambiente actual para la discusión sobre los feminicidios en México?</p> <p>LAS ÚLTIMAS PREGUNTAS</p> <p>¿Hay algo más que sientas que debería saber o que quisieras compartir conmigo?</p> <p>¿Conoces a alguien que pueda ser una persona interesante para entrevistar?</p>
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