

# Women Framing Women: Gender Roles and Agency in the Zapatista Army of National Liberation

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## Abstract

This study uses framing theory to examine how women in the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) frame themselves and their roles. Eleven documents written by women in the movement are analyzed using content analysis to collect quantitative and qualitative data. Results show that women most frequently frame themselves in untraditional, rather than traditional or neutral, roles but infrequently demonstrate agency in these roles. The frequency of untraditional roles exhibits a progressive view of Zapatista women, yet the lack of total deviation from tradition reflects an adherence to historical norms. The instances of agency that do appear suggest a sense of empowerment among the women as they become more vocal in expressing the part they play in deciding the roles they take on. My findings contribute to a deeper understanding of women's roles and gender in the EZLN and provide a new perspective on the ways women are framed in the movement. Limitations and areas of further research are discussed.

On January 1, 1994, the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista Army of National Liberation, EZLN) declared its presence to the world through the First Declaration from the Lacandon Jungle in opposition to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). A social movement from southern Mexico dedicated to indigenous rights, the EZLN fights against oppressive globalization and opposes the Mexican government's support of neoliberalism, the belief that the market should be free of government intervention and regulation. On the same day, the women of the movement made a declaration for themselves – a list of rights for women called *La Ley Revolucionaria de Mujeres*, or Women's Revolutionary Law. This document served as a formal, written record of these women's assertions and became the first of many written declarations, speeches, and interviews produced by women in the EZLN. As the EZLN continues to further its mission, public communications have become an important aspect of the movement's tactics. In addition to five more declarations from the Lacandon Jungle, many members and leaders of the movement have given speeches and published writings fighting for the EZLN's cause.

This paper studies women's roles in the EZLN, using framing theory to examine how women frame their roles in the movement. Framing can be used to

demonstrate the ways a group interprets the meanings of its actions and the roles of its participants (McAdam, McCarthy & Zald 1996). Here, framing provides a perspective on the women's presentation of events and how they view themselves within the context of the movement. This theoretical approach contributes to the current understanding of women in the EZLN, drawing on previous categorization of women's roles as traditional, neutral, and untraditional.

This research intends to answer the following general question: how do women frame themselves in the EZLN?

The data are collected from eleven documents, including written declarations, speeches, and interviews dating from 1994 to 2003. These documents are written variously by groups and by individual women.

In order to answer the overall question and test the hypotheses, I use both quantitative and qualitative content analysis, drawing on manifest and latent coding to fully capture the ways roles are framed. The unit of analysis when coding for roles is constituted by the word, and when coding for agency it is by the phrase. I compare percentages to analyze the frequency of types of role and presence of agency. I also study the text itself to examine how the women perceive each role.

<b>Title of Document</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Year</b>
Don't Abandon Us!	Comandanta Ramona and Major Ana Maria	1994
Women's Revolutionary Law	Group	1994
Women's Rights in Our Traditions and Customs	Grupo de Mujeres de San Cristobal de las Casas	1994
The First of Many Steps	Comandanta Ramona	1996
Never Again a Rebellion Without Us!	Comandanta Ramona	1997
To the students of University City, UNAM	Comandanta Ramona	1997
Paramilitaries harass Nicolas Ruiz	The General Assembly of Women of Nicolas Ruiz	2000
International Day of the Rebel Woman	Comandanta Esther, Yolanda, and Susana	2001
Never Again a Mexico Without its Women!	Comandanta Esther	2001
Speech Before the Mexican Congress	Comandanta Esther	2001
Words Addressed to Women	Comandanta Fidelia	2003

*Table 1: EZLN Documents*

Data analysis reveals that overall, women are more likely to frame themselves in untraditional roles without agency. However, women also frequently frame themselves traditionally as victims and as mothers. Women infrequently frame themselves in untraditional roles that are a complete departure from traditional roles such as childless and unmarried.

I conclude that the framing of women's roles in the EZLN demonstrates that women understand their place in the movement not only as women, but as indigenous women with a multitude of roles and responsibilities. The frequency of untraditional roles exhibits a progressive view of Zapatista women, yet the lack of total deviation from tradition reflects an adherence to historical norms as well.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Framing*

The act of framing defines situations that "are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events...and our subjective involvement in them" (Goffman 1974:10-11). This type of framing occurs on a more micro-level within the context of the individual experience rather than the structure of social life, and results in an individual interpretation of events (Goffman 1974). Through framing, individuals make sense of their experiences and assign meaning to social occurrences. Robert Entman defines framing as selecting parts of reality and describing the meaning

of these selections through text in order to define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies (1993). Frame analysis shows how frames affect individuals' thoughts and actions (Entman 1993).

Benford and Snow have since noted how framing can be used to increase understanding of the character, dynamics, and development of social movements (2000). In the context of social movements, framing reflects the "shared meaning and definitions people bring to their situation" and the "perspective attached to ideas and sentiments" of that situation (McAdam, McCarthy & Zald 1996:5). A frame is defined as an "interpretive schema that simplifies and condenses 'the world out there' by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of action" (Noakes and Johnston 2005:3). Furthermore, they note that frames may present a narrow view of the subject and emphasize or deemphasize certain aspects (2005). The women in the EZLN, particularly Comandantas Ramona and Esther, frame their view of women's roles in the movement through their speeches and writings. As previous literature suggests, the Zapatista women frame themselves not only as women, but also as indigenous women, and not only as indigenous but also as Mexican (Hernández Castillo 1997). This research analyzes which frames are highlighted by the women themselves to determine how they see their roles.

## ROLES AND (UN)EQUAL GENDER RELATIONS

### *Roles*

All members of society face socially-imposed expectations of their behavior and responsibilities that are tied to their social position. Individuals then act upon these expectations and take on roles, which are “patterned and characteristic social behaviors, parts or identities that are assumed by social participants, and scripts or expectations for behavior that are understood by all and adhered to by performers” (Biddle 1986:68). Individual actors also have expectations of others with their own set of roles. Socially-assigned expectations are learned through experience and are viewed as the primary origin of roles (Biddle 1996). Women and men often encounter different expectations and consequently participate in differing roles within the group. I apply framing theory to women’s roles in the EZLN to understand how their roles are framed and viewed as traditional, neutral, or untraditional within the movement.

### *Mayan Heritage*

As an indigenous social movement, the EZLN is influenced by its Mayan ancestry and heritage. Although gender roles have evolved over the centuries, this shared background provides the basis for contemporary culture. In traditional Mayan society, men’s and women’s roles were seen as complementary and interdependent (Bever 2002; Re Cruz 1998). The men worked in the fields and the women worked in the home, and both sets of responsibilities were needed and valued. However, as social complexity increased and outside Western perspectives such as capitalism were introduced, a system developed in which women were increasingly treated and viewed as subordinate (Dornan 2004). Similar social history is documented in Native American cultures, where gender roles were based on complementarity and reciprocity until contact with Europeans resulted in women’s subordination in the private sphere (Gongaware 2003). These changes altered the historical idea of complementary gender roles (Dornan 2004) and produced a hierarchical gender ideology that supported men in the public sphere and women in domestic roles, which increased male authority over women (Re Cruz 1998). This transformation has resulted in the ideology that an ideal woman is hardworking, respectful, supportive, patient, non-argumentative, shy, soft-spoken, nurturing, and

responsible for helping her husband avoid destructive behavior (Bever 2002).

Yet, the EZLN is broadening this depiction. As the women of the EZLN frame gender roles in today’s society, frames can range from more traditional, private sphere roles to untraditional, public sphere roles. Women are incorporating agency and personal choice in ways that defy conventional social movement dichotomies such as practical/strategic, private/public, and individual/collective. Eber argues that women can still organize even when fulfilling traditional gender roles, that private and public spheres often merge together, and that personal wants can be balanced with collective goals (1999). Consequently, the manner in which women frame their roles, in addition to the role itself, may demonstrate shifts in gender roles and ideology.

### *Traditional Roles*

Historical gender roles have produced a widespread system of inequality in Mexican society, with women traditionally designated to work in the home to care for the children while men work in the fields (Eber 1999). Women are valued as demure and as wives (Zylberberg Panebianco 2006), as midwives, healers, and partners to their husbands or in service to the saints and deities (Eber 2011). They are expected to take care of the house (Eber and Kovic 2003), including all of the associated chores such as washing, cleaning, cooking, and feeding (Villarreal 2007). Women are also strictly regulated in their interactions with men. Women are discouraged from speaking to men outside of the family because if the woman is unmarried, she appears to want a boyfriend, and if she is married, she appears to want a lover (Zylberberg Panebianco 2006). Conversely, when organized women “[get] used to the gossip” (Hernández Castillo 1997: 109), they challenge traditional roles and open new spaces for others, particularly within political participation.

### *Untraditional Roles*

Examples of untraditional roles for women include challenging authority like the police (Speed 2003; Toledo Tello and Garza Caligaris 2006), acting as insurgents and role models to other women (Forbis 2003), as military leaders and public representatives (Capozza 1999), as workers of the land (Harvey 1998), as local and regional representatives, political

leaders and members of government, and as health and education promoters (Villarreal 2007). One of the most untraditional roles for women is serving in the military, a role through which women not only confront Mexico and the Mexican army, but also traditional gender roles (Speed 2006).

### *Transforming the Roles*

Politically, efforts have been made to empower and create a voice for women, often by women (Olivera 2005). New power relations encourage increased support for women, particularly within the political sphere, and offer the opportunity for collective discussions (Mora 2003). Women's skills and leadership knowledge allows them to make gender power relations more egalitarian (Stephen 2006). However, traditional housekeeping roles prevent women from having maximum political access and taking on leadership positions (Eber 1999), especially due to men's unwillingness to contribute around the house (Eber 2011).

Socially, women are also pushing for change, not in ways that entirely reject traditional gender roles, but in ways that alter gender relations (Eber and Kovic 2003). Women are seeking changes in all aspects of society, including decision making, land inheritance, marriage choices, education and work rights, respect, and perhaps most importantly, "traditions and customs that disadvantage women" (Moncayo 2006: 77). The claim to only change hurtful traditions recognizes the shared and respected indigenous culture and history that the women are not trying to erase, but rather modify when practices are deemed detrimental.

Although much research exists regarding social movements in Latin America, there is a general lack of gender-focused research in the context of social movements in both the political science and social science fields (Ortiz-Ortega and Barquet 2010). Parts of the research about indigenous women in Chiapas alternate between the opposite themes of total oppression and harmonic complementation (Eber 1999).

### HYPOTHESES

Mayan society functions through gender role complementarity; however, increasing social complexity and contact with Western culture have

relegated women to a subordinate role. Through the EZLN's campaign for indigenous recognition, women have a platform to assert themselves as indigenous women with their own needs and wants. Individuals as well as groups of women have used this opportunity to share experiences and express opinions. In order to understand how women situate themselves within the movement, I ask, how do women frame themselves in the EZLN? Based on the above literature, I hypothesize that women will frame themselves most frequently in untraditional roles and more commonly without agency in their actions.

H1: Women frame themselves in untraditional roles more than traditional or neutral roles.

H2: Women frame their roles without agency more than with agency.

H3: Women frame more untraditional roles with agency than traditional or neutral roles.

### METHODS

#### *Data*

This study uses a convenience sample of documents produced by women in the EZLN. The documents were selected based on author gender and title or main topic. In order to gain a more focused insight regarding the roles of women in the EZLN, I specifically looked for documents written by individual women or groups of women who were part of the movement. I also looked for documents that focused on women in order to examine how women frame themselves and other women in the movement. Although my information was collected through a convenience sample, this collection method was the best way to ensure that the data would address my research question. As the majority of EZLN documents are not written by women and do not specifically address women's issues, a random sampling of EZLN documents would not have produced the needed, relevant data.

In total, I gathered eleven documents, six of which were written by individual women and five of which were written by groups of women. The documents are dated from 1994 – the first year of the movement – to 2003, and include written declarations, speeches, and interviews. Eight documents have been previously translated to English while three documents are in Spanish.

### Method

This study uses qualitative and quantitative content analysis to study women's roles and agency in the EZLN. More specifically, I analyze the documents by coding for traditional, neutral, and untraditional roles of women in the EZLN and for whether women demonstrate agency or choice in the presentation of the role. Content analysis is a method for systematically interpreting characteristics of communication (Berg 2009). The use of content analysis allowed me to apply

framing theory to understand how women frame themselves through written declarations, speeches, and interviews.

My codes are divided into three categories: traditional roles, neutral roles, and untraditional roles. Traditional roles include caretaker, daughter, mother, partner, representative of husband, victim, and wife. Neutral roles include indigenous and poor. Untraditional roles include childless, leader, military member,

Category	Sub-category	This variable includes...	Examples
<b>Traditional Roles:</b> This category includes conventional, historically-expected roles for women that are mostly domestic, dependent, and in the private sphere.	Caretaker	the role of caring for the household, community, or people other than a woman's own children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The housewives stayed behind and watched over the communities.</li> </ul>
	Daughter	girls mentioned within the parent/child relationship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A daughter's decision should be respected.</li> <li>In some places daughters don't get anything.</li> </ul>
	Mother	women in the role of caring for their own children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We are the mothers.</li> <li>Women have the right to decide the number of children they will have and care for.</li> </ul>
	Partner	members of a personal relationship or significant other when no gender is mentioned.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women have the right to choose their partner.</li> <li>To marry or be with someone you have to ask permission.</li> </ul>
	Representative of husband	women who represent their husbands in public when the husband is unable to attend.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No examples found.</li> </ul>
	Victim	women framed as abused, violated, mistreated, oppressed, condemned, abused, exploited, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They have treated us like objects rather than human beings.</li> <li>We, as women, have a double suffering.</li> <li>For many years we have suffered pain, forgetting, contempt, marginalization and oppression.</li> </ul>
	Wife	women within the context of marriage or serving their husband.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We are the wives of the compañeros.</li> <li>[Men] help their wives or their compañeras.</li> </ul>
<b>Neutral Roles:</b> This category includes roles that women would fulfill regardless of EZLN involvement.	Indigenous	women framed as indigenous and of Mayan descent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We want to be recognized as indigenous people and women.</li> <li>We indigenous women have begun to reflect on our rights.</li> </ul>
	Poor	women framed as poor or in poverty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Because we are poor.</li> <li>[Mothers] do not have enough money.</li> </ul>

Table 2: A Typology of Roles

<b>Untraditional Roles:</b> This category includes unconventional, historically-unexpected roles for women that are mostly independent and in the public sphere.	Childless	women who do not have children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No examples found.</li> </ul>
	Leader	women who have leadership positions or lead groups of other people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women have the right to hold positions of authority.</li> <li>• We need women leaders.</li> <li>• It is important that women become leaders in our organizations.</li> </ul>
	Military member	women who are members of the EZLN army but do not have an officer title.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I'm an insurgent.</li> <li>• There are women who decided to be soldiers.</li> </ul>
	Military officer	women who are members of the EZLN army and have an officer title.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am a commander.</li> <li>• Women now have the insurgent rank of captain, of major, of lieutenant.</li> </ul>
	Participant	women who partake and engage in community activity, public forums, and are involved in the organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women have the right to participate.</li> <li>• When we participate and gather with other women, our hearts feel strong.</li> <li>• We have the right to participate in the decisions of the community.</li> </ul>
	Representative of group	women who represent groups of women or the EZLN as a whole.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through my voice speaks the voice of the [EZLN].</li> <li>• We decided to organize ourselves in this rebellion to ask for what we need, our rights.</li> </ul>
	Representative of self	women who represent only themselves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No examples found.</li> </ul>
	Role model	women who serve as role models to others and set an example.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have to be an example.</li> <li>• Women elsewhere might take the example and do something.</li> </ul>
	Survivor	women who have faced challenges and overcome large obstacles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To survive, we have to work starting in childhood.</li> </ul>
	Unmarried	women who are single and not married.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have the right to be protected from rape whether we are single or married.</li> </ul>
	Voter	women who vote in decisions made within the organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First we voted on whether to begin the war or not.</li> <li>• Men and women voted on it.</li> </ul>
	Worker	women who work for economic gain or to fulfill responsibilities within the organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women have the right to work and receive a just salary.</li> <li>• Women work making pieces for guns and also small bombs for defense.</li> </ul>
Zapatista	women framed as Zapatistas, members, or supporters of the EZLN.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are Zapatistas.</li> <li>• As zapatista women we've made a little progress.</li> <li>• That is why we decided to organize in order to fight as zapatista women.</li> </ul>	

Table 2 Continued: A Typology of Roles

military officer, participant, representative of group, representative of self, role model, survivor, unmarried, voter, worker, and Zapatista. For each “role” so coded, I then went back and coded for whether or not the speaker/writer was expressing agency in the context of that role. Roles with agency were ones where, based on the language in the document, the woman actively chose to take on the role through a conscious decision. Language that indicated this active choice included decide, choose, take, gain, organize, fight, participate, and build. Roles without agency did not include this element of personal choice. Women may demonstrate a differing level of agency in everyday life than appears in the documents, but this research only analyzed a sample of written sources.

I use both manifest and latent coding to collect data on women’s roles and agency in the movement. The technique I use is descriptive coding, which summarizes the topic of a passage of qualitative data. This technique is useful when coding a variety of data forms, such as the three types of documents I use in my analysis (Saldaña 2013). My unit of analysis is the word when coding for roles and the phrase when coding for agency. Words allow me to see the exact role the women present, and phrases allow me to see the presence of agency. Although latent coding is subject to the reader’s interpretation, I have created rules for each variable and category to increase reliability and decrease researcher bias.

I coded each document in Microsoft Word using the comments tool. When a role appeared in the text, I would create a comment and make note of the role present in the text. If a new role appeared in the documents, a new code was created and added. After coding all of the documents, I used Microsoft Excel to enter the frequencies of each code, organized by role within each document. The first round of coding entailed coding for women’s roles and the second round of coding included determining agency for each previously identified role. In total, I coded for 22 different roles resulting in 390 codes. The seven traditional roles include 128 codes, the two neutral roles include 98 codes, and the thirteen untraditional roles include 164 codes<sup>1</sup>. The combined roles with no

agency include 367 codes and the combined roles with agency include 23 codes.

I continued to use Microsoft Excel to determine frequencies related to each code. I created frequency tables and bar graphs to determine the percentage of instances per code. To analyze the roles, I divided the number of instances of each code by the total number of instances in the respective category (traditional, neutral, or untraditional). This enabled me to compare the frequency of each individual role within the context of its respective category and to see which roles were more prevalent in the documents. I also compared the number of instances of each category out of the total number of instances. To compare the frequency of each category, I divided the number of instances of each category by the total number of instances of all three categories combined. This enabled me to compare the categories and to see what category of roles was most prevalent in the documents. To analyze agency, I created two larger categories of no agency and agency. Within each of these two categories, I inserted the subcategories of traditional, neutral, and untraditional for a total of six subcategories. I first divided the number of instances of each code by the total of instances of variables in the respective category, no agency or agency. I then divided the total number of instances of each variable by the total of the respective subcategory, such as no agency – untraditional. This enabled me to see in which categories, as well as individual roles, agency was more prevalent in the documents.

For my qualitative analysis, I grouped the data from the documents according to each code. I then analyzed the data by searching for patterns of how women in the movement framed their roles, based on my reading of the literature. I also considered agency in order to compare how women understand their roles, and to see if they exhibited an active choice in taking on the role.

## ANALYSIS

The quantitative and qualitative analyses of my data provided me with information to evaluate my hypotheses and research question. The quantitative

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<sup>1</sup> Even though the category frequencies follow the same pattern as the number of variables in each category, the categories are similarly represented when compared to the total word count of the documents. Untraditional roles compose 0.93% of all

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words, followed by traditional roles at 0.72% and neutral roles at 0.55% of all words. This small difference in frequencies shows that the difference in number of variables in each category is not a limitation.

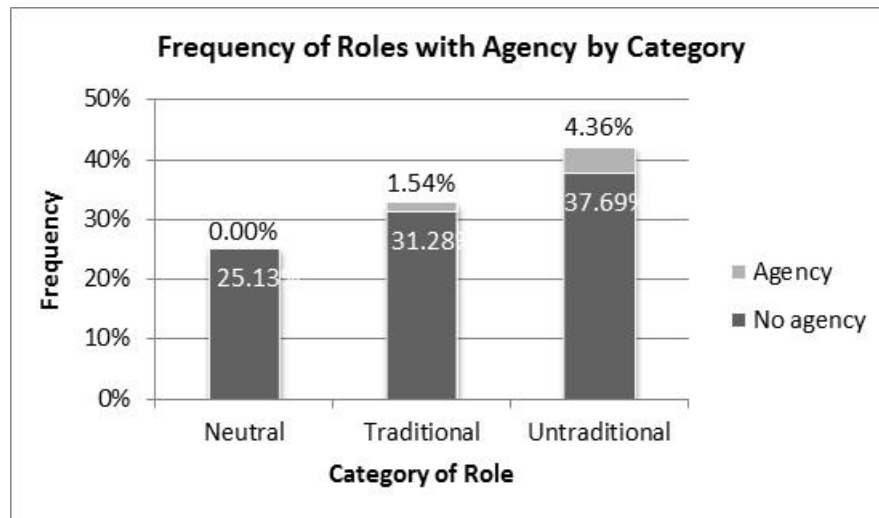


Figure 1: Percentage of total instances of roles with and without agency by role category (N = 390)

analysis provides the percentages of instances that each category of codes, and each code, appeared. The quantitative analysis also measures the frequency of agency within each category and code. The qualitative analysis explains how the women use each code and the meaning the women attribute to each role. The results demonstrate that women most frequently frame themselves in untraditional roles, most commonly without agency, but with the most agency for untraditional roles. Additionally, even though untraditional was the most represented category, individually, the two most frequent roles (excluding indigenous) were in the traditional category: victim (52 instances, 13.33% of all roles) and mother (47 instances, 12.05% of all roles).

From a qualitative perspective, an untraditional role often exists in opposition to a traditional role. Of the four traditional/untraditional groupings (mother/childless, wife/partner/unmarried, representative of husband/group/self, and victim/survivor), women are more likely to frame themselves in the traditional role (except for the representative role, when women are more likely to frame themselves untraditionally). For the two related but both untraditional role groupings (participant/leader and military member/officer), women are more likely to frame themselves in the less involved of the two roles.

#### Quantitative Analysis

The total number of roles coded equals 309. As shown in Figure 1, women are most frequently

framed in untraditional roles (164 instances, 42.05%). Traditional roles are the second most frequent frames (128 instances, 32.82%) and neutral roles were the least frequent frames (98 instances, 25.13%). These results support my first hypothesis, which states that women are framed in untraditional roles more than traditional or neutral roles.

The total number of roles without agency (367 instances, 94.1%) exceeds the total number of roles with agency (23 instances, 5.9%). This result supports my second hypothesis, which states that women's roles are framed without agency more than with agency. When broken down by category, untraditional roles are framed with the most agency (17 instances, 4.36%). Traditional roles are found with less agency (6 instances, 1.54%) and neutral roles do not have any instances of agency. These results support my third hypothesis, which states that women's untraditional roles include the presence of agency more than traditional or neutral roles.

A closer examination of the traditional category of roles, the second most frequent frame, can be found in Figure 2. These percentages are compared to the total frequency of traditional roles (N = 128). The most frequent role is victim (52 instances, 40.63%). The second most frequent role is mother (47 instances, 36.72%). No instances of "representative of husband" were found.

Only two traditional roles contain instances of agency. Of all the traditional roles, only mother and partner



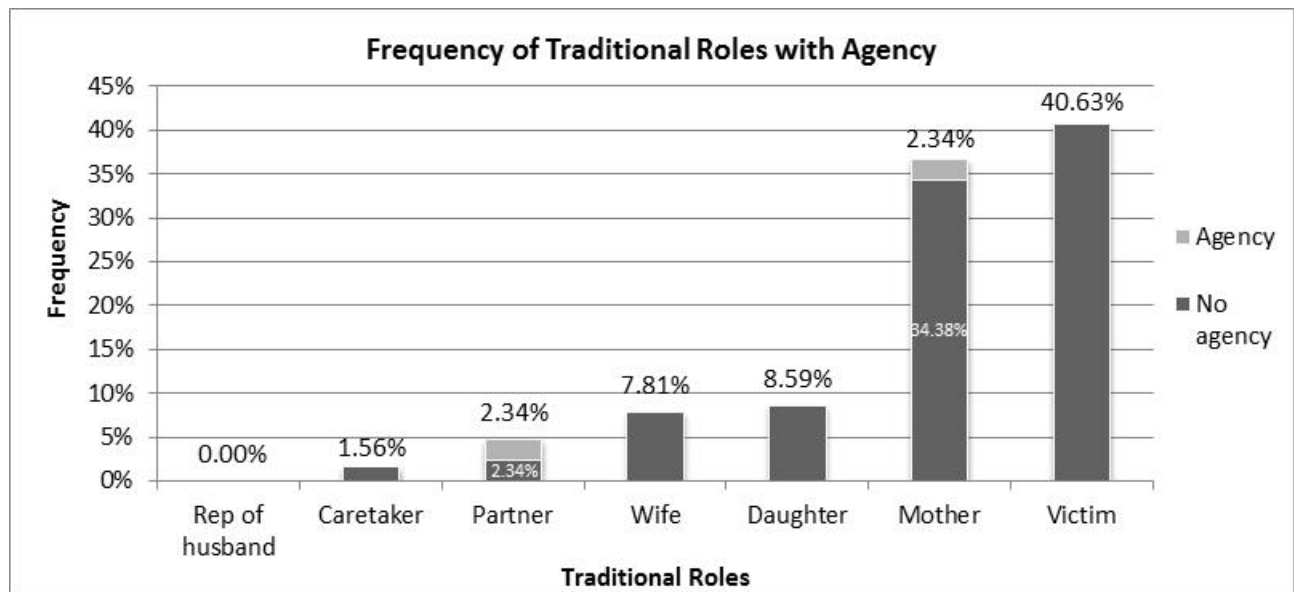


Figure 2: Percentage of instances of traditional roles with and without agency (N = 128)

include instances of agency, and at the same rate (3 instances of agency each, 2.34% each). The other traditional roles do not demonstrate any examples of agency.

Neutral roles are the least frequent of all three categories (See Figure 3). These percentages are compared to the total frequency of neutral roles (N = 98). Within the neutral category, indigenous is the most frequent role (78 instances, 79.59%) while poor is the least frequent role (20 instances, 20.41%). Additionally, indigenous is the most frequent role out of all roles in all three categories. Neither neutral role includes any instances of agency.

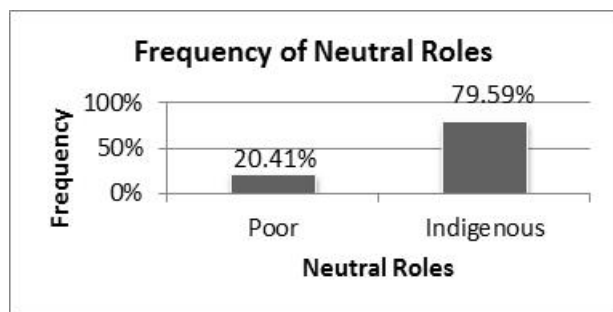


Figure 3: Percentage of instances of neutral roles (N = 98)

The category of untraditional roles is the most frequent category (See Figure 4). These percentages are compared to the total frequency of untraditional roles (N = 164). The most frequent untraditional role is participant (39 instances, 23.78%), followed by worker (36 instances, 21.95%). There are no instances

of childless or “representative of self,” and only one instance of unmarried (0.61%).

Five untraditional roles contain instances of agency. The most frequent untraditional role with agency is participant (9 instances of agency, 5.49%). The second most frequent untraditional role with agency is leader (3 instances of agency, 1.83%), followed by military member and representative of group (2 instances of agency each, 1.22% each). Worker is the second most frequent untraditional role but it only has one instance of agency (0.61%). The remaining eight untraditional roles (childless, representative of self, unmarried, voter, role model, survivor, military officer, and Zapatista) do not demonstrate any instances of agency.

#### Qualitative Analysis

Using qualitative analysis, I examine how the women perceive and understand the roles. Roles are categorized as traditional or untraditional according to the literature. Many traditional roles had untraditional counterparts, and are analyzed together when applicable.

#### Mother and Childless

The role of mother was interesting to code because rarely did the women ever explicitly use the word mother but instead framed themselves as mothers in terms of their children. Children are spoken of protectively. Mothers also note the sacrifices made to have and raise children. Although women emphasize their right to decide the number of children they will

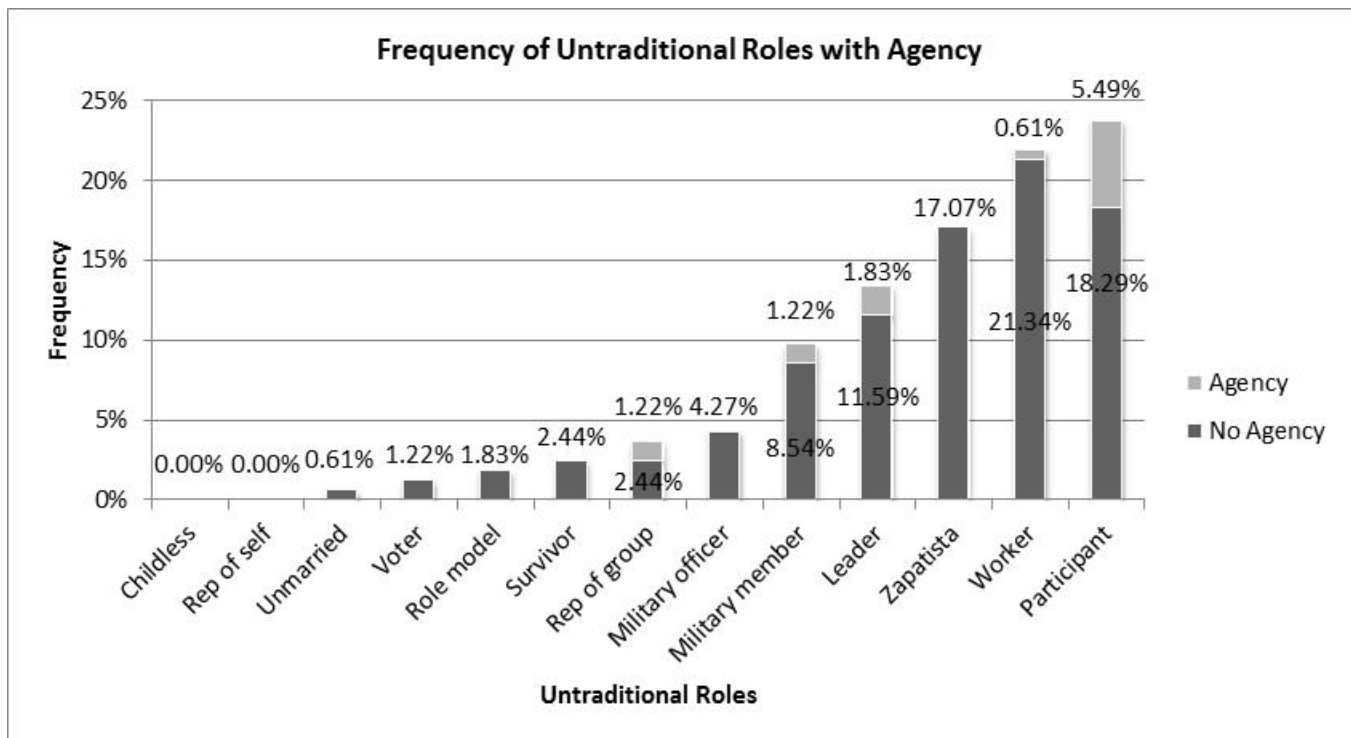


Figure 4: Percentage of instances of untraditional roles with and without agency (N = 164)

have and when to have them, the idea of not having children at any point in their lifetime is not mentioned, meaning that there are zero instances of the code childless. Examples of motherhood include:

Women have the right to decide the number of children they will have and care for.

Primarily the women, it is they who feel the pain of childbirth. They see their children die in their arms from malnutrition, for lack of care. They also see their children without shoes, without clothing, because they do not have enough money to buy them, because it is they who care for the homes, they see that they do not have enough for food.

The first example demonstrates agency. Agency in motherhood is framed in terms of decisions about children, choices in number and timing. A traditional ideology about family remains strong as demonstrated by the lack of women framing themselves as childless.

#### *Wife, Partner, and Unmarried*

The role of wife is often used in relation to men or husbands. Wives are mentioned as victims of domestic abuse and defenders of the family, and in only one instance as receiving help from men in the kitchen. This pattern implies that a wife's responsibility is domestic, which follows traditional roles. The role of partner was created when women speak about their role as a wife, but did not specify gender. I distinguish partner from wife because using a gender-neutral term implies more equality without the connotation associated with wife. Similar to childless, the unmarried code was created in the event that women choose never to marry. However, only one instance of this code is seen, in the context of protection from sexual assault whether the woman is single or married. Although the use of the word single may include women who have chosen not to marry, the word could also include women who have not yet married but plan or hope to do so in the future. Even though there are women in the EZLN who have chosen to remain single and usually childless, the lack of instances of women framed in this way demonstrates that marriage is still a dominant value in the community. Examples of wife, partner, and unmarried include:

(wife) We are the mothers and wives of the *compañeros* who were beaten and choked with tear gas, who are denouncing the following violent incidents.

(partner) Women have the right to choose their partner, and are not to be forced into marriage.

(unmarried) We have the right to be protected from rape whether we are single or married.

The example for partner illustrates agency. Agency is framed as choice in marriage partner and respect for the daughter's decision. This respect also demonstrates the traditional influence of the parents in decisions regarding marriage. Women frequently frame their role as a wife with the choice of who and when to marry. No instances of agency are found for wife or unmarried.

#### *Victim and Survivor*

The role of victim is the most frequent traditional role. Victim was coded as a traditional role for its illustration of the historic inequalities between genders and the subordinate position women hold. Women frequently frame themselves as the victim and as being victimized by outsiders, *mestizos*, the national government, the military, the community, men in their family, and men in general. Women also frame themselves as victims of a double or triple suffering, which include being women, indigenous, and poor. Given that overall, women are more likely to frame themselves in untraditional roles, I thought it interesting that the role of victim is so common. This might be so for a number of different reasons. First, by framing themselves as victims, women create the space to press for change and to demonstrate the need for this change and to give credibility to the movement. Second, women might use their victimization as justification for women to have more freedom, liberty, or voice in their home and community. However, portraying themselves as victims so frequently diminishes their effectiveness and argument for change because the audience is constantly reminded of women's traditionally subordinate position in society. Yet, the victim role is often utilized as a mechanism for change in the claims to not be mistreated or beaten.

The role of a survivor is framed as overcoming struggle or resistance, but also a means for survival. Women discuss the difficulties they have overcome in the past and the current challenges they bear to create a future for themselves and their families. This frame is not utilized very often, perhaps because the role of a victim was much more frequent. This frequency reflects a limitation on the women's thinking because if they framed themselves as survivors more than victims, the women would demonstrate more agency in their ability to effect change. Examples of victim and survivor include:

(victim) For many years we have suffered pain, forgetting, contempt, marginalization and oppression.

(victim) They have treated us like objects rather than human beings.

(survivor) *Muchas resistencias hemos tenido que vencer para llegar hasta aquí.*

Neither victim nor survivor includes any instances of agency.

#### *Representative of Husband, Self, and Group*

Although the literature suggests that a traditional role for women is to represent their husbands when needed, I do not find any examples of this role. The untraditional role of "representative of self" was created to oppose the traditional role of "representative of husband," because in the literature when women ask to not represent their husbands they claim they want to speak for themselves. However, while I do not find any instances of women representing themselves as an individual, I do find a few examples of women representing a group, either other women or the EZLN as a whole. Many of the speeches analyzed often begin with the idea that women are standing and speaking as representatives of the EZLN. In other cases, women serve to represent other women in presenting their needs and rights. Due to the fact that some women do not yet feel comfortable speaking in front of groups, even when composed of only women, a group rather than an individual representative seems logical. Another possible explanation is that the women have similar grievances, so one person can speak for the group. However, being a group representative is only

a small step closer to participatory gender equity. Examples of representative of group include:

Through my voice speaks the voice of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation.

We sacrifice our lives without any hope for the future, and so in order to not die on our knees and beggars, we decided to organize ourselves in this rebellion to ask for what we need, our rights.

The second example demonstrates agency. Agency in representing the group entails women taking the initiative to seek representation in public forums. Women make the collective decision to join together to express their views to their larger group.

#### *Participant and Leader*

The role of a participant is the most frequent untraditional role. Women frame their participation as a right that is absolutely necessary to improving the situation of women. They also demand the ability to participate in the way they choose, particularly in the same way as men. Women understand their participation to be a critical method for expressing their views and a platform for connecting with other women in the community. Through participation, women encourage others to participate as well. This form of emulation is important as women take on this untraditional role and experience discomfort. Women are framed most frequently as participants, demonstrating a step further into the public sphere for women. Yet, further leadership is possible. If women are content with the position they have and do not have an interest in leadership, a more traditional gender ideology is supported. The role of a leader is important because it reflects a higher level of engagement than just participation as well as holding a position traditionally designated for men. Women have taken on the role of leadership as a right and as a way to express the views and opinions of women. Women do note that when women are in these positions of leadership, they need to be respected by men. Women as leaders rely on legitimacy provided by the entire community, not just other women. For a leadership position to be meaningful, both men and women must accept this role. Examples of participant and leader include:

(participant) Women, regardless of their race, creed, color or political affiliation, have the right to participate in the revolutionary struggle in a way determined by their desire and capacity.

(leader) When we take a leadership position in the community we shall be as committed to the job as are men.

The first example of participant demonstrates agency. In addition to the most frequent untraditional role, the role of participant also contains the most instances of agency in any role. Participating can mean something different to each of the women, but generally included the right to participate in general (in a way defined by the woman), or in ways to participate as men do, such as fighting. Additionally, some women participate to be recognized. Agency in leadership refers to women stepping up to a higher position, and although it exemplifies progress for women, it still shows the prevalence of men in leadership positions and the instances of women inserting themselves into a traditionally male-dominated setting.

#### *Military Member and Officer*

The role of a military member is more straightforward and includes the women who frame themselves as insurgents or soldiers. This role is very untraditional for women and requires dedication to the cause and personal sacrifices, especially when serving in the army defies family wishes. Not all women, such as mothers, are able to be in the army, and so female military members are generally younger single women. Women in this role can serve as inspiration or a source of pride for other women not necessarily in the army. The role of a military officer is even more untraditional for women because it represents leadership in the army. The women who hold officer titles have often committed their lives to the cause, making even larger personal sacrifices than the women serving as members. Women in this role discuss the example they set for other women, but especially for the other women in the army who look to them as their commander or other officer position. Examples of military member and military officer include:

(member) And not only me, there are women who decided to be soldiers.

(member) Many of the women who have joined the EZLN have done so without telling their families.

(officer) Then, since I led one unit, I knew I had to go first, in front of my *compañeros*. I am a commander and I have to be an example.

(officer) ...those women now have the insurgent rank of captain, of major, of lieutenant. That's how we saw that women can indeed be strong.

The two examples of military members show agency. Agency in military membership emphasizes the women's decision to join the EZLN, even once in defiance of the family. Serving in the military particularly defies women's traditional roles because the opportunity to be a mother, arguably the most valuable role of a woman in this cultural model, is lost. When the woman joins the military of her own accord, not only does she make an active choice about which role to enact, but she also makes a choice to give up other roles as well. No instances of agency for military officer were found.

### *Indigenous*

The role of an *indígena*, or indigenous woman, is the most frequent role out of all of the roles. The role is framed as a collective identity and shared background. This frame is used to show the conditions in which these women live, the disadvantages into which they are born, and the need for recognition from the larger population. The women emphasize that not only are they indigenous, but they are indigenous women, a specific identity which adds to their burden and suffering. Similar to the use of victim, the role of being an indigenous woman is more often used as a limitation than a source of pride or power. However, the women are not willing to compromise this aspect of their identity, for it is a role that separates them from the other women in the country. Their demands and wants are reflected in this unique position and the women reject attempts to singularize them as either women or indigenous because they are inseparably both. I think it is noteworthy that the indigenous role is the most frequent out of all the roles because this common use demonstrates the understanding that

the women of the EZLN do not comprise their own women's movement, but rather are a part of the EZLN, an indigenous movement. The frequent use of this role highlights the close ties the women have to their indigenous background and the shared identity with the men of the EZLN as well. Examples of indigenous include:

We want to be recognized as indigenous people and women.

Both as indigenous people and as women, we demand respect for ourselves and for all our rights.

The role of indigenous did not include any instances of agency.

### *Zapatista*

The role as a Zapatista encompasses women's pride for being part of the movement. Women frequently frame themselves as Zapatistas and emphasize how the EZLN creates opportunities for them. The framing as Zapatista is often joined with the framing as women, demonstrating that while women identify with the movement, they recognize their unique role within it as Zapatista women. Women speak of their role as Zapatistas as empowering.

We are zapatistas.

And it is also a symbol that it is I, a poor, indigenous and zapatista woman, who would be having the first word, and that the main message of our word as zapatistas would be mine.

That is why we decided to organize in order to fight as zapatista women.

The role of Zapatista did not contain any instances of agency.

## CONCLUSION

This paper analyzes how women in the EZLN frame their roles in the movement. Using eleven documents written by individual women or groups of women in the movement, I analyze untraditional, neutral,

and traditional roles through content analysis, quantitatively comparing percentages of frequencies as well as qualitative context.

I find that untraditional roles are framed most frequently. I also find that most roles do not demonstrate agency, but when they do agency is most commonly found in untraditional roles. Women most frequently frame themselves as indigenous, victims, mothers, and participants. I find few instances of 'very' untraditional roles that completely deviated from historical norms, such as unmarried, childless, or "representative of self."

My findings show that while there is some flexibility and a progressive presentation of gender roles in the women's writings, customary and traditional roles are still somewhat preserved. The women demonstrate the importance of all three categories of roles: traditional, neutral, and untraditional. The frequent framing of indigenous roles reflects a strong connection to the EZLN's purpose and mission while the common use of the role of mother establishes the women as the supporter of the family. Additionally, the multitude of ways in which women frame themselves as participants reveals progress for women taking part in EZLN happenings.

This research fills an important gap in the literature about women in the EZLN. The use of content analysis to investigate framing contributes to current understanding of women in the EZLN, providing a closer look at women's roles and their understanding of their place and purpose in the organization.

One limitation of this study is that the documents were not randomly selected. Out of the many existing writings, speeches, and interviews available, I chose my sample based on documents clearly written by women and whose main focus in the documents was the discussion of women in the movement. However, given the specific nature of my research question, I anticipated that the chosen documents would provide the best data possible. Another limitation is that due to the scope of this paper, the list of twenty-two variables is not exhaustive. The variables used in this study were chosen based on their anticipated importance according to the literature but do not fully represent the wide range of roles women have in the EZLN.

Future research is needed in order to gain a fuller and deeper understanding of women in the EZLN. A more inclusive list of variables, as well as an analysis of more documents, will provide more information about how women perceive and discuss their roles in the movement. Finally, once a comprehensive analysis of the documents has been conducted, field research must be done to compare these narratives with the ways in which the EZLN activists enact them. Such a comparison would allow for discussion about the level of consistency between words and actions, and would show if the documents of the EZLN accurately represent the women's experiences of life in the movement.

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