



**What Does Gender Equality Mean?
Deep Confusion within the Discourse of the
Bolivarian Project of Venezuela**

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Disclaimer:

This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

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List of Acronyms

BANMUJER	Women's Development Bank
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
FCDA	Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis
GAD	Gender and Development
GDI	Gender-related Development Index
GII	Gender Inequality Index
HDI	Human Development Index
HDR	Human Development Report
INAMUJER	The National Institute of Women
MINMUJER	Ministry of Popular Power for Women and Gender Equality
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN	The United Nations
WID	Women in Development
WAD	Women and Development

Abstract

The main objective of the study is to discursively analyze how the official discourse prevents the establishment of gender equality through the production of meaning. I argue that the official discourse of the Bolivarian Project constructs gender relations that maintain a gendered hierarchy, preventing true gender equality. The theoretical framework that I apply is a social construction and postmodern feminist perspective, as well as Connell's (1990) theory of the state as a gender regime. Critical Discourse Analysis is used as the methodology, along with some aspects of Feminist Discourse Analysis, to study the oral speeches performed by Hugo Chavez, the former President of Venezuela. Through the application of a detailed analysis table, several contradictory discourses are revealed. There is confusion within the official discourse about what gender equality truly means. Through these discourses, a gendered society is maintained. In effect, the production of gender equality meanings through the official discourse blocks the full transformation that is needed to achieve a comprehensive gender approach to developments.

Keywords

Gender equality, Critical Discourse Analysis, Gender and Development, gender regime, Bolivarian Project of Venezuela, social transformation

CHAPTER 1 | INTRODUCTION

The former President of Venezuela proclaimed himself to be a feminist. This simple phrase, “I am a feminist”, triggered my interest in this matter. As a populist leader of a state that is working towards a socialist system, I questioned what this phrase actually meant. I was skeptical as to his sincerity and understanding of his words.

The struggle for women’s rights and full recognition as significant citizens has been long and tumultuous. Although it is now widely agreed that women, in fact, cannot be categorized as one homogenous unit, it is unarguable to state that on a historical level, especially in considering colonial histories, women have been subjected to subordination under men. In view of this history, feminism was established as a space in which to achieve justice for women. An early view of feminism was that the fundamental root of the oppression of women was men. Yet in more recent feminist theories, men have been considered less of the problem and more of a solution.

The belief that men should be included in issues of gender has been established in the Gender and Development Approach (GAD). In this paper, the issue of a true and comprehensive gender approach is advocated and it is argued that without it, there cannot be a sustainable society. It is stressed that the advocacy of gender equality does not suffice in achieving a change in gendered institutions. Feminist perspectives on gender equality are reviewed to better understand how gender equality can be interpreted and to help us arrive to the definition of an approach to development that truly constitutes both men and women.

Through the critical analysis of the official discourse of a State that has announced its intentions to work towards gender equality, I will reveal the ways in which discourse can prevent the societal transformation that is needed in achieving a successful gender approach to development. The analysis will show how feminist claims and goals are hijacked to reach anti-feminist results.

The Bolivarian Project of Venezuela, as established under the Presidential administration of Hugo Chavez, has been chosen as a case study. Empirical evidence is drawn from the official discourse as distributed through oral speeches given by the Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. Through this analysis, the gendered ways in which society is organized will be exposed, as well as the various nuanced ways in which discrimination is kept alive and well.

As I adopt a social construction feminist perspective, I am interested in revealing the power relations present and sometimes hidden in discourses. I emphasize that a true gender approach and the achievement of gender equality will never be possible without a comprehensive and inclusive approach to development, one which considers nuanced yet powerful discourses distributed by the state. I also utilize Connell’s gender regime theory (1990) as a theoretical framework for this study. More on these analytical tools are expanded upon in Chapter 2.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is the methodology used as a tool to analyze the collected data. CDA is concerned with social processes and structures that create texts and their discourses, as well as how they are understood by society. (Wodak 2001) As will be further elaborated in Chapter 3, this approach combines several different tools to analyze text, such as metaphors, rhetoric, framing, and narratives. However, despite its diversity, CDA has a specific objective. It is concerned “with how texts do [and] can contribute to the reinforcement of the position of the powerful and privileged, or to the promotion of the interests of the relatively weak and disadvantaged or excluded.” (Wodak 2007: 3) Oral speeches addressed towards women and given by Hugo Chavez since 2009, when a feminist rhetoric emerged, constitute the data that will be analyzed. How gender equality is interpreted by the official discourse of the state and how meanings are produced through these discourses is the main interest of this study.

In order to achieve the goal of this study, several aspects must first be elaborated. The history of the Bolivarian Project and its social context is reviewed in Chapter 3. In Chapter 2 some background on the discursive techniques and tendencies of Hugo Chavez will be provided, in order to better understand the complexities of this study. In the following section, the GAD approach to development is reviewed, as it is the framework that has inspired and supported my argument.

1.1 Working Towards a Comprehensive Gender Approach to Development

In the 1980s a new concept of Development emerged, that of GAD. This approach aims to recognize the complex relations between men and women. It urges the understanding of these relations, rather than simply stating that one gender is the victim, while the other is the enemy. It advocates for a transformation of development interventions, one that is founded on cooperation and a true understanding of gender. It has been criticized for simply replacing “gender” for “women”, and although this may be true, such approaches that merely do this are not a true implementation of a gender approach. These failed attempts to a gender approach to development do not consider the complexities and nuances within society. It is also feared that this approach will facilitate the cooptation of women movements by men. Moreover, and understandably, many women refuse to work with men due to their historical role in oppressing women.

In the early 1970s an approach to implement women into the economic system was created, Women in Development (WID). Women and their work began to become considered by the development sector in the 1970s, receiving a great boost into recognition by Ester Boserup and her writings on women’s importance in agricultural communities. (El-Bushra 2000: 55) This was the beginning of widespread criticism regarding the frameworks of development being created for the benefit of men. Following these realizations, WID was implemented, a development approach that inserted women into the male-dominated formal economy in the effort to bring social and economic equity. (Beetham and Demetriades 2007: 201) In other words, it was not concerned with the welfare of women but with the efficiencies and practicalities of the action.

WID was later joined by another approach that critiqued it, Women and Development (WAD). WID, an approach influenced by liberal feminist thought from mostly North American feminists, began to be criticized by feminists from the Global South. The current WID scheme is one that is based on the knowledge of the Global North, excluding the knowledge and experience of women from the South. It is a one-size fits all solution that unsurprisingly, does not fit all. (Beetham and Demetriades 2007: 201) WAD supports the creation of a relationship between women and development processes.” (Visvanathan 1997: 18)

In light of this discord, GAD emerged, opening the way for a more gender-oriented approach, rather than a purely women-oriented one. The emergence of a new approach came about through the concern with “power imbalances that lie at the root of gender subordination, such as gendered roles and divisions of labour.” (Molyneux 1985 a cited by Beetham and Demetriades 2007: 202) Contrasting the limited-minded WID, this approach focused on gender relations, power dynamics and the fact that such hierarchies are present not only in the market, but in other institutions such as the family and the state. (*Ibid.*: 201) It breaks away from a short-term approach of simple integration and instead advocates an approach that considers the long-term consequences of sustainability.

Even within GAD there is “confusion and tension” (El-Bushra 2000: 55), which can be detrimental to its goal to achieve a transformative gender approach. One factor that leads to this conflict is the meaning of gender. This is often presented as an unquestioned concept but its complexities are many. It is widely agreed that sex is biological while gender is cultural, but its definition is still open for interpretation and debated upon. (*Ibid.*: 58-59) The definition that is widely used by GAD is the following by Ann Oakley (1972: 158 as cited by El-Bushra 2000: 58):

Sex is a biological term: 'gender' a psychological and cultural one. Common sense suggests that they are merely two ways of looking at the same division and that someone who belongs to, say, the female sex will automatically belong to the corresponding (feminine) gender. In reality this is not so. To be a man or a woman, a boy or a girl, is as much a function of dress, gesture, occupation, social network and personality, as it is of possessing a particular set of genitals.

Oakley contributes social construction of gender roles through the way we dress, the way we interact with others, etc. as the defining factor of gender. I also take a social construction feminism perspective through this study.

Another root of confusion is found when asking what contributes to a transformative approach to gender relations. A transformation in gender relations will not only be achieved through the economic empowerment of women, it is more complex than that. It encompasses the relations between men and women. It is more than just economic, political and cultural. It is psychological, emotional and social. Moreover, gender cannot be separated from class, race or sexuality. (El-Bushra 2000: 61) Once this is acknowledged, a more complete understanding of humans will be achieved, facilitating the development of a more sustainable society.

Furthermore, gender is a *transversal* concept that cannot be fully separated from other categories of social identity. (El-Bushra 2000: 60) El-Bushra states the main problem as being:

Many development agencies adopt women's economic empowerment as their main strategy for achieving gender equity, assuming that it will lead automatically to gender equality. Yet women through out the world describe their experience of discrimination in many other areas of life, including their political roles, which define their power to control resources within social relationships, and their need for both emotional security and reproductive rights within interpersonal relationships. (2000: 56-57)

Previous development policies failed in improving the lives of women because of its inability to include their experiences into the process, as well as the unequal production of knowledge that excluded women. (Warren 2007: 188) A transformative approach cannot be so shallow as to exclude half of society in its attempts to bring progress. One of the main elements of GAD is 'gender mainstreaming', (Beetham and Demetriades 2007: 212) as a sort of preventive screening process. As described by March et. al (1999) gender mainstreaming can be interpreted in several ways. For some, "*mainstreaming* means making gender concerns the responsibility of all in an organization, and ensuring that they are integrating into all structures and all work." (1999: 10; emphasis my own)

Today, in the effort to live up to the commitment to uphold the rights of women, GAD seems to be the most widely applied framework when "conducting research from a gender perspective" as its theory is still relevant. (Beetham and Demetriades 2007: 203) However, the implementation of this approach is still not complete. (*Ibid.*: 204) The belief of this study is that GAD is vastly more relevant in today's world than the other alternatives due to its concern with power relations and should therefore, when applied, be implemented completely and comprehensively.

With the view to achieving and developing a comprehensive gender approach to sustainable development, GAD helps in the efforts towards explicitly qualifying what this means. implementing global gender equality. (Beetham and Demetriades 2007: 204) However, this study is not about the implementation of GAD per se, the framework is simply used to help determine what a transformation in society truly entails. Furthermore, I am not suggesting the adoption of GAD within the Bolivarian Project. What I advocate is the need for a new dimension to the approach. WID is outdated, and GAD is at the risk of becoming so as well. (El-Bushra 2000: 55) Now is the time for a new and improved approach with version that will provide the social transformation that is needed to achieve gender equality.

1.2 Research Objective and Questions

Equal representation of women is imperative to gender equality, but this does not just mean an equal presence of women, as is practiced by WID/WAD approaches to development. It requires a social transformation that is not just cultural, economic and political. The changes need to be in the way we think, the way we interact with one another, the way we speak, even in the way we see certain things. This is of course an idealistic transformation, but it is one that can happen with time, and overall, through the unveiling of nuanced ways in which the gendered organizing principle of society is maintained. As I adopt a postmodern feminist perspective, I believe there is space for change. Nothing is fixed.

I want to understand the nuanced ways in which the Venezuelan state has used feminist discourses to achieve anti-feminist results, such as sustaining a gendered hierarchy. In this case, I consider the advocacy of gender equality through the official discourse of the Bolivarian Project of Venezuela and how it produces meanings of gender equality. Hence, the main objective of the study is to *discursively analyze how the official discourse prevents the establishment of gender equality through the production of meaning.*

This objective stands upon three assumptions. The first assumption is based on the constructionist approach to language, which claims that language constructs meanings. The second assumption is that the official discourse of the state, as reflected in speeches by Hugo Chavez, utilizes feminist notions to achieve anti-feminist practices. Lastly, that the discourse has a concrete and visible influence on gender relations through its definitions of femininities and masculinities. Lastly, that a social transformation, rather than simply integrating women, is needed to achieve sustainable gender equality.

Hence, the main question posed in order to fulfill the objective is:

How has the production of meaning within the official discourse regarding gender equality contributed to the failure of achieving gender equality?

The sub-questions that are considered in terms of the objective are:

- 1) How are women framed through the official discourse of the state?
- 2) What are the different meanings of gender equality, as produced by the official discourse?
- 3) How is gender equality understood by the Project?

I argue that the official discourse of the Bolivarian Project constructs gender relations that maintain a gendered hierarchy, preventing true gender equality. Despite the passing of laws and implementation of policies that claim to be gender-neutral and an official discourse that claims to advocate gender equality, I expect that there is another discourse, one that is more nuanced yet not subtle, which maintains a gendered hierarchy of power. In effect, it blocks the full transformation that is needed to achieve full gender equality.

1.3 Limitation and Scope

It is not the intention of this research to consider the direct impact of the discourse of Chavez on women, or to speculate on the way his discourse is interpreted by popular women. To study this, I would have to interview women, a task that unfortunately did not fit the timeframe available for this study. The intention is to simply analyze the discourses of the Bolivarian Project regarding gender equality as distributed through the oral speeches of the head of State.

The issue is not a question of measurement of change (Beetham and Demetriades 2007: 204), but one of implementation, transformation and the distribution of contradictory messages. By conducting a critical analysis of the gender discourses put forth by this government, the goal

is to reveal and study the power relations present in language use and its real effects on a successful (or in this case, failed) societal transformation.

I wish that I had been able to analyze more speeches, but for several reasons this was not possible. First, it is not easy to find full speeches online. At times, fragments of speeches can be found, but they are scarce and incomplete. Books of speeches given by Chavez have been published in four editions by the government, one book per year from 2002-2006, but there seems to be nothing easily accessible since 2007 on the official government websites. The transcripts of *Aló Presidente* are online since about 1999 but they are labeled only by the order that it was aired. There are no dates or mention of topics that were covered. This makes it hard and tedious to sift through as the official website holds 378 transcripts of shows, each of at least 50 pages, up until 2012.

The study solely assesses speeches personally given by Chavez and addressed towards women. This could be considered as limiting, but this is intentional so as to purely focus on the political speeches of the leader and to prevent distractions caused by other variables such as the media or the political opposition.

1.4 Relevance and Justification

This study is relevant as it suggests a change to an approach to development, the implementation of a comprehensive gender transformation rather than integration. Furthermore through the identification of how certain gendered subjectivities are reproduced in political discourses and social policies, knowledge can be distributed on the ways in which a gendered society is reproduced. Furthermore, in studying the inconsistencies that arise in the political discourse, efforts can be made to correct them and to inform gaps in gender policies. Through this research I hope to further understand the complexities of social justice and gender politics.

1.5 Methodology

As the interest of this study is how meanings are constructed, the “system of meanings” must be analyzed. In order to achieve this, the context of the text needs to be clearly specified. (Phillips and Hardy 2002) The context of the text will be carefully examined in the following chapters, but its importance is explained here. Through this specification of textual, as well as historical context, the method of analysis was selected. In this case, Phillips’ and Hardy’s synthesis of discourse analysis approaches displayed on two axes is helpful. (2002: 20) One axis is labeled with *context* on one side, and *text* on the other, emphasizing a spectrum between the two labels. The other axis, which is perpendicular to the first, is labeled *constructivist* versus *critical approach*. In critical approaches the focus is more “on the dynamics of power, knowledge and ideology”. Constructivist approaches, on the other hand, focus on “processes of social construction that constitute social reality.” (*Ibid.*) Certainly, in Discourse Analysis there is a need for a little bit of both, but considering the issue I hope to cover, along with the text that has been selected, the combination between context and critical is the most relevant. Thus yields CDA as the suggested approach to be used. (*Ibid.*)

CDA is an essential starting point to analyze how women are represented through the chosen speeches and how power relations are reflected through the framing of women and men. CDA has a component that is concerned with how texts affect the disadvantaged in society and how they work to the advantage of those who hold power. (Wodak 2007: 3) This is another reason why this approach is appropriate for the objective of this analysis. CDA also advocates for detailed analysis of texts. Detailed analyses of each chosen speech as well as more information on the genre and significance of each speech is featured in Chapter 4.

Due to the fact that CDA has no set methodology to collect data, several techniques must be combined. For the sake of this study, Wodak’s preference for detailed text analysis has

been adopted. (Wodak 2001) Additionally, Van Dijk's preference towards considering local meanings, the relationship between power and knowledge, and choosing specific documents that do not necessitate a large sampling is applied. (Van Dijk 2001)

Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) is a theoretical perspective as well as a methodological practice that is considered in this study, as it is meant to add a factor of social justice and social transformation into the analysis process. (Lazar 2005: 2) FCDA is therefore particularly relevant in studying the power relations produced by language that is assumed by this study. The aim of this approach is to help in the decoding and understanding of several dimensions of discourse. Over all, it is intended to explore the ways in which "power and ideology in discourse" sustains a "gendered social order". (Lazar 2005: 1)

Furthermore, FCDA is based on the theory that language facilitates the possession and practice of power. The belief of this approach is that through the careful and detailed analysis of language usage, "social transformation and emancipation" can be achieved. (*Ibid.*) As a theoretical and practical approach, FCDA has a material and substantive objective to ensure that language is "accountable and responsible" to social justice and equality for society. (Lazar 2005: 6) The approach attempts to unveil the hegemonic tendencies of reproduced knowledge that often hides power dynamics.

The data analyzed in this study is comprised of three speeches that nationally given, as well as intended for an audience of women. All of the speeches are from 2009 and onwards, as it was only until this time that feminism and gender equality really gained a presence in official discourse. The speeches were analyzed by creating a detailed discourse analysis table as used by Gasper and Roldan. (Gasper 2000; Roldan and Gasper 2010) Several significant excerpts, chosen for their relevance to the objective of the study, were selected from the speeches. These excerpts were divided into components to further clarify the meanings of certain words, phrases and sections. (Scriven 1976) In the table, conclusions and assumptions of each excerpt were also identified, both stated and unstated, allowing for a deeper contemplation of the production of meanings. All of the speeches were from 2009 onwards, as this was the year when a feminist rhetoric began to surface, along with an increased frequency of gender equality discourse.

1.6 Organization of the Paper

As this study intends to contribute to the existing literature on gender equality, GAD and Discourse, I will now briefly review the aspects of each that are considered in this study.

In Chapter 2, several feminist perspectives on gender equality are considered, as well as the chosen theoretical framework of this study. Social construction and postmodern feminism are chosen as the most relevant and helpful in reaching the objective of this paper. Connell's theoretical framework on the state as a gender regime is also considered as a guide in understanding the relationship between the Bolivarian Project as the state and gender relations. These concepts are then related to discourse and power, as they are important for the successful application of CDA.

Phillips and Hardy emphasize that it is extremely important to consider the historical, political and social context of the text when analyzing discourse. (2002: 6) Thus, Chapter 3 provides a brief historical context of the Bolivarian Project, its rise, its relation to women and its political strategy. Chapter 4 provides a discursive context where Chavez's rhetoric, masculinities in discourse and the particular contexts of the chosen speeches are considered and reviewed. Chapter 5 features the analysis of the detailed discourse analysis tables' results that were found. Chapter 6 draws conclusions from the study and suggests research for future studies.

CHAPTER 2 | FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON GENDER EQUALITY

Throughout our lives, we dance a gendered dance, and through the dance we are gendered.

(Lorber 2010: 245)

The aim of this study is to reveal instances of reinforcement of a gendered social hierarchy and its power dynamics reproduced in the gender equality discourse of the Bolivarian project. Through the analysis inconsistencies are urged to gravitate to the surface, so as to better understand the discursive practices. The acknowledgement of these inconsistencies can help in the assessment of current gender policies as well as the improvement for future actions.

These objectives can be achieved through the better understanding of precisely what gender equality means. Holter suggests the review of two social theories that are related to gender inequality. These theories aid in the classification of what is masculine and feminine, as well as to further “challenge the divisions between neutral and gendered” practices. (Holter 2005: 16) These two theories are *direct gender hierarchy* and *indirect structural inequality*. He aims to find the relation between the two and claims that although the two may seem synonymous at times, they are in fact not. (Holter 2005)

Direct gender hierarchy asserts that men dominate all aspects of society. The theory states that all men discriminate against women. This theory is concerned with the immediate causes of gender discrimination, leading to the negligence of power issues between and among genders. (*Ibid.*: 17) On the other hand, indirect structural inequality views the discrimination of women “as a matter of society and of men’s role in society, not of men as such.” (*Ibid.*: 18) This view is also concerned with the “wider, social causes of discrimination.” (*Ibid.*: 26) I consider the theory of structural inequality important for the basis of this study as it helps in better understanding the indirect forms of discrimination that can be found in political discourses.

In the remainder of this Chapter, I review certain feminist perspectives that could possibly aid in addressing the research problem. First, I briefly describe three feminist perspectives on gender equality that have been categorized as gender reform feminisms. These feminisms believe that women and men should be equal in legal terms, while still acknowledging biological differences between the two genders. (Lorber 2010: 21) These are liberal feminism, socialist feminism and postcolonial feminism.

The second group of feminist views, categorized by Judith Lorber as gender rebellion feminisms, focus on gender, rather than just women. These views also emphasize that there is room for change and transformation in the current gendered social order. (Lorber 2010: 193) The first perspective that is reviewed is social construction feminism, which provides the foundation for postmodern feminism, the theory that has been chosen as a framework with which to guide this analysis.

In order to reach the objectives of this paper, the power of discourse needs to be carefully considered to be able to assess the social and discursive significance of the speeches that have been analyzed. It will be elaborated how these concepts are connected to the chosen theoretical approach and to the methodology of the study.

2.1 Gender Equality through Integration

Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminists hold that gender inequality emerges from the gendered division of labor. This entails societies’ tacit agreement that women should take care of everything related to

reproductive work, such as childcare and domestic work. The main issue that Liberal feminists see in this division of labor is the lack of recognition and value given to what has been labeled as “women’s work”. (Lorber 2010)

Lorber successfully captures the essence of Liberal feminist thought by stating: “There is an internal theoretical contradiction in liberal feminism that centers on the question of whether women and men have to be the same to be equal.” (2010: 40) An integrationist approach is suggested by this stream of feminist thought, meaning that the simple inclusion of women into industries dominated by men will bring a sustainable solution to the subordination of women. (Lorber 2010: 25)

These liberal feminist politics are flawed in failing to question the gendered roles practiced in society. Women are simply to join a male-dominated environment to end the cycle of discrimination against women? This is naïve and insufficient.

Socialist Feminism

In expanding the work of Marxist feminism, socialist feminism recognizes the inequality in women’s paid labor and unpaid domestic labor, as well as acknowledging that class and race also contribute to the discrimination of women. Inequality is viewed as complex and dependent on intersectionality. (Lorber 2010: 70) As a solution to inequality and discrimination towards women, socialist feminism calls for the establishment of more economic opportunities for women, as well as for the government to aid women in their housework and to provide them with social services.

Although the acknowledgment of intersectionality as an element of discrimination and the awareness of women’s several burdens has led to the advancement of feminist goals, socialist feminism is inadequate in addressing the issue at hand. This theory lacks a nuanced approach and understanding of gender relations and how it structures society. Moreover, economic development is the main concern of this view, the solution of which does not necessarily bring justice and empowerment for women.

Postcolonial Feminism

Postcolonial feminism criticizes the effects of modernization on women and their development. The patriarchal system of social organization is criticized as being discriminatory to women. Post colonial theory has been born out of postmodern thought, criticizing the duality of the practices and effects of modernization, “freedom, self-determination, reason – and yet also submission, marginalization, and inadequacy of the ‘other’”. (Morell and Swart 2005: 94)

In reversing these unwanted effects of imposed modernization, postcolonial feminists suggest that women’s “economic resources” be protected. (Lorber 2010: 86) This branch of feminism also calls for the cooperation and organization of women in social communities so as to achieve empowerment, particularly in politics. (*Ibid.*)

Although all views could potentially help in understanding and addressing the research problem, they all fall short in providing the proper guidance. The gender politics of each call for an integrationist approach to inclusion and equality, an approach that is insufficient in addressing the implementation of complete gender equality and the study of power through discourse.

2.2 Gender Equality through Transformation

Social Construction Feminism

This stream of feminism forms the foundation of postmodern feminism, the theory that is applied in this study. Social construction feminism is concerned with the “practices and processes of gendering” that occur on a daily basis. (Lorber 2010: 243) It addresses the gendered organization of society including “cultural values” that are manifested in society. (*Ibid.*) It shows that gender is socially produced to bring order to the social structure of society.

The aim of social construction feminism is to bring the practices that maintain a gendered system of power to light, to expose them, and to raise awareness about these processes. This theory is especially aware of the fact that gender is used and endorsed by established institutions such as the family, market and state as ways of organizing society. (Lorber 2010: 244)

Social construction feminism is optimistic, as it considers that there is space for change in the gendered order, but it acknowledges that the “invisibility” of the construction of gender is what has kept the system in power for so long. (*Ibid.*: 245) This feminist thought has provided a much needed linkage between “gendered processes and gendered social structures.” (*Ibid.*: 243) This particular element of invisibility and the need to unveil the gendered processes of society is of interest to this study and will be brought into the postmodern approach.

Postmodern Feminism

This feminist perspective expands upon the work of social construction feminism, while borrowing aspects from postmodern and poststructuralist thought. “Poststructuralist feminists tend to see gender as fluid, negotiable and created through repeated performance rather than as fixed or innate.” (Gardiner 2005: 45) Postmodern feminism also stands by the theory of performativity, a theory presented by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble*. (1990) It stresses that it is through the “constant performance of normative gender and sexuality that maintains the gendered social order.” (Lorber 2010: 268)

With Judith Butler’s theory on performativity as a base, postmodern feminism states that gender roles are enforced and reinforced through the repetition of “performing” normative gender roles. In other words, gender has become a verb, an action that we all fulfill, due to centuries of the (re)construction of these identities. This is based on the claim that gender is socially constructed through language, discourse, and cultural symbols. Through these practices power is distributed and claimed.

Moreover, this theoretical perspective “examines the ways societies create beliefs about gender at any time (now and in the past) with discourses embedded in cultural representations or texts.” (Lorber 2010: 268) It aims to explore and reveal the many ways in which gender is used as an organizing principle of society. However, Lorber reminds the following: (i) *changing gendered behavior does not necessarily change gendered organizations;* and (ii) *legal gender equality does not erase informal (yet concrete) sexism, discrimination and misogyny.* (quoted from Lorber 2010: 243) These are two important caveats to keep in mind when considering the case study of the Bolivarian project.

“Degendering” is considered an important element to utilize as a tool to better understand the research problem. Lorber advocates for the “degendering” of society in all aspects of our lives. For Lorber, “degendering is a recognition of the myriad ways that we do gender- and deliberately not continuing these practices.” (2010: 257) This is the elimination of any traces of gender categories and roles that are present in social life. Lorber continues by stating, “where language itself is built on gender categories, developing gender-neutral ways of addressing and referring to people will be a major and revolutionary enterprise, but its accomplishment would go a long way towards degendering.” (*Ibid.*)

The “doing” of gender is always present in society, although it may not be obvious to many. The efforts to make these processes more obvious, to bring more awareness to them, and then work towards the elimination of gendered divisions can be done through the reformation of the way we speak and address each other. (Lorber 2010: 258) This is what I attempt to address in this study through the discursive analysis of the official discourse of the Bolivarian project.

2.3 State as a Gender Regime

Gender performativity cannot be theorized apart from the forcible and reiterative practice of regulatory sexual regimes.

(Butler 1993 as cited by Lorber 2010: 270)

To understand the relation between the state and gender, I look to R.W. Connell’s theory of the state as a gender regime. In reviewing the liberal and radical feminist notions of the state, Connell finds them insufficient for theorizing the dynamics between state and gender relations. She states that for her, “the point of a theory of the state is a better capacity to make appraisals of political strategy.” (Connell 1990: 509) Although her theory is based on the liberal state, she also points out that it could be applied to other state processes. This is how I will adopt her theory, to better understand the behavior and dynamics of the Bolivarian project of Venezuela.

Connell provides a theoretical framework that emphasizes the relations between the state and gender. I follow these assumptions of the ways in which the state relates to gender issues, in this case, the issue of equality. The dimensions of Connell’s theoretical framework are as follows (italics are direct quotes from Connell 1990: 519-532):

1. *The state is constituted within gender relations as the central institutionalization of gendered power. Conversely, gender dynamics are a major force constructing the state, both in the historical creation of state structures and in contemporary politics.* Chapter 3 consists of the historical context of the Bolivarian Project of Venezuela, the current process of governance, and its relation with women and gender.
2. *As a result of this history the state is a bearer of gender (though in a much more complex way than ideas of the “male state” suggest). Each empirical state has a definable “gender regime” that is the precipitate of social struggles and is linked to – though not a simple reflection of – the wider gender order of the society.* Through the review of the historical context of the Bolivarian project and its particular relation to women, the gender regime of the state will be exposed. This can be found in Chapter 3. The critical discourse analysis in Chapter 5 will further reveal the nuanced shades of the “gender regime”.
3. *The way the state embodies gender gives it cause and capacity to “do” gender. As the central institutionalization of power the state has a considerable, though not unlimited, capacity to regulate gender relations in the society as a whole.* This dimension of the theory supports the fundamental assumption that builds this study, the fact that gender relations are regulated through the social policies, the power that the state has to influence society.
4. *The state’s power to regulate reacts on the categories that make up the structure being regulated. Thus the state becomes involved in the historical process generating and transforming the basic components of the gender order.* The assumption that the official discourse of the state can make a definitive impact in gender relations through defining the “gender order” is upheld by this statement. It supports the fact that discourse can affect and subscribe societal norms.
5. *Because of its power to regulate and its power to create, the state is a major stake in gender politics; and the exercise of that power is a constant incitement to claim the stake.* This relates how the state uses its power to increase the rhetoric on certain issues through which it’s own power

can be increased. This is clarified and depicted in Chapter 5 through the critical discourse analysis of Chavez's speeches to women.

6. *The state is constantly changing; gender relations are historically dynamic; the state's position in gender politics is not fixed. Crisis tendencies develop in the gender order, which allow new political possibilities.* This supports the position of postmodernism that there can be change, and in fact, that there *will* be change at some point. The transformation of the gender regime is not only possible, but also inevitable.

Connell's theory of the state as a gender regime is utilized as a map for this study, to guide it through the process of understanding the power in the production of knowledge by the state and how the resulting official discourse creates meanings within gender relations. The last point is particularly important for this study, as it refers to the transformation of society, supporting the need for the implementation of a comprehensive gender approach.¹

2.4 The Production of Meaning through Discourse and Power

Discourse and power are interconnected and mutually dependent. The connection between power and discourse is particularly important for this study as it is the foundation of the methodology. The intention is to understand the relation between power and discourse. Power, because it is a rudimentary aspect of gender relations, and discourse because, as mentioned, its connection to the methodology and the data being studied. It's about power and the production of knowledge through discourse and discursive practices.

Foucault has famously theorized on this subject, asking "how is power exercised and what are its effects?" rather than "what is power and where does it come from?" (Storey 1993: 92) I am interested in Foucault's question and how it can be applied to the case of the Bolivarian project. For Foucault, "power is a strategic terrain, the site of an unequal relationship between the powerful and the powerless" rather than possessed by the powerful. (*Ibid.*)

Foucault also theorized that power is productive and not simply repressive. (*Ibid.*) In other words, power is not practiced just for the sake of being powerful. There is a productive element in the practice of power, whether it is to boost a political campaign, to win the support of voters or to maintain a group in subordination to advance the interests of the one that exerts power. In the case of Chavez and his discourse regarding the Bolivarian project and its intentions, power is produced through the production of meanings regarding women and gender equality.

The meaning that is given to a particular discourse is constructed through language. (Hall 1997: 15) Because it is constructed, a verb that requires an active effort, language and the discourse that it produces and reproduces is intentional. Discourse is the use of language as a mechanism to structure "understanding and behavior". (Heywood 2004: 6) It is precisely these structures that will be revealed through detailed analysis of Chavez's discourse.

During the process, it is important to keep in mind that although power and discourse are closely linked, the latter is particularly dependent on the former. As Tilley explains it, "discourse is not just connected to power, [...] it is a form of power." (Tilley 1990: 301) The use of gender discourse as a form of power will be further scrutinized in the following chapters.

In order to better understand the production of meaning, the practice of framing must be referred to. To *frame* a particular text or speech is to set a particular perspective. The act of framing decides from what angle the particular piece of information will be elaborated. Framing, done by the speaker and, therefore, the powerful, ideologically steers the powerless into a certain direction. (Papacharissi 2008) This is a technique often used in written text, but can also be uti-

¹ This connects to the GAD approach that was reviewed in Chapter 1.

lized in oral speech. Frames “influence how people understand, remember, evaluate, and act upon a problem.” (Papacharissi 2008: 53)

Framing then, can be understood as a functional tool utilized to present “all spoken and written forms of language”, transforming language into a “social practice”, or discourse. (*Ibid.*: 61) Frames are particularly significant because they introduce the possibility “for future actions”. (Verloo and Lombardo 2007: 32) This is significant when considering the social politics that are meant to be created through the discourses dispersed by the Bolivarian project through Chavez.

Representation is another tool through which meaning is produced through language, (Hall 1997: 16), as well as “a source for the production of social knowledge.” (*Ibid.*: 42) This questions the distribution of power. It asks who has the power to say certain things, to represent certain things, to categorize, to include, to exclude, to define. It is through this power to define that meanings are created. And in turn, the “production of meaning is always involved in the production and maintenance of power relations.” (Moore in Tilley 1990: 116)

Foucault aims to “liberate discourse”, in other words to “take it seriously”, to acknowledge that it has “real material effects”. (Tilley 1990: 326) This is one of the aims of this study in its efforts to bring awareness to the more subtle ways of discrimination, subordination and the overall maintenance of structural inequalities through male dominance.

2.5 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have explained the reasons for choosing the perspective of postmodern feminism as well as the theoretical framework of Connell’s state as a gender regime. Through the combination of gender studies and cultural studies, the power of discourse in producing meanings has been deliberated upon.

The first three theories were much more concerned with economic aspects. This is of course every important when considering the causes of subordination of women, but it is not the focus of this study.

I am interested in the dynamics of power and discourse through the production of meaning and its particular relevance to the state’s gender regime. In order to fully understand the dimensions of the gender regime as theorized by Connell, the history of the state and its gender politics must be considered.

CHAPTER 3 | CONTEXTUALIZING THE CASE STUDY

Venezuela provides a rare opportunity to study the implementation of such major projects of social transformation, their successes and failures in application, their impact on communities, and whether they reached their stated goal.

(Buxton 2011: ix)

3.1 The Establishment and Rise of the Bolivarian Project

El Proceso, also referred to as the Bolivarian Revolution, is particularly relevant when considered as a project aiming to achieve an alternative to the historically western strategies to development. (Buxton 2011) It is a social movement led by the government under the auspices of leftist ideologies, a political process that aims to encompass all aspects of social life. However, more than a revolution, this process is a project with the intention to creating an alternative to the modernization theories such as Rostow's five-stage model of development.² It is for this reason that I will refer to the Bolivarian revolution, which is also often synonymous with the Venezuelan state under Hugo Chavez, as the *Bolivarian Project*. This term, as I see it, better describes the interests of this study and the social policies implemented by the governmental process that took place under President Hugo Chavez.

The Bolivarian Project, led by Hugo Chavez and inspired by South American Liberator, Simon Bolivar, has been developing roots since before the Venezuelan President came into office in 1999. This Process is a hopeful fusion between military components and civil society in the hopes to establish social reform, to eliminate neoliberal policies from the past. In order to understand the emergence and importance of gender discourses within the Bolivarian Project, it is essential to consider the history of the movement, its politics, and its characteristics.

Chavez has a significant relationship with Venezuelan women. This began in 1992 when he led an unsuccessful coup against the government as a gesture of abhorrence for the neoliberal policies being imposed. The policies called for state "downsizing", reducing government spending, and "terminating populist social programs". (Boron 2011: 226) These neoliberal policies tended to marginalize the poorest sectors of the community, especially women. For example, with an increase in public transportation fees the burden of women was increased, as they now had to walk down to the valley from their hillside shantytowns for work or other necessities. (Motta 2013)

Chavez's rise to power was facilitated by his personal relationship with the popular sectors. As a man who had a humble upbringing and was raised by parents who had indigenous heritage, he was able to relate and gain the trust of the lower classes that were historically socially excluded. His supporters felt a connection and assumed a mutual understanding, as many of them were in the lower class and indigenous minorities, blending ethnic, social and political identities. (Villa 2011: 302). All of his efforts, then, have been an active attempt at achieving liberation from the past politics.

The intention has been to incorporate this political project as a process towards achieving social justice and widespread improvement, an effort to transform the political system into a socialist model. With the mentoring and guidance from Cuba and its leader, Fidel Castro, Chavez established many policies with the view to provide social services such as the distribution of af-

² Rostow, W.W. (1960) *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*

fordable food products through Misión Mercal, and the provision of health services to the poorest *barrios* through the Misión Barrio Adentro.

In 2012, Venezuela ranked 71 in the Human Development Index (HDI), rising to 0.748 from 0.662 in 2000.³ In the Gender Gap Rankings published by the World Economic Forum, Venezuela ranked 49 out of 58 countries in 2005, a year before Chavez announced his political plans to move the Bolivarian Project even more towards a socialist ideology.⁴ It received an overall score of 3.42, with 7 indicating full gender equality. The factors that were considered in this study were economic participation, economic opportunity, political empowerment, educational attainment and health and well-being. The following are the rankings Venezuela received in each factor, out of the 58 countries that were ranked.

Gender Gap Rankings [Factors]	Economic participation	Economic opportunity	Political empowerment	Educational attainment	Health and well-being
49	38	13	52	33	58

According to the 2013 Human Development Report (HDR) presented by the UNDP, Venezuela ranked 93 in the Gender Inequality Index (GII),⁵ receiving a value of 0.466. In 2005, Venezuela received a 0.474 in the GII.⁶ It also revealed that as of 2012, 17% of seats in parliament are held by women. Out of a total of 165 seats in national parliament, 28 women hold seats. In 1998, the year Chavez was elected to Presidency, 12 women held seats in parliament, out of 203 total seats.⁷ Thus, the increase in women parliament seat holders has increased from 6% to 17%, a number that is still quite small considering men still hold more than 80% of the parliament.

The HDR also reveals that as of 2011, 49% of women were participating in the labor force, in contrast to 80% of men who were in the labor force.⁸ Women, however, were measured as ahead in secondary education enrolment with 55%, and men with 49.8%.⁹ Considering the labor force participation rate of women, it is possible that although women may be enrolled in programs, they are unable to attend courses due to other responsibilities, whether domestic, community or economic.

³ This data and more information on how the HDI is calculated can be found at <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/VEN.html>

⁴ these countries included 30 of toeh OECD member states and 28 “emerging market” countries. More information on this can be found at http://www.weforum.org/pdf/Global_Competitiveness_Reports/Reports/gender_gap.pdf)

⁵ More on this can be found in UNDP Human Development Report of 2013 found here: http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR2013_EN_Summary.pdf

⁶ <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/indicators/68606.html>

⁷ Total seats of national parliament found here: <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/SeriesDetail.aspx?srid=556&crd=862>; Amount of women holing seats found here: <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/SeriesDetail.aspx?srid=660&crd=862>

⁸ Venezuela has a population of 29.9 million, according to <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/gender/country/venezuela,-rb>

⁹ <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/HDR/2013GlobalHDR/English/HDR2013%20Report%20English.pdf>

3.2 The Bolivarian Project as a Populist Project

The Bolivarian Project, established by Hugo Chavez and his government, encompasses several populist characteristics, including “widespread redistributive methods” (Kampwirth 2010: 2) to advance the social justice development envisioned by the movement. Through the establishment of these social programs, Chavez succeeded in establishing a good rapport with the popular sectors. This unique relationship between Chavez and his supporters is important to consider for this study, as it can help in better understanding the President’s relationship with citizens.

Chavez has proclaimed himself a “radical populist”, although it is unclear by what exactly he meant by this. (Kampwirth 2010: 7) Others have labeled him a neo-populist leader whose “strategic style” has been characterized by Rafael Duarte Villa as including “a personalized leadership, a strong top-down social mobilization, an eclectic and anti-establishment ideology and a systematic use of redistributive methods.” (Villa 2011: 301)

To better understand the relationship between Chavez and Venezuelan women, Gioconda Espina and Cathy A. Rakowski’s review the style of populism adopted by Hugo Chavez and “the ways in which it is gendered”. (2010: 180) The authors claim that, despite the discourse of the state claiming to depend on the participation of the people, the politics of the Chavez administration are in fact “very top down” and “heavily dependent on funding and decisions made by national leaders.” (Ellner 2006: 73-79 as cited by Espina and Rakowski 2010: 184) In efforts to disseminate his vision of a revolutionary movement, Chavez undertook the role as “charismatic leader”, as well as a father figure who “promises to resolve the people’s problems and gives direction to the movement.” (*Ibid.*: 186) Chavez has been viewed as the “liberator of women”, the leader who “understands and appreciates their sacrifices and struggles to care for their families and communities”. (*Ibid.*) This can help to explain the significance women have in the Bolivarian revolution and to the political aspirations of Chavez.

3.3 Political Strategy throughout the years

After 2007, and really not until 2009, did a feminist rhetoric emerge within the Bolivarian Project. (Rakowski and Espina 2011: 177) Chavez declared himself a feminist in 2009. Here I will provide a brief rundown of the history during Chavez’s administration. I will then expand on the timeframe of this study, which is from 2009 onwards.

Since Chavez’s election to Presidency in 1999, nine election campaigns were organized. Once Chavez was inaugurated into presidency in February 1999, he began working on his first task of rewriting the 1961 Constitution. (Maya 2004: 85) In an effort to showcase his commitment to participatory democracy, Chavez declared a national referendum on the subject, which passed with an 88% vote in April of the same year. (Gott 2005: 143) This was followed by the reelection of Chavez, only a year and a half after his first presidential inauguration. (Maya 2004: 73) Both actions were considered as the “legitimization” of the Chavez government (Yepes 2011: 41) and its aspirations to “break from the past”. (Maya 2004: 84) In 2006, presidential elections were held again, further reassuring Chavez’s position as the Venezuelan leader. In August 2004 a presidential revocatory referendum was carried out, in 2007 a constitutional referendum was organized and in 2009 an amendment referendum was occurred. Elections for deputies of the National Assembly took place in 2005 and 2010. Governors and mayors were also elected twice during this period, in 2004 and 2008. (Yepes 2011: 41) Between 2000-2010, all of these elections took place in Venezuela, to emphasize the democratic participatory rhetoric of the government.

In 2000, after Chavez was reelected two years after his initial election, the vast majority of participants would have voted for him again. However, almost immediately after the reelection, support fell drastically below compared to that given to the opposition, reaching its lowest point in 2001. According to Yepes’ studies, the opposition was winning in approval ratings up

until early 2004, when Chavez's confidence ratings suddenly peaked to pass those of the opposition between February 2004 and the presidential revocatory referendum of August 2004. That month, Chavez won the presidential revocatory referendum, further legitimizing the Bolivarian project. (Lander and Maya 2007: 2)

In 2005, Chavez declared that as of Dec 3, 2006 presidential reelection, a new phase would be implemented, one that would work towards "a socialist model and a revolutionary participatory democracy". (Chavez as quoted in Lander and Maya 2007: 11) The phrase, "Socialism of the 21st Century" was soon adopted to advocate the new political path under Hugo Chavez, as well as to campaign for his reelection in 2006. (*Ibid.*: 7) At the end of the year, Chavez was once again elected President, a win Maya and Lander explain is partly due to the establishment of more social policies called *misiones*, or missions, made possible by the increased price per barrel of crude oil, which was nearly US\$60 in 2006, more than double the increase from US\$25.8 in 2003.¹⁰ (*Ibid.*: 3)

An active encouragement of social polarization has also been predicted as a cause of the reelection of Chavez, as it seems to have been a campaign strategy in the revocatory referendum in 2004. (Lander and Maya 2007: 12) This means that the campaigns targeted the popular sectors through the social policies and implementation of the missions, as the middle and high classes tended to vote for any faction that was opposing Chavez at the time. (*Ibid.*)

In 2006, Chavez won the election with nearly 63% of votes, also winning all states. In 2004, he won the revocatory referendum with 59% votes. In 1998, he won with 56% of the votes. There has been a clear and visible increase in popularity of Chavez throughout the years. (Lander and Maya 2007: 16)

However despite all of these numbers and the efforts to organize participative democracy through many elections, Maya and Lander assert that the "personalistic political strategy of Chavez" puts in question the democratic intentions of the State, an issue further questioned when considering the government's populist tendencies and the concentration of power within the head of state. (Lander and Maya 2007: 8) In fact, the Presidential decrees that create the missions include an article that calls for an evaluative and management control mechanism of the programs, but these are to be reported directly to the President. If there is anything negative, there is no democratic mechanisms to push for the Executive to take action if it is an inconvenience to him, as he is the one who receives the reports. This illustrates how much power is in the hands of the head of state. (Mundó 2009: 43)

In terms of a feminist discourse, the term was very rarely heard prior to 2007, apart from a few femocrats in the government. This was the only year in which Chavez lost an election to the opposition. This election was for the passing of a constitutional referendum that would increase the presidential term. It was not until 2009 when the term "feminist" began to be heard more regularly within official discourse. At the World Social Forum in Brazil 2010, Chavez proclaimed: "I affirm here that I am a feminist. In fact, I believe that one cannot be a good socialist if one is not a feminist". (Rakowski and Espina 2011: 177)

3.4 Women and the Bolivarian Project

Equality of gender and social inclusion have been principle components in the discourse of the Bolivarian project, something that is made evident by establishing the new Constitution in 1999, a document that prides itself in its gender sensitive and non-sexist language. Women make up a large number of the community council membership, communal groups initiated by the government that work to spread the work of the missions and the message of the government.

¹⁰ Oil is Venezuela's natural resource and only export.

They work towards “making the reelection of Chavez attractive” to other community members. (Lander and Maya 2007: 5)

In 2004, just two years after a failed attempted coup against the President, Chavez won the presidential referendum that reiterated his widespread popularity. (Villa 2011: 306) This meant an increase in discursive practices related to the Bolivarian process, including the implementation of many social programs. Many new gender sensitive policies and social initiatives were put in place.

The Misión Madres del Barrio, was created in March 2006, a few months prior to the December presidential elections. This Misión is the only social program implemented by the Chavez administration that aids women “exclusively”. (Espina and Rakowski 2010: 190) This program distributes “60-80 percent of the minimum wage” (*Ibid.*) to the women that fulfill the requirements listed in the Presidential Decree No. 4.342, which was published in the official government newspaper, the *Gaceta Oficial*, on March 24, 2006. In order for women to be eligible to receive the allowance provided by the program, she must have a low income, be responsible of dependents, and must be a housekeeper or homemaker, *ama de casa*. Furthermore, the beneficiaries are supposed to assume further responsibilities such as; ensure the care of all community members, guarantee the education of all community members, ensure the proper functioning of communal facilities, and “administrate public resources” to the community.¹¹ Considering Chavez’s propensity to populist behavior, this strategy would illustrate “a strong top-down social mobilization” as well as “a systematic use of redistributive methods.” (Villa 2011: 301)

Misión Madres del Barrio is not the only attempt made by the Venezuelan government under Chavez to improve and guarantee the rights of women. Misión Niño Jesus which works to guarantee health care and services to pregnant women and their newborns, as well as providing education on sexual and reproductive health.¹²

Moreover, Government entities created for the benefit of women and the protection of their rights have been established. The Ministry of Popular Power for Women and Gender Equality (MINMUJER) and The National Institute of Women (INAMUJER), which is part of the former, are federal agencies that are responsible for the issues of women and gender. According to its official website, INAMUJER is a state entity that is responsible for the execution of public policies relating to women. The institute is dedicated to the “permanent defense of women’s rights” by facilitating access to the judicial system and encouraging women’s integration into “institutions of power”. The values of INAMUJER are listed as “solidarity, respect, honesty and the will to serve.”¹³

Prior to the Chavez administration, social movements organized by and for women were growing and developing. Advancements in women’s rights were granted before Chavez, a fact that many seem to not know, resulting in a glorified vision of Chavez as the “liberator of women.” (Espina and Rakowski 2010: 184) Moreover, many of the political achievements reached by women were achieved through lobbying of women’s movements and civil society. However, it is true that certain aspects have improved for women under Chavez. The passing and establishment of a non-sexist constitution was one of Chavez’s first achievements while in office. Moreover, the establishment of institutions dedicated solely for women such as INAMUJER, MINMUJER and BANMUJER have led to an increase women’s political recognition. (Rakowski and Espina 2011: 155)

¹¹ <http://www.hpcd.com/es/gazettes/38405.pdf>

¹² <http://gobiernoonlinea.gob.ve/home/misiones.dot>

¹³ http://www.minmujer.gob.ve/inamujer/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3&Itemid=2

The advancement and spread of the Bolivarian movement depends immensely on the maintenance of popularity of the executive power as well as on the support of the popular people, the beneficiaries of these social policies implemented as part of the Bolivarian project. Women, overall, have been encouraged and called to serve the government led by Hugo Chavez. It is important to acknowledge that *barrio* women have played a significant part in the “community organizations” and mobilizations relating to the Bolivarian Project and the socialist struggle advocated by Chavez and his administration. (Garcia Guadilla 1993: 84 as cited by Fernandes 2010: 207)

Mabel Mundó questions whether these social policies established by the Bolivarian Project have led to social inclusion or have aided in a “strategy for clientelism.” (2009) Mundó claims that the establishment of these social programs have done a lot to contribute to the *legitimacy* of Chavez’s government, supporting the statement that the poor sectors were important for the survival of Chavez’s presidency. She continues by stating that Chavez initiated these social missions in the first place because he felt threatened that he could potentially lose the next election in 2003. (Mundó 2009: 28)

Mundó concludes that in the end, the education missions were forms of clientelism, rather than fostering social inclusion and cohesion. (2009) Mundó calls these social programs “political marketing mechanisms”, units that help in the advancement and advocacy of the government and its politics. (2009) In relating this to the research objectives, a discourse of gender equality and inclusion would advance the enrolment rates of the programs supports the assumption that Chavez’s discourse on the matter was shallow.

In fact, the former Director of INAMUJER, Maria Leon, has noted that the establishment of a “popular feminist” movement has not been easy. She said that popular women tend to “more readily respond to race and class issues and to requests to support President Chavez and the Bolivarian project.” (Rakowski and Espina 2011: 178) This inevitably leads one to wonder (or perhaps reaffirm) whether Chavez utilizes this advantage, this loyalty, to secure his electoral support. This aspect is important when considering the first three points of Connell’s gender regime theory, the relation between the state and gender relations, and how the two constitute each other.

She further admitted that “to reinforce the idea that gender is important in the struggle against capitalism and imperialism, INAMUJER has linked themes of “class consciousness, country consciousness and gender consciousness” in women’s training and addresses at women’s meetings.” Thus, Chavez’s assertions of being a feminist can perhaps be attributed to a simple “marketing” strategy. (*Ibid.*)

Rakowski and Espina take another approach towards the analysis of Chavez and his relation with the social policies. Although it may seem obvious, what they state is important to emphasize. It is the fact that law and implementation are very different things when it comes to the achievements of rights, or any law for that matter. (Rakowski and Espina, 2011: 155) The authors ask a very important question; “Is advancing women’s rights a key policy objective of President Chavez for the Bolivian Revolution? Is this a revolution that not only has a ‘gender perspective’ but can even be called ‘feminist’”? (*Ibid.*) Although Chavez is a self-proclaimed feminist, the discursive analysis in Chapter 5 will explain how and why the Bolivarian Project is far from being feminist and far from implementing a true gender perspective. In the end, the Chavez administration has perhaps tried to implement a gender approach but in fact it is a simple integrationist approach. In supporting Mundó assumption of a marketing strategy, Rakowski and Espina suggest that any discourse about gender equality has been to get men “used to” the idea of having women around. This is a shallow attempt at gender inclusion, as it is not transformative. More on how the Bolivarian Project’s gender strategy is not sustainable, specifically through official discourse, will be elaborated upon in the coming chapters.

CHAPTER 4 | DISCURSIVE CONTEXT

Every day the whole women's movement takes on a new form that is clearer, stronger, more committed and more beautiful, of course, for everything that a woman touches and sees becomes beautiful, that is true, it is even true for us, the ugly ones, they even see us as handsome... An infinite kiss for all Venezuelan women! And my heart and soul, recognition, affection, and strength so that you continue carrying out the historic work of re-seeding, of reconstructing, the great woman who is Venezuela.

Hugo Chavez
International Day of Women March 8, 2004
(Kampwirth 2010: 1)

In the 14 years that Hugo Chavez was in office, he made hundreds of speeches, internationally, nationally, on the radio and even on his own television show, *Aló Presidente*. Through these speeches, he disseminated many discourses regarding his foreign policy, economic policy and, of course, his social policy. Hugo Chavez was a very visible and accessible figure, making his “electoral strategy and message” extremely important for his political success. (Yepes 2011: 42)

According to José Antonio Gil Yepes’ study in which he synthesizes statistics on all of the elections held during the Chavez era, some of the most important factors of all the elections are the objectives of leadership, party affiliation and economic resources of the candidate. (Yepes 2011: 42) However, the factor that perhaps is more closely related to the citizens who vote is “the electoral strategy and the message towards the masses that follows the electoral strategy.” (*Ibid.*; translations are my own) In terms of the purpose of this study, this factor is certainly the most important, as the official discourse on gender equality and their dispersion through these political messages will be reviewed and analyzed through Chavez’s speeches.

The particular point of interest of this study is the production of meaning of gender equality through the official discourse of the Bolivarian Project. As the President of Venezuela during period of time of interest to the study, and as the founder of the Bolivarian Project, Hugo Chavez’s discourse is deemed as official and representative of the state. As the Venezuelan political leader, Chavez and his fellow constituents “were always careful about the symbolism of each political action”, (Maya 2004: 83) a fact that is important to reach the objectives of this study.

In this chapter I attempt to synthesize some literature that analyze the discourse and rhetoric of Hugo Chavez. Comparatively to writings on Chavez’s discourse on gender, much has been written on his style of speech, his rhetoric and the way he categorizes between the “I” and the “other”.

4.1 The Manifestation of Masculinities

The concept of masculinities must be briefly covered to better understand the male leader and men in society, and ultimately the discourse to be analyzed. Connell says that a key part of bringing about change within gender relations is “a change in patterns of masculinity”. (1987: 130)

Masculinities are considered an imperative component of a successful gender equality approach. The question as to whether or not men and masculinities should be included in the process of achieving gender equality and social justice has been debated. Advantages and disad-

vantages are discussed by White (2000), Cornwall (2000) and Chant (2000).¹⁴ This study takes the stance that it is imperative to include the study of men and masculinities within feminist thought.

This issue is particularly relevant to this study when considering the social context of the speeches that are analyzed and the discourses that are revealed. As Holter puts it, “theories of masculinities are important for understanding the dynamics of the gender system.” (Holter 2005: 23) As the person who distributes the messages in this case is a man, studying masculinities can help us understand certain aspects of his speech, language and intentions.

For McKinnon, “masculinity defines men”, and masculinity in turn, is defined by sex. (Gardiner 39) She attributes the definition of masculinities through the “sexual exploitation of women.” (Gardiner 2005: 40) On the other hand, Nancy Chodorow argues that “men’s aggression “ is due to “cycles of humiliation and domination” among and between men of different hierarchies. (*Ibid.*) Judith Butler, considers gender as being “unnatural”, as a social construction that can be changed just as it has been created. (Butler 1990)

The inclusion of women’s knowledge into the study of men are beneficial to the relationships between men and women, and ultimately within society. In this study, a study that adopts a feminist perspective, masculinities are referred to in order to bring a more comprehensive understanding of the actors involved. It allows for a more complete framework to consider the effects in wider society.

4.2 Rhetoric and Discourse of Chavez

Hugo Chavez had a tendency of broadcasting his speeches on all of the national channels, *cadenas*, sometimes emitting speeches that lasted hours. Through this direct and widespread contact with the Venezuelan people, he was able to disperse his message and make speeches. The discourse exerts its power over the subject as it creates it. This “power of discourse” is significant when statements and social practices are repeated and reinforced. (Wodak 2001: 38) Through the constant repetition of the *cadenas* and the distribution of his voice, Hugo Chavez utilized this “power of discourse”.

Lander and Maya state that during the 2006 presidential electoral campaign, Chavez upheld two discourses. One of a confrontational character which he used during times of crisis, the second was of a more calm and loving tone, one that spoke of peace and understanding toward his opposition. (2007: 19) This relates to his practice of categorization, in which he divides society into two groups.

Kirk A. Hawkins (2010) relates this practice to Chavez’s populist discourse, a factor that he studied through a quantitative technique. The study states that to Chavez, and within his populist leader discourse, the “will of the people is equal to Good”. (Hawkins 2010: 38) On the other hand, “a conspiring minority” is synonymous to evil. (*Ibid.*: 41) The extremes that are invoked by his speech is characteristic in a populist leader who is often described as charismatic and passionate.

The focus of Jenny Farías de Estany and Lourdes Molero de Cabeza’s (2009) study is the discourse of Hugo Chavez used in a speech in April 2007 to the supporters of the PSUV (Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela). The objective of the others was to analyze the construction of identities in the framework of the “construction of the new nation” and the “birth of PSUV.” In particular, they were interested in the semantics of the constructed “I” and “other”. “I/us” was assigned to those who contribute to the advancement and success of the Bolivarian Project,

¹⁴ All found in *IDS Bulletin* 31(2)

while “you/others” refers to those who negatively affect the efforts of El Proceso, such as the opposition. (2009: 379)

According to the study, it was found that the historical practice of subordinating women and depicting men’s dominance through language was present in the political discourse. (de Estany and de Cabeza 2009: 371) In other words, sexism was present in official discourse even in 2007, despite the State claiming otherwise. However, the study does claim that gender recognition was present in the use of the feminine version of words. (*Ibid.*: 376) The complementarity of men and women is made clear here through the terms such as *diputada*, *propulsora* and *compañera*.

However, in the end, the authors show that Chavez emits a discourse that is inclusive in the attempt to depict a new relation between the two genders. However, they fail to show how exactly. There is a lack of textual evidence and very limited in-depth analysis of the text. Through the discursive analysis featured in Chapter 5, I hope to bring more depth to the study of discourses and the meanings that are subsequently produced.

In considering these studies and their results, it aids in developing a better understanding of the producer of knowledge featured in this study, Hugo Chavez.

4.3 Elements of the Analyzed Speeches

As already mentioned, three speeches were chosen to be analyzed in the attempt to study the production of meaning, in this case, the meaning of gender equality. In this case, the producer of meaning and also of knowledge, is the speaker. Hugo Chavez, the President of Venezuela at the time of these speeches, and the founder of the Bolivarian Project. As the head of state and the founder of the Project, Chavez is deemed as the appropriate representative of both entities. In this case, the two are deeply intertwined, and therefore, Chavez speech and his discourse can undoubtedly be considered the official discourse of both the state and the Bolivarian Project.

According to Hansen (2006), every genre of discourse, in this case official political speeches, has a particular manner in which it justifies its legitimacy. In this case, the “claim to authority” is through Chavez’s social position as the elected President of Venezuela and as the winner of several elections and referendums during his regime. (Hansen 2006: 55-71) The intended audience of the speeches are the Venezuelan people, particularly since all of the speeches were aired live on national television.

The style of speech used in all of the events is one filled with charisma, laughs, affection towards women, and resolve towards a revolutionary socialist feminist path. He invokes characteristics through this speech that are often embodied by populist leaders. Chanting often interrupts the long speeches, with the attendants screaming, whistling, affirming and, at times, singing.

All of the speeches were chosen due to their intention to address Venezuelan women. The first speech, which corresponds to Table 1 in Appendix I, was given on March 8, 2009, International Women’s Day.¹⁵ He broadcasted his speech on his famous show, *Aló Presidente*, an arena where he dedicates his time to talking about social policies, taking questions from citizens as well as discussion with them (sometimes for hours and hours) telling jokes, singing and sometimes, even dancing. This particular event is a gathering of women waiting to speak with Chavez about the missions and other social policies. Some even ask him for personal favors, to help with a sick neighbor, or to give them advice on other issues. The beginning of this speech of 2009, is filled with the comments of women who have been chosen to speak for certain missions.

¹⁵ http://www.alopresidente.gob.ve/materia_alo/25/p--6/tp--32/

After flipping through many pages of the transcribed speech, Chavez takes the microphone. Then, it is Chavez's turn to speak. He spends a good amount of his speech at the beginning talking about and praising a Mexican singer. Then he seems to call roll attendance, calling all the names of the women that are there and the groups they are representing, also mentioning the women ministers who are there.

The second speech, which corresponds to Table 2, is given at the celebration of the 91st Brigade of Motorized and Horse-drawn Cavalry. It was aired on *Aló Presidente* on April 25th, 2010. Before turning to the agenda at hand, Chavez spends the beginning of the meeting greeting soldiers, asking them questions about themselves, about their education, and their aspirations. The third speech, referred to in Table 3, was given in September 2012, two months before presidential elections. The speech is intended to speak about the defense and progress of Venezuela in front of a gather of women.

CHAPTER 5 | DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

These discourses influence the way we think about our world, without questing the underlying assumptions about gender...

(Lorber 2010: 269)

Gender equality analysis (...) emphasizes the role of society and the position of both men and women in ways that decrease or increase gender equality.

(Holter 2005: 25)

The following section unveils the several contradictions that were found in the discourse distributed by Chavez and the Bolivarian Project. The analysis tables can be found in the Appendices, Appendix 1 corresponding to Table 1, and so forth. I will refer to each separate section of the speech that was analyzed by its box number. For example, [1A] refers to the first box (hence, A) of Table 1.

5.1 Revealing Structural Inequality

In the structural inequality view, the changing societal positioning of men and women is the main matter.

(Holter 2005:24)

We need to be more aware of the ways of discrimination. Although the issue at hand is not particularly as visible as violence against women or denial of voting rights, it is still an issue, a structural issue. I'm not simply trying to say that this is an issue of male dominance, but rather that it is an issue of structural inequality. Gender equality is the responsibility of both men and women, as seen by the structural inequality theory. (Holter 2005: 31) These speeches normalize discrimination as well as gender norms. The purpose of this study is to analyze the deeper dimensions, the nuanced ways in which inequality can be sustained. It is a deeper issue that is embedded in society.

5.2 Results of CDA

A shortened version of the detailed analysis tables have been provided here to facilitate the understanding of the analysis. They are reproduced in their entirety in the Appendices.

TABLE 1

Components of Text	Commentary/ Clarification of Meanings	Assumptions and Conclusions
[1A] sobre todo las mujeres que luchan por la igualdad, por la liberación de ellas mismas que es la liberación de nosotros los hombres, es la liberación de nuestros hijos, es la		SC: Once women are "liberated" then all of society will follow. Chavez is claiming that women must first be the

<p>liberación de nuestros pueblos, soy feminista.</p> <p>Un verdadero socialista debería ser un verdadero feminista.</p>	<p>Chavez declares himself a true socialist as well as a true feminist.</p>	<p>starting point of their own liberation.</p> <p>SA: Socialist and feminist ideologies are synonymous.</p>
<p>[1B] ¡La mujer, la mujer, la mujer!, sólo voy a leer esta primera parte en honor a la mujer, a ese ente superior que es la mujer, no estoy haciendo política barata, ¡no, no!, ustedes son superiores a nosotros, no tengo la menor duda, ¡nadie tenga la menor duda!</p> <p>La mujer como ente, como humano es superior al hombre, escribo así: «El extraordinario pensador y gran escritor que fue Simón Bolívar, lo dejó dicho para la posteridad de la siguiente manera: “La mujer nos es muy superior (al hombre), Dios la ha dotado de gran perspicacia y sensibilidad y ha puesto en su corazón fibras delicadísimas, cuerdas muy sensibles a todo lo noble y elevado, el patriotismo, la admiración, el amor; hacen vibrar esas cuerdas y de allí resulta la caridad, la abnegación y el sacrificio”».</p>	<p>A typical rhetoric of Chavez, categorizing “us” and “you”.</p> <p>Women’s characteristics are God-given. She is delicate and sensitive.</p> <p>Traditionally feminine characteristics, reproduction of socially constructed notions of the characteristics women should possess because of her femininity.</p>	<p>SC: Women are superior to men.</p> <p>UA: Characteristics of women are God-given, and therefore “natural”.</p>
<p>[1C] ¡Justicia para la mujer!, y para reflexionar y para comprometernos aún mucho más, los que tenemos más responsabilidades, pero, es de todos el compromiso en luchar por una sociedad de iguales [...]</p> <p>La mujer, todavía, es considerada un ser inferior, objeto sexual y no sé cuántas cosas, objeto comercial para vender, ¿qué cosa?, ¿no?, cuánto daño le ha hecho eso a la misma mujer y a toda la sociedad por extensión, a todos nosotros. Ahora, ésa es una de las armas destructoras del Capitalismo.</p>	<p>Uses the objectification of women as a direct cause of capitalism. Uses a strategic way to criticize capitalism, while connecting it to women. Connects to discourse of being a true feminist to be a true socialist.</p>	<p>SA: It is the responsibility of everyone to work together for equality</p> <p>UA: The responsibility is not solely that of the state</p> <p>SC: The hurt of women is the hurt of society</p> <p>UC: Capitalism is the entity to blame for the woes of all society. Concerned with</p>

		direct negative effects of the hegemony of capitalism rather than the structural inequalities within society.
<p>[1D] Presidente Chávez: No me digas quien para que lo salves del Látigo Chávez, porque el mundo ha sido del hombre, y lo que queremos que sea tanto del hombre como de la mujer por igual.</p> <p>[Ministra de Estado para Asuntos de la Mujer, María León]: [...] Pero, a mí lo que me gusta decir, igualdad de la mujer y el hombre es para que los hombres entiendan cosas como ésta. [...]</p> <p>Chavez: Pero, yo sí creo que hay que ir más allá, la igualdad del género, mujer e igualdad del género, creo que pudiera quedar redondo, pero, eso lo podemos decidir hoy mismo en las próximas horas.</p> <p>[p. 11]</p>	<p>The Minister has a true sense of what gender equality means, and the fact that men need to be included and taught about gender equality so that they understand how to practice it.</p> <p>He doesn't expand on what exactly gender equality means to him and he fails to engage with the argument provided by the Minister.</p>	<p>UA: Chavez is against adding men to the Ministry of Women's Affairs</p> <p>UC: Chavez refuses to include men into the program because he doesn't believe an institute concerned with women and gender issues should include men</p>

TABLE 2

Components of Text	Commentary/ Clarification of Meanings	Assumptions and Conclusions
<p>[2A] Mira la altura de la pierna. Miren, muchachos, esto, es que parece como si tuvieran la pierna sostenida sobre una viga, ¿ve? Y miren la pierna recta, miren la falda, miren la feminidad, la hermosura de la mujer dándole prestancia.</p> <p>Miren la forma de agarrar, aguerridamente, la subametralladora, la mira, no hay detalles: 100 puntos. ¡Un aplauso para estas muchachas, qué maravilla!</p> <p>[p. 18]</p>	<p>Extremely sexist comments.</p> <p>Invokes imagery of what is traditionally deemed masculine, a gun, held by a feminine women</p>	<p>UC: Chavez is looking at the bodies of the women, looking at their skirts, their form, their "beauty"</p> <p>SA: Femininity is beautiful, and therefore, women are beautiful.</p> <p>SC: Chavez praises the women for undertaking role in military</p>
[2B] Yo estaré siempre atento a esto para que		SC: To live with digni-

<p>no nos rezaguemos y puedan ustedes cumplir con su trabajo y vivir dignamente. El objetivo de un soldado no es hacerse rico, ¡no!, todo lo contrario, todo lo contrario, pero sí vivir con dignidad y con decoro: la familia, la mujer, la pareja, los hijos, la vivienda.</p> <p>[p. 37]</p>		<p>ty is to have a family, a wife, children</p> <p>UC: A heteronormative family is “dignified”</p> <p>UA: A soldier is a man who works hard, has a wife, family, etc.</p>
<p>[2C] Ustedes saben que las mujeres antes no podían ni votar, aquí no tenían derecho a voto las mujeres, ni a ir para la escuela. Bolívar rompió con eso y empezó a crear escuelas para niñas.</p> <p>Bolívar era muy feminista, yo soy feminista, soy feminista, y creo que todo verdadero revolucionario debe ser feminista.</p> <p>Porque la liberación de la mujer del dominio del machismo, cultural... ¿Tú no ves que las niñas desde que son niñas: para la cocina, a barrer, a limpiar, a lavar los corotos? ¿Y los varones... nosotros? Por la calle corriendo por ahí, para la calle [risa]. Yo no digo que las niñas vayan para la calle, no, no, no; sólo que ahí comienza la división del trabajo, desde niño, desde niña. Es cultural la cosa, es cultural, como si los niños se supieran cuidar solos y las niñas no. Y eso lo tenemos nosotros sembrado aquí.</p> <p>No es fácil de entenderlo a veces, a mí mismo me cuesta [risa] aun cuando soy feminista y definiendo plenamente la igualdad entre hombre y mujer.</p> <p>[p. 47]</p>	<p>Feels the need to repeat and reiterate that he is a feminist</p> <p>Acknowledges the cultural and constructionist aspects of the gendered division of labor</p> <p>These assumptions about men and women are embedded through culture and since childhood</p> <p>What exactly doesn't he understand?</p>	<p>SC: Bolivar was a feminist because he created schools for girls in a time when women couldn't vote</p> <p>SA: A feminist supports women and their struggles</p> <p>UA: Women have more responsibilities and duties compared to men, since childhood</p>

TABLE 3

Components of Text	Commentary/ Clarification of Meanings	Assumptions and Conclusions
<p>[3A] Es verdad, los dolores del mundo, son mayores en la hembra. Yo lo vi desde niño, desde niño. La madre, la abuela, recibe en su pecho, en sus hombros, en todo su ser con más fuerza los dolores de la vida, los dolores de la vida, y actúa en</p>		<p>SC: Women suffer more</p> <p>UA: Women are weak</p>

<p>consecuencia, y actúa en consecuencia.</p> <p>[p.19]</p>		
<p>[3B] Yo por eso digo, un verdadero revolucionario, socialista, debe ser verdaderamente feminista, feminista.</p> <p>Porque la liberación de los pueblos, pasa por la liberación de la mujer, el dominio del machismo y eso es una cosa cultural</p> <p>[p.20]</p>		<p>SC: Socialism and feminism must go hand in hand</p> <p>UA: Culture is the culprit for many inequalities experienced by women</p> <p>SA: The emancipation of women leads to the emancipation of society</p>
<p>[3C] Mire y, cómo es que dice el dicho, hay un dicho inglés, con los dichos hay que tener cuidado porque a veces, a veces reflejan el machismo ¿no? la cultura machista, chistes, dichos. Pero este que voy a decir, creo que no es machista, fíjate, creo; si es machista ustedes me pitan. Ajá.</p> <p>[p. 22]</p>	<p>He still doesn't know what constitutes as <i>machista</i> and what doesn't. As a "feminist", he should be well aware.</p>	<p>UA: Machismo is a result of cultural practices and symbols</p> <p>UC: Even if the joke may be <i>machista</i>, he will say it anyway</p>
<p>[3D] [...]uno de los aspectos donde tenemos que nosotros profundizar y lograr éxitos superiores, avances mucho más notables, es en el logro de la igualdad del género, ahí tenemos una batalla muy dura que dar todavía porque es una batalla cultural, en primer lugar.</p> <p>Ahora, ¿de dónde debe surgir ese conjunto de nuevas políticas para ir logrando de manera mucho más firme la igualdad de género? ¿De Chávez? ¿De las ministras? No. De las mismas mujeres, de las bases populares, de las mujeres organizadas, de los movimientos de las mujeres, como aquí lo estamos oyendo ahora mismo.</p> <p>[pp. 26-27]</p>	<p>Contradiction with the previous statement he made about the issue of gender equality being cultural. If it is cultural, then why is it only through the women that it has to change?</p>	<p>SC: Gender equality is due to political, cultural, social and economic factors</p> <p>SA: Women are responsible for their own struggle for equality</p> <p>UA: Men are not directly part of either helping gain equality of women or in the creation of gender inequality</p>

5.3 A Confusion of Discourses

The application of CDA has revealed the confusion of discourses found in the official discourse of the Bolivarian Project, as distributed through speeches given by Chavez. Through the identification of the meanings given to gender equality within these speeches, it becomes apparent that there is no consolidated definition and stance on what it really means. This leads to a grave confusion of discourses, identities and actions, blocking the move towards a society of equals. These contradictory discourses constitute norms in society through the regulation and power of the state. (Connell 1990)

In the official discourse, the liberation of women is equated to liberation for all. Chavez is clear when mentioning several times that liberation of women means the liberation of all society. In other words, without the successful and complete emancipation of women, all of society will experience inequalities and injustices. However, Chavez declares that women must be the starting point of their own liberation, conveying that it is the responsibility of women to liberate themselves. This is far from a gender-focused approach as it neglects the benefits of men and women working together towards social justice. Rather, all of the work is put on women.

This corresponds to [1A] in which the text reinforces the triple burden of women; paid, domestic and community responsibilities. This is subtly veiled by complements and affection given by Chavez. He affirms that it is the duty and responsibility of women, particularly as Venezuelans, to fight for their liberty, not only for themselves, but for their men, children and entire communities. In other words, women are expected to take full responsibility of the struggles towards reaching emancipation, as well as those of all society, alone.

This discourse of “women are responsible for their own emancipation, yet responsible for the liberation of all” is contradicted by another discourse that claims “we need to fight for gender equality together”. In [1C] Chavez declares that everyone in society must participate in the struggle towards gender equality, leading to the assumption that the responsibility is of everyone. He justifies this by equating women’s hurt to the hurt of society. In other words, if women suffer, society suffers. This is inline with the previous discourse declaring “liberation for women equals liberation for all”. At the same time that this discourse imposes responsibility upon all, it also assumes that the to achieve gender equality is not the sole responsibility of the state.

It is revealed in [1D] that Chavez has no idea what gender equality actually means. The Minister María Leon has a true sense of what gender equality means, and is aware of the fact that men need to be included and taught about gender equality so that they understand how to practice it. Chavez on the other hand, although he claims for the equality of women and men, refuses to even contemplate the inclusion of men into the Ministry of Women’s Affairs. This is a problem, as it shows his misunderstanding of what gender-cooperation means and the benefits it would have in bringing a social change to gender relations. Furthermore, he doesn’t expand on what exactly gender equality means to him and he fails to engage with the argument provided by the Minister.

In [3A] Chavez states that culture is the culprit to blame for many inequalities experienced by women. He expands by saying that gender equality is due to political, cultural, social and economic factors. But in [3D] a contradiction is triggered. If inequality is cultural, then why is it only through women that it has to change? It should be through everyone, as culture does not only pertain to women. An unstated assumption here is that men are not directly responsible for either helping gain equality for women or in the creation of gender inequality. A deep confusion within and among his discourses begin to be exposed.

At several points in all three speeches, he declares himself a feminist. Of course, he must be to be a true socialist, he declares. Any true socialist and revolutionary, which is the image he’s

trying to invoke and encourage all to take a part of, should be a true feminist. However, at no point does he explicitly state what being a feminist means to him.

When Chavez mentions he is feminist. Connell questions if a “feminist state” is even “conceivable”. (Connell 1990: 537) Connell responds with stating that first, the “state is historically patriarchal” rather than “essentially patriarchal”, (*Ibid.*: 535) and that if a state were to come close to becoming feminist, it would have to have to replace “militarization and internal hierarchy” with “demilitarization and participatory democracy”. (*Ibid.*: 537) Chavez’s government claims to have established participative democracy, but the military component has nothing but increased since Chavez taking power.

Connell finally states that a possible characteristic of a feminist state of the future would need to involve “a radical democratization of social interaction”. (*Ibid.*: 538) This can be found in the inclusive and comprehensive gender approach that is suggested and advocated by this study. The opening of spaces for more interaction between members of society, interactions that will perhaps one day, as envisioned by Lorber, lead to the elimination of genders as a flawed organizing principle.

Through the identification of both stated and unstated assumptions and conclusions within the speeches, we can find the meanings produced by Chavez. It is an unstated assumption that, to Chavez, a feminist is someone who supports women struggling for emancipation, women who struggle for their entire communities. It also seems as though he interprets feminism to mean supporting women through praising their bodies, their delicacies, their femininity, and by encouraging their struggles towards justice.

This brings us to the next discourse that is invoked by Chavez, one that affirms women to be delicate, feminine, sensitive, and full of love. All of these characteristics are declared to be God-given, and therefore, natural, as cited in [1B]. These are all traditionally feminine characteristics, reproductions of socially constructed notions of the characteristics women should possess. All of these feminine characteristics result in the weakness of women, the reason why women suffer more than men, as is pointed out by Chavez in [3A]. If women are so weak, how are they supposed to fight for equality and recognition, on their own with no cooperation from all of society? This is further contradicted by his statements in Table 1 and 3 that women are undoubtedly superior to men. Once again, Chavez has talked himself through a circular labyrinth and is stuck at the middle, with no way out other than backtracking and reversing previous statements.

5.4 Concluding Remarks

Through the creation of these contradictory discourses, the state can constitute gender politics. Due to its power to create and produce meanings, the state can regulate and constitute social processes. This is in line with Connell’s fourth and fifth elements of gender regime. (1990)

In 2005 Chavez articulated that one of the new strategies for the new phase of governance was to “advance the formation of the new social structure”. (Mundó 2009: 45) What is new about the gendered discourses analyzed here? To me, there is nothing new about the way Chavez interprets the role of women and their characteristics. Chavez still treats women as if they were less valuable than men. The gendered and at times, patriarchal, social structure still stands, firm and tall. Furthermore, as expected, CDA led to the unveiling of several contradictions within the discourses distributed by Chavez and the Bolivarian Project.

CHAPTER 6 | RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSIONS

When the information about genitalia is as irrelevant as the color of the child's eyes... then and only then will women and men be socially interchangeable and really equal.

(Lorber 2010: 258)

To many it may be obvious that Chavez, a populist and socialist leader, would never implement a truly gender-equal discourse, but then why put up the charades? A study on the way his discourses are related to political strategies and to the results of such discourses would be very interesting, although difficult to qualify. This analysis of his gender equality discourse brings evidence to the fact that his intention was to sustain a gendered hierarchy, rather than promote a true gender-equality approach. Future studies could also analyze the interdiscursive practices of the Chavez regime by study speeches addressed to women and speeches addressed to men. In this way, the different ways in which Chavez interacts with men and women could be studied.

This study set out to discursively analyze the production of meaning within the official discourse of a state, and how these discourses can lead to opposite results than what may be advocated on the surface. After a detailed analysis of discourse, a confusion of discourses was revealed. There is no explicit definition of what it means, or what is truly intended by gender equality. A transformation in the way power is distributed through discourse, therefore, needs to occur. In following Connell and considering the sixth aspect of a gender regime, luckily there is space for transformation in society, as he states “the state is constantly changing; gender relations are historically dynamic; the state’s position in gender politics is not fixed.” (1990: 532)

In the end I advocate for a comprehensive gender approach that includes both men and women to work together and understand each other in the struggle to achieving social justice for all. This does not equate to male dominance over activities. On the contrary, it encourages dialogue and understanding between men and women and overall, the education of men in what gender equality should resemble. To achieve this, greater awareness needs to be advocated in terms of discrimination and the myriad ways of maintaining it. This analysis shows the subtle ways in which discrimination and subordination can be practiced, as well as veiled behind feminist rhetoric.

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Appendix I

TABLE 1

March 8, 2009

Women’s International day

Source: Aló Presidente Program No. 326

SA= Stated Assumption

UA= Unstated Assumption

SC= Stated Conclusion

UC= Unstated Conclusion

Words of importance

Components of Text	Commentary/ Clarification of Meanings	Assumptions and Conclusions
<p>[1A] Un beso de mi corazón a todas las mujeres de Venezuela y del mundo y sobre todo a las mujeres que luchan por la justicia social, sobre todo las mujeres que luchan por la igualdad, por la liberación de ellas mismas que es la liberación de nosotros los hombres, es la liberación de nuestros hijos, es la liberación de nuestros pueblos, soy feminista.</p> <p>Un verdadero socialista debería ser un verdadero feminista.</p> <p>[p. 1]</p> <p><i>(the same sentiment is repeated on p. 4)</i></p>	<p>Chavez shows affection towards women, most of all to those who struggle for men, children, their communities.</p> <p>Chavez declares himself a true socialist as well as a true feminist.</p>	<p>SC: Once women are “liberated” then all of society will follow. Chavez is claiming that women must first be the starting point of their own liberation.</p> <p>UA: A feminist is someone who supports women struggling for emancipation, for women who struggle for their entire communities. A burden to support all members of society is assumed the responsibility of women, particularly disadvantaged women who are already struggling for their own freedoms.</p> <p>SA: Socialist and feminist ideologies are synonymous.</p> <p>SC: A socialist is also a feminist.</p>
<p>[1B] ¡La mujer, la mujer, la mujer!, sólo voy a leer esta primera parte en honor a la mujer, a ese ente superior que es la mujer, no estoy haciendo política barata, ¡no, no!, ustedes son superiores a nosotros, no tengo la menor duda,</p>	<p>A typical rhetoric of Chavez, categorizing “us” and “you”.</p>	<p>SC: Women are superior to men.</p>

<p>¡nadie tenga la menor duda!</p> <p>La mujer como ente, como humano es superior al hombre, escribo así: «El extraordinario pensador y gran escritor que fue Simón Bolívar, lo dejó dicho para la posteridad de la siguiente manera: “La mujer nos es muy superior (al hombre), Dios la ha dotado de gran perspicacia y sensibilidad y ha puesto en su corazón fibras delicadísimas, cuerdas muy sensibles a todo lo noble y elevado, el patriotismo, la admiración, el amor; hacen vibrar esas cuerdas y de allí resulta la caridad, la abnegación y el sacrificio”».</p> <p>Bolívar, ése es Simón Bolívar, el padre Bolívar, feminista sin duda, ¿eh?, justo, no es ninguna exageración.</p> <p>[p. 3]</p>	<p>Women’s characteristics are God-given. She is delicate and sensitive.</p> <p>Traditionally feminine characteristics, reproduction of socially constructed notions of the characteristics women should possess because of her femininity.</p> <p>How is Bolivar a feminist?</p>	<p>UA: Characteristics of women are God-given, and therefore “natural”.</p> <p>UA: It is assumed that Bolivar was a feminist because of the seemingly kind attention he gave to women in his writings.</p>
<p>[1C] ¡Justicia para la mujer!, y para reflexionar y para comprometernos aún mucho más, los que tenemos más responsabilidades, pero, es de todos el compromiso en luchar por una sociedad de iguales [...]</p> <p>Y en el mundo hay... cuántas desigualdades, pero, sobre todo la del género que es la más bestial, la más salvaje.</p> <p>La mujer, todavía, es considerada un ser inferior, objeto sexual y no sé cuántas cosas, objeto comercial para vender, ¿qué cosa?, ¿no?, cuánto daño le ha hecho eso a la misma mujer y a toda la sociedad por extensión, a todos nosotros. Ahora, ésa es una de las armas destructoras del Capitalismo.</p> <p>[p. 9]</p>	<p>He begins by stating that there are those who are more and should take more responsibility for the struggle for social equality, but then he says that the responsibility is of everyone in society.</p> <p>Expresses that gender inequality is the worst.</p> <p>Uses the objectification of women as a direct cause of capitalism. Uses a strategic way to criticize capitalism, while connecting it to women. Connects to discourse of being a true feminist to be a true socialist.</p>	<p>SA: It is the responsibility of everyone to work together for equality</p> <p>UA: The responsibility is not solely that of the state</p> <p>SC: The hurt of women is the hurt of society</p> <p>UC: Capitalism is the entity to blame for the woes of all society. Concerned with direct negative effects of the hegemony of capitalism rather than the structural inequalities within society.</p>

<p>[1D] [Ministra de Estado para Asuntos de la Mujer, María León]: Sí, nosotras habíamos propuesto que fuese el Ministerio para la Igualdad de la Mujer y el Hombre; debido a que el Instituto, cada vez que nosotras vamos a un sitio y hablamos del instituto, bueno, y porque no hay un instituto para el hombre, dicen. Entonces, una explicación larga, y ahora el Ministerio de la Mujer, igual. Aquí esta mañana cuando entré me decía uno de los compañeros, ¿y cuándo va a haber un Ministerio para nosotros los hombres? Entonces, yo le dije, ¡mira...!</p> <p>Presidente Chávez: No me digas quien para que lo salves del látigo Chávez, porque el mundo ha sido del hombre, y lo que queremos que sea tanto del hombre como de la mujer por igual.</p> <p>[Ministra de Estado para Asuntos de la Mujer, María León]: [...] Pero, a mí lo que me gusta decir, igualdad de la mujer y el hombre es para que los hombres entiendan cosas como ésta. [...]</p> <p>Chavez: Pero, yo sí creo que hay que ir más allá, la igualdad del género, mujer e igualdad del género, creo que pudiera quedar redondo, pero, eso lo podemos decidir hoy mismo en las próximas horas.</p> <p>[p. 11]</p>	<p>The Minister of Women's Affairs suggests the integration of the affairs of men as the Ministry's responsibility.</p> <p>The Minister has a true sense of what gender equality means, and the fact that men need to be included and taught about gender equality so that they understand how to practice it.</p> <p>He doesn't expand on what exactly gender equality means to him and he fails to engage with the argument provided by the Minister.</p>	<p>UA: Chavez is against adding men to the Ministry of Women's Affairs</p> <p>SC: Chavez wants equality for women as much as men</p> <p>UC: Chavez refuses to include men into the program because he doesn't believe an institute concerned with women and gender issues should include men</p>
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For the full speech:

PDF: [Speech 2009](#)

Official Website: http://www.alopresidente.gob.ve/materia_alo/25/p--6/tp--32/

Appendix II

TABLE 2

April 25, 2010

91st Brigade of Motorized and Horse-Drawn Cavalry

Source: Aló Presidente Program No. 356

SA= Stated Assumption

UA= Unstated Assumption

SC= Stated Conclusion

UC= Unstated Conclusion

Words of importance

Components of Text	Commentary/ Clarification of Meanings	Assumptions and Conclusions
<p>[2A] Mira esta foto de las cadetas de la Academia Militar, esto es impecable. Las muchachas de la Milicia desfilaron muy bien, pero como son nuevas ¿verdad?, pero esto es perfecto. Es que yo, buscando detalles, no conseguí; tú sabes que uno busca en los detalles, más aún en la foto que está ahí. A estas muchachas hay que darles algún reconocimiento. Claro, no sólo a las que están en la foto: a todas. Mira la altura de la pierna. Miren, muchachos, esto, es que parece como si tuvieran la pierna sostenida sobre una viga, ¿ve? Y miren la pierna recta, miren la falda, miren la feminidad, la hermosura de la mujer dándole prestancia.</p> <p>Miren la forma de agarrar, aguerridamente, la subametralladora, la mira, no hay detalles: 100 puntos. ¡Un aplauso para estas muchachas, qué maravilla!</p> <p>[p. 18]</p>	<p>Extremely sexist comments.</p> <p>Invokes imagery of what is traditionally deemed masculine, a gun, held by a feminine woman</p>	<p>UC: Chavez is looking at the bodies of the women, looking at their skirts, their form, their “beauty”</p> <p>SA: Femininity is beautiful, and therefore, women are beautiful.</p> <p>SC: Chavez praises the women for undertaking role in military</p>
<p>[2B] Yo estaré siempre atento a esto para que no nos rezaguemos y puedan ustedes cumplir con su trabajo y vivir dignamente. El objetivo de un soldado no es hacerse rico, ¡no!, todo lo contrario, todo lo contrario, pero sí vivir con dignidad y con decoro: la familia, la mujer, la pareja, los hijos, la vivienda.</p> <p>[p. 37]</p>		<p>SC: To live with dignity is to have a family, a wife, children</p> <p>UC: A heteronormative family is “dignified”</p> <p>UA: A soldier is a man who works hard, has a wife, family, etc.</p>

<p>[2C] Ustedes saben que las mujeres antes no podían ni votar, aquí no tenían derecho a voto las mujeres, ni a ir para la escuela. Bolívar rompió con eso y empezó a crear escuelas para niñas.</p> <p>Bolívar era muy feminista, yo soy feminista, soy feminista, y creo que todo verdadero revolucionario debe ser feminista.</p> <p>Porque la liberación de la mujer del dominio del machismo, cultural... ¿Tú no ves que las niñas desde que son niñas: para la cocina, a barrer, a limpiar, a lavar los corotos? ¿Y los varones... nosotros? Por la calle corriendo por ahí, para la calle [risa]. Yo no digo que las niñas vayan para la calle, no, no, no; sólo que ahí comienza la división del trabajo, desde niño, desde niña. Es cultural la cosa, es cultural, como si los niños se supieran cuidar solos y las niñas no. Y eso lo tenemos nosotros sembrado aquí.</p> <p>No es fácil de entenderlo a veces, a mí mismo me cuesta [risa] aun cuando soy feminista y definiendo plenamente la igualdad entre hombre y mujer.</p> <p>[p. 47]</p>	<p>Feels the need to repeat and reiterate that he is a feminist</p> <p>Acknowledges the cultural and constructionist aspects of the gendered division of labor</p> <p>These assumptions about men and women are embedded through culture and since childhood</p> <p>What exactly doesn't he understand?</p>	<p>SC: Bolivar was a feminist because he created schools for girls in a time when women couldn't vote</p> <p>SA: A feminist supports women and their struggles</p> <p>UA: Women have more responsibilities and duties compared to men, since childhood</p>
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For the full speech:

PDF: [Speech 2010](#)

Official Website: http://www.alopresidente.gob.ve/materia_alo/25/p-3/tp-32/

Appendix III

TABLE 3

September 12, 2012

Encounter with the Women with the Candidate Hugo Chavez, in defense of the Motherland

Source: blog.chavez.org.ve

SA= Stated Assumption

SC= Stated Conclusion

UA= Unstated Assumption

UC= Unstated Conclusion

Words of importance

Components of Text	Commentary/ Clarification of Meanings	Assumptions and Conclusions
<p>[3A] Es verdad, los dolores del mundo, son mayores en la hembra. Yo lo vi desde niño, desde niño. La madre, la abuela, recibe en su pecho, en sus hombros, en todo su ser con más fuerza los dolores de la vida, los dolores de la vida, y actúa en consecuencia, y actúa en consecuencia.</p> <p>[p.19]</p>		<p>SC: Women suffer more</p> <p>UA: Women are weak</p>
<p>[3B] Yo por eso digo, un verdadero revolucionario, socialista, debe ser verdaderamente feminista, feminista.</p> <p>Porque la liberación de los pueblos, pasa por la liberación de la mujer, el dominio del machismo y eso es una cosa cultural</p> <p>[p.20]</p>		<p>SC: Socialism and feminism must go hand in hand</p> <p>UA: Culture is the culprit for many inequalities experienced by women</p> <p>SA: The emancipation of women leads to the emancipation of society</p>
<p>[3C] Mire y, cómo es que dice el dicho, hay un dicho inglés, con los dichos hay que tener cuidado porque a veces, a veces reflejan el machismo ¿no? la cultura machista, chistes, dichos. Pero este que voy a decir, creo que no es machista, fíjate, creo; si es machista ustedes me pitan. Ajá.</p> <p>[p. 22]</p>	<p>He still doesn't know what constitutes as <i>machista</i> and what doesn't. As a "feminist", he should be well aware.</p>	<p>UA: Machismo is a result of cultural practices and symbols</p> <p>UC: Even if the joke may be <i>machista</i>, he will say it anyway</p>

<p>[3D] [...]uno de los aspectos donde tenemos que nosotros profundizar y lograr éxitos superiores, avances mucho más notables, es en el logro de la igualdad del género, ahí tenemos una batalla muy dura que dar todavía porque es una batalla cultural, en primer lugar.</p> <p>Una batalla política, cultural, una batalla social, una batalla también económica, también económica, es una batalla integral.</p> <p>Ahora, ¿de dónde debe surgir ese conjunto de nuevas políticas para ir logrando de manera mucho más firme la igualdad de género? ¿De Chávez? ¿De las ministras? No. De las mismas mujeres, de las bases populares, de las mujeres organizadas, de los movimientos de las mujeres, como aquí lo estamos oyendo ahora mismo.</p> <p><i>[pp. 26-27]</i></p>	<p>Gender equality goes beyond political, cultural, social and economic factors.</p> <p>Contradiction with the previous statement he made about the issue of gender equality being cultural. If it is cultural, then why is it only through the women that it has to change?</p>	<p>SC: Gender equality is due to political, cultural, social and economic factors</p> <p>SA: Women are responsible for their own struggle for equality</p> <p>UA: Men are not directly part of either helping gain equality of women or in the creation of gender inequality</p>

For the full speech:

PDF: [Speech 2012](#)

Official Website: <http://blog.chavez.org.ve/temas/discursos/chavez-reitera-compromiso-mujeres-venezolanas/#.Un-w7hb3DZs>