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**Gender Self-Representation in the Discourse of Margaret Thatcher Before,  
During and After her Role as the First Female Prime Minister in the UK**

**TESIS PARA OPTAR AL GRADO DE MAGÍSTER EN LINGÜÍSTICA MENCIÓN  
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Where there is discord may we  
bring harmony. Where there is  
error, may we bring truth.  
Where there is doubt, may we  
bring faith. And where there is  
despair, may we bring hope.

MT

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## **Abstract**

The representation of women in positions of power remains a relevant topic nowadays. When a woman is elected to such a position, it attracts attention due to the historical dominant presence of men in these roles. In the past, women did not have the right to vote, and therefore, when a woman occupies a position of great importance, it is something that attracts attention. Margaret Thatcher was the first woman to lead a major political party, which later led her to become the first female Prime Minister in the UK and to hold that position for eleven years, making her the longest-serving Prime Minister. Margaret Thatcher was criticized for her leadership, particularly for being perceived as adopting a “masculine” approach and not making any progress in policies for women.

This study aimed to determine the representation of gender in Margaret Thatcher’s discourse and the linguistic features used for this purpose. Thematic analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis were employed to characterize the discursive gender self-representation by examining recurring themes and linguistic patterns. The analysis revealed that gender was indeed present in her discourse, although with nuances and variations depending on the context in which the speeches were delivered. Considering gender as a social construct, it was possible to determine to some extent that Margaret Thatcher embodied characteristics culturally associated with masculinity as she occupied spaces of decision-making traditionally occupied by men but she was, therefore, considered “masculine” for not being soft, calm, sensitive and other characteristics culturally associated with femininity. It is important to note that Margaret Thatcher also demonstrated a constant defense of her gender and challenged gender biases when personally offended, but did not advance in a pro-women agenda in her eleven years in Downing Street.

Furthermore, it should be acknowledged that even though gender is a social construct with certain associated behaviors, Margaret Thatcher was considered to adopt those culturally-associated masculine behaviors because she did not adopt culturally-associated feminine behaviors while she was holding office.

**Keywords:** Gender, self-representation, critical discourse analysis, politics, Margaret Thatcher.

## **I. Introduction**

In a world where power has long resonated with the voices of men, a woman came to challenge what was known until then with her words, actions, and relentless determination. As we dig into the discourse that surrounded Margaret Thatcher (MT), we uncover not just an iron political journey, but an exploration of how language, identity, and gender intertwine to shape the narrative of leadership.

Globally, there have been few women in positions of power such as Prime Minister or President. In 1975, MT won the leadership of the Conservative Party, becoming the first woman to lead a major party in the UK. At that time, she served as the Shadow Prime Minister in opposition. Years later, she became the first female Prime Minister of the UK, holding the position for eleven years and becoming the longest-serving Prime Minister from the 20th century to the present. The context in which MT takes office as Prime Minister is crucial since the UK was ruled by another woman, Queen Elizabeth II, however, MT was elected by popular ballot. Nicknamed and known as “The Iron Lady” for her strong political stance, she was often described as a woman who governed like a man. Therefore, this research aims to characterize how gender is presented in her discourse as a method of self-representation and which resources were used for this purpose.

The studies analyzed, have found in MT’s discourse a masculinization contrasted with what was expected of a woman holding office. Another branch that has also been detected is that the construction of MT’s identity is not only mediated by her, but there are contextual factors that intervene in the public image projected by MT, which are also marked by masculinization. Another aspect highlighted is MT’s projection of a “housewife” politician. Therefore, the pertinence of this work has to do with characterizing her identity and self-representation, taking into account how gender appears within MT’s own discourse in different periods of her political career. This topic is significant considering that we live in a society where women are beginning to take on prominent roles and hold positions of power.

This thesis will be divided into the following sections: The first section will provide a theoretical framework, reviewing relevant concepts and studies previously carried out on the topic. It will be followed by the methodological framework, including analysis models, corpus, and transcription methods. After this, the analysis and results will be presented, followed by a

discussion of results, the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research, concluding with a final summary.

The objectives, both general and specific, to find the information required about MT's gender self-representation discourse will be presented below.

**General Objective:**

Characterize the discursive gender self-representation of Margaret Thatcher before, during and after her role as the first female Prime Minister of the UK.

**Specific Objectives:**

- Characterize the meaning patterns regarding gender in the self-representation discourse of Margaret Thatcher.
- Categorize the lexical items, syntactic structures and pragmatic strategies present in the self-representation discourse of Margaret Thatcher.
- Describe changes in Margaret Thatcher's gender self-representation discourse in the different periods of her political career.

## **II. Theoretical Framework**

### **1. Gender**

Gender is an important subject to be highlighted in this work since it is precisely what is expected to characterize within MT's discourse. Gender has been widely discussed in the literature and has been a subject of academic inquiry. The significance of gender studies lies in their ability to shed light on power dynamics, social inequalities, and the lived experiences of individuals. It is a field that has been shaped by feminist movements, critical theories, and interdisciplinary approaches, whose understanding, relationship to language, and power relations have evolved over the years. Some of the issues addressed in gender studies include, for example, differentiation between sex and gender, intersectional perspectives, ideology and its social construction. Some of the authors reviewed to propose the notion of gender as theoretical support for this work are Judith Butler, Monique Wittig, Lia Litosseliti and Jane Sunderland, Marta Lamas, Simone de Beauvoir, and Michelle Lazar.

The most classic notion of gender refers to a group of people who share common biological sex and this biological sex is linked to a specific gender "it is spoken of women and men as the feminine gender and the masculine gender", respectively (Lamas, 2000, p. 2). We could review this definition of gender and biological sex as an inseparable set, as a cultural phenomenon that has transcended time and remains in the construction of different societies. The philosopher Simone De Beauvoir mentioned in 1949 that particularly the female gender is a cultural construction: one is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes one, implying that gender roles are something cultural, built in society, but not something biological with which one is born. This definition of gender nowadays has a wider perspective considering gender as an identity that does not necessarily go hand in hand with biological sex, in fact, a distinction between biological sex and the socialization of femininity and masculinity is made (Grassi, 2017). In the present work, gender will be understood as the construction and socialization of "male" and "female", which are categories that structure our social practices, being gender a social practice that also crosses other social practices (Lazar, 2005). For instance, Lazar has mentioned that gender is also understood as an "ideological structure that divides people into two classes, men and women, based on a hierarchical relation of domination and subordination" (Lazar, 2005, p.7). Another important thing to highlight about gender is its intersectionality because when Lazar mentions that gender crosses other social practices it means that it intersects with other categories of social identity such as sexuality, social position and ethnicity (Lazar, 2005).



In discussions of gender, Butler argues that the only gender that exists is the “feminine” and the reason for that is that the “masculine” represents the universal or the general norm, and the “feminine” represents “the other”. Therefore, “gender” only means female gender (Butler, 1990). That displacement described by Butler is also manifested in language as it is pervasively masculinist and exists a linguistic absence and opacity towards women (Butler, 1990). In fact, it has also been argued that in the English language, male nouns and pronouns have been given generic status, which ends up rendering women invisible, and it constitutes an example of symbolic capital accrued to men in English-speaking cultures (Spender 1985, as cited in Lazar, 2005; Sunderland and Litosseliti, 2002). Language, therefore, is the means through which gender is manifested, where we make our own gender visible and where differences between genders can be manifested. In principle, the clearest manifestation of gender in semantic terms is through personal pronouns since they are the ones that introduce gender into language with the use of the third person (Wittig, 2006). Wittig has stated that with the use of the first person, “I”, gender also appears since the speaker intervenes in their own gender, in the case of English, “when she is a woman —sociologically speaking—, she must somehow, with certain clauses, make public what her sex is” (Wittig, 2006, p. 106). Wodak (2015) states that when we do an analysis of gender, the context and the interactions that the speaker participates in must be considered. For example, the use of tag questions or indirect speech can be considered in a positive or negative way, depending on whether it denotes feminine insecurity or a collaborative conversation at work and that is part of a given context (Wodak, 2015). Therefore, by merging Wittig’s and Wodak’s views, the construction of gender also involves semantic and pragmatic aspects.

Additionally, gender should not be constructed as a stable identity, but “gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts” (Butler, 1990, p. 179). The illusion of the gendered self, then, is generated from the stylization of the body (gestures, movements, and styles), therefore, “doing gender” constitutes a performative act. Gender is manifested through the interactional form not only in everyday activities but also “in the asymmetry of the relationship between the sexes, the dominance of the ‘male’ and its normativeness” (Wodak, 2015, p. 701 - 702). Gender studies have precisely succeeded in showing the subtle way in which assumptions and practices of linguistics are implicated in patriarchal ideology and oppression (Lazar, 2005).

In conclusion, gender is socially constructed and performed within society, with language serving as the medium through which gender is expressed and transmitted. The linguistic features, including semantics and pragmatics, play a relevant role in making gender

visible and identifiable. Furthermore, it is important to study gender in conjunction with gender identity and self-representation, as gender represents the socialization of identities. Considering that gender is enacted through social interaction and that identity and self-representation become visible and represented through language, an examination of gender leads to an exploration of gender identity and its manifestation in discourse as well.

### **1.1 Gender identity and self-representation**

Identity could be understood as a subjective phenomenon in which an “I” is constructed, along with the distinction we make with “others”. Foucault (1984) has mentioned that identity is a process that is embedded in social practices in which discourse plays a fundamental role since “individual identities are recognised, constructed and regulated” (Baxter, 2016, p.37). Identity is seen not only as an aspect made visible through language but also as a performative act through which people create definitions of themselves (Wittig, 2006). Citing Giddens, Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002) also mention that the identity is “a series of choices one continually makes about oneself and one’s lifestyle” (Litosseliti and Sunderland, 2002, p.7).

As it was mentioned before, gender can be regarded as a type of identity work that is also constructed from the context in which a person is situated; more than a personal attribute, as something that emerges from discursive interaction (Ponton, 2010). In fact, regarding interaction, Wittig (2006) states that it is not possible for people to be significant through language without the gender mark, that is, by using personal pronouns or with the lexical choices that a speaker could produce to make their gender visible in interaction with others. Both linguists and anthropologists have identified the use of pronouns “in anchoring language to specific speakers in specific contexts” (de Fina, Schiffrin, and Bamberg, 2006, p.4), then, when using personal pronouns, speakers position themselves in relation to others. Therefore, identity would be something that is socially constructed from the relationships of the speaker and what is being said, the relationship between the speaker and listener, relations with dominant ideologies, among others (de Fina, Schiffrin, and Bamberg, 2006).

Butler argues that “It would be wrong to think that the discussion of ‘identity’ ought to proceed prior to a discussion of gender identity for the simple reason that ‘persons’ only become intelligible through becoming gendered in conformity with recognizable standards of gender intelligibility” (Butler, 1990, p.22). Finally, these reflections gave the concept of identity a non-essentialist perspective of the self in which gender identity cannot be defined in terms of a set of characteristics but as a more flexible construct. In fact, Litosseliti and

Sunderland state that women's identities may be more complex since, for example, at work "she may identify herself as a 'competent teacher', but if expected to carry out the traditionally feminine 'caring' role of 'pastoral care', may feel she is a 'put upon employee' or 'victim of gender stereotyping'" (Litosseliti and Sunderland, 2002, p.7).

Discourse plays a significant role in the formation of identities and self-representation. It is through discourse that individuals project themselves and engage in various activities. Utterances communicate an integrated sense of who is doing what, reflecting the multiple and "heteroglossic" nature of identity. People can identify with multiple social groups simultaneously, highlighting the complexity of identities. Identity is seen as a continual process of making choices about oneself and one's lifestyle, but also influenced by affiliations and interactions with others. Identities are not solely self-ascribed but also emerge from the attributions and ascriptions of others. Gender identity, in particular, is fluid and multiple, challenging the notion of essential identities, since it intersects with other aspects of identity, such as ethnicity, age, class, disability, and sexual identity. The complexity of gender is intertwined with power relations and is constructed through the interpretation and incorporation of texts into individuals' practices (Fairclough, 2003; Gee, 1999; Litosseliti and Sunderland, 2002; Jaworski and Coupland, 1999; Lazar, 2005).

### **1.1.1 Self-representation as a window to identity**

Based on the above mentioned, it could be considered that identity would be closely related to the self and its representation through discourse in social interaction. However, some authors have argued that the notion of the identity being embodied in the self is inadequate, since "there has been a shift towards anti-essentialism via a critique of the traditional view of the self as an isolated, self-contained entity" (de Fina, 2010, p. 264). Other authors such as Shamsudin (2010) and Foucault (1984) argue that both the self and identity have an important link with social interaction because it is precisely through social interaction where the self emerges via discourses.

As mentioned before, some authors have shifted towards an anti-essentialist perspective criticizing that the self is something isolated, something that people simply possess and that it represents the core essence of a person (Bucholtz et al., 1999, as cited in De fina, 2010). The former is linked to gender studies in which it is argued that people can adopt different identities, even different from "what their personal 'visible' characteristics would suggest" (Barrett, 1999

as cited in de Fina, Schiffrin and Bamberg, 2006, p. 3), and there is nothing given about being part of a social category. Lamas (2000), as previously stated, has asserted that women and men are not a reflection of natural reality. On the other hand, from a psychological perspective, it is also mentioned that there is no such thing as a defined model of a “human actor” (Potter, 2003 as cited in de Fina 2010). Thus, according to what these authors suggest, to consider the self as something unitary, homogeneous or as a defined model of “human actor”, is far from how people are represented in social reality. The current proposal is summarized by de Fina (2010) as: “Thus the idea that the self is essentially unitary, continuous and rational is seen as a product of history rather than as a necessary and characteristic condition” (de Fina, p. 265).

Society, says Shamsudin (2010), is shaped by the actions of individuals and as individuals in a society, they create networks, groups, and organizations within it. Therefore, the self is “influenced by the shared languages and meanings of these groups” (Shamsudin, 2010, p. 12). Apart from being influenced by the groups and networks a person is involved in, social interaction is precisely the context in which the self emerges (as it happens with identity). Then, the self emerges from our mind and, through language, the meanings in which the self is embodied are delivered in interaction, “the mind does the thinking work for the self in determining and indicating meanings to itself and to others through language which encapsulates these meanings in the form of symbols” (Shamsudin, 2010, p.13). The most important system for negotiating identity and expressing it is through language (de Fina, 2010). Shamsudin has presented the idea that the formation of a social identity involves two processes which are: a) self-categorization; and b) social comparison; but “one’s identity is formed by self-categorization in terms of the roles or positions one takes up which are comparatively constant” (Shamsudin, 2010, p. 16). Finally, regarding the relationship between identity and the self, the author mentions that in identity theory, a person’s identity refers to “a set of meanings, which are attached to the self and maintain the individuality of the self” (Shamsudin, 2010, p. 18).

In sum, discourse is crucial in the construction of identities, as language serves as a powerful tool through which we shape and define ourselves. Language is not only a means of communication but also a vehicle for self-representation. As individuals, we use language to narrate our experiences, beliefs, and values, which, in turn, contribute to the formation of our identities. Also, as we engage in social interactions within various contexts, there is a constant negotiation of our identities which contribute to the multifaceted nature of them. As interactions are partly determined by discourse, it is relevant to see in the following lines what is meant by discourse.

## **2. Critical Discourse Analysis**

Following Fairclough's (2001) definition, I will understand discourse as the use of language either written or oral, and also as representations of how things are and have been, as well as imaginary representations of how things might or could, or should be: "I see discourses as ways of representing aspects of the world – the processes, relations and structures of the material world, the 'mental world' of thoughts, feelings, beliefs and so forth, and the social world" (Fairclough, 2000, p. 124).

### **2.1 Discourse as representation of the world**

Different discourses represent different perspectives of the world; therefore, they may be associated with the different relations that people have to the world, which rely on their positions and personal identities, and constitutes a tool in relating to one another, keeping separate from one another, cooperating, dominating, among others (Fairclough, 2000).

### **2.2 Discourse as social practice**

Discourse is considered a social practice, and as a social practice, it is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned. Fairclough (2003) mentions that discourse appears in three main ways in social practice: genres (ways of acting), discourses (ways of representing), and styles (ways of being). The act of speaking or writing inherently involves discourse, as it constitutes the process of acting and interacting (Fairclough, 2003). Fairclough (2003) further distinguishes genres as "different ways of (inter)acting discursively" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 26), and discourses as representations, which are part of social practices. Such representations are discursive matter since they "may represent the same area of the world from different perspectives of position" (Fairclough, 2003, p.26). Then, it is relevant to note that "discourse" assumes two connotations: "abstractly, as an abstract noun, meaning language and other types of semiosis as elements of social life; more concretely, as a count noun, meaning particular ways of representing part of the world" (Fairclough, 2003, p.26). It is difficult to separate gender, as it was previously defined, from discourse because the manifestation of gender identity and the self occurs in interaction by the use of language. In fact, Fairclough (2003) highlights the notion that identity is an effect of discourse, in other

words, essentially constructed in discourse. However, considers that claim partially true since “people are not only pre-positioned in how they participate in social events and texts, they are also social agents who do things, create things, change things” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 160).

To summarize, according to Fairclough, language constitutes an inherent part of social life, where social practices are articulated through discourse (Fairclough, 2003). Similarly, Wodak (2015) asserts that discourse is something which is context-dependent within specific fields of social action. Also, as discussed above, it is socially constituted as it is “linked to the argumentation about validity claims such as truth and normative validity involving several social actors who have different points of view” (Wodak, 2015, p.89). What both authors have agreed on is that the notion of discourse fundamentally refers to the use of language where interaction, society and culture are also part of (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997).

### **2.3 Discourse: the use of language shaped by social structures and shaping the context or situation itself**

Language and discourse are related in the sense that discourse is the use of language in social practices shaped by social structures, therefore, language is essentially part of society and not something apart (Fairclough, 1989). As a social process, it is also socially conditioned by other aspects of society, as dialectical relationships and contexts. When we speak or write, we shape our language to fit the situation or context, but our language also contributes to creating that very situation or context (Gee, 1999). Discourse is understood as language use in specific contexts and is characterized by its communicative and contextual nature.

There is a distinction between text and discourse, with text seen as a physical object existing in relation to discursive and social practices, while discourse is more amorphous and unconstrained by boundaries. Text is also “the fabric in which discourse is manifested” (Talbot, as cited in Litosseliti and Sunderland, 2002, p. 12) and it can exist physically (e.g. marks on paper). Then, the analysis of a text is only one part of discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1989). Discourse, as already explained, represents and interprets the world from specific perspectives, often reflected in its vocabulary. Presuppositions, assumptions, and meanings are discourse-relative and contribute to the formation of subjects and the structuring of societies (Fairclough, 2003). Discourse analysis focuses not only on interpretations but also on the active production of reality through discourse (Wodak and Meyer, 2001). Then, the analysis of discourse is, necessarily, “the analysis of language in use” (Brown and Yule, 1983, p. 1) and the role of the context.

## 2.4 Analyzing discourse critically

Analyzing discourse “critically” has to do with taking a broader look at what the discourse is used for, its final purpose. Not only what is said in rather literal terms, but questioning the power relations that are implicit in the discourse and how power is legitimized against an oppressed class “discourses are not interesting as mere expressions of social practice, but because they serve certain ends” (Wodak and Meyer, 2001, p. 34). In that sense, Foucault (1984) considers that language as a system does not represent human experience in a neutral way, and discourse may serve different and conflicting power interests.

The main aspects that are taken into consideration in CDA are the ideological character of discourse, that is, social inequality, gender issues, and how power is legitimized through discourse. It describes the structuring of power and domination through texts and their effects on the possibilities of individual action. Van Dijk (2001) states that CDA takes an explicit position, and wants to understand, expose, and also resist social inequality, which is perpetuated in everyday local language and discourse practices. Additionally, discourse may have major ideological effects as it “can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people” (Fairclough and Wodak 1997).

Critical discourse analysis takes position along with the “oppressed” to pursue emancipatory objectives (Wodak and Meyer, 2001) and dissent against those who abuse. It is a form of discourse analysis but with an “attitude” (van Dijk, 2015; Wodak and Meyer, 2001) as it focuses on “social problems, and especially on the role of discourse in the production and reproduction of power abuse or domination” (Wodak and Meyer, 2001, p. 96). It also studies the way social-power abuse and inequality, apart from being reproduced, enacted and legitimated, is “resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (van Dijk, 2015, p. 466). Therefore, the issue of gender as an unequal power relation should be studied from a critical perspective since “whereas the power relations between men and women are similar to those between dominated and subordinated classes and ethnic groups, the day to day context in which these power relations are played out is quite different” (Eckert, as cited in Lazar, 2005, p.3).

According to van Dijk, 2015, some of the properties of critical discourse analysis (CDA) are:

It focuses primarily on social problems and political issues rather than the mere study of discourse structures outside their social and political contexts. This critical analysis of social problems is usually multidisciplinary. Rather than merely describe discourse structures, it tries to explain them in terms of properties of social interaction and especially social structure. More specifically, CDA focuses on the ways discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce, or challenge relations of power abuse (dominance) in society (van Dijk, 2015, p. 467).

Also, Fairclough and Wodak (1997) summarized the main tenets of CDA in the following list: 1) CDA addresses social problems; 2) power relations are discursive; 3) discourse constitutes society and culture; 4) discourse does ideological work; 5) discourse is historical; 6) the link between text and society is mediated; 7) discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory; 8) discourse is a form of social action (van Dijk, 2015).

In the process of discourse analysis, there are features related to the context which are assumptions and presuppositions. These features can be regarded as belonging to particular discourses, for instance, a neo-liberal economic and political discourse (Fairclough, 2003), that may use these features to talk about something as a given. Therefore, “what is ‘said’ in a text is ‘said’ against a background of what is ‘unsaid’, but taken as given” (Fairclough, 2003, p.40). In addition, saying something as if it were given has a relation with seeking hegemony, which is also seeking to universalize meanings and thus maintain dominance, and that is the ideological work that CDA exposes (Fairclough, 2003).

In analyzing discourse critically, particularly MT’s discourse, these features are closely looked up bearing in mind the effect they may have on the reproduction of discourses with their ideologies underneath.

## **2.5 Ideologies in discourse**

Ideology, in its early stages, focused on the study of “ideas” but now, one of the acceptions has to do with “the foundation of the social representations shared by a social group” (van Dijk, 2006, p. 729). Therefore, they are essentially social as languages are. They are shared by the members of a group, and they express beliefs in common which are presupposed to be true.



### 2.5.1 Ideology as the “common sense”

Discourse embodies ideologies and ideological assumptions which may come to be taken as common sense and contribute to power relations, viewing common sense in the service of power (Fairclough, 1989). The “common sense” is the familiar world of everyday life, however, this world is “built entirely upon assumptions and expectations” (Fairclough, 1989, p.77) and controls the members of a society and their interpretations. It is considered that the effectiveness of ideologies depends upon how merged they are with these common-sense assumptions. When our background knowledge subsumes these “naturalized” ideological representations, they come to be seen as non-ideological and part of the “common sense” (Fairclough, 1989).

Fairclough states that to make sense of a whole text, it is necessary to arrive at a coherent interpretation of a text, and refers to the term *coherence* in two senses: “(1) between the sequential parts of a text; and (2) between (parts of) a text and ‘the world’” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 78), that is how the text fits with our experience of the world or “the conception of the world it presupposes” (Fairclough, 1989, p.78). A strategy to impose certain assumptions towards readers (or listeners), is by placing the interpreter through textual cues and making them take into account this assumption if they are to make sense of the text.

“Common sense”, says Fairclough, “is substantially, though not entirely ideological” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 84). Thus, the relationship between common sense and ideology is the conception that an ideology constitutes an implicit philosophy in the political activities of social life which are taken for granted and connected to common sense. An ideology is regarded as essentially tied to power relations understanding ideological common sense as “common sense in the service of sustaining unequal relations of power” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 84) and they play an important role in the legitimization of power abuse by dominant groups (van Dijk, 2006). Dominant discourses’ objective is related with what Pierre Bourdieu has established as the “recognition of legitimacy through misrecognition of arbitrariness” (as cited in Fairclough, 1989, p. 91), then, those dominant discourses will come to be seen as natural. One of the most efficient forms of ideological dominance occurs when the dominated group end up accepting these ideologies as part of the common sense, which is what Gramsci called “hegemony” (van Dijk, 2006).

Ideologies likewise constitute mental models, mental constructs that control discourse and other social practices, and it is through these mental models that discourses are able to influence social representations and reproduce them (van Dijk, 2006). The social field that is

essentially ideological is politics and it is eminently within it that opposed groups, power, struggles, and interests are at stake since ideologies are involved in situations of competition, conflict and resistance between groups as part of social struggle. The aforementioned may explain why their practices are polarized “on the basis of an ingroup–outgroup differentiation, typically between Us and Them, as ideological discourses also show” (van Dijk, 2006, p. 730).

### **2.5.2 Ideologies as social practice**

As mentioned earlier, ideologies constitute ideas shared by social groups. In that sense, van Dijk (2013) has stated that even though ideologies have to do with systems of ideas, particularly social, political and religious ideas shared by groups, he also asserts that the notion of “ideas” is vague and ambiguous. Then, it is preferred to employ the term that is “mostly used in psychology to refer to ‘thoughts’ of any kind: beliefs” (Van Dijk, 2013, p.6 - p.7).

Ideologies serve as frameworks that enable groups not only to make sense of the world from their perspective but also as a basis for their social practices (van Dijk, 2013). While ideologies and social practices are two related notions, they are distinct concepts. Then, ideological stances can be considered as a basis for social practice, for instance: “sexist or racist ideologies may be at the basis of discrimination” (van Dijk, 2013, p.8).

Ideologies can be positive or negative depending on one’s perspective or the group members’ point of view, and they are “socially learned and collectively represented” (van Dijk, 2013, p.30). As ideologies are representations, claims van Dijk (2013), they can also be enacted in ways of acting. Ideologies are more than personal beliefs, they consist of shared social beliefs that define “their identity, their position in society, their interests and aims, their relations to other groups, their reproduction, and their natural environment” (van Dijk, 2013, p.12).

Language use and discourse are social practices influenced by ideologies, since much of the group members’ discourse is based in ideological opinions. These ideological opinions are acquired through reading and in interactions with peers (van Dijk, 2013). There is an overlap between discourse and society in the sense that discourse is part of it and “so are the socially shared ideas of the group members” (van Dijk, 2013, p.10). The manifestation of ideologies, including political ideologies, are observable, acquired, expressed, propagated within discourse. As political ideologies are observable through discourse, they are usually studied in terms of the structures of political discourse, involving elements like biased lexical choices, syntactic structures such as actives and passives, pronouns such as “us” and “them”,

metaphors, arguments, implications, and many other properties of discourse which are controlled by context models (van Dijk, 2006).

In sum, ideologies are not only shared social beliefs but also develop as “mental forms of group (self-) identification, and often in relation to other groups” (van Dijk, 2013, p.37), they are enacted through discourse within social practices, and may contribute to the shaping of common sense dominant discourses.

### III. Literature Review

The current study seeks to explore how MT represents her gender identity in her self-representation discourse with the ideological implications it may convey, considering the fact that she was a member of the Conservative party and the first female Prime Minister (PM) of the UK.

Several studies have been made regarding MT and her role as a woman leader. The issue of gender in these studies stands out. In 2016, Katie Weaver in her work: *Feminism Under Duress: Was the Thatcher Government Bad for the Women's Movement in the U.K.?*, raised the concern of whether the fact of having the first female PM in the UK and Europe was a contribution to the feminist movement (or not), and she mentions that “besides being a highly visible female politician, Thatcher seemingly strived to avoid a feminist persona” (Weaver, 2016, p. 110). At the same time, she had no problem portraying herself as the stereotype of a housewife and mother. Another fact mentioned by the author is the composition of her cabinet which was completely composed of men “The first female prime minister was Conservative; yet, at the same time, she was the only PM to have no women in her cabinet since the Second World War” (Bashevkin, 1996, as cited in Weaver, 2016). The conclusion of the author is that despite MT’s visual prominence as an early female political figure, it was a man who proved to be more feminist, and this man was Tony Blair from the Labour party.

Another study that also explores MT and her role as the first female PM, *I don't think of myself as the first woman Prime Minister: Gender, Identity and Image in Margaret Thatcher's Career* by Anneke Ribberink, makes a differentiation between female power and feminism, and MT represents a “version of female power that does not conform with feminist aspirations towards women’s empowerment qua women”. Ribberink also mentions that she (MT) was an expert “gender-bender” since she “could seem masculine and instill fear through her aggressive and iron-ladylike behavior” but she also used her charms when necessary. Finally, there is a paradox in the fact that she showed what women are able to achieve in politics, but did not want to be seen as a *female* PM (Ribberink, 2005, p.179).

Ponton (2010) analyzes the question of gender identity in the case of MT. The author mentions that the dilemma that successful women face is being damned if they behave like men, and damned if they don't: “she deliberately set out to excel in characteristics that are conventionally attached to men: authority, courage, firmness, determination and the will to succeed” (Charteris-Black, 2005, as cited in Ponton, 2010, p. 198). Moreover, the author

defines MT as a “housewife politician”, “depicting a domestic, female identity with which most social classes can identify” (Ponton, 2010, p. 199), in other words, the gender identity that MT demonstrated was a woman who does the cleaning and cooking but also participates in politics. Finally, the author made gender-related identity categories (men, women, ladies, housewife, wife) and analyzed twenty-eight 1975 speeches, one of them was the press conference after winning the conservative leadership in which MT replied: “I regard myself as Margaret Thatcher” (Ponton, 2010, p. 213) when she was asked by a interviewer if she regarded herself as Mrs. Gandhi, which, may imply she did not want to be compared with other women. Another hint at MT’s gender identity, according to the author, is the fact that she mentioned that she follows the steps of a “great man”, Winston Churchill (Ponton, 2010). Lastly, MT rejects the suggestion that her victory is a victory for women, she considered that “...It’s not a victory for Margaret Thatcher, it’s not a victory for women. It’s a victory for someone in politics” (Ponton, 2010, p. 211), using a gender-neutral pronoun as “someone”.

The self-representation of MT has also been studied in *Mapping London: A Political Cartography Through the Eyes of Margaret Thatcher*. The analysis of MT’s discourse in her books *The Path to Power*, and *The Downing Street Years* regarding self-representation, concludes that: “MT represented her professional career in detail in a clear strategy of Self representation of a woman who acted in the public sphere, who was interested in defining her distinctive character as a political leader, as a great figure of an epoch, as the only person who held the authority to construct her truth, her identity and her power” (Birrento & Gonçalves, 2019, p. 29). Lastly, considering as two important lines of investigation the self-representation in discourse and gender identity, Robinson (1989) mentions that the concepts of “masculine” and “feminine” are not parallel, in fact, there is an asymmetry between them and their representations. The author also claims that the privilege of self-representation is a privilege that the feminine does not share. Besides, the *subject* has been theorized as “universal”, and the “universal” is: white and male.

MT has also been analyzed from the “housewife” public image she projected. In this regard, Prestidge (2017), mentions that in order to understand MT’s public image, it is essential to establish connections between the political culture she operated in and the broader popular culture. The portrayal of MT as a housewife, in Prestidge’s (2017) words, was an attempt to narrow this gap by merging personal and political spheres but viewing MT’s housewife image simply as a visual representation of her desire to determine women to the home, underestimates the political context that helped her gain and maintain power for over eleven years. To understand how MT’s public image operated, it is necessary to explore the social and cultural

resonance of the ideas and ideals. Her self-presentation is important, but the author acknowledges that public images are collaborative efforts, involving various actors and contexts. Then, the media environment, feminist politics, Labour politics, and popular political cultures are participants in the construction of MT's public image.

MT's brand of female power emerged as a response to the model of female authority that she challenged. Although she positioned herself as anti-feminist, she was still influenced by the discourses generated by feminism. In Prestidge's (2017) opinion, recognizing the contributions of feminism to the construction of MT's public image is crucial, particularly when understanding the symbolic anti-feminist connotations associated with the portrayal of "the housewife". By inquiring into the cultural history of "the housewife" within Conservative discourses, Prestidge (2017) situates MT's domestic image within the gendered traditions of Conservatism. Additionally, considering the immediate political context highlights why the identity of "housewife" was strategically advantageous during the late 1970s as many voters were women (Prestidge, 2017).

MT became Prime Minister in 1979, becoming the first woman to hold that position in the UK, as previously mentioned. In the different countries of the world, there are few women who have participated in politics in relation to the number of men. Even though many voters are women and nowadays participation of women in politics has increased, there is still much to be done to ensure the equal presence of both genders in decision-making positions. According to the European Parliamentary Research Service (2019), worldwide, women are still under-represented in leadership positions, either female heads of state, government and members of parliament. Then, when a woman like MT occupies a position of power as important as being Prime Minister of the UK, she is often masculinized because they have been historically occupied by men.

It has also been established that MT displayed confusing views on women in politics on various occasions. In an article titled 'The Youngest Woman Candidate Calls to Women', published in *The Evening Post* in 1950, she (MT) paradoxically "warned against separating 'political affairs into those that concerned men and those that concern women' but at the same time called for 'more women in the House... to see that women's rights are adequately defended'" (Berthezène and Gottlieb, 2018, p. 43). MT was first elected as Prime Minister in 1979, and according to John Campbell's biography (2000), she deliberately downplayed the feminist aspects of her success. Nevertheless, in an earlier time, her search for a safe parliamentary seat quickly brought her face-to-face with the challenges women in politics faced in the 1950s (Berthezène and Gottlieb, 2018). She addressed issues identified as of concern to

women such as shopping and housing, highlighting that there were a million more women voters than men, therefore, they have a special responsibility as “all parties are wanting to attract more women” (Berthezène and Gottlieb, 2018, p. 143). In this regard, Conservative party’s communications focused on traditions established in earlier decades to promote new female voters into the political system, in fact, they tended to highlight women as domestic workers. MT indeed succeeds in taking this strategy as “not just because she rose to lead the party, but because she had a particularly compelling way of connecting political issues to the experiences of everyday life, and had a distinctive stance on so many of the themes identified here” (Berthezène and Gottlieb 2018, p. 165).

In light of the insights offered by various authors on MT’s identity and the perception of gender, several aspects stand out. MT challenged conventional expectations of women in politics, which may entail sweetness and delicacy. Instead, the authors affirm that she adopted a more masculinized approach, exhibiting toughness, authority, firmness, and determination. As Charteris-Black (2011) notes, “Margaret Thatcher deliberately set out to sound right rhetorically through the characteristics that are conventionally attached to men: authority, courage, firmness, determination and the will to succeed.” (Charteris-Black, 2011, p. 166-167). Moreover, as the Russians dubbed her “The Iron Lady”, it became a source of pride and played a crucial role in establishing her identity as it turned into “a powerful weapon in establishing her identity as a woman in a man’s political world” (Charteris-Black, 2011, p.166).

Representation like MT’s is significant in politics as it expands visibility and legitimizes women as political subjects (Butler, 1990). However, despite these attributes, MT’s attitude seems to be a complex blend of contradictory identities: “masculine” and “housewife”, defying conventional expectations. While she distances herself from feminism and exhibits ambiguous views on women in politics, she continues to present herself as a subject with both “masculine” and “housewife” attributes.

This work seeks to determine and characterize how MT represents herself and her gender identity through discourse, characterizing her self-representation, discursive patterns regarding gender; as well as lexical items, syntactic structures and pragmatic strategies used for this purpose. In the studies presented here, different analyses have been made on the same subject, finding in MT’s discourse a masculinization contrasted with what was expected of a woman holding office. On the other hand, it has also been detected that the construction of MT’s identity is not only mediated by her, but that there are contextual factors, the media, other political parties, and feminist movements that also intervene in the public image projected by MT, which is marked by masculinization, and the projection of “housewife” politician image.

This work will take what was previously established by the authors as a basis but seeks to characterize her identity and self-representation, always taking into account how gender appears within MT's own statements in different interviews, from different periods.



## **IV. Methodology**

This work adopts a hermeneutic methodology, which is fundamental for qualitative research and involves the art of interpretation (Brinkmann, Jacobsen, & Kristiansen, 2014). The qualitative approach is employed to not only describe the phenomenon but also to understand and interpret it. Qualitative research focuses on building knowledge about the social world and human experiences (Leavy, 2014). It seeks to explore, describe, or explain social phenomena by inquiring into the meanings that individuals or groups ascribe to their activities, situations, events, or artifacts (Leavy, 2014). The research is conducted by analyzing the experiences and ideas of individuals or groups within their naturalistic settings, that is, collecting data in naturally occurring situations (Bryman, 2012).

Qualitative research emphasizes words over quantification, and its goal is to generate theories from empirical material. It embodies the view that social reality is constantly shifting (Bryman, 2012). According to Flick (2007), text plays a fundamental role in this type of research as it serves as empirical material. This means that the corpus used in this work will be the actual empirical data gathered within natural contexts.

The qualitative approach is pertinent to this study, as it aims to describe and interpret how MT constructs her gender performatively through her discourse and the ideologies therein, characterizing precisely her self-representation with the meaning patterns regarding gender, categorizing lexical, syntactic and pragmatic strategies, describing changes along her period as PM. To accomplish the objectives of the current work, two analytical approaches will be utilized. The first approach is thematic analysis using the 6-phase guide proposed by Braun and Clarke, (2006) to identify and report possible patterns (themes) with regard to gender in MT's discourse. Second, to scrutinize MT's discourse from a critical perspective and analyze it more profoundly, Critical Discourse Analysis will be employed to examine features such as lexical choices, nominal phrases, and rhetorical figures of speech that can be said to articulate a particular ideological construction of a gendered identity.

### **4.1 Corpus**

The corpus of this research consists of 15 different interviews given by MT; 12 of them are televised interviews and 3 of them were radio interviews. Both the televised and the radio interviews were retrieved from the "YouTube" platform, which is freely accessible to the public, with the exception of one of them (televised), which was retrieved from "Facebook",

which is also accessible to the public and no account is needed for this purpose. The selected interviews correspond to different years and, therefore, different periods in the political career of MT: when she was a Member of Parliament in the 60s, Secretary of State for Education and Science, Leader of the Conservative party, Prime Minister, and member of the House of Lords. This allows for the observation of developments or changes in her gender self-representation through time.

The criterion to select the interviews (and discard others) was to consider only the ones that included relevant information for the objectives of this study. Therefore, in this case, the principal selection criterion was that gender had to appear in MT's discourse within the interviews to see how it was addressed. The second criterion of selection had to do with the periods in which the interviews were carried out as mentioned above. So, interviews corresponding to the years before, during and after her period as Prime Minister were considered: a) when she was Secretary of State for Education and Science; b) when she won the election as leader of the Conservative Party; c) when she was already working as Prime Minister (a job that lasted 11 years); and finally d) the period when she had to resign to her position as Prime Minister. A total of 15 interviews were selected and transcribed.

As mentioned above, one of the selection criteria had to do with the different periods of MT's political career, which can be summarized as follows:

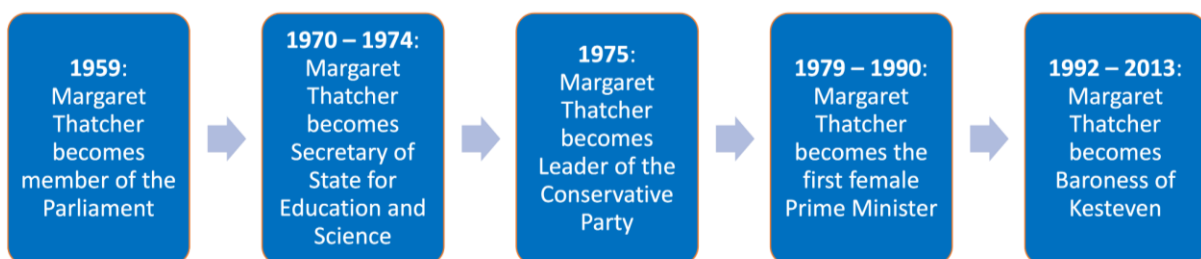


Figure 1: Periods in Margaret Thatcher's Political Career (Own elaboration).

There will be a brief description of the interviews selected with their respective dates and the political contexts in which MT found herself since, as mentioned by Wodak and Meyer (2001), the historical context is always analyzed and incorporated into the interpretation, even though there is no strict procedure for this task (Wodak and Meyer, 2001).

#### **4.1.1 Review of the historical context of the interviews**

a) 1960: MT as Member of Parliament

She was elected Member of Parliament in 1959. At the beginning of 1960, she gave her “maiden speech”; because of that, she was interviewed and made her first appearance on tv. It was a short interview but addressed gender issues.

b) 1973: MP, Secretary of state for education and science

MT was interviewed on the program “Val Meets the VIPS”, a UK tv Series from the BBC. The public invited were children who had the opportunity to ask MT questions. A girl asked if she thought there should be more women in parliament. Based on the prior question, another boy asked if she would like to see a woman Prime Minister.

c) 1974: Shadow Secretary of the Environment

This interview was one year after her election as Conservative party leader. By then, her party had lost the election, so she was shadow secretary of the environment. Shadow secretaries are in charge of scrutinizing the policies and actions of the government, as well as offering alternative policies. In this radio interview, she discusses her personal interests, home life, and family before her political career.

d) 1975: Leader of the Conservative Party

This interview was the first radio interview after she won the election as the leader of the Conservative party. MT mentioned that she was still surprised when she was announced as the “leader of the opposition”. Besides, she is asked about how it is to be a woman in politics and if she still does, at that time, her husband’s breakfast.

e) 1975: Leader of the Conservative Party

That same year, at the beginning of the year, she was elected as leader of the Conservative Party, defeating Edward Heath. In this interview, she was asked questions

regarding her position as leader of the opposition, and some journalists from the audience asked her about the fact that she was the first woman in achieving this position as leader.

f) 1976: Leader of the Opposition

MT was interviewed on the “Good Afternoon” program about her role as the first female leader of the Conservative Party. The panel was composed only by women. There were four interviewers and MT as a guest, making it a table made up exclusively of women. The theme of the interview focused broadly on gender.

g) 1978: A little over a year before the general election in 1979

In this interview, MT recalls the influence of her father to get interested in politics and claims how he taught her not to follow the crowd just for being afraid of being different and that she had to decide what to do and, if necessary, to lead the crowd but not just follow it. She also recalls her childhood, her career and her family.

h) 1981: Already Prime Minister

By this date, MT had already assumed as Prime Minister. On this occasion, she was interviewed on the TV program “Afternoon Plus”, a program hosted by a woman who was accompanied by a studio audience made up of seven women from different fields who asked her questions about inflation, unions, but also about sexism and the task of removing it.

i) 1984: MT is interviewed after the Brighton Bombing that almost claimed her life

An attack attributed to the IRA (Irish Republican Army) nearly cost MT’s life. In this interview, she was asked about that. Then, the interviewer reflects on the fact that there would be two Margaret Thatchers, one “strong” and another “warm”.

j) 1985: Intimate and personal interview with MT

This interview had a more intimate nature since some personal issues of MT were addressed, such as family and marriage. The interview was conducted by another woman, and the program was called “woman to woman”.

k) 1987: Interview with “Children’s Express” the same year of her third victory

The year 1987 was the year of the election in which the Conservative party had its third consecutive victory. Consequently, MT was, for the third time, prime minister of the UK, achieving the goal of being the longest-serving prime minister of the 20th century. In this context, she was interviewed by two young interviewers from “Children's Express”, a US kids’ newspaper.

l) 1987: Intimate interview about MT’s favorite things

This is an intimate conversation between Russel Harty, a British television presenter, and MT. He wanted to know the difference between the public face of MT, the one that everybody knew, and how she really was in her personal life, considering her favorite things, heroes, poems, recipes, buildings, among others. This conversation shows a rather more human side than a political one of the former Prime Minister.

m) 1990: Before MT's resignation

This interview was done before MT resigned as Prime Minister. The interview was carried out at the beginning of 1990; therefore, her cabinet had not resigned yet either.

n) 1993: The Downing Street Years

MT published an autobiography book in 1993, titled “The Downing Street Years”, which encompasses the whole of her time as Prime Minister. It was a long period of time, that’s why in the interview she mentions that her first decision to make was if she was going to do one volume or two. She was asked about women being “practical” by quoting her book in which she mentioned that Indira Gandhi was “immensely practical”.

o) 1995: Interview with Stina Dabrowski

She is a well-known journalist from Scandinavia who had the chance to speak with MT about her role as a woman in politics, the Falkland Islands war, and the war in Yugoslavia, among other topics.

The aforementioned is summarized in the following table considering the period in her political career, the year in which the interview took place, a brief description of the video and the link to find it:

<b>N°</b>	<b>PERIOD</b>	<b>YEAR</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>LINK</b>
1	<i>Member of Parliament</i>	1960	First television interview of Margaret Thatcher.	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yc3hm7dhEQo&amp;ab_channel=BrugesGroup">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yc3hm7dhEQo&amp;ab_channel=BrugesGroup</a>
2	<i>Secretary of State for Education and Science</i>	1973	Interview carried out by children on the program “Val Meets the VIPS”.	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=211366080512826">https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=211366080512826</a>
3	<i>Shadow Secretary of the Environment</i>	1974	Interview previous to the Conservative party leadership election with Anthony King.	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3xJD Dm-XK0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3xJD Dm-XK0</a>

4	<i>Leader of the Conservative Party</i>	1975	First radio interview after winning the Conservative Party election on “The Jimmy Young Show”.	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1J0uVdSR7Fc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1J0uVdSR7Fc</a>
5	<i>Leader of the Conservative Party</i>	1975	Tv interview after winning the Conservative Party election on the tv program “Firing Line with William F. Buckley jr”	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hf9rNeTN4V0&amp;ab_channel=FiringLinewithWilliamF.Buckley%2CJr">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hf9rNeTN4V0&amp;ab_channel=FiringLinewithWilliamF.Buckley%2CJr</a>
6	<i>Leader of the Conservative Party</i>	1976	Tv interview as Leader of the Opposition. The interviewers were only women.	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9zjto8aKhs&amp;ab_channel=ThamesTv">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9zjto8aKhs&amp;ab_channel=ThamesTv</a>
7	<i>Leader of the Conservative Party</i>	1978	Radio interview as Leader of the opposition with Roy Plomley.	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E87cpeUA_E5g">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E87cpeUA_E5g</a>
8	<i>Prime Minister</i>	1981	Tv interview 20 months after taking office as Prime Minister.	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFY6e2r2_hA&amp;ab_channel=ThamesTv">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFY6e2r2_hA&amp;ab_channel=ThamesTv</a>

9	<i>Prime Minister</i>	1984	Tv interview days after the Brighton bombing that almost claimed her life.	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DBO2ErEs00Q&amp;ab_channel=ThamesTv">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DBO2ErEs00Q&amp;ab_channel=ThamesTv</a>
10	<i>Prime Minister</i>	1985	Margaret in her own words, interview with Miriam Stoppard.	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bzof-se9VKo&amp;ab_channel=Timeline=WorldHistoryDocumentaries">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bzof-se9VKo&amp;ab_channel=Timeline=WorldHistoryDocumentaries</a>
11	<i>Prime Minister</i>	1987	Interview with two young journalists from “Children’s Express”, a US kids newspaper.	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICoDKyQcwmU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICoDKyQcwmU</a>
12	<i>Prime Minister</i>	1987	Intimate conversation with Russell Harty.	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qeUH6prrF8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qeUH6prrF8</a>
13	<i>Prime Minister</i>	1990	Interview at the “Wogan” television chat show.	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WFDIKmXUzhE">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WFDIKmXUzhE</a>
14	<i>Member of House of Lords</i>	1993	Interview in the program	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch">https://www.youtube.com/watch</a>



			“Booknotes”, a C-SPAN program for authors of public policy, historical and political works.	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DEHPdpkcyIs&amp;t=147s&amp;ab_channel=thatcheritescot">h?v=DEHPdpkcyIs&amp;t=147s&amp;ab_channel=thatcheritescot</a>
15	<i>Member of House of Lords</i>	1995	Interview by the Swedish and well-known journalist from Scandinavia, Stina Dabrowski.	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_gnhy7eT1s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_gnhy7eT1s</a>

Table 1: Interviews Selected as the Corpus of the Investigation (Own elaboration).

#### 4.1.2 Transcription

Once the interviews were selected, the transcription process took place. It should be noted that neither a specific method of transcription nor a digital program was used, it was a manual transcription from careful listening. As it is suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) in respect to transcription and thematic analysis:

There is no one set of guidelines to follow when producing a transcript. However, at a minimum it requires a rigorous and thorough ‘orthographic’ transcript – a ‘verbatim’ account of all verbal (and sometimes nonverbal [e.g., coughs]) utterances. What is important is that the transcript retains the information you need, from the verbal account, and in a way which is ‘true’ to its original nature (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 17).

In that case, some steps were taken to ensure quality and accuracy of the transcriptions. To achieve that purpose, some of the features from the *Jefferson Transcription System - A guide to the symbols*, which “provides a method for annotating speech with details of performance,

acts, texts, movement, interaction between actors, content and context” (University Transcriptions, 2017) were used.

As already stated, the transcriptions in this study used various symbols to indicate specific linguistic features. Commas were added to denote a separation of ideas which were perceived through slight rising intonation. Periods were used when MT changed the subject, accompanied by final falling intonation. Quotation marks indicated the speaker’s words in a different context and the words of other speakers. Question marks were used for interrogative sentences after a sharp rising intonation. Ellipses represented pauses in discourse from different lengths. Finally, square brackets denote overlapping conversation, and bracketed ellipses indicate missing text.

It is important to note that the transcriptions were not based on orthographical criteria. Instead, they were created by carefully listening multiple times, considering voice pitches, pauses, and other features in their respective context. The purpose was to ensure quality and accuracy to capture the discourse as natural as possible without any biased information.

Non-verbal communication such as coughs and background noises were not considered, but aspects such as stutters, repetition of words, and filler words were considered in an attempt to maintain a verbatim representation. In respect to laughter, it was decided to transcribe it as “ha, ha, ha” instead of using the “(h)” notation proposed by the Jefferson Transcription System. This decision aimed to enhance a better general understanding of a transcribed laughter for the readers, who may not be used to reading scientific transcriptions in qualitative research. Besides, the use of “ha, ha, ha” did not alter the meaning or structure of the discourse itself.

Phonological aspects, such as voice pitch, marked pitch up, marked pitch shift, emphasis in syllables, and louder words with capital letters, were not taken into consideration in the transcription process.

Therefore, the symbols used can be summarized in Table N°2:

<b>Symbol</b>	<b>Definition and Use</b>
[ ]	<b>Square brackets: for overlapping talk</b>
.	<b>Periods: Final falling intonation</b>
,	<b>Commas Slight rising intonation</b>
?	<b>Question marks: for questions &amp; sharp</b>

	<b>rising intonation</b>
...	<b>Ellipsis: Pause</b>
“ ”	<b>Quotation marks: quote someone else’s sayings or herself in another speech</b>
[...]	<b>Bracketed ellipsis: indicates that part of a quotation is missing</b>

Table 2: Transcription’s symbols. (Own elaboration based on Jefferson Transcription System – A guide to the symbols, 2017)

Braun and Clarke (2006), state that manual transcription allows one to have a more thorough understanding of the data, which is useful for the analysis itself (Braun and Clarke, 2006), and also allowed to capture relevant information of the data as it was carefully listened over and over before the analysis. Finally, transcription conventions used (Jefferson Transcription System and Braun and Clarke proposals) are accepted in qualitative research.

## 4.2 Analytical Framework

At the beginning of this section, it was mentioned that two different methods were used to analyze the collected data. The first method used was Thematic Analysis, which identifies repeated patterns in someone’s discourse and classified them into themes. The second part of the analysis was a Critical Discourse Analysis, which allows us to go beyond the limits of the sentence and attempts to explain the use of language and discourse in broader social, political, cultural, and historical structures, processes, and constraints (Van Dijk, 2009). Thematic analysis was useful in detecting repeated gender themes arising from MT’s, allowing for the incipient characterization and verification of gender presentation. Regarding CDA, it is a useful tool that allows us to describe and analyze the language used in the data, including underlying assumptions through lexical choices, metaphors, and euphemism, among others.

### 4.2.1 Thematic Analysis

The first step to conduct the thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke (2006) proposal, was to read and re-read the transcribed data and immerse oneself in the data. In this case, the data was taken from the transcribed interviews, and particular attention was given to the objectives of this work to identify patterns within the discourse, such as repeated topics and phrases, and become familiar with the depth of the data and taking notes of it. It is important to note that the interviews were transcribed as faithfully as possible.

After getting familiarized with the data retrieved from the transcription, the next step was to assign codes to paragraphs, sentences or words that represent topics to generate an initial list of ideas. In phase 3, the essence of each code was taken into account to match them up according to their similarities or repeated patterns into themes that encompassed all of the codes, prioritizing and having in mind the objectives of the current research. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested that “a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question” (Braun, and Clarke, 2006, p.10), in other words, it is a broader level than codes and encompasses all of them.

In phase 4, an exhaustive reading was done to refine the themes and to rule out themes that were not relevant to the research question and objectives. Additionally, themes that were related to each other were merged into one theme.

After all the information was selected and the themes emerged from the codes addressed, thematic maps were created to illustrate how these codes align with each main theme. A table with some examples of sentences was created to show the context in which the different codes appeared, and these codes were organized among their respective themes to support the analysis.

Finally, and in order to achieve all of the above, the authors mentioned that this type of analysis involves constant back-and-forth movement between the data set, which was carefully done to address as much relevant data as possible for answering the questions raised in this work.

#### **4.2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis**

The use of critical discourse analysis is justified in this study because the discourse being studied is MT's, a woman who, perhaps unintentionally, was one of the most powerful women of the 20th century as the first female Prime Minister in the UK. Her position as Prime Minister meant that her discourse was a powerful one and could be legitimized and contrasted with other less powerful discourses when it comes to issues of gender. Van Dijk (2009)

mentions that political discourse can be important within citizenship since “its power derives from both this broad sphere of influence and its various degrees of legitimacy” (van Dijk, 2009, p. 93). Then, analyzing MT’s discourse is more than a linguistic exercise since “discourses are more than just linguistic: they are social and ideological practices which can govern the ways in which people think, speak, interact, write and behave” (Litosseliti, 2010, p. 120), and through language social realities are reflected (Litosseliti, 2010).

Critical discourse analysis is a model that serves to analyze not only linguistic features as mentioned above, but also elements that are more deeply embedded in a statement that may appear neutral at first glance but may also present an ideology and stance regarding gender. In this sense, critical discourse analysis is also capable of analyzing discourse at both the micro and macro levels of analysis. Litosseliti has mentioned that “there is a clear distinction between analyzing text or talk (hence, ‘discourse’) as a means to an end, and analyzing it as an end in itself” (Litosseliti, 2010, p. 118). Besides, van Dijk suggests concentrating on some linguistic markers to analyze discourse, which are: “stress and intonation; word order; lexical style; coherence; local semantic moves such as disclaimers; topic choice; speech acts; schematic organization; rhetorical figures; syntactic structures; propositional structures; turn takings; repairs; hesitation” (Wodak and Meyer, 2001, p.26). Therefore, these features will be taken into consideration.

As for the steps followed, first, the transcribed data was carefully reviewed for statements made by MT regarding her position as a woman in a prominent political role - a key focus of this research. Specifically, attention was paid to her use of lexical choices, metaphors, passive voice, and underlying assumptions, as these are features highlighted by van Dijk (2009) as important elements to consider in analyzing discourse. These features can manifest in various ways, including syntactic structures (such as active and passive voice), through vocabulary selection, presuppositions, descriptions of people, rhetorical figures, and argumentative structures.

Secondly, as it is an important part of critical analysis, underlying assumptions, power dynamics, and others within the same data were also analyzed. It should be noted that this stage is not necessarily less scientific because the data, through different quotes, is presented for a better understanding of the analysis, and its purpose is to demonstrate how certain lexical and syntactic elements are used, for example, with the purpose of generalizing certain mental models (van Dijk, 2009). The aforementioned will be illustrated with the instances in which they occurred with transcription extracts.

## **V. Analysis and Results**

In the following sections, I will present the main findings derived from both the thematic analysis and the critical discourse analysis of the interviews. Examples from the data will be included to illustrate the interpretation of the themes and the discursive strategies employed by MT to construct meanings in relation to her self-representation in terms of gender.

### **5.1 Thematic analysis**

#### **5.1.1 “Women are practical, they get on with the job”**

The first theme raised from the thematic analysis is “women are practical, they get on with the job”. The phrases “women are practical” and “women are immensely practical” are mentioned several times by MT to demonstrate that women can cope with a lot of responsibilities because they have the duty of running a home, managing a family, cooking, and shopping. This is reinforced by a series of statements made by MT which will be summarized below.

It seems to be observed by MT that women being practical is the reason why they can also cope with political duties. She also mentions that women are competent and decided to take on any responsibility and that they can stick out for themselves as they have built up an armour. Additionally, women do not necessarily need help from institutions because they can help themselves as they have always done.

A woman’s approach to politics, in MT’s view, is closely related to being a mother because a mother always wants what is best for her children, which involves thinking about the future of the country and not just the present. In any situation, the children must always come first. Besides, when the budget has to be managed in a nation, a woman is able to do it the same way she takes care of the budget of a home. You have to know how much money you can afford to spend to avoid getting into debt, and this applies to both the country and the household.

MT considers that it is not more difficult to be a Member of Parliament because of being a woman, but it is harder for working mothers because they do not always have the support of a family or friends to balance both motherhood and work. However, they are any less good mothers because of work, as they give enough time to their children.

The above is a summary of the issues addressed by MT when she mentions some of the responsibilities that women assume when they have to take care of things. The phrase “women are practical, they get on with the job” was chosen, because it reflects her view that women are practical because they eventually do what they have to do and carry out the tasks assigned. Also, these abilities are linked with the traditional role of mothers as house makers. Lastly, the phrase encompasses all the codes that refer to women’s “tasks”.

All of the above can be summarized in Figure N°2, which has the theme in the center of it and the codes surrounding it:

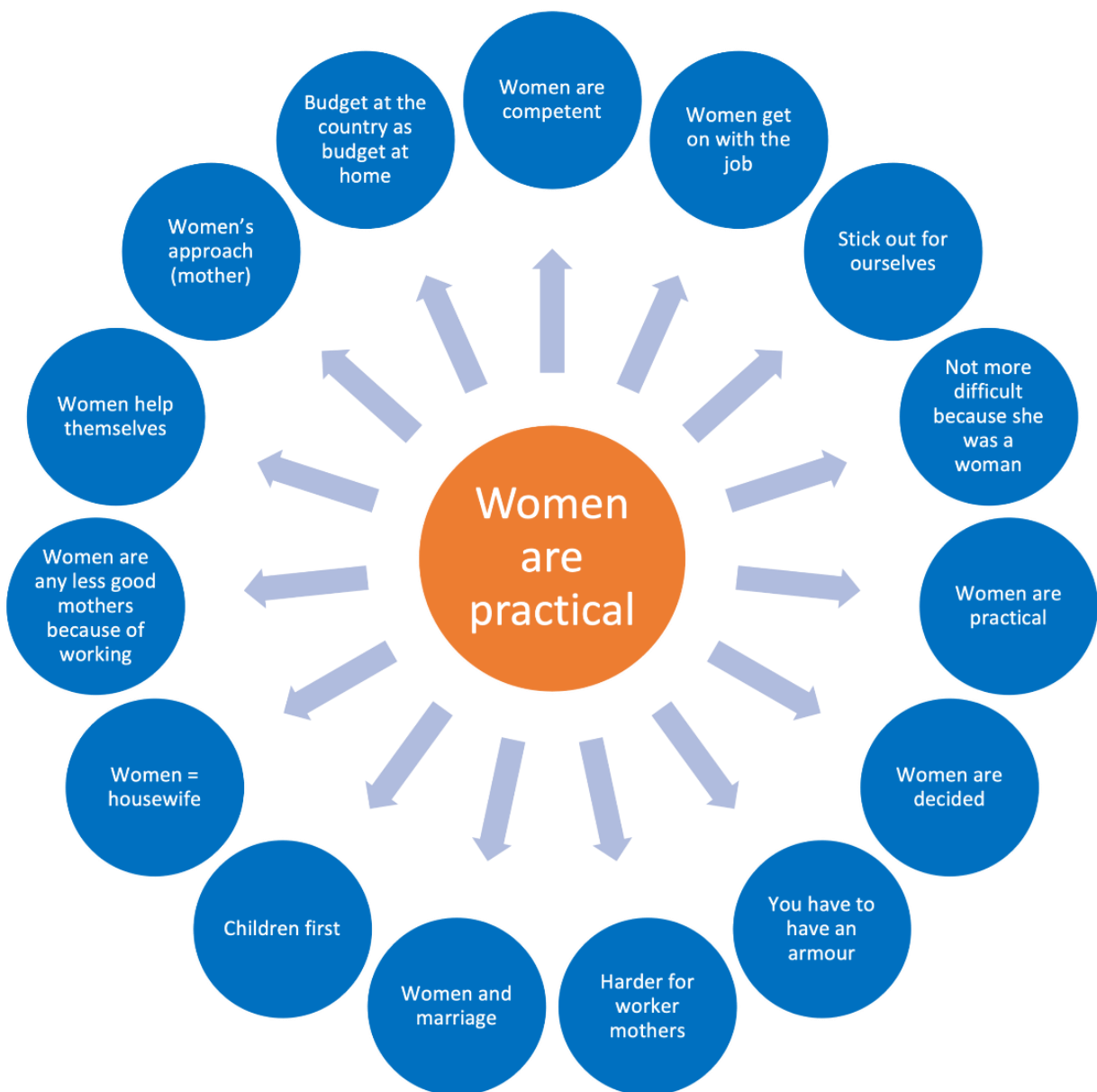


Figure 2: Thematic Map “Women are practical, they get on with the job (own elaboration).

In the following quotes it can be seen the contexts in which MT mentions that women are practical and the code assigned for them:

Nº Interview	Quote	Code
5	<p><b>Margaret Thatcher:</b> ...Really women are intensely practical, again, I don't mean that frequently, we are an intensely practical sex, we often get on with the job, we don't always talk about it as much as men we get on doing it...</p>	Women are intensely practical
14	<p><b>Margaret Thatcher:</b> I think that we tend to be much more practical because, in addition to doing the job as prime minister, there is usually a house to run, a lot of decisions to be made and, therefore, you come to make the practical decisions quickly, keep everything tidy and keep everything within a pretty tight timetable.</p>	Women are practical
4	<p><b>Jimmy Young:</b> Mrs Fisher of Richmond says "Mrs Thatcher became an MP when her children were about four years old, however, most educationists and pediatricians consider that the mother's place is in the home, uh, when children of that age and, does she really think that a mother ought to go to work.</p> <p><b>Margaret Thatcher:</b> Well, it was in fact six years old, Mrs fisher, and I know the importance of those early years and I could not have done it unless we lived in London and my job had been in London and I'm the first to recognize that but you know, Mrs Fisher, there are many women who are on their own with children, they're widows, or they're deserted, they don't make any of the less good mothers because of that.</p>	Women are any less good mothers because of work
2	<p><b>Child (3):</b> You said that women should be, should go more into politics, but I don't think so, I think so because, I, like a person, a man argues against a woman she won't really have the chance of fighting back as she is a woman.</p> <p><b>Margaret Thatcher:</b></p>	Stick out for ourselves



	Oh my dear, yes. I, I, I'm quite a good fighter in argument, and some women are very argumentative, you know? and might even win. I don't think that anyone would say that either Barbara Castle or myself lack debating fire. I think you might be thinking that on the whole women perhaps are not as aggressive but there are some of us in politics who've had to learn to stick out for ourselves and do.	
4	<b>Margaret Thatcher:</b> It is very painful and you do have to build up a bit of an armour and never be misled by the armour, you have to have an armour on top because you're a bit soft and sensitive underneath, and sometimes the armour is pierced but it's one of the things that you have to learn to accept.	You have to have an armour

Table 3: Number of the Interview, Quotes, and Codes from Theme 1.

In quotes from interviews 5 and 15, MT notes how women are practical, arguing that they are practical because they do not say what to do, but how to do it and do, which is something men do not do. Women are “immensely” practical because they usually have a house to run and children to take care of, a husband, etcetera, and because of that, decisions can be made within a timetable.

Another thing she mentions, as she says in interview N°4, is that the fact that a mother works, does not make her a bad mother (as has been suggested to her for “abandoning” her children) because a woman, as a practical person, can do many things. This is something that is repeated several times in discourse and is emphasized as one of the codes that stands out within this theme.

Finally, she also supports the idea that women are capable, determined and competent in life (for being practical), are able to stick for themselves, are able to help themselves, and it is not more difficult to carry out political tasks for being a woman, but at some point, you must build an armor to face criticism. This can be seen in quotes from interview N°2 and N°4.

Then, as mentioned earlier, the phrase “women are practical, they get on with the job” was chosen, because it illustrates her view on women being practical as they do what they have to do, which imply carry out the tasks assigned, therefore, home duties.

### 5.1.2 Importance of the person, not the sex

The second theme was also very frequent when MT was particularly asked about her feelings regarding being the first female Prime Minister. In her words, it does not matter if you are a man or a woman; the important thing is whether the person is suitable for the job and has the competences to do it. Then, when looking for a person who is suitable for the job, you just look at the person and not their sex.

According to MT, there has not been a great deal of discrimination against women because they are able to offer themselves and run as candidates. In that matter, the Conservative Party is very progressive. When she joined the Carlton Club, a club from the Conservative Party that historically had been composed by men, she was the first woman to join but, in her own words, she did not join as a woman, she joined as the leader of the Conservative Party and no distinction was made because of her gender. This may be explained because, as she said, she never felt like an outsider in a “man’s world” and does not agree with the fact that society is full of labels.

She considers herself an ordinary politician and does not see herself as the first woman Prime Minister but as the first person with scientific qualifications to hold office. Finally, despite all of what was mentioned, she enjoys being a woman.

All of the above can be summarized in Figure N°3:



Figure 3: Thematic Map “Importance of the person not the sex” (Own elaboration)

Then, the following quotes illustrate the contexts in which she mentions that being a woman is not the most relevant thing for holding a political office, but rather being capable to do it. The codes created for each quote derive in the current theme:

Nº Interview	Quote	Code
1	<p><b>Journalist:</b> Doesn't get more difficult because you are a woman?</p> <p><b>Margaret Thatcher:</b> No, I didn't notice that, it rarely is, because of the quality of one's audience</p>	Importance of the person, not the sex
2	<p><b>Child (Roger):</b> Would you like to see a woman Prime Minister?</p>	Importance of the person, not the sex

	<p><b>Margaret Thatcher:</b> I think it depends on who the person is. I don't think there will be a woman Prime Minister in my lifetime. And I don't think it depends so much on whether it's a man Prime Minister or a woman Prime Minister as whether that person is the right person for the job</p>	
7	<p><b>Margaret Thatcher:</b> They were very sweet about it. I didn't join the Carlton Club as a woman. They said the leader of the party has always been a member of the Carlton Club and I don't think they recognize my sex.</p>	Joined the Carlton club not as a woman but as the leader
9	<p><b>Margaret Thatcher:</b> Oh, I have no idea, no idea at all, I can only tell you in doing the job has been invaluable. People tend to think of me as the first woman prime minister in number ten, in fact, I'm the first scientific prime minister</p>	First PM with a Scientific Degree
10	<p><b>Miriam Stoppard:</b> You're very much working in a man's world, um, do you ever feel like an outsider?</p> <p><b>Margaret Thatcher:</b> No, I don't and I think it is that having been trained for whatever subject I was in, whether it was science, whether it was law, I've always felt the equivalent of anyone else who was trained in that subject and so I haven't noticed it, it doesn't, it doesn't bother me.</p>	Not an outsider in a man's world

Table 4: Number of the Interview, Quotes, and Codes from Theme 2.

As shown in the quote from interview N°1, she does not consider that it is more difficult (the exercise of politics) because she is a woman. Moreover, she raises the idea that her gender is not relevant because, as mentioned before, she is not an outsider in a “man’s world”, which is mentioned in interview N°10. Likewise, this is related to the fact that she does not like labels, such as “woman Prime Minister” or “man Prime Minister”.

Another recurring topic within the current theme is MT’s emphasis on being the first Prime Minister with scientific qualifications. This aspect is highlighted as being more significant to her than being the first woman Prime Minister, as evidenced in transcript N°9. When it is mentioned to her that as the first woman Prime Minister she is making history, she considers that she is just an ordinary politician and, on another occasion, she mentions the

context in which she joined the Carlton Club like any other leader of the Conservative Party, as mentioned in interview N°7.

The title for this recurrent theme has its significance in the portrayal of a downsizing of gender. The neutralization of gender by using “person”, is very frequent in her interviews when addressing the fact of her being the first female PM and certainly gives hints on her self-representation.

### **5.1.3 “Women do things differently”**

This theme encompasses different opinions by MT regarding women in political contexts. So, “women do things differently” is a significant topic of MT's recurrent themes as she mentions different features that women possess in such political contexts.

It was something meaningful for the interviewers that she was the first woman to occupy a major political role, as she was constantly asked about her thoughts regarding that fact. Also, she was often asked if she would like to see more women in parliament as well as herself or even include more women in her cabinet, given that she had very few throughout her eleven years holding office.

There were two approaches to these types of questions, in the first place she mentioned that “we’ve got to have more women in Parliament first” or “many more of them ought to come forward to offer themselves as candidate”, acknowledging the fact that more women are needed in political contexts. However, on a second approach, she observed that women who do become Members of Parliament do not take an active part in discussions, are reluctant to ask questions and do the practical job “they get up things like coffee parties, raise money”.

Also, when claiming that more women in parliament are needed, MT stands out that women have the ability to be members of it “there is an enormous ability there”, but admits that they are more modest in running for office, and claimed in another opportunity that people “expect you to behave in certain ways”, referring to women in politics are expected to behave accordingly to certain parameters.

In MT’s words, there have been good female Prime Ministers. Actually, Indira Gandhi is mentioned a few times in different interviews, and the reason why they are good women Prime Ministers is because they are practical, as mentioned in the previous theme. She further establishes positive aspects about women in political contexts, such as being “tough”, separating that concept as a masculine one since she mentions that “when a woman has a job to do she's tough and she sticks to it” and claims that may be the most female of characteristic.

A sub-theme emerged from the principal one, which is Margaret Thatcher's approach to political contexts. This subtheme emerges due to the difference in how MT refers to women in general and herself. In her own words, she was not necessarily peaceful when speaking; she was a good fighter in arguments, she was not guilty of lacking aggression, was determined to be heard, and was a reluctant butcher, which is a quality needed from PM according to the interviewer. These phrases summarize how she represented herself in discourse, in political contexts. She also argued that she was tough, like many women when it came to their children, and in those opportunities, no man is as tough as women in defense of them, and that can be the most female of characteristics, as mentioned earlier. Despite media suggestions, she was never close to a breakdown, and criticism became something she got used to. Lastly, when asked if she felt like a role model for feminists she did not consider herself one.

All of the above can be summarized in Figure N°4:



Figure 4: Thematic Map “Women do things differently” (Own elaboration).

N° Interview	Quote	Code
5	<p><b>Margaret Thatcher:</b> ...yes, I know, women are very much more modest in running for parliament than men</p>	More Women in Parliament
7	<p><b>Roy Plomley:</b> Well you're the first woman to become leader of a major British political party, how many women are there in the house now?</p> <p><b>Margaret Thatcher:</b> Oh, compared to a few we haven't go more than, than about twenty-five or twenty-six.</p> <p><b>Roy Plomley:</b> Is the number going up?</p> <p><b>Margaret Thatcher:</b> No, it hasn't changed since the 30s. It's, it's absurd when you think the number of women who have a really good training, so many more of them ought to come forward to offer themselves as candidate</p>	More Women in Parliament
10	<p><b>Margaret Thatcher:</b> Yeah we've got to have more women in parliament first.</p>	More Women in Parliament First
2	<p><b>Child (Linda):</b> Do you think there ought to be more women in parliament?</p> <p><b>Margaret Thatcher:</b> Yes, I do, Linda. I think we should have more than, fewer than thirty women out of six hundred and thirty men and women in total, and it's just not quite enough but, you know, whenever I go to political functions, you'll find that women are much more reluctant to ask questions than men and they tend to do all the practical part of politics, they raise money, they get up things like coffee parties fates bizarre, they do things for the elderly, etcetera but they don't take so much active part in the discussions, quite a lot of them go to local councils but it stops there, so I'd like to see a few more.</p>	Women not so active in political discussion
4	<p><b>Margaret Thatcher:</b> ...all the press was regarding me merely as a means of flushing out the next leader not of the possibility of being the next leader and I sometimes had to say to them look I'm nudging fifty, I'm no chicken, that's about</p>	I'm no chicken



	the time when you would expect a person who could be a leader to take over. [...]	
6	<p><b>Interviewer 2:</b> I noticed you were... excuse me interrupting you, criticized after the fall, a squalid tactic in the house, I think, yesterday because you raise your voice to a little shouty, and this is accepted from a man but obviously not so easily accepted from a woman.</p> <p><b>Margaret Thatcher:</b> Well, it's my voice. I think yesterday I had to raise my voice to be heard, and I was determined to be heard and say what I had to say but isn't it absurd?</p>	Determined to be heard
6	<p><b>Interviewer 1:</b> Nevertheless, Mrs Thatcher, I think that when you took office and you got this great position of power, leader of the conservative party, and you were a woman, it was a great search of interest in this country because we almost expected something very different to happen, a woman in power. Now, do you think you've disappointed people by not doing anything really different and by not, perhaps, putting a woman's quality into the job?</p> <p><b>Margaret Thatcher:</b> I thought the quality that was needed from me at that time was to try to heal the wounds, and there were some wounds. A lead of a party has to try to get the party together because, you know, political parties aren't just conglomerations of politicians, they're groups of people who join together because they believe in something, and the things they believe in are greater than the differences that separate them, and so, all the time we have to keep those objectives, and those believes in mind. I knew also that it was probably going to be a long hole and one of the things you must not do in politics is get to pick before is needed because you have to go on, day by day, by day, and you see, what we are doing gradually is tenderly gathering strength. And when I go and do walk about in town the response is marvellous particularly from the women because, you know, women do things differently.</p>	Women do things differently
5	<p><b>Margaret Thatcher:</b> [...] We have far fewer women candidates than men candidates, so it's not surprising that fewer get elected. There is</p>	Women have the abilities

	<p>an enormous ability there, an ability which could be tough for both congress and industry, and for political life.</p>	
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Table 5 : Number of the Interview, Quotes, and Codes from Theme 3.

When she talks about women in political contexts, several codes are grouped together, as there are several contexts in which she mentions this issue. On the one hand, there should be more women in parliament, but at the same time, ought to offer themselves as candidates, as can be seen in interview N°7. Another code that is generated within this theme has to do with the fact that women in political contexts, apart from being modest about running for office, are not very active in political discussions when they are elected, which can be seen in interview N°2. However, despite being modest, mentions how women possess the ability to be in political life, as can be seen in interview N°5.

Finally, as mentioned before, when she refers to herself in political contexts, there is a little nuance with respect to women in the third person. She says that (she) is determined when trying to be heard, that she is no chicken, and that she is very good in argument, among others already mentioned. Some of these examples can be seen in interview N°4 and N°6.

Although in the previous theme (5.1.2) MT mentioned that gender is not relevant but the qualifications are, on other occasions, she claims that women have their own approach to political affairs, and also lists her view on the characteristics of women in these contexts. However, adds more characteristics to her own approach, which again gives hints on her self-representation.

#### **5.1.4 “People don’t elect men because they are superior”**

In this theme MT reflects her opinion about men in politics, how they differ from women, and how they sometimes end up doing what they say women stereotypically do. She suggests that women may not be as prepared as men in politics due to lack of experience, but they can cope better than men in different duties and tough decisions.

Men are limited because they discredit a woman by arguing that they are vain, weak, or emotional, yet they often end up doing precisely those things that are stereotypically assigned to women. For instance, in MT’s opinion, they do not make tough decisions and are unable to give their own view in matters so they carry notes with them to read. Because of that, MT believes that “Prima Donna” should be a masculine word instead of being associated with women.

MT denies the idea that people elect men because they are superior, and suggests that the world is not necessarily male-dominated, but rather male-dominated to some extent. Therefore, MT challenges the idea of “male superiority”.

All of the above is summarized with the codes in Figure N°5:



Figure 5: Thematic Map “People don’t elect men because they are superior” (own elaboration)

The next table serves to illustrate how these codes appeared from the interviews and then were merged into a theme:

N° Interview	Quote	Code
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4	<p><b>Margaret Thatcher:</b> Well the extraordinary thing is, it is different being leader of the opposition, all the decisions ultimately come to you all the tricky decisions and the really difficult thing of man management and I say that as a woman, uh, it's you know I'm coming to the conclusion, it's easier to manage ladies than it is to manage men, prima donna is a feminine word, it's a great mistake, it should be a masculine one ha, ha, ha.</p>	<p>“Prima donna” should be a masculine word</p>
13	<p><b>Terry Wogan:</b> They don't, they don't seem to make any concession to the fact that you're, you're a woman...</p> <p><b>Margaret Thatcher:</b> Oh no, why should they? and I don't make any concession to the fact that they're men.</p>	<p>No concession with the fact they are men</p>
6	<p><b>Margaret Thatcher:</b> ...For the world in which my children will want a house, have their families and grow up, and I think there is this basic difference between women's approach and men's approach.</p>	<p>Women's approach versus men's approach</p>
14	<p><b>Brian Lamb:</b> Quote: "My experience is that a number of the men I have dealt with in politics demonstrate precisely those characteristics which they attribute to women: vanity and an inability to make tough decision." Why did you want to write that?</p> <p><b>Margaret Thatcher:</b> Because it was true. I often found them much more vain than we were. I think I was very practical, and so were my women colleagues. It wasn't things that mattered for my reputation, it was what I could do which mattered to our country. So, I thought they, they do attribute women, they say to women, "You are vain," but I don't think we were. I think we were much less vain. And they often attribute to women the incapability of making tough decisions. It was they, I found, who weren't able to make the tough decisions, and often they couldn't bear it when I made it.</p>	<p>Men don't make tough decisions</p>
5	<p><b>William F. Buckley Jr.:</b> Excuse me Mrs Thatcher, but isn't a logical consequence of what you just said, that there are very few competent women in England.</p>	<p>People don't elect men because they are superior</p>

	<p><b>Margaret Thatcher:</b> No, not at all.</p> <p><b>William F. Buckley Jr.:</b> Because there are very few women politicians, and If everybody proceeds to elect people with any reference of sex, it must be that they choose men ninety-nine per cent of the time because they are superior</p> <p><b>Margaret Thatcher:</b> No, I'm afraid, I'm afraid that women are...</p>	
4	<p><b>Jimmy Young:</b> Yes, I mean, do you have to be at all careful of the way in which you, I was going to say play the fact that you're a woman? I don't quite, that's not quite the phrase that I want but, uh, you have to be careful not to overplay it presumably.</p> <p><b>Margaret Thatcher:</b> Yes, people expect you to behave in a certain way, uh, if, for example, you refuse to go on and do a program for very good reasons they say well, was it for emotional reasons men are very limited in their views about women, Jimmy, very limited indeed.</p>	Men are limited

Table 6: Number of the Interview, Quotes, and Codes from Theme 4.

As mentioned earlier, MT said on some occasions that men have characteristics that they themselves attribute to women and this can be seen in interview N° 14, that's why "prima donna" should be a masculine word.

In addition, as men do not make any concessions with the fact that MT is a woman, she does not make any concessions or distinctions with the fact that they are men, therefore, she would not expect any special treatment. This can be seen in interview N°14 with the phrase "why should they?".

When she refers to women's approach and its difference with men's approach in politics, she means that women think about the future of their children when they work in politics, i.e., in the long term future, unlike men (Interview N°6). On the other hand, as mentioned above, she also claims that men are much more vain than women and are unable to make tough decisions, which can be seen in Interview N°15. On some occasions, she also criticizes and mocks men by saying that men are limited in their views (Interview N°4).

MT establishes a difference between women in political contexts and men in political contexts. Even when she states that they look at the person and not the sex, on different

occasions criticize men because they criticize women and it is men who are not able to carry on tough duties, for example. When MT denies that people elect men because they are superior, questions the idea of “male superiority” and establishes differences between genders as she does not say “the person”.

The themes presented in the current section reflect in thematic patterns how MT establishes gender in self-representation discourse.

## 5.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

In the following extracts, semantic, pragmatic and syntactic features are evaluated when MT addresses gender from a self-representation perspective. The interviews have been organized into four different forms of self-representation with extracts of them in each of the four categories:

### 5.2.1 Self-representation in the first person

In these interviews, MT refers to herself in the first person, either by the use of pronouns or because of contextual reasons:

#### Interview N°2:

**Val:** Graham Hill said last week he didn't think there'd ever be any women Grand Prix racing drivers because **they weren't aggressive enough. You don't think that's the reason, do you? Lack of aggression in women.**

**Margaret Thatcher:** I wouldn't say that I was guilty of lack of aggression sometimes.

MT upholds her possession of aggression and challenges the assumption of a third person by avoiding the stereotype assigned (in the use of “they” by Val). It is believed that women are not aggressive enough, but she represents herself as someone that is not part of that stereotype by using the pronoun “I”, instead of “we” for women in general. The use of the modal verb “wouldn't” may indicate that there was a possibility assigned to women that does not correlate with her reality. Because of the choice of words, it seems that she tries to attenuate the use of “aggression” as she did not reply “I am aggressive” directly but mentions that she was not guilty of a lack of aggression. When talking about herself, gender (or what is assumed to be typical representation of women) is not a limiting factor. Finally, the use of “sometimes”

implies that the lack of aggression is not an absolute characteristic but varies depending on the situation.

#### Interview N°2:

**Child (3):** You said that women should be, should go more into politics, but I don't think so, I think so because, I, like a person, a man argues against a woman **she won't really have the chance of fighting back as she is a woman.**

**Margaret Thatcher:** Oh my dear, yes. I, I, I'm quite a good fighter in argument, and some women are very argumentative, you know? and might even win. I don't think that anyone would say that either Barbara Castle or myself lack debating fire. I think **you might be thinking that on the whole women perhaps are not as aggressive but there are some of us in politics who've had to learn to stick out for ourselves and do.**

In this instance, unlike the previous extract, MT uses a more direct lexical choice to say that “she is” a good fighter and reinforces it with the intensifier “quite” when the child in the interview makes an assumption about women being unable to fight back because of their gender. To avoid the generalization made by the child, generalization that may include her, she reorientates his opinion by using the modal verb “might”. Nevertheless, she makes a distinction as for women in general and herself since she is, and only some women are good fighters. Later, she says again “some of us” implying that she partially agrees then with the assumption because some women are unable to fight back but she is part of the category of those who can fight back. Again, gender, or being a woman as is traditionally understood and present in the presupposition of the child interviewer, is not a limitation. The child by omitting characteristics of being a woman, it could be assumed that he considers they would be weak.

#### Interview N°4:

**Jimmy Young:** Can I ask you what will you miss most about the Ted Heath era? if anything that is.

**Margaret Thatcher:** Well the extraordinary thing is, it is different being leader of the opposition, all the decisions ultimately come to you all the tricky decisions and **the really difficult thing of man management and I say that as a woman, uh, it's, you know, I'm coming to the conclusion, it's easier to manage ladies than it is to manage men, prima donna is a feminine word, it's a great mistake, it should be a masculine one ha, ha, ha.**

She makes an omission, since she does not respond directly to the question and does not mention what she will miss most about Ted Heath, instead, she mentions what is difficult

in exercising her role as leader, which is man management. This may imply either that she will not miss Ted Heath, or perhaps that it was easier for a man than she as a woman to manage men. She supports the latter statement by saying that “prima donna” should be a masculine word. A prima donna person is someone who demands attention, therefore, by the use of these lexical choices, she is implying that the stereotype existing towards women being “prima donna” should be used with men. Besides, she also mentions that it is a mistake to consider “prima donna” as a feminine word, because women are easier to manage, which indirectly puts women in positive terms and men in negative terms (us vs. them). However, it may also imply that women are more submissive and do not take an active part in the discussion, as mentioned in interview N°2. Despite the difficulties of men’s management, she asserts her power as she also takes this issue with irony by mocking men.

#### Interview N°4:

**Jimmy Young:** Nonetheless, I mean, a hard decisions have to be made, don't they? and although you're not a prime minister yet it is true to say, **they do say that the Prime Minister needs to be a good butcher**, I mean, um, would you say that you're a good butcher?

**Margaret Thatcher:** **I don't know whether I'm a good one, I'm a reluctant one but I recognize that this is one of the tests of leadership**, I had a horrid day yesterday having to tell people whom I could see the disappointment written in their faces but nevertheless, I had to do it, **I wouldn't be fit to be a leader otherwise** but each and every one of them had a reason and they were all big enough to understand that reason and to accept it generously although they were disappointed.

The interviewer introduces the notion that Prime Ministers are expected to be good butchers, which metaphorically refers to display toughness. MT represents herself as a “reluctant” butcher, which means that she persists with her ideas, despite acknowledging the expectation that a Prime Minister needs to make tough decisions. Besides, she does not deny the assumption that Prime Ministers need to be “butchers” in politics as mentioned by the interviewer, which may imply that she agrees with this affirmation. However, she mentions that she “had” to do it, as something mandatory and a necessary step to fit as a leader. Even though those contexts are challenging and horrid, and constitute “tests” of leadership, she did it, because that is what a leader has to do, which portrays an image of self-confidence. She also says that “she wouldn’t fit”, which implies established boundaries that she is able to fulfil.

#### Interview N°4:



**Jimmy Young:** Margaret, the fact that you're a woman has played a big part in the election, in the coverage of the election, let's put it that way, **do you think things would have gone differently at all had you been a man?**

**Margaret Thatcher:** I think that's difficult to say, in a curious way, I think in the first ballot **it was not an advantage**, in the second ballot, it might have been an advantage because people said "look if we're going to have something different let's have someone who's really different and if it's a woman it must be obviously different", and you often find that **as a woman in a job, it's a disadvantage at first but once you've got the job it can be a tremendous advantage.**

Even though she considers herself as not lacking aggression and reluctant butcher, the fact of being a woman does not constitute an "advantage" in elections, this implies her awareness of the difficulties women face to get involved in male-dominated spaces such as political ones, as she also describes that as something that happens "often". In the second ballot, she is not sure either if it was an advantage to be a woman as she uses the modal verb "might" but does not say that it was. She does not mention it directly as she is using the second person pronoun in "you often find" instead of "I often find", but it may be inferred that she is not only aware of the difficulties that women face but she has experienced them herself.

#### Interview N°4:

**Jimmy Young:** How do you feel deep down about, I mean, all politicians, especially when they rise to eminence get **personal attacks** upon them, don't they? I mean, it's to be expected. Now, how do you feel about that? because **it must be extremely painful at times**

**Margaret Thatcher:** **It is very painful and you do have to build up a bit of an armour and never be misled by the armour, you have to have an armour on top because you're a bit soft and sensitive underneath**, and sometimes the armour is pierced but it's one of the things that you have to learn to accept. In the end, what is important is that your decisions are such that you can live with yourself at the end of the day. Some of them are tough but in the end, you've got to be able to convince yourself, well I did it because **I had to do it** and all things considered it was the right thing to do but they do hurt, they do hurt.

The interviewer presupposes that personal attacks are painful for her as he uses the modal verb "must". MT says that she is soft underneath but downsizes it with "a bit". At the same time, does not use the first person as "I am a bit soft" but transfers it to the second person "you". Nevertheless, she considers that what is important is to make decisions that "I had to do", in this case, the first person is used to portray someone who is able to make tough decisions, which may again assert her authority and self-confidence.

#### Interview N°6:

**Interviewer 2:** I noticed you were... excuse me interrupting you, **criticized** after the fall, a squalid tactic in the house, I think, yesterday **because you raise your voice to a little shouty, and this is accepted from a man but obviously not so easily accepted from a woman.**

**Margaret Thatcher:** Well, it's my voice. I think yesterday I had to raise my voice to be heard, and **I was determined to be heard** and say what I had to say but isn't it absurd?

**Interviewer 2:** ...it is was unfair, actually.

**Interviewer 1:** Nevertheles...

**Margaret Thatcher:** Uh, it is ridiculous, and I must get my message across as comes naturally to me.

MT seems to not care about the criticism she faced for raising her voice. In fact, she uses the first person on this occasion to say, "I was determined to be heard", and considers these claims "absurd", which assert her self-confidence.

At first, she does not refer to the statement that there are things accepted from men and not so easily accepted from women, and represents herself as "determined", but then retakes the discussion and says "Isn't it absurd?", the "it" representing the criticism she had as something absurd, and not the fact that there are differences in the acceptance of certain behaviors from men and women.

Then, the interviewer acknowledges this difference in accepted behaviors depending on gender, but MT again ignores that issue and mentions that it is something ridiculous and that her goal was to get her message across.

#### Interview N°7:

**Roy Plomley:** Now it's occurred to me, Mrs Thatcher, that **you must already have had to face some problems because of your sex**, they must have had to bend the rules a bit when you joined the Carlton Club.

**Margaret Thatcher:** They were very sweet about it. I **didn't join the Carlton Club as a woman. They said the leader of the party has always been a member of the Carlton Club and I don't think they recognize my sex.**

The interviewer assumes that she might have faced problems because of her gender and puts the Carlton Club as an example of a place in which they might have to change the rules because the Carlton Club has historically been an all-male place. However, and even though the interviewer brings up the topic of gender as other interviewers have constantly done, she evades that topic and replies that the Conservative Party did not have to bend any rules to get her into the Club: "I didn't join the Carlton Club as a woman". Even though she is a woman, it

seems that she abstracts herself from her gender, since she directly denies that the rule of “all-male place” was bent because of her, despite the fact she was in fact the first woman in history to be admitted. It is interesting to note that evades gender on two occasions, when she says that the “leader of the party has always been a member of the Carlton Club”, and when she says that “they did not recognize my sex”, ascribing a characteristic to others. Again, she represents herself as equal to men and is certain about the power she possesses.

#### Interview N°10:

**Miriam Stoppard:** One of your most famous sayings is that **you thought there'd never be a female Prime Minister in your lifetime.**

**Margaret Thatcher:** I, I did, I did, **I couldn't see people choosing a woman Prime Minister** but, you know, **we talk far too much about labels**, some people, you know, try to map out their lives. I can remember some of my young contemptors and actors say “I'm going to be Prime Minister”, that was the one thing I never said 'cause I didn't think I'd have the chance but I didn't, but just, just take what opportunities are available to and grasp them with both hands [...]

The interviewer brings up the phrase MT said when she was Secretary of State. Since MT said that she “couldn't” - a modal verb used to establish an inability to do something in the past-, imagine people choosing a woman in those times, implies her awareness of the prejudices people had regarding women in politics. In addition, she seems to dislike labels that attempt to map out lives based on gender, i.e., “female prime minister”. Her discomfort with labels implies that her gender is not a relevant aspect for her to highlight and less so in the performance of her position.

#### Interview N°13:

**Terry Wogan:** They don't, **they don't seem to make any concession to the fact that you're, you're a woman...**

**Margaret Thatcher:** Oh no, **why should they? and I don't make any concession to the fact that they're men.**

This short extract reveals once again that MT feels like an equal to men. The interviewer assumes that men have to have concessions with women. However, she replies with the rhetorical question: “why should they?”, which is a form of sarcasm, and also she does not make any concession with the fact that they are men either. Then, this implies that she puts

herself as an equal to men and represents herself as someone secure about the power she possesses without considering gender as a determinant factor.

#### Interview N°14:

**Brian Lamb:** Quote: "**My experience is that a number of the men I have dealt with in politics demonstrate precisely those characteristics which they attribute to women: vanity and an inability to make tough decision.**" Why did you want to write that?

**Margaret Thatcher:** Because it was true. **I often found them much more vain than we were. I think I was very practical, and so were my women colleagues.** It wasn't things that mattered for my reputation, it was what I could do which mattered to our country. So, I thought they, they do attribute women, they say to women, "You are vain" but **I don't think we were.** I think we were much less vain. And **they often attribute to women the incapability of making tough decisions. It was they, I found, who weren't able to make the tough decisions,** and often they couldn't bear it when I made it.

MT speaks about the characteristics men tend to stereotypically attribute to women, which are stereotypes that she considers men in fact have. She presents a dichotomy of "us vs. them" since she highlights good characteristics of women "I was very practical, and so were my women colleagues" and, on the other hand, the incapability of men to make tough decisions "It was they, I found, who weren't able to make the tough decisions".

She uses the pronoun "we", so she includes herself in the category of women, also she criticizes the inability of men to make tough decisions and proudly takes the first person "I" in "...when I made it" to demonstrate her power and her possibility to make tough decisions. Even when she downsizes the relevance of gender in other interviews, it seems that it looks with a critical perspective when the assumptions made by men are unfair and quickly includes herself in the category of women by using "we".

#### Interview N°15:

**Stina Dabrowski:** Lady Thatcher, the Swedish people know you very well as a former Prime Minister of Great Britain. Who they don't know is the little girl Margaret Roberts who grew up in Grantham and they don't know the reflecting woman behind the face of power, now, you have described her in your book *Path to Power*, "**when I speak to men they very rarely like to admit that they have power and even less that they enjoy it**", what about you?

**Margaret Thatcher:** **But to be Prime Minister is to exercise power, you must be conscious of that responsibility,** conscious that there are people who don't necessarily agree with what you want to do and therefore the way in which you exercise power must come from strongly held principles translated into practical policy and then acted upon. [...]

MT, distanced herself from men as they are incapable of assuming that they have power. Instead, MT firmly affirms her power as she mentions the consciousness needed for the power that a PM exercises. She claims that power “must” come from strongly held principles. The use of the modal verb “must” implies that something is mandatory as if it were from common sense, which is in concordance with the powerful image that she has represented in several interviews.

#### Interview N°15:

**Stina Dabrowski:** But you have said yourself that you think that women are more vulnerable to personal criticism than men.

**Margaret Thatcher:** Many women are, I wasn't.

**Stina Dabrowski:** You weren't

**Margaret Thatcher:** I had a mission in life, I had a job to do, and believe you me when a woman has a job to do she's tough and she sticks to it.

**Stina Dabrowski:** You have been the most powerful woman in the world in the eighties, do you think that you've been a very important role model for feminists and women?

**Margaret Thatcher:** I don't know, Mrs. Gandhi, I knew, it's very interesting the women who got on in politics to the top often went to some of our College Oxford or to Oxford University, Mrs. Gandhi did, I myself did, Benazir Bhutto did, it's very, it's just something to note. **Did I think I was a role model? no. Frankly, the phrase “role mode” hadn't been invented then.**

**Stina Dabrowski:** So, you said that if you want something done, no, if you want something said you should ask a man...

**Margaret Thatcher:** ... if you want something done you ask a woman, that's quite right. **We women, I think spend less time talking and more time doing.**

**Stina Dabrowski:** Would you say that in your life as a political leader that you have been able to use your femininity to get what you want?

**Margaret Thatcher:** No, I don't think so, it never occurred to me that way. I use my arguments and maybe a certain passion because you feel things strongly then they do come out strongly but it never occurred to me to, to attempt to do, to use feminine wiles at all.

**Stina Dabrowski:** But do you like being a woman? I mean, do you like dressing up...

**Margaret Thatcher:** I enjoy being a woman, I've never tried the alternative and I don't want to.

In the previous paragraphs from interview N°15, MT represents herself in different manners, using the first, second and third person. First, the interviewer presupposes that MT, as a woman, is more vulnerable because MT said on one occasion that women are.

Nevertheless, she denies these assumptions and mentions that “many women are”, using the third person, but “I wasn’t”, using the first person. She reinforces her lack of vulnerability and affirms her self-confidence by mentioning that when a woman has a job to do, they may be tough, as she has been.

MT makes reference to other women who have been Prime Minister like her and stands out the fact that they also have background studies at Oxford University. It seems that she reorientates the focus from herself to other successful women and downplayed the observation from the interviewer. Nevertheless, it may be inferred that she never thought of herself as a role model for women anyway because, even though the term did not exist, she could have said, for example, that she was “an inspiration” to other women and did not, which implies a resistance to adopting that label and avoids again the matter of gender that the interviewer brought.

The interviewer, through intertextuality resources, mentions a famous phrase by MT. MT claims that women spend less time talking and more time doing, which implies that men spend too much time talking and less time doing things. In this opportunity, she includes herself in the category of women, as she says “we women”.

Later, she uses the lexical item “feminine wiles”, when referring to using femininity to get things. This selection of words may imply self-confidence and a negative evaluation of using femininity to get what is needed in political contexts. The self-confidence is manifested when she says that she rather uses her arguments and not such “wiles”. Also, justifies her discourse that may be expressed “strongly” by saying that the things (presumably beliefs) are felt strongly, perhaps implying an ideological stance. She also creates a dichotomy between using feminine wiles versus having a strong position when using her own arguments and positions herself within the second option.

The last question of this extract of the interview denotes assumptions from the interviewer, who apart from asking MT if she likes being a woman, also wanted to ask if she liked to dress like one. The question of the interviewer is full of assumptions, as presupposes that MT may not be comfortable with her gender perhaps because she does not use “feminine wiles” or because she possesses a strong discourse. In this interview, MT represents herself with self-confidence as she is not vulnerable and has strong discourses because of her strong beliefs. Enjoys being a woman but does not feel or does not want to be a role model to them.

In this section, MT’s discursive gender self-representation was mainly represented by including herself in the category of women. What can be highlighted here is the fact that she includes herself as a woman and not as a “person”, and in general terms, refers to her gender

in positive terms. When talking about herself, reflects self-confidence and mainly asserts the power she in fact possesses, and it kept that way from the first to the last interview, that is from the beginning to near the end of her political career.

### 5.2.2 Housewife self-representation

In these interviews, MT represents herself and women as housewife:

#### Interview N°1:

**Journalist:** There's been universal praise for your performance yesterday, talk of the frontbench, how do you feel about that?

**Margaret Thatcher:** Well, I think we'll just try to be a very good backbencher first. Certainly, **until these two are a little older I couldn't take on any more political responsibilities**, these responsibilities are quite enough.

When MT talks about her children, she uses a metaphor by referring to them as “these responsibilities”. As she nominalizes them as “responsibilities”, may allude to the role of women in the care of the children. Then, saying that she “couldn't” take any more responsibilities implies how relevant is to her maternity as her duty because, as the use of the modal verb “couldn't” suggests, there was no possibility to do anything else. Therefore, she projects herself as a housewife.

#### Interview N°1:

**Journalist:** Have you been **able to combine your political life with looking after a family, running a home?**

**Margaret Thatcher:** Well, **I mainly do the catering** here, **I like cooking and I do the shopping** and always a big batch of cooking at the weekend [...]

The interviewer asks questions with gender-related presuppositions based on assumptions about women's roles and responsibilities. The interviewer assumes that it is her job to run a home because he does not ask whether she does it or not, only asks how she is able to do both things. Nevertheless, MT's response seems to support such a presupposition that taking care of the house, the children and cooking are women's roles, as she says “I like

cooking”, which also may imply that she perceives women as domestic workers. Again, the image of the housewife is projected.

### Interview N°3

**Anthony King:** When you have a weekend free and don't have a large number of speaking engagements, how do you spend it? in London?

**Margaret Thatcher:** No, we go, we tend to go down to Kent on the odd occasion when we have a weekend free, it occurs about once in four, once in five weekends, so we have a small flat there. Usually, and well one reads because it is nice just to sit back and read sometimes, political reading sometimes, it's general reading or if you're wanting to empty your mind of problems I do read the latest detective story which is a marvelous way of relaxing **but usually, there's something to be done, you see, this is one of the differences between men politicians and women. When I have time off I have to look around the house and think well I must get that done, and that done, and that done.** [...]

She states that when she has free time, there's always something to be done in the house. The latter implies the gender roles culturally assigned to women as domestic workers who have to take care of the house duties since she also mentions that that is the difference between men and women politicians. Men “must” not do these things, accepting the reality that men do not face domestic work. She uses the modal verbs “must” and “have” with the first person “I” in “I have to look around the house” and in “I must get that done”. Both “must” and “have” denote an obligation, which refers precisely to her consciousness that is women's duty. Nevertheless, she acknowledges that and again portrays herself as a housewife politician, as she combines the first person with what women “have” to do. Then, essentially represents herself as a housewife.

### Interview N°4:

**Jimmy Young:** Yes. Indeed, it's true to say that we've had quite a lot of uh, of uh... correspondence in from women who say they just don't know how you do it, **they don't know how you manage to run a home...**

**Margaret Thatcher:** No, well if I stop to think how I did it, I wouldn't know either but I do it the way they do it, **we just get on with the job in hand and somehow it all gets done.**

In this case, the listeners of this radio program assume that the woman's place is “running a home”, so it is hard for them to imagine how she is able to do both things. MT includes herself in the category of women by using the pronoun “we” saying that “we just get on with the job”. The use of the word “just”, may imply that is something that women are used



to. Nevertheless, at the same time, by also using the pronoun “we” she establishes that all women are able to get all things done, including domestic work, therefore, it may be inferred that she agrees with the listener that it is her role to do the domestic work.

#### Interview N°8:

**Jane Reed:** Good afternoon. Some of your senior colleagues have expressed, I think in public, or seem to be expressing some doubts about the value of wives working outside the home, surely **you can't actually agree with this.**

**Margaret Thatcher:** I think what some of us are very concerned about, and we've come across it, in **some women and young women wives almost feeling guilty if they don't have a job as well as running the home, that must never be one of the most important jobs in life** and I would say to **any women, she wants to stay at home and put absolutely top bringing up her children and after all, I didn't come into parliament until my children were six**, right, that is a very important job you can do, please **don't be deflected, other people want to do both things,...**

Due to doubts of other Members of Parliament about women working, MT does not reply if she agrees or not with her colleagues but says that “some of us” are concerned, which may imply that she is part of that group that expresses doubts about women working outside the house. However, uses an empathetic approach because expresses “concern” not doubts, which seems to be a euphemism in her discourse. Later says that the concern is with women who feel guilty if they do not have a job apart from running the home and establishes that that “must” never be the most important job, but the most important one is to run a home and bringing up children as if it was something mandatory to consider it that way. She shares her personal experience in which had to postpone her political career and prioritized her role as a mother until her children were six but even though she considers that staying at home is the most important job in life when she says “don't be deflected” supports different women's choices.

MT's response reflects a nuanced perspective on women's roles and choices, acknowledging pressures from society while supporting personal choices. She seeks to emphasize the importance of homemaking and childcare and represents herself as someone who did that.

#### Interview N°10:

**Miriam Stoppard:** You make it very hard on yourself but you made it even harder in fact because you then became an MP when they were six...

**Margaret Thatcher:** And I gave up the law. You cannot do three things in life, I would, you cannot build up is your legal career and be a member of parliament and run a home, **you can do two things and many men do two things, they have a business career and a Member of Parliament, a woman can do two things, you can have a constituency parliamentary and ran a home, you can't do three.**

MT recognize the fact that women can do two things, be a member of parliament and run a home, and compares with men also do two things. However, men are Members of Parliament and have a business career, and only women get to run a home. Once again, highlights the role of a housewife politician, which is how she represents herself as she speaks from experience.

#### Interview N°10:

**Miriam Stoppard:** In what ways does the fact that you're a woman affect the way that you see the job?

**Margaret Thatcher:** If you know that's a question I find very difficult to answer. **I've never been a man Prime Minister, so I don't know quite what it would be like**, but I do think **women take a slightly different approach**. First, women by their very nature, I spoke of the miracle of birth, I spoke of the birth of your children affecting your life more than anything else because **your children matter far more to you than anything that happens to you. Therefore, you automatically think long-term [...]**

In this extract, the interviewer assumes that MT's gender "affects" how she sees her job and again she avoids acknowledging this issue as something relevant. Then, MT does not reply about the way it may affect her but mentions that it is "difficult to answer" since she has "never been a man" PM, therefore, she excuses herself and avoids replying about how gender affects her because she has not been a man to compare. It may be inferred that she does not consider that there exists a woman's view and a man's view in the job of a PM. However, she mentions that "women", using the third person, take a slightly different approach, bearing a gendered assumption that women are mothers and that is what impacts their approach. When talking about herself, avoids referring to any gender contrasts in the way she sees her job. But it is interesting to note that what makes women hold a different approach, in MT's view, is their role as mothers, and even mentions that women are specialized in these characteristics when she says by their very nature: women give birth, which is a traditionalist view presumably related to her conservative ideology.

#### Interview N°10:

**Miriam Stoppard:** ...but I was going to ask you this, **most women who work do feel guilt about leaving the children behind** and when yours were six you became an MP, did you feel guilty?

**Margaret Thatcher:** **Yes, I made, I was, I was dead lucky**, everything in my life happened to go right. I'm the first to say that had I been chosen, to say, fight a Yorkshire seat and my husband had a job in Yorkshire. **I don't think that I could have left my home on Monday morning, come down to Westminster and returned on Thursday night, I was not that kind of mother.**

MT stresses how she fulfilled her role as a good mother. Even though she felt guilty at first, had the chance to stay with her children because she lived close to Westminster, but when she says that she “was not that kind of mother” reflects her opinion on women who do that and have to leave their children, as something negative, as if they were bad mothers.

#### Interview N°10:

**Margaret Thatcher:** [...] **Got to have a method will it be practical** and then you automatically even now I automatically, **if I'm entertaining people, it's a large automatic get up and clear their plates away or say “do you mind stacking?”**, because it's just second nature.

MT refers to women being practical, which on other occasions she has described as the ability to do things instead of just saying them. This extract reflects how she recognizes a “second nature” as if it was the second nature of women to attend in the house. Once again, displays her housewife self-representation.

#### Interview N°10:

**Miriam Stoppard:** Do you see any **contradiction in saying that women are equal the sex, the sexes don't matter, best person for the job, and then, saying that women have special knowledge, special experiences, it enriches their contradiction?**

**Margaret Thatcher:** No I don't, **I don't see any contradiction because I think they're two things**. The one is in your professional capacity and then there's another and your fundamental nature and there is and because of **the fundamental difference between men and women that does have an emotional difference**. First, as I said, we go through the miracle of birth in our particular near, therefore, to children, uhm, but secondly you know so often **women are left having to cope** and that has an effect because **women always somehow, if they are left to cope, can cope**, so there are these two factors in a way they're both related but somehow women cope and you know the whole world can be falling around your ears and someone will get up and carry on, well I better make a cup of tea now, come on just yet sit down, then come on get up, dust yourself down you start dusting the children now wiping their face, stopping their tears, finding a chair, “have you had enough to eat” or, and you start set about setting the world to rights again **but you can cope during a crisis**. I have often said it is, it is the daily, the ordinary daily load which, in a way, can take more out of you than a crisis because a crisis the adrenaline flows and the test is whether you can take

the ordinary daily responsibility and that, in the end, is what you have to do here and I'm always very pleased when people say to me but there have been many, many, **men who've come in and they've looked a bit more worn and torn after six years than you do**, and again, **I think, well, if you've been too looking after children when you're young and keeping a house going and everything else, you do just keep going and there is a difference between men and women in that way [you said they'll] and just be proud of it.**

The interviewer describes contradictions in MT's discourse because, in the first place, MT has mentioned that gender (or sex) is not relevant but the person, and later she says that women have special knowledge. MT denies this possible contradiction in her discourse by arguing that those are different things. Highlights that what makes women different has to do with the "miracle of birth", then, MT's view on women's approach is related to being a mother. Using the third person, she says that "women are" able to cope and dimensions this ability with the hyperbole that even when the "whole world can be around your ears" they are able to cope. MT also claims that one fundamental difference between men and women relates precisely to their coping abilities and later says "just be proud of it", as women should be proud of what they are capable of doing in coping. In the end, she balances a belief in equality with recognition of biological and societal differences between men and women but denies that there is a contradiction in her discourse and reflects herself as a "proud" housewife.

#### Interview N°11:

**Kid 2:** Do you think **it's harder for a woman to get into politics?**

**Margaret Thatcher:** I think it is harder, **it certainly is harder for a woman with a young family** because people would say but you can't leave your home, **I was lucky, my home was in London [...]**

The young interviewer asks if it is difficult for women to get into politics to which MT declares that it is in fact difficult for women with young families because of the prejudices of people against them for leaving their houses with their children. This implies that MT is aware of the difficulties women have to face in society. Nevertheless, she does not mention possible systemic barriers culturally constructed that discriminate against women who are trying to enter politics and the difficulty is for women who are mothers, supposing that women are mothers

#### Interview N°12:

**Margaret Thatcher:** ... I have learned to, um, cope with living under stress.

**Russel Harty:** Well, what is it then? the power, the...

**Margaret Thatcher:** Well, I don't know, I'm just often asked about this, it's a lot of training, it's a good deal of experience but perhaps, you know, **women are better at it than men, you know, when everything's going wrong in the home and the, the telephones ring there's someone at the front door, the piece of calamitous news has happened, life's just got to go on and you turn and do the next thing**, it may be making a cup of tea, it may be comforting someone, it may be getting the children home from school or getting them off to something they're going to. **Come what may we cope, we have to, there's no one else to do it so women will cope** and that perhaps is the answer.

MT assumes that it is something natural for women to cope with the house and the children, and the reason why women cope is that they “have” to, a modal verb that refers to an obligation, and includes herself in that obligation as she uses the pronoun “we”. The justification to cope is that “there’s no one else to do it so women will cope”, referring to the fact that women are used to the stress because domestic work is their duty and no one else - meaning men- will do it. She also compares women by saying that they are better at coping than men, implying an “us vs. them” dichotomy, affirming her view of gendered roles and portraying herself as a housewife able to cope.

#### Interview N°14:

**Brian Lamb:** I've got a lot of little things I wrote down, and I'm just going to read them to you and get your response. "Mrs Gandhi," meaning Indira Gandhi, "**was also - perhaps it is not just myth to see this as a female trait - immensely practical.**". Are only women immensely practical?

**Margaret Thatcher:** I think that **we tend to be much more practical because, in addition to doing the job as Prime Minister, there is usually a house to run, a lot of decisions to be made** and, therefore, you come to make the practical decisions quickly, keep everything tidy and keep everything within a pretty tight timetable.

The idea that women are practical, which is a theme very repeated in her interviews as we saw in the thematic analysis, refers to all the work women “have” to do and do. In this case, she includes herself in the category of women because of the use of the personal pronoun “we”. She portrays herself as a housewife politician as she did in her campaign, and proudly incorporates herself with this kind of woman as is able to do everything within a tight timetable, as if she were fulfilling a work schedule.

MT’s self-representation as a housewife seems to be crucial as it is something very recurrent in her discourse and is loaded with her beliefs on women’s duties in the household.

She represents this characteristic with pride, which may also be closely related to her conservative ideology.

### 5.2.3 Women in the third person

In the current section, different interviews of MT talking about women in the third person, abstracting herself from the female gender, were grouped:

#### Interview N°2:

**Child (Linda):** Do you think there ought to be more women in parliament?

**Margaret Thatcher:** Yes, I do, Linda. I think we should have more than, fewer than thirty women out of six hundred and thirty men and women in total, and it's just not quite enough **but**, you know, whenever I go to political functions, you'll find that **women are much more reluctant to ask questions than men and they tend to do all the practical part of politics**, they raise money, they get up things like coffee parties fates bizarre, they do things for the elderly, etcetera **but they don't take so much active part in the discussions**, quite a lot of them go to local councils but it stops there, so I'd like to see a few more.

MT refers to women in the third person “women are”, as she was not part of that category. Later she says that “they” referring to women as well. It is interesting to note that she does not include herself in this category while she makes appreciations about women in politics like: “women are much more reluctant to ask questions” and “they don't take so much active part in the discussions”. Both appreciations imply that she does not consider that she performs her role like the other women. Besides, she uses the adversative conjunction “but” on two occasions, and this type of adversative conjunction serves to contrast the previous idea with what is mentioned later. In this case, in recap terms, more women are needed in parliament “but” they are reluctant to ask questions, and women tend to do all the practical jobs “but” don't take an active part in discussions. Both cases imply that women do not participate in what is important in political contexts. Then, she abstracts herself from this type of woman.

#### Interview N°2

**Child (Roger):** Would you like to see a woman Prime Minister?

**Margaret Thatcher:** I think it **depends on who the person is. I don't think there will be a woman Prime Minister in my lifetime. And I don't think it depends so much on whether it's a man Prime Minister or a woman Prime Minister as whether that person is the right person for the job at that time.** And it's very difficult to foresee what may happen many, many years ahead.

Even though she mentions that it does not depend so much on gender but the right person for the job, downplays the possibility that a woman could occupy that position. Additionally, she starts with the statement “I don’t think there will be a woman Prime Minister in my lifetime”, which denotes a negative predisposition towards the chance that a woman could be elected. It seems that again she abstracts herself from supporting her own gender, perhaps because is aware of the societal barriers that women face. At that point, she was in a political position of power as Secretary of State but it was a designated position.

#### Interview N°2:

**Val:** Do you think it's what you were saying earlier, just prejudice in the mind of the public, or do you think...

**Margaret Thatcher:**Not wholly ...

**Val:** ...or do you think it's because women don't have the desire to become Prime Minister?

**Margaret Thatcher:** ...let's be. It's not wholly prejudice, let's be fair. I **don't think we have enough women with the same range of experience in politics as men have had** and it is important, **whoever becomes Prime Minister, that they've had quite a wide range of experience** in top political jobs. And we haven't yet worked up sufficient women...

In this extract, MT denies prejudice against women but claims that they do not possess the experience required. She also refers to women in the third person in “we haven’t yet worked up sufficient women”, implying that she is not part of this unprepared group of women. In this opportunity, MT takes distance from women as well.

#### Interview N°4:

**Jimmy Young:** Yes, I mean, **do you have to be at all careful of the way in which you, I was going to say play the fact that you're a woman?** I don't quite, that's not quite the phrase that I want but, uh, you have to be careful not to overplay it presumably.

**Margaret Thatcher:** Yes, **people expect you to behave in a certain way**, uh, if, for example, you refuse to go on and do a program for very good reasons they say well, was it for **emotional reasons, men are very limited in their views about women, Jimmy**, very limited indeed.

MT agrees with what is argued by Jimmy and acknowledges the need for caution, because “people expect you to behave in a certain way”, which implies that MT is aware of gender stereotypes too, as shares a personal experience in which she may have had very well

supported reasons but people, particularly men, assume it was for emotional reasons. In this case, she makes reference to her gender but not in the first person but in the second with the use of “you”, as she says “expect you to behave in a certain way”.

#### Interview N°4:

[...]

**Margaret Thatcher:** I'm sure she was, she's a very hard worker and she's done well so she comes on... **Jimmy we're not getting nearly enough women into parliament, they're not coming forward and standing as candidates nearly enough, if we had more, those of us who were there wouldn't be as conspicuous and it would help.**

Even though she submits the idea that not enough women are getting into Parliament, she implies that is their fault, because “they’re not coming forward and standing as candidates”. By placing the responsibility principally on women, she leaves aside stereotypes women have to face and their position of disadvantage in political contexts. MT also uses the pronoun “they” to talk about women in the third person, which creates a sense of detachment, as if she was not part of that category: “they’re not coming”. Additionally, it can be inferred by the use of the lexical item “conspicuous”, that her preference for increased female presence in politics is not necessarily to enhance equality in representation, but rather to create a more homogeneous space where the presence of women does not stand out too much.

#### Interview N°5:

**William F. Buckley Jr.:** Excuse me Mrs Thatcher, but **isn't a logical consequence of what you just said, that there are very few competent women in England.**

**Margaret Thatcher:** No, not at all.

**William F. Buckley Jr.:** Because there are very few women politicians, and if everybody proceeds to elect people with any reference of sex, it must be that they choose men ninety-nine per cent of the time because they are superior

**Margaret Thatcher:** No, I'm afraid, I'm afraid that women are...

**Jeff Greenfield:** He said that.

**Margaret Thatcher:** ...yes, I know, **women are very much more modest in running for parliament than men.** Nothing like as many of them put up, as you know. **Now that's not because the ability isn't there and many of them are tied up with bringing up families, etcetera,** and there therefore out of the political scene for quite a time. **We have far fewer women candidates than men candidates, so it's not surprising that fewer get elected. There is an enormous ability there,** an ability which could be tough for both congress and industry, **and for political life.** We have far more in local affairs because is not so difficult for them geographically to get their local authority as it is to spend midweek in London. But I wouldn't put anything like the stress on these questions that you, I...



In general terms, there is a defense of women in MT's words, as she claims that there is an "enormous" ability that could even be "tough" for political life. Besides, MT justifies women not running for parliament since they are "modest" and are "tied up with bringing families". In this opportunity, MT shows awareness of the little possibilities women have to run for political responsibilities, and it seems that this defense may be triggered by the assumptions made by the interviewer who claimed that there are few "competent" women. Nevertheless, she speaks of women in the third person, as if she had not faced these difficulties.

### Interview N°6

**Interviewer 2:** How do you manage to remain feminine as you are in a male-dominated world?

**Margaret Thatcher:** We ought not to be male-dominated, you know...

**Interviewer 2:** It appears to be...

**Margaret Thatcher:** I'm afraid you are right, to some extent it is, but politics is about life, politics is the art of how we live together in society, and after all, **the greater numbers of society are women in fact.**

MT makes an omission and does not reply to the question about being "feminine" and claims that "we -including herself- ought not to be male-dominated", and "ought" as something mandatory that should not occur but seems to occur anyway in the interviewer's opinion. Later she accepts that "to some extent" there seems to be male domination in society, and as politics represents life and society, the "greater numbers of society are women", which may indicate that MT agrees with the idea that there should be a more equal representation in political spaces and not dominated by men. Again, she speaks about women in society in the third person.

### Interview N°6:

**Interviewer 3:** Yes, but I remember talking to Joe Greenman, on this program, and he said he wished that he could see a merging, he couldn't see it so far, a merging from women when they took over, yes he wanted equal rights, yes he wanted **equal opportunities for women but what he hoped was that they were going to come to the job in a different way from men**, he said no much evidence yet that women go tough like men, **they got party political like men** [yes] and that they were bureaucratic like men, and what a shame when they could bring something different... [do you know...?]

**Margaret Thatcher:** Do you know that Kipling's prime female of the speeches is more deadly than the male? [right...] and the time when she is tough, and the time when she is more deadly is the most female of characteristics in defense of her children, and anything and everything she wants for them. You'll see no man as tough as any woman is in defense of

her children and in trying to get what **she wants for them, and you'll see something else, which are often find, I think women are more interested in the longer term future than men, and I think it is because we are always thinking on the world in which our children will grow up.**

MT is indirectly criticized for doing politics just like men do by using intertextuality, that is, mentioning something another person mentioned in the same program. In semantical terms, she omits what was asked and answers the question by rephrasing it. Then, she says that “any woman” can be even tougher than any man when it comes to her children and that it is the most female of characteristics. In this case, MT presupposes that all women are mothers, therefore, their approach is very different from that of men because women think in the long-term thinking about their children’s future. The third person is used to describe women as “women are” instead of “we are”. Later she includes herself in “we are always thinking on the world in which our children will grow up”, which depicts a housewife image as earlier mentioned but as tough as she is.

#### Interview N°7:

**Roy Plomley:** Well **you're the first woman to become leader of a major British political party**, how many women are there in the house now?

**Margaret Thatcher:** Oh, compared to a few we haven't go more than, than about twenty-five or twenty-six.

**Roy Plomley:** Is the number going up?

**Margaret Thatcher:** No, it hasn't changed since the 30s. It's, **it's absurd when you think the number of women who have a really good training, so many more of them ought to come forward to offer themselves as candidates.** [...]

The lexical item chosen by MT, “absurd”, to refer to the number of women in the house, implies that it is inconsistent with what could be considered a reasonable number. Then, it is absurd that there are 26 out of 600 since it is a very low number. The aforementioned implicates MT’s acknowledgement of the underrepresentation of women and by saying that the amount is “absurd” and she may consider that as something unfair. Later, mentions that there are women who have really good training, which differs from what she established in previous interviews from her early years in politics, which may imply a change of her perspective on that matter. However, transfers the responsibility to women to offer themselves as candidates, and refers to women in the third person.

### Interview N°8:

**Gillian Peele:** Do you think the drag side, the sex discrimination act and the race relations act **have in fact contributed to the elimination of discrimination in our society?** and is there anything else that you feel **your government could do to help to eliminate discrimination? and you yourself would in fact want to do at this present juncture?**

**Margaret Thatcher:** I think perhaps they were the final thing you could do legally to try to do away with discrimination, I'm absolutely satisfied, there's nothing more you can do by changing the law to do away with either sex discrimination or racial discrimination, after all, **I don't think there's been a great deal of discrimination against women, for years you've been able to come into parliament, you've been able to be ministers, you've been able to do many, many things which not many women have taken the opportunity to do,** and I think really to try and get discrimination or prejudices, now, isn't ordinary human matter and **would help enormously if more women who have supreme education in universities actually came into public life,** for example, we have generation, after generation of university train women and very few of us have actually come into parliament, I could do it a lot more, you can do any more about it by law only by people take you advantage of the opportunities and do your way with discrimination by virtue of their own performance.

When asked if her government or she herself would be more helpful in eliminating discrimination, MT establishes directly that discrimination would not be eliminated just by changing the law and that might be the final thing you could do, which may imply her awareness of the fact that discrimination is built within society and constructed culturally, then, it is an "ordinary human matter", which will not change by changing the law. However, denies that there is a "great deal" of discrimination against women, downsizing discrimination and putting it as something not so relevant since women can apply for positions, to be Members of Parliament and do not do so, therefore, it is their responsibility not to seize these opportunities to overcome discrimination. This implies a denial of cultural barriers and prejudices that women face when applying for public positions. Also, MT uses the pronoun "you" instead of "we", which presupposes that she does not feel part of that group of women who have not taken the opportunities. Besides, she claims that women with supreme education coming into public life would help to overcome discrimination since they are trained women. This affirmation leaves aside women who do not have supreme education and wish to be part of this public life. Then, MT does not include herself in this type of women as she applied and took the existing opportunities and the other women have been able to do so and do not.

### Interview N°10:

**Miriam Stoppard:** Well now even in the cabinet there **you're still a one-woman band in the cabinet, isn't it?**

**Margaret Thatcher:** No, no, no it isn't. I don't know where people got this idea from that, that, **that they're all men, yes,** and believe you me they're not, **I wish they were a bit more sometimes but still no partly because I, we've always argued things through very much argue,** I think so and we still do, we still do.

The interviewer introduces the assumption that there would be an imbalance within MT's cabinet, isolating the female gender, to which MT emphatically disagrees and denies stating that the assumption is incorrect. Nevertheless, when she says that she "wish they were a bit more sometimes" indicates the awareness of gender disparity in the composition within her cabinet. MT questions the assumptions based solely on gender and dissipates the idea that there is male dominance. However, it was a fact that there were few women in the cabinet and did not include more.

These lexical choices used to challenge the assumptions could be seen as a rhetorical strategy to downplay her own significance as the only woman in the cabinet, and also refers to women in the third person as she says "they were a bit more".

#### Interview N°11:

**Kid 2: What are you doing for women? how are you helping them?**

**Margaret Thatcher:** Well, **we believe that women help themselves and we're trying to get more and more opportunities for them** and we have legislation which makes, uh, discrimination against women for jobs illegal but you know women are coming up and up and **they're taking much greater part in many of the professions than they used to** but we still have the same problem as you do, **there are not enough women coming into politics.**

MT uses the pronoun "we" to talk on behalf of the government, and in representation of the government, believes that women are able to help "themselves", then, apart from not helping women, refers to them in the third person. However, she does mention public policies that make discrimination against women illegal but "women are coming up", which refers to more women taking part in professions than they used to. The use of the adversative conjunction "but" may imply that the legislation mentioned is not enough now that there are more women involved. She criticizes that those numbers of women are not going up in politics as "there are not enough women coming into politics". In this instance, refers to women in the third person as well, estranging herself from that category.

In this section is important to note that MT abstract herself from other women, and appears nuances with other instances in which she has felt as part of that category and defended them. She constantly refers to women as "they" and blames them for not taking the available opportunities as she did and succeeded.

## 5.2.4 Gender-neutral self-representation

In this section, MT represents herself in neutral terms, by avoiding referring herself as a woman:

### Interview N°1:

**Journalist:** Doesn't get more difficult because you are a woman?

**Margaret Thatcher:** No, I didn't notice that. It rarely is, because of the quality of one's audience and the fact most of them have had more experience of doing precisely what you are doing.

When the interviewer asks if it was more difficult for her because of her gender, instead of saying “yes, it was” or “no, it wasn't”, she replies with the sentence “I didn't notice that”. With this selection of words, in pragmatic terms, MT is implying that is not something relevant to highlight, even though the interviewer presupposes that it was. She also says that “it rarely is”, “rarely”, understood as something infrequent, which implies that she only felt that way when it was a challenging context as she says, “quality of one's audience” and “experience”. These last lexical choices may be relevant to assert her self-confidence, despite her gender. In this case, the topic of gender is avoided.

### Interview N°4:

**Jimmy Young:** ...have people's attitudes changed toward you at all in the past week?

**Margaret Thatcher:** Oh, enormously and I'm told I've changed and even my husband says “you've got a new confidence” or he said I have changed over the last six months or so, I haven't noticed it but the great change really occurred about a fortnight before the ballot because **all the press was regarding me merely as a means of flushing out the next leader not of the possibility of being the next leader** and I sometimes had to say to them look I'm nudging fifty, I'm **no chicken, that's about the time when you would expect a person who could be a leader to take over and after that, they did begin to take me a little bit more seriously** and now they have all of a sudden changed attitudes and realized that **they must look at you for your own potential as a person and not as a woman leader.**

The interviewer has the assumption that she was treated differently before she was elected leader of the Conservative Party, to which she replies with the use of the adverb “enormously” denoting a great degree of something, in this case, people's attitude. She also claims how she was considered as “merely” a means to an end, but not as the next leader. The use of “merely” denotes how she was not considered important, and also may be inferred that

MT faced difficulties of being a woman in politics. This is reinforced by the idea that the press did not seriously consider her a candidate capable of being the next leader.

Later, MT uses a metaphor to refer to herself, “I’m no chicken”, challenging gender-related assumptions held by the press and the people. By asserting that she is not a chicken, she rejects the notion of being a coward and asserts her power in discourse. Additionally, she emphasizes that as she was nudging fifty (years old), she possesses the experience necessary to be a leader. This indicates her belief in having the required merit and experience for a political role, as she has mentioned in other interviews. She has demonstrated that gender should not be a relevant factor, as she highlights the need for others to consider her potential as an individual leader, rather than simply as a woman leader. Even when she faced gender discrimination by the press when she was a candidate, she downplays the role of gender, as gender blindness in representing herself.

#### Interview N°4:

**Jimmy Young:** And do you think **it's as easy for a woman to take that kind of action as for a man? or easier perhaps?**

**Margaret Thatcher:** I think it depends upon the kind of person you are and not really whether you're a man or a woman, I, I'm sure that Harold Macmillan felt every bit as much difficulty as I did when he had to change people.

Then, the interviewer asks if it is easier for a woman to make tough decisions (tough decisions mentioned previously in the interview), which may imply that tough duties are easier for women perhaps because they would not receive the same treatment as men. She denies this assumption by saying that it depends upon the kind of person you are and not really whether you're a man or a woman, which implies that either men and women may face the same difficulties. She supports her argument by comparing herself with Harold Macmillan to eliminate assumptions regarding her gender, because it may be as difficult for both. Then, it is not a gender-determined issue in her view. MT downplays the role of gender and highlights personal characteristics; she also asserts that difficulties are not tied to gender and positions men and women as equals. Then MT minimizes gender-based differences.

#### Interview N°4:

**Jimmy Young:** Yeah. But not, uh, **you don't think they hurt you anymore because you're a woman than they would if you were a man for instance,** I mean, **you're warmly emotional.**

**Margaret Thatcher:** I tell you when they really hurt, sometimes, when I was at education and it was quite clear that a number of the commentators disapproved of my policies because they were fundamentally of a different view, and I had a lot of attacks then made upon me and I know some of my family then said “oh is it worth it, mommy”, and I said now “look, **that's what they're trying to do, they're trying to get rid of me by these attacks and they're jolly well not going to succeed**”.

The interviewer assumes that because of her gender personal attacks may hurt more as women are “warmly emotional”. MT’s response challenges the notion that attacks hurt her more because she is a woman as she shifts the focus from her gender to the context in which attacks occurred and the reasons behind them. Her response focuses on her professional decisions rather than her gender. MT represents herself as determined in the face of criticism, attacks did not dissuade her, even when her family questioned whether the challenges were worth enduring. Then, MT avoids framing the attacks in purely gendered terms and instead associates them with professional and ideological contexts, therefore, minimizes gender-based differences.

#### Interview N°4:

**Jimmy Young:** But indeed, when you were at education they very nearly did succeed, didn't they? **there was a time when you've admitted that you came very close to a breakdown.**

**Margaret Thatcher:** No, **never close to a breakdown.** Close to wondering whether it was worthwhile but never, in fact, did I actually, **would never was I close to resignation, never.**

The interviewer affirms as a fact that MT was close to a breakdown, to which MT emphatically denies. She uses an interesting syntactic order which is “would never was” before herself (“I”) to emphasize that she is not weak and never was close to resignation. It may be inferred that she felt offended by this assumption since she emphasized a lot of her claims using “never” four times. This may also imply that this assumption is gender-based and that is what she is against.

#### Interview N°5:

**Jeff Greenfield:** Or Hubert Humphrey, it's more up for everything. I'm wondering if in your own case, your reputation when you were a cabinet member with, **under Mr Heath's administration, the sobriquet was “Margaret Thatcher milk snatcher”** because of your objection to the free milk program, well if that **in your ideological state helps you within the conservative party overcome some of the stereotypical objections that might have raised to women holding office.**

**Margaret Thatcher:** No, would you be so very surprised if I said that, at home, on the hold, **we just look at the person [William F. Buckley Jr.: yes] and not necessarily the sex**, you would be, but **that's because you are a man, I mean, you are limited... ha, ha, ha.**

In this opportunity, the interviewer states that women face stereotypes to hold political office, however, despite the reputation she had for being a “milk snatcher”, he asks if it is due to her being part of the Conservative Party that helped her to overcome those stereotypes. MT denies his statement and asks a rhetorical question, in which at the same time, she implies that he probably wouldn't believe that the Conservative Party doesn't care about people's gender. In addition, she answers her own rhetorical question by saying that he would indeed be surprised to know that because “men are limited”, and followed by a laugh, which in pragmatic terms indicates an irony in her words. It seems that she does not consider that her party helps her to overcome stereotypes as if she denied the existence of them at all because it is the person that matters, not the sex. Then, she downplays gender-based assumptions.

#### Interview N°5:

**Jeff Greenfield:** ...when women run for office here it always becomes a major issue, and it seems that in your election it didn't, and I'm asking you...

**Margaret Thatcher:** Of course, it didn't, of course, it didn't.

**Jeff Greenfield:** Why “of course”?

**Margaret Thatcher:** We are very progressive in the conservative party; you know? Oh, but yes, but we are, does [William F. Buckley Jr.: everybody agrees that freedom in private properties is radical] at the the moment I think it's quite progressive to believe in private property as a fundamental right, and I do believe it a fundamental right in the backs of political freedom... but look, **we look at the person to see if they've got the abilities**, now, **I've heard this argument frequently that really “women are rather more emotional than men”**. **Really women are intensely practical, again, I don't mean that frequently, we are an intensely practical sex, we often get on with the job, we don't always talk about it as much as men we get on doing it...**

She does not consider that gender was a major issue, as she uses “of course it didn't” when the interviewer says that a woman running for office is a major issue because it is not something frequent. Then, she establishes that the Conservative Party is very progressive, and they look at the person who has the “abilities”, implying that she possesses those abilities. Later, with the use of intertextuality resources, mentions an argument that she has heard frequently which has to do with women being rather more emotional than men, a stereotype with which she disagrees. She states that women are very practical, distancing themselves from men who talk a lot about doing things while women do things. Also, when MT claims that “I



don't mean that frequently", implying that there are few opportunities in which she establishes a difference between men and women.

Then, as MT denies the interviewer's assumption and gives all the explanation of why gender is not relevant for her party but the person's abilities, denies gender-based assumptions.

#### Interview N°5:

**Jeff Greenfield:** It's just...

**Margaret Thatcher:** ...it amazes me that you regard me as a phenomenon, it really does. I'm just an ordinary politician.

**Jeff Greenfield:** No, no, that's not amazing, that's simple, objective looking, **first head of a major party in Britain is a woman in its history, it's a phenomenon, welcome, but a phenomenon.** What's interested me is that **it does not seem to have entered into the decision-making process when you took over the leadership of the conservative party, whereas here it is almost impossible for women to run for office,** in particular an executive office, which affects as what you now hold as the shadow Prime Minister, without that becoming almost a dominant issue, we've elected for the first time in America a woman Governor not elected on her husband's coattails and it was the, it was almost the only issue against her, and I...

**Margaret Thatcher:** Yes, **but** look, I was a Cabinet Minister, I was secretary of state to both education and science, it so happened that **I was, perhaps the only person in the cabinet at that time who had scientific qualifications and all of the people in my work within the scientific field saying "goodness, we've got someone who speaks the same language", there was no question "Are you a man or a woman on holding that office", it was a person who was suitable for the job.**

In this extract, MT describes herself as an "ordinary" politician, that is, with no special features, reinforces that idea with the adverb "just", meaning simply. The interviewer claims that is an objective looking at her achievement as for women in general is almost impossible to run for office. MT downsizes the importance of her gender by saying "the only person" accompanied by the first person with the pronoun "I", which implies that she considers herself someone even to men, as she is suitable for the job. The former, again posits her self-confidence, and gender is presented in neutral terms.

#### Interview N°6:

**Interviewer 1:** Nevertheless, Mrs Thatcher, I think that when you took office and you got this great position of power, leader of the Conservative Party, and you were a woman, it was a great search of interest in this country because **we almost expected something very different to happen, a woman in power.** Now, do **you think you've disappointed people by not doing anything really different and by not, perhaps, putting a woman's quality into the job?**

**Margaret Thatcher:** I thought **the quality that was needed from me at that time was to try to heal the wounds**, and there were some wounds.

MT uses the passive voice in “quality that was needed from me” and does not make any reference to gender. MT does not reply to the question, which may imply that she does not acknowledge that she is not doing anything different, or does not consider that she has to do something different but mentions what she thought was the quality expected from her, which is what she has done by “healing wounds”. Finally, she does not mention anything about any “women’s quality”, minimizing gender-based beliefs.

#### Interview N°9:

**Paul Jones:** There’s another question here now from John Cronin from Wimbledon, he would like to know **to what extent does your training in scientific method influence your style of leadership**.

**Margaret Thatcher:** Oh, I have no idea, no idea at all, I can only tell you in doing the job has been invaluable. **People tend to think of me as the first woman prime minister in number ten, in fact, I’m the first scientific prime minister** [...]

MT uses intertextuality resources to mention what other people have said to her about being the first woman Prime Minister and claims that she is the first Prime Minister “with scientific qualifications”. She highlights the idea that beyond the fact that she is the first woman Prime Minister, she is also the first scientist, which seems to be something more relevant to her. Besides, underlining the importance of her qualifications over her gender may imply self-confidence in male spaces and the downplaying of gender.

#### Interview N°10:

**Miriam Stoppard:** **You’re very much working in a man’s world, um, do you ever feel like an outsider?**

**Margaret Thatcher:** No, I don’t and **I think it is that having been trained for whatever subject I was in**, whether it was science, whether it was law, **I’ve always felt the equivalent of anyone else who was trained in that subject** and so I haven’t noticed it, it doesn’t, it doesn’t bother me. [...]

It is stated by the interviewer that she is working in a man’s world, implying that the world of politics is mostly male-dominated as there is low representation of women. Then, the interviewer wants to know if she has felt like an outsider in this male-dominated world. MT immediately rejects the idea of being an outsider and says “no, I don’t”. She emphasizes that

her competence and expertise have placed her on equal terms with anyone, so she feels like an equivalent to men and asserts her self-confidence. MT concludes by stating that “I haven't noticed it”, that is, she has not been bothered by any outsider status, reinforcing her confidence, and self-assurance. MT shifts the focus of gender categorization and highlights her professional competence and training as the defining factors of her identity. By downplaying the significance of gender and emphasizing her training and expertise, she reinforces the idea that qualifications and skills are what determines one's place in a professional field.

#### Interview N°10:

**Miriam Stoppard:** Are you excited there though by the idea that you are the first woman in number 10? is it still exciting?

**Margaret Thatcher:** I am terribly excited to be here, it is the most fantastic privilege, I still every time I come in, I am still thrilled to be here, still thrilled. I don't think of myself as the first woman Prime Minister, I am still thrilled to be the person who is in here.

In the same interview, the interviewer concludes by asking if she is excited about the idea she is the first woman to be Prime Minister of the UK, and she replies that she is thrilled to be the “person” who is there and does not think of herself as the first woman Prime Minister, even though that is a fact. MT again shifts the focus of gender-based categorization and underlines that she is excited to be the “person” occupying that role.

#### Interview N°12:

[...]

**Margaret Thatcher:** ... and then it so happens that you may think of me as the first woman Prime Minister here I happen to be the first person with a scientific degree and so here we've tried to get sculptures or pictures of some quite famous scientists, and as you come in downstairs there is a bust of Faraday lent to me by the royal institution, it should be up here but it came on a piece of granite that weighs three-quarters of a ton and that would have gone through the floor so it's on the ground floor, but a remarkable person to whom we owe so much.

Lastly, once again, MT mentions that people may think of her as the first female to occupy number 10 in Downing Street, but she is actually the first PM with a scientific degree, implying that qualifications in terms of merit and experience are more important than gender.

Gender-neutral discursive self-representation seems to be essential in MT as she is constantly asked about her thoughts on being the first female, which was a fact. Nevertheless, there is a constant downsize of her gender or gender blindness towards this topic. She prefers

to represent herself as a person with scientific qualifications rather than acknowledging and embracing the fact that she was the first female in history to become PM.

## **VI. Discussion**

This section will cover the main findings in regard to the objectives proposed for this work:

### **6.1 Analysis**

#### **6.1.1 Thematic Analysis**

It is relevant to note how the 4 themes that emerged after the thematic analysis are somehow linked between them: 1) Women are practical; 2) Importance of the person, not the sex; 3) “Women do things differently”; 4) “People don’t elect men because they are superior”. These themes are attached as they reflect MT’s views on gender.

In most interviews, MT was repeatedly asked how it felt to be the first woman Prime Minister, which is a major issue in the interviewers’ opinion. In those instances, MT would often respond with the same answer, saying “we just look at the person, not the sex”, which leads to the second theme. She also mentioned that women are very practical and accustomed to coping with the stress of managing a household, unlike men. This is where their difference lies. Men have a very limited perspective about women in politics and even accuse them of being emotional. But many times, says MT, men end up acting according to the stereotypes they assign to women. From MT’s perspective, women are not as they are portrayed (emotional, vain) but rather women can be tough, possess enormous ability, and do things differently, but not many of them have run for political positions.

The connection between these four themes allows us to reflect on the objectives of this study, which are related to the characterization of the discursive gender self-representation of MT, as well as characterizing the meaning patterns regarding gender, describing changes in MT’s self-representation in the different periods of her political career, and categorize the lexical choices, syntactic structures and pragmatic strategies.

Gender appears in the recurrent themes established from different perspectives. Firstly, she believes that gender is not relevant, but rather it is the person with qualifications that matters. Secondly, she emphasizes that women are practical, due to their housewife responsibilities and the things they “have” to do as women, such as running a home, managing a family, cooking, shopping and “get on with the job” Her own representation is based on seeing herself not as the first woman, but as the first Prime Minister with a scientific degree.

She portrays herself as tough, not a pushover, and highly practical. Therefore, even when gender is not a determinant factor in politics, she includes herself within these prototypical characteristics of being a practical housewife. Regarding progress, when analyzing the interviews chronologically, there doesn't seem to be a substantial change over the years. She repeats the same discourse regarding what women are capable of.

Then, the patterns detected in the different recurrent themes make it possible to see how MT reflects the construction of her gender in her discursive self-representation. She does so from different perspectives: women are practical, therefore she also considers herself a practical woman who “gets on with the job” and copes with stress; gender is not so important to her, therefore, she constantly uses the neutral word “person”; that women do things differently, even when gender is not important, there is a women's approach and it is related to the care of the children and the house and she is part of that category of women; finally, MT criticizes men and does not consider them superior because in many occasions, they are unable to make tough decisions, while she has been able to do so herself.

### **6.1.2 Critical Discourse Analysis**

In the critical analysis of discourse, the language was analyzed by looking beyond patterns and seeking semantic and lexical items, as well as contextual features in pragmatic terms, and on some occasions the word order, which were used as a resource to transmit gender stereotypes and power.

At the beginning of her career, she faced a lot of questioning because of being a woman. In the 60s one may assume that there were more stereotypical presuppositions regarding women in positions of power because it was a different society. In fact, her first televised interview took place because she had made her first maiden speech in the House of Commons and that was part of the news because it was not common to see women in those male-dominated contexts, and a woman like MT, who was able to perform a speech as many other men have, was something that stood out from the rest. However, when the journalist asks if it was more difficult because she was a woman she calmly replies “No, I didn't notice that, it rarely is”, so she implies self-confidence considering that it was not a more difficult task because of her gender, apart from ascribe characteristics to others as she did not notice that the audience saw her differently because of her gender as well, and that is a position that apparently kept until the last interviews. The assumption and stereotype in this case came from the journalist.

She constantly asserts her power by the use of different resources such as reformulating the interviewer's questions, comparing herself with other important politicians, stating that she does not waste time in saying things but does them, saying that she possesses scientific qualifications that allow her to speak the same language than many other men politician, by saying that "we ought not to be male-dominated", by using intertextuality and rhetorical questions, by affirming that she never felt like an outsider in a man's world because she was trained to be in any context. Therefore, what was mentioned before about the downplaying of gender and her constant assertion of power says a lot about how she sees herself and how she represents herself and her gender through discourse.

Another thing that can be highlighted is that she strongly believed that women's role is to be domestic workers, and she included herself as part of that category of women with those stereotypical duties, as could be seen in "I mainly do the catering here, I like cooking and I do the shopping and always a big batch of cooking at the weekend", or in "when I have time off I have to look around the house and think well I must get that done", and in "if I'm entertaining people, it's a large automatic get up and clear their plates away". This idea is strengthened by her frequent statements that women are practical, and they are practical for several reasons. According to her view: they (women) worry about several things at the same time and they are able to cope with them and the stress that that conveys, because they are used to that since is their duty to take care of the children, do the cooking, the catering, the shopping, and sometimes the phone is ringing and there is someone at the door, but women are able to deal with all of that because "there is no one else to do it for you". When she says that women are practical, she also takes it to the political arena, because as they are used to doing many things and coping with everything, they are able to make tough decisions and do things, not just say what has to be done but doing them, and that is one of the main differences she emphasis with respect to men. However, and as mentioned earlier, she also links this idea of "practical women" with being a mother, always talking about women and their children as if being a woman should be correlated with being a mother.

MT expressed various views on the role of women in politics. While she believed that there should be more women in Parliament, given that the current number of female MPs was absurdly low (less than one thirty out of six hundred), she also placed some responsibility on women themselves for not offering themselves forward as candidates, constantly using the third person for this purpose. On the other hand, when she was asked about the lack of women in her cabinet, which are designated by her, she suggested that "I wish they were a bit more sometimes", acknowledging the fact that there are few women, but also says that more women

should first be elected to parliament. During her time as the longest-serving British Prime Minister, only three women served in her cabinet, and this could be attributed to MT's perception of women as lacking in preparation compared to men, and not considering them as essential for work. Also, supported by the idea that they are generally more modest to run as candidates because it is they who have to take care of their children and the domestic work, as previously established.

Nonetheless, there appeared some contradictions in her discourse, even though she denies it in interview N°10 when the interviewer implies it. She acknowledged that prepared and suitable "people" are needed for leadership positions implying that gender is not a barrier to success, she also rejected the notion that men are inherently superior to women, as suggested in interview N°5. She emphatically denies this statement and says that there are women with tremendous ability but many of them are tied up to their families. It seems that most of the time she makes an effort to not consider gender as something relevant in the political field by denying that there are cultural barriers for women, or a great deal of discrimination against women since they are able to do the same things as men, even though it is their responsibility not to do them. However, when there appears a comment which precisely makes stereotypes visible, she stands out and talks about women including herself in the discourse with the pronoun "we", as in "we get on with the job" or "I had a job to do, and believe you me when a woman has a job to do she's tough and she sticks to it". So, it seems that when she feels personally offended makes a defense towards her own gender. These contradictions in her discourse may be due precisely to the conservative ideology that permeates her speech, but comments and attitudes upset her at times and respond energetically.

Another aspect that might be highlighted as something found in MT's discourse has to do with the antagonism with which she represents herself in respect to men politicians. Again, it has been said that she considers gender as not a relevant aspect of politics, but when it comes to men politicians, she criticizes them on many occasions and takes distance from their behavior. For example, she criticizes the fact that men are unable to make tough decisions, and they "couldn't bear it when I made it", apart from wasting too much time talking and not doing enough things. She directly says, perhaps mockingly, that men are limited, as they have a limited view of women. Lastly, she refers to men as "prima donna", as they look for attention, and end up being vain which is a stereotype they (men) attach to women. In her opinion, women do not necessarily lack aggression and not all of them are emotional, as it has been stereotypically suggested. It can be said that indirectly makes a defense of her gender when it comes to criticizing men.



I think she uses as a resource the distancing of women to be able to fit into this space that historically was and continues to be dominated by men, being very aware of the issues that women have to deal with because she herself has had to face them. She has a very strong conservative discourse and “meritocracy” seems to take that space in the sense that if she was able to achieve it, anyone can, especially taking into consideration that she did not come from a wealthy family background. She also has lived the stereotypes and the roles assigned to women because she has to dedicate her life and her free time to continue with domestic work, but she assumes it as part of her duties and not as something unfair and inequitable. In the development of her career, however, she did not make any significant contribution to the growth of women or even encourage them to run for more positions to advance in equality. She was 11 years holding office, the longest-serving PM and yet, she is criticized for leading just like men have and for “not doing anything different”. I think that is a biased way of looking at it also because she is called “a masculine woman” but she held historically masculine positions in politics, and that does not necessarily make her masculine, constituting a very gender-stereotypical assumption. She was tough, reluctant, and determined and those characteristics are stereotypical, and from a very binary perspective, associated with men, but she was not necessarily masculine because of that. Yes, I agree that she could have done more for women, but I would not call her a masculine woman either, because these are gendered expectations. She included only three women in her cabinet, possibly because she did not consider them to be as prepared, but maybe she wanted to stand out and be the only woman who was able to do these “masculine” tasks as well or better than men to prove herself.

The implication of this study, with respect to others that have been carried out on MT, has to do precisely with the last point. She was always criticized for being masculine, however, that also reproduces sexist discourses and stereotypes. It was a feat to become the first woman PM in UK history and also to be in office for 11 years and that fact, even from her conservative point of view, may have influenced indirectly to other women to dare to run for positions of power.

The objectives of this work have to do with characterizing the presence of gender in MT’s own representation, starting precisely from the premise that MT was the first woman in history to be Prime Minister but “ruled as a man”, as previous work established. First of all, it is important to mention that gender is indisputably present in her discourse, sometimes she speaks in neuter by saying “person”, but the truth is that she does speak of herself as a woman, and when she speaks of gender in general form it also serves to characterize her vision regarding the subject. She is a person who acknowledges and asserts her power by using the

resources previously mentioned for this purpose, and although most of the time she exerts a downplaying of gender, it can be appreciated how she constructs gender in her discourse either to represent herself and others.

All of the descriptions mentioned above about MT and her responses when addressing the topic of gender, varied from interview to interview. As aforesaid, on some occasions, she referred to women in the third person as she was not part of that category by using “they” or “women are”, and on other occasions, she put herself in the first person in the category of women by using “I” or “we” and somehow “defending” her gender. The semantic, syntactic and pragmatic resources were identified to support the discourse analysis, and she proved to be the reluctant person she described as there was not a significant evolution from the first to the last interview regarding gender.

## **6.2 Limitations of the Study**

The limitations encountered in the current work are correlated with, in the first place, the transcription of the interviews, since features such as intonation, and voice pitch rise for emphasis, were not considered and that may have given further elements to be analyzed that may have had another impact on the analysis. Also, as only some features proposed by the Jefferson Transcription System were used, perhaps it would have been of greater scientific validity to make a transcription with all the conventions established there.

Another limitation identified is that most of the interviews were video recorded, and just a few of them corresponded to radio interviews. The video was an extra feature that could have complemented the research through a multimodal analysis, in which semiotic aspects for the construction of meaning are reviewed and could also have further enriched this analysis.

Lastly, the selected interviews were only in the time periods before she was elected Prime Minister, months after she was elected, and finally when she resigned. It would have been interesting to consider an interview from the year in which she was first elected (1979) to be compared later with posterior interviews. However, it was difficult to find one that addressed the topic of gender.

## **6.3 Further Research**

Even though this work used metalanguage with linguistic theoretical bases, for a further study more features of this nature could be added to enrich and support this analysis even more.

It could also include aspects that were not addressed in the current work, such as hyponymy, metonymy, etc., and wider rhetorical aspects could be considered too.

On the other hand, it is also suggested to take the limitations presented in this work and take them to the analysis. Therefore, in the future, the analysis could be done with a more thorough transcription to highlight other aspects of the language such as phonetic aspects considering voice pitches, pauses and non-verbal features.

It could be interesting to consider the idea of including a multi-modal analysis as well, both to enrich the research and to take advantage of the fact that these are recorded interviews that are freely available to the public through the “YouTube” platform and relevant semiotic aspects can be considered. In this area, more interviews from other years could be added, considering the year MT was elected to collect her first impressions and her first confrontations with the biased questions she received.

## VII. Conclusion

The objective of this study was to characterize the discursive gender self-representation of Margaret Thatcher before, during and after her role as the first female Prime Minister of the UK. Two methods of analysis were employed to address this research objective: thematic analysis and critical discourse analysis.

Initially, approximately 30 interviews were reviewed, but only 15 were considered based on a selection criterion related to gender being mentioned in the interview context. Transcriptions of the selected interviews were made using the Jefferson Transcription System, and general patterns were identified through a thorough reading of the transcriptions. These patterns were then coded and classified into themes, resulting in four recurring themes: “Women are practical, they get on with the job”, “Importance of the person not the sex”, “Women do things differently” and “People don’t elect men because they are superior”. These themes align with the research objectives and were considered throughout the analysis process.

The second part of the analysis, critical discourse analysis, involved a meticulous reading of each interview to detect syntactic, lexical, and pragmatic elements and analyze the sentences both in their literal form and in their contextual implications. This analysis allowed for a multi-faceted examination of the research objective. The identified recurring themes shed light on how gender is represented in MT's discourse, while the critical discourse analysis provided insights into both the literal presentation and the underlying assumptions made in her discourse, particularly regarding gender. In this section, the analysis was organized into four different forms of self-representation: “self-representation in the first person”, “housewife self-representation”, “women in the third person”, “gender-neutral self-representation”.

Regarding the expected results, it was anticipated that MT would hold a very dismissive view of gender, and indeed, she repeatedly emphasized in her discourse that gender is not relevant when discussing politics. This was evident in one of the recurring themes identified in the thematic analysis and in the critical discourse analysis through lexical choices and contextual relationships. Furthermore, it was expected to find a discourse heavily influenced by her conservative ideology, which was also evident in her perspective on gender and how it related to her conservative viewpoint in considering women as housewives.

Unexpected aspects that emerged from the analysis included her critical view of men in politics, as she had been accused of being “masculine”, therefore, it was unexpected to face her criticism towards them. Another aspect to note was the occasional contradiction within her

own discourse. While she stated that gender was not important and that the focus should be on the person, there were instances in which she defended her gender and spoke positively about it, creating a dichotomy of “us vs. them” in which positive aspects of the in-group (women) were highlighted while negative aspects of the out-group (men) were emphasized.

In conclusion, through an exhaustive analysis employing two different methods, it can be established that Margaret Thatcher indeed conveyed the idea that she was not a pro-women woman, as previously noted by other authors, as her discourse contained numerous stereotypes reinforcing this notion, and it was mentioned to her from a critical perspective in some interviews that she had not done anything differently for women and that it seemed she governed just like men. Additionally, she placed great emphasis on merit, competencies, and experience as prerequisites for important political roles. Her expectation was that highly educated women could fulfill these roles, while less educated women were left aside. Her discourse did not acknowledge or consider the social inequalities faced by women to achieve those important political positions. It is important to note that her perspective appeared to be strongly biased by her ideology, which was something also anticipated. It can be inferred that she expected women to access positions of power based on their own merits, as she herself had pursued political positions from a young age. Thus, the notion of “meritocracy”, although not explicitly mentioned, emerged in her discourse to legitimize her opinions. Consequently, there was no analysis or consideration of systemic barriers or cultural constructions that have made it more difficult for women to pursue political careers. In terms of lexical choices, when referring to women as less capable and less prepared than men, she used the third person. However, when expressing positive aspects from her perspective, she included herself using the pronoun “I”. It is interesting to observe when and in what context she uses one or the other, and how it uses them along with words like “tough”, “practical”, “butcher”, “prepared”, etcetera.

This study contributes to the existing literature by providing a more contemporary perspective and further problematizing MT’s situation. Previous works on the topic of gender in MT’s discourse have concluded that she ultimately governed like men, reflecting from a binary perspective. It can be argued that she was labeled as “masculine” not only because she was tough but also because she occupied a space historically dominated by men. Perhaps she wanted to “masculinize” herself to be taken seriously, as she was aware of the difficulties women face in accessing positions of representation and power. Thus, she was tough, reluctant and determined, and those characteristics, as mentioned earlier, are stereotypical, and from a binary perspective, associated with men, which means that she was considered masculine

because of not being soft, calm, sensitive and other stereotypical assumptions towards women. On the other hand, it is a fact that in the exercise of her role, she did not advance a pro-women agenda, but this may be a characteristic of the Conservative Party, as they look at the person. Therefore, there is a lack of analysis or consideration of the systemic barriers and cultural constructions that have made it more difficult for women to access positions of power.

In conclusion, this study provides a comprehensive analysis using two distinct methods, which reveals that MT indeed demonstrated a lack of support for women's issues, as previously noted by other authors. Her discourse contained various stereotypes, and she emphasized the importance of merit and individual qualifications for political positions. However, she did not address the systemic barriers and social inequalities that have stopped women from getting actively involved in politics. This research contributes to the understanding of gender in MT's gender self-representation discourse from different perspectives and provides a basis for further exploration in this area.

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