FRAMING FEMINISMS:

FEMINIST CRITIQUES OF PATRIARCHAL NEWS MEDIA

by

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ABSTRACT

The thesis evaluates feminist media critiques in terms of their capacity for promoting sufficient systemic change to correct the patriarchal optic of hegemonic media institutions. It analyses how media interpret and frame feminisms and it probes the evolution of a feminist critique committed to producing a paradigm shift in news production.

Media critique traditions are reviewed primarily within the context of feminist interventions with the Canadian state. The development of these critiques is explored by extracting contributions from three theoretical frameworks. The thesis examines, in a first instance, feminist theory and its various conceptualizations of gender which have influenced political strategies. Secondly, features of the Gramscian hegemony theory are considered, particularly as they acknowledge the agency of social movements in the negotiation of both hegemony and oppositional practices, as well as the role of news media in the process of ideological hegemony. Finally, feminist contributions to communication theory are reviewed.

Subsequent to the identification of the theoretical constitution of a feminist media critique, the thesis correlates the evolution of this critique with analogous cycles in feminist epistemologies. It proposes that the direction of feminist analysis and advocacy related to the 'women and the media' question corresponds to initial stages in the feminist critique of traditional epistemology and could therefore be informed by the trajectory of this arguably more mature critique.

The thesis identifies within a feminist media critique, the tension between traditional empiricist values of dualisms and of objectivity and more critical analyses located in the social construction of knowledge. It points to the value of current liberal feminist interventions but sees their influence as confined within a transitional stage of deconstruction of sexist practices in media industries. It suggests that liberal feminism

must experience fully its inherent contradictions before it can assist the feminist project of paradigm replacement. The thesis argues that to achieve a paradigm shift in the news discourse, feminist interventions should proceed to the second stage of reconstruction, and mobilize for the infusion in media industries of a critical mass of female journalists articulating feminist politics.

DEDICATION

To Michael, Oliver and the memory of our son and brother, Nathan.

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INTRODUCTION

Personal experience in the women's movement inspired this thesis and yielded questions about the capacity of liberal feminism to achieve systemic change of the scope required to advance in any significant way the feminist project of dismantling patriarchal social relations. Are piecemeal approaches and reformist goals particularly vulnerable to cooptation within hegemonic institutions and therefore extraneous to any meaningful program of social change?

And more specifically, how effective are current feminist interventions within mainstream media in promoting feminist objectives? Indeed, this thesis represents an attempt both to locate within feminist theory and epistemology feminist interventions in changing media frames of women and the women's movement, and to assess these interventions. In the process, the thesis deconstructs feminist media critiques and examines the separate contributions of their theoretical lineage -- feminist, social-movement and communication theories. This return to theoretical roots is not self-indulgent. Like all social activism, feminist advocacy is subject to pressures of financial and human resources disproportionate to the enormity of its task. Between seeking innovative fundraising strategies and complying with the exigencies of existing funders, recruiting and training volunteers, attending to administrative and management issues endemic to organizational culture, as well as simply discharging their respective mandates, feminist organizations seldom have the opportunity beyond occasional strategic planning to seek theoretical knowledge that could enhance their advocacy and service work. This thesis seeks to correct this situation through both its foundation in theory and its infusion of theoretical observations into feminist models of media advocacy. I conceive of feminist theory as the repository of precise terminology and of models of analysis which lies behind feminist practices. Theory is logically primary: claims that media practices and products should include feminist perspectives could not

exist without critical theories about the social significance of media or about the content, social value and expressions of feminism. Excursions into feminist theories of media are necessary also if constraints of patriarchal relations within media are to be uncovered. The gendered structure of media can never be revealed by traditional investigative means to the extent that tradition is committed to the preservation of this very structure.

My academic work has been considerably enriched as a result of my tenure as National Liaison/Editor, and subsequently Executive Director of MediaWatch (1987-1991) and the possibilities this afforded me both to observe and to contribute directly to the development of policy and advocacy for realizing women's equality in Canadian media. The thesis represents an attempt to complement earlier personal political efforts, delving into critical theory as an adjunct to practice in part to explain shortcomings of feminist media critique and advocacy, and to suggest adjustments in strategy. Although I examine in the thesis feminist principles and analyses within the media critique generated by MediaWatch, I do so without regard to issues of feminist organizing. I concentrate primarily on the content of MediaWatch's work without reference to, and without implying disrespect for, the value of its original mandate, its organizational structure, its relationship to other groups in the Canadian women's movement or other organizational factors that likely influenced its policies and practices.

I note additionally that although I have to a considerable extent confined my research and analysis to a Canadian context, I have also made substantial use of American sources and references on the basis of the extensive infiltration of American media in Canada and overlapping Canadian/American media theories.

This thesis probes within three theoretical fields constructions of ideological frameworks. It does not claim, however, to cover the entire context and development of these theories. The first area of exploration is feminist theory with specific concern

for conceptualizations of gender within various feminist discourses that have served to define feminist politics and strategies, and as such form the content of claims for the infusion of feminist discourses in media. The second field is that of social-movement theories where I examine features of hegemony/counter-hegemony, such as the role of consciousness-raising and the marginalization of some variations of feminism, that make this theory particularly germane to analyses of the feminist movement. And finally, I consider within the communications discipline as well as the broader debates about epistemological issues, the influence of both gender and counter-hegemony theories on the evolution of a feminist media critique committed to changing media frames of feminism and to producing a paradigm shift in patriarchal, hegemonic media.

Two sustained arguments are pursued throughout the thesis and are overlaid upon concurrent analyses within each chapter. First, I denote how analytical frameworks are experiencing growth in the complexity and cross-pollination of theoretical positions. I underscore how ideology is eclipsing earlier orientations or boundaries, in the direction of expanded taxonomies and paradoxes. Secondly, I explore the contradictions within liberal feminism, and its radical possibilities.

The first chapter on the women's movement, feminist politics and theories considers the increasing recognition given by feminists on the role of ideology in the personal and social transformative nature of feminisms, and it unveils the evolving complexities of feminist political discourses on women's inequality. I initially sketch the history of the women's movement in the U.S. and Canada in what is generally recognized as the two waves of a protracted movement and I include an overview of the currents of feminism that have traditionally sheltered different intra-movement political strategies. Categories and typologies do not exist as entirely discrete and compartmentalized entities and I acknowledge that, for analytical purposes, my synthesis has ruptured historical periods and waves which may have experienced somewhat greater overlap and fluidity than the analysis might imply. The distinctions I

draw nevertheless are intrinsic to the discussion that concludes the chapter. I consider how the concept of gender -- as the foundation of feminist theory and practice -- is defined by different feminist discourses and how these varying definitions in turn have influenced the development of political strategies including those centred around media practices. Feminism is plurivocal: the analysis in this chapter identifies these diverse voices.

In the second chapter entitled "Social movement theories, oppositional practices and the media-movement dialectic," I explore the theories of resource mobilization and new social movement in order to highlight how limitations of these approaches are corrected in a theory of hegemony which better apprehends the function of ideology and more adequately acknowledges the agency of social movements in the negotiation of both counter-hegemony and hegemony. I thereafter punctuate the role of news media in the process of ideological hegemony that justifies their importance in examinations of social-movement development based on the Gramscian paradigm. Finally, I examine the influence of patriarchal relations on media institutions and their ideological work.

I outline, in the third chapter, media frames of feminisms and feminist media critique traditions. I describe studies of media representations of women and of the women's movement as well as the specific feminist responses they have provoked. I draw extensively on the contributions of MediaWatch to feminist interventions with the Canadian state. In the process, I trace the evolution in the feminist media critique of feminist discourses on gender leading to more complex understandings of the women and media relationship, and I relate this development to the gender communication model developed by Lana Rakow (1986). I supplement case studies from the literature with results of original research on the framing of feminist issues that focuses on journalistic interpretative devices of themes and sources. I analyze in this study coverage of the women's movement through a review of newspaper articles concerned

with the issue of federal cuts to the Women's Program that in 1990 threatened with closure women's centres across the country. Considering the failure of feminist interventions in the legislative and regulatory arenas, this research project offers critical speculation on the greater potential for change of a strategy that emphasizes instead the role of female media workers in changing news values and accessing feminist voices.

More prescriptive than the preceding chapter, the fourth and final chapter, "Towards a new paradigm?," seeks to problematize the notion of 'women and the media'. It links previously identified stages in the evolution of feminist media critiques to analogous cycles in the evolution of feminist epistemologies. It focuses on the negotiation of differences in media critiques within a counter-hegemonic process that in turn challenges ideological hegemony, and speculates on the potential to achieve a paradigm shift in the politics of representation. I refer extensively to the theoretical framework of Sandra Harding (1986; 1991) and the application of her feminist analysis of epistemology to the feminist analysis of balance in broadcasting by Strutt and Hissey (1992). This latter examination discusses the vulnerability of advocacy focused on regulatory interventions and provides some justification for abandoning such strategies.

CHAPTER 1

THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT, FEMINIST POLITICS AND THEORIES

Introduction

My objective in this first chapter is to chart a particular trajectory of feminist activism and theory. The intent is not to create a definitive map of feminist tenets but to extract features that disclose a growing emphasis in feminist discourses on the role of ideology in the personal and social transformative nature of the women's movement.

Following an overview of the development of the women's movement and of the currents of feminism that ensconce intra-movement differences, I will consider how theories of gender are conceived by these different feminist discourses and how they in turn influence the development of political strategies. I will also examine factors beyond gender such as women's class and race identifications. The discussion in this initial chapter about historical conceptualizations and their influence on particular theories and practices introduces concepts that will subsequently be underscored in an analysis of the evolution of a feminist media critique.

Feminism and Politics

The earliest organized activity of the American women's movement is generally recognized as having been the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. The exclusion of women from the public sphere and the denial of legal protection in the private sphere were challenged for the first time when 100 women and men signed *The Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions* (Bem, 1993:64). This declaration demanded voting privileges as well as equal rights in marriage, property, wages and custody of children (Anderson, 1992:173).

First Wave of the Women's Movement

Debates on sexual equality, however, precede feminist activity for women's suffrage and can be traced back at least to the eighteenth century in the publication by Mary Wollstonecraft in 1792 of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, her vision of a social, political and economic order which questioned the value of women's confinement to the domestic sphere and promoted equal rights to all humans as species members (Delmar, 1986:15-19).

Women's early activism centred in philanthropic, moral-reform causes such as prostitution, prisons, temperance and abolition, without necessarily explicit equality goals (Ryan, 1992:10-14). Enfranchisement of women was not a central concern for all feminists in the early movement when divergent feminist objectives and strategies coexisted[1]. It did, however, become a shared goal at the turn of the century when "the vote took on the weight of a symbolic function, uniting the personnel of many different campaigns; and, reciprocally, support for female suffrage became the touchstone of feminism. But the vote was never in any simple way the object of feminist aspirations." (Delmar, 1986:21)

The campaign for women's suffrage was bifurcated: "For some supporters suffrage was the end and for others it was the means to the end" (Ryan, 1992:34). Some proponents presented an equal-justice argument which sought for women independence and improvements in their lives 'where they were.' Others highlighted the human good women could achieve with the vote once in a position to assert their moral and spiritual superiority. These two interpretations of feminism Sheila

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[1]Rosalind Delmar (1986) underscores the theoretical fragmentation of the eighteenth century women's movement too often assumed to be united. She further contends that histories of feminism posit, without sufficient evidence, theoretical continuity between 'generations' of the movement and she questions, for example, the accuracy of citing Mary Wollstonecraft's work as 'the text' of the later movement.

Rowbotham has labelled the *historical*, where women's equality is demanded on the basis of ethical grounds and is expressed in the struggle for equal rights, and the *ideal*, a utopian conception in which women take over the superior status of men in society (1972:14).

The evolution of the movement in Canada at the turn of the century followed parallel lines, with the first suffrage protagonists belonging to the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the National Council of Women. The feminism which characterized activities in the late nineteenth century has been described as 'maternal feminism' to reflect the hope of mothers that their active participation in politics and their moral crusade would change the world (Dumont, 1986: unpaginated). Nellie McClung led the struggle for the vote across the western provinces from 1912 to 1916. Federal suffrage was achieved in 1918, in 1940 in Québec. Feminism's next major accomplishment was not to occur until 1929, when personhood status was granted Canadian women under the terms of the British North American Act following a challenge by Nellie McClung, Emily Murphy, Louise McKinney, Irene Parlby and Henrietta Muir Edwards (Anderson, 1992:200-201).

Second Wave of the Women's Movement

After a hiatus of forty years[2], feminist organizing re-emerged in the late 1960s. Two factors played an important part in this resurgence: the dissonance women experienced between the cultural promotion of the ideal traditional family during the

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[2]Feminist activism was not completely dormant after enfranchisement. During the Depression of the 1930s, women were merely engaged in fewer and less visible campaigns until the pace quickened in the 1960s. In her discussion of female institution building, Estelle Freedman attributes the decline of feminism after passage of suffrage in part to the devaluation of women's culture in general and of separate female institutions in particular. The momentum and networks which facilitated the suffrage movement were lost when women tried to assimilate into male-dominated institutions without first securing feminist social, economic or political bases (1979).

1940s to the 1960s and their increasing participation in the labour force[3]; and the actual constraints of the homemaker role (Ryan, 1992:36-37). Betty Friedan was a catalyst in this second wave when she published *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963 and unleashed a critique of the idealized, postwar version of American life and a challenge to the myth of femininity and motherhood.[4]

In the United States as in Canada, however much the resurgent movement may be perceived as the spiritual descendant of the post-suffragist feminist movement, it is not its organizational progeny. It had two origins in two different strata of society with different styles of political action. Jo Freeman refers to them as the "older branch" and the "younger branch." The "older branch" is represented in the United States by the National Organization for Women and a "woman's rights" perspective (1987:221). Founded in 1966, NOW has an extensive network of community-based chapters, a membership of 260,000 and a budget of U.S. $10 million supplemented by donations and bequests from wealthy supporters (Anderson, 1992:195).

The younger branch found its recruits amongst women active in student protests and social movements involved in civil rights and antiwar activities, but disaffected by male chauvinism in these movements. These participants were generally hostile to movement organization and elected not to form a national organization of their own (Freeman, 1987:221). They were much more aligned with a "woman's liberation" perspective.

Similarly, two sets of grievances fuelled the women's movement in Canada: one which related to limits to women's rights, and another which underscored female

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[3]In Canada in 1967, women's participation in the paid labour force had reached the previous wartime peak.

[4]This social critique centred on white, middle-class female constrictions and experiences distinct from those of women of colour. These differences will be reviewed in a later section of this chapter.

specificity.[5] In what is referred to as the "old set" of grievances, feminists condemned discrimination and the exclusion of women from men's rights and privileges (Black, 1988:81). Groups were organized specifically to pressure for government action in relation to the status of women. The Voice of Women in 1960 and the Fédération des femmes du Québec[6] in 1966 were the first two such coalitions (Black, 1988:83).[7] Created at the urging of newspaper columnist Lotta Dempsey for women to come together and denounce international conflict, the Voice of Women was successful in influencing public opinion against nuclear testing, in promoting other antiwar causes, as well as in convincing government to establish a Royal Commission on the Status of Women. The campaign for the Royal Commission was fostered by Doris Anderson,

[5]Extensive differences obtain between Canadian and American feminist debates and practices. Feminists in Canada have had to reckon with federal and provincial jurisdictions, regional disparities as well as with colonialism and relations of domination with the United States. There is in Canada a tradition of political economy which has infused feminist analyses of society with a set of materialist debates and a socialist politics far richer than those developed in the United States. An insightful analysis of the development of feminism in English Canada and in Québec is provided in *The Politics of Diversity: Feminism, Marxism and Nationalism* (Hamilton and Barrett, eds., 1986).

[6]Francophone groups in Québec have shared many feminist issues with their anglophone counterparts. The women's movement in Québec, however, has historically been framed by a broader political context in which priority is assigned to the cause of Québec nationalism. The struggle for independence has raised linguistic and cultural barriers which feminism cannot transcend. Divisions that erupted when the anglophone movement represented by the National Action Committee on the Status of Women rejected the 1990 Meech Lake Accord endorsed by francophone feminists exemplify the contradictory framework of support for federal structures. It should be clear that references to the Canadian women's movement in this present work do not include the movement in Québec which has experienced a different evolution, activism and pattern of achievements. Micheline Dumont demonstrates how very different both the history and praxis of feminism are in Québec and English Canada (1992).

[7]Community organizing in the early 1970s extended also to women of colour and First Nations women. The Native Women's Association of Canada was founded in 1973, assembling several First Nations and Métis associations already established, and representing Aboriginal women across Canada. Please see *The Impact of State Policy; Women's Response to State Action* (1988) for details on the advocacy work of the NWAC.

editor of *Chatelaine*, the largest and most feminist women's magazine in Canada, who supported the efforts of Laura Sabia, spearhead of the campaign for the Royal Commission and convenor of the 1966 Committee on Equality for Women. This Committee, comprising representatives from Voice of Women and other voluntary and professional women's organizations, successfully lobbied for the establishment of the Royal Commission in 1967 and for the creation in 1972 of an organization to pressure for implementation of the Commission's recommendations - the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), now an umbrella group of more than five hundred organizations (Black, 1988:85-87)[8].

The second, "new set" of grievances called for women to be different without being disadvantaged and for women's specific qualities to be better appreciated. This sector of the movement sought not only equal access to the public sphere but compensation for women's 'double shift' of paid labour and unpaid domestic work. The younger women and students who populated this arm of the movement infused it with a commitment to an economic, class-oriented analysis of women's situation and an equally significant engagement to non-hierarchical, consensual organizational structures. It is within these groups that we can trace the genesis of the liberationist procedures of 'consciousness-raising' and the dissemination of the slogan which is closely aligned to the views of nineteenth and twentieth-century feminist philanthropy: 'the personal is political' (Black, 1988:81-83).

Women's liberation groups were established across the country, chiefly in major universities, with women's caucuses and groups springing up within unions and political parties. Rape crisis centres, health centres, abortion referral services, transition houses for battered women, hostels for homeless women, women's centres,

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[8]NAC is an organization of organizations unlike the American national Organization for Women which is comprized of individual memberships and state-based branches.

women's studies programs, lesbian groups and women's media production groups: these are all feminist services which have succeeded the women's liberation groups of the late 1960s.

The second-wave women's movement in Canada is commended for its ability to accommodate within its umbrella organization, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, groups with divergent ideologies and political strategies (Black, 1988:97). It could also be said that the existence itself of a mass-based national group run by a paid professional staff makes the feminist movement in Canada and the United States unique in organization and ideology, there being no analogous organization in European countries (Katzenstein, 1987:12).[9]

The issue of funding is an important one with repercussions in the state institutionalizing of feminist demands. Women from other countries may look with envy at Canadian women's organizations receiving appropriations from the Canadian government (Anderson, 1992:211), but this dependency on federal funds is not without its drawbacks as the feminist agenda is increasingly entangled in the state's agenda, both constituencies working hand-in-hand to implement state commitments to the status of women. Feminist activists are invited to participate in the policy-making process, regrettably not to *define* political commitments but rather to develop ways to *implement* them. This reveals a restructuring of the relationship between feminists and the political system, a relationship fraught with contradictions as feminists are called upon to participate in the implementation of state policies based on inadequate if not outright

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[9]This difference with European movements was noted in reference to the U.S. and the National Organization for Women but would have been extended to Canada had Katzenstein's comparative analysis of women's movements not been limited to the United States and Western Europe.

misrepresentations of feminist issues[10]. It is undeniable that funding guidelines of the Women's Program of the Secretary of State, such as those rendering ineligible for funds organizations, projects and recipients whose primary purpose is to promote a view on sexual orientation or on abortion, influence the course of feminism in Canada[11]. The short, project-based funding cycles threaten the stability of feminist activism and services. Just when women's groups began to feel relatively secure with renewable, annual operational grants from the Women's Program, state funding began a downward spiralling trend which resulted in these groups diverting their attention and energy from feminist causes to lobbying for reinstatement of funding levels and fundraising in other social sectors.[12]

Although the present historical overview is not intended as a comprehensive account of the women's movement, even as a sketch of major circumstances it would be incomplete without mention of the resistance to second-wave feminism. Over the last decade, anti-feminist groups such as R.E.A.L. Women have increasingly competed for public legitimacy and funds. In a controversial move in 1990, the government

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[10]This shift in the site of struggle from the parliamentary sphere to the bureaucracy is well documented by Sue Findlay in her article for *Resources for Feminist Research*, September 1988.

[11]Implications of the Women's Program policy for sexual orientation are elaborated in an article by Becki Ross in *Resources for Feminist Research*, September 1988.

[12]The annual budget of $11.2 million for the Women's Program was cut by $1.6 million in 1990/91, prompting the Program to eliminate financing for three feminist publications (Resources for Feminist Research, Canadian Women's Studies Journal and Healthsharing) and to reduce by 20 percent funding for five feminist action groups (Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sports, Canadian Committee on Learning Opportunities for Women, Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, the Women's Research Centre and Nouveau Départ). Core financing for 80 women's centres across the country was also eliminated. After a storm of protest, $1.2 million in operational financing of the women's centres was restored. Meanwhile, however, the allocation to NAC was reduced by 50 percent over three years.

awarded a project grant to R.E.A.L. (an acronym for Realistic, Equal, Active for Life) Women, a right-wing group spawned from the anti-choice movement in 1981 and heretofore one of the Women's Program's most vocal opponents. R.E.A.L. Women claim to be working in defence of a traditional family and for recognition and reward for the distinctive abilities and activities of women (Black, 1988:84-85). They oppose abortion under any circumstances, day care, equal pay for women, affirmative action or other equality measures in the workplace, homosexuality and family law reform (Anderson, 1992:212).

The contemporary anti-feminist discourse is rooted in a biological-deterministic argument based on competing nature/nurture views that date from the suffrage campaign. As noted earlier, some nineteenth century feminists claimed an equal rights position and argued for the elimination of penalties connected to their reproductive role, whereas others claimed a social feminist position that valued this reproductive role and argued for a female political voice that would contribute to a kinder social environment. The anti-feminist forces supported social feminist principles to the extent that these principles recognized woman's 'natural' role in homemaking and childcare. Anti-feminism objected to suffrage, however, claiming women's role is not secondary in the social order but complementary: a 'separate but equal' doctrine which asserts that the private realm is the proper sphere for women and the public arena is the proper sphere for men (Mackie, 1991:262). The modern-day debate against feminism has endured on this 'essentialist' ideology, rejecting measures which would increase the equality of women in the public sphere[13]. The discourse of social-feminists, however,

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[13]Anti-feminist sentiments as expressed in a pro-family movement to bring back a middle-class family model of breadwinning men, homemaking wives and their children may be rooted in women's fear of economic abandonment by men and the resultant dependence on low-paying jobs or welfare (Ryan, 1992:103). Klatch's quote captures this persistent phenomenon: "all women are just one man removed from welfare" (in Ryan, 1992:103).

has become more nuanced and complex, acknowledging that gender is not really about difference but represents a system of dominance (Ryan, 1992:118). This and other feminist conceptions of gender will be examined later in the chapter.

Feminist Politics and Theory

Of particular salience to the present analysis of the evolution of feminist politics is that the record of feminist organizing during the second wave of the movement has traditionally superimposed on movement development a bipolar structure: women's rights / women's liberation; reform sector / revolutionary or radical sector; older branch / younger branch. These distinctions and categories have recently been criticized for their failure to recognize how, within the movement, groups are increasingly converging in complementary ways.

Wanting to neutralize the reform-radical designation, Freeman is the one to have coined the two segments of the second-wave movement *younger / older* branch (1987:221), while Ryan has proposed the more neutral terms *mass movement* and *small group* (1992:41). However well intentioned, these semantic adjustments nevertheless subsume original distinctions and, I believe, remain inadequate to attenuate the persistent critique within the feminist movement of reformist strategies. Despite the fact that it has attracted the greatest number of women, liberal feminism is often perceived negatively in terms of both ideology and activism. It has been suggested that this unfavorable view may be the result of contemporary theoretical analyses of feminist ideology having originally been formulated within the more radical sector of the movement (Ryan, 1992:2). This perception that socialist or radical feminisms offer a more fundamental program of social change is not universal, and arguments will be developed below that highlight the poverty of political labels increasingly eclipsed by the recognition of shared ideological assumptions. Following an outline of the three major political designations in the women's movement, my analysis will turn to the

core ideology underlying the various feminist discourses and the different ways they use to explain women's subordination in contemporary society. Although only three distinctive political perspectives are explored, other debates are acknowledged which crosscut these divisions, notably dual-system theory and poststructuralism. Although I adopt the conventional schematic divisions of liberalism - radicalism - socialism, I do so recognizing that they are arbitrary separations and the terms themselves are sites of disagreements. These labels, like the strategies they signify, are not universally accepted. Liberal feminism is often called reform or bourgeois feminism; socialist and Marxist feminisms are sometimes used interchangeably; and radical feminism is frequently referred to by its more specific expressions such as cultural feminism or separatist feminism (Adamson et al, 1988:10). I invoke the tripartition of liberalism - radicalism - socialism as an analytical distinction to allow the discussion of political perspectives to take place and with the objective of demonstrating how these divisions have grown stale.

Liberal Feminism

The liberal-feminist vision centres on equality of opportunity, on removing barriers to women's full access to social wealth, position and power. It refuses the dominant, essentialist stereotype of woman, insisting on gender equality. Contemporary liberal-feminist thought is rooted in liberal political theory of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which challenged prevailing notions of biological determinism and in the era of Enlightenment and valued assumptions about the rationality of human beings. Early liberal feminists, most notably Mary Wollstonecraft, contended that women's disadvantaged social situation derived entirely from their exclusion from educational and other opportunities in patriarchal society. Wollstonecraft believed in the maintenance of a family structure and women's continued responsibility for childcare which would be enhanced by the greater

education she advocated for them. This conception of women's status infers a clear continuity between the public and private spheres, a continuity that is challenged by later liberal feminists who recognized the dichotomy in women's potential for intellectual achievement and their denial of the franchise (Code, 1988:24-26).

The liberal-feminist model draws on the concept of difference between women and men and prescribes the eradication of these differences through equality-seeking measures. By and large, this androcentric model of feminism ignores the differences between women themselves as well as within the specific social existences of women. Liberal feminists are ideologically committed to formal political processes and existing public decision-making structures and have therefore been less stringent than socialist and radical feminists in examining the politics of daily life in the private sphere and to analyze sexual power and privilege. Liberal feminists do not assume the necessity of institutional change beyond the inclusion of women on an equal basis (Code, 1988:35). The following quote from Segal illustrates how this disregard for systemic inequalities is rebuked by some feminists:

> Most feminists are well aware that women do not overturn existing power structures simply by individually entering the more powerful and privileged terrain of men. Once there, they may merely serve as the exceptions, used to disguise the general exclusion of women. Joining the male elite is anyway demanding, depressing and difficult for many women when it operates through definitions of authority and everyday practices designed to exclude or ignore the situation of most women (Segal, 1987:235).

Also admonished is the absence of any theorization about men themselves not being equal under capitalism:

> If the question were posed: "Equality with *which* men?" the answer could not be "Oh, of course, with all men." It is unlikely that women are claiming equality with men who are disadvantaged and exploited as a consequence of their race, class, or culture (Code, 1988:46).

The conventional notion that liberal feminism implies merely an 'add women and stir' approach has been challenged in recent years. I would not posit that this is merely magnanimity on the part of feminists who wish to endorse all feminist

narratives. I would, however, postulate that this development reflects an increasing recognition that the concept of equality of opportunity for women would undoubtedly require and lead to major social and economic re-organization, a recognition that is fostered by theorization of the complex ideological web that surrounds all forms of feminism regardless of their political lineage. Indeed, in her 'qualified' defense of liberal feminism, Susan Wendell points to how liberal feminism is no longer committed to a number of philosophical positions that are rooted in its political tradition and for which it is frequently criticized, such as abstract individualism and the traditional liberal way of distinguishing between the public and the private. She notes additionally that liberal feminism's clearest political commitments such as equality of opportunity and of legal rights, and the promotion of equal education for girls and boys, are important to women's liberation and generally are compatible also with socialist-feminist and radical-feminist goals (Wendell, 1987).

Critiques of liberal feminism abound, some from within liberal feminist quarters themselves. They range from the tendency to accept male values as human values, to overemphasize the importance of individual freedom over that of the collectivity, to valorize a gender-neutral humanism over a gender-specific feminism and to take for granted the basic structure of the nuclear family and of the state[14]. No one to date has explored the tension within liberal feminism more fully - and hopefully - than Zillah

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[14]In a staunch attack on liberal feminism well encapsulated in the title of her critique, "Liberalism and the Death of Feminism" (1990), Catharine MacKinnon addresses all of these characteristics of liberal feminism, and in a reversal of the equation, ascribes a brighter future to liberalism than to feminism. In a separate work (1987), she critiques liberalism - as applied to women - for its support of state intervention on behalf of women as abstract persons with abstract rights, without scrutinizing the content of these notions in gendered terms.

Eisenstein[15]. She documents in *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism* (1981) how the contradiction between *liberalism* as patriarchal and individualist in structure and ideology, and *feminism* as sexually egalitarian and collectivist, forms the basis for feminism's movement beyond liberalism. Many activities considered safely reformist because they appear only to change consciousness turn out to have rather radical implications for altering social and psychological structures[16].

Radical Feminism

The 'equality' objective of liberal feminism is in tension with that of 'difference' in radical feminism which supports female specificity and essentialism (Barrett, 1987:29). Whereas liberal feminism identifies as its goal the power of men, radical feminism validates sexual dimorphism, denigrating masculinity and believing in the moral superiority of women. 'The future is female' denotes the belief of radical feminism in the ideology of a superior female essence that counters the trend towards androgyny and the minimizing of gender differences (Alcoff, 1988:410). Radical feminists also used the slogan 'the personal is political' to redefine the most intimate of human relations as political - sexuality. 'The personal is political' also summarized an important link between personal life and overall political structures:

> If the lives of women were to be changed in any fundamental way, the social structures that constrained women's choices would have to be changed first. Such change required collective action in the political arena, not individual action in each person's private life (Adamson et al, 1988:201).

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[15]See also the discussion by Deborah Rhode (1986) on liberal jurisprudence, on feminist radical roots, and the present challenge to move beyond liberal legalism, to demand not simply equality in form but equality in fact.

[16]Other forms of political resistance such as trade unionism likely share in these characteristics. They are not implied as 'unique' to feminism and may well parallel other movements.

Radical feminism challenges the existing patriarchal discourse in which liberal feminists want to participate and its definitions of femininity and humanity. In the words of Angela Miles: "To claim women's humanity only insofar as women can show themselves to be like men is to challenge men's definition of women but not their definition of humanity" (1982:218).

Whatever interpretation of women's oppression radical feminists subscribe to, they all agree that it is the primary, the most widespread and the deepest form of human oppression. Radical feminism locates sexuality and reproduction within the patriarchal family at the centre of women's oppression and directs attention to the ways in which men attempt to control women's bodies through such means as restrictive contraception, sterilization, abortion laws, violence and the institution of heterosexuality.

Male domination is perceived by radical feminists as the most profound condition of alienation, biological reproduction as the primary source of women's oppression, and the family as the key instrument in the oppression of women through sexual slavery and forced motherhood (Code, 1988:41; Weedon, 1987:17).

Radical feminism perceives female culture as the ultimate solution to patriarchy's construction of gender, patriarchy being conceived as a trans-historical, all-embracing structure beyond rehabilitation and thus necessitating women's withdrawal into separatism (Weedon, 1987:17).

The critique of radical feminism addresses the risk, in mystifying female activities and values, of reproducing the very texture of female oppression found in gendered distinctions that feminism attempts to correct. The critique of radical feminism centres primarily on its pivotal and interwoven concepts of essentialism and moral superiority, to reject biological reductionism and false universalism. To be sure, by reflecting on reproduction, radical feminists have exposed political theory and practice to heretofore ignored topics of sexuality, childbearing and childcaring. The

risk is two-fold: to idealize motherhood to such an extent as to confine women again to a separate sphere as nurturers (Rowbotham, 1989:98), and to theorize human nature in a deterministic fashion by construing biology as immutable and impervious to environmental forces (Tong, 1989:128). In the view of socialist feminist Alison Jaggar, it is the historical interplay of biology and environment that creates gender, and universal assertions about men and women are specious (in Tong, 1989:128). Rosemarie Tong summarizes Jaggar's view this way:

> (...) not all men are victimizers, and not all women are victims. The fact that radical feminists themselves are able to escape their false consciousness, even under the system of patriarchy, is evidence of this. If patriarchy were, indeed, all pervasive and totalizing, radical feminism could never have obtained the space it needed to develop. Moreover, even a cursory sketch of history shows that all men do not oppress all women in the same ways. To say that they do is to ignore the historical realities of class and race (Tong, 1989:128).

Radical feminists focus more on what all women share than in the ways male domination is experienced differently for women in different races, classes and cultures. Moreover, some paint "a picture of such unrelenting oppression and exploitation of women that it is hard to imagine how feminism ever got started. This extremely important social theory, like all fruitful theories, has its limitations" (Harding, 1987:135).

Such reservations about radical feminist theory translate into concerns about the viability of some of the strategies that emerge from this theory. For example, not all women want or need separation from men, nor do we all identify with the movement that refuses participation with the institution of heterosexuality (Tong, 1989:130).

A woman's counter culture based on the proposition that female biology is inherently good risks affirming those very aspects that patriarchy devalues and degrades. By valorizing positive female attributes developed under oppression, radical feminism reproduces the oppositional structure man/woman, culture/nature, positive/negative, analytical/intuitive - all mirror images of the discourse of power

(Alcoff, 1988:413-416).

Socialist Feminism

A distinction is sometimes made between Marxist feminism and socialist feminism based on the former believing that class ultimately better accounts for women's status, whereas the latter conceives of gender and class as equal accomplices to women's oppression[17]. Socialist feminism is perceived as the successor of Marxist feminism, a confluence of Marxist, radical and psychoanalytic streams of feminist thought. It is viewed as an alternative to an essentially gender-blind Marxism that dismisses women's oppression as not nearly as important as male workers' oppression. Social change, for socialist feminists, is dependent on a confrontation with the patriarchal dimensions of capitalism, on an understanding of the relation between class exploitation and sexual oppression. In contrast with radical feminism which assumes that human nature is essential, socialist feminism views its meaning as historical and social. It recognizes the connections between gender and other social hierarchies and divisions, and which sees patriarchy as forms of oppression which vary historically.

> Drawing, then, upon a Marxist analysis of class oppression, socialist feminists maintain that the capitalist economic system oppresses women as a group, just as it oppresses the working class as a whole (Code, 1988:36).

It views patriarchy as intertwined and interdependent with capitalism, the former describing sexual relations and social reproduction and the latter economic relations and social production (Segal, 1987:37). Socialist feminists challenge the power relations of the social and economic system and argue that equality of opportunity is unattainable

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[17]See Tong (1989) for a discussion of these two traditions. The articulation of patriarchy and capitalism is theorized in various ways and is often referred to as dual-systems theory, a synthesis of marxist and radical feminist theory that recognizes the importance of both systems in structuring contemporary gender relations (Walby, 1990).

until fundamental systemic differences are eradicated.

In the Marxist view, women are oppressed under capitalism through a sexual division of labour that serves the interests of capitalism directly and *indirectly* through serving the interests of men. Women are responsible for domestic and reproductive labour - and paid labour, freeing men to devote themselves fully to productive labour in the public sphere. There is a difference of opinion amongst Marxist feminists about praxis: whether changes proposed by socialist activists would relieve women's oppression as one of the many miseries engendered by capitalism, or whether women's issues need to be dealt with separately in recognition of women's oppression by both capitalism and patriarchy (Code, 1988:30-31).

Contemporary socialist feminists continue this debate, unequivocal on the inadequacies of explanations in biological terms alone to account for women's disadvantaged situation, and convinced of the instrumentality of material and economic factors in perpetuating patriarchal oppression.

The socialist perspective within feminism has produced two main lines of theoretical argument. The first contends that patriarchal relations and ideology within the family have secured a gender division which has resulted in women's work being an especially exploited segment of the capitalist labour market. The second emanates even more directly from the critique of patriarchal culture to consider the role of patriarchy in the reproduction of the capitalist system of social relations (Connell, 1983:35). These formulations recognize that class and patriarchy form a web of practices, a 'patriarchal structuring of production and a class structuring of reproduction'.

Feminist Theory and Ideology

> While the first wave of feminism (...) abruptly ended following an ideological vacuum, the second wave of this same feminism fairly threatens to abruptly end following an excessive ideology! (Ginette Castro, translated and quoted in Dumont, 1986:unpaginated)

Feminist theories have unfolded exponentially since the original formulations of women's subordinate status in the eighteenth century and have outgrown the political traditions from which they emerged. Traditional political categories no longer comfortably accommodate the similarities and differences amongst feminist analyses and strategies. The overlap is remarkable: for instance, socialist and radical feminisms share an orientation for communal living without hierarchy; socialist and liberal feminists share the activist practice of working in the political arena; and liberal and radical feminists assert women's higher values (Ryan, 1992:90).

In its different permutations, feminism contains various social theories that attempt to explain the relations between the sexes. By virtue of this common objective, all share certain characteristics: from the challenge to unsatisfactory, hierarchical gender relations; to a desire not merely to expose female subordination but to transform relations between women and men; to a critique of reason, science and social theory (Ramazanoglu, 1989:8). Feminism is praxis: theory develops out of practice (or politics) yet it underlies that practice.

> (...) feminism is a movement and in so far as some of its followers have engaged in philosophical analysis it also gives rise to theory. In that it articulates the opinions and attitudes formed within a group in order to defend and promote its interests, feminism is the expression of the world-view of that social group, that is an ideology (Godard, 1985:178, fn 2).

An important change in the early 1980s involved a self-conscious awareness by feminists of commonality among themselves (Ryan, 1992:90). Concerns about variations in types of activism and in political affiliations took second stage to a

consideration of the roots of oppressive social practices[18].

There has been a shift in collective consciousness about gender relations and a diffusion of feminist thought in society. Whether feminist or not, we are all aware of the feminist agenda and the spread of a feminist consciousness will likely continue. Indeed, if it is true that life experience is a necessary ingredient for individuals to commit themselves to activism, then we can count on a new generation of feminists to emerge as it confronts sexist attitudes and as it experiences discriminatory policies (Ryan, 1992:111).[19] The social transformative role of the women's movement may be perceived differently by its different adherents but the personal transformative nature of the movement certainly is not. The feminist subject occupies a primary position within the movement, the movement having originally emphasized individual change and struggle. Indeed, the feminist slogan 'the personal is political' attests to the importance of women's own lives and experiences; personal testimonies in consciousness-raising groups were central practices during the resurgence of the movement in its second wave. Notions of multiple and differing subjectivities constructed through particular discourses have superseded earlier emphasis on the identification of a universal female subject and shared experiences amongst women. Notwithstanding such poststructuralist

[18]Narrow views of feminist legitimacy severely threatened the women's movement, with competing theories becoming demobilizing factors as disputes over ideological purity overrode common concerns. The movement found itself with competitive models of 'right thinking.' Radical groups argued over who was really radical and dismissed the mass movement sector (Ryan, 1992:60-61). As noted in the earlier discussion, such factionalism ignored the radical potential of liberal feminism as well as the potential for women who joined this sector to become radicalized on issues of sexism, classism, racism, and lesbianism.

[19]I have avoided engaging herein in a debate about who can claim a 'feminist' label, who is 'inside' or 'outside' feminism. See Moi (1989:182) for her distinctions between feminism (a theoretical and political practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism), femaleness (a matter of biology) and femininity (a set of culturally defined characteristics). Her position is that men can be feminists. In contrast, Delmar (1986:27) insists that feminism is 'gender-specific': women are its subjects, its enunciators, the creators of its theory, of its practice and of its language.

incursions into feminist theory, personal transformation and the quality of human relations remain intrinsic to feminism. This is a movement which has been described as combining a social philosophy with a personal politics. Its aims are to transform society in part through transforming the individuals who become involved (Hall, 1989a:364). One has to *become* a feminist. It is a complex and multi-faceted transforming experience which alters the way one apprehends oneself and the contradictions in the social and political order. Feminism offers women a politics that is subjectively relevant and gives "a sense of politics implicating 'us' - putting ourselves within the frame of political involvement" (Brunt, 1989:154).

Sex and Gender

A threshold issue in theories about gender and gender relations is the distinction between the concepts of *sex* and *gender*. Under contemporary usage *sex* has referred to biological distinctions between women and men whereas *gender* has been defined in opposition to *sex*, as the cultural construction and reproduction of these differences.

More recent work of feminist theorists (MacKinnon, 1987; Hubbard, 1990; Rhode, 1990) has problematized these notions, emphasizing the interdependence of biological and social forces, the way cultural practices influence the evolution of physiological differences and how these differences in turn help structure social relations. Biologically based variations such as height, weight and physical strength cannot be wholly disentangled from cultural factors such as diet, division of labor, and so on. 'Biology is destiny' insofar as only men can produce sperm and only women can produce eggs and gestate[20]. The situational context in which women and men live affects the size and significance of biological differences. These differences, however,

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[20]According to this convention, the only viable 'sex roles' are childbearer, wet nurse and sperm donor.

could not possibly be so pronounced as to justify the sexual inequality they have produced (Bem, 1993:38). Further, any adequate understanding of sexual difference must be sensitive also to the differences between women.

In addition to the recognition of the dialectical relationship of these two concepts, the notion of gender as dominance has introduced another layer of complexity and is encapsulated in the term *sex/gender system*. Mouffe, for instance, refers to the sex/gender system as the process in which biological sex is transformed into social gender and in which male domination over the female is created. It is produced and reproduced in a multiplicity of social practices and institutions (1983)[21].

Ultimately, the debates about whether the differences between the sexes are innate, socially constructed or experienced together; about whether a maximalist/essentialist or minimalist/anti-essentialist philosophical position is the more appropriate one to describe gender reality; and whether sex differences extend beyond reproductive functioning - these debates are secondary to the fact that gender divisions are power relations that are socially constructed as gender hierarchy, and as such are mutable categories of social organization that can also be socially deconstructed.

> Gender is both something we do and something we think with, both a set of social practices and a system of cultural meanings. The social practices--the "doing" of gender--and the cultural meanings--"thinking the world" using the categories and experiences of gender--constitute us as women and men, organized into a particular configuration of social relations (...) Our particular gender system of two dimorphic and asymmetrical genders is one of only a variety of systems that could be constructed (Rakow, 1986a:21,23).

Analyses of sexual inequality have experienced fundamental shifts since the

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[21]See Flax for her discussion of how gender can become a metaphor for biology just as biology can become a metaphor for gender (1987:637); Barrett for her analysis of cultural practice as an essential site of the struggle over the meaning of gender (1980:112); and de Lauretis for her analysis of the 'technologies of gender.' The role of ideology and of symbolic systems in the construction of subjectivity will be surveyed in Chapter 2.

second wave of feminism, a shift for example from a non-problematic concept of masculinity within the (at that time) prevailing theory of androgyny to one that is critiqued within more recent theories of female difference that appreciate the role of culture in constructing dichotomous concepts of femininity and masculinity. I now turn to some of the major theoretical frameworks which transcend feminist politics and, through their efforts to problematize the nature of gender relations, reveal the evolving complexities of feminist political discourses on women's inequality. The approaches either deny the extent of differences between women and men, celebrate gender difference or dislodge difference to challenge its organizing premises. Together these analyses illustrate a fundamental paradox in feminism: how to acknowledge difference without amplifying it or reducing it to the point of obliterating the female subject.

Gender Equality -- Gender Difference

Gender equality is the hallmark of liberal feminism. Early political strategies focused on the concept of androgyny, as feminists perceived institutional, systemic discrimination as the cause of female inequality and gender neutrality as the best strategy to resist the dominant stereotype of women and those distinctions made on the basis of sex. This approach was evident in the first wave of feminist advocacy, when minimizers of male-female difference argued for enfranchisement on the basis that women were more alike than dissimilar to men. It was also reinforced in the second wave with demands for identity of legal rights for men and women, at least until the emergence of a woman-centred discourse in the 1980s which challenged androgyny for its treatment of women as all but invisible.

This supposedly 'sex-blind' approach lost its appeal as a liberation strategy when it became evident that gender neutrality so deemphasized the differences in the life situations of women and men that, as a strategy, it was helping only those few

women who were similarly situated to men. Further, strict equality before the law did not always benefit women. For example, when applied mindlessly and formulaically in divorce settlements, gender neutrality was actually harming differently situated women by falsely presupposing them to have as much earning potential - and hence as little need for alimony - as their husbands (Bem, 1993:179). Under gender neutrality, with law refusing to take gender into account, in effect men are granted legal preference because society advantages them and ignores women's social disadvantages (MacKinnon, 1990:218). Further, gynocentric insights exposed men as the standard of comparison in arguments that focus on whether women are like or unlike men[22]. Maleness is the original entitlement, unquestioned on the basis of *its* gender (MacKinnon, 1990:221). This path to equality prescribes that women be measured according to their correspondence with a male standard.

In the 1980s, the cause of women's inequality increasingly was perceived as the conflict women experienced between career and family which prevented them from attaining economic and political resources. The corresponding strategy involved gender sensitivity, the recognition that women required special-protection provisions to compensate for their biological and historical role as the caregivers of children. On the premise that women and men are differently situated with respect to reproduction, it called for substituting the earlier sex-blind approach for a sex-responsive one. This second path to equality retains masculinity as the referent, but it implies that women should be measured by their distance from, as opposed to their proximity to, the male standard (MacKinnon, 1990:217-8).

Protectionism has been resisted by some feminists and antifeminists. Feminists argue that it reinforces the old sexist stereotype of women as inherently incapable of

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[22]Not an entirely new notion since Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* had already argued that woman is oppressed by virtue of being 'other,' of being *not*-man.

competing successfully with men without special compensatory provisions. Nonfeminists see no justification for making special arrangements to help women who have themselves decided to invest time and energy in their careers, rather than in their children.

A second strand of feminist work has sought less to challenge than to validate gender differences. This maximalist discourse celebrates female difference, supports a critique of masculinity and reinvests the debate with concerns about connectedness, mutual empowerment and harmony (Bem, 1993:128). Women-centred theorists have postulated several sources of male-female difference, within accounts that emphasize biological essentialism, child developmental theories or social psychology.

To the extent that it must generate identification with a socially constructed and mutable class 'women,' feminism does require a conceptualization of sexual difference. Angela Miles argues that in order to express women's interests beyond merely the sectional, feminism must affirm both women's specificity and equality in what she calls "a transcendent and revolutionary synthesis of these two apparently contradictory conditions (1982:214). She says further: "The *liberatory* affirmation of the traditional devalued female aspects of life (...) is of course an extremely difficult task. For it requires a dynamic, critical and creative perspective which includes transformation in the very moment of affirmation" (1982:217). Indeed, feminism is challenged in many ways: to develop theoretical tools to understand specificity and commonality within women's experiences and in relationship with men; to acknowledge both diversity and unity among women; and to develop these analyses facing the paradox that while gender consciousness is a necessary condition for the existence of feminism, the goal of feminism is in effect to eliminate prescribed gender roles (Code, 1988:20; Cott, 1986:49).

Beyond Gender -- Beyond Women?

> The differences attributed to sex are lines inequality draws, not the basis for those lines. Social and political equality are lived-out social systems that are basically indifferent to abstract conceptual categories like sameness and difference. (MacKinnon, 1990:213).

When the subject is gender, some themes of difference are inescapable. However, the feminist political project increasingly focuses on patterns of disadvantage and power. Gender is a social relation and to value women only in their resemblance to men diverts attention from the power distributions that transcend sex categories, from the patterns of disadvantage and dominance embedded in social institutions and practices.

Contemporary feminist scholarship underscores the enduring dilemma of presupposing some recognition of women's commonalities, of women's separate 'class' identification while refuting homogenization - that is, simultaneously recognizing the role of gender in constructing and constraining female identity in like ways yet proposing that its influence is dependent on other social circumstances which often constitute additional vectors of domination. Code notes, for instance, that over the last two decades, there has been a shift in most forms of feminism from a conceptualization of an exclusive view of women as a class to a recognition of differences among women (1988:20). A single, essential 'women's experience' is no longer assumed - nor should a 'feminist viewpoint'. Differences of race, class and sexual practice have become a primary focus of theoretical discussion. Judith Butler suggests that rather than being a stable signifier, the term 'women' has become a site of contest and of multiple significations:

> If one "is" a woman, that is surely not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive, not because a pregendered "person" transcends the specific paraphernalia of its gender, but because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities (Butler, 1990:3).

The neglect of ethnic and racial differences and inequality in feminist theory has undergone intense scrutiny. Increasingly, feminist theory is seeking a political consciousness that not only projects private- sphere issues into the public arena ('the personal is political') but would distinguish between public policy and private choice ('the public is personally political'). Such a public/private distinction is necessary if we are to recognize that women of colour generally have not had the benefit of the economic conditions of white women. For example, concerns about the unhealthy consequences of standards for feminine beauty or the focus on the unequal division of household labor are issues within the personal realm that white feminists have placed on the public agenda. Feminists of color have focussed instead on public issues such as imperialism, racism and school desegregation (see for example, Hurtado, 1989; hooks, 1984).

This awareness of difference beyond gender is claimed to be one of the major products of feminism since the consciousness-raising of the 1960s when uniformity and solidarity in experience and opinion prevailed (Gagnier, 1990). This shift additionally entails the substitution of feminist metanarratives that gave early feminist theorizing discursive unity, with postmodern politics that reveal heterogeneity where simple sex difference or a crude dualism were perceived. Within anthropological accounts, for instance, postmodernism replaces notions of presocial or universal domains of social relations with 'naturalizing' symbolic and social processes. Postmodern politics also substitute philosophical views on sex differences with notions of overlapping constructions, introduce psychoanalytic theory that questions the role of multiple relationships in the development of identity, and include multiple differences in sociological analyses of gender construction (Gagnier, 1990:22-23).

Sandra Harding (1987) identifies two sources of criticism of a unitary feminist perspective. The first emerges from feminists who participate in semiotic, deconstructionist and psychoanalytical discourses and who argue that the female subject

being a 'site of differences', there could never be a feminist epistemology, but only many stories that different women tell about the different knowledge they have[23]. The second origin of skepticism about 'a' feminist standpoint generating true stories about social life has appeared in the writings of women of colour, bell hooks, amongst others, who have played a vanguard role in reconceptualizing the notion of identity. Hooks accents women's differing experiences of patriarchal oppression. What makes feminism possible is not that women share certain kinds of experiences but that they federate around their common resistance to different forms of male domination (hooks, 1984).

Is the fragmentation of identities proposed by postmodern thinking - specifically the dissolution of the category 'women' - a threat to the historical feminist project? If some essential notion of 'women' cannot be retained, does feminism even make sense as a field of study and as a political project? These questions on the implications of the fractured female subject form the crux of current scholarship (see for example, Offen, 1990, Modleski, 1991). The jury is still out but the search continues for a basis of renewed solidarity and a common framework to establish a "balance of power in society between the sexes" (Offen, 1990:19-20). Our theoretical and political project is now to reclaim sexual difference and the category 'women' in a way that avoids male dominance and female subjection.

Tanya Modleski exposes eloquently in *Feminism Without Women* the extent to which [hegemonic] male power ultimately deals with the threat of female power by incorporating it (1991:7). The desire to deny gender and to break free of restrictive gender roles brings us dangerously close to a "pregendered" past where there was only

[23]Feminists who conceive of poststructuralist tendencies obtaining in feminism, assert the social dimension of individual traits, practices and experiences. They reject biological determinism not because women subjects are underdetermined but on the contrary because they are overdetermined by a social discourse. The category 'woman' is rejected as fiction and the gendered subject is disappeared (Alcoff, 1988).

one universal subject - man (Modleski, 1991:163).

Conclusion

> Although I presently find it enormously difficult to assign to myself any one feminist label, this is because I find something valuable in each of the feminist perspectives to which I have been introduced. Perhaps this is a sign that the labels are obsolete... (Tong, 1990:8)

Feminism is plurivocal. It is a movement with multiple articulations in opposition to sexual hierarchy and with self-transformational objectives. Many of the theorists consulted warn against the evolution of a feminism that attempts closure or that merely replaces an existing orthodoxy with one of its own. However, by virtue of its ability to transform both society and its subjects, feminism can claim a hegemonic position. In Hall's words: "Feminism has unsettled everything in the theoretical universe of the Left by bringing on the political agenda the question of sexuality and creating a revolution in thinking that all social practices and forms of domination are always inscribed in and to some extent secured by sexual identity" (1989a:132). The risk of course with any multiplicity of articulations is of losing the original ground of unity and protest against gender hierarchy.

The range of theories and of constituencies in feminism has grown wider and more differentiated since the first wave of the movement. They have provided a spectrum of conceptualizations and a constant tension between the validity of an analysis of women as a sex-class and the contradictory claim for the multifaceted female identity not overdetermined by her gender. Feminism no longer reconciles the various discourses, practices and theoretical positions but, on the contrary, further expands the taxonomy. It seeks to sustain rather than resolve paradoxes and complexities so that the multiple subjects and standpoints can, in their diverse attacks on patriarchal ideological hegemony, exponentially increase opportunities for positive change.

The potential of this multiplicity of feminist conceptualizations and political strategies to challenge patriarchal hegemony will be explored in the next chapter, particularly at the intersection of feminist and media theories.

CHAPTER 2

SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORIES, OPPOSITIONAL PRACTICES AND THE MEDIA-MOVEMENT DIALECTIC

Introduction

I will examine in this chapter three theoretical paradigms that dominate the field of social-movement analysis - resource mobilization, new social movement theory and the hegemony/counter-hegemony paradigm. My critique will sketch the relative capacity of these theories to explain and predict feminist emancipatory strategies, and as such will necessarily be selective and schematic.

I will thereafter punctuate the role of news media as a terrain where ideological hegemony is contested, as instrumental in maintaining a particular ideological frame and thus of importance in any examination of social-movement development based on hegemony theory.

I will conclude this chapter by probing the intersection of hegemonic/patriarchal news media with the women's movement, laying the foundation for a more extended depiction, in the third chapter, of the movement-media symbiotic relationship.

Theoretical traditions of contemporary social movement analyses

The field of social-movement research was originally dominated by a social-psychological paradigm which gave centrality to traditional collective behavior and treated social movements as anomalies, as expressions of economic or social malfunction and strain. This paradigm is represented by theories of collective behaviour and mass society, and reduces collective action to a pathological reaction to economic crisis and social disintegration, particularly among the rootless (Melucci, 1985:790). The analysis of such collective behaviour was entrenched in a functionalist

model that emphasized integration, equilibrium, and harmony and, in this model, collective behaviour represented an irrational response by people displaced by social change (Canel, 1992:24). Rush and Denisoff refer to this approach as the consciousness of dysfunction: "the role of a movement in these analyses seems to be that of repairing the effects of a dysfunction rather than ameliorating those elements of the social structure responsible for the dysfunction in the first place" (1971:184). Individuals participate in collective behavior spurred by strains, discontent, frustration and aggression.

Collective-behavior theorists stress psychological reactions to breakdown either in the organs of social control or in the adequacy of normative integration. This approach rests on a belief in the irrationality of collective behavior, a bias which revealed the inadequacies of this classical tradition when - as some theorists claim - actors in the social movements of the sixties and seventies did not conform to the image of "anomic, fragmented, underprivileged, and irrational deviants" (Cohen, 1985:672-3). In this perspective, the movements of the sixties and seventies were not responses to economic crises or breakdown but they involved concrete goals, clearly articulated general values and interests, and rational calculations of strategies.

The theoretical response to the classical paradigm is bifurcated, with the emergence in the United States of the resource-mobilization tradition, and in Western Europe of the socio-historical tradition generally known under the rubric of new social movement theory or NSM.[24] Overall, this response addresses social-movement

[24]The categories and labels used throughout this synopsis are those found in the literature that traces the history of social-movement analysis. However, there is not always agreement and different theorists may assign different labels to the same paradigm or theory. The socio-historical tradition, for example, has been coined "identity-oriented" by Cohen and "action theory" by Hannigan to represent the work of theorists like Touraine and Castells of the French School of new social-movement analysis, whereas other scholars also include in this particular sociological tradition, theorists from the German/Hungarian stream such as Offe and Habermas. The more inclusive interpretation is intended herein.

characteristics such as their uniqueness/recurrences; if historically recurrent, it asks whether the movements arise out of similar conditions and whether inferences can be made from an earlier fate to contemporary prospects (Howard, 1974:1). Theoretical attention turns from the study of psychological underpinnings of individual social-movement participants to that of social-movement organization and social change.

Reflections on theoretical approaches and their limitations

The distinctions between resource mobilization and NSM are numerous and substantial. The European NSM approach is historically sweeping and speculative; the American model of resource mobilization is more empirical and behavioural. Notwithstanding these distinctions, both approaches do share assumptions about the normalcy of social conflict and the rationality of collective contestation.

Resource-Mobilization Theory

The resource-mobilization theory insists on the explanatory importance of organization and rationality. It addresses the ability of social movements to marshal resources to their cause. This theory posits that collective action involves the rational pursuit of interests by groups. It further maintains that the social movement sector competes with other sectors of society much as the capitalist, free enterprise market does (Foss and Larkin, 1986:19). The course of social movements is heavily influenced by the availability or paucity of resources such as money, expertise and access to publicity.

Social movements arise not out of goals and grievances - these are permanent products of power relations - but from changes in resources, organization, and opportunities for collective action. Social-movement mobilization requires bureaucratic and formal organizations, and success occurs when a social-movement group is recognized as a political actor or realizes increased material benefits (Cohen,

1985:675).

Two main orientations exist within the resource-mobilization paradigm, notably an 'organizational-entrepreneurial' approach concerned with factors that influence movement success or failure:

> A social movement is a purposive and collective attempt of a number of people to change individuals or societal institutions and structures (Zald and Ash, 1966:329).

There is also a 'political-interactive' model which emphasizes, as the object of analysis, collective action between groups with opposed interests:

> What we call a social movement actually consists in a series of demands or challenges to power-holders in the name of a social category that lacks an established political position (Tilly, 1985:735-6).

The resource-mobilization paradigm has received considerable criticism because of its insistence on the strategic-instrumental rationality of collective action. It articulates only those dimensions of conflict behaviour that correspond to organizational development and/or structural crises of the state and the political system.

This is the critique of resource mobilization offered by French sociologist Alain Touraine[25]:

> The notion of resource mobilization has been used to transform the study of social movements into a study of strategies as if actors were defined by their goals and not by the social relationships - and especially power relationships - in which they are involved (...) in too many cases, this notion is used to eliminate enquiries about the meaning of collective action as if resource mobilization could be defined independently from the nature of the goals and the social relations of the actor, as if all actors were finally led by a logic of economic rationality (1985:769).

Resource mobilization suffers from other weaknesses. For example, it underplays the 'spontaneous' aspects of social movement behaviour by overemphasizing formal organizations, their unity and homogeneity. It also exaggerates hierarchical aspects of social movement structure. It tends to ignore

[25]Touraine, as will be seen in a following discussion, is credited with providing the broadest theoretical framework within the NSM paradigm.

historical forces in the generation of social movements. Finally, and most importantly, it emphasizes the observation of phenomena that can be measured and subjected to variable analysis, to the exclusion of the examination of the underlying consciousness of social movement participants as they engage in praxis (Foss and Larkin, 1986:26).

Indeed, resource-mobilization theory has been inhospitable to evaluating symbolic challenges attempted by social movements and the constitutive role of consciousness and ideology. The relationship between movements and the political system is important and legitimate but it is not exhaustive. Contemporary social conflicts are not just political, they also confront dominant cultural codes (Melucci, 1985:798,813). The outcome of collective action should be measured not merely in terms of successful appropriation of goods in the political system but also in terms of its challenge to the symbolic system. To make visible power relationships is in itself a major political achievement (Melucci, 1985:814-5). Membership figures, the relative infrequency of public protests, and the more audible self-criticism within the movement, for instance, do not signal that the second wave of the women's movement has crested. Even at the outset, the women's movement made less use of the 'orthodox' tactics of disorder, pursuing instead its political agenda in less visible ways - through consciousness-raising groups, collectives, caucuses and local organizations (Katzenstein, 1987:3).

Resource mobilization fails to adequately explain the women's movement and its successes when it ignores the diffusion of feminist consciousness as critical to the success of the movement. Changing consciousness is a vital resource at two levels: the individual, around issues of personal identity and policy preferences; and the institutional, around the admissibility of feminist issues as subjects of legislative and policy treatment (Katzenstein, 1987:6-7). Organization is not the only mobilization resource critical for evaluating the success of the women's movement. Equally critical is the development of a collective consciousness which incorporates varying degrees of

approval for the movement's grievances and goals (Mueller, 1987:92). The neglect of consciousness is a major liability in understanding social movements that are defined in large part by their capacity to produce a massive shift in collective consciousness. Mobilization of people is insufficient: social movements must also mobilize sustaining ideas. An essential part of this process is ideology. Furthermore, a social movement like feminism challenges existing unequal power relations either in a personal or public way. Personal transformation is as valid as, even prerequisite, to social change (Ryan, 1992:156).

New Social Movement Theory

Whereas enquiries in resource-mobilization theories focus on *how* social movements arise, on bureaucratism and pragmatism, NSM theories ask *why* and emphasize enthusiasm and idealism (Hannigan, 1985:448). The former reflect on how a movement is made up, if and how it survives (Melucci, 1985:791); the latter de-emphasize the importance of social movement mobilization and organization, to focus instead on the movement as a whole (Hannigan, 1985:442-3). In fact, this neglect of the role of organizational structures and strategic interaction is so profound as to be perceived as a blindspot in the NSM theory (Hannigan, 1985:451; Cohen, 1985:705).

Those dimensions of social action disregarded by resource-mobilization theory are positive features central to the socio-historical theory. According to NSM, the social field contested by social movements is neither the state or the market - it is civil society: "the domain of struggles, public spaces, and political processes, it comprises the social realm in which the creation of norms, identities, and social relations of domination and resistance are located" (Cohen, 1985:700).

Influenced by poststructuralism, NSM theory injects historical, identity-based analyses in social movement explanations. The collective, rational actor of resource-mobilization theory is jettisoned in favour of a perspective that interprets social

movements less as pursuing material interests than constructing new political subjects through discursive practices. NSM theory underlines the capacity of new movements to reshape the discursive field of politics through personal and cultural transformations (Carroll, 1992:8).

As defined by the European conceptual tradition, new social movements constitute agents of social transformation in post-industrial society, the labour movement having preceded them as the decisive social movement in the industrial epoch; they are "hailed as the (possible) new historical subject" (Olofsson, 1988:22). Indeed, in the exposition of his sociology of action - *The Voice and the Eye* - Alain Touraine propounds that, in line with neo-Marxist theory, what lies at the core of society are social struggles and what is at stake is no less than society's self-production. This view of social movements as the "main actors of society," and the "principal agents of history," and of the centrality of conflict is markedly dissimilar from American conceptions that see social movements as seeking to redress imbalances or which ignore all struggles other than those of civil society against state incursion (1981:8-9).

Alain Touraine's sociology of action is founded on three themes which I will briefly outline: the nature of society, the false positivity of order and the role of historicity and class relations. Touraine asserts that society is a hierarchized set of systems of action without nature, foundations nor organization: it is purely action and social relations (1981:25). Additionally, Touraine calls fictitious the belief that there preexists a social order which social movements disrupt. Social movements are neither exceptional nor dramatic events: they reside at the heart of social life. "Social movements are not a marginal rejection of order, they are the central forces fighting one against the other to control the production of society by itself and the action of

classes for the shaping of historicity" (Touraine, 1981:29).[26]

According to Touraine's conceptualization, social movements are solutions to, not symptoms of the crisis of contemporary society. He is credited with shifting the analytical focus to the anti-institutional character of movements and their ability to transform their opposition into a systematic critique of the dominant structure of power, rather than on their relative ability to penetrate political structures (Hannigan, 1985:441,449). Conflicts in areas of cultural reproduction, social integration and socialization are conflicts over what Habermas has termed "the grammar of forms of life"; they are not conflicts sparked by problems of distribution (1981:33).

NSM postulates that new social movements no longer articulate purely a class conflict and that their actors are identified not on established political codes [left/right, liberal/conservative], nor socio-economic codes [rural/urban, poor/wealthy] but that they aggregate around categories taken from the movements' issues [gender, age, race, etc.] (Offe, 1985:831). Class conflict is expanded to include the question of control over cultural models. Social and political conflicts are expressed in new social movements in polar opposite of the class conflict model: conflict is staged by a social alliance whose demands are neither class-specific nor fed exclusively by the simple exploitation of the labour force, but are strongly universalistic (Offe, 1985:835; Melucci, 1980:217).

This is Offe's description of the composition of the social base of new social

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[26]Historicity is defined as a society's capacity for action on itself. Although Touraine never actually refers to it as such, it is difficult to disentangle this concept of historicity from that of hegemony, particularly when he writes: "The *ruling class* is the group of innovator-dominators which becomes identified with this production of society by itself, with this historicity, which it in turn utilizes in order to legitimize its domination over the remainder of society, i.e., over the *popular class*, which is subjected to the ruling class but which also challenges its domination in order to win back historicity for itself" (1981:31).

movements: the new middle class characterized by high education status, relative economic security and employment in personnel/service occupations; elements of the old middle class consisting primarily of independent, self-employed workers; and people outside the labour market such as housewives, students and the unemployed (1985:831-5). The relationship between the new social movements and a new social stratum is generally recognized. Olofsson cites empirical investigations that have determined that students, white-collar workers and professionals, especially those in public employment, form the social base of the new social movements. He adds that members of the new middle class share a contradictory class relation, with different combinations of privilege positions and he argues that the heterogeneity of the social base of new social movements makes possible different political and ideological formations through their reshaping and interpellative capacity (1988:28-32). Similarly, Laclau and Mouffe point to the highly diverse conflicts addressed by social movements - urban, ecological, anti-authoritarian, anti-institutional, feminist, anti-racist, regional or that of sexual minorities - and their differentiation from workers' or class struggles. These are 'new' social movements primarily because of the 'novel' role they perform "in articulating that rapid diffusion of social conflictuality to more and more numerous relations which is characteristic today of advanced industrial societies" (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985:159-160).

The emphasis in NSM on discursive practices is a critical improvement over resource-mobilization theory but this notion is problematic to the extent that it risks losing sight of political economy and praxis. A variegated middle-class constituency does not necessarily eject all working-class involvement. The absence of a leading actor does not erase the class character of these conflicts. Further, any theory based so pronouncedly on a particularistic, fragmentary constituency totters on the brink of antipolitics, paralyzed by an identity-politics that denies the potential for solidarity around a universalist vision of social justice and human rights (Offe, 1985:841-2).

NSM theory, despite its range of theoretical propositions, as a rule apprehends new social movements as discontinuous from traditional struggles. I have already critiqued some aspects of this discontinuity: the rupture between NSM participants and the workers' class, and that between previous struggles centred on control over material production/distribution and contemporary struggles of cultural/social reproduction. Another rupture is observed in the field of action, which in contemporary movements has shifted from the political sphere - the state, to the cultural realm - civil society (Touraine, 1985; Melucci, 1985).[27]

Habermas situates this rupture within a dichotomous model of 'old politics' versus 'new politics,' with the former dealing with issues of economic, social, domestic and military security, and the latter with problems of quality of life, equality, individual realization and participation (1981:33). It is no longer an issue of *restoring* civil society by attending to problems of distribution but of *reconstituting* civil society through an emphasis on identity and autonomy, on issues dealing with human rights, peace and environmental preservation (Offe, 1985:842).

None of these ruptures, however, are as sharp or as definitive as NSM theories interpret them. I will highlight four points of contention. First, it is questionable, at least in the case of feminism and undoubtedly for other movements also, to discuss the women's movement in terms of a new social movement representing a break with past traditions of feminist organizing. Indeed, feminism [and other social movements] has not done away with the forms, strategies and beliefs of the old, having generally employed time-honored forms and routines of meetings, marches, associations, petitions and demonstrations (Tilly, 1988:13). I have already surveyed in the previous

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[27]There are differences in assessments of linkages between new social movements and the political system. Eduardo Canel summarizes those of Touraine, Laclau and Mouffe, Habermas, Offe, and Melucci in his chapter "New Social Movement Theory and Resource Mobilization: The Need for Integration" (1992).

chapter the substantial overlap in feminist ideology and politics between the two waves of the movement. Contemporary feminism claims legitimacy precisely on the basis of its historical continuity (Weir, 1993:75). The symbolic and organizational forms of contemporary feminism have their antecedents in the women's movement of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is a movement as old as socialism itself. Where are the interpretations of feminism in the pre-World War II NSM version of social movement history? Not only does the class essentialism in NSM unfairly represent this history, it abrogates the possible forms of socialist politics within contemporary social movements. In her critique of political claims advanced by a NSM discourse, Lorna Weir questions the absence in this discourse of any consideration of class practice - whether consciously or unconsciously held - in social movement groups. She says:

> To reduce the women's movement to gender politics uninfluenced by class or race would constrain its action to the rankest of liberal feminist programs. This is a position to which the NSM logic of argument necessarily leads, thereby undermining the work of the left within social movements (1993:96-7).

She cites her own research on Canadian pro-choice organizing which revealed a left feminist practice that was both class sensitive and unifying, attending to differential access to abortion based on class privilege.

A second imperfection of new social movement theory resides in its emphasis on group identity at the expense of strategy, neglecting - as Canel notes - to identify all the processes that intervene in the passage from 'condition' to 'action'. Further, the constitution of social agents is not a purely discursive process: there are structural limitations to possible group identities that can in fact emerge (1992:35). In particular, the perspective of Laclau and Mouffe replaces economic and class reductionism with 'discourse reductionism' (Canel, 1992:36). Their analysis of social antagonisms and multiplicity of social identities within a hegemonic framework will be more fully assessed in the following section.

Third, by defining civil society as the exclusive arena for social movement

activity, NSM undervalues the connection between civil society and the state, and between social movements and political reform (Canel, 1992:36-7). Touraine, for all intents and purposes, when faced with the dual orientation of state intervention and radical action in feminism, deals with this paradox by stripping feminism of its 'social movement' designation, distinguishing between the first as a 'cultural innovation' and the other as a 'cultural movement' (1985:777). This notion of cultural phenomena refuses to apprehend social movements as struggles for institutional reform and denies feminist claims against the Canadian state that are fundamental to women's equality: issues such as abortion, daycare, equal pay, violence against women and state funding for social service and advocacy.

Finally, the separation between labour struggles of the past and contemporary ones is not as radical as sometimes suggested. Canel rightfully asks: "Isn't the common denominator of these struggles, old and new alike, that they seek to democratize political, economic, and social life?" (1992:37).

Notwithstanding weaknesses of each approach, the recognition in resource mobilization of *social organization* as a prerequisite to collective action and the emphasis in NSM on *discursive struggle* as integral to movement politics are undeniable strengths. When conflated, they make a third approach valuable both theoretically and strategically: the hegemony/counter-hegemony theory.

Hegemony/counter-hegemony

That the interests of one class are made to appear to all others as natural and inevitable is the core of Antonio Gramsci's formulation of ideological hegemony. Gramsci used this concept to refer to the capacity of allied ruling-class factions - forming a historical bloc - to establish their leadership over the whole of society without necessary recourse to coercive forms of domination. This represents the power to control and frame alternatives, to win and shape consent, so that the 'total social

authority' appears natural and normal (Clarke et al, 1981:59).

That hegemony and the notion of ideological reproduction are receiving much theoretical attention is in part a response to a perceived failing of contemporary Marxism to recognize historical action. In particular, Althusserian structuralism overlooks human agency and the conditions of production and reception of cultural forms. Whereas structuralism situates ideology in the 'relatively autonomous' superstructural level constituted by and in turn constitutive of class-based economic relations, hegemony acknowledges the possibility of numerous forms of relations shaped by complex and often contradictory pressures and forces (Gramsci, 1971:350). Indeed, Gramsci's conception of ideology departs from earlier Marxist theory in stressing the material nature of ideology and its inscription in cultural and political practices (Mouffe, 1981:233).

The terrain where ideological hegemony is contested is that of the 'integral state,' the institutions of civil and political societies. These two major superstructural levels combine the coercive apparatus of the state in political society, and the hegemonic/consensual in civil society where reside the ensemble of commonly-called 'private' organisms (Gramsci, 1971:12). It is in this 'integral state' that a ruling-class alliance not only maintains its dominance through legal and legitimate means, but also wins the active consent of those over whom it rules (Bennett, 1981:216). Hegemony, in Gramsci's modification of the Marxist framework, refers to the processes of generating the 'spontaneous consent' of the governed to the rule of a particular social class through the promotion of ideologies that act as social cement.

The value of a social-movement analysis grounded in a theory of hegemony lies precisely in the intersection in this theory, of class, state and civil society contestations. In such a conceptualization, social movements become agents of counter-hegemony, disrupting hegemonic discourses and practices, and contesting the discourses of capital, patriarchy, racism and colonialism (Carroll, 1993:10).

Laclau and Mouffe argue to this effect, that the openness and the indeterminacy of the social - the incompleteness or limits of society - give rise to antagonisms and assure the possibility for hegemonic articulations (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985:134). The inherent plurality of the subject both causes and results in a plurality of discursive forms exposed to hegemonic struggle. As the subject changes, so do the interactive positions, tendencies and strategies. To quote Laclau and Mouffe: "Every antagonism left free to itself, is a floating signifier - it does not predetermine the form in which it can be articulated to other elements in a social formation" (1985:171).

Stuart Hall also characterizes the field of social movement formation as an inter-discursive field generated by contradictions of class, race and gender that each classify the world in different ways (1985:111). Taken together, Hall's arguments for "a politics which is always positional" (1989a:129-130), for subjects of ideology that are not unified nor assigned to a single political position but are always "in process" (1988:10) and for diverse positionalities for subjects occurring in different situations in relation to a different range of social sites (1985:95-106), sustain complexities so that multiple subjects and standpoints can, in their diverse attacks on ideological hegemony, exponentially increase opportunities for successful contestation. Individuals can cross racial, class and gender boundaries and form alliances to effect social change.

As noted previously, an important caveat must be injected in those approaches focused on identity politics. Antagonisms do form a necessary precondition for the organization of dissent, as do specific grievances. However, there must also be a structure to these resistances. Indeed, were they to remain fragmented and episodic, there would be little reason even to invoke the concept of counter-hegemony with its optimistic prognosis for transformation (Carroll, 1993:9). The accumulation of individual conversions to feminism, for instance, is not a strategy of resistance and social transformation. Collective mobilization must follow instances of personal transformation. In the context of a theory of capitalist domination and transformative

socialist practice, Gramsci emphasized the role of theoretical and strategic leadership in forging a practical unity-in-diversity around a shared social vision. Contemporary appropriations of this analysis for theorizing the organization of dissent retain the original Gramscian recognition for the distinct and often contradictory identities and constituencies of a movement that must be reconciled within some larger programme of transformative politics (Carroll, 1993:12).

As a critical approach, hegemony extends the liberal-pluralist thesis of consent as 'consensus.' It also breaks away from the economist Marxist notion of consent as 'false consciousness,' that is as a representation of reality distorted by the location of the subject in the relations of production (Mouffe, 1981:233).[28] Consent thus becomes "structural and epistemological" (Gramsci, 1971:164). Hegemony works by inserting the subordinate class into institutions and structures controlled by the hegemonic bloc. Subordination is secured less by coercive means than by "weakening, destroying, displacing or incorporating alternative institutions of defence and resistance thrown up by the subordinate class" (Clarke et al, 1981:60).

Leslie Good (1989) summarizes succinctly Gramsci's contribution to a Marxist science of political action. She highlights the presence of two general and intimately related uses of the idea of hegemony by social theorists. The first recognizes it as a theory of consent which exposes the process; and the second, as a political strategy, a way of searching for access points for struggle. It is clearly by understanding the nature and production of consent that social-movement participants can begin to challenge ideological hegemony and as will be explored at the end of this chapter, one particularly key contestant in this production of consent are media. Indeed, the struggle over images and discourses represents a major site of access in civil society, in

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[28]Fiske (1987:256) contests such idealism that assumes the possibility of a society without ideology, in which people have a true consciousness of their social relations.

the process of hegemony.

Due in large part to the compromises that must be made in order to sustain it, hegemony is never completely dominant. Todd Gitlin is most persuasive in this line of argument, advancing that "absolute power forbids alternatives; hegemony organizes consent and allocates a certain limited social space to tailored alternatives" (1982:206). Hegemony must thus respond to social change, to those tensions in civil society inevitably the result of the relative autonomy enjoyed by cultural and social constituents of civil society. Indeed, hegemony prevails only to the extent that it accommodates dissidence. A class secures hegemonic leadership not through obliteration of counter-culture, but only to the extent that it can articulate the interests of other social groups to its own by means of ideological struggle. This accommodation most certainly implies some sacrifices on the part of this class and results not in a pure ruling ideology but very much a negotiated one (Bennett, 1986:xv; Mouffe, 1981:223).

As NSM theorists have insisted, the working class no longer represents the central participant in the politics of transformation, and within the concept of hegemony, the traditional class unity is similarly displaced. Culture and ideology cannot be divided into opposing *class* cultures and ideologies, in the same manner that constituents of social movements are not differentiated along class lines but represent diverse overlapping social strata. Tony Bennett is but one among numerous cultural theorists to assert that this critique of class reductionism enables due recognition of the network of social and ideological relations in cultural struggle, to the articulations of class, race and gender (1986:xvi).

Bennett also stresses another important feature relating to class de-alignment and it is the fact that cultural practice does not carry its politics within it: "its political functioning depends on the network of social and ideological relations in which it is inscribed as a consequence of the ways in which, in a particular conjuncture, it is articulated to other practices" (1986:xvi). Such a position displaces the concepts of the

unitary political subject and of the essentialist political content of symbols. A symbol takes its form depending on the way in which it is articulated with other discursive elements. This understanding is essential to social-movement analysis to the extent that it impacts on oppositional projects and counter-hegemonic strategies.

Gramsci conceived of reforms as a rearticulation of existing ideological elements and not as the outright rejection of the existing world-view. Ideological struggle in hegemony and counter-hegemony alike, consists of breaking down the system into its basic elements and choosing those which "with some changes of content, can serve to express the new situation" (Mouffe, 1981:229). This process of transformation is fundamental to the construction of counter-hegemony, with the introduction of discourses that interject elements which transcend hegemonic discourses:

> The emphasis on counter-hegemony as a transcendent project involves a line of thought which does not negate that which exists, but strives to construct, in Gramsci's terms, 'good sense' from 'common sense' and in this way to prioritize or valorize those elements or features which are 'new' (Hunt, 1990:314).

Counter-hegemony represents not the struggle to impose a fully developed, self-sufficient and oppositional world-view, but the "protracted process of the *articulation* of discrete discursive elements into new configurations" (Hunt, 1990:324). Alan Hunt emphasizes that "counter-hegemony is not some purely oppositional project conceived of as if it were constructed 'elsewhere', fully finished and then drawn into place, like some Trojan horse of the mind, to do battle with the prevailing dominant hegemony" (Hunt, 1990:324). The process of hegemonic struggle has its parallel in that of counter-hegemonic formation. Neither are ever finally achieved. Some elements of feminist discourse and alternative practice, for instance, may prevail over others at any one time.

The evolution of a feminist counter-hegemonic consensus involves the negotiation of multiple definitions of sexual practices and of political transformative

ideologies, as well as strategies to inoculate the state with this diversity of perspectives. Those elements of feminist ideologies and strategies - from radical politics of direct action, through issues of racism and lesbianism, to varying forms of feminist organizing - may be marginalized in the women's movement, but they nevertheless retain their capacity to challenge feminist counter-hegemony (Michaud, 1993:201).

The achievement of real social change requires the securing in the realm of 'common sense' in civil society of some claim which at one point was perceived as controversial and contestable but has since become self-evident. It has achieved hegemonic status having become a component of 'common sense'. Consent is achieved through common sense and common sense in turn is obtained through discourse which has the effect of "sustaining certain 'closures', of establishing certain systems of equivalence between what could be assumed about the world and what could be said to be true" (Hall, 1982:75).

In their comprehensive summary of the theoretical perspectives that dominate the field of communications research and that consider the dynamics of closure in media discourses, Pamela Shoemaker and Stephen Reese (1991) relate two approaches for the analysis of the role of media. The first conceives of media as channels for transmitting reality. It is implied in early models of the communication process that have been abandoned largely because of their failure to acknowledge the media's role in shaping our symbolic environment. An alternative approach conceptualizes media as active participants in society with routines, values and organizational structures that tend to reproduce and sustain the dominant ideology. This function of media in the maintenance of ideological hegemony will next be examined.

The role of media in ideological hegemony

In a conception of ideological hegemony, media operate as a paradigm that accepts the dominant ideological boundaries, and through journalistic norms and

practices, are instrumental in maintaining a particular hegemonic frame. Kuhn defines a paradigm as a set of broadly shared assumptions about how to gather and interpret information relevant to a particular sphere of activity. News is paradigmatic inasmuch as it offers an "accepted model or pattern" that helps to make sense of the world (1970:23).

The news paradigm

This process of signification in the journalistic paradigm occurs through the production of news whereby events are selected and assigned to a context which makes them intelligible to audiences. This process of inscribing meaning to events presumes the existence in society of a shared stock of cultural and political knowledge, common 'maps of meanings' that express fundamental values. This process of signification "both assumes and helps to construct society as a 'consensus'" (Hall et al, 1978:55). Media may not be the only forces in the shaping of public consciousness and consensus. However, they are among the most powerful, providing - through the signification of events - one key terrain where 'consent' is won or lost. The 'reproduction of the dominant ideologies' being a problematic and contradictory process - media are after all relatively autonomous from the state and are structured by professional criteria - recreates the arena of signification as a field of ideological struggle (Hall et al, 1978:221). Notwithstanding this struggle in the ideological sphere between competing interpretations of situations or facts, the dominant or most powerful interpretation often shapes the consensus interpretation and this consensus interpretation gains additional currency the more it is repeated and recorded. Daniel Hallin divides the journalistic paradigm into three spheres: consensus, controversy and deviance (1989:116-7). The news paradigm adjusts to hegemonic requirements and sustain these ideological boundaries.

Hegemony in news as in entertainment takes notice of alternatives to the

> dominant values, descriptions and ideals, and frames them so that some alternative features get assimilated into the dominant ideological system, while most of that which is potentially subversive of the dominant value system is driven to the ideological margins (Gitlin, 1982:209).

Within a framework of ideological analysis, this notion of culture as an arena of struggle between those with power and those without implies two ancillary concepts: the social and historical specificity of audiences and the polysemic nature of media texts. Although it is beyond the purview of this thesis to explore the historical and institutional basis of the process of ideological negotiation, it is crucial to underscore that cultural artifacts are produced in specific historical contexts. Although my focus is on the hegemonic character of media as evident specifically in the framing of events, issues of ownership and control of media, although not addressed herein, are nevertheless recognized as important to problems of ideology in media.[29]

Two features of the journalistic paradigm contribute to the convergence of dominant ideas perceived as consensual, common sense views and professional practices. The first involves media routines established to manage the flow of information and which, while they may do this, also impose their own logic on the product that results. Source-based routines are particularly powerful in maintaining ideological boundaries to the extent that, due to newsroom bureaucratic pressures, they are given primacy in identifying and interpreting events.

> [The] selection of interviews indicates whose views were deemed to be important. These are the legitimate and authoritative voices in terms of the dominant view. Once inserted into the logic and flow of coverage they constitute what amounts to an 'official view' (Glasgow University Media Group, 1982:120).

Secondly, the professional ideal of objectivity - that journalists are objective when they let dominant sources frame the news and conversely are biased when they

[29]See Hackett (1988) for his contributions to the debate in cultural studies on 'radical instrumentalism' and conceptions of active audiences. Also, *Cultural Politics in Contemporary America* discusses the political economy of media and cultural institutions, and a politics of images centring on the experience of viewing (Angus and Jhally, Eds., 1989).

use their own expertise to draw conclusions - this ideal of objectivity inevitably results in an over-accessing of powerful and privileged voices. Social reality ends up being defined by accredited sources as media accept the ideological boundaries established and interpreted by these elite sources. In a study designed in part to establish the degree of convergence between sources and journalists, Ericson and his colleagues at the University of Toronto convincingly document the extent to which "news is a representation of authority" (Ericson et al, 1989:3). Official sources may be accessed extensively, but citizen's interest groups do surface in the news. The news media pick up on these organized voices of democratic pluralism, but some voices are heard more often and more clearly than others. Preferred narratives, aimed at granting legitimacy, are given to organizations whose views articulate with the presumed consensus, and whose reformers are 'insiders' in the sense of being in accordance with state-mediated public interests. Negative narratives, aimed at marginalization, are given to organizations whose views do not articulate with the consensus (Ericson et al, 1989:261-2).

News media process social opposition by absorbing elements that resonate with 'social consensus' and relegating to the ideological margins those that contradict dominant definitions. Todd Gitlin has identified this process as 'media frames' to refer to "persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual" (1980:7).[30] In his own study of the complex relations of the American New Left and the media, Gitlin documents the contributions of journalistic routines, of the ideology of media elites and instances of direct intervention by

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[30]The concept of frame was defined by Goffman as 'the principles of organization that govern events and underlie definitions of a situation (1974: 10-11). Other examples of frame include the selection of a news angle that transforms an occurrence into a news event and the latter into a news report (Tuchman, 1978:193f).

government officials in the framing of events and issues within dominant common-sense notions (1980). Interpretative frames reproduce the meanings associated with hegemonic interests from the perspective of selective accounts of the world which are presented as comprehensive, universally valid and legitimate.

Related to these practices is what Hall et al refer to as the transformation which the media themselves must perform on the interpretations which the primary definers provide in order to translate them into their commodity news form. These authors argue that by superimposing criteria of newsworthiness through selectivity and modes of address based on specific target audiences, news items become even more accessible to the uninitiated, more intelligible and inflected with consensual values (1978:60-62). Furthermore, when the public discourse is disproportionately delineated by official viewpoints, those issues these officials inject in the discourse are conferred concentrated media attention and thus perceived as salient by the reading and viewing publics.

As has long been noted by empirical media researchers, this agenda-setting power of media, this capacity to influence what audiences think about, is achieved through the on-going selective process or gatekeeping which ascribes newsworthiness to certain events and excludes others (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). This process alone, however, does not explain media's critical ideological work, the transformatory role of news organizations. "A problem with the metaphor [of gatekeeping] is that it leaves 'information' sociologically untouched, a pristine material that comes to the gate already prepared; the journalist as 'gatekeeper' simply decides which pieces of prefabricated news will be allowed through the gate" (Schudson, 1989:265).

Conversely, and in addition to setting the public agenda, media provide an environment that can silence opinion, suggesting which views would meet with social approval and which would be denigrated. Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann initiated the 'spiral of silence' theory (1974) which has been used to describe the process by which

social movements are swept away (Cirksena, 1989). The spiral of silence theory suggests that people's fear of social isolation motivates them to survey their environment to determine the prevailing climate of opinion. If they determine that more people share their opinion than are opposed to it, they will be more likely to speak out on behalf of their views. Minority opinion-holders may otherwise be induced to abandon their views. Media being the primary source of information about the climate of opinion, those who do not find their views represented therein fall silent. If the media depiction is unrepresentative of public opinion, then people may be deceived about the 'true' climate of opinion.

This theory does ascribe a powerful role to media. Some critics have even described it as a return to theories of the mass society (Katz, 1981) with its atomized individuals on one hand and powerful agencies of social control on the other, active agents of false consciousness constraining people to misperceive their environment and their own place in it.

Unlike agenda-setting and spiral of silence theories that accredit media with primacy in the legitimation of public opinion, hegemony refuses to ascribe the positions of power, whether in discourse or across the whole social formation, permanently to anybody. Hegemony requires people to do specific concrete work (Hall, 1989b:51-52). By extension, media as hegemony's agent can too be influenced by shifting relations of power and by competing paradigms.

Media -- movement dialectic

The insertion of sufficient paradigmatic anomalies from the margins into the ideological centre may eventually produce a paradigm shift. Indeed, the hegemony theory derives its appeal in analyses of social movement and media interactions from the possibility of counter hegemony and the incorporation within 'common sense' of once contestable claims. The preceding discussion has touched upon two journalistic

determinants of hegemonic ideology within a larger dimension of news frames: access to primary definitions and criteria of newsworthiness.[31] These features are important to social movements to the extent that they affect coverage of social movement issues and events. Other consequences ensue from a movement-media dialectic. There is the role of media in the mobilization of social movement participants in the emergent stage of a movement, through the creation of a collective awareness and recognition of a shared grievance (Kielbowicz and Scherer, 1986).

The influence that media coverage may exert on social movements in terms of granting them legitimacy and facilitating recruitment is counterpoised by a much more contradictory pressure in the later developmental stages of a movement. The reciprocal relationship exists in a context fraught with tension as activists on the one hand strive to access an establishment institution to achieve non-establishment goals, whereas media inject movement perspectives and events in a public discourse defined by elite sources within an ideological framework that relegates to the periphery voices that challenge the status quo (Molotch, 1979).

> Media and movements, particularly in the modern American context, are part of a single process through which one social class acts to guarantee stability in the face of continuous challenges to that stability (Molotch, 1979:91).

Furthermore, even if a social movement manages to elicit news coverage, it does not necessarily represent an instance of media working against dominant ideology. Indeed, Gitlin emphasizes that "*the hegemonic ideology of bourgeois culture is extremely complex and absorptive; only by absorbing and domesticating conflicting values, definitions of reality, and demands on it, in fact, does it remain hegemonic*

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[31]In their article "The role of the press in the dynamics of social movements," Kielbowicz and Scherer cite additional elements of newsmaking relevant to social movements, in particular organizational routines such as a preference for dramatic and visual events, news cycles and rhythms, pack journalism and the deployment of newsgathering resources.

(1980:256, emphasis in the original).

The paradoxical relationship between the journalistic paradigm and a movement's accommodation to these news production routines in order to garner coverage can profoundly affect the structure and direction of the movement (Gitlin, 1980). It may increase radicalism or conservatism in a movement in order to retain the media spotlight by adapting movement rhetoric and tactics to prevailing media frames. It may also exacerbate inherent tendencies in movements towards dual internal forms of protest, that is institutionalization of movement demands and critical action, and hierarchical, bureaucratic organizational proclivity through media focus on movement leadership (Kielbowicz and Scherer, 1986).

The media hegemony thesis reveals the influence of media on the evolution and goal attainment of social movements. However, the structure of material and symbolic journalistic processes are not unalterable conditions. Media do not recuperate and co-opt all social dissent particularly since dissent itself, far from being unitary, is related to potential numerous articulations. Bruck's conclusions - based on the analysis of Canadian media coverage of peace, disarmament and security issues (1992) - that a preoccupation with the dynamics of closure in media discourses fails to account for the contradictory operation of the news media, is particularly germane to the present context. A theory of hegemony/counter-hegemony permits an analysis of social movements within a media production process viewed as constrained rather than controlled. Possibilities for change exist in the nature of newswork. Media may operate within a political-economy conditioned by capitalistic ownership, industrial organization and bureaucratic proclivity, but these influences alone do not determine the content of news media. To be sure, these are constraining factors, but journalistic norms and practices remain as an important site of struggle. Unlike most other social movements, feminism has within its ranks media workers who organize and agitate from within for equality measures in both news organizations and in news coverage of

feminist issues.

The remainder of this thesis is concerned with media representations of feminism, resistance to media frames and a feminist media critique that increasingly problematizes inside-media and outside-media interventions. Before this analysis, however, I will conclude the present chapter on the hegemonic character of media, with observations on its patriarchal orientation.

Feminism-Media Dimensions

I believe the dialectical relationship between media and the women's movement differs from that between media and other social movements by virtue of the dual character of media as hegemonic and patriarchal institutions. Feminism seeks to penetrate a hegemonic discourse in a challenge to both capitalist ideology and its androcentric dimension.

After defining the concept of patriarchy, I will discuss its presence and expressions, first in the broader social/ideological context, and next in the more specific cultural/media discourses and institutions.

The Concept of Patriarchy

This is how Adrienne Rich has defined patriarchy:

> Patriarchy is the power of the fathers: a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men - by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male. It does not necessarily imply that no woman has power, or that all women in a given culture may not have certain powers (...) whatever my status or situation, my derived economic class, or my sexual preference, I live under the power of the fathers, and I have access only to so much of privilege or influence as the patriarchy is willing to accede to me, and only for so long as I will pay the price for male approval (quoted in Bem, 1993:40).

To be sure, this particular characterization is controversial. However, it is not within

the parameters of my present enquiry into the patriarchal complexion of media discourse to debate definitional variations, to integrate hegemony theory and the reproduction of patriarchy, or to explore why women consent to the ideology and practice of patriarchy[32]. My analysis will be limited to the patriarchal arching of news in media institutions already conceived of as agents of hegemonic ideology. What I propose to do is to overlay a discourse of patriarchal relations upon one of capitalist ideology in media.

Michèle Barrett and Mary McIntosh (1985) argue that the concept of patriarchy has a valuable but specific purchase. They claim it cannot be equated with a concept such as 'capitalism' since it would need to demonstrate that it forms, as capitalism does, the organizing principle of society. They acknowledge, however, that the adjective 'patriarchal' does describe certain types of social relations that combine a public dimension of power and exploitation with a dimension of personal servility[33]. I would agree that society is not reducible to patriarchy, nor does this concept explain all aspects of the oppression of women, but that the term patriarchal represents a dimension of society that articulates with other divisions such as race and class in capitalism. I will therefore limit my discussion to only two, albeit two crucial and universal references to patriarchy central to Rich's definition: its variability and historical nature.

Feminist theorists have consistently acknowledged that patriarchy constitutes a system of relations based on male authority, power and privilege. Social ascendancy is not spread evenly among all men. We have already discussed in the previous chapter

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[32]See O'Brien (1989) and R.W. Connell (1987).

[33]Walby adopts a similar differentiation which she calls 'private patriarchy' based upon household production and the relatively private sphere of the home and 'public patriarchy' based on all other structures (1990).

that some men have more power than others. Similarly, some societies have been more patriarchal than others. It is critical to recognize that patriarchal relations today differ from those in a previous era, in the same way that a modern class structure differs from feudalism (McCormack, 1991:3). The term patriarchy originally referred to the power of the father over his kinship group within anthropological accounts; it *literally* meant 'rule of the father.' It did not acquire the political significance it now has until the new-wave feminist discourse of the 1970s sought to explain the creation and maintenance of men's dominance. It has become widespread feminist practice to use the term broadly, to refer *figuratively* to the 'rule of the father' (Ramazanoglu, 1989:33).

Equally critical is the concept that patriarchy cannot be explained solely by the intentions of individual men: it is a property of asymmetrical gender relations in the private domain and in public institutions[34].

Further, the notion of patriarchal structures does not necessarily give rise to a fixed, ahistorical analysis. Women are not passive victims of oppressive structures. They struggle with some measure of success to change both their immediate circumstances and the social structures. In response, patriarchy changes in form, incorporating some of the changes into existing legal, bureaucratic and economic structures (Walby, 1990:200-201). Sheila Rowbotham has given the concept of oppression some of its earliest historical-materialist characterizations, emphasizing that it is not an abstract moral condition but very much a social and historical experience. Its form and expression change as the mode of production and the ensuing relationship

[34]Dorothy Smith has pointed out that the authority which men have in the world of thought is derived from their membership in a social category. She writes: "Men are invested with authority as individuals, not because they have as individuals special competencies or expertise, but because as men they appear as representative of the power and authority of the institutionalized structures which govern society. Their authority as individuals in actual situations of action is generated by a social organization" (1978:289).

between men and women, between men and men, and between women and women, change in society (1973:xiii).

In an interesting argument for preferring the term 'androcentrism' to that of 'patriarchy,' Sandra Bem claims that the former "goes beyond telling *who* is in power to tell *how* their power is culturally and psychologically reproduced" (1993:40-41). I remain unconvinced that the more historical and conventional term 'patriarchal' does not itself imply, as does 'androcentric', the privileging of male experience and the "otherizing" of female experience. I believe that both adjectives similarly denote a male universal standard and female experience as a sex-specific deviation of this norm, and I shall use them interchangeably.

Patriarchal Ideology

Relations between elite and mass, relations between ruling class and working class, the dichotomy between dominant culture and subcultures: these stratifications are commonly used to describe our society but they obscure other pertinent social categories such as gender (Rakow, 1986b:21).

In *The Lenses of Gender*, Sandra Bem documents the pervasiveness of androcentrism[35] in Western culture by analyzing four central cultural discourses. (1993:42-79) She claims that these discourses privilege male perspective and experience while subordinating women on the basis of (1) either their deviation from the male standard, (2) their domestic and reproductive functions within a male-dominated family and/or (3) their definition as sexual temptresses.

In the first discourse she examines, Judeo-Christian theology - a fundamental

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[35]Androcentrism is one of three gender lenses Bem believes are embedded in the culture. The others are gender polarization and biological essentialism. Together, these lenses explain how biology, culture and the individual psyche interact to systematically reproduce male power.

underpinning of contemporary Western thought - the different and unequal nature of the sexes is prescribed by God in the biblical story of the creation, with only Adam unambiguously defined as in God's image. In contrast, Eve is an inferior, secondary being created merely as an adjunct to Adam.

According to the second discourse of Ancient Greek philosophy Bem analyzes, the different and unequal nature of the sexes is inherent in nature itself. In the ancient Greek tradition, just as in the ancient Judeo-Christian tradition, the first woman on earth, in this case Pandora, is held responsible for the fall of humanity when, unable to contain her curiosity, she opens the box entrusted to her thereby unintentionally releasing all the vices, sins, diseases and troubles within it. Bem writes that similarly, the works of Plato and Aristotle reflect androcentric conceptions of woman as a subordinate denied basic civil and legal rights and segregated within the household to carry out domestic, childbearing and childrearing chores.

In the third discourse of Freudian psychoanalysis, the different and unequal nature of the sexes develops during the course of psychosexual development, when boys resolve their Oedipus complex and develop a strong superego whereas girls resolve their penis envy by replacing it with a wish for a child and thereby make room for [vaginal] femininity. As Bem notes, these twin concepts of male-castration anxiety and female penis envy presuppose a priori that the female genitalia is an inferior version of the male genitalia.

In the fourth cultural framework Bem traces, she contends that the history of the American Equal Rights law deeply embeds, as do Judeo-Christian theology, ancient Greek philosophy and Freudian psychoanalytic theory, a definition of women in terms of their domestic and reproductive functions within a male-dominated household, and a definition of women in terms of their departure from a male standard. Although this discourse does not strictly obtain in a Canadian context in which, unlike the United States where an Equal Rights Amendment was defeated, sexual equality is protected by

the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the condition Bem describes nevertheless endures.

I would add a fifth discourse to the above indicators of the patriarchal dimension of ideology: the media discourse. As I have underlined earlier, the hegemony thesis maintains that cultural production provides an important site for the construction of ideological processes since meaning is negotiated through means of communication and signification. Furthermore, like the state, media are not a pre-given instrument of oppression, but are a site of struggle and to some extent at least responsive to concrete pressure. Finally, as I have illustrated in the preceding chapter, we live in a context of asymmetrical gender relations where men experience social ascendency.

Within a hegemonic order where the ways in which we think about ourselves and our society are shaped and distributed by the specialized work particularly of schools and media that form the 'ideological apparatus' of society, and in this context of hierarchical gender relations, "the universe of ideas, images and themes -- the symbolic modes which are *the general currency* of thought -- have been either produced by men or controlled by them. In so far as women's work and experience has been entered into it, it has been on terms decided by men and because it has been approved by men" (Smith, 1978:282).

The political-economy of media institutions attests to this androcentrism.

Patriarchal Media

Media organizations should be recognized for what they are: mostly privately-owned, profit-motivated, transnational businesses with close links and shared interests with the power structures that operate at the political and economic levels. Major players in this contested political terrain are (white, middle-class) men who, in spite of their differences, share a common set of interests, assumptions and concerns simply by virtue of being men in a society divided and ordered by gender hierarchy (Finn,

1989:390).

The following chapter will address more fully how patriarchal relations are expressed through the media discourse. One example drawn from Geraldine Finn's media criticism (1989) may suffice here to illustrate the problem experienced by the women's movement to represent women's concerns without losing them to the hegemony of male interests embodied in language: violence against women. When the feminist concern for battered wives was taken up by the state and media, in the process of being accepted as a social concern, it was divested of its original political content of male power over women. The problem of 'violence against women' became a concern for 'family violence.' This translation obfuscates the specificity of male violence, and it reproduces male ideology.

The structure of male dominance in gender relations and in hegemonic media discourse is not a closed system that obliterates the possibility of contestation. On the contrary, it is only one dimension of reality; it does not dominate all human relations. The very existence of feminism affirms the potential for counter-hegemony. It also confirms that there is no absolute male power or absolute female powerlessness.

Conclusion

Combining ideology with strategy in civil society, the theory of hegemony recognizes the potential for challenging prevailing ideology through media. Indeed, the value of the hegemony/counter-hegemony theory in an analysis of feminism, over those of resource mobilization and new social movement, is derived from the theory's recognition of the material nature of ideology, of the presence of symbolic as well as political struggles and of the structural aspect of dissent. Basically, hegemony theory amalgamates consensual practice within civil society, with political strategy within the state. It is the theory that best apprehends the function of ideology in cementing social relations through negotiations between social movements and the state and within social

movements themselves.

The role of media is appreciated to its true worth in the symbolic order, as an important site where social consensus is processed and media frames imposed on event interpretations. Further, ideological struggle in this sphere implies the 'proximate' possibility of achieving incremental gains in changing public definitions of a social movement and the 'ultimate' possibility of performing a paradigm shift.

Media are agents of hegemony, essential to those engaged in oppositional practice who want to present alternatives to the dominant worldview. I will review in the next chapter feminist attempts to exploit the internal contradictions in media, and I will survey findings of research that have probed the dialectical women's movement-media relationship.

CHAPTER 3

MEDIA FRAMES OF FEMINISMS AND FEMINIST MEDIA CRITIQUES

Introduction

The discussion in this chapter opens with three dimensions of the relationship between mainstream media and the women's movement: media images, female employment and news frames. I present herein a descriptive account of major research approaches to gender in communication studies as they apprehend these dimensions and inform related advocacy strategies.

I outline studies of media representations of women and of the women's movement, as well as the specific feminist responses they have provoked, and in the process trace a shift in the feminist critique from one based on media products to another that engages a deeper analysis and political agenda (Rakow, 1986a). The issue becomes one of the extent to which media frames of feminisms have lagged behind increasingly differentiated feminist constituencies, as well as complex theoretical positions and definitions of the feminist movement. These media frames have been confronted by a critique which conversely not only reflects fundamental shifts in gender analyses but also problematizes the relationship of women to media.

I document changes within feminist media criticism, but it is not until the subsequent, more prescriptive chapter, that I will elaborate more fully on the counter-hegemonic potential of changing feminist perspectives on media frames, when I also link gender media research/advocacy outlined in the present chapter with prevailing feminist conceptual and epistemological frameworks. The analysis of the interrelationship of media and feminisms based on the literature in this area of enquiry is supplemented by a modest case study of journalistic framing devices which points to the influence of gender in the framing of feminist issues in the establishment press.

From empiricism to ideology -- the shift in feminist media critique

The cultural production and reproduction of gender roles and relations stand at the crossroads of women's contemporary contest for equality. While numerous institutions such as religion, the traditional family, politics and capitalism became the focus of feminist criticism in the 1960s, analysis of the media was a top priority to many feminists either because of the blatantly oppressive representations of women they projected or because of the almost total absence of women and their concerns (Smith, 1989:281). *The Feminine Mystique* (Friedan, 1963) symbolizes feminist writings of this period that reflect an awareness of the contributions of media representations to the ideology of sex roles. The presence of women in cultural production was viewed not merely as a ground on which struggles must continue in order to eradicate demeaning and unrealistic portrayals, but also as one that has implications in terms of employment access and equity and, additionally, in terms of articulating a feminist discourse.

Feminist concerns with cultural institutions generally and with gender issues in the Canadian mainstream media specifically have proceeded from the evidence of women's exclusion and have historically adopted one of two opposing (yet complementary) strategies. They have either led to the development of parallel media derived from distinctly female-centred cultural models and devoted exclusively to the coverage of women's culture, or they have been channelled through the state to reverse women's exclusion by expanding media institutions, with calls for legislative and regulatory action both to eliminate gender stereotyping in media content and to provide

gender equity in media industries. The following exposé[36] is restricted to research and advocacy relating to the latter strategy of feminist challenges to mainstream media, and it reveals the nature of female portrayal and employment participation through feminist interventions with the state[37].

Regulating gender equity

The issue of gender stereotyping in the media was first placed on Canada's public agenda in 1973, when Women for Political Action and the Ontario Committee on the Status of Women intervened at the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (hereafter CRTC) licence renewal hearing of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). The National Action Committee on the Status of Women appeared in front of the CRTC at the subsequent renewal hearing of the CBC in 1978, reiterating dissatisfaction with a broadcasting system that underrepresented or misrepresented women.

As noted in the first chapter, the establishment in February 1967 of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women marked the first stage in the development of public policy on the status of women. Although the Commission recognized the role of

[36]Much of this exposé is drawn from the author's discussions of feminist interventions into the regulatory arena (Strutt and Hissey, 1992; MediaWatch Brief, 1991) and is supplemented by observations of Liss Jeffrey (1993). It does not purport to be an exhaustive account of all feminist activities in this area but is sufficient to indicate what practices and arguments have characterized the feminist lobby.

[37]Although not entirely disregarded by feminist activists, the print media have nevertheless received disproportionately less attention than broadcasting, the latter being a regulated industry and thus more vulnerable to state intervention. However, the need for the inclusion of more women in print media was underlined in a MediaWatch study of Canadian newspapers which documents over a three-year period (1990-92) a decreasing number of female bylines, undue attention in news stories to women's personal appearance as opposed to their achievements and the persistence of sexist language (MediaWatch, *A Three-Year Overview of Sexism in Canadian Newspapers*, 1992).

advertising in reinforcing and exploiting stereotypes, it made no mention of the underrepresentation or distorted portrayal of women in other media products. It did, however, recommend the introduction of equal opportunity programs for women within federal Crown corporations such as the CBC (recommendations 43 to 48). Twice - in 1974 and again in 1979 - the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW, itself a progeny of the Royal Commission) reviewed government action on the Royal Commission Report. It was not until 1979 that CACSW noted partial implementation of Recommendations 43 to 48. It observed that occupational segregation is persisting and of the 44 corporations surveyed, only eight had established equal opportunity programs. These included the CBC which instituted such a program following a special study by the CACSW in 1978 on the status of women in the CBC[38].

The government published in 1979 a "plan of action" in which it promised to suggest that the CRTC develop a set of national standards and guidelines for the elimination of gender stereotyping in the Canadian media and in all federal government publications (Minister Responsible for the Status of Women: 28). In response, the CRTC launched a Task Force on Sex-Role Stereotyping in the Broadcast Media, with representation from government, industry and advocacy groups[39]. It eventually recommended a two-year period of self-regulation by the industry starting September 1, 1982, with voluntary compliance with industry-defined guidelines on gender stereotyping.

The national women's organization, MediaWatch, is credited with strengthening the women's lobby when it was created in 1981 to monitor radio and television content

[38]See Susan M. Crean (1987) for a review and analysis of women's participation in broadcast management in the CBC.

[39]Nineteen people served on the Task Force chaired by Commissioner Marianne Barrie - from the CRTC, the public across Canada, the CBC, the private broadcast media and the advertising industry.

as a means of evaluating industry progress during the trial period of self-regulation (Raboy, 1990:31). The CBC commissioned its own monitoring study, unlike private broadcasters who chose instead to rely on the one conducted by the CRTC in 1984. Of these three content analyses, only the 1984 MediaWatch study was conducted in two phases, offering a comparative analysis of changes in portrayal as a means of assessing the effectiveness of self-regulation in reducing stereotyping.

Regardless of methodology, the findings of the several reports generally concurred. Given the differences in emphasis and methods, their remarkable similarity in outcome can reasonably be attributed to the pervasiveness of the phenomenon under scrutiny. In its *Response to the CRTC Report on Self-Regulation* (1986), MediaWatch reviewed and compared the findings and conclusions of the three studies and further evaluated them against the industry guidelines of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) and the Advertising Advisory Board (AAB, since replaced by the Canadian Advertising Foundation, the CAF). MediaWatch concluded that only in the use of sexist language in television news, public affairs and information programs, had there been unequivocal improvement during the two-year period of self-regulation.

The better-known statistics from the CRTC-commissioned ERIN Report (CRTC, 1986, January) are quoted here to illustrate the status of women in Canadian broadcasting at that time. The number of women in broadcasting was found to be significantly smaller than the number of men in every area. On English television, females constituted only 16% of characters in children's cartoons, 41% of characters in adult drama, 29% of program staff in news and public affairs, and 21% of persons interviewed in news and public affairs. Women accounted for 12% of English radio announcers and 9% of voiceovers in English radio ads. The roles of women and men differed in each major area of broadcasting and advertising. ERIN Report notes that in television news, women, unlike men, are generally interviewed in a non-expert capacity. In drama, they are more often associated with home and family roles while

men assume employment roles. In broadcast advertising, men are more likely to be cast as salespersons or experts and women as consumers.

Although ERIN Research was specifically precluded by the CRTC from recommending either on the effectiveness of self-regulation or on future action, its Report nevertheless drew conclusions pertaining to these issues. The Report stated that if reducing certain differences in the portrayal of women and men is desired, change must occur in two ways. The quantitative representation of women in programming and advertising must be increased and there must be a concomitant change in the kinds of roles women occupy. ERIN Research was very clear that while equalizing the number of women and men would reduce some unwanted differences in sex roles, it could not eliminate all of them.

Findings from a 1988 replicate study by ERIN Research were released in December 1990 (CRTC, 1990). This second report presents research data on representations of women and men in programming and advertising on Canadian radio and television from 1984 to 1988. It notes no appreciable gain in the four intervening years and it concludes that the period of broadcasting under review is characterized much more by stability than by change. In those few cases where positive change has occurred, women nevertheless still lag behind men in terms of their numbers and in terms of the roles they occupy. From 1984 to 1988, the only groups that registered a general increase in participation by women are television news announcers, radio announcers and staff of TV information programs. There is a serious imbalance in the numbers of middle-aged women and men in television, with men between the ages of 35 and 65 outnumbering women as much as five to one in some areas of programming and advertising.

The permeation in the broadcasting system of gender inequality has also been documented by Toronto Women in Film and Video, a sister group of the Los Angeles-based Women in Film formed in 1984. Its *Statistical Profile of Women in the*

Canadian Film and Television Industry (March 1990) is a baseline national survey that documents the participation rate of women and men in every sector of the film and television industry. Findings of this study reaffirm women's overall participation in the workforce. For example, it found that women comprised 35% of the workforce in film, television and video industries, compared to a 43% participation rate of women in the paid labour force at large. It also showed, however, that in the private media sector, women dominate in six job categories, from production secretary/bookkeeper (90%) to hairstylist (71%). In 1988, women represented 84% of clerical workers in broadcast oriented companies with over 100 employees but they represented only 9% of upper level managers. Women accounted for only 14% of the influential creative positions, 14% of upper managers in public-sector television and radio companies and just 1% in private-sector companies.

In addition to accepting the 1979 Task Force recommendation that it institute and assess self-regulation over a two-year period, the CRTC notified licensees to submit within one year a report on their initiatives vis-à-vis gender stereotyping, such a report to include information on public complaint mechanisms and educational measures initiated to sensitize station personnel on the issue (CRTC, 1983). Twice the Commission extended the deadline for submission. By January 31, 1985, only 66% of eligible broadcast stations had bothered to respond to the CRTC requirement, with only 27% of these explicitly endorsing the industry guidelines on sex-role stereotyping (CRTC, 1986, 22 December:7).

In assessing the self-regulatory period, the Commission considered industry compliance with guidelines, station reports, procedures implemented to address complaints, the level of industry and public awareness, public hearing submissions as well as the ERIN Research findings summarized above. After reviewing all of these factors, the Commission concluded that "self-regulation has been only partially successful and that further action is necessary" (CRTC, 1986, 22 December:46). This

action was the imposition of a condition of licence requiring adherence by all broadcasters to the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) self-regulatory guidelines (CRTC, 1986, 22 December:52).

This meant that the CRTC itself was responsible for assessing individual licencees' performance in complying with the guidelines. The second large-scale content analyses conducted for the CRTC by ERIN Research suggests that the condition of licence has not been effective. There is also evidence that the CRTC itself has not implemented the condition as forcefully as it could. An extensive research study on CRTC involvement in gender stereotyping (Trimble, 1990) points to the lackadaisical approach of the CRTC in seeking compliance with its condition of licence[40]. A stronger approach need not involve revoking licences - a power the CRTC has never levied even, for instance, in cases of non-compliance with Canadian-content quotas[41]. But the CRTC could monitor individual licencees regarding their performance on gender stereotyping, as it does for the only other blanket condition of licence, the CAB Code on broadcast advertising to children. Further, having acknowledged the existence of systemic discrimination in the entire broadcasting system and having declared voluntary self-regulation to be ineffective to the extent of making such regulation

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[40]Trimble's findings clearly indicate that the Commission is unwilling to assess in any depth industry actions regarding gender stereotyping. Her study revealed that few questions on this issue were addressed to licencees at licence-renewal hearings (usually only one), that the question asked was of an extremely general nature, that follow-up questions usually were not asked, and that the Commission was satisfied merely with assurances that the licencee had some sort of mechanism in place to educate staff or monitor programming and advertising. Questioning did not refer to the fact that this is an area governed by a condition of licence. It accompanied questioning on other social issues dealt with in a voluntary manner by the broadcasters. Indeed, Trimble documents that one applicant who appeared at his station's licence renewal hearing was unaware that the condition of licence existed and was surprised when this was subsequently pointed out to him.

[41]In 1975, 17 private television stations that did not meet minimum Canadian-content quotas faced no regulatory repercussion (Babe, 1979:186).

mandatory, the CRTC was nevertheless simultaneously entertaining a CAB proposal for voluntary industry self-regulation administered by a Broadcast Standards Council. The CRTC adopted this concept in principle in September 1988, thereby reversing its earlier decision - and this in the absence of any evidence to substantiate an improvement in the broadcasting environment that would justify a return to voluntary self-regulation and roll-back of the condition of licence[42].

The Broadcast Standards Council is fashioned on the press council model. It is a reactive model that relies on a public-complaint process and voluntary participation by broadcasters. For all intents and purposes, it places the onus for achieving responsible broadcasting on individual members of the public who, instead of the CRTC, are responsible for ensuring that broadcasters are accountable. Broadcasters who become Council members are required to inform their communities of the existence of the Council and broadcast standards, through public-service announcements. However, substantive information about the standards themselves are only provided on request. Written complaints about the failure of a station to adhere to a particular standard are addressed directly to the station, the level at which the CAB expects most complaints to be resolved. Dissatisfied complainants are then instructed to reformulate their comments for the Secretariat of the Council which forwards them to the Regional Council. Complainants who remain dissatisfied are informed only at this point of their right to complain to the CRTC.

The feminist lobby has contended that this complaint-handling mechanism would rapidly discourage even the most perseverant complainant and that it is located

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[42]The efficacy of the Canadian regulatory framework was assessed in a comparative content analysis of American and Canadian programming (MacBeth-Williams et al, 1990, cited in Jeffrey, 1993). Findings revealed a difference favourable to Canadian programming with regard to occupation and sex object portrayals, a limited difference with regard to authoritative and/or knowledgeable portrayals and no difference with regard to the numerical preponderance of males.

within a system that places far too great an onus on the targets of discrimination and virtually none on the industry itself. They maintain that since the CRTC has ascertained systemic discrimination, the leadership in promoting and achieving change should shift from individual members of the public to the industry itself and to the federal regulator. MediaWatch has opposed this model noting its unsuitability for dealing with issues of systemic discrimination -- problems of balance with respect to the representation of Canadian society, abusive or offensive programming and in some instances balance and adequacy of coverage on public issues -- and in particular the issue of gender stereotyping (MediaWatch, 1987:3).

The feminist critique maintains that the Broadcast Council proposes no effective deterrent to stereotyping. A penalty that carries no financial implications for broadcasters is perceived as unlikely to deter gender stereotyping, let alone promote real and positive change.

MediaWatch has consistently argued that several conditions are necessary if a public-complaint mechanism - in itself a method MediaWatch later determined to be ineffective for eradicating systemic discrimination - is to be useful in a program to assess industry standards. The public should first have a basis for comparison against which to measure the standards to be achieved. The system for public comment should be widely known and easy to use and the public should be educated on the issue and problem they are expected to address (MediaWatch, 1987:4). Such a mechanism must be part of a larger context for the assessment of compliance with guidelines in which the CRTC remains involved. Measures supplementary to the compilation and analysis of public complaints would consist of findings from monitoring studies, the establishment of targets and assessment of achievements in meeting these targets, analysis of statistics reported by licensees and public interventions at public hearings (MediaWatch, 1987:5).

Legislating gender equity

The 1985 Caplan-Sauvageau Task Force on Broadcasting acknowledged that there is a need in the Canadian broadcasting system for more programs by women, for equal opportunities for production and dissemination of women's work and for more women on government boards and decision-making bodies. Although the 1985 Task Force Report discussed the introduction of an equality clause in the Broadcasting Act, it concluded that such a provision may conflict with freedom of expression. Support for such a clause was nevertheless received from the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Communications. On September 28, 1988 the House of Commons approved passage of Bill C-136 to replace the 1968 Broadcasting Act, with provisions that address portrayal and employment equity. These clauses recognized that the broadcasting industry remains largely unaffected by current employment equity legislation and gave a clear mandate to the CRTC to implement employment equity practices[43]. Bill C-136 died when a federal election was called in the Fall of 1988. It was re-introduced by the re-elected government as Bill C-40 in 1989, received third reading on December 5, 1990 and was proclaimed on June 5, 1991.

The new Broadcasting Act provides for a Canadian broadcasting system that should, through its programming and the employment opportunities arising out of its operations, serve the needs and interests and reflect the circumstances and aspirations of Canadian men, women and children including equal rights. This provision serves two important functions relating to the status of women within broadcasting. First, it promises women the opportunity to be both the consumers and creators of programming of interest to them. Second, it gives the CRTC the mandate to impose on

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[43]In 1987, only 39 of 268 broadcasting corporations and only 15 of 360 cable operators had 100 or more employees, the number needed to include them in the Employment Equity Act.

broadcasters conditions that relate to the employment and visibility of women both on-screen and off. Due application of this provision promises women access to and participation in the national broadcasting system and in turn the inclusion of women's perspectives.

The new Act clearly establishes the obligations of the broadcasters and the powers of the CRTC to ensure that principles of gender equality are respected. The equal rights clause guarantees opportunities to take administrative and legal measures against broadcasters and advertisers who renege on their obligations.

Feminist responses to legislation and regulation

The first two decades of feminist analysis and interventions in the mainstream media have resulted in minor gains and the significance of these improvements in portrayal and access is under dispute (Jeffrey, 1993). As Jeffrey points out, the collision of commercial imperatives and equality rights, the ascendance of the "free marketplace of ideas" over mandatory guidelines, and the poor profit picture painted by broadcasters[44] have impeded action on equality issues. In this regard, she quite rightly observes that a feminist lobby entrenched in principles based on social justice and charter rights have lost the edge to arguments founded on the professional benefits that could accrue to the industry were it to take advantage of women's talents and on the

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[44]General economic conditions in broadcasting have certainly prejudiced the gains made over the past decade by the CBC, with openings abnormally constricted at a time when a generation of women have reached the management entry level (Crean, 1987:115).

financial benefit of appealing to women as audiences[45]. This trend is particularly applicable to print content with newspapers decrying the loss of female readership over the last 20 years[46] and advocating the deployment of more resources to reach this untapped market (Morgan, 1992).

The critique of media images and employment opportunities for women has been founded principally on quantitative content analysis and has called for portrayal and employment equity measures. The theoretical underpinnings of this approach clearly tend towards a perspective of gender neutrality and androgyny.

Policy interventions and positions have been informed by a liberal perspective that argues for change primarily within existing social structures and practices and that prescribes equity in portrayal and employment as a means of eliminating sexist media content. The liberal-feminist vision centres on equality of opportunity, on the removal of barriers that impede women's access to social status, power and authority. As discussed previously, this current of feminism prescribes the eradication of gender difference through equality-seeking measures. But as I also claim earlier, the liberal feminism label has become somewhat of an oxymoron, espousing as it does feminist ideals of collectivity contradicted by those of liberal abstract individualism. Indeed, this incongruity is similarly located in the feminist media critique.

Whereas at its inception MediaWatch had assigned itself a mandate to facilitate

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[45]As noted earlier, MediaWatch expanded its mandate from that of facilitating a complaint process to one which included the promotion of legislative change, public education and consumer advocacy, the development of educational and media literacy materials, and research. It also adopted the principles that women are a charter group whose rights should be protected and enhanced and that the implications of changing media products and media industries are far-reaching in terms of achieving gender equality in Canadian society (MediaWatch, 1991).

[46]The Newspaper Advertising Bureau notes that in 1970, women's readership outpaced men's 78% to 77%, whereas in 1990 the figures are 60.5% [female] to 64.5% [male] (Quoted in Morgan, 1992).

the bureaucratic routing of individual complaints from media consumers, soon thereafter it used results of government-sponsored content analyses to justify the elimination of such an individualistic approach and the acknowledgment of systemic discrimination with systemic remedial measures. It moved beyond seeking redress for individual instances of gender discrimination to raise arguments against systemic inequalities. Furthermore, its critique of media content and policy subsequently widened to enfold arguments against a unitary voice for feminism or a single, essential 'feminist viewpoint', as well as arguments in support of subjects and discourses rooted in diversity and multiplicity. The quantitative demand for numerical representation was compounded by a qualitative demand for representation both on the screen and behind the scene that better reflect women's differing race and class identifications. Finally, regulatory and journalistic root concepts heretofore unchallenged by a feminist media critique, such as balance and objectivity, are being critically examined for their implication in the ideological reproduction of androcentric viewpoints (Strutt and Hissey, 1992). This shift towards a more complex analysis of the relationship between women and media is reviewed below and will also be addressed in the next chapter within a context of the counter-hegemonic potential of an evolving feminist media critique.

Research and activism within gender communication frameworks

Feminist activism in the field of media production and representation has in large part belonged to the first of four approaches in communication studies identified by Lana Rakow (1986b): *the images and representation* approach. The work of MediaWatch, the oldest and most visible of the women's groups concerned specifically with media content, initially focused on sex-roles and effects research. It contended that media portrayals contribute to the socialization of children and the maintenance of asymmetrical gender relations - presenting models, conferring status, suggesting

appropriate behaviours and encouraging stereotypes. This reformist approach stresses the influence of media on the formation of attitudes, the development of self-concepts, social perceptions and social values (Gallagher, 1981).

The second, more radical approach of *recovery and reappraisal* describes women-centred, alternative media and challenges social and institutional structures[47].

Reception and experience form the third approach in Rakow's model. This framework examines women's specific and complex relationship to media, including their appropriation and resistance to dominant meanings. For example, Angela McRobbie (1982), Dorothy Hobson (1982), Janice Radway (1984), Annette Kuhn (1982), Michèle Mattelart (1986) and contributors to *Television and Women's Culture: The Politics of the Popular* (Brown, 1990) represent a trend critical of purely text-based criticisms and that seeks to explore more profoundly reading practices and audience pleasure. It dismisses ascriptions of a passive role for female audiences, emphasizing instead studies of audiences actively engaged in the meaning-constituting system, capable of resisting dominant messages and of substituting alternative readings of media texts. It recognizes that indeed the media product is only one element in a series of social relations of cultural production that need to be taken into account (Kuhn, 1982).

Finally, research that informs feminist media activism has also adopted a *cultural theory* approach, examining the ideology of gender as produced and reproduced in cultural practice (for example Dorothy Smith, 1978; Michèle Barrett, 1980).[48]

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[47]Feminist contributions within this approach include alternative media produced by, for and/or about women which are beyond the scope of the present analysis but which nevertheless are recognized as significant contributors of feminist political discourses to mainstream media.

[48]The article by Strutt and Hissey (1992) on feminisms and balance in broadcasting is a recent example of this approach and will be reviewed in the next chapter.

This four-part communication model in and of itself reproduces, within theories of gender communication specifically, the proposition I formulated in the first chapter on theories of gender generally, that analyses of sexual inequality have experienced fundamental shifts from a non-problematic concept of masculinity to one that is critiqued within more recent formulations that appreciate the role of culture in constructing these very concepts of masculinity and femininity. The evolving complexities of feminist political discourses on women's inequality are reproduced in a feminist media critique that has evolved from its earliest demands for numerical representation of women in media equal to men and proportionate to their presence in the population, to consideration of the audience and the context of viewing/reading, and to theoretical explorations of gender and media ideologies. This progression in gender research in communication is affirmed by French theorist Michèle Mattelart who situates contemporary feminist media analyses squarely within theories of ideology (1986; 1991). She notes how feminist sensibilities have transcended analytical frameworks that promote analyses of media content. She denounces such frameworks for concentrating on numerical instances of sex roles and ascribing to these positive or negative attributes without considering how these images are 'made to signify.' Earlier models of gender research are seen as based on a stimulus-response system that assumed a simple connection between representation and consumption whereas these processes are now problematized within a synthesis of feminist theories which seek to reconcile gender difference and gender specificity with theories of ideology.

Gaye Tuchman's preeminent study *Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media* (1978) propelled research within the images and representation model for analyzing women and the media. With her colleagues, she established the hypotheses that media reflect dominant societal values in a symbolic (as opposed to literal) manner and that women are subject to symbolic annihilation in the media through processes of condemnation, trivialization or absence (1978:8). This study was followed by several

others that further documented the symbolic annihilation of women in the media through analyses of male-dominated news definitions, female images, female media access, and factors in the interinstitutional context such as media ownership (Epstein, 1978; Robinson, 1978; Butler and Paisley, 1980).

Explanations of media sexism then shifted from this distortion model - based on the concept that media should present a veridical reproduction of social life, that for instance there should be a direct, discernible correspondence between the depiction of women in the media and contemporary life - to a model that recognizes the role of media in organizing and producing experience. The distortion model was subsequently judged to be theoretically inadequate and Tuchman then proceeded to demonstrate that the area most subject to demands for veridical reproduction and charges of distortion, the news, simultaneously defuse radical critiques and reinforce existing patterns of political and social power (Tuchman, 1979)[49]. Similarly, Gerbner proposed that a reality reflection hypothesis which suggests that media content will eventually reflect social change was flawed, inasmuch as the constancy of media depictions undermine existing social and economic advances of women and reinforce cultural repression (1979).

Calls for 'more realistic' images of women became somewhat problematic in two ways. First, gender stereotypes have social counterparts which many might perceive as 'real'; arguing for 'more realistic' images does not address the question of who should define the 'objective' reality media should transmit. Secondly, the reality reflection thesis implies that media output has unequivocal meanings: they are either real or not real, whereas media texts are precisely sites of struggle over meaning (van Zoonen, 1991:42-3). Merck (1979) similarly admonishes calls for verisimilitude in the

[49]Deming claims that a more productive line of enquiry does not demand empirical realism from television but asks instead "Whose fictions are these? What culture(s) do they serve?" (1990:42).

representation of women and notes the tendency of realism to naturalize the status quo into inevitability. She advocates a challenge to the conventions of media narratives, to their structural elements and for recognition of them as signifying practice. She encourages the adoption of a method of analysis such as that developed in film theory by Laura Mulvey (1975), which would discover each medium's disposition to produce a particular meaning of femininity and reveal the false neutrality attributed to the varied operations of the media. The concept of media frames was introduced as a more politically sensitive model that addresses the construction of conflicting articulations of culture and the transformation and absorption of dissent (Tuchman, 1979; Gitlin, 1980).

From 'symbolic alienation' to 'frames'

Much critical work done in the area of feminism in the news had begun with media images of the women's movement in the early stages of its resurrection. In a quantitative study of the overall content of two Los Angeles and 12 British newspapers over the course of a year (1968-69), Monica Morris traced the progression in media creation of public perceptions of feminism: initially as a temporary movement of little significance - although it was sufficiently large and active to warrant greater press coverage - then as a novelty movement not to be taken seriously and finally as an interest group campaigning for liberal reform (1972)[50]. In the same vein, Jo Freeman addresses media hostility to feminism in the 1960s noting their handling of women's liberation activities with a mixture of humor, ridicule and disbelief, and much as society treats women - as entertainment not to be taken seriously (1975:111-112). G.J.

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[50]Morris also found that the women's movement accounted for only 26 of more than a quarter million units of news. Scant coverage of the women's movement (1%) was also noted by Funkhouser who studied ten-year trends (1960-70) of prominent social issues in three weekly U.S. news magazines (1973).

Robinson similarly reports on ways in which the second wave of the feminist movement in Canada had been trivialized throughout its infancy, by media use of disparaging language, their selection of less prestigious details to report and their denigration of legitimate claims (1978:102).

Important aspects of the relationship between news coverage of women and the strength of the re-emerging women's movement were summarized by Cancian and Ross (1981). Their research supports prevailing hypotheses that the women's movement of the 1960s developed independently of the media, that expansion of media coverage lagged several years behind expansion of the movement, and that any surge in media coverage may be attributed less to sudden change in the movement than to support for the movement having crossed some "threshold level." They further comment that data which implied that growth in media coverage of the movement in turn accelerated the growth of the movement, are contradictory[51].

Evidently, the growth of the movement was not hampered by its public image and sparse news coverage. The response of the press was to institute another method of control: the enlarging of existing divisions within the movement between moderate and radical elements and co-optation of its more moderate ambitions (Morris, 1972; van Zoonen, 1991)[52].

Some implications of news frames on the feminist movement

This recognition and legitimation of the liberal variant of the movement by the

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[51]The study also examined the reporting of the civil rights movement at that time and the conclusions are similarly applicable to that movement.

[52]I am not implying that this is a feature unique to the feminism-media dialectic. Indeed Gitlin (1981) and Hackett (1991) have documented this characteristic in the case of the New Left movement of the sixties and of the anti-militarist movement, respectively.

media (and, it should be noted, with the potential of limiting the movement's realization of its aim to radically restructure social relationships) have been explored by Donna Gill in a study which updates that of Morris (1987). In her thesis, Gill investigates the representation of feminism in the Canadian daily press during the 1980s, through the construction of news frames. She probes how certain ways of reporting events and accessing feminist discourse are not attributable solely to practices peculiar to any news organization, but are applicable to the institution of news as a whole (1987:46). She argues that there are significant patterns in the framing of feminists and the women's movement within four essential features: the type of access feminists receive, the nature of their articulations, the types of women who gain access to speak within the discourse in terms of their race, occupation, affiliations and level of social status, and finally, the specific variety of feminism which is permitted to enter news content.

Gill considers how publicly-available meanings are not static[53] as she documents how the press constructed a specific meaning of feminism which privileged liberalism, through its use of the anti-feminist group R.E.A.L. Women as primary definer in the debate over right and left-wing positions. What Gill found is that by selecting certain pro-patriarchal elements of the discourse of R.E.A.L. Women and omitting other extreme positions unfavorable to liberal, patriarchal media, the news granted this anti-feminist group an amount of legitimacy sufficient for them to frame the issues at hand and to make feminists in turn function as respondents[54]. This organized female opposition to the women's movement, in its interaction with the news industry,

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[53]This feature of the frame analysis is seen as an improvement over static categories of media studies that focus on portrayals of women's roles (Robinson, 1978).

[54]Tuchman (1978) documents similar instances of feminists' views balanced against those of anti-feminist Phyllis Schlafly.

displaced the boundaries which circumscribe the marginal and the mainstream, defining liberal feminism as radical. As Gill suggests, it is one thing for R.E.A.L. Women to do this, but when the mainstream press adopts this frame of liberal feminism as the radical variant of feminisms - when in fact the majority of Canadian women are thought to be more moderate - then the reporting of R.E.A.L. Women could hold serious consequences for both liberal feminism and ultimately for the revolutionary vision of other feminisms. She says: "This redefinition is important to the extent that it attempts once again to communicate the idea that feminism, be it liberal or not, is an extremist social perspective, rather than a set of beliefs which are now widely diffused throughout the social fabric" (1989:13).

In summary, Gill reports that the stories she analyzed were framed in terms of a conflict that was disruptive to an otherwise smoothly functioning social order. Some of the dominant frames she identified were (a) the nature of feminist articulation relying on confrontational language (such as battle metaphors) or sloganizing, (b) other familiar journalistic techniques such as the use of primary definers which set the limit for all subsequent discussion by framing what the problem is and with feminists in turn functioning as respondents, (c) strategic areas of silence with accredited sources overaccessed.

Two important points, outlined in the preceding chapter on the role of media in the process of counter-hegemony, are revealed in Gill's study: the extent to which primary definers and news values influence the framing of issues. These characteristics have also been examined by Sharon Dale Stone and I will review the findings of her 1988 study before summarizing results of a more recent analysis I conducted.

Stone studied the conditions under which feminist perspectives can find expression in the mainstream press, examining the representation of the feminist movement in Toronto newspapers during the first six months of 1988. Like Gill, Stone assumed that publicly-available definitions are not static and that indeed the mainstream

press is not a monolithic entity without spaces for alternative voices. Unlike Gill, however, Stone supplemented her analysis of newspaper content with interviews with journalists and feminist activists. Among other things, Stone found that feminist journalists "quite consciously sought information about feminist activities and views and constructed them as newsworthy" although she does qualify that this picture of feminists and the feminist movement remained nevertheless circumscribed, with concerns of marginalized women underplayed (1993).

Framing devices - a case study

Framing devices similar to those observed by Gill, and gender-specific journalistic influences in the articulation of public definitions of feminisms as discerned by Stone, were similarly uncovered in a case study of the coverage of the women's movement. This project consisted of a review of newspaper articles concerned with the issue of 1990 federal cuts to the Women's Program that threatened with closure 80 women's centres across the country[55]. This particular event was chosen on the basis of the fullness of coverage it received in the three newspapers in the sample, it being an event that unfolded on the national political scene. The issue also enabled control for subject matter variations in the news flow, thereby permitting observations on the *character* of the coverage of feminisms and not merely the *presence* of feminist content. Additionally, the selection of this particular issue circumvented any ambiguity that could arise in defining feminist content since - at least up until the period under

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[55]It is noteworthy that the targets were those very groups that provide direct services to women that address concrete forms of female oppression such as counselling and shelters for battered women, as well as feminist publications which are instrumental in communicating feminist ideology to participants in the women's movement. Although their core funding was not entirely eliminated, other national lobby organizations did have their state allocation significantly reduced. MediaWatch was amongst the few organizations not targeted. Could this be an indication of the state's perception of the innocuous nature of its interventions?

study and prior to the funding of a project sponsored by the anti-feminist groups R.E.A.L. Women - the Women's Program of the Department of the Secretary of State only funded feminist groups which it defined as "groups committed to promoting the equality of women and eliminating barriers that limit the choices and opportunities for women in Canada" (The Women's Program Funding Requirements).

The objective of the research was to document the presence, frequency and intensity of coverage in the mainstream press of topics also profiled in the feminist press, as a measure of the former's patterns in interpreting events and accessing feminist discourse[56]. The study looked at all articles that were found in *The Globe and Mail* (9), *The Vancouver Sun* (16) and *The Province* (21) between February 22 and June 29, 1990 on the issue of the budget cuts to the Women's Program and its casualties: women's centres, feminist lobby groups and national feminist publications.

The initial, coding phase of the study was concerned solely with media access, whereby a record was made for each story of placement, column size, presence/absence of visuals, story type, story theme, and finally, a list of all individuals directly or indirectly quoted in the article. Thereafter, the coverage of feminist groups was assessed in a three-part process. First, the features of each article uncovered in the coding were assigned an intensity score based on a weighting system designed to

[56]The National Media Archive of the Fraser Institute reports regularly on studies of media coverage of public policy issues, such studies adopting a customary method for assessing bias coverage, the three-point nominal scale of favourable-neutral-unfavourable. Such direction categories were avoided in this study as they tend to override important nuances and context. Indeed, the methodology and assumptions of the NMA have been found flawed by social scientists (see Gilsdorf, Hackett and Savage, 1990). They fault the NMA notably with assuming that the weight of a point of view can be measured in number of statements, that all issues naturally have an equally weighed two sides, that objective journalism entails reporting on events whereas non-objective journalism is characterized by coverage of issues not pegged to events. This the NMA calls advocacy journalism and critics could construe such a position as diametrically opposed to feminist conceptions of news. By focusing on the character of coverage at the sub-issues level and using topic profiles from the feminist press in a sense as dependent variables, this research avoids measurements of content as editorially negative or positive.

modify frequency counts in order to reflect the factor of prominence. Secondly, an evaluation of sub-issues was done, with the story themes grouped into topics with intensity scores similarly tabulated. A topic profile of a March 1990 article in the feminist periodical *Kinesis* was constructed, as a focus of comparison. Finally, a study of two framing devices was done, namely themes and sources.

Research Findings and Analysis

Themes and News Values

Twenty-four themes were identified in the media-access stage of the research and these were grouped into six topic categories:

- Motivation of cuts - any discussion concerned primarily with economic context of the reduction to the Women' Program;
- Closure of Women's Centres - any discussion concerned primarily with present or eventual closure of women's centres as a consequence of reduction to the Women's Program;
- Demonstrations/protests/arrests/security threats - any discussion concerned primarily with occupations of government offices by supporters of the Women's Program, other public protests and government response;
- Services affected by cuts - any discussion which extends beyond the closure of women's centres to include substantial descriptions of the services which are lost through such closures;
- Negotiations between federal and provincial governments - accounts of the federal proposal for co-sharing with the provinces the cost of maintaining the women's centres; and
- Conflict resolution - accounts of the decision to reinstate funding and of the continued economic viability of the centres.

The frequency counts for each theme having been weighted for qualitative differences of prominence, it was found, overall, that the sub-issue of protest claimed

the greatest proportion of the coverage (26.6%).

The Globe and Mail covered only four of the six categories of sub-issues, ignoring the substantive topic of the advocacy and educational services that women would lose as a result of the budget cut - a prominent topic in the Kinesis profile - and devoted 43.9% of its coverage to the issues of confrontation and conflict. *The Vancouver Sun* similarly emphasized confrontation (37.3% of its total coverage). However, unlike the national paper and in proportion similar to *The Province*, it attended to the question of fiscal co-sharing between federal and provincial governments (26.3%). The issue of services was recognized although it comprized the smallest topic category (7.3%). It was in *The Province* that readers accessed the most diverse coverage. The story of cuts to the Women's Program was granted a framework that considered both the economic context (i.e., with the sub-issue of the motivation of the cuts given 23.9% of *The Province* story coverage, as opposed to less than 11% in each of the other two newspapers) and the social context (i.e., accounts of the services women and society in general would lose once the women's centres closed amounted to 24.7%; by contrast, they represented none of *The Globe*'s coverage and only 7.3% of *the Sun*'s). Both of these topics predominated in the *Kinesis* profile.

Analysis of Sources

This final phase of the research on framing devices focused exclusively on the identification of the official spokespeople and other sources accessed by journalists throughout the development of the story. Sixty-eight sources were accessed a total of 131 times by the 27 journalists covering this story at the three newspapers surveyed. Overall, 38 sources were politicians or other government representatives; 23 represented feminist umbrella organizations or national lobby groups; and more than half of the sources accessed, 66, were spokespeople from women's centres or grassroot

organizations representing those groups most directly and profoundly affected by this round of funding cuts (there were four others).

Several inferences can be made from the data obtained including the notion that the selection of news sources is influenced by factors such as their proximity to journalists. Indeed, the *Globe and Mail* accessed twice as many political sources as feminist sources (8 politicians:4 feminists) and these politicians were largely federal politicians (7 federal:1 provincial). Source access was similarly biased towards national representatives from within central Canada as opposed to local, grassroot representatives (in a frequency ratio of 3:1). *The Vancouver Sun* exhibited a similar distribution pattern and that paper's considerable access of federal political sources can be attributed to its reliance for coverage of the issue on its Ottawa news bureau. Only at the *Province* is the balance between political and feminist access shifted in favour of feminist sources (in a 4:9 ratio), with national feminist representatives quoted less frequently than their grassroot counterparts (1:8). In positive correlation with its more diversified news coverage that emphasises the fundamental issues of the threatened services, the rationale for the cuts and cost-sharing negotiations, the *Province* offered a predominance of access to grassroot sources. Further, it made unique use of editorial and analytical reporting.

However, the finding most pertinent to my present discussion relates to the distribution of male and female journalists across source types. Whereas almost as many male and female journalists accessed political or governmental sources (in a frequency ratio of 19:21), female journalists were much more likely to access feminist lobbyists and feminist grassroot representatives. Indeed, while male journalists overall accessed 20 feminist national or grassroot sources, female journalists interviewed 63 such sources.

This survey shows, albeit in a modest but nevertheless revealing analysis, that if the direct and explicit contributions of feminism - in this case, the educational and

advocacy services women's groups provide such as counselling, shelters and educational workshops - are to be made more visible in public definitions of the movement, then the choice of spokespersons is crucial. Results of this case study suggest that feminist groups should nurture local media contacts and should recognize the value of female journalists as a resource for the movement and its concerns. The issue of budget cuts to the Women's Program received media attention but the accent too often was placed on the controversial aspect of this event at the expense of more substantive content. This example illustrates how the seemingly "deviant" nature of the movement was highlighted through the overaccessing of the "authoritative" sources of government officials and politicians, giving them an advantage in establishing the interpretive framework of a particular issue. This frame, however, was much more likely to be displaced by female journalists who underscored other newsworthy aspects of the story and sought in turn feminist sources to articulate those other neglected features of the event.

This research project suggests that critical, analytical attention should turn towards documenting the capacity of female media workers to deviate from established journalistic practices, by seeking under-accessed feminist sources and articulating feminist issues that contradict traditional news values. However, I find it necessary to confine within a more speculative context the findings I have obtained. Conclusive evidence would require a more rigorous and explicit examination that would supplement the textual approach I have adopted in my study of feminism in the press, with other critical factors. It would for instance be essential to examine within female media work, organizational and economic catalysts. For example, newsroom adjustments made in an attempt to gain back a specifically female readership need to be measured, and story assignments are undoubtedly an important variable in any analysis of gender-influenced story coverage.Nevertheless, the study does support the argument I will introduce in the next chapter, that in light of the current influence of female

media workers in improving media frames of feminism and the potential of this influence increasing significantly once a critical mass of female media workers has been achieved, female media advocacy should indeed mobilize in support of employment equity in media industries and feminist interventions from within media.

Conclusion

I close this chapter by extracting from the preceding analysis of frames which highlighted the role of primary definers and of female journalists in changing criteria of newsworthiness, elements of the media/movement relationship distinctive to the women's movement. These elements are: (a) women journalists who identify themselves with feminism, (b) women's caucuses and (c) the women's pages as a movement resource.

It has been noted that the women's movement has been the object of news treatments characterized by ridicule and ostracism[57], and that coverage of consciousness-raising and feminist issues has been hindered by professional newswork formulas which, for instance, tend to focus on discrete events and official spokespersons. However, it has also been shown that the women's movement is not a resource-poor group without advocate journalists and that the reporter is indeed the key media person. Newswomen were able not only to lessen opposition to the women's movement and its issues in the early 1970s, but coverage of the movement at that time consisted also of journalists' personal conversion stories that further entrenched

[57]The most celebrated example of disparaging media treatment of the women's movement has to be fictional accounts of 'bra burning' in the early 1970s.

feminism within the newsroom (Freeman, 1975:114)[58]. The research studies cited above demonstrate how, despite constraining journalistic norms and practices, female journalists continue to push the boundaries of news values and can articulate issues of the movement through feminist sensibilities. This is not true.

Additionally, no other social movement can claim to have its issues represented in newsroom caucuses at least to the extent that feminism can. In 1992, the Canadian Association of Journalists listed women's caucuses at the *Calgary Herald, Edmonton Journal, Globe and Mail, Hamilton Spectator, Kitchener Waterloo-Record, Montreal Gazette, Ottawa Citizen, Vancouver Province, Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, Toronto Star* and *Vancouver Sun.* Activities of these in-house lobby groups include internal surveys of equal employment opportunities, gender monitoring of newspaper content, assessment of maternity and paternity leave policies, policies relating to recruitment and promotion of women in the newsroom, readership surveys, guidelines on gender-neutral language, and mentoring programs for women[59].

Finally, newspaper sections devoted to women's issues are being revived in an attempt to arrest and reverse the decline in female newspaper readership. While some feminists have in the past conceded that treating news about the women's movement as soft news at least enabled women's pages to disseminate knowledge about the movement (Tuchman, 1978), others have referred to this practice as ghettoization and depoliticization of women's affairs, and reinforcement for archaic views that women's

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[58]Freeman writes that in the fall of 1969, major American news media simultaneously began to do stories on women's liberation using reporters known for their objectivity and unfeminist views. However, virtually all initial stories in *Time*, *Life*, and *Newsweek* were personal conversion stories that raised the consciousness of other writers and researchers and motivated them to protest for better conditions (1975:114).

[59]I am grateful to Frances Bula for providing me with this information on Canadian women's media organizations represented at the 1992 Women in the Media's plenary session of the Canadian Association of Journalists.

and social issues do not constitute news of interest or benefit to men (Epstein, 1978; Flick, 1989)[60]. The industry, however, claims that the revived women's sections are different from their precursors to the extent that they focus less on society news, beauty tips and recipes to cover a broader spectrum of interests and issues facing women in a complex, changing society (Rykken, 1992).

As I have noted to be the case for feminist analyses generally, the evolving feminist media critique continues to produce more complex understandings of the 'women and the media' relationship. The contested areas within the various research approaches and strategies, however, need not be divisive or disruptive. I want to explore in the next chapter how these differences themselves are negotiated *within* a counter-hegemonic process which in turn challenges ideological hegemony. As I have said in the second chapter, the process of hegemonic struggle is replicated in that of counter-hegemonic formation. Only selective elements of feminist discourse and alternative practice can prevail within counter-hegemony at any one time.

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[60]It is beyond the scope of my analysis to dwell more deeply into the debate between proponents of the women's page and proponents of general news placement. I would note, however, that this issue concerns not only placement of coverage of feminism within newspapers but also employment opportunities. Kay Mills, for instance, relates how the abolition of women's sections in several American newspapers cost women editors their jobs (1990:124).

CHAPTER 4

TOWARDS A NEW PARADIGM?

Introduction

I underlined in the preceding chapter how traditions of feminist media critique have followed a trajectory similar to that charted by feminist discourses on gender. Mainstream media theories seemingly have progressed through stages akin to those of feminist gender theories. We find in the first stage an unproblematic concept of inequality, with the addition of women - in an otherwise unchanged context - seen as the corrective to the underrepresentation of women. The second stage offers a concept of difference that seeks to explore more deeply women's relationship to media and dismisses, for instance, generic explanations of media consumption. In a third stage, formulations conflate these two approaches within a theory of ideological hegemony that recognizes within media texts and processes the role of communication in the construction and accomplishment of a gender system, as well as the potential for resistance to dominant meanings, and the articulation of alternative perspectives through counter-hegemonic strategies.

This final chapter links these stages in the evolution of feminist media critiques to analogous cycles in the evolution of feminist epistemologies. However, not all arguments within the field of feminist epistemology are summarized as I narrowly focus on stating how certain specific issues central to traditional epistemology - namely autonomy, objectivity and functionalism - appear from a feminist perspective. This compendium of the evolution of feminist critiques of science is then applied to feminist critiques of media when I explore the various directions taken by feminist advocates to theorize counter-hegemony in mainstream media, and speculate on their potential to achieve a paradigm shift in the politics of representation.

The critique of conventional epistemology

The practice of feminist research is grounded primarily on three central premises, themselves reflective of principal criticisms of conventional epistemology[61] (Ferree and Hess, 1987).

The first premise is a fundamental theoretical rejection of the ideal of value-free research, of the possibility that any significant work can be accomplished without a perspective rooted in specific, concrete experience.

The second assumption involves the rejection of the positivist division between theory and practice as implied in a concept such as objectivity. In contrast with conventional epistemologies, the feminist view encourages research based on engagement in struggle as a means of unveiling relationships and structures that might otherwise remain obscure.

The third assumption of feminist epistemologies - and perceived limitation of conventional ones - concerns their anti-functionalist tendency. An awareness of change and inconsistency within individuals and social structures is reflected in key concepts for feminist theory and methodology, such as resistance, ambivalence, conflict and struggle.

I consider below feminist contributions to these debates on the social

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[61]I review solely theories that purport to redeem science as opposed to those that dismiss it completely. I am therefore circumventing discussions within feminism that condemn all forms of research and theory as inherently incapable of assisting the feminist project. Rich (1976) for example conceived of theory per se as a patriarchal instrument of oppression because objectivity merely reflects the subjectivity of men (in Currie, 1988). Harding (1987) also discusses two origins of skepticism about a feminist science: feminist agendas of the disparate discourses of semiotics, deconstruction and psychoanalysis, and, secondly, the writings of women of colour who insist that because of feminism's opposition to domination stories, there cannot be a feminist science (in fact, this position is antagonistic toward any attempts to do science - androcentric or not). Evelyn Fox Keller (1985), on the other hand, finds problematic the proposal that science should be rejected completely because of its deep-rooted androcentrism on the grounds that such a proposition dooms women to residing outside of modern culture.

construction of knowledge. I will subsequently highlight feminist epistemological alternatives and will follow this discussion with an outline of the analogies between these challenges in the wider scientific community and those in the communications field.

Kuhn (1970) challenged prevalent conceptions of science as autonomous, progressive, purely cognitive and unequivocally reflective of actual history. He is credited with introducing the notion of extrascientific determinants of knowledge and with identifying science as a deeply personal as well as social activity (Keller, 1985:7). Feminist social scientists have adopted Kuhn's premises to question the presumed value-neutral, objective, dispassionate and disinterested character of scientific knowledge-seeking and its supposed protection from political and other interests (Harding, 1987:182).

As Evelyn Fox Keller has noted, a most immediate issue for feminist epistemology is the deeply rooted myth that casts objectivity, reason and mind as male and the converse of subjectivity, feeling and nature, as female[62] (1985:6-7). Theorists from different disciplines have objected to the conventional notion of an impartial objectivity that is supposed to guide research and separate justified belief from mere opinion. Further, there is contention that to characterize research as subjective or objective dichotomizes modes of knowing, that these divisions are in and of themselves part of a masculine script, a cultural construction that favours dualisms:

> ... men are to women as culture is to nature, as mind is to body, as subject is to object, as domination is to subordination (Bleier, 1984:164).

Hartsock makes the point that all such dualisms are overlaid by gender with only the first of each pair associated with the male and dominant (1983:297).

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[62]I do not enter herein into a discussion of the genesis of this masculinist bias in science. For such a discussion, see for example Evelyn Fox Keller (1985) or Nancy C.M. Hartsock (1983).

Science is defined in masculine terms[63] and it follows that patriarchal culture having claimed impartiality, research for women is seen as biased because it acknowledges perspective and the political dimension of women's work. The concept of objectivity naturalizes a definition of scientific enquiry that denies a place on the agenda for modes of experience and knowledge that depart from the status quo. Personal experiences and knowledge are devalued; the hierarchical nature of traditional research severs the researcher from the subject and further divorces the researcher from the focus of the study itself (Brown, 1989; Hawkins, 1989).

Feminist epistemological approaches

Feminist analyses of science and epistemology have taken many forms. Far from being monolithic, they have nevertheless crystallized around three distinct approaches: feminist empiricism, feminist standpoint and postmodern feminism. Although presented as distinct perspectives, these theoretical developments are dialectical with each stage containing both positive and negative aspects. I review primary ones along Sandra Harding's reconstruction of recent feminist epistemology (1986; 1991) but for the purposes of the present analysis, I do not discuss all of the contradictions and paradoxes they contain.

Feminist empiricism

In many ways, feminist empiricism appears to be consistent with traditional

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[63]Margrit Eichler has isolated various elements of sexism in the research process that can be attributed to androcentric conceptions of research based on neutrality and objectivity. She considers seven forms: language, concepts, questions posed, methods used, interpretations made, policy recommendations and overall perspective (1986:46). Additionally, Kathryn Carter and Carole Spitzack note how the language used to communicate theoretical assumptions and research activities (i.e., "penetrating" explanations, "thrusts" of arguments, "seminal" works) clearly reflects masculine experience (1989:27).

empiricist tendencies. It is undeniably supportive of the goal of value-neutral objectivity and sees the problem as one of 'bad science' (Harding, 1986). The concern is with ending sexist practices and biases which are perceived as resulting from gender asymmetry in the composition of the research community.

Critics of 'bad science' focus on issues about women in science but insist that the method and content of the work of women scientists should be unaffected by their gender. The value of their contribution derives primarily from their genderfree talents and abilities. Science that is badly practiced because it is distorted by masculine bias can be remedied with more rigorous adherence to scientific methods so that they may provide a truly objective, degendered view of nature and society. As Harding notes, in this respect the critique does not deviate from the principle of abstract individualism which grounds conventional theories of science, and rules that scientific method alone can remove the blinders that obscure knowledge and observation (1991:62-3). The scientific method can eliminate any biases that may enter from the social situation of the scientist, into hypotheses, concepts, research designs, evidence-gathering or the interpretation of the results of research (1991:58).

In spite of their similarities, there is nevertheless a tension between empiricist epistemology and its uses by feminists. Indeed, one has to question how critiques that arise out of political advocacy such as feminism, can fit the empiricist model of science that insists on the separation of the scientist from political engagement. Sandra Harding (1991) isolates three ways in which, despite its conservatism, feminist empiricism undercuts and problematizes traditional empiricist epistemological assumptions, conjunctively offering a radical distinction.

First, she notes how feminist empiricism argues that the "context of discovery" is just as important as the "context of justification" for eliminating social biases that contribute to partial and distorted explanations and understandings. She explains that unlike traditional empiricism with its insistance that the social identity of the observer is

irrelevant to the explanatory power and objectivity of the research, feminist empiricism argues that women as a group are more likely than men as a group to produce claims unbiased by androcentrism[64]. It disclaims the anonymity of the authors of social theories maintaining that they are clearly men, and usually men of the dominant classes, races and cultures. Those who identify and define scientific problems leave their social fingerprints on both problems and their solutions.

Harding identifies as a second dissimilarity between traditional and feminist empiricisms that denotes the radical nature of the latter, the claim of feminist empiricism that an androcentric picture of nature and social life emerges from the testing of hypotheses generated by what only men find problematic in the world. In contrast to this view, traditional empiricism holds that scientific method is sufficient to eliminate androcentrism or any other any social biases, as a hypothesis goes through its rigorous tests.

Finally, Harding addresses the dichotomy in feminist empiricism whereby feminist empiricists exhort social scientists to follow the existing research norms more rigorously while also maintaining that it is precisely following these norms that contributes to androcentric research results.

For all its internal contradictions, feminist empiricism and indeed the liberal feminist political theory which nourishes it, provide a useful strategy precisely because they stress the continuities between conventional justifications of scientific research and feminist ones. In her assessment of feminist empiricism, Harding notes that there are many projects for which empiricism is more satisfactory than feminist standpoint theory for instance, as a justificatory strategy intended to convince a particular audience.

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[64]Feminist empiricist theorists profess to offer accounts of the social world which are less partial and distorted than prevailing, traditional ones on the basis that feminist empiricism uncovers traditional empiricism's ignored androcentrism. In their conceptualization of science, one gender-loyalty would not substitute for the other, but would advance the objectivity of science (Harding, 1987:187).

There is at least some practical value to feminist researchers adapting their work to traditional frameworks when that is the means by which they can gain legitimacy and open a dialogue with nonfeminist scientists.

Feminist standpoint

Feminist standpoint is a second response to traditional epistemology and a corollary to feminist empiricism. From the 'woman question in science' of feminist empiricism, emerges the 'science question in feminism.' According to this approach, the target is not emancipation for women claiming special-interest-group status and advocating parity in the existing scientific enterprise. On the contrary, it is women's concern that the addition of some of their more compliant members to a highly stratified institution merely has the effect of strengthening that institution as well as class and race divisions between women. Critics of this 'science as usual' approach are generally more skeptical of theories of scientific knowledge (Harding, 1986; 1991). They differ from feminist empiricists on their perception of the extent of the problem in traditional epistemology, and they maintain that empirically and theoretically more adequate descriptions and explanations can be obtained if the research inquiry is started from women's lives.

Feminist standpoint borrows from the structure of a Marxist epistemology: knowledge is shaped by historical social situations and by its very nature, science is a part of the larger social context. To quote Harding:

> In societies where power is organized hierarchically - for example, by class or race or gender - there is no possibility of an Archimedean perspective, one that is disinterested, impartial, value-free, or detached from the particular, historical social relations in which everyone participates (1991:59).

Whereas, as noted above, the critics of 'bad science' think that gender parity in numerical representation would contribute to the growth of knowledge and greater objectivity, critics of 'balance as usual' seek to update the dominant conceptual

schemes from the standpoint of women's activities and believe their strength is derived from their ability to think from the perspective of the social activities assigned to women. Not just opinions, but a culture's knowledge are socially situated (Harding, 1991:70,119); the "view-from-nowhere" position of traditional objectivism is undermined (Tuana, 1992:103).

Postmodern tendencies

The third approach of epistemological postmodernism contends that both feminist empiricism and feminist standpoint are not radical enough inasmuch as they ignore the intimate connections between science and power (Harding, 1991:48).

In societies stratified by race, class or culture, women and men are constructed historically at the junction of race, class and cultural relations. Women, men and gender relations do not exist per se (Harding, 1991:178). I have already highlighted in the discussion of feminist theory, how postmodern feminism dismisses the monolithic universalizing tendencies of modernism, embracing instead the postmodern project for multiple-identity politics and for a non-unitary, non-dualistic approach to knowledge. Similarly, postmodern feminist epistemology supports the dissolution of the dichotomy between subject/object and rational/irrational and a movement from the binary to the multiple. Additionally, it rejects the grounds on which other epistemologies also challenge dualistic thought. For example, it claims that standpoint theory posits a feminine essentialism or, by simply inverting the dualism, reverses the privileging of masculine concepts with feminine ones, thereby guaranteeing that the masculine/feminine polarity is not removed but is actually perpetuated (Tuana, 1992:103).

Like standpoint theory, however, postmodern feminism stresses the multiplicity of ways that a knower can be influenced and the view that knowers and knowledge are constituted collectively through forms of discourse. As we have explored in the second

chapter, the postmodern prohibition against subject-centred theory is in tension with feminist politics that seek to articulate the goals of the specific constituency of women. This discrepancy excludes postmodernism as a final category of residence for feminist analysis (Zita, 1988:157).

Paradigm shift

The work of Margrit Eichler (1986) offers a feminist redefinition of social science within a framework for a paradigm shift comparable to that of Sandra Harding. She also identifies three possible responses to the problem of sexist social science[65]: a liberal response which calls for incorporating women into existing models (feminist empiricism), a woman-centred approach (feminist standpoint) which she views as a necessary proximate goal and as an indispensable stage through which we must pass in order to be able to even think about a nonsexist approach (even if it exhibits the same limitations as male-centred studies albeit in the reverse direction), and finally - as the ultimate goal - the creation of new models from a non-sexist perspective based on the transformation of both the current male-centred approach and the incipient female-centred substitute (postmodern feminism).

There is undeniable agreement amongst feminist critics of science that the internal logic of feminist criticism has shifted it along a spectrum from liberal to radical (Keller, 1985). Much like feminist scholarship in general, early feminist work in the natural and social sciences focused on the absence of women in the sciences, on the barriers responsible for that absence and consequently on demands for equity. Attention subsequently turned away from merely critiquing sexist social science, to the implications of women's absence for the evolution of science. Questions were raised

[65]There are actually four responses. The first, however, can be discounted for the purposes of the present analysis since it is based on the denial of the presence of systemic sexism and recommends a business-as-usual approach.

on the consequences of the underrepresentation of women on choices of problems, experimental designs, data interpretation, etc. The 'liberal' critique of 'bad science' claims that these criticisms can be attenuated by imposing existing scientific standards more vigilantly and rigorously. Keller, for instance, rejects this view:

> My vision of a gender-free science is not a juxtaposition or complementarity of male and female perspectives, nor is it the substitution of one form of parochiality for another. Rather, it is premised on a transformation of the very categories of male and female, and correspondingly, of mind and nature (1985:178).

Out of this argument grows the critique of 'science as usual' which supports fundamental alterations to the scientific environment. The task, however, "is not to replace a disembodied 'masculine' rationalism with some sort of 'feminine' irrationality, but rather to transform our ways of seeing and knowing in order to give an expanded and integrated account of reason *and* emotion, thought *and* experience, individuality *and* connectedness in our daily lives and beyond" (Ferree and Hess, 1987:29).

From here, we progress to the search for a science, as Keller says, "named not by gender, or even by androgyny, but by many different kinds of naming" (1985:178).

There is strong agreement amongst feminist scholars that feminist research will generate a new world-view only if it meets certain basic evolutionary requirements. I have already referred extensively to the observations of Sandra Harding and Margrit Eichler. Their thesis is supported and reproduced in the work also of Aino Saarinen (1988) and Arlene McLaren (1988). Both analyses intersect, and I will supplement my discussion only with that of the former.

Saarinen subscribes to the model of feminist epistemology that asserts that feminist research represents an ambitious paradigmatic challenge that began to take shape in conjunction with the resurgence of the feminist movement a mere 20 years ago, with requirements that are complementary and conditional on one another. In a first stage, the injustices of the prevailing system of domination must first be uncovered

through a process of deconstruction that would expose the ideological filters of science. Then, the intrinsic human value of women must be demonstrated, as a means of providing the opportunity to transcend the strategy of gender equality and to resist integration of women into ideological structures with minimum concession. In this reconstructive project, new questions must be formulated concerning women's experience and from the point of view of women as active subjects. According to Saarinen's formulation, this reconstructive project follows a scheme which has as its first stage, compensatory and contribution research within a movement for gender equality where research is pursued on the terms of traditional epistemology following androcentric values, theories and concepts. This stage is followed by one of transitional research with the elaboration of feminist values and theories. The reconstructive project concludes with the installation of a new paradigm of integrative research with epistemological perspectives that cover many dimensions and reassess gender relations, class positions, as well as racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Sexism will not be eliminated by further documenting its presence. Critiques of sexism represent merely a transitional stage that must be transcended. We recall that the process of paradigm displacement described by Thomas Kuhn is lengthy and fraught with resistance. "A scientific theory is declared invalid only if an alternate candidate is available to take its place" (Kuhn, 1970:77). As Margrit Eichler writes, theoretical attention should now shift from the provision of additional evidence of sexism in the social sciences to the substitution of a model that could be used by all researchers, male and female, whether interested in feminism or not (1986:64).

> ... until we have developed a nonsexist paradigm that can be used by all social scientists irrespective of their interest in and commitment to the notion of social justice for women, the current sexist paradigm will not be abandoned, for scholars will give up on paradigm only if there is another one ready to take its place, and *not* simply because flaws in the old paradigm have been convincingly demonstrated. This suggests a natural limitation to the effectiveness of critiques of sexism in the social sciences: although they are an integral aspect of feminist scholarship and indispensable to the development of a nonsexist paradigm, just as

> woman-centered research is indispensable for it, they are important only in constituting a transitional stage toward the elaboration of a nonsexist model of social reality. In and of itself, such a critique will not lead to the abandonment of what has been critiqued, even if the critique is acknowledged as justified. (Eichler, 1986:69-70)

The paradigmatic challenge facing institutions of knowledge production was born of the women's movement in its second wave. In a relatively short period of time, the women's movement has contributed substantially to changes in cultural and political conventions that in turn have affected the conventions of scientific discourse. Using the historical example within sociobiology of Darwin's theory of sexual selection, Hannah Gay illustrates how science content is a complex of empirical observation and social convention. She notes that on that basis, political activity outside science can be a highly effective agent for change in scientific knowledge" (1993). This is one sign of interdependence between the development of the women's movement and academic research. Equally important is the contribution of the feminist movement of a counter-forum to the official, male-dominated scientific institutions and to the provision of opportunities for 'double consciousness,' that is, the growing awareness among feminist researchers of both the subjective world that they share with the objects of their studies and the description of that world by mainstream scholarship (Saarinen, 1988:44).

Feminist paradigm for communication

Feminist epistemological approaches are reproduced in work on 'women and the media,' where the problem of how knowledge comes to be legitimized is becoming a central question within the critique of media (Gallagher, 1989:85). Attention is shifting from merely denoting sexism in the media to evaluating the implications of the absence of a feminist voice in the media discourse.

As I conveyed in the preceding chapter, there has been within the positivist, empirical research paradigm, heavy emphasis on content analysis studies, on what

Gallagher labels 'research **on** women' (1989:76). Increasingly however, as is happening in Western philosophical, political and social thought, and within a 'research **for** women' context, feminists are raising important limitations in the assumptions upon which such a critique rests. One such instance concerns feminist theory and advocacy over the concept of balance in broadcasting and its journalistic equivalent of objectivity[66] (Strutt and Hissey, 1992). I present this particular commentary to illustrate the reflexivity of the liberal critique of media and its capacity to countenance the infusion of radical elements. It typifies within a feminist media critique the three androcentric issues I previously underscored in the feminist critique of traditional epistemology, namely autonomy, objectivity and functionalism. It also summons their antithesis in the content of feminist epistemology: respectively, the social construction of knowledge, the relationship between social positioning and one's interpretation of social processes, and tensions within feminist theory.

The overall argument by Strutt and Hissey maintains that the concept of balance in broadcasting is an essentially contested principle and practice that produces a vision of the world which not only largely excludes women, but which is androcentric and endorses patriarchal ways of seeing and being in the world. The feminist critique diverges along two different responses. The first contests the application of the concept of balance in an assessment that parallels the critique of 'bad science.' It endorses the ideals of balance and objectivity; it deplores their malpractice in the service of patriarchal relations; it brackets women's underrepresention. The second perspective holds problematic the practice of balance itself, along the critique of 'science-as-usual.'

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[66]The critique that follows is based on the notion that principles of balance enshrined in broadcasting guidelines are recapitulated in the journalistic ethic and practice of objectivity which applies also to print. The guidelines are thus treated as representative of a media-wide ideal and the terms 'balance' and 'objectivity' are used interchangeably to refer to a behavioural ethic for journalists that stresses impartiality as well as positive/negative argumentation.

It states that the very practices of balance or objectivity guarantee an ideologically loaded and patriarchal vision of the world; it eschews the very categories that are said to define balance; it suggests that if feminist efforts to achieve perfectly balanced media prevail, they would only have succeeded in rendering media *more* ideologically effective as patriarchal institutions.

I have explored in considerable detail in the preceding chapter, feminist interventions into the regulatory arena that have adopted the double-barrelled approach of decrying the poor representation of women in media products and in the media workplace - interventions typical of the critique of 'bad balance.' This is undeniably important work but not without significant limitations in its assumptions about balance.

Strutt and Hissey note that the primary criticism within a 'balance-as-usual' perspective relates to the way in which the balance requirement is currently encoded in the regulatory framework. Balance (or objectivity) ideals are inscribed within, and reflect a vision of the world which can best be described as liberal-pluralist, a perspective which fails adequately to theorize existing power relations. Liberal-pluralism posits a world in which relatively equal groups and individuals compete for power and influence and enjoy full freedom to struggle in the appropriate political, social or economic arenas. Competition, in tandem with regulatory and market mechanisms, ensures that no one group or individual attains excessive or exclusive power.

This vision of the world is challenged in the feminist 'balance-as-usual' critique which Strutt and Hissey illustrate using a CBC guideline that defines balance:

> The air belongs to the people who are entitled to hear the principal points of view on all questions of importance.

While no doubt expressing a noble sentiment, the guideline contains two problematic phrases, each of which raises the question "by whose definition?" Someone is required to be the arbiter of what qualifies as both a 'principal point of view' and a 'question of

importance': neither condition is self-evident. Strutt and Hissey raise several points that emerge from a consideration of this issue. The first of these derives in part from the application of these concepts within the framework of liberal-pluralism. Within a conception of the world as comprised of competing power groups, feminist perspectives and women are easily ignored through one of two strategies. On the one hand, women's issues and feminism can be so particularized that they appear irrelevant. That is, women's issues are seen as exclusive, special interest concerns affecting only one segment of the population - and hence not qualifying as 'matters of importance.' Media treatment of women's calls for daycare legislation is one example of this. On the other hand, women's issues are universalized so that they appear to be generalizable 'human issues,' often losing their critical edge in the process. The example of 'violence against women' I presented earlier is illustrative of the ways that women's concerns can be lost to the hegemony of male interests. The translation of 'violence against women' into the more generic problem of 'family violence' (a 'matter of importance') strips of its original political content of male power over women, the feminist concern for battered wives.

Strutt and Hissey register a further criticism of the notions inscribed in the broadcasting guideline on balance and provoked by a consideration of journalistic sources. The routine practices of newsgatherers encourage a reliance on centralized sources to whom reporters have on-going access, often as part of their institutionalized beats (Tuchman, 1978:93). This leads to an excessive emphasis on sources within established social institutions - most particularly from the realm of parliamentary politics - and in turn serves to legitimate these sources and institutions. The studies and research reported in the preceding chapter on the framing of feminist issues illustrate how this convenient, albeit conservative practice of accessing institutionalized, centralized sources ensures, or at the very least, encourages a reproduction of conventional or dominant interpretations. The balance here, then, is between

competing, but already privileged, voices and interpretations. Further, the 'principal points of view' of these privileged voices *constitute* the very 'matters of importance' the CBC guideline protects.

Clearly, this has some rather profound implications for emergent or oppositional perspectives and movements such as feminism. As noted earlier, few news organizations have a 'feminist beat' and those with a 'women's beat' tend not to focus on feminist issues - a situation which is not entirely due to the relatively small number of institutionalized feminist organizations. Such organizations as do exist are not always perceived as credible. It is arguable that feminist perspectives will remain marginalized, peripheral - not principal - points of view for as long as media continue their practice of virtually ignoring them. Similarly, feminist issues will not be able credibly to claim the status of 'matters of importance' through the media. As it were, the guideline provides its own justification for not including feminist voices. Indeed, it could not have been better phrased if its very intention was to guarantee both the reproduction of dominant ways of seeing the world and the continued exclusion of marginal or dissident voices.

The norm of objectivity in journalistic practice is as unsatisfactory as the definition of balance, guaranteeing the construction of a picture of reality which simultaneously privileges and legitimizes certain positions and perspectives. Furthermore, they reinforce dualisms when requiring that any controversial idea be accompanied by an opposing viewpoint, thereby ignoring how knowledge and meaning are themselves constructions within a particular political, economic and ideological system. This particular argument - that plurality of viewpoints equals truth - is critiqued particularly convincingly by Gillian Skirrow (1979) who illustrates how the necessity for impartiality, for balance, was seen carried to its logical, ludicrous conclusion in an episode of *Man Alive* broadcast on the BBC, that suggested there could be a neutral stand on exploitation and racism - a balance between representations of

poverty and oppression in South Africa and representations of Black affluence provided by the South African government.

As feminist critics of traditional epistemology have noted within the context of 'bad science,' Strutt and Hissey conclude that feminists within the field of empirical communications research who appeal for 'more balance' or 'more objectivity,' paradoxically invoke a legitimation of existing ideological practices and principles[67].

They note additionally that the critique of 'bad balance' necessarily assumes that the presence of women or feminist perspectives can be the necessary corrective, leading to 'good' or 'real' balance. As I have already noted within the context of the discussions of feminist theory, counter hegemony and feminist epistemology, this is a troublesome claim on several grounds, not the least of which is its implicit suggestion that there is, or can be, a singular, unitary voice of feminism.

To speak of a feminist perspective as if it were an orthodoxy is to deny its diverse subjects, discourses, practices and theoretical constructs. It is not possible to have a monolithic feminist perspective which stands over and against, and 'balances' patriarchal ways of seeing the world.

This illustration of developments in the feminist critique of mainstream media attests to the presence of an evolving feminist political discourse, in a communication model that reproduces the complexities of gender theories, supplementing demands for gender parity with contestations of gender and media ideologies as well as militating against a single and exclusionary definition of feminism.

Indeed, it addresses the deep entrenchment in Western knowledge structures of

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[67]In a similar vein, Mandy Merck (1979) notes how the concept of sexism could make the structure of male supremacy even stronger. She argues this is so by virtue of the concept having been extracted from its particular material conditions as well as having been inflected by the liberal heading of 'prejudice' to signify the arbitrary stereotyping on the basis of their gender of both males and females without threatening the structure of male power.

two fundamental assumptions: that an objective reality exists that can be described in general propositions and that dualisms are natural categories. In addition to pointing out the problems in accepting such dichotomies uncritically, feminists are proposing alternatives. Integration and valorizing the female are two that do not however contest the terms of the dichotomies. But a third does, as it rejects binarisms for more multifaceted ways of thinking about the world. Indeed, the most compelling current analyses are those that account for dimensions of differences besides that of gender and that recognize how identity and understanding have always been multiply determined (Cirksena and Cuklanz, 1992:37-38).

The feminist critique of mainstream media may be rooted in a liberal bedrock but it is also infused with other critical elements. As G.J. Robinson notes, positivistic sex-based research may have discovered organizational barriers to women's media careers such as difficulties in access, promotion and pay equality, but feminist and cultural theories were required to pinpoint the ideological roots of these barriers (1992).

The feminist media critique supports traditional empiricist values of dichotomies and objectivity. Yet, it acknowledges social fingerprinting and the androcentric content of media theories. Tension is felt internally also, as issues of equity in portrayal and employment, systemic discrimination, the plurality of feminist voices as gender intersects race, class, ethnicity and sexual orientation, challenges to media frames and concepts such as objectivity and balance, compete within a feminism increasingly contradictory and continually 'in process.' The counter-hegemonic challenge in media criticism indeed requires this very practice of negotiation and realignment of constitutive elements.

Conclusion

Much has been said about the double-edged value of the infusion of greater

numbers of women in otherwise unchanged androcentric media institutions and processes. This equal-rights strategy may be perceived as an ineffectual liberal feminist maneuver that would only serve to reinforce the patriarchal character of the institutions. However, I support their proposition that liberal feminist interventions in the mainstream media and through the agency of the state serve several purposes. As a transitional stage, they represent achievements of 'proximate' goals; they compete for supremacy in the formation of counter-hegemonic strategies and are therefore fluid; they are part of a political tradition to which they are no longer servile and indeed, like the critique they engender, form a 'site of differences' (a phrase from de Lauretis, 1986:14).

Indeed, it may be premature to dismiss all counter-hegemonic strategies that are based on a politics of rights and presumed oblivious to social structures. As Susan Crean notes, the initial entry of women into a previously all-male domain may be unsettling but, as long as women represent merely 20 percent of media workers, this infiltration can nevertheless be accommodated because it does not imply fundamental alterations to the environment. A second stage which would better approximate parity is much more revolutionary (1987:115). The potential contributions of female media workers to counter-hegemony is a complex issue involving a variety of assumptions. To adopt a non-essentialist position by not equating women de facto with a progressive agenda is to recognize that women are not predestined to produce different media content. Neither is there a correlation between more women undertaking media work and 'soft' news being ascribed a higher value. It is also significant that, however important they may be, local roles for women in media do not compensate for women's absence at the highest levels of corporate power (van Zoonen in Steeves, 1989:96). Additionally and despite their appeal, principles of 'equal employment opportunities' for media workers rest on a liberal-pluralist assumption of a society whereby individuals are free to compete in a hierarchically ordered contest and thus represent a

solution which would preserve this system of hierarchy (Rakow, 1989).

Notwithstanding all of these caveats, I consider that liberal feminism has yet to experience fully its inherent contradictions and cannot prematurely be dismissed within a feminist project of paradigm replacement. Women are no longer encouraged simply to progress through existing structures but are urged to transform them and this potential may in fact be intensifying. The reformist agenda could, for instance, shift its concern from denouncing media portrayals and seeking redress through interventions with the state, to seeking ways of directly assisting female media workers in changing journalistic practices and criteria.

Research conducted on the rise of women in public office in the United States may be useful in informing the Canadian media context. In a study that examined the pattern of women achieving local and national office, Carol McClurg Mueller identifies three stages in change of consciousness in these women. She calls the first stage 'career feminism' which involves a change in perceptions regarding personal ambition for public office. Women decide that it is legitimate for them to pursue a political career. 'Structural feminism' is the second stage and involves a perception that the obstacles to women's full participation in political institutions are not legitimate; exclusion is regarded as discrimination. The final stage, 'group feminism' includes a sense of group identification with other women and with the women's movement. Women support specific policy proposals of women's movement organizations (1987:100). This model evaluates social movement success in terms of the extent to which feminism contributes to further mobilization by increasing the number of policy changes introduced by women in public office. It suggests that women officials are a necessary but insufficient resource for further social movement successes. Mueller concludes that feminist mobilization requires a critical mass of women increasingly organized in caucuses and informal networks to increase women's influence at all levels (Mueller, 1987:104).

I would argue that this issue of critical mass is central to the achievement of a paradigm shift in the news discourse. The debate about whether women as media professionals advance the interests of women or their own careers is valid. Nevertheless, the point to be made is that nowhere have women ever achieved an equal share of the media workforce nor have they enjoyed positions comparable to men within the organizational hierarchies. Women media workers are approaching the third step in Mueller's model. I have addressed earlier the contributions of female journalists to the articulation of feminist politics and their association in newsroom caucuses. These are concrete intra-media struggles whose potential has yet to be fully realized or assessed.

I conceive of these endeavours as essential in propelling feminist activities in and around news media into the second stage of reconstruction. The feminist critique of media, as represented primarily by MediaWatch, has contributed significantly to the identification and deconstruction of sexist practices in media industries. Its critique of sexism must now be transcended in a project that privileges outreach and solidarity with women in the media.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has attempted to relate shifts in gender research within feminist theory to those in communications theory in order to explain and inform feminist advocacy in mainstream media. I have overlaid upon this analysis of gender research and advocacy, observations on the increasing importance given to theory and ideology not only in gender research but within influential contexts of this research, that is within feminist theory, hegemony theory and communications theory.

I have also highlighted theoretical and practical limitations of the concept of dualisms and I have noted ways in which it ignores complementary convergence as well as hierarchical relationships inherent in the very term, for feminist organizing and movement development, for epistemologies, for gender theories and for ideological hegemony.

I have identified and assessed the presence of and tensions within liberal feminist thought in the formulation of the above-captioned theories in order to arrive at a better understanding of the perceived shortcomings of this tradition as it is applied specifically to the field of media criticism and to elucidate its most promising trajectory.

There has been a considerable growth in the complexity of feminist politics with a shift from political tradition to culture and ideology - notably feminist consciousness - influencing the construction of gender identities. Indeed, the issue has become not men, women, or gender relations per se, but that of gender construction along multiple axes. One of these axes is gender hierarchy which I have underscored for example in theoretical and epistemological dualisms and in concepts of balance and objectivity. Gender is best apprehended as a social relation and to value women only in their resemblance to men diverts attention from the power distributions that transcend sex categories, from the patterns of disadvantage and dominance embedded in social

institutions and practices.

The thesis has reflected on the tension within and outside each theoretical framework it encountered. Observations were made on the plurivocality of feminism, its multiple articulations and the cross-referencing of its various permutations. Theories and constituencies in feminism have become more differentiated since the first wave of the movement and have provided a constant tension between the validity of an analysis of women as a sex-class and the contradictory claim for the multifaceted female identity not overdetermined by her gender.

I explored the potential of this multiplicity of feminist conceptualizations and political strategies in turn to challenge social movement theories, theories of media and traditional epistemologies.

I examined theories of resource mobilization and new social movement in tandem with the theory of hegemony and counter-hegemony, and underlined the progression within this sequence of social movement theories to the creation and maintenance of consciousness and ideology. This analysis was useful additionally to elucidate the role of media in ideological hegemony - as justification for both my preference of hegemony/counter-hegemony theory to assess and predict developments in the women's movement as well as my focus on advocacy strategies to improve the status of women in media. I examined and qualified the structure of male dominance in media structures and discourse but more pertinently I articulated the importance within an overall process of hegemonic struggle of the equivalent counter-hegemonic formation. Not all elements of feminist discourse and alternative practices can prevail within counter-hegemony at any one time, as evidenced in the plurality of, and the tension between, feminist practices and discourses.

I explored the counter-hegemonic potential of an evolving feminist media critique which increasingly draws on feminist theory to problematize the relationship between women and media. Analyses of sexual inequality borrowed from theories of

gender have experienced within theories of gender communication fundamental shifts from a non-problematic concept of masculinity to one that is critiqued within more recent formulations that appreciate the role of culture in constructing these very concepts of masculinity and femininity. I have outlined the feminist media critique and its evolution from early demands for numerical representation of women in media equal to men and proportionate to their presence in the population, to consideration of the audience and the context of viewing or reading, and to theoretical explorations of gender and media ideologies.

I delineated the process of paradigm challenge within the broader field of feminist epistemology as a model for the further development of feminist media criticism. Indeed, advocacy strategies of organizations within the women's movement concerned with issues of women and the media - notably MediaWatch - could be usefully informed by the pattern of change that has been uncovered in the field of social science.

Substantial overlaps were located between the feminist media critique and feminist epistemological approaches of empiricism, standpoint and postmodernism. The internal logic of feminist criticism in epistemology was uncovered and found to contain important predictions for the evolution of a feminist critique of mainstream media. I presented a model of paradigmatic shift for feminist research and advocacy in epistemology which I subsequently extended to the feminist media critique. It consists of two stages, one whereby ideological filters are exposed - sexism in media portrayal and employment - and a second, constructive project which transcends the terms of patriarchal media practices and discourses and thus requires that advocacy shift from further identification and deconstruction of sexist practices and products to supporting the battles being waged by women media workers in making media more hospitable to women and in extending the boundaries of news values.

In the process of addressing the paradigmatic potential of feminist media

criticism, the thesis has revealed some intrinsic complexities of feminism ranging from the diverse, cross-disciplinary methodologies that inform it, to the connections between scholarship and advocacy and between theory and practice that extend its scope from purely explaining the human condition to changing it.

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