1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Origins, Impetus and Inspiration for the Research

South Africa is undoubtedly crossing through a period of concentrated and vital change. Emerging from an expansive period of interconnected racial, class and gender inequality into a new democratic dispensation, it represents in many respects a case of "unfinished revolution". South Africa can be said to have undergone a revolution in terms of the change and quite radical shift in policy, law, various structures and also discourses that has taken place in recent years. Of course, to call it a case of "unfinished revolution" is not to suggest that any transformative changes are ever uncontested or finite. Rather, it is to highlight the ways in which substantial transformative change and substantial legacies of inequality can still be found side by side. The social and material legacies of South Africa's history continue to challenge diverse agents to try to understand, strategise around and act in addressing these inequalities. While early discourses of social transformation may, in some respects, have focused on the nexus of class and race relations in South Africa, gender is increasingly being acknowledged as a key issue in addressing a wide range of social problems, from poverty and development to widespread manifestations of violence and crime.

Indeed, South Africa is recognised by many as one of the most progressive, forward-thinking countries when it comes to gender, if viewed through the lens of its new policies and laws. Yet, despite the truly revolutionary accomplishments that have been made in terms of equality laws and structures, lived experiences continue to shout about the ongoing impact of untransformed gender relations on numerous areas of life. Some advancements have been made, while other issues stagnate or even regress. For example, more women are in leadership positions in South Africa's government than in most other governments in the world (Worldwide Guide to Women in Leadership, 2008). Yet at the same time, South Africa maintains the highest rate of rape in the world (see for example United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2001), women are sexually assaulted for wearing short skirts in public[1], and HIV/AIDS is spreading rapidly, especially among young women (Pettifor et al,

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[1] One incident was prominently covered in the South African media, sparking intense debate, and various other cases subsequently also emerged. See for example http://www.mg.co.za/article/2008-02-19-outrage-over-attack-on-miniskirtwearing-woman or http://www.actionaid.org/kenya/index.aspx?PageID=2527 [last accessed: 27 July 2009].

2005). Clearly, the trajectories of gender transformation represent advancements and lags, accomplishments and limitations, and certainly ongoing challenges.

A passionate gender studies student, this research was my first foray into the field of media studies and indeed feminist media studies. Catalysed by a series of personal confrontations with media representations, the concept for this research was born out of my own observations about these apparently uneven gender transformation trajectories reflected in the media, leading to questions in my mind about how the media fits into the South African gender transformation picture, and what it may tell us about the state of gender relations in South Africa today.

Some of the representations in the media that caught my eye seemed so starkly in contrast to, so unfathomable in the context of, the widely heralded progressiveness of gender policy and strategy in the new South Africa. While the legacies of poverty and violence in the lives of women, massive issues facing South Africa, were issues I had been acutely (and uncomfortably) aware of, suddenly the media as a potential social agent in gender transformation processes became of interest, in part because I perhaps in the past had naively assumed that the media industry would have been largely transformed by now. I am not sure precisely why I may have assumed this. However, I do remember thinking that it seemed logical that the media would aim to produce representations that were neither racist nor sexist, as it is a very visible and publicly accountable entity in South Africa, especially in recent years due to its often-articulated central role in building the new democracy as well as the multitude of policies and public dialogues I am aware of that rally against discrimination in media representations. Yet, what I saw were not only subtle manifestations of sexism in the media but in my view some very blatant ones too. It was perplexing to me that certain forms of sexism in the media may not be tolerated, while others seemed to be accommodated quite openly.

I remember a television advertisement (for a product I cannot accurately recall) portraying half-women, half-doll-like creatures in tight leather regalia, on their hands and knees scrubbing the floor of a ship to the sounds of music, while their behinds gyrated in the air in a disturbingly performed and plastic way. The male protagonists in the advertisement (or was it just a powerfully implied male gaze?) looked on with distinct satisfaction. Not long after I saw this advertisement, Jacob Zuma was accused of rape and the newspapers

scrambled to cover the story of "Khwezi[2]". But what was portrayed in many of the newspapers I saw was not so much the story of Khwezi - of a possible rape victim in a situation radically amplified by the status and position of the man she was accusing - but of Zuma and how this charge could negatively affect him. I wondered why and how the discourses communicated in so many newspapers could show such a high level of discursive sympathy (complicity?) with Zuma and so little concern over the potential victim, could frame the rape charge as a thorn in the side of an emerging political power (as a party political issue) rather than as a potential case of grave injustice against a victim (a gender political issue), or at least as a catalyst for discussion around the faces of patriarchy. These issues of course exploded even further in the media as the salacious details of the "night in question" emerged and were dished out in the papers with varying levels of gender-sensitivity. As the story unfolded, representations became less sympathetic to Zuma on the whole and more fractured over time. Still, these instances raised serious questions for me about the role of South Africa's media in gender transformation processes.

The media, in South Africa and elsewhere, can be viewed as a site of social and political struggle, of contested meaning making and of collective identity formation (think, for example, of the role of the media in building nationalisms, "imagined communities"[3]). As such, and as I will elaborate on in this thesis, it can be regarded as an epistemological project, part of broader contestations over voice, meaning and power that constitute wider epistemological milieus. As Foucault's work (for example Foucault, 1972; Foucault 1973) suggests in terms of discourse, the media (a medium and manifestation of discourse) both tells us about and constitutes social realities and power.

Gender itself has increasingly been recognised as a critical constituting force in the production and reproduction of both social and material inequality. A vast body of knowledge engaging with conceptions of gender has been generated and contested over the years, aimed at understanding, contextualising and addressing the gender inequalities that so profoundly shape societies. Critical issues emerging locally and internationally have further underscored this need. Widespread and highly gendered patterns of poverty, rates of gender based violence that some have asserted are tantamount to a form of gender war, and the increasingly recognised role of gender relations in fuelling the spread of HIV/AIDS,

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[2] "Khwezi" was a nickname for the woman who accused Zuma of rape, used mostly by her supporters and sometimes in the press.
[3] A term used by McClintock (1991).

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to name but a few examples, have highlighted the links between social constructions of gender and tangible manifestations of oppression. In South Africa, various academic, research and development projects have been directed, influenced and driven by gender concerns (although with varying degrees of genuine commitment and success), but there are still areas of great concern, of gaps and shortcomings in engendering processes of transformation. The media is one area that, while indeed having received attention in terms of gender, continues to present challenges and to call for further attention, particularly in the context of tenuous processes of gender transformation, and the shifting and changing identities forged in the post-apartheid context. As a site of meaning making, of epistemological expression, it is an important part of current and potential transformation processes.

In many senses, South Africa's revolution is still ongoing, and in terms of gender a multiplicity of anecdotes, documented research, statistics and daily events show how this revolution still needs pursuing. In the context of the historical legacies I have mentioned, a commitment to gender transformation is not a simple but an extremely complex and nuanced endeavour. As such, it requires a more complex and nuanced approach and, as I will present in this thesis, this is what I have tried to contribute to through this research. For example, in South Africa there has tended to be a focus on gender equity, but gendered social relations and structures that remain a strong force in limiting various forms of social and material transformation also need further attention. This, then, is the context of my research - the *need* for more *comprehensive gender transformation*, the *opportunities and challenges* presented by *contextual and historical issues*, and the *importance* of considering the *media critically* as an instantiation and tool of unfolding epistemological trajectories and, therefore, also gender transformation in South Africa.

1.2   Approach and Aims of the Research

My approach to gender studies, or the gender lens through which I tend to understand these issues, has been greatly impacted upon by my undergraduate and postgraduate schooling at the African Gender Institute at the University of Cape Town, as well as further mentorship as a postgraduate at the University of Pretoria. This schooling has instilled in my research paradigm quite a politicised perspective: a feminist political imperative to look at how unequal gender relations can be positively transformed. In addition, my schooling has

infused into my research paradigm a critical approach, the valuing of self-reflexivity and a social constructionist rather than positivistic view of research as necessarily impacted upon by location and subjectivity. In terms of gender, perhaps fortified by the complex engendered social environment in which I was raised (South Africa, with a tapestry of varied gender relations issues), I have come to view gender in a relatively nuanced and multi-faceted way, as more than just "women" and instead as a dynamic set of relations and identities, leading to numerous forms of, and powers assigned to, *masculinities* and *femininities*. This perspective has been further explored and expressed throughout this thesis, but these foundational perspectives act as the cornerstones to the concept and approach of my research.

As I have mentioned, I entered this research process with little to no theoretical understanding of the media or media studies. As such, I have aimed to explore and incorporate more knowledge around this into the existing (and developing) feminist approaches I use. Various understandings of the media's role in shaping societies have been theorised, some of which I discuss later in this thesis. I have taken a critical feminist epistemological perspective of the media, incorporating and considering many of the different theories from a range of fields but from another, feminist- politicised angle. In terms of the range of factors shaping the production of media texts, I have also drawn on media theory, feminist media theory and wider gender studies theory in an attempt to briefly map some of the complexities of the production of media texts for the purposes of this research. The importance of media representations, as well as the ways in which they operate, continue to be prolifically debated and researched, and through this research study I have aimed to further this project from a feminist perspective within South Africa, particularly by concentrating on facets of the gender-media dynamic that I perceive to be thinly addressed to date.

Firstly, a common concentration in South Africa on *gender equity* issues relating to the media has been replaced in this research with a concentration on more qualitative aspects of the representation of *gender relations* and *gender constructions* in the media. In addition, while significant work has been undertaken on gendered media production processes - exploring the implications of organisational culture and professional practices with a bearing on the constitution of media products - the ways in which *media professionals themselves* perceive *their roles* in gender transformation processes in South Africa still requires

research. Various factors interact to constitute the news production process, and journalists' perceptions and applications of agency within these complex news production environments have also been explored in various ways. However, their perceptions and articulations of agency with respect to their journalistic roles in producing representations of gender within their work is still in need of further exploration, an area of inquiry I have aimed to develop through this research. I surmised that two dimensions to the creation of gendered texts would be how journalists understand gender, and how they regard their role (if they do regard it) in processes of gender transformation in South Africa. The research study, therefore, focused on journalists' understandings of their professional location within gender transformation processes in South Africa with the aim of exploring neglected dimensions of gendered media text production, namely articulations of journalistic agency around, and discursive understandings of, gender and gender transformation feeding into textual production processes.

In short, the aims of my research were as follows:

- To investigate how journalists understand gender and gender transformation.
- To explore how journalists understand their role as media producers in producing gendered texts, and therefore also their role as journalists in gender transformation processes in South Africa.
- To unpack these perceptions through discourse.

As mentioned above, I sought to address these aims in a way that could contribute to and deepen engendered media analysis in South Africa. The contributions I have aimed to make are built around - and shaped by - both existing accomplishments and perceived gaps in the field in South Africa, as investigated through a review of literature. For example, aspects of this research were in response to study approaches to the gender and media nexus, specifically in South Africa, that I perceived as disproportionately advancing issues around the numerical representation of women producing and being quoted in the media, as well as a prevailing focus on broadly defined "stereotypes" of women in the media. While offering valuable contributions, these approaches can, in my view, tend to frame gender relations in too simplistic terms, to implicitly homogenise women and men, and to reinforce a problematic "women" and "gender" synonym (whereby "gender" comes to refer primarily to

women, sidestepping crucial relational aspects of gender and indeed the importance of masculinities).

I have therefore aimed to redefine, as part of this research, the notion of "gender transformation" in relation to the media, and sought to link it to the discourses currently being employed by those working in the media. As a result of doing this, part of the contribution of this research was the proposal and application of a critical theoretical framework for approaching gender transformation in media representations (a *"progressive"* feminist approach), developed in part in contrast and challenge to a dominant but, in my view, limited gender transformation paradigm in South Africa (a *"liberal-inclusionary"* feminist approach).

I also aimed, as part of the feminist political project of transforming gender relations and understandings thereof, to reflect throughout and at the end of this thesis on some of the discursive opportunities for change, especially in light of the schism I observed between the discourses of gender activists/academics and media professionals. I believe that endeavours to effect gender transformation in the media in South Africa are underpinned by the need for further theoretical *and* empirical development, as well as the stimulation of debate and understanding among academics, media professionals and gender activists. This research has, at its heart, concerns over processes of gender transformation in South Africa. While the research study has not constituted a *direct* intervention into gendered media practices, it has had the objective of contributing to processes of gender transformation through the production of knowledge related to areas identified as requiring further theoretical and empirical attention. This, I hope, will inform further research as well as possible interventions to be undertaken in the future, and in so doing contribute to processes of change.

With these broader aims in mind, I tackled each component of the research with more specific aims, addressed in the Chapters of this thesis. First I developed a theoretical and contextual basis from which to approach the research, through an exploration and integration of feminist theory, media and communications theory and contextual issues in South Africa related to gender and to the press (covered in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 respectively). This secondary research constitutes a literature review as well as a theoretical contribution (particularly in the form of frameworks for "progressive" and "liberal-inclusionary" feminism), which I applied to the primary research.

Then I developed a methodology, laid out in Chapter 5, informed by the background research and framing the empirical work that followed. The primary empirical research was then focused on three national weekly newspapers - each representing a different form of journalism and a different market offering - namely the Sunday Sun, the Sunday Times and the Mail & Guardian (a brief profile of each presented in Section 6.2). I first undertook a primarily qualitative, thematic, critical discourse analysis of four issues of each of the three newspapers in order to establish the kinds of gendered discourses characterising the newspapers and how these gendered meanings were discursively effected. These findings are presented in Chapter 6. Thereafter, I undertook individual interviews with journalists and editors as the core research component (presented in Chapter 7). These interviews were transcribed in full and analysed through the use of thematic, critical discourse analysis. Analysing both newspaper content and the responses of journalists and editors was very useful in terms of triangulating findings on gendered discourses. Placing these two broad components of the research into dialogue with one another as I went through the findings, I have also presented some considerations around the *implications* of these findings for gender transformation processes in South Africa and its media in the concluding Chapter (Chapter 8).

While it is difficult to locate this research strictly within a particular field, I hope that the theoretical and empirical contributions I have made can enrich both the fields of feminist media studies and gender studies more generally, particularly in the South African context. In addition to the implications of this research for feminist engagements with the media in South Africa, the findings presented in this thesis also suggest a link between engendered media discourses and wider feminist trajectories in South Africa, a link that reveals what one could perhaps describe as fault lines - limitations or weaknesses - in feminist trajectories. These, I will argue, need to be attended to if more comprehensive gender transformation is to take place and contemporary feminist accomplishments are to be meaningful in the long-run. In essence, what I have aimed to achieve through this thesis is to disseminate, support and strengthen the claim that gender transformation in South Africa - including in the media - needs to be looked at multi-dimensionally, and to move beyond the politics of gender inclusion to a more nuanced approach to gender politics, if real and lasting change in the lives of men and women is to be realised.

2 FEMINISM: A THEORETICAL AND POLITICAL POINT OF DEPARTURE

2.1 Introducing Feminism

"I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a door mat or a prostitute" (Rebecca West, 1913[4]).

Feminism can mean, and has meant, a number of different things to different people. Held together by a central political project, interpretations of the exact significance, meanings and methods of this project do, however, vary widely. Feminist theory and politics have been foundational in the design, conceptualisation and implementation of this research, from the identification of the research problem to the writing up of findings. For this reason, it is fitting that a discussion of salient aspects and interpretations of feminism is the point of departure here. In this Chapter, I aim to provide a synopsis of some of the key developments in feminist theory with a bearing on the feminist frameworks and concepts that I have applied to the research at hand.

I have not attempted to comprehensively summarise the very prolific, divergent and continually evolving theories that are condensed under the term "feminism". Rather, my aim has been to flag some of the theoretical developments with particular bearing on the shape of "my" feminism, and by extension the application of this research. "My" feminist theoretical approach has evolved through the research process, and continues to evolve, and has been fundamentally shaped through tracing the footsteps of an array of feminist works and authors. Some of these key influences are therefore explored in this Chapter. In addition, through the process of reading and reflecting, both prior and subsequent to conducting the empirical research for this study, I have come to develop the concepts of "progressive" feminism and "liberal-inclusionary" feminism, specifically for application in this research but, I hope, also capable of making broader contributions to the field of gender studies and feminist media studies. Therefore, in this Chapter I trace some of the myriad influences on my application of feminist theory in this research largely via a discussion of these two concepts.

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[4] Commented in 1913, but also referenced by some scholars from a later, more formal, source namely West (1982).

As already alluded to, feminist theory has emerged as, and increasingly developed into, an extremely diverse and divergent body of knowledge. Feminist thought and action has pre-dated the emergence of the term "feminism", with writers and activists throughout history, in various different ways, "imagin[ing] a world where women were able to realize their potential as individuals" (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). When the term emerged, however, one of the political positions and strategies of women's movements was often an attempt to avoid dogma or a unitary position within the movement, as a challenge to conventional (masculine, patriarchal) ways of knowing (and dominating). As such, the social and political underpinnings of the spread and development of feminist thought formed the foundations for the multiplicity of positions under "feminism" that came to be cultivated, and *feminisms* as a plural term has been coined to acknowledge this diversity (ibid). In addition to this heterogeneity within feminism and women's movements, the pathways or trajectories of different forms of feminist thought have been uneven; in other words, feminist theory has been and is evolving not in a linear but in a more complex and contested fashion. These features of feminist theory further underscore the need for research such as this to explicitly chart important theoretical (and political) positions that inform people's orientation within the landscape of feminist knowledge.

While qualified statements as to the key concerns and principles of feminism are inherently problematic, broadly speaking feminist theory can be said to engage with an array of theoretical canons and approaches towards the recognition of, and desire to effect change in, the subjugated status of women (Cirksena & Cuklanz, 1992). Identification and explication of the sources of women's oppression forms a further theoretical thread (ibid), through the exploration of a variety of conceptions of relations between women and men as gendered beings (Mannathoko, 1992). Although drawing on a range of theoretical tools, feminism is also commonly distinguished by its categorical application of "gender" as an analytical tool. In addition, it is importantly distinguished by its *political* agenda; whereas women's studies can be said to constitute a body of knowledge analysing the condition of women in society, feminist studies direct such analyses towards changing these conditions, towards achieving gender justice (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). As such, feminist social science is, in many senses, "decidedly not disinterested or detached" (Cirksena & Cuklanz, 1992: 38). Instead, it is as much a political standpoint as it is a theoretical one.

2.2   Gender as a Tool of Analysis

Feminist theories and political imperatives are centred upon the idea of the significance of gender, as a social force, in shaping all areas of life - economic, political, cultural and more. The concept of "gender" is, however, also contested and differentially conceptualised. Theories and applications of the term "gender" can be said to both reflect and shape the trajectories of feminist theory and politics (Nicholson, 1998). The broader (and perhaps most commonly applied within the social sciences) conception of gender is that it denotes the social expectations of behaviour, competency and status assigned according to biological sex and distinguished as either "masculine" or "feminine" (Nicholson, 1998; Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). As such, gender is viewed through a feminist lens as a key *social* variable within which humans think about and organise their social activity, as differentiated from *biological* sex (Mannathoko, 1992). The behaviours, competencies and statuses previously regarded as "natural" consequences of biological sex have thus been distinguished as discreet social characteristics (Nicholson, 1998). Simone de Beauvoir (1972: 295) captured the essence of this distinction when she said: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman". Pilcher and Whelehan (2004) further note that, importantly, gender theory recognises that these expectations and perceptions around masculinity and femininity are not merely *different*, but *hierarchical* as well, locating them within a matrix of power relations.

While this rudimentary distinction between gender and sex described above has had relatively wide acceptance in feminist theories, the complexities of the relationship between these concepts have been configured in different ways. Shulamith Firestone (1970), for example, locates women's oppression in the exploitation of their biological sex - particularly their reproductive abilities - and argues that women's only route to social emancipation is through emancipation from the functions of their sex. She therefore describes biology as the source of women's weakness, and advocates freedom from biology through reproductive technologies (ibid). Others have questioned the polarisation of sex and gender in feminist theories, arguing in various ways for the recognition of intimate linkages between them (Butler, 1990; Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Haraway, 1991; Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). This includes the argument that even what is identified as "biological sex" is so imbued with and produced out of social meaning that the social and biological can never be fully separated (Butler, 1990; Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Haraway, 1991; Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). The vectors through which biology is investigated and described, for example, are infused with

gendered social expectations (Butler, 1990; Fausto-Sterling, 2000). Another argument is that social relations actually impact upon and change biological make-up, such as changes in levels of male or female physical strength according to the levels of strength that are socially acceptable at the time (Nicholson, 1998). Naomi Wolf (1990), for example, has argued that women in the west align the development bodies in accordance with ideals of femininity, such as being physically small, thin and relatively weak.

Despite prolific engagement with these complexities and the significant advancement of the distinction between sex and gender, however, the term gender is still often used nowadays to describe or denote implicitly innate, value-free and material (biological) categories (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). Indeed, as will be further indicated in this research thesis, common conceptions of gender are often tightly bound up in essentialist, biological conceptions, centred on "sex". Through feminism, the term "gender" was popularised, but it is not always used in common parlance or policy to denote social dimensions. For example, many legal and statistical forms require people to indicate their "gender" as being either "male" or "female". Apart from the obvious assumption of dichotomy inherent with this, biological and social terms are used interchangeably, in effect discursively essentialising gender as a natural and inherent consequence of sex.

Distinctions around terms and theories related to "gender" and "feminism" remain important sites of contested meaning. However, at its foundations feminism is concerned with gendered power relations and forms of oppression, in both the empirical and political senses. Politics around the meanings of "gender" continue to unfold, with implications for feminist projects. As such, these conceptual politics will be borne in mind throughout the research thesis.

Having introduced some of the foundational concepts important in establishing a feminist starting point for research, what follows is a further exploration of feminist theory that aims to unpack and present theoretical approaches with particular relevance to this research. In the following section I present a discussion of feminist theory that aims to specifically provide a theoretical, and somewhat historical, context for the concepts of "progressive feminism" and "liberal-inclusionary" feminism, concepts that I have developed as part of this research.

2.3 Diverse Feminist Topographies: Locating and Conceptualising Comparative Feminist Frameworks for the Research

2.3.1 A note on the significance of "progressive" and "liberal-inclusionary" feminisms

By way of broad introduction, the concept of "progressive" feminism involves theoretical contributions and areas of attention I regard as important towards strengthening and deepening feminist theory and, by extension, research. In particular, as the research process unfolded I felt that this approach could benefit feminist media studies, and gender studies focusing on the media, especially in South Africa. I call this approach "progressive" because it involves some more recent theoretical shifts and because, in my view, it draws closer towards unpacking gender relations in a way that can offer greater opportunities for comprehensive change. "Liberal-inclusionary" feminism represents an approach that, while I recognise as an important contribution to the study and politics of gender, I consider insufficient to fully address gender inequalities. It is an approach that emerged through the research as having an important impact on the shape of contemporary notions of "gender transformation" in South Africa and the South African media, notions I aim to challenge and contest as limiting transformation in some respects.

2.3.2 Liberal-inclusionary feminist approaches

Liberal-inclusionary feminism has been identified or framed here as a contemporary form of liberal feminism shaped in particular by certain contextual issues in South Africa. As such I introduce it here by way of discussing both liberal feminism and the inclusionary politics of gender in South Africa in recent years.

Because feminist ideas and actions have manifested so diversely in different historical and geographical contexts, locating and contextualising feminist approaches can be difficult, as well as problematic. However, liberal feminism, often associated with the "first wave" of feminism (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004; Tong, 1998), will be the point of departure for this discussion. It can be considered one of the earliest forms of modern, organised and *recognised* feminisms. In many senses, it is often written about as a kind of source, or starting point, for the "women's movement" as it has come to be known today. Of course, the

idea that there is one "women's movement", or one source or starting point for feminist thought and action, is certainly (and rightly) contestable. The significance of early western forms of liberal feminism, however, in my view remains in the sense that western liberal feminism both reflected and profoundly influenced many of the legal, institutional, social and economic changes to the gender order that have been charted in more recent history. As an influential feminist paradigm, it has informed policy and practice not only in the western world, but also in many different locations in different ways, and at a global institutional level.

Early liberal feminism, when it emerged, could be said to be revolutionary in many respects. However, it also came to be seen as highly limited and has been extensively critiqued from a range of different feminist positions. This, in point, indicates part of its significance today. As Tong has observed, "so much of contemporary feminist theory *defines itself in reaction against* traditional liberal feminism" (Tong, 1998: 2, emphasis my own). Although internally to liberal feminism interpretations and applications of liberalism are in flux (Tong, 1998) and, by extension, liberal feminism is not entirely monolithic, the broader approach has certainly played a significant role in challenging gendered patterns of labour and participation, particularly within public sphere labour markets, education systems and political spaces (ibid). This has been done primarily through a focus on legislative reforms to existing systems, and an assertion of women's equality *with men* (Tong, 1998; Walby, 1990; Mannathoko, 1992), in other words women's ability and right to participate in the (male) world through equal opportunity.

This focus had its roots in changing gendered labour systems in the west brought about by industrialisation. Tong (1998) locates one of the first recognised voices of liberal feminism, Mary Wollstonecraft (1792), within the context of declining spaces for women within the "productive" spheres of European life, associated with industrial capitalism. This process drew labour out of the homestead (where both productive and reproductive labour had taken place) and into an emerging separate public workspace, thereby creating and perpetuating a (highly gendered) gulf between "private" and "public" labour spheres. Mary Wollstonecraft's work (1792), however, reflected primarily a bourgeois married woman's perspective on gendered labour and inequality, and was contextualised by the impact of these processes on married bourgeois women, who suddenly found themselves with a dearth of productive activities (Tong, 1998). As such, Mary Wollstonecraft described women as "kept" - in their

homes, by their husbands, and out of the productive and physically active spheres that had now become "outside".

Mary Wollstonecraft (1792) asserted women's equality with men in intellectual ability, defined in terms of "rationalism", and argued that the paucity of rational intellectual qualities in women was the product of a lack of equal opportunity with men to develop these qualities through education and participation in the public realm, rather than a product of women's innate intellectual inferiority. While this was indeed a radical assertion at the time, her critiques of inequality were largely limited to inequalities in access to education, as she argued in favour of such opportunities in order to eventually create "good" wives and mothers. "Make women rational creatures and free citizens, and they will quickly become good wives and mothers - that is, if men do not neglect the duties of husbands and fathers" (Wollstonecraft, 1792: 306). This early work highlights the importance of participation and rights to enter male dominated public spheres, associated with intellect and value, within a liberal feminist paradigm. In this line of argument, too, already lies the source of one of the principle critiques launched against liberal feminism - that while it argues for reform in women's access to certain political and economic opportunities, it does not adequately address gendered division of labour, roles or statuses within the "private" sphere.

Wollstonecraft's (1792) emphasis on women's need and right to acquire the qualities of human "rationalism" and "virtues" also raised strong critiques against liberal feminist approaches, related to their tendency to equate male values with human values (Tong, 1998). She wrote that "women, considered not only as moral but rational creatures, ought to endeavour to acquire human virtues (or perfections) by the *same* means as men, instead of being educated like a fanciful kind of *half* being" (Wollstonecraft, 1792: 125, emphasis original). Feminists have argued against the weaknesses of such approaches from the perspective that they fail to attend to the oppressive androcentrism of institutions, values and social practices (for example Mannathoko, 1992; Walby, 1990) and that they legitimate linear modernisation approaches (Mannathoko, 1992). From this point of view, while Wollstonecraft's (1792) words were challenging in their suggestion of women's ability and right to work in male-dominated spheres, in another respect they can also be regarded as representing the internalisation, rather than the challenging, of patriarchal (and capitalist) notions of (hu)manity, education and values.

In the 19th Century, John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill offered up influential texts on women's emancipation[5]. In addition to the public rights and labour domains they also focused on the "home front", attending to issues of marriage, divorce and child rearing. The principle means of liberation focused on were legal reforms in terms of certain rights and equal opportunities in the public labour market (Tong, 1998). The suffragette movement also began to emerge around this time, as the notion of women's right to public participation crystallised more and more in the public consciousness (ibid). During the time of abolitionist movements in the US, women's movements were also coming to the fore, although there was significant tension between the interests of these movements, with concerns that highlighting differences between men and women could dilute the message of racial inequality (ibid). However, while such issues did hamper certain efforts and silence certain voices in the western women's movement, women's considerable exclusion from and marginalisation within abolitionist movements also eventually catalysed some groundbreaking changes in terms of women's rights, for example those expressed in the terms of the Seneca Falls Convention (ibid). Again, the focus was on legal rights, political representation and public sphere participation of women.

Later on, in the 1960's, the rise of radical feminism created (or rather highlighted) some rifts in the women's movement in the west and threw a spotlight on the limitations of liberal feminist approaches, not only in terms of looking back at the limitations of first wave feminists but in terms of tensions between liberal and radical feminists of the second wave. As Tong (1998) observes, radical feminism became associated with Women's Liberation, while liberal feminism became associated with Women's Rights. This observation highlights the broader features of liberal feminism and its greatest challengers - in the case of the former, a focus on rights and reform to existing systems, and in the case of the latter a call to question the very heart and basis of existing systems, and to uproot them (Mannathoko, 1992; Tong, 1998; Walby, 1990). The well-known slogan of radical feminists of the 1960's that "the personal is political" also came to exemplify the shifting lens of feminist critique from the liberal feminist focus on "public" domains to a view of "private" domains as equally political, patriarchal and in need of challenging. Kate Millet (1970), for example, delved into the contentious issue of sexuality, underscoring the political (association: "public")

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[5] Various works can be included, but leading examples are Harriet Taylor Mill's *The Enfranchisement of Women* (1853) and John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869), published after Harriet Taylor Mill's death but known to be greatly influenced by her own work.

dimensions of the issue of sexuality, which had been largely relegated to the "private" (association: apolitical) sphere.

The tensions between radical and liberal feminists underscored some important questions about strategies for the emancipation of women as well as differences within the, quite homogenised, notion of "women" within the women's movement. For example Betty Friedan, author of the highly influential feminist text *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), was seen to shy away from the more "radical" feminist agendas such as those around issues of sexuality (Tong, 1998). This is perhaps surprising given the way in which her work threw light on women's oppressive lives within the "private sphere". Her attention within the women's movement was rather on achieving legal reforms and equal access to education and human rights (ibid). She opposed the idea of the United States' National Organisation for Women's public alignment with lesbians, which she considered at risk of significantly alienating mainstream society from the ideas of the women's movement (ibid).

This apparent internal contradiction in ideological stance and action is certainly not the only of its kind. Women's movements and individuals or groups within them have, in various places and at various times, sidestepped certain critical issues in this way. This could be either as part of a strategic approach (avoiding alienating those they wish to gain certain rights and recognitions from, or convince of a certain point) and/or as a function of the internalisation of certain gendered discourses that are perhaps more powerful than others, and therefore very difficult to challenge. In this case, a liberal feminist stance such as that taken by Betty Friedan could perhaps be viewed as operating to make changes to gendered discourses and structures that are more *pervious* to change, while issues around women's "intimate", "private" lives and identities remain a bone of contention.

Historically speaking, I will leave this account of early liberal feminism to step back and take stock of some of the key features of a liberal feminist paradigm. Tong (1998: 2) succinctly captures the broad strokes of liberal feminist approaches as involving the perspective that "female subordination is rooted in a set of customary and legal constraints blocking women's entrance to and success in the so-called public world." It is focused, then, on:

- Equal participation with men in so-called public spaces rather than interrogating gendered culture within these spaces or challenging gendered roles and statuses within the so-called private sphere;
- Women's voice through representation via formal legal, political, educational and institutional routes, more than questioning the social construction of women's voices or the dimensions of voice beyond formal legal, political and educational matters;
- Reforming via legislation and representation in formal structures, rather than uprooting or overhauling the values underpinning society;
- A relative male/female dichotomy in terms of conceptualising gender, without much attention to intersecting factors such as class, race, age, sexuality and so forth.

Therefore, liberal feminism has been strongly critiqued as bourgeois, heteronormative and white and/or racist, as limited in terms of its potential for transforming oppressive power relations and as male-centric in its focus. Despite prolific critiques against it, however, this paradigm has survived into contemporary struggles for women's emancipation. This is in my view, at least in part, linked to the issues highlighted by the case of Betty Friedan's position on sexuality within the women's movement - a strategic and/or socially constructed inclination to focus on changes to the gender order to which society (men and often women) is more receptive. As Pilcher and Whelehan (2004: 49) note:

"This liberal position is broadly held to be the dominant, 'common-sense' stance on feminism, applicable to the majority of women who identify as 'feminist' in some way, but don't want to overturn the status quo in order to achieve better social conditions for women."

As I have mentioned already, this research process necessitated the development of an analytical framework through which I could view, and within which I could locate, feminist discourses and discourses of gender transformation. Liberal feminism, as I have introduced it here, offers much in the way of building such a framework, particularly given its contemporary applications. However, the South African context requires an adjusted and somewhat more nuanced conceptualisation than broader liberal feminist paradigms, not least of which because liberal feminism as I have described it emerged and developed out of a western context. Important historical processes related to the women's movement in

South Africa have impacted on the form liberal feminist paradigms take in this context. These processes are numerous and complex, but I will only aim to underline some key features of struggles for women's emancipation in South Africa over the past few years, those I consider having an important bearing on the shape of liberal feminist paradigms in South Africa today. I draw mostly on the work of Shireen Hassim (2006) on women's movements in South Africa, which gives a very comprehensive and layered account that is embedded in historical detail, and apply aspects of it to my own discussion here.

The title of Hassim's (2006) work on women's organisations in South Africa is already very telling (*Women's organizations and democracy in South Africa: Contesting authority*). There may be many different dimensions to the issue of contested authority, but particularly notable in her writing on women's organisations is that processes of identifying, defining and mobilising around the goals and strategies for women's interests is a complex and contested business, both in terms of interfacing with broader society and internally to women's organisations and movements. In South Africa, these contestations over authority were strongly influenced by apartheid and anti-apartheid struggles, as well as emerging and evolving nationalisms. Hassim (2006) charts some interesting trajectories for women's movements in South Africa in relation to the period leading up to the new democratic dispensation. I will, however, focus on the ways in which certain women's and feminist issues came to be addressed at the dawn of this new dispensation.

As Hassim (2006) notes, at the turn to democracy in South Africa women's movements both recognised the unique opportunities for advancing women's interests inherent in such a transitional period, and were sceptical of the capacity for true change through legal reforms and the formal vote, being focused on as the new Constitution and legislation for the country was being drafted. McEwan (2000), in her account of engendering citizenship in South Africa's new democracy, also highlights this sceptical awareness among women activists about the potential gaps through which women's interests under the new democracy could slip. She argues that this was influenced by the internationalisation of feminist communication and engagement, whereby women activists were increasingly "part of new global discourse around gender issues" (McEwan, 2000: 8). Many gender activists had heard of, or been in exile in, other countries such as Mozambique and Zimbabwe where the sidelining of women's interests in processes of post-independence nation building had been witnessed (ibid). Therefore, "the experience of other societies has shown that the

emancipation of women is not a by-product of a struggle for democracy" (McEwan, 2000: 9). In addition, women's own experiences within South Africa, for example as part of anti-apartheid struggles, were often experiences of being sidelined as wives and mothers of the nation, and of being treated more as supporters to the ANC than its leaders (Hassim, 2006; McEwan, 2000; McClintock, 1991)[6], so that the risks of marginalisation in the building of the "new" nation of South Africa were fresh in their minds.

As such, it was important that the period of transition to democracy be strategically approached to ensure that key changes and rights for women were ensured from the outset. Formal legislative and policy changes, especially around the representation of women in leadership structures, were therefore strategically pursued, despite the recognition that these changes alone would not lead to comprehensive change. As Hassim (2006: 173) observes, this strategy was born out of the knowledge that "transitions to democracy offer unique opportunities for women to influence how democracy is broadly conceived. The restructuring of a more inclusive political system provides an important context in which women can advance their particular represented claims". This led to an initial "intense focus on numbers - that is, measuring the extent of women's participation and a concern about the nature and quality of representation and participation" (ibid). In this way, the turn to democracy in South Africa was shaped by the knowledge and experiences of gender activists towards a strategic emphasis on women's participation in the public sphere, particularly in leadership and decision-making positions. This is still evidenced today in legislative and policy requirements for "gender quotas" for representation in structures of government and other public workspaces, with the President Thabo Mbeki calling for 50/50 representation of women and men in parliament, up from the previous 30% quota.

Of course, the notion of equal representation of women in South Africa depends on the notion of "women" as a distinct constituency (Hassim, 2006). In South Africa, this category was and is particularly contentious - conceptually, politically and materially - due to significant racial and class inequalities. However, while at the dawn of democracy women's movements generally were highly aware of these issues, again strategically it was considered important to promote "women's interests", specifically around certain key rights

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[6] Of course, this experience was quite complex and layered, more so than described here. This is just to indicate briefly some of the issues experienced in terms of tensions between women's movements and anti-apartheid movements in South Africa, and that the politics of nationalism within the ANC as well as other nationalisms in South Africa (such as Afrikaaner nationalism) had been highly gendered and not always in women's best interests.

to participation. These interests, related to ensured inclusion in decision-making positions, acted as a central point of common agreement among diverse women who, in many respects, were otherwise often in contention with one another (Hassim, 2006; Hassim, 2005). Hassim (2006: 173) writes the following in this regard:

"[T]he idea that women, as a group, constituted an electoral constituency entered South African politics in the early 1990s. The interests that were seen to hold this constituency together, however, were narrowly defined in terms of a common exclusion from the processes and forums of public decision-making… The focus on 'getting women in' - that is, onto parity lists, to a large extent regardless of political ideology - held together a diverse range of women's organizations and gender ideologies in the period before the 1994 elections. Debate focused on mechanisms to achieve women's representation - most notably, the quota - rather than on particular interests of different groups of women".

This extract illustrates, in many respects, some of the common ambitions and challenges that have been discussed under "liberal feminism": a focus on representation in public spaces, especially through formal legal and policy reform, and the often strategic (and practical) focus on this as a common feminist interest that can "hold together" diverse groups of women in the face of contentious and complex gender politics. Interestingly, in Hassim's (2006) account of "liberals", in terms of their approaches to the issue of gender and representation, she in fact holds them to be against quotas which are viewed as problematic forms of state intervention and counter to the ethos of equality. Equality for liberals, according to Hassim (ibid) would involve the appointment of people solely on the basis of individual merit, not affirmative action. This highlights again the fluid and variously applied nature of the terms "liberalism" and "liberal" with regard to gender issues.

As such, for the purposes of this research I draw on both the account of western liberal feminism I have given and the South African account of post-apartheid gender equality strategies to conceptualise "liberal-inclusionary" feminism as an approach to gender transformation. With this term I refer to feminist approaches that broadly resonate with the key features of liberal feminism highlighted earlier, as well as the South African context of inclusionary gender politics observed by Hassim (2006). While Hassim (ibid) does point out that notions of "women's participation" in South Africa have indeed increasingly been

differentiated by class and race and addressed in a more complex manner towards the end of the 1990s, with a greater recognition of the politics and importance of difference among women, her account underlines some of the post-apartheid roots and historical legacies of gender politics and equality structures still seen today. Therefore, the "inclusionary" aspect of approaches to gender in South Africa is contested and representative of not all, but one, strand of feminist thought and action in the country. Nonetheless, I believe it is one that is significant, especially for this research.

"Liberal-inclusionary" feminism, then, is the term I will be using throughout the rest of this thesis, and one upon which I will build a comparative description of what I consider to constitute "progressive" feminism. As Tong (1998) has said in relation to liberal feminism, many other feminist approaches are defined in reaction to it. In this instance, the way in which I conceptualise "progressive" feminism is also done in relation and contrast to liberal-inclusionary approaches.

Other feminist writers in South Africa have indeed already pointed to the limitations of what Hassim (2005; 2006) has called "inclusionary" gender politics and strategies in South Africa. For example, Hassim (2006: 262) observes that the specialised institutional mechanisms, such as the "gender machinery", in South Africa set up to implement the deliberate inclusion of women in decision making have, in a sense, "shifted the issues of gender inequality out of the realm of politics and into the technical realm of policy making". In addition, she argues that the consequences of "the dominant focus on reforming the state is that very few women's organizations are dealing with issues of cultural norms and everyday practices, which may indeed limit the implementation and effect of legislative reforms (Hassim, 2006: 262). In this way, one may notice a similarity between Hassim's words and broader critiques of liberal feminism regarding the dearth of attention paid to gender issues associated with the "private" sphere and values born out of, and borne out in, cultural and social spheres beyond formal public spaces. Hassim's observations in this way also resonate with my own frustrations and concerns about so much gender equality and gender transformation discourse in South Africa today, especially very widely applied and shared public discourse. Indeed, the limitations of a focus on numerical representation of a homogenised category "women", without sufficient attention to subtler symbolic, cultural and social manifestations of gender and gendered power, could in my view lead to a very hollow form of gender transformation.

For example, a liberal-inclusionary approach implicitly assumes that women will represent all (or any) women's interests, without sufficiently considering how these "interests" will be understood and defined, or shaped by deeply unequal gendered processes of socialisation. It also assumes that putting women into top leadership positions within formal, public spaces will lead to transformation in all domains of life, and transformation for both women and men (who, after all, play an important part in the patriarchal order as well as any possible visions for a gender transformed future). I share Hassim's (2006) concern that technical policy approaches to gender transformation, for example through quotas on women's representation and state-provided "gender machinery", depoliticise gender inequalities and gender transformation processes, and displace attention away from the social *roots* of the gender status quo and the variety of (sometimes subtle, but always pervasive) ways in which women's subordination is played out in a variety of contexts. Like Hassim (ibid), however, I also recognise the immense direct and strategic importance of addressing issues of representation in public and decision-making spaces. As she argues,

> "In itself the demand for parity is not problematic… normal processes of electoral competition cannot be seen as fair if they persistently produce the under-representation of the same subordinate groups in society" (Hassim, 2006: 260).

However, entrance into formal institutions such as those of the state is not enough, as critics of liberal feminism have asserted for many years. How this inclusion is constructed, the gendered culture within these structures and institutions, and critical engagement with them - including by civil society - are also crucial. At the same time, the social roots of gender inequality need to be addressed if gendered oppression is not simply to reorganise, re-manifest or be perpetuated merely in new ways. Without addressing the heart of gender inequality, namely deeply entrenched gendered social constructions and values, the public face of gender transformation may change but symbolic and material transformation in the lives of women and men will be weak and tenuous.

As McEwan (2000) notes, "political and legal rights are clearly not sufficient alone to transform deeply entrenched inequalities". McEwan (ibid) also highlights how citizenship built around affirmative action measures, as witnessed in South Africa, is one based more on claims to rights, which can tend to oversimplify issues and fail to do justice to the

complexity power. Rights discourses, she argues, have become part of South Africa's political culture, which prioritises political and civil rights. This in itself, I would say, has great merit given the stripping and deprivation of political and civil rights in South African history. Like McEwan (ibid), however, I consider underlying gendered power relations to be an important area in need of greater attention in discourses of gender transformation in South Africa. McEwan (2000: 15) has incisively observed that "[i]n 'modernising' states there is often a tug-of-war between private and public patriarchies, and this is likely to remain the case in South Africa for several generations" and that "citizenship in South Africa is inextricably connected to naturalised social roles, which legal rights and policy-making cannot easily dislodge".

In this way, one can see the significance of the way in which western liberal feminist paradigms and South African, context-specific struggles for inclusionary gender transformation have been playing out in this nascent democracy. Discourses of liberal-inclusionary feminism continue to impact upon the gender transformation context in South Africa as well as to be critiqued by various writers as insufficient to enable and promote root-level, sustainable and comprehensive transformation. What follows, then, is a discussion of some of the most salient contributions towards, and features of, approaches I have conceptualised as part of this research process as "progressive" feminist.

2.3.3   Progressive feminist approaches

"Progressive"[7] feminist approaches to gender transformation flow largely from critiques of liberal-inclusionary paradigms and take a more social constructionist view than liberal-inclusionary approaches afford. I have conceptualised progressive feminism based on these critiques and the contributions made to gender and feminist studies by an array of writers and researchers, far too many to include here. Therefore, the discussion that follows will include a small selection of works that illustrate the central themes, areas of attention and theoretical contributions made towards what I call progressive feminism.

At the outset, it is perhaps important to clarify that what I refer to as progressive feminism is not so much a widely recognised theoretical perspective (such as, for example, liberal or

radical feminism), but rather feminist theory I consider as moving beyond, and progressively improving upon, liberal-inclusionary paradigms as reflected in some of the work discussed above. It is, therefore, both a grouping of broad theoretical characteristics and developments made for the purposes of this research and, I concede, a concept that is value-laden, as the term "progressive" suggests. In a sense, this approach is framed by particular feminist theoretical orientations that, in my view, offer opportunities for more comprehensive understandings of gender issues and strategies towards the transformation of oppressive gender relations, including within the media. In fact, the need to conceptualise this approach for the sake of this research arose through initial scans of literature on gender and the media in South Africa, which raised some areas of concern for me in terms of way in which these issues were being dealt with in much of the literature. I came to feel that some aspects of gender transformation were being thinly addressed (more of which I discuss in Chapter 4), and from this concern originated the idea of a progressive feminist paradigm

Second wave, and especially radical, feminism in the west is by no means the principle source of my ideas of progressive feminism. However, it is worthy of mentioning here as, in the west, it was during the second wave that many turned their attention away from mere formal legal and political rights and towards the *social meanings* and *power dynamics* applied to sex and bodies (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). Simone de Beauvoir's (1972) *The Second Sex* strongly influenced this move, and the broader shift towards social constructionism in feminism brought the concept of "gender" to the fore. Symbolic conflicts surrounding liberation struggles became as, if not more, important than struggles over equity (van Zoonen, 1994).

The slogan that in many respects came to characterise the Second Wave - that "the personal is political" - brought to the fore the imbeddedness of gender politics in all areas of life, not only the more "public" domains of unequal workplace participation and suffrage. Firestone (1970), Millet (1970), Rowbotham (1973) and later Walby (1990), among others, aimed to give emphasis and credence to the notion that the private is indeed political, as well as that the "private" and "public" spheres are deeply intertwined, by drawing attention to the ways in which patriarchy operates through social systems such as reproduction, sexuality, contemporary culture, economics and violence against women. This meant that the spotlight of social and political interrogation turned not only on so-called public spaces but, increasingly, on more intimate spaces and experiences such as sexuality, romantic

love, family, personal identity and values, as well as broader social systems such as economics and mass cultural representation. Even more radical was the suggestion that women's emancipation in all areas of life, including the political and economic, both impacted on - and was impacted upon by - gender politics playing out in more intimate spaces. Women's rights and women's emancipation became a *personal* matter, as the lens of feminist inquiry and critique penetrated and challenged conceptual boundaries that (as indicated earlier on) since the dawn of industry, especially in the west, had been imposed between "private" and "public", "productive" and "reproductive", "personal" and "political". One can say that these new insights into gender relations really began to challenge the patriarchal and androcentric foundations of broader concepts of "emancipation", "liberation" and "equality", for it could be argued that the initial intense focus on numerical representation and formal economic opportunities reflected the priorities of a male-centric conception and experience of power.

Radical, socialist and Marxist feminists began, in various ways, to chip away at the dichotomous delineations between these different domains, arguing (with different emphases and theories) in favour of the recognition of their dense interwovenness. Socialist feminists such as Rowbotham (1973), for example, identified "private" and "public" gender relations as intertwined, arguing that patriarchy is constituted of both economic and cultural systems of oppression. Constructions of gendered identities were also identified as linked to gendered division of labour, and gendered divisions of labour - including those within areas considered "personal" such as the family - as serving the broader, macro-economic interests of capitalism (Tong, 1998). Such theories have continued to be greatly developed by postcolonial, so-called "Third World" and other feminists delving into global economics and development (for example, Beneria, 2003; Bhavnani, Foran & Kurian, 2003; Enloe, 1989; Mbilinyi, 2001; Mies, 1986; Kabeer, 1994).

Radical feminists, such as Millet (1970) and Firestone (1970) also began to chart the various ways in which politics and power are mapped onto women's bodies - understandings of them, their treatment, their functions and assigned roles and values in society (Tong, 1998). Addressing issues such as suffrage and women's entry into the workplace, while still important, began to be seen as insufficient for transformation of the gender order to take place and, as Tong (1998) points out, rather than reform an existing system, many began to assert that the very roots and underlying causes of patriarchy, in all their myriad forms,

needed to be challenged and uprooted. These ideas form much of the foundation of progressive feminist thought as I come to define it here, by identifying the multiple layers of gendered-ness and multiple connections between the cultural, political, social and economic. They also highlight the ways in which power and oppression in the more material sense are connected to (or perhaps even imbedded in) power and oppression in the social and cultural - the discursive - sense.

Broadly speaking, debates over "women" as a central concept in feminist studies gained momentum with the expansion of a social constructionist perspective of gender, and also significantly contributed towards unpacking gender relations as various theoretical and political influences left their mark. What increasingly emerged were feminist paradigms that held gender to be relational, constituted by multiple factors, dynamic and shifting. As Waylen (1996) observes, the notion of "women" as unitary was increasingly questioned from the 1980's onwards, as the white, western, middle-class generalisations imposed on the category "women" were discerned, and the shortcomings of "women" as a homogenised category were identified.

Waylen (1996) identifies some key contributions to the challenge raised against the category "women" with relevance here. Among them is the influence of black, ethnic minority and "third world" and postcolonial feminists who critiqued feminist analyses as Eurocentric, ethnocentric and as sidestepping crucial issues of difference. Among these are feminist writers such as Angela Davis (1981), bell hooks (1984), Ifi Amadiume (1987), Patricia Hill Collins (1989), Changu Mannathoko (1992), Amina Mama (1995) Chandra Mohanty (2003; 1988) and Desiree Lewis (2004; 2002). These critiques have opened up numerous avenues for research and theorisation that challenge traditional western feminist approaches and necessitate far more nuanced and complex feminist understandings of gender, gender relations, power and oppression.

The scope and breadth of contributions by these feminists is wide and extremely difficult to summarise in any effective way here. Black, postcolonial, ethnic minority and "third world" feminists continue to powerfully challenge, and ask difficult questions of, feminists and the feminist project, underscoring not only the important influence of difference(s) on the manifestation of gender and gender inequalities, but also on the ways in which feminists have, can and should approach gender and feminist studies. Empirically, methodologically,

theoretically and politically, these challenges have been and continue to be key. Unequal access to the technologies and resources of knowledge production has shaped severe obstacles to production and dissemination of such knowledges. However, against these odds there have been numerous important contributions, and many more continue to be made today.

Mannathoko (1992), for example, has argued that the unitary use of the term "women" confers a false sense of homogeneity, as "gender roles" and statuses differ even within the same societies. In South Africa, for example, black women and even black men have been located quite differently within systems of power, patriarchy and capitalism than their white counterparts, and their gendered experiences therefore also differ greatly. A homogenous conception of gender, when viewed from this perspective, therefore belies the dynamic and multiply situated ways in which gender is constructed and experienced. Amina Mama (1995), in exploring black women's subjectivities, has pointed to the dynamic ways in which race, gender, class and the relationships between them are constructed and played out in individual subjectivities, showing that subjectivity involves multiple, and even contested, simultaneous and shifting positions. She also tracks some of the historical trajectories that have shaped these multiple positions and negotiated subjectivities. As such, she foregrounds an understanding of gendered experiences as constituted by various forces, and as located or situated in various, often complex, ways in relation to different people and situations (multiply-situated).

Chandra Mohanty (2003; 1988) has powerfully critiqued western feminism and the way in which it has framed (and continues to try to force into this narrow frame) women in the so-called third world, whose experiences, identities and encounters with gendered oppression not only differ significantly from western women's, but also differ significantly from one another's in many respects. Characterising western feminisms as imperialist, she argues that generalisations about, and domination over, so-called third world women (built upon and often serving the intellectual and social interests of western eyes) strictly limit and depoliticise understandings of gender and gender relations in majority countries and obscure the more complex net of power relations surrounding women in different contexts. Instead, she underlines the importance of detailed, context-specific research - this research would involve both in-depth and specific exploration, as well as wider and even global contextualisation, of the experiences and manifestations of power, gender and oppression

as they are diversely intersected with issues of class and race. These short examples highlight just a small few of the critical issues raised by postcolonial feminists that have significantly influenced the development of more complexly conceptualised and politicised feminisms. They call into question a unitary notion of "women", necessitate greater depth and detail in research and analysis than a male-female dichotomy can provide and call for high levels of reflexivity in deconstructing gendered identities and relations.

Another source of the breakdown of the homogenised category "women", according to Waylen (1996), was the influence of post-structuralist and post-modernist challenges to mainstream theory, developing parallel to feminist challenges to mainstream theory (Waylen, 1996)[8]. As Waylen (1996: 9) puts it, the "fracturing of the 'cartesian' unitary human subject and the self so beloved of rationalist enlightenment thought [was] to be replaced by notions of difference, plurality and multiplicity". As such, identity was re-conceptualised as complex and involving a variety of intersecting elements such as class, race, ethnicity, sexuality and gender (ibid). "There exists therefore a plurality of identities in the single subject" (Waylen, 1996: 9).

Similarly to the theoretical shifts catalysed and stimulated by black, minority, postcolonial and third world feminists, post-modernism and post-structuralism led to the increased recognition of the diversity between women (and men), and led to questions around simplistic earlier models that figured gender oppression primarily in terms of males oppressing females. This shift was also influenced strongly by Foucault (for example, Foucault 1972; Foucault, 1973) whose theories I address in greater detail later on. Suffice it to say here that he theorised the concept of discourse in a post-modern sense, linking it to the notion of a fragmented, multiply constituted subject (Waylen, 1996). This also had implications for the way in which the flow of power was conceptualised, with Foucault theorising a more complex flow of power than a simple oppressor/oppressed relationship (MacCannell & Flower MacCannell, 1993). He also contributed to the notion that discourses, because of fragmented subjectivities, can be contradictory, existing side by side even as they struggle with one another.

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[8] The influence between post-modern or post-structuralist theories and feminist theories worked both ways. Feminist critiques of positivistic approaches contributed to shifts in broader social theory while post-structuralism and post-modernism helped to develop feminist theory.

The study of masculinities also emerged out of and strengthened feminist theories advancing a relational, complex and multiply constituted view on gender. Writers and researchers such as Connell (2005; 2000a; 2000b; 1993), Segal (1993; 1990) and in Southern Africa Morrell (2002; 2001a; 2001b) and Ratele (2004; 1998) have challenged unitary notions of masculinity, advancing more complexly, historically and dynamically conceptualised gender identities and relations. Increasingly, feminist theorists too began to consider the importance of understanding masculinity, and its relationship to femininity, towards gender transformation. Writing on masculinities, Moore (1994: 149) highlights the importance of considering gender in a non-unitary and relational way.

> "[F]emininity and masculinity cannot be taken as singular fixed features which are exclusively located in women and men. We must agree to this if we recognize that subjectivity is non-unitary and multiple, and that it is the product, amongst other things, of the variable discourses and practices concerning gender and gender difference. Women and men come to have different understandings of themselves as engendered persons because they are differentially positioned with regard to discourses concerning gender and sexuality, and they take up different positions within those discourses".

This quote exemplifies key characteristics of emerging theories I call "progressive" - theories that emphasise gender, and the ways in which it is (actively, continually and differentially) constructed, as relational and constituted of multiple factors. Furthermore, Moore (1994) reminds us that constructions of masculinity are defined in *hierarchical* relation to femininity, underlining the notion that difference and power are inextricably woven into the constitution of gender. Lynne Segal (1993: 635) also notes, in reference to masculinity, that "[a] 'pure' masculinity cannot be displayed *except* in relation to 'femininity'" (emphasis original). Here again, theory on masculinities functions to emphasise that the performance and construction of gender is just that - a performance and construction, that therefore needs a correlation or relationship with an "other" to be actualised.

An important masculinities theorist is Connell (for example, 2000a; 2000b; 1993), who has identified the "patriarchal dividend", or the different, unequal advantages bestowed on different men according to their location within the hierarchical construction of hegemonic masculinities. Connell's work has had many implications but, for my purposes here, I will flag

the significance of this notion of patriarchal dividend which (although also critiqued) offers and supports the insight that "men" and "women" do not stand in dichotomous relationship with one another, but experience the gendered world and their gendered selves (including power and oppression) in accordance with socially and hierarchically constructed ideas of what masculinity and femininity are, and where they are located in relation to these social constructions and hierarchies of gender. All of this highlights the weaknesses of liberal-inclusionary approaches to gender transformation that not only sidestep crucial issues of difference, but also the ways in which gender and power is socially *constructed*, and marked by different and unequal ideas about masculinities and femininities.

Various emerging social theories have also gone beyond a concern with equality between male and female subjects, and linked gender to *processes*, *structures*, *institutions* and *practices*. This is illustrated in the works of writers such as Mies (1986), Kabeer (1994), Bhavnani et al. (2003), Beneria (2003) and Sweetman (2008), who argue for gendered conceptions and processes of development and economics. It also emerges in the work of Enloe (2007) who has, through feminist theory, linked gender to the institutionalisation and processes of militarism and globalisation, and Walby (1990) who has pointed to the ways in which patriarchy is manifest through institutions and governance processes. Of course, the significance of these gendered processes, structures, institutions and practices is very much connected with their implications for women's positions within societies (and the position of men who do not conform to hegemonic masculinities). However, these theories highlight the ways in which gender socially constructs, and is constructed by, the norms and values around processes, structures and practices. A relatively simple example would be the gendered nature of most corporate and business norms and values, from the valuing as professional of a masculinist work environment to a social and practical lack of space for reproductive activities to be integrated within a formal workplace career.

From this perspective, too, subjectivities are not *statically* positioned but *dynamic* and *oriented* differently in relation to different structures, institutions, processes and so forth, which are also gendered. Connell's (2005; 2000a, 2000b, 1993) theories on masculinity illustrate aspects of this theoretical shift. He notes for example that gender is configured at various levels, and is not isolated but oriented within, and in relation to, broader social and structural configurations (2002). Gender, in this view, is not only constructed at the level of individual life, but also in relation to, and interaction with, gendered ideological, cultural and

institutional configurations (ibid). Connell (1993) has, therefore, been vocal on the limitations of the traditional "sex-role" approach to gender relations, noting that this approach omits consideration of the importance of broader structures, institutions and power with which the engendered individual interacts.

The notion of not only women and men being gendered, but structures, institutions, practices and values as well, was already alluded to in de Beauvoir's (1972) influential writings. She critically identified the hierarchy of masculine values, processes and *ways of being* over the feminine, highlighting that femininity is generally regarded in terms of its "lack" of masculine traits, which are normalised (ibid)[9]. de Beauvoir noted, therefore, that society and its workings are, on the whole, deeply masculine and androcentric (ibid). This indicates a link between gender and the structural and institutional elements of society, which are created and governed in accordance with masculine values. As will be discussed further in relation to the media in Chapter 3, these ideas have been influential in highlighting the gendered nature of, for example, professional practices and organisations such as those of the media industry.

Again, I return to another work of Hassim's (2005) in conclusion. She advocates the importance of addressing the need for "transformational" rather than merely "inclusionary" feminist approaches in South Africa in a way that resonates in many ways with what I have described as progressive feminist approaches over liberal-inclusionary ones[10]. While she agrees that inclusionary feminist approaches may be necessary to create the broader conditions in which gender inequalities can be addressed, she also highlights the reluctance within these approaches to interfere with the structural underpinnings of gender inequalities (ibid). Transformational feminist approaches, she notes, employ the concept of "strategic" gender interests - a concept first introduced by Maxine Molyneux (1985) - towards not only addressing women's immediate, practical concerns but also longer-term, more fundamental issues such as the basis of gendered power relations and the interactions between political, social and economic spheres (Hassim, 2005). A transformational approach therefore aims to unpack, deconstruct and challenge gendered ideologies and relations at all levels, not merely at the level of public participation. As such, it has linkages with the ways in which I conceptualise progressive feminist theory here.

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[9] Numerous similar arguments have been made in relation to the media and the communications studies field as well, as will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Despite the various important theoretical developments I have outline above, a liberal-inclusionary paradigm still dominates in various arenas, including those of policy-making in South Africa. A relational analysis of gender, stretching beyond equity towards a deeper understanding of gendered power, structures and institutions as exemplified in the theories discussed above, underpins the feminist research undertaken here as will be evident throughout this thesis. Progressive feminist theory, then, is regarded as that which moves *beyond* the limitations of a liberal-inclusionary feminist paradigm towards a social constructionist perspective of gender as relational, multiply constituted and dynamic. It also includes theory that goes beyond concerns with numerical representation towards critically assessing the role of symbolic, socially constructed gendered representation, including the ways in which this operates in structures, institutions, practices and values. This concept of progressive feminism is also, in this research, linked to the way in which I have conceptualised - and apply - the notion of *gender transformation*. Whether applied broadly or with specific reference to the media, gender transformation, here, is understood as transformation of the gender order and status quo in a way that acknowledges, understands and builds strategies upon progressive feminist understandings of gender and how they impact upon patriarchy.

In light of these understandings, resistance to feminism, especially progressive feminist ideas that can challenge to the root very deeply entrenched social and cultural norms, is also an important area to point towards in a discussion of frameworks for understanding social change from a feminist perspective. The above sections have detailed developments and advancements in feminist thought. However, the trajectories of feminist thought and the changes they have brought and demanded have not gone unopposed. The section below therefore draws attention to some of the ways in which, or historical processes and frameworks through which, gender transformation has and is being challenged. This is, I consider, important to touch on in building a foundation of feminist understandings that will contextualise some of the further issues raised in this thesis.

2.4   "Mind the Gap Please": A Note on Anti-feminist Backlash

Pilcher and Whelehan (2004) note that anti-feminist backlash, at least as it came to be known in the west, was first most clearly observed during the second wave of feminism

concentrated in the 1960's. However, the period most strongly associated with the rise of what has come to be termed "anti-feminist backlash" was the 1980's and 1990's (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995; Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). According to Faludi (1992), the backlash phenomenon is not the manifestation of an orchestrated movement or plot to undermine feminist advancements as much as an amalgamation of social factors and actions, at times not consciously intended to undermine women's emancipation. Of the shape of anti-feminist backlash, Faludi writes the following:

> "The backlash is at once sophisticated and banal, deceptively 'progressive' and proudly backward. It deploys both the 'new' findings of 'scientific research' and the sentimental moralizing of yesteryear…The backlash has succeeded in framing virtually the whole issue of women's rights in its own language" (Faludi, 1992: 12).

In the above statement, the varied and even contradictory discourses employed to shape anti-feminist arguments are highlighted, as well as the way in which they can often strategically employ the discursive traits of feminism to turn it upon itself. Some of the arguments put forward within anti-feminist backlash discourses are that women themselves are suffering as a result of feminism, which is responsible for their contemporary problems (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). This is often supported by romanticised notions of the past (ibid), a fictional narrative of the "good old days" as characterised by gender harmony. Faludi (1992: 12) elaborates the following in this regard.

> "This counterassault is largely insidious; in a kind of pop-culture version of the Big Lie, it stands the truth boldly on its head and proclaims that the very steps that have elevated women's position have actually led to their downfall."

The manifestations of and reasons for backlash are varied. Faludi (1992) explains it as a common reaction to changes in the status quo, which are regarded with distrust and seen as potentially threatening. Benokraitis and Feagin (1995) link it to attempts to hold on to resources and power granted by the gender status quo, not only by men but also by women, some of whom might feel that feminist advances could undermine the value assigned to certain "feminine" activities and domains, such as those of the household. In addition, Benokraitis and Feagin (ibid) argue that the gender order has historically been so firmly

institutionalised and socialised that people find it difficult to challenge or disassociate with old patterns of thought and behaviour. This, of course, has serious implications for a feminist project (such as a progressive feminist one) that aims to uproot and challenge deeply socialised and institutionalised values and practices.

Both Faludi (1992) and Whelehan (2000) have pointed to the media as an important contributing factor in earlier and contemporary anti-feminist backlashes. The mass media, according to Faludi (ibid), played a key role during the second wave in vocalising, disseminating and propagating anti-feminist messages, often reinforcing or even multiplying backlash sentiments. This has been exacerbated by the fact that the very people feminists were trying to connect to - women - were poorly reached through the media, which often portrayed feminism in less than flattering terms and represented the backlash in a way that "made it palatable" (Faludi, 1992: 101). However, Faludi argues that this was not an intentional move.

> "The press didn't set out with this, or any other, intention; like any large institution, its movements aren't premeditated or programmatic, just grossly susceptible to the prevailing political currents. Even so, the press, carried by tides it rarely fathomed, acted as a force that swept the general public, powerfully shaping the way people would think and talk about the feminist legacy and the ailments it supposedly inflicted on women" (Faludi, 1992: 101).

Faludi's (1992) work on anti-feminist backlash offers a number of interesting insights that can be applied, in various ways, to different contexts outside of the geographical and time periods they focused on. Of course, anti-feminist backlash cannot be pinned to a particular time or set of events and actors, and authors such as Whelehan (2000) have pointed to contemporary cultural perspectives on feminism, including "post-feminist" backlashes against it. Whelehan has, for instance, highlighted the reformulated ways in which anti-feminist backlash is manifest in contemporary culture, for example through "politically incorrect" humour that "legitimises the practice of superficial engagement with social realities and exempts one from the responsibility of engaging with less palatable ones" (Whelehan, 2000: 25). Feminist thought and action - and actions against them - have manifested in diverse ways in diverse settings throughout history, shifting in shape and tone according to context. If one views Faludi's (1992) insights from the perspective that there are many

processes or trajectories of anti-feminist backlash, some of which heighten and become more visible at certain times, one can begin to locate the materialising of various historical resistances to change. Faludi's historical and theoretical insights can also be considered in relation to the South African context, including her reference to the media as an agent in strengthening anti-feminist backlashes.

To me, anti-feminist backlash appears at times to take the form of a punitive reaction to gender transformation in defence of the status quo, as well as something which, in addition to seething beneath the surface, is fuelled into action by a variety of forces that lead to a social desire for nostalgic stability. Gender relations, at the centre of intimate relationships and already attached to powerful discourses that naturalise and even deify gender differences, provide an accessible focal point for enacting this desire in the context of social change. In a context in which rapid changes are occurring on various fronts, revoking changes to the gender order that challenge society may be employed to some extent to offset these changes. In South Africa, for example, the push to resist and reverse gender change has been linked to other social histories and contemporary experiences of change.

Lewis (2003) reflects on anti-feminist backlashes in Africa based on arguments around culture. She argues that discourses of "culture" built around what she calls "[f]ictions of undiluted African "culture", incorporating notions of authenticity and timelessness, serve to support patriarchal goals and interests (ibid). Importantly, historical experiences of and discourses around colonialism have consequently shaped backlashes against feminist advancements in Africa. In this regard she writes the following.

> "In recent years, the charge of 'Westernisation' has surfaced with special virulence against feminism on the continent. With the growth of the women's movement and feminist scholarship during the last decade, feminism has increasingly challenged nationalist agendas that deify the leadership and ideologies of elite men. Predictably, the backlash has invoked the idea that African feminists have betrayed, violated or contaminated 'culture'" (Lewis, 2003: no page number given).

The argument that feminism is just another embodiment of colonisation and the ways in which it has often been imbibed into people's consciousness (Lewis, 2003) is extremely

powerful against the backdrop of historical and ongoing struggles to free Africa from a crippling colonial legacy. In this regard, Lewis considers anti-feminist backlashes in Africa as a manifestation of mounting anxieties surrounding the preservation of identities forged and strengthened as part of the anti-colonial project (ibid).

> "The vehemence of the feminist backlash testifies to the anxieties of those who have long built their sense of themselves, their material interests, and their political power on extremely fragile claims to the collective voice implied by their defence of 'culture'" (Lewis, 2003: no page number given).

These anxieties are patent in prevailing homophobia in South Africa. As Lewis (2003: no page number) asserts, attacks borne against homosexuals "in the name of African authenticity are rooted in the fear, experienced by many men and women, who perceive their most closely held values and norms are imperilled." Fears surrounding the relinquishing of deeply forged identities and values are ignited by gender transformation agendas, such as the move to challenge heterosexism. Yet the forging of these identities and values, despite their appeal to discourses that naturalise them, involve invention, fired within the context of anti-colonial struggles. According to Lewis (ibid), contemporary scripts of "culture" in Africa often "illustrate myth-making processes in which masculine self-definition and values are central."

This echoes McClintock's (1991) assertions regarding the development of nationalisms in South Africa, which she identifies as invented, gendered and even dangerous in their implications. While much has been written and debated in South Africa surrounding the tensions between African "culture"[11] and gender transformation processes, expressions of backlash are not limited to black citizens. In this respect, McClintock (ibid) traces the historical emergence of both African and Afrikaner nationalisms to illustrate the social and political interests that shaped gendered expressions of nationalism, inextricably linked with the construction of contemporary African and Afrikaner "culture".

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[11] I use and continue to use this term within quotation marks specifically when referring to notions of culture associated with race, ethnicity, tradition and so on (as opposed to, for example, references to organisational or visual culture). I use the quotation marks to indicate a critical caution in its use, which is contested and, in my opinion, widely misappropriated, for example, as a synonym for race or an indicator of inherent, timeless values and practices.

It is important, however, to consider as Morrell (2002) does that reactions to gender transformation in South Africa are not only characterised by a backlash, but take many forms. Morrell (ibid) emphasises the enormous impact of differential experiences of class, race and colonialism in shaping these responses in South Africa. Racial and gender affirmative action has had a bearing on different men in different ways, depending of their location at the intersection of race, class and "culture". The backlash experienced among some men in South Africa is, according to Morrell (ibid), aimed at defending male privilege and stabilising powerful sources of identity and power, related in various ways also to racial politics and economics. These backlashes can take the form of limiting the gains being achieved by women or exploiting the counter-argument that men and boys are disadvantaged by gender transformation processes, or even the victims of reverse sexism (Morrell, 2002).

These backlashes have been expressed in the creation of various men's movements and organisations in South Africa that at times appropriate feminist discourses to argue the case of men's exploitation (Morrell, 2002). This re-appropriation of feminist discourses around sexism and gender oppression to support anti-feminist backlashes is evident in South Africa as much as it was in the United Kingdom and United States since the second wave. However, as Morrell (ibid) reasserts, men's movements and organisations that promote gender justice and transformation have also been established in South Africa, illustrating the diversity of responses to gender transformation among men. Similarly, one cannot assume a homogenous reaction to gender transformation by women; anti-feminist backlash and resistance to gender transformation in South Africa also includes women. For example, the 2005 National Gender Survey (Commission on Gender Equality, 2005) found that when asked if a woman raped after drinking was responsible for her own rape, more women (41.01%) agreed than men (33.39%).

As such, anti-feminist backlash in South Africa should be considered in the context of the relationship between gender, "culture" and historical trajectories impacting on race and class. Furthermore, as will be discussed later in this thesis, discourses resembling anti-feminist backlash are not always completely distinct or separate from those promoting gender transformation. Gender relations are complexly experienced and understood, and discourses around transformation are therefore also complex and uneven. However, it is

clear that contextually specific manifestations of anti-feminist backlash are important to consider in the South African context.

2.5   Conclusions

Some central theoretical frameworks and historical processes have been highlighted to introduce the principle feminist ideas arising from, and incorporated in, this research. Feminism as a political and theoretical point of departure is laced throughout this thesis, and in particular the concepts of liberal-inclusionary and progressive feminism have been outlined as a foundational roadmap towards exploring the issue of gender and the media, as well as methodologies related to gender and the media.

Having established a feminist lens through which to further view issues of gender transformation in South Africa, the following Chapter will attempt to answer the following question: why, in the first place, is the *media* important for gender transformation? Undertaking a research study on gender representations in the media follows from an implicit assumption that the media has some role to play in engendering and/or processes of gender transformation. However, such a widespread implicit assumption - that the media is important in shaping or at least reflecting gender relations - has been rigorously challenged and variously theorised.

Therefore, the Chapter that follows will briefly delve into the underlying motivation for this research, casting our eyes to theories surrounding the impact of the media on society. The following Chapter then also begins to unpack and discuss some salient theoretical issues related to the media industry context, or the site of media production. If media representations do indeed have significance for gender relations and processes of gender transformation, then how are these representations produced, by whom and what shapes them? This research aims to find out how media professionals view issues of gender and gender transformation, especially in relation to the kinds of representations they produce through the media. Behind *this* research interest is the assumption that media professionals have a role to play in producing engendered news texts. However, there are many different ways of understanding the context in which media representations are eventually produced, and some of the primary areas of research in this regard are therefore discussed in order to provide a context for feminist critiques of the media. The following Chapter thus provides the

link between a *feminist agenda* for the research and the research *interest in media representations* specifically. It concludes with the outlining of a rudimentary feminist epistemological understanding of the news media as a basis for this research.