

Their Images, Our Selves:

Canadian Print Media's Construction of Feminism Surrounding the Cuts to the Status of Women Canada

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Abstract

Media play an important role in transmitting information for citizens in a country as large as Canada. Much of what Canadians know about the larger country comes to them through the media they view. What then, is the information that media carries forward. How do the media depict political movements and political actors who are not politicians?

This thesis explores the implications of media coverage for feminist organizations in Canada, using as a case study media's response to the cuts to the Status of Women Canada by the Harper government in the fall of 2006. This analysis specifically focuses on the image of feminism created in media and the importance (or lack thereof) communicated by media about such organizations.

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Chapter One:

The Feminist Mystique

In September of 2006 the minority Conservative government – led by Prime Minister Stephen Harper – announced drastic cuts to the Status of Women Canada (SWC), a government body meant to regulate and observe all levels of government to ensure that such institutions promote gender equality and inclusivity. The cuts instituted under the Harper government reduced the number of regional SWC offices from 16 to only four and severely curtailed the federal money available to this body. The mandate of SWC was also changed, most notably with the removal of the word “equality” from the organization’s mission statement.

In Canada, more so than many other Western democracies, the state, feminist organizations and feminist practice have often been intertwined. It was as a result of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW), which released its landmark report in 1970, that SWC was created as a federal body that reported directly to the Deputy Minister and the Canadian Parliament. Unlike many other countries, where women’s movements and their constituent organizations have been at odds with the state, in Canada the government has historically played an active role in the push for gender equality, at least since the post-WWII era, and particularly after the report of the RCSW in 1970. The National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) – the largest feminist umbrella organization in Canada – was entirely funded at its inception by the federal government, despite being constituted by non-governmental women’s groups.

The severity of the recent cuts to SWC provides another indication that the relationship between the state and feminism is evolving, even eroding, according to some

(e.g., McKeen, 2004; Chappell, 2002; Bashevkin, 1998). Certainly the shift in the relationship, as indicated by the recent cuts to SWC, is interesting and warrants a great deal of investigation and further academic study; however, it is not the main focus of this research project. This project is interested instead in how this shift has been portrayed in Canadian print media. Drawing from the rich literature on feminist media theory, this thesis explores the depiction of women and feminism created in media in order to better understand how media have chosen to represent both the image of feminism, as well as the relationship of feminism to the average woman.¹ To establish a basis from which to pursue this exploration, the thesis addresses two fundamental questions: first, “what is the general image of Canadian feminism created by media?” And, more specifically to my case study, “how have the changes in the relationship between the Canadian state and organized feminism been articulated in media?” This question is answered by focusing on the way that the cuts to SWC were communicated by the media, since these changes to funding are indicative of a deeper shift in the relationship between feminism and the state in Canada.

I hypothesize, based on the existing literature in the field, that coverage of feminism continues to present and represent the stereotypical images that have long been associated with feminism, images which are typically negative. These images will be elaborated on in greater detail in the second chapter. I also hypothesize that media coverage continues to take a post-feminist approach in articulating an understanding of the cuts to SWC. Finally, I hypothesize that feminist organizations have a difficult time

¹ As will be discussed later in this chapter and in chapter two, media have been influential in creating an understanding of feminism that is post-feminist. This understanding situates feminists in oppositional positions to that of women who are not expressly involved in feminist action. These women are situated as “the average woman” and while they may ascribe to and support many of the same things as women who are categorized as feminist do, they are given different treatment in media (Garrison, 2004).

gaining coverage because of the relationships between media and social movements. While I speculate that the government position is well represented in coverage regarding the cuts, I present evidence that feminist organizations do not receive the same amount of coverage (and may also be presented through the negative stereotypes historically associated with feminism).

While the general focus of the project is on the image of feminism in media, the research has been centered on the cuts to SWC specifically because of the serious and significant consequences of this decision for feminist practice in Canada. Given the nature of the changes that have been made, it is important to ask how media have interpreted these cuts and how media have situated the meaning and importance of feminism for Canadian women, both on their own and in relation to the changing face of the Canadian government. What is the story that media tell?

Since the cuts to SWC were so drastic and far-reaching, completely changing the face of SWC, they seem to suggest that the current administration believes state-supported, gender-based equality seeking is no longer necessary. Feminist organizations disagree. Within this opposition of viewpoints, it is important to deconstruct the messages media provide to the public and to understand with which 'camp', if any, media appear to align.

Media comprise an important social and political institution. Many scholars who examine media influence, framing and agenda setting (e.g., Carter, 2002; Entman, 1993; Hubbard, 1975; Kosicki, 1993; Rogers et al., 1997) have dedicated an incredible amount of consideration to the question of what role(s) media play in shaping society. While this scholarship has provided no definitive answer, there is certainly agreement that media are

much more than a mirror reflection of society. Media – and news media in particular – comprise the primary source of information about politics for most people (e.g., Chaffee and Kanihan, 1997; McCombs and Shaw, 1972). Thus, it is important to ask how information is created, depicted and communicated. We must question why particular stories are privileged as newsworthy instead of the other possible options, and what the motivations are – economic, political or social – for media to cover particular events and overlook others. What media choose to focus on certainly shapes the mind of the public, as well as the public's perception of political issues, events and actors considered paramount (e.g., Iyengar, 1991).

Media's coverage of women, the women's movement and feminism generally has become increasingly 'post-feminist' (Farrell, 1995: 642). Post-feminism has come to be understood, by some, as "the simultaneous incorporation, revision, and depoliticization of many of the central goals of second-wave feminism" (Vavrus, 2002: 22). In this way, we see media communicating the idea that feminism has run its course; we now live in an era where feminism is unnecessary, we are in fact post-feminist.

The second variant of post-feminism takes a different perspective, one more aptly described as anti-feminist. The anti-feminist variety of post-feminism maintains that the goals of feminism were wrong in the first place, that the movement was never meant to succeed. This version of post-feminism also suggests that the movement never enjoyed wide support and that coverage in media reflects that. There are clearly distinctions between post-feminist and anti-feminist perspectives, but in many ways the two can be situated on the same spectrum. They both suggest that feminism is not inherently valuable, although they differ as to their reasons why. Post-feminists see that the goals of

feminism have been achieved; anti-feminists that the goals were misaligned. Both argue that feminism is unnecessary and as such no longer requires consideration (or in the case of the current government's perspective, funding).

Post-feminist theorists make four main claims: 1) support for the women's movement has decreased, 2) anti-feminist movements have strong support among young women, women of color and housewives, 3) feminism has lost support because it is irrelevant, and 4) women have adopted a "no, but..." version of feminism, wherein these women support the causes of feminism, but reject the label "feminist"² (Hall and Rodriguez, 2003).

These two variants on post-feminism contribute to the idea that women and society generally no longer need feminism. While this understanding of feminism is contested widely by those who identify as feminist and others, the post-feminist perspective seems to hold sway in media (specifically the conception of society as post-feminist, that we no longer need feminism, as equality has been achieved), most clearly with American magazines like *Time* asking on their covers: "Is feminism dead?" (June 29, 1998).

The primary method of media analysis I use is content analysis – which will be described in greater detail in Chapter Three – and my content analysis asks specifically whether and to what extent print coverage provided a post-feminist interpretation of Harper's cuts to SWC. Further, it is possible that a post-feminist understanding can be extended to analyze government actions like cutbacks, which seek to reduce the resources available to feminist organizations and undermine the notion that feminism is a vibrant

² Post-feminisms, and their meanings for the women's movement, will be examined in greater detail in Chapter Two.

and important cause for contemporary Canadian women. An analysis of the ways these specific cutbacks were reported in Canadian print media permit conclusions to be drawn about the way that media approach feminism in general – that is, beyond the cuts to SWC and, presumably, across a wide variety of issues central to the Canadian women's movement.

Defining Feminism, Politics and Power

Feminism is a political project interested in gender equality and increasing women's access to power. Studying the way that media content depicts women's access to power, specifically political power, through coverage of feminist practice and involvement with the women's movement can offer an increased awareness about the message being transmitted regarding the position of women in society. In seeking to understand the image of feminism created in media, I am asking questions about how feminism is being reflected. Is feminism depicted in media in a way that shows it can be a tool to help gain political power? While feminists would see the movement in such a way, this thesis seeks to understand if media reflect that opinion or rather the opinion of those who see feminism as irrelevant or obsolete.

To examine power in this way, the research must articulate an understanding of feminism that is relevant for both academic discourse and media content analysis. Although feminism as a political theory contains multiple discourses, all of which occur under the banner of feminism, it is unlikely that the average consumer of media, or even most journalists, would have an understanding of the varied streams that exist within these theories. For the purposes of this thesis, feminism is defined generally as the

political project of working toward the removal of gendered inequality, with the understanding that gender is largely a culturally constructed category (Vavrus, 2002: 13). This definition is deliberately broad, so as to encompass the range of feminist vision found in Canada. Since examining the recent cuts to SWC will also peripherally involve an examination of NAC, an umbrella organization under which many forms of feminism exist, it is important to identify feminism in such a way that the definition demonstrates an understanding of ideological boundaries typically associated with feminism, but that it does not preclude various forms of feminism by becoming too narrow.

Further, mediated understandings of feminism are unlikely to delve into the varied forms of feminist practice that exist. When examining media's version of feminism, it is important that research definitions articulate an understanding of feminism that would be applicable to media's depiction of such movements and ideology. The definition put forward allows for an articulation of feminist goals without much engagement with the various forms feminism can take.

While media are influenced by the stories they report and in many ways represent a reflection of the world, it is equally important to recognize that media not only mirror, but also create. What media choose to focus on, the people or events they choose to speak to or about and the kinds of stories they deem newsworthy all contribute to an understanding of the world that is decidedly constructed. Media posit a world that has been filtered, edited, tweaked and often glamorized. So while media are certainly influenced by the actors that they report, it is equally appropriate to recognize the role that media play in the creation of those actors and our understanding of them. Therefore, defining feminism for the scope of this research must account for both academic and mass

mediated understandings of the term, as well as provide a definition that would be suitable for the movements themselves.

When asking questions about the influence of media in political spheres, it is important to understand how “politics” is conceived, especially when considering the relationship between feminism and the state. From the perspective of this thesis, politics is conceived of as relations of power in society,³ instead of simply the formal political institutions of power such as legislatures and bureaucracies. Political power is understood as greater than the specific political institutions of the federal and provincial governments. Alternatively, analyses examine politics using a feminist perspective, operating from the position that “the personal is political” – the rallying slogan of second-wave feminism. For an effective discussion of the ramifications of political institutions and political practice on citizens we must look beyond the structure of government to include investigation of aspects of society traditionally defined as private and broaden our conception of politics to include the domain of what was once considered personal. This is important because a great deal of feminism in Canada has occurred in a middle ground which is neither entirely separated from state institutions, nor fully integrated (Burt, 1990).

Political Women: Politicians and Activists

³ Feminist theories are informed by the belief that the structure of most societies is patriarchal, meaning that those who hold and control power are disproportionately male, suggesting that a society’s power relations are also patriarchal (e.g., de Beauvoir 1952). While women may be able to make occasional inroads into these power structures, the overall system is driven by masculine control. This also extends to the idea that particular traits are gendered, and consequently “masculine” traits are often more valued and sought after. This thesis approaches the study of politics not solely as the study of political institutions, but also as the study of power; who is more likely to hold power in those institutions, the gendered traits of these actors, as well as the actors who have the greatest influence outside of state institutions and the gendered aspects of these relations of power.

In Canada, there is a fair amount of scholarship analyzing media coverage of female politicians both in contrast to one another and to their male counterparts (e.g., Kahn and Gordon, 1997; Iyengar et al., 1997; van Zoonen, 1998, 2005; Gidengil and Everitt, 2000; Jalazai, 2006; Sampert and Trimble, 2004) as well as discussions of the stereotypes and media categories that have been created into which women tend to be classified (e.g., Dow, 1996; Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993; Varvus, 2002).

However, there is much less work on the coverage of women as political actors who are not elected officials, politicians or entrenched within government structures through their involvement in the bureaucratic structures of government. The aim of this thesis is to expand on the body of work that deals with women as politically mediated subjects who are political actors without being politicians; women who seek to influence the state and society through avenues other than, or in addition to, those presented through traditional involvement in formal politics; women who are looking to establish political power in realms beyond those opportunities afforded them as elected officials or political party supporters.

This distinction is significant because it is one that recognizes the limited access women have had in the past (and many would argue currently) to spheres and roles traditionally defined as political, such as officially elected political positions and those individuals who are involved in political parties. This conception allows for a more inclusive vision of political actors, one where women can be seen as having greater access and influence. A broad conception of the political allows for the study of feminist practice to be seen as a political project and to then ask how media have engaged with that political project. There is a great deal of literature on media's treatment of female

politicians, but do the claims these studies make about women as politicians extend to the ways women as feminists or participants in the women's movement are covered?

The distinction between these two types of political action (politicians and activists) may not always be clear, especially in Canada, as women may situate themselves and be situated in both categories (e.g., Phillips, 1991). They may see themselves concurrently as feminist activists linked to a group or movement and as individuals involved in the political process through appointed or elected office. Further, because the Canadian state and organized feminism have been so integrated (e.g., Burt, 1990: 334), the women involved with feminist action may not make a distinction between these identities/roles. The focus of this work is the media's depiction of women who are active in feminist organizations; women who seek to create progressive change through their involvement in these organizations, women who identify with a feminist politics of activism through lobby, communication and engagement with the state. Although media like to focus on individuals, the goal of the analysis is to examine the ways women as groups of collective actors involved in movements are covered. It is important to look at the treatment that individuals are given within this context; however, the goal of the thesis is to provide a better understanding of the coverage given to the group and not necessarily the coverage given to individual women who media present as the "face" of Canadian feminism.

Feminist Methodology and Feminist Media Theory

This thesis uses feminist media theory to inform a critique of media. This approach is particularly important for my case study - the media's coverage of the government

cutbacks to SWC - because the cutbacks and their coverage in media directly affect women and are certainly gendered issues. Although feminist media theory analyses all types of media, regardless of whether coverage would immediately be seen as gendered in nature, this theoretical framework is of obvious benefit for examining the gendered implications of news stories that deal with issues or events that are directed at women and have repercussions that are not gender neutral. Additionally, since feminist media theory devotes a great deal of attention to the stereotypical depictions presented in media of both men and women, as well as the underlying ideological frameworks at play in the mediation process, it is the ideal methodological framework to apply to questions seeking to understand the image of feminism portrayed in media.

Feminist media theory falls within the broader category of feminist methodology. Identifying feminism as a single theoretical or methodological framework is simply not possible. As a theoretical approach, especially one so closely linked to a political project and a movement, feminism has undergone a great deal of evolution. In recent years, with the advent of third-wave feminism,⁴ both the movement and the theory have become increasingly diverse. Almost anything that can be said about feminism can also be challenged from within the discourse, making it difficult to articulate a position from which to speak about feminism or feminist practice. The definition that has already been offered for this project will be used throughout the research. Feminism has been defined

⁴ There have been three waves of feminism, all linked, but each with its own political goals and ethos. First-wave feminism emerged in the early 20th century and was specifically concerned with extending suffrage to women and, in Canada, granting women legal persons status under the law. Second-wave feminism was born out of the civil rights movements of the 1960s and became a powerful force in the 1970s, with a focus on among many things: equality, the freedom to choose and sexual liberation. Third-wave feminism is not so readily definable, but includes post-modern feminism, black feminism, lesbian feminism and eco-feminism. Third-wave feminisms tend to be critical of the essentialized nature of second-wave feminism, as well as the notion that there can be an equitable, overarching feminist agenda for all women irrespective of race, sexual orientation and class. See Newman and White (2006) for further discussion.

as the political project of working toward the removal of gendered inequality, with the understanding that gender is largely a culturally constructed category (Varvus, 2002: 13). Feminism is also an analytical lens through which gendered inequality and the gendered nature of political institutions and society can be highlighted and explored. Although these definitions are not immune from challenge, especially from some of the most recent additions to the feminist lexicon, these working definitions do serve a fundamental purpose.

Since the goal of this thesis is to examine the treatment of feminism in Canadian media, it is important that definitions of the term are ones that can be applied to news media's understanding of feminist practice and theory, as well as to an academic discussion of feminist practice and theory. Further, the goal of this thesis is not primarily to build on feminist theory or reconcile the differences which occur within its streams, but rather to ask how feminism has been interpreted in media and how media have interpreted the cuts to SWC and the associated meanings for the future of the women's movement and feminism in Canada.

Feminist methodology is based around four major tenets. First, feminist research must continually address and reflect on the significance of gender, particularly gender asymmetry in social relations. Second, feminist research must challenge the objectivity of accepted norms and recognize, instead, their subjective nature, thereby raising consciousness and debunking accepted "truths". Third, feminist research must recognize the inseparability of the subjects and objects of research and, moreover, that personal experience is not unscientific. Fourth, feminist research must acknowledge the implications of the previous exploitation of women as objects of knowledge, and attempt

to transform patriarchal social institutions through research and writing. (Fonow and Cook, 2005: 2213)

Clearly, feminist methodology challenges many of the fundamental assumptions of empirically-based or positivist research methodologies, which some feminists assert tend to silence women's stories and perspectives. This is not to suggest that feminist methodology has not employed empirical research techniques, but rather that feminist methodology uses empirical research in such a way as to inform the reader about the bias inherent in the methodology, typically by situating itself as a political project, instead of presenting empirical data as entirely objective. Feminist methodology is not situated outside other methodologies, but instead offers an approach from a "particular political positioning of theory, epistemology and ethics" that allows feminist researchers to make claims about the relationships between knowledge and power, as well as to challenge existing notions of truth (Ramazanoğlu, 2002: 16).

Feminists challenge the idea that research can be conducted in a way that is neutral or completely objective, and instead emphasize the fact that most research occurs in space that privileges the perspectives of those who already hold power, to varying degrees (e.g., Harding and Norberg, 2005: 2011). Further,

these methodological and epistemological issues include concerns about how to understand the intersectionality of race, class, gender, and other structural features of societies; about inappropriate essentializing of women and men; about phenomena that are both socially constructed and fully "real"; and about the apparent impossibility of accurate interpretation, translation and representation among radically different cultures, especially in the glare of today's dangerous media politics (Ibid.).

Clearly, we can extend this methodology from looking at research practice to ask similar questions about the kinds of biases and perspectives that inform the creation of news. If

we view media not only as a means of sharing information, but also as comprising an institution with a great deal of power to shape public awareness and public access to information, this becomes an increasingly important path of critique and examination.

Beyond recognizing that value-free research is not possible, feminist methodology asserts that it is not desirable: “socially engaged research – that is, research that holds itself ethically and politically accountable for its social consequences – can in many instances produce knowledge” (Ibid.: 2010). Research that recognizes it does not exist outside of its own study, that it is not an objective observer but rather an actor in that study, can provide valuable results. Moreover, this kind of research asks questions meant to bring about practical and applicable answers. If women’s organizations are interested in changing the way they are presented in media, they must first clearly understand the image that is being created.

Feminist media theory typically concentrates on two major themes when deconstructing media: first, on the stereotypes and gendered socialization that occur in/through media and, second, on the ideological constructions of media – for example media’s roles in creating hegemonic representations of women and the meaning that those representations attempt to transmit (e.g., van Zoonen, 1994: 23-5). Critiques that look at socialization or stereotypes may deconstruct the image of women presented in advertising and ask how this presentation affects the average woman, who may not see herself reflected in such a production. These types of questions were among the first to be classified as feminist media theory.

Ideological critiques, another main focus of feminist media theory, are based in the analysis of signs,⁵ either verbal or visual, which are more subtle, but contribute to an understanding of media content. Ideological critiques of media often stem from Marxist or socialist feminism, and ask questions about the kinds of “ideological constructs of femininity that are produced” in media (van Zoonen, 1994: 24).

Although there are feminist media critiques that do not fit easily into these categories, elements of these approaches are found in most feminist media research. In the case of this particular research project, the primary research question is what is the image of feminists and feminism presented in Canadian news media? This question is asking about both stereotypes and ideological construction. How is the femininity of a feminist defined? Is it different from women who are not categorized or presented as feminists? How does this contribute to an overall impression of feminism?

In many cases, feminist media theory takes existing, more general media theories – such as those on framing or agenda-setting – and uses those theories to focus specifically on what media communicate about gender and socially-constructed gendered norms (van Zoonen, 1994). Feminist media theory challenges not only gendered foundations of media, but many of the biases inherent in journalism and news media that help construct a mediated world,

in a media world that portrays women constantly but ignores the overall context of patriarchy, male domination, systems of racialized inequality, and, above all, capitalism, we are provided a

⁵ Rakow and Kranich (1991) use the idea of a sign in their article “Women as Signs in Television News” in which they suggest that a sign acts as an overarching representation of an idea, a group or a movement. The sign represents a homogenized version of reality which glazes over differences and issues. By communicating, for example, feminism as a sign, media will connect particular traits to such a sign which are then projected to viewers. The sign is not reality but rather a construction, a simplification. Rakow and Kranich suggested that the sign of “woman” oppresses women by communicating only a narrow array of appropriate actions or choices.

very skewed and limited sense of what “female agency” or “free agency” are (Farrell, 1995: 643).

Feminist media theory expands the context of media to at least address issues of power inequity, if not a more balanced media world. From a feminist perspective, these issues of power inequity stem largely, although not exclusively, from gender. In fact, it was through feminist media studies that gender first came into focus in media studies, initially by focusing on the relationship between gender and audiences (Bertrand and Hughes, 2005: 103).

Van Zoonen, a leading feminist media theorist, argues that

Feminists have claimed that objectivity, value-freeness and neutrality are offspring of the hegemony of masculine modes of thinking that cherish dichotomies such as objectivity vs subjectivity, reason vs emotion, expert vs lay knowledge, abstract vs concrete, etc. It is argued that traditional science not only ignores women’s themes and experiences, it also denies the validity of women’s ways of knowing (van Zoonen, 1994: 14).

Like feminist theory in general, all feminist media theory challenges ideas of neutrality and objectivity in media creation. The perspective of feminist media theory is that contemporary media present images of women, of feminism, and gendered issues that do not represent women’s lived experiences. Media create archetypes of female characters into which women are then categorically placed – as victims, as wives, as mothers and so on. Feminist media theory challenges these categories as too limiting, confining and essentializing. The objectives of the researchers, academics and activists who align under this banner are to change the boundaries of such categories, to create new categories or even to move past categorization all together. The goal is to create media that are more reflective of the world and more capable of acting in a way that reduces power inequities, instead of transmitting and reproducing such inequities.

Finally, feminist methodology and feminist media theory are situated simultaneously in two worlds, the world of the academic researcher and the world of the activist. Just as feminism is a political project, so too is research undertaken from a feminist perspective. As Gallagher so aptly stated, it is the “reciprocity between action and research that defines feminist media studies and that contributes to its intellectual and political force” (2001: 14). This standpoint is one of the main reasons feminists call into question objectivity, asserting that all research contains an agenda and bias. Feminists are simply more clearly upfront with their objectives. Feminists seek to enable political action meant to bring about positive change for women in terms of their access to power, their political voices and their diverse representations. While feminist theorists may disagree on what exactly the political project should be, feminist methodology seems to represent agreement that research not only should be, but actively and irreversibly is, engaged in political action.

Status of Women in Canada: An Imperative Review

For examining coverage of feminism, the case study used in this thesis is Canadian print media coverage of the cutbacks to the Status of Women Canada under the Conservative government of Stephen Harper in September 2006. This particular event was selected for a couple of reasons. First, in terms of organized feminism in Canada, SWC represented, for many, the bridge between organized feminism and the state. Further, while SWC is a government agency, not a grassroots group, it is nearly impossible to avoid SWC when talking about organized feminism in Canada. Another reason why this case study was chosen is that the recent cuts to SWC reflect a more general change in the relationship

between organized feminism and the Canadian state over the past few decades whereby government has increasingly retreated from an intimate integration with organized feminism. Asking how media have contextualized and framed this change is important, particularly given the extent to which citizens rely on news media for information about current events and the political sphere.

The thesis examines all articles and editorial pieces about the cuts to SWC that were presented in *The Globe and Mail* and *The National Post* and *The Toronto Star*. These papers were chosen because of their national scope and wide circulation. *The Globe and Mail*, as the paper of record in Canada, offers a centrist perspective, and *The National Post*, as a counter balance, offers a more conservative perspective, one that has been viewed as right of centre.⁶ *The Toronto Star*, although not technically a national paper,⁷ does have the widest circulation in Canada, and is commonly viewed as ideologically centre-left, making it an important paper to examine because of the sheer number of readers (Canadian Newspaper Association, 2006) and its particular political perspective. My analyses examine whether coverage was positive, neutral or negative, using traditional content analysis measurements like story length, placement, as well as the depth of coverage each category receives.⁸

Stories were selected according to a specific time frame: one week before the cuts were announced, September 21, 2006, to March 31, 2007, six months later. This time frame is broad enough to permit conclusions about the coverage of the event as it evolved

⁶ While there may certainly be debate about the relative ideological positioning of the three newspapers included in my study – as well as other papers in the country – this way of thinking about the relative positioning of papers on a simple left-right spectrum is common in the Canadian setting (e.g., Aldridge, 2001; Goodyear-Grant et al., 2004; Jiwani, 2005).

⁷ Despite having the highest circulation and readership in Canada, the *Toronto Star* is not a national newspaper, because unlike the *Globe and Mail* or the *National Post*, it does not have a great deal of readership outside of Central Canada.

⁸ A more detailed analysis of methodological issues is provided in Chapter 3.

over the six-month period. Such conclusions include an examination of the depiction of the cuts, the groups affected and the public response as manifested in media through letters to the editor.

The research begins by asking questions regarding the importance of the SWC and NAC as identified by media, the importance and nature of the cuts, as well as the possible implications of the cuts identified/discussed by media. Additionally, empirical analyses focus on the editorial position advocated in media in response to these cuts, media coverage given to feminist organizations who opposed the cuts and the space feminist organizations used in media to advocate their own positions and voices. The research establishes the depiction of feminism created in media, as well as the response that feminist organizations are able to articulate through those same media.

The History of the “Women’s State”

While the thesis focuses on the cuts to SWC as a particular event that permits investigation about how feminism is depicted in news media and the types of messages citizens receive about the work of gender-driven equality-seeking measures within Canadian government, at the same time, my goal is to examine – as a secondary focus, of sorts – how coverage of the cuts is related to the evolution of the relationship between organized feminism and the Canadian state over the past four decades. Indeed, this relationship has changed drastically since the 1990s, and many would claim for the worse. The second wave of feminism began in Canada in the 1960s, just as in the United States, and this second wave of women’s organizing was known popularly as the ‘women’s liberation movement’. Scholars have suggested that the women’s movement in

Canada was strongly influenced by its American counterpart (e.g., Bégin, 1992: 28), in large part because of the pervasive influence of American media, but also because proximity tends to encourage the contagion of ideas. In fact, Vickers and her colleagues suggest an additional influence from our southern neighbours, for the activism of American women who came to Canada with draft-dodging men was undoubtedly influential in stimulating the growth and increasing radicalism of second-wave feminism in Canada (1993). In the United States the relationship between government and organized feminism had not always been smooth – in fact at times, it became decidedly conflictual (Ibid: 27). The Canadian government was eager to avoid tensions with organized feminism. Seeing that the women’s movement was gaining momentum and wider support throughout the country, the Canadian government felt compelled to act on the criticisms leveled against government policies by feminists. This is not to suggest that the women’s movement in Canada and the state have always been in agreement. Indeed, relations between the two groups have at times been decidedly adversarial. However, Canadian feminist movements have had a great deal more overlap with the state than feminist movements in the United States, making the distinction between the two national movements significant, in that in Canada, there has traditionally been the existence of a “women’s state” which is not reflected in the US.

For women activists of the era, the questions all began by defining what exactly the status of women in Canada was and, further, bringing these issues to the agenda. The Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW) – which was established in 1967 by the Pearson government and which tabled its final report in 1970 – was the government’s initial reaction to the surge of feminist mobilization in Canada in the 1960s. There were

three main players who participated in defining the status of women: claims-making groups, news media and the federal government (Bégin, 1992: 27). Although the government was initially reluctant to establish the RCSW, its involvement in the process helped legitimize the reality that women in Canada did not enjoy the same status as their male counterparts (Ibid).

Perhaps the most important consequence of the RCSW was that the federal government was forced to publicly declare that the subordinate position of women in Canada was a social problem that required government and societal action, a move that facilitated feminist activists and women's organizations aiming to gain increased influence over policy agendas. As Monique Bégin has rightly argued, "the report initiated far-reaching changes and has played a key role in making the situation and status of women part of the political agenda of the country" (Ibid: 21). The report represented a watershed moment in Canadian feminism, and defined the feminist agenda in Canada for decades following.

The Commission's work started with research into the social reality for women at that time, specifically to inquire and report on the status of women and to propose actions that would enhance sex equality in society, the economy, and politics. The Commission's 1970 final report contained 167 recommendations. The Commission presented an exhaustive look at women in all aspects of Canadian society, from their roles within the family to their access to political power, and made recommendations in each of the categories of examination. In the final summary of its recommendations, the Commission provided a suggestion that anchored all others. The Commission recommended the establishment of a Federal Status of Women Council that would report

directly to Parliament. It was created as an agency of the Privy Council, based on recommendations made by the Commission (Newman and White, 2006: 131). This body would undertake research, propose legislation, ensure that government policies were as gender neutral as possible and “systematically consult with women’s bureau or similar provincial organizations, and with voluntary associations particularly concerned with the problems of women” (RCSW, 1970: 392). Coupled with other bodies and agencies that would be established in coming years either within government or at arm’s length from it, this was one of the first in the development of the “women’s state” (Findlay, 1987; see also Vickers et al., 1993; Burt 1990), a term that refers to the institutionalization of a women-centred policy perspective *within* the machinery of government.

Fearing that the Commission and its recommendations would be overlooked, women began to pressure the federal government to make changes and institute the report’s recommendations, and the government was forced to act. One of the most important outcomes for organized feminism in Canada and RCSW was that women came to believe the government would respond to their concerns if faced with enough pressure (Findlay as cited in Brodie, 1996: 320).

Under mounting pressure, Trudeau appointed a Minister responsible for the Status of Women in 1971 (Ibid: 321). The Status of Women Canada (SWC) was created as a council within the larger structure of the Privy Council Office (PCO). SWC was an institution of the government, one meant to function at arm’s length, which has led to a closer relationship between the state and women’s groups in Canada than would be found in other countries, a relationship that has allowed the government greater autonomy in selecting who will be appointed to this body than would be likely in other feminist

organizations (Newman and White, 2006). While SWC appeared to satisfy the recommendations of the Commission, many feminist activists were skeptical of the council's capacity for autonomy under such a structure, and continued to pressure the government for a more autonomous body that could make recommendations directly to parliament without fear of being silenced or edited. Amid such concerns, the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW) was established in 1973. This council was

charged with the task of undertaking research, developing programs and legislative proposals, and consulting with existing organizations in the area of women's rights. However, contrary to the commission's recommendation, the CACSW was made responsible to a single cabinet minister, namely the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, rather than to Parliament as a whole (Bashevkin, 1985: 27).

Despite reporting to the Minister responsible for the Status of Women instead of to Parliament, the CACSW still represented much of what women's groups had wanted: the body had greater autonomy, as it was an "arms-length, non-partisan" (Rankin and Vickers, 2001: 7) council, and it was meant to be pan-Canadian (Ibid). However, many aspects of the council were problematic for women's groups. The council had no guarantee of existence, for it was established at the pleasure of the government and could be dismantled just as easily (Ibid: 7). The council was not headed by prominent figures in the women's movement. Instead, the head of the council was typically a patronage appointment (Ibid: 8), meaning it was often headed by an upper-class, older, white male – not the face of feminism in Canada in the 1970s or today.

Seeing the shortcomings inherent in both the structure of the SWC and the structure of the CACSW, feminist organizations responded by creating the National

Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) in 1973. NAC is a federation whose members are not people, strictly speaking, but women's organizations. As such, NAC is an umbrella organization that represents organized feminism across the country, particularly in English-speaking Canada. By 1984, only 10 years after its founding, NAC had 458 member groups, 70 of which were pan-Canadian (Rankin and Vickers, 2001: 43). Although NAC has greater independence from the federal government than the CACSW (Dobrowlosky, 2000: 30), it receives the bulk of its funding from the federal government and, therefore, has been seen as somewhat 'institutional' because, first, it is beholden to government for its continued existence and, second, it maintains a close relationship with state officials, particularly SWC (Ibid: 30). However, NAC is clearly a separate organization, free to articulate its own understanding of policy decisions made by government. It represents countless women's organizations in a way that a government council or committee could not. NAC's close relationship with the government has been important, even beneficial, because NAC's umbrella structure provides a much needed link between the state and the myriad women's groups that exist across the country.

Although SWC and CACSW have a great deal of overlap as well as considerable autonomy, the interesting aspect of both bodies is not so much what their individual roles were, but rather that together they constituted a well-developed 'women's state'. This 'women's state' was entrenched in the Canadian government to such a degree that it was likely unrivaled in the world, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s. While the reporting relationships for each body were slightly different, their focuses were very similar. Both SWC and CACSW were vested with acting on behalf of Canadian women in terms of

policy development and for representing “Canada’s international position on gender issues” (Vickers and Rankin, 1993: 8).

Initially, the government maintained good relations externally with NAC and was internally supportive of SWC and CACSW. However relationships between the state and feminist organizations began to deteriorate in the 1980s. Although the government usually made an appearance at the annual NAC lobby, by the end of the decade, the government refused to attend the meeting, sending a clear message that the concerns of women were quickly falling off the radar (Brodie, 1996: 331). Bashevkin (1998) has traced this backlash against feminist organizing in Canada in the late 1980s and early 1990s by looking at the cuts made to women’s programs under more fiscally conservative administrations. For NAC, these cuts were manageable. While NAC had once been funded almost entirely by government, by the early 1990s, government money comprised only one third of NAC’s annual budget (Ibid.: 124).

While external women’s groups were often able to weather the deep government cuts of the early 1990s and beyond, for internal ‘women’s state’ agencies, the story was naturally quite different. In 1995, the Chrétien Liberal government dismantled the CACSW and closed the Women’s Program (another branch of the government dedicated to examining issues that affect women) in the name of deficit elimination and debt reduction. Both of the mandates of these organizations were transferred to the SWC, which then continued the lobbying and policy work for the next ten years.

The shift in the funding to these organizations occurred under a neo-liberal ideology that privileged individuals over groups and as such saw fit to reduce resources to government agencies like CACSW and SWC because the government was giving so

much funding to non-governmental groups (Bush, 2001: 61). Naturally, shifts in funding arrangements, as well as the ideologies that had supported liberal funding arrangements in the past, had serious implications for both the women's movement and the women's state. The government's pressure for such organizations to become self-sufficient was an incredibly difficult demand to fulfill (Ibid.: 65). Although many of the responsibilities of CACSW were transferred to SWC, there was still a resource crunch experienced within SWC that hindered much of its work, thereby making SWC unable to fully financially support any group asking for funding. This inability to fund projects in their entirety forced groups dependant on external funding to seek out alternative sources to cover their project budgets (Ibid: 73).

The trend of reducing or even completely discontinuing support for the 'women's state' continues under the current Conservative minority government. As discussed at various points, in September 2006, the Harper administration announced five million in cuts to SWC, forcing the closure of 12 of the 16 regional offices.⁹ In addition, the word "equality" was removed from the mandate of the SWC. Following a large outcry from women and groups across Canada, Bev Oda – Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women in the Harper government – responded by saying that women are guaranteed equality under the Charter and do not need agencies devoted to the advancement of sex/gender equality anymore. In addition to the deep cuts to SWC and the removal of "equality" from its mandate, the funding mandate of the agency was also changed in the fall of 2006. SWC would no longer provide money to organizations that undertook

⁹ The new regional structure divides the areas of service into four large regions in Canada. The remaining offices of SWC will be in Ottawa, Edmonton, Montreal and Moncton. Ottawa will serve Ontario, Montreal will serve Quebec, Edmonton will serve the West and Moncton the Maritimes. (Presentation from Status of Women Canada, November 28, 2006)

research or lobbying, but would only fund groups and projects that directly served women, implying that research and lobbying had no effect on the day-to-day lives of women in Canada.

Clearly, in the early 1970s the government showed an interest in establishing agencies and institutions which would serve to improve the status of women in Canada. The notion of a 'women's state' emerged in Canada at this time because the government was willing to channel resources toward feminist agencies embedded in government structures. However, it has become increasingly clear, beginning in the early 1990s and continuing into the present, that governments have started the project of dismantling the women's state, with repeated cuts to organizations and agencies that serve women's interests. This most recent round of cuts is not new, but is perhaps the most far reaching. These cuts drastically change the face of SWC, not only by greatly reducing the points of service delivery, but by steering the agency's mandate away from an equality-seeking agenda.

This shift alone is interesting, but examining the way media have chosen to communicate this shift to the women whom the cuts affect, as well as to the broader public, is the focus of this thesis. How do media communicate feminism in Canada, especially in light of the change in relationship between the government – a once reliable supporter – and contemporary feminist movements?

Chapter Outlines

The thesis proceeds in the following manner. Chapter two begins with a literature review of media theory, specifically feminist media theory, by examining much of the existing

work on gender, politics and media. The literature review also focuses on situating the concepts of framing and agenda-setting for the selected case study, the cuts to SWC. In contextualizing the content found in media, framing is the more prominent lens of the two through which news content is analyzed, but both are important. Finally, feminist media theory, as the basis of the methodological framework for the research, is presented. The intention of this review is to establish a theoretical framework for the content analysis, specifically the elements relating to feminist media theory and media studies as applied to gender. Each of these media theories (framing and agenda-setting) carries within it a substantial body of research and all have areas of internal debate. The research conducted here is not meant to resolve these debates. Rather the theories of framing and agenda-setting are used as theoretical tools through which an increased understanding of the representation of feminism and women in media can be reached.

Chapter three presents my data and methods, and includes an in-depth discussion of my content analysis from sampling of news articles to coding decisions to interpretation of results. Since the model of methodology is feminist, a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches is used, as is common to contemporary feminist scholarship (e.g., Krook and Squires 2006).

Chapter four presents the results of my content analysis. This chapter presents both quantitative and qualitative results by focusing on both the numerical presentations surrounding representations of feminism, as well as the latent content. Although coding for latent coverage can increase the margin of error (Bryman, 2004: 197), this type of examination is important when looking for themes and other indicators that may be more subtle in content, but nonetheless important. The goal of combining the two forms of

analysis – quantitative and qualitative – is to provide a clearer and more comprehensive analysis of how feminism is depicted in media.

Chapter five provides my concluding remarks. First, I analyze my results, including how they fit with existing literature on media, politics and gender and what sorts of future research agendas are needed to provide an even better understanding of the dynamic relationship between feminism, media, the public and government. Second, I discuss what my results imply for how citizens perceive feminism and the women's movement – keeping in mind that most of our information about feminism and women's activism are obtained from media – as well as how media depictions of feminism may affect groups and feminist activists.

Chapter Two:

The Second(ary) Texts: Contemporary Concerns for Women in Media

Feminist theory is a model of relating thought to life. As such not only does it provide a critical standpoint to deconstruct established forms of knowledge, drawing feminism closer to critical theory; it also establishes a new order of values within the thinking process itself, giving to the lived experience priority.

-Margaret Gallagher (2003: 23)

The feminist understanding of knowledge, reality and truth has serious implications for the study of media. Feminists have, over the past 30 years, been asking questions about identity and authority (Gallagher, 2003: 22), asking who can speak for whom and what it means to be presented without being represented, extending these questions to both political institutions and institutions responsible for the creation of news. This means that women who identify as feminists have long questioned what is considered news and who has the power to decide? Questions like these are meant to challenge the images, stories, realities and truths news media purport to present. The goal of these inquiries is to illustrate that while media may repeat facts, they do so with an agenda and with bias. While media bias may be largely unintentional in most contexts – simply reflecting the shared culture of journalistic training, or the types of people who tend to pursue journalistic careers or the occupational routines that structure newswork– it is undeniable that each news item tells a particular story in a particular way.

Rakow and Kranich (1991) have suggested that news is a masculine narrative. News media are “sites at which women, the women’s movement, feminism and women’s issues are ignored or displayed in particular ways” (9). Not only does news present women in overwhelmingly stereotypical positions, such as wives, mothers or victims of crime (Ibid.: 14), but media also tend to reinterpret women not as individualized subjects

but as interchangeable signs. These signs are constructed out of the ritualized roles that masculine narratives employ to create such imagery, reflecting stereotypes about what it means to be a woman or feminine. Women tend not to be treated as sources or experts because they are not the purveyors of knowledge, nor are they typically the focus of media. When women are allowed to speak genuinely as women, they are characteristically presented as ‘feminists’ – a convenient label for agentic women, presumably. However, feminists are not commonly asked to comment, even on issues for which a feminist perspective would be anticipated (Ibid.: 18).

Rakow and Kranich’s arguments are particularly important when examining the mediated presentation of feminism and feminist women. North American studies of the presentation of women in news media have focused largely on how women candidates and politicians are depicted (e.g., Byerly and Ross, 2006; Gidengil and Everitt, 1999, 2000, 2002, and 2003; Iyengar, 1997; Kahn and Gordon, 1997; Jalalazi, 1997; Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993). While scholars have not ignored news media portrayals of women involved outside formal politics – that is, women who are not campaigning for or acting as an elected politician – work in this area is far less developed than that on female politicians, especially in the Canadian context. This thesis examines news coverage of the women’s movement and feminism in Canada using an in-depth case study of print coverage of the Harper government’s cuts to the SWC in the fall of 2006. The objective of this chapter is to establish the main theoretical arguments that will support subsequent analyses of the depiction of feminism in Canadian print media.

Feminist media theories examine the stereotypes of women presented in media and illustrate the tendency of media to present feminism as out-dated and unnecessary in

this “post-feminist era”. These critiques of media content and practices offer important platforms for understanding news media’s treatment of feminist groups and the women’s movement. Additionally, the dependence of social movements on media to get their messages out raises important and broader questions about the relationship between media and movements.

Feminist media scholars – and critical communications scholars more generally – often begin by asking: “What is news?” On the surface, newsworthiness may seem self evident: global politics, natural disasters, business events and national or international politics. This conventional understanding of news covers much of the daily happenings in our communities. However, feminist media theory challenges the notion that news present a comprehensive or even balanced version of the world it intends to represent. Feminist research has demanded that academic study include questions about gender and power, or about how the divide between the public and private spheres affects people differently based on their identities, including and perhaps primarily based on their gender. Feminist media theory accepts these challenges, extending them to media by problematizing accepted notions of what constitutes news, what counts as popular culture versus what counts as news and whose version of these categories are seen played out in daily news.

The presentation of dominant perspectives in mainstream print media, specifically relating to gender, manifests itself in a number of ways. This chapter examines media’s role in creating/communicating a particular image of feminism and feminist groups. While there are myriad topics under the heading of ‘media construction of feminist groups’, I focus on three integral issues to structure my empirical analyses: the

construction of post-feminism in news media; stereotypical portrayals of women, feminism, and feminist groups; and the dependence of movements on media to reach wider publics, resulting in significant self-censorship of feminists' messages and goals to media.

Media play a significant role in shaping widespread agreement in news that we have moved squarely into a 'post-feminist' era. Discussed briefly in prior sections of this thesis, the post-feminism articulated in news media will be explored further in the following section. The goal is to provide a clearer, more in-depth discussion of post-feminism, specifically its use as a term which can provide a means of understanding the world in which feminist organizations find themselves struggling for media representation.

A second theme I address is the tendency of news media to present stereotypical depictions of women and gender issues. Although this category encompasses post-feminist stereotypes, it includes a greater spectrum of the stereotypical representations of women found in media. Much of feminist media theory aims to illuminate and problematize these stereotypes (e.g., Gallagher, 2001: 167), confronting dominant media presentations by allowing the public to see that these stereotypes are seldom accurate representations of the world, but rather a creation of media and society at large.

Finally, the element of self regulation is an important one when examining the relationship between social movements and media. Movements are increasingly dependant on media, and movement-media relations are asymmetrical in that media do not depend on movements to the same extent as movements depend on media. Interest groups and movements are forced, in many ways, to self regulate and to moderate their

messages in order to make their messages more 'palatable' for media. Media liaison personnel for feminist groups have come to understand the implicit rules they must follow to garner coverage. Through this understanding, groups begin to shape their political actions and lobbying tactics in ways that are more likely to receive coverage, instead of adopting political actions that may be more suitable to their own political philosophies. In this sense, movements participate in relations of power which surround and exist within media structures, not entirely willingly, but following the rules of the game because they see this to be in their best interest.

At the core of the three categories outlined above, I am asking questions about what constitutes news. In order to answer these questions, theories of agenda-setting and framing must be examined. These theories help to explain how media presentations are shaped and refined, how decisions about content are made and, finally, how content is framed to present a particular image. The focus in this chapter is specifically highlighting the ways that theories of agenda-setting and framing explain aspects of the creation of mediated images in news, as well as the ways feminist media theorists are critical of the dominance of particular narratives or perspectives, particularly the dominance of masculine standpoints.

Feminist Media Theory and Power

Power is a key concept in feminist media studies, as in feminist scholarship more generally. Gender and power are contested concepts, but van Zoonen suggests that gender can be understood as

a particular discourse, that is, a set of overlapping and often contradictory cultural descriptions and prescriptions referring to

sexual difference which arises from and regulates particular economic, political, technological and other non-discursive contexts (van Zoonen, 1994: 33).

It is these relations of gender to economic and political contexts that inform discussions of power in feminist media theory. Ross suggests that “patriarchy is promoted via the news media’s circulation of highly-gendered, male-ordered paradigm of social and economic control” (2004: 62). While these authors focus in particular on gendered power divisions, perhaps a more inclusive approach is to think of power as a “multiplicity of relations of subordination” (van Zoonen, 1994: 4). This broad approach to power allows us to conceptualize power hierarchies that exist internally within gendered categories and externally, in a cross-cutting fashion, privileging some individuals and subordinating others along lines of race, class or sexual orientation, to name only a few. This conception of power is not static, but is largely relational and allows a single individual to act as both the oppressor and the oppressed.

Most literature on media and gender dedicates a substantial amount of time to relations of power (e.g., van Zoonen, 1994; Ross, 2004; Gallagher, 2001). Exploring these relations of power can help explain newsmakers’ roles in projecting certain versions of the world. This includes the way that media orient audiences to ideas about feminism and the women’s movement.

In many ways, patriarchy can be understood as a specific manifestation of these forms of power wherein both men and women participate in an entrenched system of domination. Maintenance of the system occurs through socialization and the establishment of norms. The assignment of gender roles and traits, often reinforced by media, helps to normalize power imbalances by presenting current divisions of power as

rational and by privileging male-female relationships over the solidarity-inducing female-female relationships (Youngs, 2004: 186). This is characteristically true of media presentations of social relationships, whereby women are typically placed in a story in relation to male characters. Further, the link between patriarchy and media can be extended to the way groups who challenge established forms of power are marginalized or discredited in their media coverage.

The marriage of concepts of power and ownership to media theory allows for an increased understanding of how the creation of a mediated world occurs. Although media's world is one that is meant to represent reality and the 'truth' to its viewers, it is instead constructed and subjective. As Rachlin has pointed out,

the concept of hegemony in critical media studies focuses consideration of the media not simply in terms of isolated problems, or institutions or practices (Carey, 1983: 313), but instead forces consideration of how media shape our knowledge of the world and how the media, as a source of knowledge, is a powerful force in social control (1988: 26).

Some see media as an institution influenced by ownership, typically through the control of media content ownership affords. In this case, the control is conceptualized as a form of hegemony by Rachlin, but can be understood more broadly as relations of power by other media theorists. They use this understanding of power as a way of explaining the dominance of some perspectives and images in media over others, arguing that ownership plays a key role in media content.

Ross goes further to argue that

part of the endurance of gender stereotypes in news discourse can be related directly to the culture of the newsrooms themselves, microcosmic environments that constitute sites of considerable contestation about gender and power (2004: 62-3).

Clearly, whether one's focus is on media ownership or the sociology of newsrooms, what happens behind the scenes has serious implications for what will be transmitted in news media. It is not only the ownership or the advertisers who have input as to what will become media content, but also the gendered nature of both the profession and the newsroom (e.g., Robinson, 2005). Journalism continues to be dominated by men (Ibid.; see also Ross, 2004), and as such, reflects a more masculine narrative. This translates to the creation of news where feminine or feminist perspectives can be marginalized, distorted or even trivialized.

Feminist media theory identifies and deconstructs gender stereotypes presented in media. These tasks are central to the activism inherent in feminist media theory. Munford is among the many feminist media theorists who argue that media disseminate gender normative and stereotypical representations (2004: 143), usually through categories that create an understanding of femininity as a particular way of being. Phalen and Algan call these categories "the four f's of women's news: family, fashion, food and furnishings" (2001: 301). By situating women within these gendered categories, news media create an understanding of what it means to be a woman in North American society. Further, these categories help to create a conception of what is 'news' and what would more traditionally be understood as 'popular culture' or 'entertainment', further reinforcing the dichotomies that reproduce stereotypical representations of women and men. These categories also serve to restrict access to media, excluding or significantly limiting the coverage of women who do not conform to these established archetypes.

As feminist media theorists continue to challenge the artificial separation of women's issues from those issues defined as 'real' or 'hard' news stories, understanding

the way that women are represented in news, however irregularly, and in ‘lifestyle’ media (represented by the four f’s of women’s news) becomes increasingly important. Clearly, the categories outlined above do not communicate women’s lives as being part of day-to-day hard news stories. Creating categories in news media that specifically target female audiences and present them information deemed ‘feminine’, and therefore more relevant for women, continue to restrict access to news. Categories do this by reinforcing a separate, largely private sphere in which we see the image of the ‘average’ woman and her ‘appropriate’ interests depicted against those of a “feminist” (Garrison, 2004: 30). Feminist media theory challenges this distinction, seeking to create a media world that blurs these divisions, where issues that are decidedly gendered - for instance, violence against women, sexual harassment or childcare issues - are not relegated to the women’s pages¹⁰ or the back pages, but are instead treated with the same priority as other issues like party politics or natural disasters. These challenges mirror many of the critiques that feminist activists level against states and society. Thus, an increased distortion and deconstruction of the public/private divide entails greater media access for groups who attack such structures.

Feminist media theorists often refer to relations of power to articulate understanding about the dominance of particular images and identity constructions in media. Feminist critiques of these constructions are meant to illustrate that what constitutes news is actually a manifestation of manufactured hierarchical social categories that privilege established ways of knowing and established power relationships. These

¹⁰ Women’s pages emerged in newspapers in the 1950s and often featured tips on cleaning, recipes or information about new household products. Although the women’s pages no longer exist in namesake, they continue to exist in print journalism, most often in sections now more often referred to as “lifestyle” or “style”. It is in these sections that Phalen and Algan (2001) suggest we would see media that is directed specifically at women.

interactions consistently place women in lower positions of power. Because women's issues have only begun to make the foray into mainstream media as anything other than special interest stories, these narratives must compete on a playing field that is predisposed to categorizing them as "special interest" and relegating them to the domain of popular culture, not hard news (van Zoonen, 2005: 24). In many instances, these categorizations operate from a male narrative, which can overlook important gendered implications, undermine feminine knowledge and ignore issues of importance for women (Gidengil and Everitt, 2003: 568).

Post-feminism: "I'm not a feminist but..."

The first of the three themes that I focus on in particular in my presentation of empirical results is the tendency of news media to adopt a post-feminist perspective on women's activism, despite the reality that substantive sex/gender equality are still distant goals, not concrete achievements. According to Varvuz, "media representation of political women in the 1990s promotes a form of post-feminism: a revision of feminism that encourages women's private, consumer lifestyle rather than cultivating a desire for public and political action" (2002: 2). The post-feminism shown in media highlights the role of the individual, not of the movement. Post-feminism can be understood as "the simultaneous incorporation, revision, and depoliticization of many of the central goals of second wave feminism" (Ibid: 22). So while post-feminism undermines feminism and challenges feminists to find a place of relevance in contemporary Western society, it still allows for accommodation of some of the tenets of second-wave feminism, only now on an individual level. Post-feminism rearticulates feminism in such a way that suggests it is no

longer a political project to be exercised through social activism, but rather a lifestyle that can be achieved through purchasing consumer goods that allow the new woman to have it all: a family, a job and all the gadgets she needs to balance work and play (Ibid.: 17).

‘Post-feminist’ is not a term that the women’s movement has used to describe itself (Aronson, 2003: 904). The term ‘post-feminism’ has taken on two distinct meanings: 1) to claim or imply that feminism is no longer necessary because equality has been achieved, or 2) to challenge the very foundational basis of feminism. The first usage does not question whether feminist goals are worthwhile, while the second usage does. In this way, the second usage of the term post-feminism is more aptly described as ‘anti-feminism’, because it challenges the feminist movement from its inception, continuing to rally against the agenda of contemporary women’s movements by arguing that these organizations actually harm women, families and society at large. This harm is inflicted by feminists who deconstruct ‘natural’ male-female relationships and therefore jeopardize traditional family structures (which these groups perceive to be of paramount importance) (Hammer, 2002: 13-17). The anti-feminist perspective sees the goals of the women’s movement as out-of-touch, meaning that the groups do not address the needs or desires of women en-masses, but rather the needs of a select few who are vocal but misguided. From an anti-feminist perspective, it is not problematic that we are now post-feminist, but rather that we were ever feminist. This anti-feminist post-feminism challenges the ideas first outlined by the women’s movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Groups like R.E.A.L. women – a conservative Canadian women’s group – question many of the beliefs and goals of the feminist movement. R.E.A.L. Women operates on the principle of offering

women “a choice other than feminism” and sees itself as the defender of “traditional values and the rights of the homemaker” (Goddu, 1999: npa).

Clearly, there are differences between anti-feminist and post-feminist accounts of women and feminism in media. What is central to both is that each perspective – anti-feminist as well as post-feminist - communicates a message that undermines feminist claims to power and change.

In much public discourse, feminism has become a scapegoat social movement – a straw figure easy to attack, because it has been constructed as being so extreme and counterproductive to women’s lives as to be laughable. This perspective was propagated thoroughly during the 1990s by very positive media coverage given to Camille Paglia and Christina Hoff Summers, two self-proclaimed feminists who have written antifeminist tracts (Varvus, 2002: 168).

Varvus and others criticize media for giving too much credence to women who espouse anti- or post-feminist messages while claiming to represent feminism (conventionally understood); examples include women such as Camille Paglia and Christina Hoff Summers.¹¹ As a result of the prominence given to anti- and post-feminist women, public discourse around feminism has changed in a way that negatively frames the term. Rhodes is very clear that “for any social movement, the media plays a crucial role in shaping public consciousness and public policy” (1995: 685). As media continue to present images of people who speak negatively about feminism and its objectives, media contribute to negative public perceptions of feminism and its adherents.

¹¹ Both Camille Paglia and Christina Hoff Summers have written books about feminism. Although Paglia self-identifies as feminist, she challenges many of the goals of modern feminism and believes that too much of feminism is, as she calls it, victim-centred. Summers repeatedly criticizes feminism for being a bastion of male-bashing, especially the form of feminism she calls “gender feminism” which is prevalent in academic communities. Both have been characterized as feminist by the media and themselves, as well as being given status as experts about feminism; yet both women espouse positions that are criticized by other feminists, who characterize their positions as anti- or post-feminist.

As Farrell has pointed out, “the media continue, despite obvious improvements, to frame and present women’s issues and the feminist movement in ways that support anti-feminist perspectives” (1995: 642). Media consistently promote post-feminism as the appropriate way to understand the current state of feminism and the women’s movement (Gorton, 2004: 154). By continually situating feminism in such a way, as well as promoting an image of feminism that is often negative and oppositional to ‘ordinary women’, media have helped to create a conversation with audiences in which the average woman is encouraged to identify as post-feminist because she cannot see herself or her beliefs reflected in the media’s depiction of feminism (Aronson, 2003: 905).

The dominance of post-feminist perspectives in media represents an image wherein feminism is consumed and then re-presented by media in a way that is still accessible to audiences, but no longer politically volatile; feminists’ demands for large-scale institutional change have been replaced by a message of ‘good enough’, implying that women should be content with the gains that the movement has made. Feminism has been re-branded as unnecessary, so now to be feminist is to be greedy since this post-feminist understanding claims that women have achieved equality. Because this presentation of feminism suggests that equality has been achieved, to want more or to dispute the notion that equality has been achieved is portrayed as being anti-male because rights are now viewed as zero-sum in a gendered way (Goddu, 1999: C1). For women to gain more, men must consequently lose something.

Aronson conducted a study that highlights the effects of media’s portrayal of feminism on a group of women. She found that the women participants tended not to identify as feminist (2003: 905), even though when asked, the majority of the women

supported issues central to feminism. Study participants resisted the label ‘feminist’ altogether or accepted it only with qualification. (2003: 912). Aronson concluded that the perspective exemplified by her research participants “reflects the anti-feminist movement and the media’s construction of feminists as lesbians and militants” (2003: 916).

Through studies of this kind, the connections between the post-feminism presented in media and the ideas of women viewers become plain. Although in Aronson’s study the participants’ perspectives on individual aspects of an overarching feminist agenda remained positive, their unwillingness to identify as feminist suggests that their attitudes toward the feminist label are different than those toward the individual tenets of the feminist project. Although the participants were often able to support many of the aspects of a feminist agenda individually, they could not link these individual causes together and see that as a clear articulation of feminist values; rather, feminism was, for them, different than these values in combination. Whether it is the label or the stereotypes associated with the label that is being rejected, the result is the same; women continue to distance themselves from the movement by refusing to attach themselves to the term ‘feminist’.

Varvus is very clear that the “I’m not a feminist but...” rhetoric is incredibly important to this discussion. In the “but”, the conjunction, there is room for agency among women and space for them to assert their feminist values, if not an outright acceptance of the label (Varvus, 2002: 20-1). The women in Varvus’ study participate in the construction of a post-feminist perspective. In a sense these women participate in media’s construction of feminism by reinforcing the claim that the world no longer needs

feminism. However, because these women continue to advocate for feminist causes on an individual and issue-based level, we can also see in them aspects of audience agency.

The similarities between Varvus's and Aronson's findings are important because the connection between each researcher's findings indicates that media's use of a post-feminist frame to cover feminism negatively affects women's attitudes towards feminism, showcasing the power of media to shape societal understandings of movements. While these women may be able to accept individual aspects of a feminist agenda, women are increasingly likely to distance themselves from a feminist label. This distancing undermines the feminist movement by positioning women in such a way that they will not self-identify as feminist.

Concurrently, despite the continued allegiance of many women to the principles of feminism, countless news stories present a different picture. McDermott argues that "after sensationalized coverage in the early years of the women's movement, feminism was deemed unnewsworthy ten years ago and its concerns were rendered invisible in a media-defined 'post-feminist' era" (1995: 678). The new challenge for feminism is not only to make news, but to rearticulate a version of feminism in media that suggests feminism is still vibrant and necessary, rather than outdated, obsolete or even harmful. In so doing, feminist media theorists are attempting to counteract media narratives that suggest otherwise.

Stereotypes: Constructing Identities

The second theme that I focus on in this thesis is the use of stereotypes in news to inform coverage of women, feminism, women's issues, and so on. Virtually all work on gender,

media and politics is concerned with exposing stereotypes presented in media and then reshaping or broadening the images and people stereotypes are meant to represent. The ultimate goal is to create more inclusive representations of people in media. Research supports the conclusion that media tend to act as a socializing agent (e.g., van Zoonen, 1994: 35), making it all the more important to ask what kinds of gendered stereotypes and norms media convey.

It is also essential to note that gender-based stereotypes constitute one example of a broader phenomenon, for stereotypical coverage of historically-marginalized groups is just one of the many manifestations of power construction in media presentations. In fact, no individual has only one identity; no one is simply a woman or a man. Issues of class, race and sexual orientation -among many others -are also presented in stereotypical ways in media (e.g., Fleras and Kunz, 2001; Zilber and Niven, 2000). Often these stereotypes privilege certain ways of being in the world. While the focus of this research is gender and the implications of media stereotyping for our understanding of feminism, it would be wrong to overlook the importance of other aspects of an individual's identity and other forms of media stereotyping (van Zoonen, 1994; Ross, 2004).

The point that stereotyping is a news media practice extending beyond gender ties in with the enduring critique levied against the Canadian women's movement that it is comprised primarily of white, middle-to-upper class, heterosexual women and, thus, ends up reflecting the interests of this relatively privileged sub-group. Some scholars go even further, examining media's role in constructing this image and concluding that "white middle-class women [tend] to get more favourable coverage than either black women or working class women" (Byerly and Ross, 2006: 43). These conclusions support the idea

that gender identity does not exist in a vacuum; women's depictions are also influenced by their other identities such as their race, class and sexual orientation.

Media representations of feminists as white, middle-class and heterosexual have further homogenized representations of the movement by presenting individuals as the symbols or personifications of movements or groups. Camauër's research has supported this idea, as she has aptly illustrated with her conclusion that "you are not allowed to be a group in the media" (2000: 175). Movements may consist of many heterogeneous individuals, but media tend to focus on one or two key people in an effort to personalize the movement and give the viewer a simple context for situating the movement. When Sunera Thobani was elected as the president of NAC, the fact that she was a woman of colour leading a feminist movement in Canada became a focal point for news. Thobani found that media could not easily accommodate the idea of a non-white woman embodying the face of feminism in Canada (Goddu, 1999: npa). As Rakow and Kranich point out, "it seems...that when reporters and editors think of women, they think of white women; when they think of feminists, they think of white women" (1991: 19).

This raises a number of interesting challenges for organized feminism in Canada. Since media tend to understand groups and movements through an individual member who acts as the 'face' of a movement – typically someone at the apex of a group, such as its president or founder, for example – diversity of representation becomes difficult. How does the movement represent itself as a movement - a group of affiliated individuals working toward a common cause - when media are much more prone to covering individuals as personifications of movements, instead of the groups themselves? As Huddy points out,

the media have tended to minimize the diversity among feminists by reserving the label feminist for a few prominent women “superstars” but rarely using it for the many other individuals who call themselves feminist, including ordinary women and men (1997: 197).

Relatedly, Farrell suggests that,

media historically have focused on the fascinating protagonists who populate the women’s movement rather than the collective change of cultural critique that feminism has created (1995: 643).

The challenge of feminist media theory is to push media beyond its focus on individuals to examine the broader implications of what the women’s movement means for citizens. Further, the theory aims to broaden media’s understanding of feminism to allow those women and men who are not leaders of women’s movements to see themselves reflected in media’s storytelling about feminist actions. Because media tend to report disproportionately on women’s personal lives instead of political endeavours (e.g., van Zoonen, 1998, 2006; MacIvor, 1996: 209), it is all the more critical that coverage of feminist movements be expanded beyond coverage of their leaders.

Garrison is very direct about the power of media to create and disseminate information and identities: “we must continue to be clear about the power of the media to inform an understanding of feminism and what it means to be feminist” (2004: 24). Stereotypical depictions of feminists in media are often negative and have included the use of terms like “bra-burners” (Bradely, 1998: 160), a “lunatic fringe” (Rhodes, 1995: 691), “lesbians and militants” (Aronson, 2003: 916), “deviant” (Camauër, 2000: 141), “unfeminine, irrelevant, undignified and trivial” (Phalen and Algan, 2001: 303), “antifamily” and “man-hating” (Hall and Roderiguez, 2003: 883). Because many women’s experience of the women’s movement is through news coverage (Rhodes, 1995:

705), the kinds of phrases used to describe feminists and feminist movements are of obvious importance.

Garrison argues that media have played a greater role “in cultural knowledge production of feminist consciousness than feminist thinkers have acknowledged” (2004: 25). Feminist media theory attempts to undercut these stereotypes by exposing them as such. Because feminist media theorists do not see media as balanced or neutral, the goal of such scholarship is to provide space for new depictions of gender to emerge, including a more nuanced and balanced understanding of feminism and feminists. Feminist media research is indeed a political project with a specific agenda meant to eradicate negative images in favour of balanced or even positive images of women and feminism in media. To do so, establishing the way that stereotypes are constructed and communicated becomes increasingly important for scholars.

Representations which encourage stereotypical interpretations occur not simply through the terms that are used, but in the way that media present an overall impression of what is and is not feminine. Media tend to find it easier to cover women who fit easily within the defined limits of femininity, and thus ‘conventional’ women often receive more coverage. Yet, this is not an ironclad rule. Although some make the case that media often overlook women who do not conform to conventional gender norms (e.g., Goddu, 1999), other scholars suggest the opposite occurs. Media are also drawn to women who do not conform to expectations about feminine speech and behaviour, because one of the key criteria of newsworthiness is the element of surprise or the unexpected (e.g., Bennett 2003). Newsmakers are drawn to the dramatic and the unexpected, because drama sells news. Consequently, counter-stereotypical women are often covered in such a way that

their deviance from gender norms is emphasized – sometimes even exaggerated – though rarely in a positive way (e.g., Gidengil and Everitt, 2003; Ross, 2004: 63-5; van Zoonen, 2005). Highlighting and implicitly criticizing deviance can be as effective as a means for creating/maintaining norms as showcasing women positively when they reflect ‘normal’ feminine behaviors.

Coverage of the issues women’s groups advocate is sometimes different. When women’s groups raise issues that fit within dominant understandings of appropriate gender roles and societal expectations - for example, discourse around issues like equal pay for equal work - they are given media coverage (Barker-Plummer, 2000: 150). However, the same is not true of feminist groups who attempt to change the fundamental structures of institutions or challenge assumptions about proper gender roles. Feminists who talk about the patriarchal nature of society and the institutions within it, or the need to recognize the equal value of feminine¹² and masculine traits, receive remarkably less coverage (Garrison, 2004: 28). In these cases the media tend to situate the feminist woman in opposition to the “real” woman or the “feminine” woman (Ibid: 30), further contributing to the overall impression of feminist as other and helping to reaffirm a sense that society is post-feminist.

If media comprise one of the leading institutions in cultural knowledge production, the messages they impart about appropriate gender roles are incredibly important. While there is significant debate about the concept of gender in political fields like identity politics or political theory, this debate has not yet emerged in mainstream

¹² It is not always clear what constitutes a masculine or feminine trait. However, there are many recognized dichotomies - for example, reason (masculine) versus emotion (feminine) or autonomy (masculine) dependence (feminine) - that often present the traits or corresponding actions in such a way as to privilege the masculine half of the pair.

media in the same way. Because questions of gender and gendered identity have become so central to feminist theory, it is likely that these questions will continue to make inroads into studies of media, specifically in the way that media reaffirm and support gender stereotypes, not only as masculine or feminine, but also in the way that media perpetuate the concept of gender as natural and binary. Much of the work of feminist media theorists is still concerned with exposing gendered behavior and roles as societal constructions rather than truths (e.g., van Zoonen, 1994). Debates around the binary aspects of gender or the social construction of gender are not yet well established in the minds of mainstream newsmakers or the average news consumer.

Everitt argues that news is written by men, for men, about men (2005: 388); news is a masculine narrative (Gidengil and Everitt, 1999: 48; see also Rakow and Kranich, 1991). This is inherently problematic, because this process continues to privilege men's perspectives and the issues men deem important over those that women may choose to emphasize. Additionally, political women are continually constructed as 'others'; media "implicitly critiques them for deviating not only from the orthodox boundaries of their true gender, but also from the traditional expectations of masculine politicians" (Everitt, 2005: 389). Masculine narratives continue to privilege female actions that conform to feminine stereotypes, and at the same time overemphasize female actions that do not fit within proper gender roles by presenting coverage that exaggerates women's "unfeminine" or aggressive actions (e.g. Gidengil and Everitt, 1999). For women who lead feminist movements, this places them in a tenuous position – a 'double-bind', in fact, where strong women leaders are 'damned if they do, and damned if they don't' (e.g., Jamieson, 1995). Clearly, women who are active within feminist movements articulate

women's concerns, which are gendered and inherently fit within feminine categories. However, the way particular women may vocalize these concerns is at risk of being deemed by media as overly aggressive and masculine, undermining these women's claims to represent the average woman, who many feel would be more likely situate herself within domains that are defined as traditionally feminine.

Additionally, feminist media theory looks beyond superficial presentations of the image of women presented in media to ask questions about how women are spoken about or for (e.g., Gallagher, 2003: 25). Semiotics is often employed in this context because of "its ability to unravel structures of meaning beyond the mere presence or absence of women in cultural forms" (van Zoonen, 1994: 74). Semiotics includes the study of signs, instead of just phrases, and looks at the overall message of media. To do this, all sign systems in a text are analyzed, focusing on word choice and the combination of words, not just word choice in isolation. What become most relevant is not the sign, but the meaning that is attached to it and the way the sign is typically decoded by the viewer (Ibid: 75-6). These signs, the stereotypes and imagery they communicate, help contribute to a widespread construction of a particular understanding of gender. Rakow and Kranich (1991) discuss this particular approach, and argue that the presentation of woman as sign reaffirms women's position as members of a group with a "seemingly homogenous viewpoint" (8). This understanding of woman as sign creates categories into which women are placed, allowing them to be classified and represented without much need to incorporate an authentic female perspective. Instead, women act as placeholders, not subjects who articulate and create their own identities. One woman stands for all women,

because 'woman' is a single homogenous category, not a complex and multifaceted collection of people with intersecting interests and beliefs.

Identity construction happens through the particular types of stories selected and the way that those stories are told, but it occurs on a more subtle level as well. It happens through the types of people who are used to tell the story. Media is predisposed to seeking male spokespersons and experts, even when dealing with issues that affect women specifically (e.g., Rhodes, 1995: 687). These experts subtly continue to present an image of male as expert and female as object. Additionally, the construction of identity happens in the way that women are spoken about, through the phrases or words that are used to describe them, as outlined above. Finally, feminist media theory examines the ways that women are stereotypically socially situated. In media representations this often means that women's coverage emphasizes their relations to men - as wife or mother, for example (e.g., van Zoonen, 2006) - or as beings who need masculine protection - as helpless victims (Hall and Roderiguez, 2003: 687). In either case, the tendency of news to discuss women in relation to (more powerful or influential) men can trivialize women's own goals, abilities and accomplishments. For example, the tendency of media to consistently situate former Cabinet Minister Belinda Stronach in relation to Frank Stronach - her father, the founder of car-parts manufacturer Magna - or Minister Peter MacKay - her former partner - implicitly raises doubts about whether her political accomplishments were earned by her alone (e.g., Trimble, 2006).

Media tend to use narrow, easily-identifiable roles to represent individuals and groups. Media produce singular or narrow identities because newsmakers edit out imagery or information that posit conflictual ideas (Taras, 2001: 44). For feminist media

theorists, the dominant presentations in media are informed and shaped by patriarchy. This results in a clearly defined creation and imposition of an understanding of what is feminine and what is not. Clearly, in most media circles, being a feminist is not the same thing as being feminine.

Feminists or feminism will often be constructed in a simplistic way and attached to only one issue, as mentioned before, representing only a limited view of feminist goals (Huddy, 1997: 186). This narrowed depiction also allows media to determine which issues will be deemed 'feminist' in the public consciousness, in this way circumventing the power of feminist organizations to fully define their own agenda to the public. In an American study, gender equity and abortion were the two most reported "feminist topics", making up over half of the coverage of the women's movement (Barasko and Schaffner, 2006: 33). While these issues are both central to the women's movement, they are not the only issues of concern. A frame can become like a box, limiting the "tactical repertoire" available to a movement (Costain et al., 1997: 209).

Media and Movements: "You scratch my back, I might scratch yours."

Media coverage and the way content decisions are made have strong implications for movements who seek media coverage to help increase the public's awareness of the issues that these movements aim to transform. A great number of the scholars who examine the relationships between social movements and media note the asymmetrical power relationships that exist between the two (e.g., Carroll and Hackett, 2006: 87; Gitlin, 1980). This means that while media are not particularly dependant on movements to create news, movements are incredibly dependant on media. The power differential in this

relationship is significant. Movements interested in getting and maintaining coverage must play by the rules outlined by media.

Gitlin's analysis of news coverage of the group Students for a Democratic Society is instructive (1980; see also Rhodes, 1995; Farrell, 1995). In Gitlin's case study, media reshaped the meaning of the movement in such a way that the press coverage began to engage and attract a very different group of supporters with a very different agenda, thereby influencing the direction of the movement itself (1980: 137-8). This shift was not necessarily what those closely involved with the movement desired. Because of the frames¹³ used in coverage of the movement, as well as the kinds of publicity stunts that were successful in garnering coverage, the movement itself was shaped by media's coverage of it. Gitlin and others are very clear that because of the dependence of movements on media, many groups will self regulate and conform to media practices that may not fit with the group's politics in an effort to attain coverage (1980; see also Rhodes, 1995; Farrell, 1995).

Thrall (2006) also devotes particular attention to the relationship between a group's resources and its media access. The level of resources available to an organization or movement greatly affect its ability to garner coverage. Organizations already well established in the public sphere or that have significant financial backing have greater opportunities to attract coverage. Naturally, larger budgets allow for bigger media stunts and greater advertising dollars (Thrall, 2006: 407). These kinds of stunts can help create a buzz around a particular event meant to entice media, allowing organizations more prospects when marketing particular agendas.

¹³ Framing is a media theory that will be discussed in much greater detail in the following section.

Further, groups that often have money or other resource wealth are also often groups that tend to present a conservative or non-threatening agenda, making their access to media less constrained. Business and industry groups would fit well within this category. In fact, these are the types of groups that may be media owners or significant share-holders in media themselves. Because these groups are less likely to present ideologies that challenge the status quo, they are therefore more likely to receive coverage. Additionally, these groups are at an advantage in gaining coverage because they also benefit from maintaining the status quo. They do not present agendas that challenge the existing social and political foundations of institutions in the same way that feminist, LGBT or some environmental groups would be expected to do. Clearly, money is not the only defining characteristic that will dictate how much media coverage a group is able to secure, but it certainly is an important one.

The media also operate in what Barker-Plummer calls a “strong hegemony model” (2000: 123), meaning the media tend to marginalize and at the same time co-opt the discourses of new social movements. Since many movements are concerned with seeking change, the incorporation of their messages into mainstream media may actually reduce their potential for making change. Their “new and important” message is reinterpreted as part of media’s world, already well established, sometimes in ways that are objectionable to the movements who media purport to represent (Gallagher, 2001: 73).

Further, this relationship encourages movements to self regulate and articulate media messages in ways so that they are more likely to be picked up by journalists (Barker-Plummer, 2000: 127). In doing this, movements often shape their media presentations to fit current media imagery, instead of putting forward what may be

viewed as more radical agendas, because of the pressing importance of receiving media coverage (Gitlin, 1980: 41). This form of self screening – in which movements put forward public images that they believe will maximize their coverage – can lead to distortions in the portrayal of movements whereby their public images presented in media do not accurately represent movements’ actual goals or beliefs (Brinson, 2006: 545). While all individuals and groups seeking news coverage practice some form of self-screening as a matter of good media strategy, the types of frames typically applied to women and women’s movements force these groups to take on roles and personas that often fail to highlight the most important or salient aspects of their agendas.

The information and images that many movements put forward to media are more likely to conform to the dominant message or image already established in media. These messages are not entirely media’s creation, but occur through a discourse between the media and movements in which movements self-screen or self-regulate because they believe it to be in their best interest to do so (Barker-Plummer, 2000:130). Clearly, the relationships between movements and media are dynamic and contingent, and movements themselves do participate in their own mediation through processes of self-censorship.

Because of movements’ dependence on media, coupled with the power media can exert in shaping a movement (e.g., Gitlin, 1980; Rhodes, 1995; Farrell, 1995), the kinds of messages media transmit are critically important. As Gitlin has pointed out, media’s presentation of a movement tends to become “the movement” for wider publics who have few, if any, alternative sources of information (1980: 3). Media’s ability to construct a group’s ideology has serious implications for the post-feminist label in the case of women’s movements, as the power of this term has become an increasingly problematic

term for the women's movement seeking support from the public. Post-feminism shows readers a dead movement, not a vibrant, worthwhile cause. Because post-feminism is a construction of media that is used to label the movement – not a label the movement adopted itself (Aronson, 2003: 904) – the possibility of reshaping and reclaiming media coverage in a more positive light becomes increasingly problematic. As Gitlin has pointed out, the use of language invites audiences to identify and categorize movements in particular ways (1980: 6).

News media's tendency to portray the current era as post-feminist can be understood, in part, as a function of how media define newsworthiness, particularly the assignment of newsworthiness to events that are conflictual or dramatic, thereby escalating conflict and drama. Gitlin uses the example of protest to illustrate his argument. If a march gets 100,000 protestors at one event, the next one must have 200,000 to be considered successful (1980: 214). There is no room under this coverage model for maintenance, for maintenance of support is often equated with failure.

After the growth of the second-wave women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s, the burden of continued growth could not be sustained, especially in the 1990s when the movement suffered a backlash (e.g., Bashevkin, 1998). Feminism was deemed unworthy of media coverage in the 1990s, and its concerns became invisible in the media landscape (e.g., McDermott, 1995: 678, Barasko and Schaffner, 2006: 31). A post-feminist understanding of the movement emerged in media at this time; although, in contrast, many still associated with the movement found it to be vibrant and growing (Goddu, 1999: npa). Because the movement was not growing at the same rate as it had in the heady years of the 1960s and early-1970s, a post-feminist label was more easily applied

because growth in support had stalled or stopped. Yet, this does not mean at all that public support for feminism and its goals had waned or that the need for government intervention to encourage gender equality had disappeared.

Clearly, the propensity of the media to present its own arguably distorted version of the movement speaks to the capacity of media to influence where the focus of its stories will fall. Agenda-setting, the power to choose which issues will be placed at the forefront of news and, by extension, the public agenda, has ramifications for the depth, amount and kind of coverage a movement will receive, and agenda setting is important to take into account when examining the other categories outlined above.

Agenda-Setting and Framing: Feminist Perspectives

When dealing with media, it is important to ask questions about what constitutes news and what media choose to focus on when reporting events or movements. Agenda-setting and framing are media theories that seek to answer questions about media content. These theories are concerned with how media select stories, the importance they place on certain aspects of stories or the way they may privilege certain viewpoints over others. The goal of these theories is to posit questions about the realities of media and the messages media impart to wider publics. Additionally, these media theories attempt to articulate more clearly the relationship between media production and content, sometimes extending their analysis to consider ownership, by beginning with the understanding that mass communication does not follow a linear process, and there is no clear distinction between where media begins and society ends (Carroll and Hackett, 2006: 86).

Agenda-setting is a theory of media effects (Kosiski, 1993: 103), and its central claim is that while media “may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, it is stunningly successful in telling people what to think about” (Cohen, 1963, as cited in Weaver, 1996: 37). Agenda-setting theories attempt to examine the underlying construction and agenda of media, suggesting that “the media are not ... passive conduits of information; they are not mirrors, uncertain or otherwise. They are part of the social reality they report” (Young, 1981: 694). This means that media have the power to shape the public consciousness, not necessarily by telling them how to interpret an event, but certainly in telling the public what events or issues are important and publicly pressing. Thus, there emerges a strong correlation between what media showcases as important issues and what the public will say are important issues (e.g., Wanta and Ghanem, 2005: 40).

Generally, agenda-setting is a long-term process (Wanta and Ghanem, 2005: 46), taking place through media coverage of issues over extended periods of time, sometimes as much as decades. Hubbard argues that agenda setting is most effective with newly emergent issues, issues that have taken shape in public consciousness through their depiction in media (1975: 23). However, that now applies to almost every aspect of society since media have been a socially-pervasive institution for almost 50 years, and much longer if you exclude electronic media. At its core, agenda-setting theory seeks to understand the pictures of the world media present, as well as the decisions at play behind the scenes, specifically the individuals and groups who hold the most power in determining what counts as newsworthy.

Agenda-setting is especially important for feminist media theorists, who continually critique the established mediated reality. Media democratization, a political action many feminist media theorists support, sees a problem not only with what information is communicated, but also with the ways that information is produced and disseminated (Carroll and Hackett, 2006: 95). Scholars suggest that decisions about media content are often made at higher levels of management and are then filtered down, reflecting elite interests (e.g., Baldwin, 1997: 24; Herman and Chomsky, 1988). Concurrently, decisions made by those in middle management are made by individuals who have internalized the unspoken conventions of acceptable content and practice self regulation, thereby enforcing the regulation of other journalists and newsmakers under them (Baldwin, 1997: 24).

Because so much of feminist media theory is concerned with the stereotypes embedded in media, asking questions about the ways these stereotypes are created through content decisions and agenda-setting becomes increasingly important. Since agenda-setting and framing theories identify the ways that media shape public opinion, asking questions about the structures and institutions that precipitate these depictions is important, especially when seeking to increase critical-viewing skills in audiences.

Applied to coverage of the women's movement, agenda-setting and framing theories suggest that news coverage leads viewers to believe that the agenda of most feminist groups is rather narrow (e.g., Barasko and Schaffer, 2006). By focusing on only one or two of the many issues of importance to the women's movements – abortion is the best example – media often present an image of feminist organizations as decidedly single-issue focused with little coverage of organizations' many other activities on issues

such as pay equity and child care, for example. Women's groups have large and varied agendas, but this is not well represented in coverage of these groups (Barasko and Shaffer, 2006: 22). This is exactly the kind of framing that feminist media theorists critique. It is problematic that a particular image of the women's movement has been constructed by media, especially when the movements themselves offer much broader platforms. Clearly, media effects theories have been successfully applied by feminist media theorists to help understand and deconstruct the mediated image of gender and gendered issues.

Some agenda-setting perspectives are prescriptive and suggest that media should not only monitor what is going on in the world, but should also be active in leading social or political action (e.g., Kosiski, 1993: 112). A great deal of feminist media scholarship would fall into this category, since much of the work of these scholars is directed toward expanding the depictions of women in media, in line with a feminist vision of gender articulation. As Gorton argues, feminists have often been understood in terms of their appearance in media and not their politics (2004: 157), a tendency that is reflective of more general patterns of coverage of women. Therefore, feminist media theorists have an interest in shaping the image of women presented in media. In many ways, this shift is meant to be done by changing the ways that media agendas are set and the ways that issues are framed.

When analyzing news media framing, theorists often make arguments about salience. Framing is the interpretive lens or story line that is used to present an issue. Media influence ideas about salience through the "the subtle selection of certain aspects of an issue...to make some seem more important" (Rogers, 1997: 235). Framing and

agenda-setting go hand in hand. While agenda-setting analyzes which events and issues are selected as news – and therefore bestowed with importance – framing is the way specific aspects of the event or issue are emphasized or interpreted in news. As Entman notes,

to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation (1993: 52).

A useful way to think about the distinction between agenda-setting and framing is that the former relates to *what* story will be told, while the latter relates to the *way* it will be told. Frames can be defined as much by what they overlook, under-represent or entirely omit as by what they include (Entman, 1993: 54).

It is important to recognize that frames are not value free (Byerly and Ross, 2006: 39). Beyond reinforcing the stereotypes that pervade news media, frames are often applied to stories in such a way as to help fit the story into current media lexicons. Since journalists regularly find themselves under tight deadlines and even tighter confines of allotted space and time, familiar frames, archetypes and stereotypes are essential shortcuts for journalists to attach meaning to events and issues (e.g., Huddy, 1997: 185). Feminist media theorists have repeatedly highlighted the masculine narrative of news and extend that narrative to the types of frames that are used to talk about women in media, often in relation to women as politicians.

In many ways, the metaphors used to discuss politics in general reflect the masculine construction of the political sphere. Sports and war metaphors are some of the most common used to report politics (e.g., Sampert and Trimble 2004; Gidengil and Everritt 1999), particularly in the lead up to elections, which are conventionally reported

as horseraces between contending candidates (e.g., Iyengar et al., 2004; Goodyear-Grant et al., 2004). The repercussions of the use of masculine metaphors are myriad, but primary among them is the implicit suggestion that politics is a masculine realm where women are either unwelcome or out-of-place (e.g., Gidengil and Everitt, 1999). In fact, Gidengil and Everitt suggest that women in politics are obliged to adopt masculine personas, specifically during debates, or otherwise face the possibility that news will neglect them altogether (2003). Should women choose to adopt a more ‘feminine’ debating style, their suitability for political positions is implicitly called into question, because the role ‘politician’ has been defined according to masculine leadership styles and traits (e.g., Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993).

These types of frames are important for understanding media treatment of female politicians. However, Costain and her colleagues argue that in covering the women’s movement, media prefer different frames (1997). The two most prominent frames for covering the women’s movement are “conflict” or “personal interest”, specifically the “cult of personality” often associated with the leaders of women’s organizations (Ibid: 207).

Both these frames serve purposes in positioning the women’s movement. Frames that apply conflict as the main lens through which to tell a story tend to reaffirm the aggressive or ‘militant’ aspects of feminism. Since these types of stories can also focus on interpersonal conflict, the message can also present the subjects as petty and may focus on the conflict instead of substantive issues as the central concern of the movement. Frames that focus on the leaders, instead of the movement, also have a tendency to focus on the appearances or personal lives of the women at the head of the movement, rather

than the goals and issues with which the movement is most engaged. These “cult of the leader” frames are often seen as reductionist, for they fail to communicate feminism as a movement, and instead showcase the movement in an individualized manner (Costain et al., 1997: 209). Once the focus falls on an individual, rather than the movement as a whole, news coverage tends to concentrate on the individual’s personal tastes and personal life, rather than politics and the systemic nature of gender inequality. Van Zoonen calls this “celebrity politics” (2006), and one might speculate that the rise of celebrity politics is connected with the increasing tendency toward “infotainment” news formats in Western news media (e.g., Bennett 2003). For example, stories about Lucie Pépin, former leader of the CACSW, continually referred to her as ‘elegant’, a descriptor that was not attached to her politics or communication style, but to her appearance (Goddu, 1999: npa).

Audience Agency

Theories of agenda-setting have suggested that there is a significant link between the issues selected for coverage by media and the priority that audiences give to those issues (Kosiski, 1993: 101). The implication here is that media drive the public agenda, with audiences as passive recipients, similar to the hypodermic needle model of media effects.¹⁴ However, media effects are not equal for everyone, and research about media effects must also account for audience agency and the way that audiences deconstruct or

¹⁴ Also known as ‘magic bullet theory’, this model of media effects, popular in the post-WWII era as an explanation for the success of Nazi propaganda, is now largely discredited. It assumed a direct, automatic, homogeneous infusion of media messages to audiences en masse. This model ignored the interpretive component of any media effects model, which is critical given that audience members have a variety of social backgrounds, experiences, and ideologies. For further critique of the hypodermic needle model, see Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955).

decode media messages, a perspective popularized by the two-step flow theory of communications theory (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944), which incorporates a focus on audience agency (hence, the second step in the model).

Although this thesis focuses on news content – specifically how print media covered the cuts to SWC – and not necessarily on what effect content had on audiences, we must be constantly mindful of the capacity of audiences to exercise agency in their viewing of media. Because the concept of audience agency is so important to understanding the relationship between those who create media and those who consume media, it is important to acknowledge the fact that the audience is not just the receiver, but also the interpreter of media.

Although media present stereotypes, audiences still process these representations using their own knowledge and experiences (Entman, 1993: 53). Decoding is a dynamic process: “reading media imagery is an active process in which context, social location, and prior experience can lead to quite different decodings” (Gamson et al., 1992: 375). Put simply, individuals can interpret the same news in different, particularized ways depending on their own social location, prior knowledge of an issue, ideology and core values.

Despite the importance of examining the mediated representations of women, as is the case for this thesis, it is also essential that an analysis of stereotypes acknowledges the capacity of audiences to use their own experiences to challenge these stereotypes present in media. Viewers tend to be more critical of media that conflict with their personal belief systems and more accepting of media that fit well within their world view (Gamson et al., 1992: 389), a particular manifestation of the pervasive confirmation bias that appears to

be part of human nature (e.g., Nickerson, 1998). Although agenda-setting and framing offer important ways for conceptualizing the role of media, especially as media construct the world beyond the doors of many viewers, audiences still have agency in terms of the ways they decode media's messages. However, because many women have access to the women's movement only through the coverage received through media (Rhodes, 1995: 705), understanding the ways the movements (as feminism, organized women's groups or government agencies responsible for women) are presented becomes imperative.

Looking Forward

Clearly, feminist media theory raises some interesting questions and concerns about the way women are presented through media. This thesis analyzes how these theories can help explain the presentation of feminists and feminism in media, specifically surrounding the cuts to the SWC in the fall of 2006. The next chapter outlines the methodologies used to obtain empirical data on coverage of the cuts, specifically 1) my content analysis of Canadian print coverage of the cuts to SWC, and 2) qualitative textual analysis of select print stories about the SWC cuts.

Chapter 3:

If Women Counted...the Numbers Would be Different: Measuring the Coverage

Content analysis is one of the primary methodological tools for analyzing media communications. According to Holsti, whose definition has become a classic for political scientists, content analysis is “any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages” (1969: 14).

Holsti (Ibid) goes further to outline the questions content analysis is most helpful in answering. He suggests content analysis has three fundamental goals. First, content analysis can be very effective in helping to describe the characteristics of messages, without delving into the encoding or decoding processes that many studies of media include (Ibid: 27). Second, content analysis allows researchers to make “inferences about the causes or antecedent of the message” (Ibid: 32). This form of analysis is not as focused on questions of “what” but rather on questions of “who” or “why”, and as such is open to criticism since much of the relationship between statements and motivations of individuals are open to wide and varied interpretation. The third goal of content analysis is to make inferences about the effects of the messages (Ibid: 35). This form of analysis cannot be centred on media alone, but must also find ways to evaluate the recipients of the communication and connect audience members to media texts.

Content analysis focuses on the two major forms of information presented in media: structural content and substantive content. Substantive content can be further categorized into manifest or latent content. Additionally, analysis of media content can occur in a qualitative or quantitative form, although commonly, especially for feminist scholars, a mixed-methods approach is used.

Structural content analysis focuses on the physical characteristics of media communications. In the case of print media, the form of media examined in this thesis, questions are asked regarding the length of a story or column, its placement in the newspaper and so on. These categories are easily quantifiable and are readily apparent for measurement. Typically, these types of examinations have high inter-coder correlation,¹⁵ because it is easier for different coders to reach agreement on objective structural characteristics of news stories compared to the substantive content or message of a story, which are open to greater interpretation.

Substantive content analysis is an examination of the deeper meanings in a text. This type of exploration can be achieved through asking questions that go beyond the more surface-level structural content. Analysis of substantive content is meant to get at the underlying message of an article, and analysis tends to focus on the topics being explored, the kinds of quotes being used or the implicit meaning conveyed through the choice of metaphors or frames, to provide a few examples. These questions may be posed in such a way as to get at more subjective content in the text – for example, coding the tone of an article, a task that requires more interpretation from the coder(s) than tallying the word count for a story. While structural content analysis tends to be quantitative in nature, both quantitative and qualitative forms of data collection can occur when dealing with substantive content.

¹⁵ Inter-coder correlation will be discussed later in this chapter. Since I was the only person involved in the coding process, I do not deal with or provide measures of inter-coder reliability in this thesis. Nonetheless, as a concept, inter-coder reliability refers to the rate at which different coders would reach the same conclusions about a piece of communication and speaks to the validity of a content analysis. Thus, even in studies that use a single coder, it is important to keep in mind the underlying reasons that make inter-coder reliability important.

A further sub-categorization of communications content is between manifest and latent content. Each of structural and substantive content can be further divided into manifest and latent content. Manifest content is content that is apparent not only to researchers undertaking the content analysis, but also to audiences. Therefore, content analysis of this kind is typically explicit and readily measurable. Research questions are asked in such a way that they can be answered through the search for specific terms or phrases. Consequently, these terms must be obvious on the first reading of material, as they would be to audiences, who would not characteristically read the same article repeatedly searching for deeper or 'hidden' meaning.

Latent content, or a "reading between the lines" (Holsti, 1969: 12), is also an important aspect of media analysis. Many studies of propaganda, for example, focus on latent content in efforts to uncover suggested meanings that underlie communications. It is now standard to see content analysis of media in general, not just studies of propaganda campaigns, ask questions about both manifest and latent content. In fact, most studies of political communications ultimately aim to say something about the latent meanings or messages contained in a communication. Latent content investigation can be achieved through both quantitative and qualitative studies of media. However,

qualitative content analysis, which has sometimes been defined as the drawing of inferences on the basis of appearance or non-appearance of attributes in messages, has been defended most often, though not solely, for its superior performance in problems of applied social science (Holsti, 1969: 10).

In a sense, latent content analysis is the act of drawing out inferences that can be reasonably deduced from communications.

When content analysis seeks to examine latent content, the goal is to uncover the symbolic meanings of words or images. In the case of an analysis of feminist groups, the word ‘militant’ offers an example of a kind of word that has latent meanings. For those who do not support the movement, using the term ‘militant’ is done so to express that these groups are aggressive, perhaps irrational or unwilling to compromise. The term is applied in a way that is meant to connote negative imagery. However, that same term may be used by the movement itself, a particular feminist group may self-identify as ‘militant’, but would not be using the term in the same negative way. Instead, the term could be used to try to articulate the power of the group, its commitment to its own goals and its desire to create change. In this case the term is used in a positive, self-affirming way. The goal of latent content analysis is to examine the way a symbol, even a word, is employed, keeping in mind at all times that meanings can be contested, for “the latent meaning of symbols vary according to how many members of the group using the language share the latent meanings (Riffe et al., 1998: 108). Although the manifest definition of a word or symbol might be quite clear, the way the term is applied might change its interpretation for audiences.

Although examinations of manifest content are often more reliable, methodologically speaking, latent content is usually more significant or interesting (Riffe et al., 1998: 107). For this reason, many studies combine analysis of both manifest and latent content, typically using analyses of manifest content in order to make inferences about latent content. The two do not exist in separate spheres. Usually manifest and latent content have a degree of overlap; hence, the majority of content analyses are compelled to address both.

In terms of substantive content, quantitative analysis focuses almost exclusively on manifest content. What in the news can be counted, readily identified, or is immediately obvious? It is important that this form of analysis uses categories that are obviously apparent and that the categories be evident to multiple people. Because these data will make claims about the surface message of media, these claims must be objective (Holsti, 1969: 3) and replicable (Riffe et al., 1998: 21). This means that the results must establish very similar conclusions even when separate and isolated individuals conduct the research. Further, the evidence used to support such claims must be such that it would be identified and coded the same way by different parties.

Although content analysis is often a process of turning qualitative texts into quantifiable data, there are ways to approach content analysis in which data are not transformed into numerical representations, but rather approached in a more 'raw' or contextual state – where information is not reinterpreted as part of a coded index, but is instead examined in its original presentation. This could involve examining the way sentences are constructed, or how particular descriptive word choices are employed. In these instances, a qualitative approach is adopted wherein the researcher searches for themes in media instead of recording the amount a particular subject is discussed or the number of times a term is used, for example. This form of analysis is often supported by the use of quotes, which can help illustrate the themes in a way quite separate from the number of times a particular trait or label may be mentioned. Arguably, however, the most powerful and comprehensive form of communications analysis combines both quantitative and qualitative content analysis.

Some feminist and ethnographic methodologies surrounding content analysis suggest that it is preferable to allow the categories to emerge from the data (e.g., Bryman, 2004: 183). I use feminist methodology as extensively as possible, especially considering my research involves creating an understanding of exactly how feminism is presented in media. However, I have chosen to establish categories of investigation before starting the content analysis, a practice that tends to be followed by communications scholars in order to ensure that results are not data-driven.

In an attempt to provide space for a feminist approach in my analysis, I have employed both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Feminist methodology is also more supportive of qualitative approaches (e.g., Bryman, 2004: 336), largely because of the feminist critiques of quantitative methods (e.g., Harding, 1987). In addition to a coding grid that was used to elicit numerical data about my sample of news stories, questions were asked that could not be quantified or coded. These questions allowed me to contemplate what the main message of the article was, where the focus lay and to note specific quotations that highlighted a particular bias or perspective in the presentation of opinion. This form of examination allowed me to look beyond the more simple numerical data for themes that could then be supported by quotes, as suggested by Bryman (2004: 392).

Feminist methodology often questions the possibility of objectivity by contesting the possibility of a “disembodied abstract knower” (e.g., Fonow and Cook, 2005: 2215; see also Harding, 1988). A feminist methodology replaces the abstract knower with the embedded researcher, a perspective that acknowledges that the researcher is part of the power relations she seeks to uncover (Fonow and Cook, 2005: 2215). This does not mean

that objectivity is abandoned or that quantitative data are meaningless; rather, the point is that researchers must recognize their own biases and agendas in the collection of data and attempt to be explicit about them.

As mentioned earlier, feminist research is often guided by political practice. Consequently, it is more important and likely that the agenda of such research is made evident. From the perspective of feminist methodology it is not imperative that the agenda of the researcher be abandoned, but it certainly cannot trump the ethics or the validity of research methodology, which must always strive to produce results and information capable of satisfying external scrutiny. It does, however, suggest that feminist research is meant to create information which can be used to support feminist political practice.

Case Study: Harper Government's Cuts to SWC

Although the case study has already been briefly discussed in Chapter One, it is worth revisiting this particular choice within the context of establishing the parameters of the content analysis. Coverage of the cuts to the SWC was selected as the case study for a number of reasons. First, it is nearly impossible to talk about organized feminism in Canada without talking about the SWC. Further, many groups in Canada that undertake feminist work are able to do so largely through funding received from SWC. In addition to representing Canadian women nationally - or at least attempting to, for groups such as R.E.A.L. Women would dispute the notion that SWC represents all women - SWC is responsible for channeling a great deal of the funding that supports local and regional feminist organizations. Although on the surface the cuts targeted only the SWC, deeper examination suggests that these cuts have even greater implications for feminism in

Canada. If the RCSW was a landmark for the Canadian feminist movement, (Brodie, 1996; Bégin, 2002; Bashevkin, 1985) and the SWC emerged as a direct result, how else can the cuts that completely change its make-up be understood but as deeply altering its capacity to regulate policy and in turn protect the interests of women?

In fact, Clark argues that women in Canada are still waiting for many of the RCSW's recommendations to be enacted, (1997: 6), clearly showing how a weaker SWC has strong implications for Canadian feminism. On an ideological level, the cuts to the SWC are so far reaching they would indicate at the very least a desire within the Harper government to change the way the SWC operates. Many have argued in the newspapers I have analyzed that the goal is much more exhaustive than that, suggesting that the goal of the Harper government is to disable the organization entirely¹⁶.

While this is in itself worthy of note, it is incredibly interesting to understand how media interpret and communicate these events to the public. Additionally, in presenting the SWC cuts to the public, how did media talk about feminism and feminists generally? This case was selected because it represents such a pivotal moment for Canadian feminism and because SWC has been such a pivotal node in the Canadian women's movement as well as the 'women's state' more generally. As such, media's treatment of the event is important to understand, since it is the primary way through which most Canadians received information about the cuts.

The goal of the thesis is to understand the image of feminists and feminism created in Canadian print media, so naturally many of the categories and codes developed

¹⁶ e.g. Author Unknown, "MPs Join Fight to Restore Women's Aid Funding." *The Globe and Mail*. December 11, 2006. A5., Author Unknown, "Push on Tories to Restore Programs." *The Toronto Star*. December 11, 2006. A10.

for this content analysis directly reflect the subject matter by asking questions about representation. These questions use defined terms and categories inspired by feminist media research, and are meant to encourage the researcher to look for ways in which women are stereotypically represented and cases where representation is contrary to what would be predicted by feminist media theory.

Because a great deal of feminist media theory also suggests that media promote a post-feminist understanding of the women's movement, questions regarding the tone of articles and the way articles may suggest that feminism is irrelevant were also asked. Questions of this nature allow me to discern if the post-feminism frame identified in other forms of media or in other countries holds true in the case of Canadian print coverage of cuts to the SWC.

Further, as the cuts to SWC are indicative of the dramatic changes in the relationship between the state and organized feminism in Canada over the past few decades (e.g., Burt, 1990; Newman and White 2006), questions regarding media's decisions to communicate that shift were also asked, largely by analyzing how news presented the relationship between the government and SWC and if news chose to provide a history of the organization in its coverage of the event.

Selection of Papers

Research has shown that those seeking political knowledge will more frequently turn to newspapers than to television (Chaffee and Frank, 1996). Reading a newspaper is a significant correlate of political knowledge (e.g., Gidengil et al. 2004). Because of the

important role newspapers play in the formation of political knowledge, print news was the media format selected for this thesis.

As outlined briefly in previous discussion, the content analysis was performed on articles from three large papers in Canada that together are typically perceived to span the left-right spectrum of mainstream Canadian print media (e.g., Aldridge, 2001; Goodyear-Grant et al., 2004; Jiwani, 2005). *The Globe and Mail* and the *National Post* are both national in scope. The *Globe*, which offers a solidly centrist perspective, has a weekly circulation of 2,014,441 (Canadian Newspaper Association, 2006), making it the most widely read national paper and therefore incredibly important to examine. The *National Post* was selected, because it is the other – in some ways competing – large-circulation national paper in Canada, reaching 1,387,462 Canadians weekly (Ibid.). The *Post* is also thought to offer a centre-right perspective. Finally, while not a truly national paper, the *Toronto Star*, typically thought to offer a ‘socially progressive’, centre-left perspective, has the largest circulation of any paper in Canada, reaching 3,258,599 Canadians weekly (Ibid.). Because of the sheer number of people this last paper reaches and its left-leaning perspective, it was also an important paper to examine. In total, these papers combined reach a large portion of the Canadian adult population and offer a range, however restricted, of political perspectives, making the messages they present all the more important to examine.

Time Frame of Coverage and Article Selection

The time frame from which the sample of news stories was drawn begins one week before the announcement of the cuts, on September 21st 2006 – when speculation started

that SWC was at risk of losing funding – to six months following the cuts. The last article examined is dated March 31st 2007. This time period was chosen because it provides sufficient time to analyze how coverage of the cuts, as well as the responses to the cuts by groups, unfolded in news media. Since the cuts were announced at the end of September but not enacted until April, the decision to examine news articles that spanned a six-month period was taken in order to examine coverage of the event from the announcement to the enactment of the cuts.

Articles were selected from within the chosen time period by searching for terms such as “Status of Women” and “budget” in all three papers.¹⁷ Factiva was the database used to identify relevant articles, and I also examined a random selection from all three papers, chosen from the two months following the announcement of the cuts, on microfiche to ensure that the results from Factiva were accurate. Once all of these articles had been compiled, they were further scaled back. Often articles would mention SWC and Bev Oda only in passing, with the main focus of the story having nothing to do with the cuts to the organization or feminism in Canada. These stories were not used in the final analysis. Additionally, during the selected time period, Doris Anderson passed away. Doris Anderson had been very influential in the development of SWC as well as other women’s organizations in Canada, and often articles paying tribute to her would mention SWC and her contribution to organized feminism in Canada. However, these articles did not touch on SWC in recent years or on the cuts that had recently affected the organization, so none of these articles were used in the final analysis. While both sets of articles talk about SWC, the focus of these articles was more often on the individual –

¹⁷ The search terms used were “Status of Women”, “Status of Women cuts”, “budget cuts”, “budget”, “Conservative government”, “Bev Oda” and “Stephen Harper”.

Bev Oda or Doris Anderson – and not about either feminism or SWC. After extraneous articles were cut from the total, the number of articles coded was 42.

Coding

Each article was coded using the established coding grid (see Appendix 1 for full coding grid). Every question on the grid was posed to each article and answered. If the question was not appropriate for the content of a particular article, answers were coded to reflect that. Each article was tracked with an individual identification number, so that all data collected from the article – both qualitative and quantitative - could be readily compared to the original news source in its entirety.

In terms of the practical mechanics of performing a content analysis, the researcher must establish in advance the kinds of questions that will be asked about each unit of communications by creating a formal coding grid. This approach to content analysis ensures that studies will seek to answer very specific questions and a hypothesis or set of hypotheses. The questions that were asked about each aspect of a news story are put together in a document (the coding grid) which can be applied to each media text. A coding grid is akin to a survey, for it asks a series of questions about each unit of communication analyzed in the study, and the coder or coders systematically complete a separate ‘survey’ for each news story. To put it more concretely, in this thesis instead of asking, “what is the image of feminism created in media?” I constructed a coding grid – which is included in entirety in appendix one, as mentioned above – that asked questions about each newspaper story such as “are feminists presented as out-of-touch?” or “are feminists presented as “representative?” Each of these categories was created through the

extensive literature review presented in Chapter Two. Based on the kinds of results other researchers had found in their studies of media, I was able to create categories to test my specific hypotheses¹⁸ about print coverage of the cuts to SWC in the fall of 2006. By doing this, I have made my research more replicable, in part, because I am searching for particular terms or phrases.

To promote objectivity as far as possible, as well as to define the political project of the research, content analysis employs extensive coding. As discussed earlier, coding is the way that the categories of the content analysis, the very questions the researcher seeks to answer, are operationalized. Once codes and categories are established, they are applied to the individual unit of analysis. In the case of this study, the unit of analysis is the individual newspaper article. I use articles derived from three newspapers: the *Globe and Mail*, the *National Post* and the *Toronto Star*. I include three types of articles in my content analysis: hard news stories, columns/editorials and letters to the editor. Hard news stories are stories typically featured in the first few pages of each section of a newspaper. These stories are meant to provide the facts about an event or an issue, and are traditionally thought of as “neutral” news pieces. Columns and editorials are typically found in the last few pages of the first section of a newspaper. They are typically pieces written by staff providing their opinions on an issue, supporting their opinion through the use of facts. Letters to the editor are most often the responses of the public to these columns and editorials, and occasionally to hard news pieces. Letters to the editor can be written by any member of the public, but often feature contrasting opinions or perspectives by prominent figures affected by the issues under examination in the story.

¹⁸ See Chapter One for outline of specific hypotheses.

Looking Forward

The next chapter presents the results of the content analysis, beginning with a brief outline of the history of the relationship between organizations within government, like the Status of Women Canada (and other feminist government bodies which have existed in the past 40 years), and the Canadian media. Following this outline, media coverage of the cuts is analyzed and results are presented.

Chapter Four:

Institutional Bodies that Matter: Analyzing Coverage

Before analyzing print news coverage of the cuts to SWC in the fall of 2006 it is important to contextualize the relationship between SWC and media. Chapter One examined the evolution of the women's state in Canada, but it is also important to understand the interaction of SWC with media. SWC has had a long history with both the government and media, and its relationships with both have been strained at times. Although my content analysis looks specifically at the Conservative government's cuts to the organization in the fall of 2006, the evolution of SWC underscores two critical points: first, SWC has occupied an integral role in the Canadian women's movement and, second, media have often failed to adequately communicate the shifts in the relationship between SWC and the government, as indicated by the Harper government's deep cuts to the SWC.

Historical Context: Media Coverage of RCSW and SWC

Part of the reason I was initially interested in analyzing news coverage of the cuts to SWC is because there is remarkably little work on media's treatment of the organization and its relationship with media. Freeman (2001) addresses the early years of the movement and the relationship between news media and SWC, but the time period she analyzes does not extend beyond 1971 and is therefore mostly focused on the RCSW. This account is still relevant, not only because the RCSW provided the impetus for the creation of SWC, but also because Freeman clearly illustrates that from the beginning organized feminism was reliant on media for communicating its agenda. As such, it is instructive to start with a

brief discussion of the historic relationship between SWC/organized feminism and Canadian media, which sets the background for the contemporary case study I examine in this chapter.

Freeman rightly points out that from the RCSW's inception, Florence Bird – the chair of the RCSW and herself a trailblazing female journalist in Canada – recognized that news coverage of the Commission had the power to be incredibly influential, with the possibility that negative coverage could be very damaging just as positive coverage could help the Commission garner support and make greater changes (2001: 28). Aware that the Commission pushed boundaries, the group leading the Commission's research was careful about establishing its mandate for fear of how particular types of wordings may have been interpreted. The Commission debated the type of language most suitable to use in addressing women's issues. Since the Commission and the women's movement at the time were primarily interested in the pursuit of equality, it was clear that the phrasing of the mandate would have to reflect this. However, recognizing that many in society were wary of such "feminist attacks" on established social relationships, the committee opted to talk about 'equal opportunity' instead of 'equality', which it felt would be too politicized or radical in this context (Ibid.: 29). The term 'equality' suggested a need for societal and institutional overhaul, and those involved with the Commission were fearful of how media might interpret such a drastic call to action. Instead, members felt that 'equal opportunity' carried less drastic connotations.

Even from its inception, the power of the media to shape the Commission was clear. Knowing that how media framed the goals and agendas of the Commission would be vitally important to how successfully it was received by Canadians en masse, the

Commission was careful to choose language that would encourage positive media attention – a delicate balancing act in the early days of the second-wave women’s movement. Research has shown that media can be powerful shapers of movements (e.g., Gitlin, 1980; Rhodes, 1995; Farrell, 1995), as discussed in detail in Chapter Two, and this is a clear example of a group consciously shaping the presentation of its political vision to make it more palatable to news media.

Despite the Commission’s caution, its news coverage was initially more negative than positive (Freeman, 2001: 29). It became clear that the media tended to focus on areas of conflict within the Commission or to frame the Commission as ‘man-hating’. In a particularly telling quote from the Winnipeg daily newspaper *The Tribune*, a journalist states,

The report on the status of women is a peculiarly feminine document – intriguing, expensive, a little late, wisely illogical and its beauty is in the eye of the beholder. The basic theme of the report is that women should be the legal, moral and social equals of men – except in one or two instances where women should be more than equal.¹⁹

Clearly, some of the journalists of the day were not exercising objectivity. Nor did these perspectives espouse statements that supported a feminist agenda. As a result of negative coverage, the Commission attempted to regulate the kinds of briefs media institutions and journalists could access (Ibid.: 36).

Overall, the coverage of the Commission remained more negative than positive, mainly because the claims of the Commission were largely presented by media as highly contentious (Ibid.: 236). However, in time, journalists did soften and ran follow-up stories that included quotes and interviews with feminists (Ibid.: 223). Although much of the

¹⁹ Author Unknown. “God Bless’ em.” *The Tribune* December 9 1970, 6.

news framed feminism in an unsympathetic way, the fact that these perspectives received coverage at all is noteworthy.

Media coverage continued to be an ongoing struggle for feminist organizations in Canada. During the Meech Lake and the Charlottetown Accord debates, when feminist mobilization in Canada was highly active, media outreach was critical (Dobrowolsky, 2000: 127). Those inside the movement understood that coverage would be integral to successful political action. Even during such important times for feminism in Canada, journalists acknowledged that “media were not all that interested in feminist concerns” (Ibid.: 128). Media’s resistance to adequately covering feminist agendas is clearly one of the major struggles facing feminist action in Canada. During the rounds of constitutional negotiations from the early-1980s to the early-1990s, media eventually realized that reporting on feminist action was important because of the capacity of these groups to seriously affect constitutional change (Ibid.).

Coverage of feminism continues to be highly event focused. Feminist groups have an easier time making the news during times when big events are occurring, such as during the constitutional debates and following the Montreal Massacre – where Marc Lépine explicitly targeted and killed feminist women (or at least women he believed to be feminists). Yet, the ongoing concerns that feminist organizations have mobilized around for the past 30 years do not resonate within media coverage unless they can be closely affiliated with an event. For example, violence against women gets coverage every year in early December on the anniversary of the Montreal École Polytechnique shooting, but is not as prominent during other parts of the year.²⁰

²⁰ Iyengar (1991) proposes a model of media theory which helps to explain this trend. The theory will be elaborated on later in this chapter.

While coverage of the movement is cyclical, at times making feminism more prominent in media, getting women's issues the kind of coverage many feminists believe is necessary for successful political action continues to be a struggle for women's groups. The importance of such an analysis as undertaken here lies in its capacity to articulate the media landscape currently with regard to feminism in the hope that it can help feminists change their presentation in media in the future.

The Cuts are Announced and the Ladies are Losing: Coverage of the SWC Cuts

The overarching goal of this thesis is to analyze how Canadian news media depict feminism. This topic has been further divided into three more specific questions or categories, each of which will be examined in this chapter through the content analysis.

First, what was the representation of feminism in Canadian print media of the government cuts to SWC in the fall of 2006, and did coverage reflect and fit with existing literature on gender, media, and politics? The literature suggests that coverage of feminism, as well as women involved in politics, will focus on negative attributes and create negative stereotypes through which viewers are meant to understand either feminism or political women. Research questions were asked that were meant to highlight ways that women – as feminists or political actors – were presented, seeking to understand if these presentations were positive or negative, and if they followed many of the stereotypical presentations the literature suggested would be present.

Second, in coverage of the cuts to SWC, did Canadian print journalists present a post-feminist perspective, a pattern of coverage discussed and criticized in much work on feminist media theory? This second question is especially significant, because the

message of the Harper government about the cuts was that the women of Canada no longer needed SWC because equality had been achieved, a claim deeply contested by women's organizations and activists.

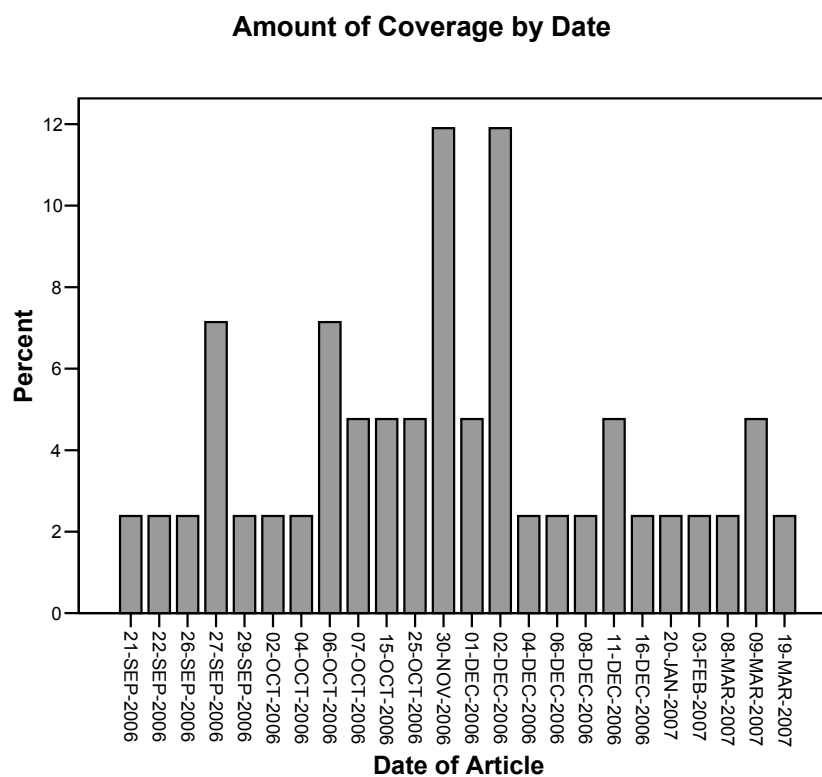
Finally, the third issue I examine concerns media's capacity to articulate the relationship between government and feminist organizations in Canada, including but not limited to SWC. Since understanding these relationships is central to understanding the role of feminism in Canada, as well as the way government has liaised with women's groups and incorporated feminist bodies into government structures, it is worthwhile to ask how media have transmitted this information to the wider public. Additionally, these questions engage in examining the relationship between movements and media. While it was hypothesized that the government and the movements themselves would be promoting different motivations with respect to the cuts, research was interested in seeing what argument, if any, received more prominent media coverage. Because the literature suggests that media will rely on entrenched sources, like those in government, and will be less likely to cover messages emanating from movements, it was hypothesized that the government's perspective would be more prominent in coverage of the cuts and that feminist organizations would struggle for media coverage.

Results

The three largest papers in the country – *The Globe and Mail*, *the National Post*, and the *Toronto Star* – ran a combined total of 42 news items about the cuts to SWC. Temporally, the coverage came primarily in three waves. As Figure 1 illustrates, naturally, the first wave of print coverage came immediately following the announcement of the cuts, which

occurred on September 25th 2006, with the federal budget. The second wave of coverage, which had even more stories, came in late November and early December.

Figure 1

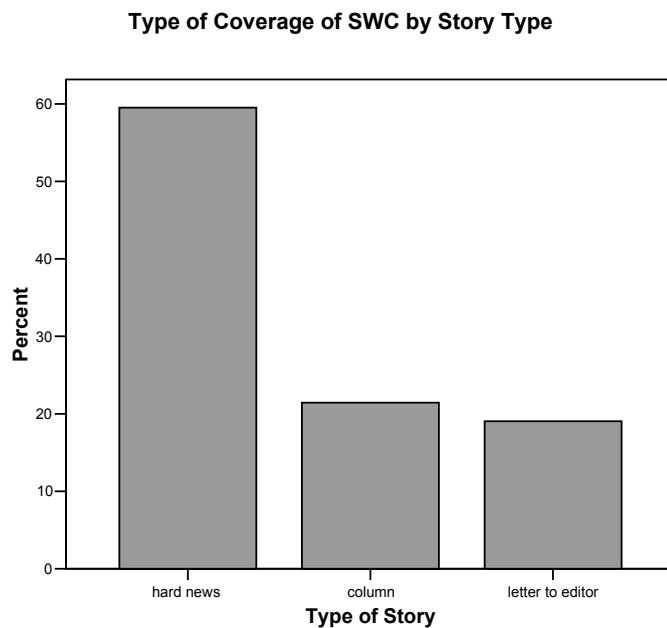


Five stories about the cuts were run on each of November 30, 2006 and December 2, 2006. This second wave of stories was initiated largely by two events: first, Bev Oda's November 29th announcement that 12 of SWC's 16 regional offices would be closed on April 1, 2007 and, second, the Liberal convention held on December 1, 2006 where the Party released its 'Pink Book' calling on government to take a greater role in increasing women's participation in politics. At this conference Belinda Stronach specifically made reference to the gender-based insults she has endured from male politicians, suggesting that such commentary is hardly inviting for women interested in political careers. Media

linked these negative comments from male politicians about their female counterparts – such as allegations that Peter McKay called Stronach a dog – to the recent cuts to the SWC. Finally, a third wave of news coverage of the SWC cuts came on the days leading up to International Women’s Day on March 8, 2007.

The majority of the coverage (60 percent) was delivered in the form of ‘hard news’ stories (Figure 2). For the remaining stories, 21 percent of the coverage was in the form of columns and 19 percent was in the form of letters to the editor. Generally, the coverage was well placed in the papers (data not shown). Forty-three percent of the stories were presented in the first ten pages of the paper (A1-A10). However, photos, which often draw attention to the story and act as a marker of the significance for a news story, were included in only five of the 42 stories.

Figure 2



In the stories analyzed, SWC is mentioned in 95 percent of the articles, which can be partially attributed to the way in which articles were selected,²¹ as discussed in the previous chapter. However, articles dealing with the budget were included in the selection of articles, and with the exception of two of those articles, they also addressed the cuts to SWC. This suggests that the cuts to SWC were certainly among the most newsworthy and prominent items included in the 2007 budget. Interestingly, only 71 percent of the articles mentioned feminism, which suggests that a significant portion of articles that mentioned SWC did not mention feminism (or related acronyms). Since SWC is a government body that is decidedly feminist, it is somewhat surprising that the coverage did not always link the two concepts.

Representations

How is feminism represented in Canadian print media? Some feminist media theorists suggest that feminism is represented in overtly negative ways, ways which conform to established stereotypes that feminism is ‘man-hating’, ‘bra-burning’, lesbian, unattractive and lunatic, as discussed in Chapter Two. Negative representations have undeniably been part of media coverage of feminism in the past; however, such terms and obvious stereotyping were not found in my analysis. When negative stereotyping has been used in the past it was often done in ways that were very overt. Feminists were described as lesbians (the term being used in such a way as to imply that being homosexual was reprehensible or somehow explains feminists’ assumed man-hating tendencies), or that feminist women were necessarily unattractive or ‘manly’. Indeed, these types of

²¹ To select articles I ran separate searches in Factiva using search the terms “budget cuts” and “SWC” and “women’s movement”, I then examined any article which dealt with the coverage of SWC in terms of the budget cuts or which examined the budget cuts on a more general level.

characterizations have been used in the past to portray feminism and feminists as deviant and to alienate the public from feminist agendas.

These messages, which were once much more common, were not found in any of the coverage of SWC. That is not to suggest coverage was without offensive labeling. In a *National Post* story, a reporter, Martin Loney, referred to the “incestuous and well-lubricated world of Canadian feminists”.²² These descriptors conjure questionable imagery, especially since Loney did not elaborate on what he meant by such terms. He later suggested that feminist groups did not care if they were dealing with Conservative or Liberal politicians, as it was business as usual by suggesting feminists were more interested in money than politics. Yet, again, he never expanded on what he meant by the terms “incestuous” or “well-lubricated”. In a *Globe and Mail* article, Laura Penny suggested that “Lady Cons [meaning women who supported the Conservative party] were quick todeclare their distain for the feminazis who presume to represent all women”.²³ This phrase was not buried in the article either, but was the focus of the entire second paragraph of the story, greatly increasing the probability that it would be read. Equating feminists with Nazis through the use of such a term is certainly nothing new, but it is still shocking to see such an unfair and politically charged characterization receive press. It suggests to audiences that there are links between the two, that feminists can be understood as extreme, irrational, fanatic, even violent in the pursuit of their agenda. It also suggests that the very goals of the feminist movement are irrational or entirely misaligned, perhaps even harmful for society. However, these two phrases stand out, not only because of their offensive nature, but also because they are the most extreme in their

²² Martin Loney. “Liberal Women Stuck in Pink Past”. *National Post*. December 2, 2006, FP15.

²³ Laura Penny. “Liberal “Pink Book” Makes Women on All Sides See Red”. *The Globe and Mail*. December 2, 2006, F9.

depiction of feminists and certainly do not represent the bulk of reportage on feminists in Canada.

SWC was never once represented as unattractive, homosexual, or ‘man-hating’, negative stereotypes linked to feminist groups in the past. Historically, feminists have been presented as either unwilling or unable to engage in traditional male-female relationships, the implication being that this explained why feminists would be disgruntled and lash out (e.g., Dow, 1996: 93). This interpretation of feminism has made the movement easier to disregard. It marginalizes feminist motivations for political action and again makes the discourse male-centred by presenting feminist women as the ‘women scorned seeking revenge’, instead of acknowledging that feminist claims have a strong basis. In the case of Canadian print coverage of the cuts to SWC, the presentation of feminism has not fallen into such obviously essentialist categories.

Characterizations of SWC as militant and extreme still occurred, but only in a small portion of articles. The characterization of SWC as militant was found in 5 percent of the articles, and the characterization of SWC as extreme was, likewise, presented in 5 percent of the articles. While most journalists do not marginalize feminist actors by calling them ‘radical’ and implying that their political motivations are somehow misaligned or too severe to be given credence, there are still those who insist on situating feminist actions in such a way. This shift in language demonstrates that organizations like SWC have started to see the fruits of their labours realized, as journalists become more accommodating of their messages and less willing to equate feminism with extreme politics or a radical fringe. However, to characterize a government agency such as SWC as either militant or extreme is interesting, because in terms of the spectrum of political

actions undertaken by feminist organizations, it is more moderate than many that operate in Canada and was identified as a middle-of-the-road liberal feminist organization at its inception (Philips, 1991: 763). What this type of stereotyping is likely to do is to suggest that any group more radical than SWC is so extreme as to be laughable, undermining the criticisms that any groups other than SWC would levy at the state and other gendered institutions.

Interestingly, print coverage of the cuts to SWC was more sympathetic to SWC specifically than it was to feminism generally. For example, articles were more likely to characterize feminism as extreme than they were to depict SWC as extreme (10% of articles versus 5% of articles); articles characterized both feminism and SWC as militant in roughly the same proportions (about 5% for each). Although some feminist groups have appropriated words like ‘militant’ – employing them to impart a positive message about the passion and dedication women’s groups bring to their political platforms – this was not the way the term was employed in print coverage of the cuts to SWC. In one story, as has already been mentioned, feminists were labeled “feminazis”;²⁴ another article identified the women and the groups who align against the cuts as “radical”.²⁵ Yet another article suggested that feminist organizations and agencies funded through tax dollars operated under agendas which wanted nothing more than to “embarrass Canada before international bodies.”²⁶ All of these articles support the idea that feminist groups in Canada are militant. However in the instances where reporters implied that these groups were militant, the articles were not supportive of the SWC or its mandate.

²⁴ Laura Penny. “Liberal ‘Pink Book’ Makes Women on All Sides See Red.” *The Globe and Mail*. December 2, 2006. F9.

²⁵ Lorne Gunter. “Harper’s Unconservative Spending Spree.” *The National Post*. March 19, 2007. A15.

²⁶ Martin Loney. “Liberal Women Stuck in Pink Past.” *The National Post*. December 2, 2006. FP 15.

Although there were commonalities among the three papers in terms of their coverage of this event, there were notable differences as well. Across many of the variables I use to measure representation of feminism and SWC, the three newspapers tended to fall along the anticipated political spectrum, with the *National Post* being the most conservative paper, the *Globe and Mail* being centrist and the *Toronto Star* giving the most liberal perspective on both SWC and feminism in general (See Table 1). As Table 1 illustrates, the *Post* was by far the least supportive of SWC, with only 15 percent of its articles presenting a sympathetic perspective on SWC. The *Globe* and the *Star* were both much more supportive of SWC, with 57 percent of the *Globe's* articles and 67 percent of the *Star's* articles offering supportive commentary on the agency.

Table 1: Tone of SWC Articles by Newspaper

Newspaper	% Supportive (#)	% Oppositional (#)	Neutral or Balanced in Tone (#)	Total
Globe and Mail	57% (8)	36% (5)	7% (1)	100% (14)
National Post	15% (2)	23% (3)	62% (8)	100% (13)
Toronto Star	67% (10)	7% (1)	27% (4)	100% (15)
Total	(20)	(9)	(18)	(42)

What is interesting to note is that all three papers were both less supportive and less oppositional with respect to feminism than to SWC and more prone to provide neutral or balanced coverage of feminism (data not shown). Despite this more neutral categorization of feminism overall, feminism was categorized as extreme and angry more times than was SWC, despite the fact that SWC was mentioned in stories more often than feminism. This suggests that coverage of feminism, when not neutral, is more prone to being overtly positive or negative than coverage of SWC. Characterizations of feminism

as extreme or angry fall well within what would be anticipated using a feminist media theory model, as discussed in Chapter Two.

This fact that SWC was not always often identified with feminism is interesting because it suggests that scholars like Varvus (2002), Aronson (2003) and Huddy (1997) are correct when talking about some of the negative perspectives associated with the feminist label. The feminist label has very particular connotations that are pervasive and generally negative. Although SWC is a feminist organization, it was only explicitly identified as feminist in 21 percent of the articles in which the agency was mentioned. This is an interesting finding. SWC is undoubtedly a feminist organization; its founding was directly connected to the resurgence of the women's movement during the 1960s and early-1970s. Yet SWC is no longer largely identified as feminist by media. This may suggest that media believe audiences are already familiar with the organization and its mandate. However, it may also be indicative of a desire on the part of media to distinguish the organization from feminism, knowing the negative label feminism tends to attract.

These findings suggest that some journalists are willing to extend support to well established organizations within government – SWC – so long as such organizations are not identified with a cause that is much more negatively politicized – in this case feminism. Despite feminism being presented in more neutral terms than the SWC, it is clear that many journalists make a distinction between feminism and SWC.

Interestingly, there do seem to be notable sex differences in coverage of the cuts among male and female reporters, a common finding in other feminist media analyses (e.g., Robinson, 2005; Ross, 2002; van Zoonen 1994). In my content analysis, results

indicate that female journalists were much more likely to mention feminism in stories dealing with the cuts. Of the 57 percent of articles written by an identified author, 38 percent were written by women. Of the 25 (of 42) journalists whose sex was identifiable, 14 women mentioned feminism while only five men did. Male journalists accounted for only eight of the stories dealing with SWC, while female journalists accounted for twice that, with 17 stories written about the agency. Not only were women journalists more likely to mention SWC in their stories, as Table 2 illustrates, female journalists were much more likely to write articles which presented a tone supportive of SWC. Forty seven percent of articles written by women were supportive of SWC, whereas only 25 percent of articles written by men were supportive of SWC.

Table 2: Tone of SWC Articles Based on Sex of Author

Sex of Journalist	% Supportive (#)	% Oppositional (#)	% Neutral or Balanced in Tone (#)	Total
Male	25% (2)	37.5% (3)	37.5% (3)	100% (8)
Female	47% (8)	24% (4)	29% (5)	100% (17)
Unknown	59% (10)	12% (2)	29% (5)	100% (17)
Total	(20)	(9)	(13)	(42)

Although 40 percent of the articles analyzed in this study had no identified author and 3 percent of articles were written by an author whose sex was not discernable,²⁷ there was a marked difference in the sex of journalists covering the stories in cases where sex was attributable. This suggests that despite some academics' claims that the sex of a journalist makes no difference to the content of their stories (e.g., Chambers, Steiner, and Fleming 2004; Liebler and Smith 1997), this was not the case for the media coverage of the cuts to SWC. Not only were women more likely to write about these cuts, thereby

²⁷ Despite efforts to find additional information on this one journalist, none could be found, and thus this journalist's sex was indeterminate.

bringing increased attention to the situation, women journalists were also more likely to write articles that supported SWC. Female journalists may have taken on this story as a matter of choice or personal political belief, but it is more likely that assignments were arranged through a gendered division of labour in the newsroom, wherein women were assigned to cover stories about women (e.g., Robinson 2005). Male journalists were most likely to focus on the budget in their coverage, whereas female journalists focused most on cuts to SWC, followed by articles looking more generally at feminism in Canada.

It may be precisely because of the SWC's role as a government organization that it is seen as less feminist by journalists. Feminist organizations have often raised issue with the state, operating from a role that is outside of government, even if funding flows from government. Despite the close affiliation of feminism with the state in Canada, there have still been issues which have mobilized women's groups against the state. It is entirely possible that SWC is seen as less politicized than an entirely public feminist organization might be. Also, SWC's ostensible position as a representative for all women in government suggests that it is just that, representative, or at least more likely to be treated as such by media.

While Aronson (2003) is able to demonstrate that women have begun to distance themselves from or qualify their involvement with the feminist label, this is less likely to happen with an institution within government that is meant to be representative on a wide scale. Perhaps news media's more supportive tone toward SWC reflects the well-established relationship between journalists and government, who often seek political figures when looking for quotes or support for stories because of their position as official sources (Barasko and Schaffner, 2006: 26). These relationships increase the likelihood of

journalists liaising with both elected and appointed politicians regarding the cuts and the agency. The same sort of relationship does not appear in the coverage between nongovernmental feminist organizations and media personnel.

In fact, NAC, which has a long history and relationship with SWC and is thought by many to be the voice of the pan-Canadian English feminist movement (Vickers, 2000), is not mentioned once in any article dealing with either the budget or the cuts to SWC. This omission is quite surprising given the established relationship between NAC and SWC, as well as the prominence of the NAC in the Canadian women's movement more generally. Many of the individuals involved with SWC, such as Doris Anderson, have also been intimately involved with NAC. Indeed, NAC seems the obvious choice for interviews or perspectives regarding the cuts. Yet, this organization has no representation in print media coverage of the cuts in three of Canada's most important dailies.

This finding is interesting, as it relates to the questions posed about the relationships between media and movements in Chapter Two. Did NAC lack the necessary resources or relationships with journalists which would have enabled its perspective to have been included in print coverage of the cuts? Was NAC unable to articulate a message about the cuts that newsmakers found compelling enough to include? Why was NAC overlooked, when other feminist and anti-feminist groups, like R.E.A.L Women and NAWL, were covered? Although it is not possible within the scope of this research to answer such questions it is certainly interesting to pose them and speculate about the possible answers.

This also raises interesting questions about the capacity of media to transmit to audiences the power of feminist movements to make change. Although NAC has been an

effective lobby group in the past, especially during the Meech Lake and Charlottetown accords, its absence in media does not communicate accurately about the capacity such organizations have to change government policies. It certainly does not inform the audience of ways groups like NAC have carved out a role for themselves within political institutions.

Although it has been very closely linked and historically funded by government, NAC is not a governmental body. Feminist media theory makes claims about the propensity of news media to ignore that which occurs in the realm of the private sphere, or to treat that which is expressly gendered as belonging to the realm of the private sphere, which is linked more closely with popular culture than with news (van Zoonen, 2005: 23). Conversely, media may overemphasize aspects of the private sphere by focusing on the personal or sexual relations of individuals while ignoring or trivializing their public initiatives (Ross, 2002: 12). While NAC is not entirely private – it is a public organization made up of women’s groups across the country – it is not as public as a government agency, nor does it have the same public status. NAC continues to be marginalized as a ‘special interest’ group, and special interest groups have greater difficulty attracting media coverage. It may well be that journalists attempted to contact NAC, but were unable to get in touch with anyone. Given the limited funding and staffing of the organization, this may be a possibility.²⁸ As Thrall (2006) has suggested, the resources a group can direct toward pursuing media coverage will greatly affect their capacity to attain it, and NAC is not a resource-rich organization. However, NAC has

²⁸ In fact, I tried to contact the organization myself regarding the cuts and was unable to get information from them. Nobody at the organization contacted me after an initial email suggesting that they would get back to me. In recent years, NAC has experienced a significant shortage in funding and is no longer the powerful organization they once were, which helps to explain an organizational inability to respond to inquires regarding the cuts to SWC .

wider representation than any of the nongovernmental groups that were mentioned in coverage of the cuts and, as such, is curious in its omission from print coverage of the cuts to SWC over the fall and winter of 2006/2007.

The two nongovernmental groups that received the most opportunity to comment on the cuts in print media were the National Association of Women and the Law (NAWL)²⁹ and R.E.A.L Women.³⁰ Interestingly, these two groups were presented as equally viable and representative of women, each contributing a different perspective. R.E.A.L. Women was presented as offering the alternative to feminism, and NAWL was presented as a champion of the causes of feminism and the necessity of SWC. In an interview, the director of law reform at NAWL suggested that the reforms made to SWC's structure made the agency's focus much too narrow and placed too much attention on "straight delivery of service rather than on the larger issue".³¹ Clearly, the NAWL's position was quite sympathetic to the SWC.

Since many of the female politicians interviewed linked the decision to cut SWC's funding to the Conservative ideological agenda, R.E.A.L Women became the obvious choice for both journalists and Conservative government officials when searching for commentary from a women's group who supported the cuts. In an interview featured on October 6th in the *National Post*, the spokesperson for R.E.A.L. Women was incredibly supportive of the cuts to SWC. In the story, R.E.A.L Women was presented as a group

²⁹ NAWL was founded in 1974. NAWL works as a feminist not-for-profit organization which seeks to promote equality for women, largely through legal reform, legal research, lobby and education. Until the budget cuts of 2006 NAWL received considerable funding through SWC, but no longer qualifies for support based on its research and lobby driven mandate.

³⁰ R.E.A.L. Women (Realistic. Equal. Active. for Life.) presents itself as the women's group that is the alternative to feminism. The group has actively tried to get the government to stop funding SWC, and is active with other political projects wherein the women involved with the group typically align to try and stop feminist actions.

³¹ Jennifer Ditchburn. "Women Let Down, MPs Tell Oda; Conservative Funding Cuts Denounced Minister Deflects Calls for Resignation." *The Toronto Star*. October 6, 2006. A6.

founded on the abolishment of SWC and organizations like it, arguing that SWC is “biased toward a feminist ideology and fuels treatment of women as victims”.³²

It is not problematic that R.E.A.L. Women was given an opportunity to comment on the cuts; rather, the troublesome issue is more that news media presented all of the groups interviewed as having equal levels of popular support. This is a prime example of the “false balance” that Gitlin (1980) critiqued in coverage of supporters and dissenters of the Vietnam War. Two ideas or groups are presented as having equal support on an issue when in fact one has much wider support (Ibid.). The effect, naturally, is to enhance the legitimacy of the more marginal perspective or group beyond its true support base. R.E.A.L Women is a powerful conservative women’s group, and as such its perspective is important. However, it is not nearly as well supported as many of the other feminist groups in Canada, and certainly is not nearly as widely supported as NAC, which is a long-established, well-supported pan-Canadian feminist organization.³³ Yet, R.E.A.L Women was given space in print media for commenting on the cuts to SWC, and NAC was not mentioned once, a finding that is reminiscent of Tuchman’s work on the “symbolic annihilation” of women in news (1978), but in this case, it is the marginalization of feminist women that has occurred. This kind of presentation warrants concern since it suggests that R.E.A.L Women has more support than it may, and

³² Jennifer Ditchburn. “Women Let Down, MPs Tell Oda: Conservative Funding Cuts Denounced, Minister Deflects Call for Resignation”. *The National Post*. October 6th 2006, A7.

³³ Comparing the two organizations is difficult because individuals cannot align with NAC, only groups can, and R.E.A.L. Women measures its membership based on individual affiliation. However, in 1988, R.E.A.L. Women stated their own membership to be 45,000 individuals across Canada (Steuter, 1992: 297). At the same time, NAC had 493 affiliated organizations (Vikers, 1993: Appendix B), some of which are quite large, like the YWCA and regional SWC committees. Based on the sheer number of membership organizations and the likelihood that many of the organizations had memberships well over 100, many in the 1000s, it is reasonable to hypothesize that the membership of NAC is significantly larger than that of R.E.A.L. Women. Dobrowolsky also suggests that R.E.A.L. Women is an organization of limited membership despite its attention from both political figures and the media (2000: 126).

completely ignores the support that NAC enjoys. The image of the active women's organization in this case is not even a feminist organization, but rather of a group of women decidedly opposed to feminist values.

Another negative aspect of R.E.A.L Women's prominence in news about the cuts is that the organization and its supporters consistently characterize feminism as a movement that portrays women as victims and whiners.³⁴ The same characterization of feminism is espoused by women like Camilla Paglia, who has been already briefly mentioned. This kind of coverage undermines feminist claims about who has power in institutions and who does not, because it marginalizes the feminist perspective by portraying it as irrational or stemming from a place of strategic victimhood, instead of allowing for the possibility that feminist claims about power and patriarchy have credibility.

That is not to suggest that feminist groups and feminist women got no coverage in media. They did, and their responses to the cuts will be analyzed in the section dealing with coverage that offered a post-feminist perspective, because typically their responses to the cuts were directed toward the commentary from both government and the media that suggested feminist organizations like SWC were no longer necessary.

Lastly, SWC and women like Minister Bev Oda were not necessarily sexualized in the coverage, as might be expected given past research on coverage of women political figures (van Zoonen, 1994, 2005; Goddu, 1999). Yet, this does not necessarily mean that sexually-charged representations do not continue to occur regarding women involved in politics. During the period of analysis Belinda Stronach – responsible for the Status of Women portfolio in the Liberal shadow cabinet at the time – was named in the Tai Domi

³⁴ Norma Greenway. “‘Oda letting women down,’ NDP says.” *The National Post*. October 6, 2006. A7

divorce case.³⁵ This brought considerable attention to Stronach's personal life, and resulted in negative coverage of her as a 'home-wrecker' and a woman of questionable morality. Furthermore, then-Premier of Alberta Ralph Klein made explicit reference to Stronach's past relationship with Peter MacKay – then-Minister of Foreign Affairs, recently appointed Minister of National Defence – when Klein 'roasted' her at a charity event in Calgary in November 2006.³⁶ While this coverage does not expressly pertain to the coverage of the cuts to SWC, it did not escape notice by readers. One letter to the editor demanded printed apologies from both the *Post* and Peter MacKay regarding the comments he had allegedly made about Belinda Stronach.³⁷ Further, the author of the letter linked sexist remarks from politicians to the SWC cuts, arguing that

whether its cuts to programs that largely affect women, removing the word "equality" from the mandate or gutting the department's research and advocacy budget, we are seeing more and more illustrations of this government's fundamental disrespect for women (Ibid.).

Even though remarks about Stronach are not necessarily directed at issues pertaining to SWC, readers drew those conclusions and made connections between the remarks about Stronach and the status of women in Canada, as evidenced by their response in letters to the editor. One of the main messages in coverage, both from Stronach in interviews and from readers through their letters,³⁸ was that the cuts were indicative of an anti-woman

³⁵ Tai Domi is a well known professional athlete, who was dating Belinda Stronach. Domi was in the process of getting a divorce from his wife, and Stronach was named in the divorce papers, spurning considerable coverage of her, as well as her relationship with Domi.

³⁶ Klein's sexist commentary went as follows: "Belinda roasted me as a Conservative last year, but of course she's a Liberal now. I wasn't surprised she crossed over – I don't think she ever did have a Conservative bone in her body ... Well, except for one." "Klein joke mars fundraiser". *Ottawa Citizen*. November 9, 2006, A5.

³⁷ Maria Minna. "Apologies due from Post, McKay." *The National Post*. October 25, 2006. A13.

³⁸ Of the eight letters to the editor printed about SWC, 63 percent were supportive of the agency, suggesting that readers saw coverage of SWC presented in such a way that they felt compelled to respond in media. Only one letter to the editor was opposed to SWC.

ethos within the Conservative Party. In this sense, the fundamental motivation for the two events – sexist comments toward women politicians and dismantling of the ‘women’s state’ – is the same: a lack of sympathy for organized feminism and for women in politics and society more generally.

Post-feminist Understandings

In line with the types of descriptors used to characterize feminism, a sizeable portion of print coverage of the cuts encouraged skepticism – sometimes subtle, at other times overt – about the vitality and importance of both SWC and feminist groups in general. Although coverage appears to have become more representative, with reporters seemingly less willing to attach identities to movements which have historically served to marginalize them, coverage is at times willing to question the need for a feminist movement at all in contemporary Canadian society. As illustrated in Table 3, an identifiable post-feminist perspective was present in 21 percent of articles analyzed, which, in turn, elicited responses in other articles arguing against the idea that feminist goals have been achieved. The fact that 21 percent of articles presented a post-feminist perspective is not to suggest that the other 79 percent of the articles presented a pro-feminist position. Often articles presented both a post-feminist perspective and a pro-feminist perspective, and in these cases the article was coded as balanced.

Table 3: Perspectives on Feminism in Articles

Perspective on Feminism	% of Articles (#)
Post-Feminist	21% (9)
Not Post-Feminist	79% (33)
Total	100% (42)

While almost half of the articles analyzed were supportive of the SWC, only 31 percent of the articles overtly praised the organization. Further, many of the terms used to describe the agency or its goals conveyed a sense that the agency had outlived its usefulness. In 19 percent of the articles, the SWC was presented as ‘out-of-touch’, meaning that as an agency, SWC no longer understands what women need and is therefore no longer relevant for Canadian women. Only one article suggested that SWC is isolated, but SWC was depicted as irrelevant or extreme in 17 percent of the articles. One column in the *Globe* suggested that SWC was a “government relic” and that the agency was “looking for an excuse to keep itself alive”.³⁹ Oda herself suggested that the agency was not providing help directly to women,⁴⁰ which certainly implies that it is an organization well out-of-touch and perhaps ‘wasting’ taxpayers’ dollars. Phrasing like this implicitly questions the viability of SWC.

Another article suggested that if Harper were to reinstate some of the funding for SWC, as was talked about in spring of 2007, the government would be “rearming those who would cut their [the government’s] throats.”⁴¹ Such violent imagery can only suggest extremism and militancy to the audience, even if the author is using the terms in a metaphorical way. It was also implied that SWC was extreme by suggesting it was ideological or even dogmatic.⁴² In the post-9/11 world, to be called ideological is to be associated with acts of extremism, as we are continually told that acts of terrorism are founded in ideology. When this term is applied to other groups, like women’s groups, this

³⁹ Author unknown. “An Agency Well Pruned.” *The Globe and Mail*. December 1, 2006. A26.

⁴⁰ Ibid; Author unknown. “12 Status of Women Offices Set to Close.” *The Toronto Star*. November 30, 2006. A11.

⁴¹ Lorne Gunter. “Harper’s Un-conservative Spending Spree.” *The National Post*. March 19, 2007. A15.

⁴² Norma Greenway. “‘Oda Letting Women Down,’ NDP says.” *The National Post*. October 6, 2006. A7.

ideological presentation suggests a lack of moderate thought and may impart to readers a sense that the feminist groups and activists are dogmatic.

Throughout the articles, even those that did not explicitly support or condone a post-feminist perspective, there was consistent skepticism about the need for an agency such as the SWC, subtly suggesting that Canadian society is indeed post-feminist. Similar to preceding analyses of newspaper differences in support of/opposition to SWC and feminism in general, there were marked differences across the three newspapers in terms of their presentation of a post-feminist perspective in coverage of the cuts. As demonstrated in Table 4, of the 21 percent of articles – or 9 out of 42, in raw numbers – that presented an explicitly post-feminist perspective, 55 percent of these were printed in *The National Post*, while *The Star* and the *Globe* each accounted for only 22.5 percent of the post-feminist articles.

Table 4: Perspectives on Feminism by Newspaper

Newspaper	Post-Feminist Perspective % (#)	Not Post-Feminist	Total (#)
National Post	55% (5)	24% (8)	(13)
Globe and Mail	22.5 % (2)	36.5% (12)	(14)
Toronto Star	22.5% (2)	39.5% (13)	(15)
Total	100% (9)	100% (33)	(42)

Clearly, the *Post*'s coverage was more likely than that of the other two papers to suggest that feminism is obsolete in Canada. To take the comparison even further, Table 5 presents data on the types of articles – hard news, opinion, or letters – where a post-feminist perspective appeared across the newspapers analyzed. Of the hard news articles that presented a post-feminist standpoint, 80 percent of them were printed in the *Post*. In contrast, the *Globe* restricted post-feminist coverage entirely to columns, and the *Star*

split the perspective evenly between hard news pieces and columns. While the *Star* presented a post-feminist perspective in one hard news story, this story was balanced in the sense that it also presented the counter-perspective that the cuts were damaging for the pursuit of gender equality and as such were detrimental to women.

Table 5: Post-Feminist Perspective by Newspaper and Story Type

Type of Story	Newspaper	Post-Feminist Perspective % (#)	Not Post-Feminist Perspective % (#)	Total (#)
Hard News	National Post	80% (4)	30% (6)	(10)
	Globe and Mail	0% (0)	40% (8)	(8)
	Toronto Star	20% (1)	30% (6)	(7)
Sub-Total		100% (5)	100% (20)	(25)
Column/Editorial	National Post	0% (0)	0% (0)	(0)
	Globe and Mail	67% (2)	17% (1)	(3)
	Toronto Star	33% (1)	83% (5)	(6)
Sub-Total		100% (3)	100% (6)	(9)
Letter to the Editor	National Post	100% (1)	28.5% (2)	(3)
	Globe and Mail	0% (0)	43% (3)	(3)
	Toronto Star	0% (0)	28.5% (2)	(2)
Sub-Total		100% (1)	100% (7)	(8)
Grand Total		(9)	(33)	(42)

As a reader, one expects to find overtly subjective opinion in columns, editorials and letters to the editor. However, there is a greater expectation of objectivity in presenting hard- or information-based news, which is meant to present factual information. While the *Globe* and the *Star* both seem to have presented a relatively neutral perspective – remembering the impossibility of completely eliminating journalistic bias or style difference – the *Post* appears to have been less successful in

accomplishing this. The *Post* was much more likely to impart the message to its readers that feminism is an out-dated, unnecessary relic, an echo from our past. One writer for the *Post* suggested that organizations working to increase equality via affirmative measures are misaligned, because in terms of representation of women in politics “it defies logic that good, electable candidates are being passed over because of their gender”.⁴³ He made this argument despite countless academic works suggesting that women are indeed still being passed over as electable candidates (e.g. Tremblay and Trimble, 2003; MacIvor, 2003; Young, 1997).

The idea that feminism does not represent ‘ordinary women’ and is unnecessary are also represented by *Post* writer Lorne Gunter. He suggests that following the cuts,

there were a few purple-rage editorials and some formulaic press releases from radical women’s advocacy groups. But there was no uprising among ordinary Canadian women, no evidence whatever [sic] that voters were moved to see the Tories as heartless, gender Neanderthals as a result of the cuts.⁴⁴

By using the word ‘radical’, Gunter suggests that feminism is extreme. Further, by pitting feminist women against “ordinary Canadian women” he suggests that the goals of feminism are oppositional to the goals of the average woman, whoever that ordinary woman is meant to be, undoubtedly implying that feminist visions are both out-of-touch and much more extreme than the desires of the “ordinary woman”. This type of language delegitimizes feminist women by presenting them as ‘others’ in contrast to the ‘normal’ or ‘average’ woman.

This is similar to the kind of message that Bev Oda projected in news media, as well. Oda repeatedly reaffirmed that the term ‘equality’ was no longer needed in SWC’s

⁴³ John Ivinson. “Dion Out to Woo More Women for the Commons.” *The National Post*. December 6, 2006. A5.

⁴⁴ Lorne Gunter. “Harper’s Un-conservative Spending Spree.” *The National Post*. March 19, 2007. A15.

mandate since equality rights are guaranteed in the Charter, in a sense ignoring that gender equality was only guaranteed in the Charter because of extensive lobbying and pressure from feminist groups (Dobrowsky, 2000). Further, Oda suggested that SWC reinforced separation along gendered lines, and that SWC did not provide help to women directly.⁴⁵

While news media were quick to give coverage to people who articulated a post-feminist perspective, space was also provided for criticism of such a standpoint. In a direct response to one of the articles in the *Globe* advocating a post-feminist perspective, the paper ran a letter to the editor attacking such arguments and advocating for the importance of both feminism and SWC.⁴⁶ In particular, the author of the letter objected to the suggestion in a *Globe and Mail* article that “surely, the Status of Women Canada, for one, which lost \$5- million in funding for administration, does not need to exist in perpetuity”.⁴⁷ The author of the letter responded by arguing that while SWC may not need to live on forever, it was certainly necessary now since gender equality had not been achieved.⁴⁸

In another rather witty letter to the editor titled “Patriarchy gone missing”,⁴⁹ the letter-writer argued that SWC is still completely essential for Canadian women:

So, gutting Status of Women Canada’s funding now can only mean one thing: Patriarchy has disappeared in Canada overnight. I guess I slept through that, but I look forward to the next round of data from Stats Canada (...) for clear proof that the current Conservative government isn’t merely stamping out equality-seeking programs on ideological grounds.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Kim Solga. “Agency Still Needed.” *The Globe and Mail*. December 1, 2006. A26.

⁴⁶ Linda Briskin. “Not a Mystery.” *The Globe and Mail*. September 29, 2006. A16.

⁴⁷ Author Unknown. “Ottawa Takes Small Knife to Bloated Spending.” *The Globe and Mail*. September 27, 2006. A16.

⁴⁸ Linda Briskin. “Not a Mystery.” *The Globe and Mail*. September 29, 2006. A16.

⁴⁹ M.J. McKenty. “Patriarchy Gone Missing.” *The Globe and Mail*. October 4, 2006. A18

⁵⁰ Ibid.

This argument is common in letters to the editor throughout the three papers. The tension between the two perspectives culminates with a post-feminist perspective, on the one hand (the message of the Conservative government and some media) and a response to anti-feminism on the other, meaning that many critics of the cuts see the cuts as ideologically driven, informed by an anti-feminist perspective. They dispute such an anti-feminist perspective arguing that nothing resembling full equality has been achieved, and that SWC is neither redundant nor obsolete.

Those who support the cuts insisted on representing feminism as a relic that relegates women to positions of victims, or suggested that such organizations present women as helpless and in need of constant support. In a letter to the *Star*, one woman declares that Canadian women have won the victory over inequality, suggesting that the agency (SWC) coddles women and treats them as “less clever creatures than men”.⁵¹ This type of understanding is echoed in the *Globe* in a column that suggests SWC is looking for an excuse to keep itself alive, but that in reality the agency has well outlived its usefulness.⁵² R.E.A.L. Women presented a consistent message in media as well, for whenever someone from the group was interviewed, the message was always the same: the cuts were a welcome shift from the “narrative of victimhood”.⁵³ Although the position of R.E.A.L. Women can perhaps more aptly be characterized as anti-feminist, the group was often used as a source in articles that suggested the cuts were a necessary progression

⁵¹ Rondi Adamson. “Women No Longer Need to be Coddled, Like Less Clever Creatures than Men.” *The Toronto Star*. October 15, 2006. A16

⁵² Author Unknown. “An Agency Well Pruned.” *The Globe and Mail*. December 1, 2006. A26.

⁵³ Jennifer Ditchburn. “Women Let Down, MPs tell Oda: Cons Funding Cuts Denounced Minister Deflects Call For Resignation.” *The Toronto Star*. October 6, 2006. A6.

for an agency that had outlived its original purpose – in other words, a post-feminist understanding of the cuts.

This perspective is juxtaposed with those journalists, politicians and the general public who used media to declare that equality has not been achieved, that feminism is still incredibly relevant and that the cuts stem from an ideological agenda within the Conservative government, not because SWC really is unnecessary. Maria Mourani, a Bloc MP, was quoted as telling Oda: “your judgment, guided by your conservative ideology, is that systemic discrimination doesn’t exist”.⁵⁴ This quote was further supported by an argument from the journalist, indicating that women were disadvantaged both socially and economically.

Belinda Stronach also received considerable coverage speaking out against the cuts, both because of her position in the Liberal shadow cabinet at the time and because of her prominent political persona. She repeatedly attacked the cuts as ideological manifestations of an anti-woman, anti-feminist perspective. Stronach argued that “cutting the budget by 25 percent, [and] removing the political advocacy work does not take women forward. It takes women backward”.⁵⁵ She was so explicit as to actually state that the Conservative government was “pursuing an ideological agenda that ignores the needs of many women”⁵⁶ and that the goal of the Harper government was to cripple or even abolish SWC.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Leslie MacLeod. “Gender Equity – We’re Not There Yet.” *The National Post*. October 7, 2006. A17.

⁵⁶ Laura Penny. “Liberal “pink book” Makes Women on All Sides See Red.” *The Globe and Mail*. December 2, 2006. F9.

⁵⁷ Author Unknown. “MPs Fight to Restore Women’s Aid Funding.” *The Globe and Mail*. December 11, 2006. A5.

This coverage of Stronach – while typical of news media’s focus on individuals instead of entire movements – demonstrates that there was a direct response in media to the post-feminist perspective and that Stronach represented a wider spectrum of people than just herself. This response challenged both the post-feminist perspective and the presentation of feminism by arguing that SWC and other feminist organizations are still vital and necessary. Although a great deal of the coverage was neutral, providing only information about the cuts and how the cuts would alter the institutional structure of SWC, there was also an ongoing debate in news media regarding the authenticity of a post-feminist perspective, and the debate aligned clearly along ideological lines. Those supportive of the Harper government and a conservative ideology were more likely to suggest that feminism was no longer needed, as equality had been achieved and feminist agencies actually did more harm than good by treating women as victims in need of government intervention. On the other hand, those who challenged the Conservative Party were also more obviously opposed to the post-feminist understanding of either SWC or feminism in general. Although this conclusion is not startling, it is interesting to see that the post-feminist representation is prominent in Canadian print media – particularly the centre-right wing of it, as evidenced by the *Post*’s disproportionate use of the post-feminist frame (Table 5) – even if it is strongly rebuffed by groups and individuals.

The Government and Feminism: An Uneasy Partnership

The final theme I examined is the way that media communicated the changes that have occurred over the past few decades in the relationship between the government and organized feminism. As discussed at several points through the thesis, the Canadian

government and organized feminism have had a close relationship for the past 40 years, beginning with the RCSW. However, the cuts to SWC are evidence of another change whereby this familiar relationship seems to be drawing to a close.

The changes in SWC's mandate and the cuts to the agency's funding indicate that, at the very least, the government has attempted to alter the nature of this body, if not dismantle it entirely. The government's decision to remove the word 'equality' from SWC's mandate is certainly consistent with the idea that society is post-feminist. Indeed, Minister Oda justified the removal of this critical word by pointing to the fact that gender equality is guaranteed in the Charter, as though a bill of rights automatically ensures substantive equality for historically-marginalized groups. Although this chapter has explored the post-feminist frames used to cover the agency and feminism more generally, it has not yet examined the way this shift has been articulated to the public. The Harper government presented a post-feminist justification for the changes – mainly through Minister Oda – but the government did not address the history of the agency or how it has traditionally liaised with parliament. Iyengar (1991) proposes a media model which suggests that news media typically construct stories in an episodic rather than a thematic format. Iyengar suggests that media rarely offers background or context in stories, and is instead event-focused in its coverage. Iyengar's understanding of media in this way is very influential in interpreting the treatment of feminism in media.

Additionally, the removal of the word 'equality' and the changes in SWC's capacity to direct funding to lobby or research groups were covered, but there was little attention given to the role SWC has played in policy creation and regulation within government.

Of all the coverage given to these cuts, only three articles provided any context or history of the organization, or thematic coverage in Iyengar's parlance (1991). The history that was provided can be considered scant at best. The best history offered was in an article in the *Star*, which informed readers that the agency

was set up in the 1970s under Liberal prime minister Pierre Trudeau to promote the equality and advancement of women. In the early 1980s, its lobbying efforts forced the same Liberal government to include women's rights as part of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.⁵⁸

Less hospitable background coverage likened the agency to a fossil of the Trudeau era, calling it "Womenslibesaurus Regina."⁵⁹

Little coverage was actually given to the work being done by SWC or by the individual organizations that would lose funding from the changes to the mandate. The NAWL was interviewed regarding the cuts on three occasions, but readers were never told about the work this organization undertook or why it may be of importance for women.⁶⁰ Only one article made reference to the fact that NAWL would lose funding as a result of the cuts to SWC and may, in fact, have to 'close shop' as a result. This again raises questions about the degree to which media communicate to audiences the power that movements have to shape political landscapes. Ignoring the history of these organizations fails to provide audiences with the critical understanding that political institutions are shaped not just by politicians but by members of the public who become involved in social justice movements.

⁵⁸ Author Unknown. "Keep Women's Funding." *The Toronto Star*. October 7, 2006. F6.

⁵⁹ Rondi Adamson. "Women No Longer Need to be Coddled, Like Less Clever Creatures Than Men." *The Toronto Star*. October 15, 2006. A16.

⁶⁰ NAWL was influential in much of the feminist mobilization around the Charter. The group has been focused on increasing women's representation on the Supreme Court and has often advocated for increased representation in parliamentary and other government bodies not only of women, but of visible minorities, Aboriginal Canadians, and the disabled (Dobowolsky, 2000).

Print coverage never elaborated on how the cuts to SWC would change feminist practice in Canada, or how the cuts would affect feminist organizing. The history and motivation of feminist practice in Canada was dealt with in articles as though the audience were already well versed in the background of the movement, as well as the structure and operation of SWC. Readers had to turn to other sources to fill in whatever blanks may exist in their knowledge, or through a close examination of the types of words and descriptors used to discuss either feminism or SWC.⁶¹

The kind of coverage described in the last few paragraphs is consistent with Iyengar's (1991) model. This is true of all news, not just stories about feminism. Thematic stories engage the reader with an issue, like environmentalism, whereas episodic coverage is usually event-focused. Thematic stories get more at the "why?" questions by attempting to uncover underlying causes, historical dynamics, or evolution in the course of social and political issues. In contrast, episodic stories engage more with the "who, what, where and when?" of news, and present complex social and political issues as distinct and unrelated, rather than intertwined and complex. Iyengar suggests that media typically present news in an episodic format because this type of news is more easily consumed by readers, demands less research for journalists and fits better within the tight deadlines demanded by modern news production (1991). While "who, what, where and when" are important aspects of any news story, the most important is often "why?"

This kind of coverage exemplifies the understanding of media that Iyengar (1991) puts forward. He suggests that audiences have no capacity or interest for sustained media

⁶¹ These terms have been outlined in the previous section dealing with representations of feminism in Canadian print media.

debate about the consequences of actions or the history leading up to a story but rather prefer that information be presented in neatly concluded stories, where no ongoing coverage or background information is required. While this type of coverage may effectively sell papers, it is of little utility for the movements who depend on sympathetic coverage to gather support from the public.

The coverage analyzed in this thesis focused mainly on the cuts and did not often venture into questions about why the cuts occurred or what ramifications they would have for organized feminism and the groups that depend on government money. In other words, coverage of the cuts largely failed to engage with any of the issues feminist organizations have mobilized around. The image of feminism in Canada presented in media remained principally one-dimensional. Childcare was occasionally referenced, but by and large, the high-priority issues on the agenda of Canadian women's organizations were missing from the news media landscape. Coverage failed to articulate why such organizations still exist and the causes near and dear to these organizations.

When coverage did address why the cuts were made, responses were typically articulated in one of two ways: first, we no longer need feminism and/or, second, the cuts were ideologically motivated. What these answers failed to do was provide sufficient contextual information about the government's role – both historically and today – in supporting and sustaining the work of organized feminism in Canada or what the absence of feminist organizations would mean in any concrete sense over the long term. Although people critical of the cuts were quick to point out that the cuts would set the women's movement back, they did not discuss in great detail specifically how the movement, women, or Canadians in general would be harmed. The fact that equality was dropped

from the mandate was a focal point, but coverage rarely looked beyond that to analyze what the change in funding requirements to SWC would mean for many feminist organizations in Canada. Although it was mentioned briefly, the fact that no more money would be available for women's groups to undertake research or lobbying is problematic. Indeed, the goal of SWC was to ensure that policy was developed in consideration of gender, and such consideration typically requires both research and lobbying.

Conclusions

Generally, the overtly negative characterizations of feminism and feminist organizations have disappeared from news media coverage, or at least in the coverage of cuts to SWC in the fall of 2006. In place of overtly negative stereotypes, the suggestion that such organizations no longer have a valid or necessary place in contemporary Canadian society has crept in, reaffirming the suggestion by many feminist media theorists that media tend to present a post-feminist understanding of organized women's movements and women's agencies.

While my analyses suggest that post-feminist frames are used in a minority of stories (21 percent of articles analyzed), this level of coverage is certainly abundant enough to warrant concern, particularly because post-feminist news frames almost always elicited letters from readers in this case study. In other words, while post-feminist frames were used to report one in five of the news stories analyzed in this case study, it is clear that many readers disagree with the claim that gender equality has been achieved.

It is also telling that the bulk of the post-feminist coverage was found in hard-news pieces, not in columns or letters where one might expect to find a more blatantly

opinionated perspective. This may be indicative of the masculine nature of the news narrative that so many theorists have identified (e.g. Gidengil and Everitt, 2000, 2002; Rakow and Kranich, 1991). It may also suggest that the post-feminist perspective is creeping into more mainstream news, and refutation of post-feminism is left not to other 'hard news' pieces, but to less 'objective', 'credible' news formats such as opinion columns and letters to the editor.

Finally, although it is not surprising – given news media's preference for episodic coverage (Iyengar, 1991) – it was nonetheless unfortunate that news media failed to communicate to audiences that the cuts to SWC indicate a deep shift in the relationship between government and organized feminism in Canada. The fact that SWC can no longer fund projects that deal with research or advocacy was mentioned, but only briefly, and this brief mention of the ramifications of the cuts never explored the long-term implications for feminist organizing or for the work of SWC itself.

Chapter 5

Conclusion:

Ain't I a Feminist? Reconciling Imagery and Ideology for Canadian Women

“I’m not a feminist, but” was one of the phrases that most stood out in this research, as an ideal way of capturing the idea of feminism projected in media. Such a phrase suggests that while many women might not be too keen to situate themselves within the feminist camp – knowing all too well the kinds of labels the ‘f-word’ carries – these same women are also unwilling to completely abandon the goals and political projects of feminism, mainly because they do not concede that the feminist project has entirely run its course. This perspective of post-feminism presented in media, and the ideology associated with it, is interesting to examine because of implications it carries for understanding mediated versions of feminism.

This thesis began by asking what the image of feminism presented in Canadian print media looks like? Using feminist media theory as my primary theoretical and methodological framework, I hypothesized that news media would present feminism as either an outdated relic of the past – thereby communicating to audiences that Canada was post-feminist – or conversely that presentations of feminist women would continue to reinforce negative stereotypes about feminism and feminist practice, contributing to the growing tendency of women to distance themselves from the feminist label.

Although feminist media theory suggests that stereotypes of feminism will be overtly negative, this did not hold true, for the most part, in my case study of print coverage of cuts to the SWC. However, this is not to suggest that coverage was resoundingly positive or even neutral. There was a significant amount of coverage that

criticized the goals of the movement and was decidedly negative. In rare circumstances the terms used to discuss feminism were blatantly discriminatory or disapproving, the most obvious being the use of the expression “feminazi”. Yet, negative coverage was typically much more subtle. Instead of overtly criticizing feminists as ‘man-haters’ or ‘ugly’, as has happened in the past, negative coverage alternatively suggested that feminists are relics of a past long gone, and have no reason to continue to exist (or receive government funding) in a society where equality has been achieved. Feminists were characterized as out-of-touch, unrepresentative and in a few cases extreme or radical.

All of these terms are ways of suggesting that feminism is out of step with contemporary Canadian society and that the women involved with the movement have their own agendas or ideologies that are not easily reconciled with those of ‘average’ women. In many ways, media continue to frame feminism, especially in this case, as a movement or ideology made up of individuals who are not representative of women who are ‘average’ or ‘ordinary’. The reader is meant to interpret the ordinary woman as the woman found in their own daily lives, the women on the PTA or at the office or in the book club. While it is hard to say exactly what the average woman or feminist should be without reducing both sets of women to simple, essentialist caricatures, it is clear that the tone of coverage often implies that a woman cannot be both a feminist and an ‘average’ woman, that these are instead separate worlds. This creation certainly flies in the face of third-wave feminism, which has shown that women can have multiple identities, at times aligning and at time conflicting. Yet this message is not presented in media. Instead, women are characterized as either/or – and rarely both.

Further, through the language outlined above – the arguments made by journalists and the quotes of politicians which were highlighted in coverage – media often promote the notion that Canadian society is post-feminist. Although the post-feminist perspective was found in a minority of articles, it was prominent in one out of every five articles dealing with the cuts to SWC, which still represents a significant portion of the coverage.

This shift in the way negative coverage is employed when discussing feminism is interesting, because women are clearly not on equal footing in most aspects of public and personal life, suggesting that we are not in a post-feminist era. On average, women still earn roughly \$0.72 for every dollar that men do (e.g., Shannon and Kidd, 2001), and this wage gap is projected to persist until 2031 at least (Ibid.). Women continue to assume disproportionate responsibility for providing care for children, elderly people and the disabled (Wolf and Soldo, 1994). There is still no national publicly-funded childcare program, despite the fact that this was one of the recommendations the RCSW put forward in 1970. Women are still underrepresented in positions of power from boardrooms to Parliament (e.g., MacIvor, 2003; Tremblay, 2007). If the data are disaggregated even further, we would see that certain categories of women – such as poor women, Aboriginal women and immigrant women – are at a particular disadvantage. Such measures of equality, which do not even begin to address the more difficult feminist goals to measure, such as creating more fluid conceptions of gender or reformulating patriarchal power structures, clearly demonstrate that women have not achieved positions of equality. Yet media and the current government still choose to depict society as post-feminist in a significant portion of articles.

What this may suggest is that feminism has made inroads; instead of readily disputing the goals of feminism, as was more easily undertaken at the movement's inception and again at the start of the second wave, critics must more clever. Since the goals of the feminist movement have established and wide support, those who oppose feminist action must find new ways of attacking feminism. The next logical step is to dispute that these goals still need to be achieved. One can effectively undermine feminism by suggesting it is no longer necessary. Perhaps this can even be accomplished with greater ease than suggesting feminist visions are ill-placed. Post-feminism is conceivably a more dangerous presentation for feminist organizations because it is so subtle; it does not attack feminism using overtly negative stereotypes or imagery, but instead suggests that our focus would best be placed elsewhere. Such a perspective also opens the door to give more coverage to women's groups like R.E.A.L. Women, which are decidedly anti-feminist and argue against the need for feminist organizations.

This is What a Feminist Looks Like

What are the implications of these patterns of coverage of feminism? Since many women have seen feminist mobilization as a means of challenging current power structures in society and as a gateway to help reformulate such relations of power, asking how the image of this movement has been communicated is increasingly important. If Canadian women come to know about feminism primarily through its representation in news media, how media showcase feminism will undoubtedly affect audience understandings of such a cause.

Because a significant portion of media communicate a post-feminist perspective, it is possible to speculate that this message will resonate with Canadian women. Media consistently presented feminist women as out-of-touch and irrelevant, which clearly communicates to audiences the notion that feminist arguments are ill-informed and just plain wrong. However, responses to such a message, as seen in the letters to the editor in all three papers, suggest that regardless of the message presented in media regarding feminism, Canadian women are not yet ready to concede that equality has been achieved – a perspective the Harper government has been keen to represent.

While government is almost certain to get media coverage when it calls a press conference, the same is not true for organizations and lobby groups. If media communicate a post-feminist message and fail to present the perspectives of those directly involved in the organizations affected by such a message, like NAC, how are Canadian women meant to decode these presentations. NAC was not mentioned even once in the coverage of SWC, yet it represents a coalition of many of the feminist groups across Canada. Although women, like audiences more generally, demonstrate a capacity to decode media messages, to read between the lines, how can women understand the relevance of such an organization if it is obliterated from the media landscape?

What is also problematic is the way that media fail to communicate the influence that feminist groups have had in the past and the important roles these groups have played in all aspects of politics, from the decriminalization of abortion to the development and writing of important sex equality guarantees in the Charter. Political and legal mobilization have historically been necessary for women to get politicians to take their causes seriously (e.g., Manfredi, 2004). If media fail to communicate the importance and

power of such mobilization, audiences who have no first hand knowledge of feminism's history may be more easily convinced that such groups are unnecessary and that mobilization is ineffectual.

Media Democratization

What does this kind of media coverage mean for feminist groups, who will undoubtedly find themselves in situations where they need media to spread information about a fundraiser, an event or a new lobby that is occurring? How can these groups navigate a mediated world that is prone to characterizing the ideological foundation of these groups as obsolete? These questions open the door for theories of media democratization, which challenge media to become more inclusive and representative. This theory is endorsed by many feminist media theorists, but also by many groups involved in social action, including feminist activist groups. Democratization in this form is meant to reposition media, moving it away from an often unitary, stereotypical or over-simplified presentation of identities, groups and other actors. The goal of media democratization is to increase the diversity of content, through decentralizing decision making about media content and allowing greater input from traditionally underrepresented groups.

Underrepresented groups, in this case study women's groups, often get media coverage that is one-dimensional (e.g., Huddy, 1997: 186). By expanding the capacity to influence media coverage to more groups, the objective is to increase the diversity of representations and points of view. Carroll and Hackett see media democratization as an action meant "to change media messages, practices, institutions and contexts (including state communication policies) in a direction that enhances democratic values and

subjectivity, as well as equal participation in public discourse and societal decision-making” (2006: 84). When examining the implications of media democratization for media’s coverage of feminism, it would mean opening up space in mainstream media for a rearticulation of the goals and principles of feminism, not solely by journalists and media owners, even those who may identify as feminist, but also by feminist groups themselves. After such reforms, the post-feminist perspective would be less likely to carry such weight, since feminists would have access to media in such a way that allowed them to promote their own vision using their own voice.

While this seems like an ideal solution (some may argue an unrealistic one as well) for those who have been traditionally marginalized in media, the practicality of implementing such reforms brings to light interesting questions. What impetus would large corporations have for undertaking such reforms and how would they be accountable to shareholders in such a situation? Pressure from the public, to open up access to media for more groups may be one possibility. Further, there is the issue of free-ridership. Typically, marginalized groups in media are also groups who operate with limited funding – funding that is strictly regulated – so there is no additional money to undertake periphery goals, like media democratization. Most of the groups who would benefit from media democratization do not focus primarily on media reform. For these groups media is a conduit through which they can reach new members, not the focus of their lobby. This translates to a large array of groups who would benefit from media democratization but who lack the resources to direct toward this project, leaving scholars like Carroll and Hackett (1999) to suggest that these groups are waiting for other organizations to lobby

for this change, from which they will reap the benefit. Media democratization of large and powerful newspapers remains a significant challenge.

However, with the rising popularity of the internet as a tool of communication, through blogs for example, we increasingly see a greater representation of diverse perspectives. The goal of media democratization, while still supporting such grassroots communication as blogs and internet groups, would be to incorporate such a diversity of voices and perspectives into mainstream media. The question of how is the next challenge for those who ascribe to this philosophy.

Further Research

There is a gap in the existing feminist media theory. While the scholarship that examines the role media play in constructing female politicians is quite deep, there is a lack of analysis directed at the political roles women can play through their participation in social justice movements (like feminism) and the way that these forms of activism are understood through media. This thesis has attempted to begin filling that gap by examining the coverage of feminism and feminist women in the context of coverage of the cuts to SWC in 2006. However, there is still a great deal of room left to expand on the way women are portrayed in media when they attempt to seize political power through avenues other than involvement in formalized political structures.

Now that we have a clearer vision of the kinds of messages being transmitted through media regarding feminism, it is important to ask how these messages affect audiences. If one of the goals of getting media coverage is to increase support and mobilization for causes like feminism among the wider public, it is important to

understand how media content affects the public. Certainly, such research is well beyond the scope of this project; yet, it is still important to connect findings on content with hypotheses about how audiences may decode or interpret content. To begin with, analyzing how audiences interpreted the coverage of the cuts to SWC and how that interpretation affects political mobilization would be an interesting place to start.

While possibilities for reform are certainly potentially fruitful, in the meantime, what feminist groups, their allies and the wider public must understand right now is that media still portray feminism in negative ways, either through the use of negative stereotypes and metaphors or through suggestions, implicit and explicit, that the movement is over. This is the reality. Large-scale reform of the media system or journalistic practice is likely to occur gradually and incrementally, if at all. Thus, feminists and women generally must adapt to the current media landscape, which, as my analyses illustrate, is not always hospitable and is certainly far from straightforward in its approach to feminism. For these groups, navigating a post-feminist media environment has become a new challenge to be added to the the feminist work of Canadian organizations.

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Appendix 1: Coding Grid**Cuts to Status of Women Canada Media Coverage Coding Grid**

- V1. Which newspaper does the story appear in?**
 National Post 01
 Globe and Mail 02
 Toronto Star 03
- V2. What is the story type?**
 Hard news 01
 Columns 02
 Letter to Editor 03
- V3. Date (month/day/year)** _____
- V4. Author:**
 Male 01
 Female 02
 None given 99
- V4a. Name of Author:** _____
- V5. Placement (Page #)** _____
- V6. Story Length** _____
- V7. Headline Text:** _____
- V8. Photo included:**
 Yes 01 No 02
- V8a. Who is featured?** _____
- V8.1 Is photo:**
 Positive 01 Negative 02 Neutral/Balanced 99
- V9. Photo Caption**
 Yes 01 No 02
- V9.1 Caption is:**
 Positive 01 Negative 02 Neutral/Balanced 99
- V9.2 Does caption editorialize?**
 Yes 01 No 02

V9.2a Text: _____

V10. Is SWC mentioned?

Yes 01 No 02

10.1 Who is interviewed?

Male 01

Female 02

None 03

10.1a number male not applicable 99

10.1b number female not applicable 99

10.2 Is a direct quote used?

Yes 01

No 02

10.3 Is the individual presented as a:

Specialist/Expert 01

Lay Person 02

Other 03

identify: _____

10.4 Tone of the article

Supportive 01

Oppositional 02

Neutral/Balanced 99

V11. Is NAC mentioned?

Yes 01

No 02

11.1 Who is interviewed?

Male 01

Female 02

None 03

Multiple 04

11.1a number male not applicable 99

11.1b number female not applicable 99

11.2 Is a direct quote used?

Yes 01

No 02

11.3 Is the individual presented as a:

Specialist/Expert 01

Lay Person 02

Other 03

identify: _____

11.4 Tone of the article

Supportive 01

Oppositional 02

Neutral/Balanced 99

V12. Is feminism mentioned?

Yes 01
No 02

12.1 Who is interviewed?

Male 01
Female 02
None 03
Multiple 04

12.1a number male not applicable 99

12.1b number female not applicable 99

Numbers: men _____ women _____

12.2 Is a direct quote used?

Yes 01
No 02

12.3 Is the individual presented as a:

Specialist/Expert 01
Lay Person 02
Other 03

identify: _____

12.4 Tone of the article

Supportive 01
Oppositional 02
Neutral/Balanced 99

V13. What individuals are mentioned?

13a Stephen Harper 01 all: no mention: 99

13b Bev Oda 02

13c Belinda Stonach 03

Other 04 identify: _____

V14. Are any other women's groups mentioned?

Yes 01

No 02

V14a Identify: _____ none:99

V14.1 Is the focus on individuals in the groups or on the groups themselves?

Individuals 01

Groups 02

No mention 99

V14.1a Identify: _____

V15. What is the main focus of the story?

The Harper Government 01

The Budget 03

The cuts to SWC 04

Response by groups	05	
Feminism in Canada	06	
Other	07	identify: _____

Does the article praise:**Neutral**

V16.1 Stephen Harper/Gov't	Yes	01	No	02	99
V16.2 SWC	Yes	01	No	02	99
V16.3 NAC	Yes	01	No	02	99
V16.4 The Budget Cuts	Yes	01	No	02	99
V16.5 Feminism (general)	Yes	01	No	02	99

Does the article object to:**Neutral**

V17.1 Stephen Harper/Gov't	Yes	01	No	02	99
V17.2 SWC	Yes	01	No	02	99
V17.3 NAC	Yes	01	No	02	99
V17.4 The Budget Cuts	Yes	01	No	02	99
V17.5 Feminism (general)	Yes	01	No	02	99

V. 18 Is SWC depicted as:

V18.1 Feminist	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V18.2 Angry	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V18.3 Militant	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V18.4 Out-of-touch	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V18.5 Man-hating	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V18.6 Isolated	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V18.7 Irrelevant	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V18.8 Extreme	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V18.9 Homosexual	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V18.10 Unattractive	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V18.11 Important	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V18.12 Relevant	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V18.13 Inclusive	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V18.14 Representative	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V18.15 Good	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V18.16 Balanced	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V18.17 Necessary	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99

V19. Is NAC depicted as:

V19.1 Feminist	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V19.2 Angry	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V19.3 Militant	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99

V19.4	Out-of-touch	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V19.5	Man-hating	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V19.6	Isolated	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V19.7	Irrelevant	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V19.8	Extreme	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V19.9	Homosexual	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V19.10	Unattractive	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V19.11	Important	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V19.12	Inclusive	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V19.13	Representative	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V19.14	Good	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V19.15	Balanced	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V19.16	Necessary	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99

V20. Is feminism depicted as:

V20.1	Angry	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V20.2	Militant	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V20.3	Out-of-touch	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V20.4	Man-hating	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V20.5	Isolated	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V20.6	Irrelevant	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V20.7	Extreme	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V20.8	Homosexual	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V20.9	Unattractive	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V20.10	Important	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V20.11	Inclusive	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V20.12	Representative	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V20.13	Good	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V20.14	Balanced	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V20.15	Necessary	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99

V21. Is the Harper government depicted as:

V21.1	Angry	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V21.2	Militant	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V21.3	Out-of-touch	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V21.4	Woman-hating	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V21.5	Isolated	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V21.6	Irrelevant	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V21.7	Extreme	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V21.8	Homosexual	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V21.9	Unattractive	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V21.10	Important	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V21.11	Inclusive	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V21.12	Representative	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99

V21.13	Good	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V21.14	Balanced	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99
V21.15	Necessary	Yes	01	No	02	No Mention	99

V22. Does the article provide a history of SWC?

Yes	01	No	02
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V23. Does the article provide the context of the relationship of SWC and NAC to the government?

Yes	01	No	02
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V24. What is the main message of article?

V24a Defacto coding of emergent categories

V24.1 Does the article present a postfeminist perspective?

Yes	01	No	02
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Notes:

Appendix 2: Term Definition for Coding Grid

V10. Letters to the Editor will be taken as direct quotes

V12. What counts as feminism mentioned?

Feminism is only one of the terms that will be coded as constituting mentioning feminism. Synonyms that will be accepted include mention of women's groups, the women's movement, the feminist movement or any other term generally understood to be in reference to feminist practice.

V18-20. What counts as "depicted"?

For the coding of any section which asks how particular groups are depicted, anytime an article explicitly uses one of the terms outlined, the coding will reflect that the article depicted the group in that way. However, if the article does not explicitly use a term from the list but is written in such a way as to imply, for instance the tone of the article suggests that feminism is irrelevant, the article will also be coded to reflect that. Only understandings that are immediately apparent to the coder will be coded as depicted, to ensure that the results are not skewed or unfairly biased.

If none of the terms are mentioned or the article does not display an agreement or disagreement it will be coded as "no".

V21-22. What does "history" mean?

In this case, history refers to any context that the article may provide about the creation of either SWC or NAC, or the relation of either to the government. Since press coverage of institutions often does not provide a great deal of context, leaving the reader to fill in the blanks with the information provided in the article it is important to discern the times when a reader is provided with more information about the context of an organization or its history.

V23. Qualitative analysis

This question is meant to allow the coder some room to reflect on the article without being confined by the coding scale. Because this thesis is partially informed by a feminist methodology, which supports the idea of allowing categories to emerge from that data, the observations will be analyzed following the completing on the coding, to see if any patterns or categories emerged in this section, which were not predicted by the coder and the coding grid.