This chapter aims to establish a theoretical grounding for the study through exploring how concepts of ideology, hegemony and representation have been used in the past by feminist scholars to elucidate women’s roles in popular culture. Furthermore, the chapter analyses the constructed nature of news, using the concept of framing to discuss how gender, social movements and the women’s movement have been represented in the press. The chapter will then go on to explain how the research was carried out with the use of both content and critical discourse analysis.

Ideology, hegemony and representation

Ideology, as we understand it today, comes from a Marxist tradition of examining class and power relations, and refers to a system of beliefs, which are partial, misguided and distorted and conceal real imbalances of power in society (Williams 2003).1 Karl Marx used ideology to examine why the working class did not rebel against dominant classes and contended that ideology was the expression of a class position, where those owning the means of production controlled the means of mental production as well. Consequently, he concluded that the ruling class were responsible for maintaining and (re)producing ideologies that favoured the dominant class by representing certain social inequalities as ‘normal’ and ‘natural’. As Marx (1976, p. 59) famously stated, ‘The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas. The class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force’.

While Marx was important for identifying how ideology is used to construct class distinctions as natural, other scholars have since advanced
his theory to incorporate other forms of (interlocking) oppression such as gender, age, race, ethnicity and sexuality (Barrett & McIntosh 2005; Davis 1990; Elshtain 1981; Hartmann 1997). Another important development was Italian theorist Antonio Gramsci’s (1971) rejection of Marx’s view that oppressed groups were simply ‘brainwashed’ by the dominant classes. Instead he developed the concept of hegemony, where ideological dominance is not simply imposed by the ruling class but is a process of negotiation, whereby dominant groups work to convince society that they are best equipped to fulfil their needs and desires. Furthermore, ruling groups never get complete consent, because, as Gramsci notes, it is not always easily given and is a ‘complex mental state which varies from person to person because some are more socialised than others’ (as cited in Lears 1985, p. 570). However, if ruling groups want to maintain hegemony, they must find views appealing to a wide range of society, and at times selectively accommodate views from subordinate or marginalized groups (Lears 1985). This means that dominant ideologies shift over time and even incorporate some (less radical) aspects of counter-ideologies in their attempts to remain dominant. For example, patriarchy has made several concessions regarding women’s status in society, giving them the right to vote and participate in the public sphere while keeping gendered hierarchies intact. The way dominant ideologies negotiate counter-ideologies will be a key theme of my analysis, particularly regarding gender roles, the division of labour, and issues regarding race, class and sexuality, to why people do not revolt against their oppression.

While ideology and hegemony are important concepts in themselves, they also form the base for understanding representation, which Hall (1997) states is the production of meanings through language of the concepts in our minds. Studies of representation seek to explore hidden structures and uncover ideologies embedded in texts – ideologies which contribute to systems of power in society. Studies of gender representation therefore seek to analyse how power flows through binaries such as masculinity/femininity and the private/public spheres. The comparative and longitudinal aspect of this research will be particularly useful, examining whether or how these ideologies have changed over time and space, thus tracing women’s (lack of) progress since the 1960s.

**Gender roles and the public/private sphere**

During the Second Wave, an important distinction was made between sex and gender, which forms an integral part of socialist feminist