

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

In this concluding chapter, a recapitulation of the aims, methodology and findings of this research will be made and the significance of this study will be looked at.

5.1 Aim of study

The onset of gender distinction which culturally and socially gave the masculine gender a leg up in the power stakes, can be traced to the annals of history. However, the wheels of economic evolution, long been in favour of males, have spun with such relentless force to the tune of worldwide globalisation that has shaken every economic, cultural, social and gender paradigm ever set. The extent of this assault on the masculine gender in Malaysia is the focus of this study. Three research questions were formulated to put into perspective the constitution of masculinity in Malaysia. The three questions are:

1. How much of traditional masculinity is evident in a local men's magazine?
2. To what extent has capitalism influenced the concept of masculinity in Malaysia?
3. How is masculinity represented in a local men's magazine?

5.2 Methodology

The potency of the mass media as a channel of information in the era of globalisation cannot be undermined. With an array of media to choose from, this researcher chose a magazine, *FHM Malaysia*, as the instrument of study. Two factors played a role in the choice of this magazine. Firstly, its market segmentation along the lines of gender with a male – specific audience in mind. Secondly, its international affiliation, whereby it is the only international – based magazine which has a local chapter in Malaysia. In line with globalisation, aside from locally – written articles, articles that appear in the other international *FHM* editions and are deemed to be of interest to the male Malaysian reader, are also included. This encapsulates the essence of masculinity as the Malaysian male is generally predisposed towards the global motions around him.

Having singled out *FHM Malaysia* as the instrument of study and selecting 12 issues (from October 2000 to September 2001), the researcher fragmented the magazine into five parts. The five categories are the cover page, regular segments, feature articles, interview pages and advertisements. These five parts were further subdivided according to their content, to enable a more thorough and comprehensive analysis. 96% of the content of the magazine per issue was covered using this approach.

5.3 Findings

The findings of the study show that relics of traditional masculinity still exist within the Malaysian male. Fascination with aggression and violence, reminiscent of the hunter – gatherer age, remains. Exhibitions of bravery and strength are still applauded. However, the advent of the consumerist era has severely reduced the opportunities for males to display overt physical courage. The hunter has been replaced by the technocrat. This marks the waning of open exhibitions of strength and aggression. Thus males are depicted as being less than men in a traditional hegemonic sense of masculinity.

This observation is further established when analysing the various segments of *FHM Malaysia*. In the advertisements, the female figures appear to be more empowered than their male counterparts. In the jokes segment, males are portrayed as objects of derision. In *Eats*, the culinary page, men have started to venture into the kitchen, once a domain associated with women. These findings corroborate the depiction of the male in a less traditional hegemonic sense of masculinity.

In the present consumerist society, the male body, once closely associated with hard labour, is viewed in a different light. It has become an object in the economy of consumption. It is highly visible, especially in advertisements, to merchandise consumer products of male interest. This serves to underlie the importance of having a polished public image.

In a nutshell, the findings of the study indicate that masculinity in Malaysia is undergoing a gradual change. There has been a dilution of traditional hegemonic masculinity with the advent of consumerism.

5.4 Significance of findings

There is copious literature on gender studies, especially in relation to feminism. It has only been in recent times that there has been a gradual augmentation of research materials in men's studies. However, most of the current research available is founded on a homogeneous Western society. Differing social and cultural factors mean that gender theories that have emerged from these studies cannot be applied wholly in a Malaysian context. Hence, the findings of this study provide an insight into a neglected area of sociology in Malaysia. This brings about an enhancement of knowledge, which expands the corpus of gender studies in Malaysia and an increased awareness of gender relations in general.