GENDER ISSUES IN COMMUNICATION EDUCATION - A MALAYSIAN CASE-STUDY

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by

Shanthi B. B. Ambigapathy
Centre for Mass Communication Research
University of Leicester

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This study is concerned with the politics of gender formations and the role of communication media in the perpetuation of different and changing forms of patriarchal power and of women's oppression, and communication education as one crucial site for both professional socialisation into gendered values in mass communication practice and for re-visioning these values and assumptions that sustain hegemonic masculinity. The major argument here is that gender scholarship is essential to both understanding and undermining patriarchal devices which oppress women.

In Malaysia, communication education is offered at the level of higher education -- an important site for producing potential communication professionals. In this connection, it is important to examine communication education programmes to understand more precisely the gender composition of faculty staff, tutors' views towards gender issues and the significance accorded to the study of gender in communication courses. This study has advanced that the curriculum which forms the foundation of the educational system is socially constructed and that the relevant context has to give attention to both the socio-cultural and structural setting.

At the socio-cultural level, this study has highlighted the 'state-centric' nature of Malaysia -- the ongoing interests of patriarchy, the functioning of global market forces and the collaboration of local and foreign governments that work in complex ways to perpetuate the subordination of women. It has further been observed that the Malaysian social-cultural milieu is one that grants ethnicity as a principle factor in the re-structuring of social relations and development activities. Gender criticism occupies a marginal position and the state development policies have not directly promoted the interests of women. At the structural level, taking the case-study of the USM Communication Programme, this study has revealed patterns of male domination within its formal organisation structure. A major problem arises in a general lack of understanding where most tutors still fail to appreciate the effects of gender oppression and differentiation, and perhaps more seriously, they often fail to recognise these issues as problematic. A study of communication courses has shown that gender issues are largely excluded from discussion through the choice of topics in course syllabus, in the selection of issues in examination papers and in the selection of reference materials. This has created a major gap in the curriculum -- a silence which leaves gender issues unheard in the study of communication.

In the wake of the above findings, this study has attempted to outline some initial directions, immediate strategies and priorities for a gender agenda in communication education. In particular, the study has presented syllabus guidelines that chart some fruitful lines of inquiry that can contribute towards gender conscientisation and empowerment.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

If women are to claim rather than simply receive an education - an act that can "literally mean the difference between life and death" (Rich, 1979:32), we feminists, sociologists and educators must be prepared to untangle both the ideologies and objective conditions in women's lives that render our work, knowledge and power invisible.

(Luttrel, 1989)

Gender, a social creation, is a major principle that organises human life. It assigns rights, responsibilities, roles, values and status to different groups of people. As part of a stratification system, gender ranks men above women - the status 'women' is usually held in lesser esteem than the status 'men'. In most groups, men are advantaged over women. But, women while sharing a common identity, do not inhabit the same historic space as numerous factors impinge and compel upon their identities in significantly different ways. Gender is intertwined with other constructed categories like race, religion, class, caste and nationality and this produces a diverse range of gender experiences. Male and female members of privileged groups command more power, prestige, property and economic rewards than members of unprivileged groups. This unequal distribution of power, prestige, property between men and women is now a distinctive part of the structure of contemporary societies. In particular, gender produces a subordinate group - women, whose labour in the household and in the marketplace, whose sexuality and childbearing responsibilities have less value. Since gender is at present a system of power and dominance mostly favouring men, the 'gender project' initiated by women, aims to redress the imbalances and to change social, institutional and individual structures that define men as more valuable than women.

Much of the work on gender issues has placed a major emphasis on the role of ideas and consciousness in the construction and maintenance of male dominance in societies. The role of culture as ideology has been a site of struggle for feminists because it is a mode in which meanings are formed and transformed:

We have asserted the importance of consciousness, ideology, imagery and symbolism of our battles. Definitions of femininity and masculinity, as well as the social meaning of family life and the sexual division of labour, are constructed on this ground.

(Barrett, 1982:37)
In this connection, gender perspectives have utilised the field of cultural criticism to question the rationality of the dominant culture by revealing the way culture structurally favours men and their interests. The attention on the media has become important because the media have become core components of social-cultural, economic and political activity. The media are deeply implicated in cultural experience and in the articulation of public affairs. The media play an important ideological role and provide social knowledge through which individuals perceive their lives and those of others. The media do ideological work, ordering and evaluating social knowledge, distinguishing between preferred and excluded explanations (van Zoonen, 1994; Hall, 1977). The gender focus on the media is crucial as these are power structures which define reality, produce social meanings, set agenda and inform the citizenry. Gender media scholarship confronts a diverse range of debates about media. For example, it examines the power of media images, models and ideologies about masculinity and femininity; the involvement of women in defining reality, specifically in the production of media content; the media's role in framing women's issues; the focus media gives to constructing more positive representation of women as powerful actors, active citizens and agents of development; the relationship between subject and text, of the status of the subject in the production of meaning; and the participation of women in fostering democratic communication and social change in society (Mattelart, 1994; van Zoonen, 1994; Gallagher and Quindoza-Santiago, 1994; Riano, 1994, Creedon, 1993).

Over the past few decades, there has been a proliferation of studies that have examined the part the media play in the creation of public opinion and in framing the meanings of gender in a given society. These studies illuminate the social construction of gendered hierarchies and practices in social institutions and processes which do not privilege women's experiences and interests. Creedon (1993) argues that there has been no major rupture in the basic assumptions of communication and media practice despite the increase of women in the field of communication. The entrance of women into media industries has not offset men's domination and power in determining media policies and media content. The owners, editors and those in key positions deciding news and entertainment content are still predominantly men. Further, the media workplace continues to produce dominant values and conventions and rarely questions both the structural position of women and the masculinist ideology that supports gendered roles (Balakrishnan, 1994; Beasley, 1993; Gist, 1993; Johnson, 1993).

A number of gender strategies have been proposed and implemented to improve women-media relationships. Although some of these strategies have borne fruits, the gender media struggle is still a long one as there is still a disturbing gap in
the participation of women in developing media policy and determining the nature of media content. Today, the gender media struggle continues to take place at different levels. Gender media scholars and activists struggle in national, regional and international organisations, in mainstream media organisations and women's media, and in communication education programmes. They attempt to transform gender values, to foster gender media literacy and active involvement with the media, to sensitise communication students to gender issues, to empower women with media knowledge and skills, to enhance equal opportunities for women in career advancement in media organisations and to empower women to establish women's own media.

In this study, my interest falls on communication education as it responds to media literacy and the understanding of various developments in the media environment. One of the major roles attached to communication education has been to develop and inculcate critical abilities of learners and to orientate them to recognise that all information is mediated. Hence, it is one possible site to develop gender consciousness in media issues and to encourage students to deconstruct that which is communicated and make informed choices in communication activities, specifically in relation to giving attention to women's voices and interests.

Communication education is an area of study offered in schools and in higher education in many countries. I focus on communication education at the undergraduate level as this is a crucial area of gender struggle and intervention. At the university level, the study of communication is not simply an academic field. It is also a research area which is instructive for assessing existing patterns of communication and for determining policy. It is closely related to an immediate intent of putting research findings into practice. In numerous parts of the world, including Malaysia, it is also an important site for producing potential communication professionals. Various programmes on communication studies and media training are organised at the level of higher education to expose students to media knowledge and technical skills that will allow them to participate in media-related work. In Malaysia for example, students are trained and prepared to join as producers or journalists in the media, as development agents or information officers in government agencies, as copywriters or creative workers in advertising agencies or as public relations officers in both government and corporate bodies. The focus on communication education thus becomes an important area for gender scrutiny, particularly when students are given education and training to engage in the construction of information and meaning in various communication and media-related professions. The gender concern in communication education is therefore pertinent as this is one crucial site which can
create avenues to re-vision gender values in media practice. To date, there has been no comprehensive research on the gender composition of faculty staff and the content of communication courses in training schools in various parts of the world. Research in this area is important as the positioning of gender issues in the curriculum might influence students’ views when they research and involve themselves in communication activities.

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition on the importance of constructing a significant gender agenda in communication education globally. If communication education programmes attempt to establish democratic communication and egalitarianism in society, they must give serious attention to gender and race inequality as they do to class inequality. Indeed gender inequality itself is linked to economic inequities and race distinctions and these are important frames of study. The feminist critique questions masculinist perspectives that obscure the gender dimension in the debates surrounding media understanding and media skills in this field of study.

In the United States, Rakow (1993a) urges communication educators to consider the standpoints of all the material they currently present in the curriculum of communication education:

Whose experiences are enshrined in the canons of theory and research now being taught? Who wrote the theories, who did the research, who was the subject of the research? Whose speech, whose rhetorical strategies, whose relationships, whose experiences with technology, whose media, whose definitions of news are your students learning about?

(Rakow, 1993a:159)

Rakow alerts communication scholars to the ways topics related to gender and race are excluded or appear superficial in most core curricula of communication education. She strongly urges the need to reassess the social statements that are being made in this field of study. Bowen and Wyatt (1993) advance a shared concern regarding the relative absence of gender scholarship in the graduate and undergraduate communication programmes. They contend that gender controversies do not emerge as relevant knowledge in the development of curriculum and that women’s circumstances are rarely heard within the theorising and debates on human experiences, specifically in the realm of communication.

Although I use the singular term feminist or feminism in this study, it is important to observe that there are multiple discourses that attempt to theorise the position of women in society.
In Britain, Baehr (1980) and Parry (1990) also question the knowledge generated in this field which marginalise gender issues and problems. Baehr eloquently argues that historically, the study of communication has seen women relevant as housewives or consumers only and has obscured the diverse, complex and problematic relationships of women and communication. In this sense, communication studies has primarily focused on sex as a variable rather than framing women as people. In the field of sociology of education, Acker (1994:28) brings to attention the argument by Bernard (1973) that there is a 'machismo factor' in sociological research, "which ensures the dominance of research that are 'agentic' (implying powerful distant manipulation of variables) rather than 'communal' (implying naturalistic observation of people). This argument can also be applied to the field of communication studies which takes women primarily as objects or variables of inquiry, rather than as subjects or groups of people who have a range of views and experiences.

In her study, Parry (1990) brings to our notice that gender issues are marginalised in postgraduate journalism programmes and that students have been openly told by their tutors not to take feminist angles in news reporting. In a similar vein elsewhere, van Zoonen (1989) appears perturbed when her study reveals that Dutch Communication Schools are found not to take gender issues seriously. She argues that substantial debates about the subordination of women and the gendered patterns of organisational routines of media and news values seem to be discouraged in the curriculum.

The same problems appear to manifest in communication education in most Third World countries. Third World women have important roles to play in the development of their societies and their representation in the media is important in influencing values, ideas and action that can advance women's meaningful participation in working towards improvement in society. But women are underrepresented in media organisations and there are gender imbalances in information flows as media debates lack critical reflection on the well-being of women (see Gallagher, 1994; Media Development, 1994; Steeves, 1993a). Women need to be acknowledged as active political citizens; yet this appears to be seriously debilitated in the struggle for development, especially in the realm of development communication. The definitions of problems, analyses and action plans have dominantly been framed from male-centred perspectives which devalue gender issues.

In Africa for example, the media-women relationships are problematic. Media stories and news reports are seen to depreciate the actual contribution of most
women's work and to emphasise characteristics of passivity, dependence and subservience. Most development communication projects pay less attention to women and have been found to ignore the interests and the potential contribution of women in development (Steeves, 1990). Despite this evidence, recent studies in Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia report that there is very little concern on gender issues in communication education programmes and little support is present for training female media professionals (Okunna, 1992; ACCE/PES/WACC Report on Women in Media Education, 1991). One study by Okunna (1992) in Nigeria notes that communication education programmes are dominated by male tutors. She urges the need for the involvement of women in curriculum matters to raise discussions on gender issues and to question the assumptions underpinning news gathering and reporting.

In the Malaysian context, very little has been said about gender issues in communication education. The quest for development calls for serious analytic attention to questions regarding the place of women in informing and influencing the nature of development. Women's voices are important in media debates if women as citizens are to have active involvement in the process of development. In this sense, communication education programmes have a responsibility to advance gender issues in the education and media training of potential communicators. So far, no study has been taken to assess the significance given to gender issues in the curriculum. Clearly, this has not emerged as a relevant problem that warrants immediate attention. Rather the gender question has been framed in a different fashion. Almost two thirds of Malaysian communication students are females and this has been taken as an indication that there are no pressing problems. One prominent male communication educationist makes the observation that the female communication students face difficulties in the profession when they get married. To solve this problem, he stoutly suggests that communication education in Malaysia should develop curriculum that "offer courses in effective family management for female students to enable them to cope as a wife, mother and as a full-fledged professional" (Hamdan, 1987:198).

Such startling comments convey misleading views, assumptions and approaches to constructing a gender agenda in the curriculum of communication education. In fact such approaches would only encourage conformity to given norms and practices, reinforce and legitimise the status quo rather than deconstructing and assessing gendered values and practices in communication. This indicates that so little is known about gender formations and the problematic women-communication relationships in society. The misreading of the gender agenda is a cause of alarm and
this suggests that a lot of work still needs to be done to problematise this critical issue and clarify feminist directions in Malaysia.

The research on gender issues is an important concern if we wish to engage critically with society and media. At the same time, it is necessary to investigate what happens to gender questions in communication education programmes as this may have significant implications for research, policy making and preparing students for the communication profession. Nonetheless, by way of caveat, it needs to be acknowledged that the structure and content of mass communication need to be changed, as do the structures and value systems of society. It cannot be assumed that if gender issues are given significance in communication education, everything else would fall into place and gender oppression would cease to operate in society. In order to improve the position of women in society, it is essential to transform all structures of inequality. The gender struggle in communication must also take into account a different set of specific problems related to the organisational structure of the media. Factors such as market trends, state regulation, editorial policy, audience conception, the autonomy of female media professionals in relation to their position in the organisation hierarchy and the wider developments in the socio-cultural and political setting will influence the expression of gender systems and ideologies in the media.

The contribution of communication education within this framework may seem almost obsolete. But struggles are important in this site as what happens in communication education is not irrelevant. Rather, the sorts of possibilities undertaken in this study are important because they challenge dominant assumptions in thinking about communication and working towards creating spaces for the gender agenda. It is crucial for gender media scholars to recognise the opportunities to develop gender conscientisation and gender curriculum initiatives to improve students' understanding on gender conflicts and to strive in policy efforts to promote women's autonomy and career advancement and to help shape a better representation of women in media content. This effort would specifically empower female students with critical knowledge and skills and equip them with aspirations to plan their careers as well as support gender struggles. At the same time, this would also inform male students to accept an equal share of domestic duties and to sustain their contribution for a better society. Such a communication pedagogy would aim to conscientise both male and female students and invite them to question dominant assumptions and values of

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2The gender struggle here refers to efforts that aim to advance women's position and to change institutional and individual structures that define men, their views and experiences as more valuable than women and women's concerns.
hegemonic masculinist ideology that influence media production and media content. Underpinning this attempt is a goal that shares the Gramscian and Freirean ideas for an alternative ideology. The need to develop a feminist pedagogy of communication which can both inform those who will study communication and, at the same time, provide insights for understanding gendered ideas and practices that are encased in particular historical and institutional societies is essential to the gender media project. Thus, there is a need to identify communication education as a possible site for gender activism as schools of communication could contribute to social change or perpetuate the gender problem.

1.1 Taking some Bearings

The terms that appear in the title of this thesis are not unproblematic. There are difficulties in working with the concepts of gender and communication education. Some explanation is needed to give an orientation to the focus of this study.

On Focusing on Gender

In most societies, the classification of people as male or female, along with an assignment of traits, values and relations are elaborated into a system of ideas, an ideology that functions as a cultural frame of reference. It organises existence by specifying the behaviours, duties, powers and relation of the sexes; their opportunities for education, labour, activity and pleasure. It also regulates creative and intellectual endeavours (Messer-Davidow, 1985). In essence, gender becomes a systematic social construction of masculinity and femininity; a fundamental organising principle that structures material and symbolic worlds and our experiences of them (van Zoonen, 1994). The term gender signifies power relations and offers an epistemological starting point for examining social conflicts in society. While the term gender is used to refer to the construction of both masculinity and femininity, I work with a theoretical orientation that sees women as an oppressed group in a patriarchal society. For me, this is a political perspective and looks for issues that concern specifically with the meaning of femininity and the place accorded to women in society. Hence, the focus taken in this study embodies gender as a central topic, women as an oppressed category and feminism(s) as a body of theories which seek to understand the gendered nature of virtually all social relations, institutions and process.

Another term that needs to be clarified here is women. I have used the plural form women to note that women do not appear as a monolithic, unified group and that it is questionable to assume one form of oppression affects all women equally. The diversity in terms of class, race, ethnicity, religion, national culture etc. and the
multiplicity of approaches and assumptions pose various tensions in feminist thought. It is crucial to note that gender is anchored in a matrix of intersecting attributes such as race, class, ethnicity, religion, physical ability, sexual preferences and other cultural factors (Lorber, 1994; Riano, 1994).

In this connection, it is therefore important to recognise that there are many theoretical positions available in feminist thinking. There is not one feminism but rather several competing perspectives which attempt to understand the position of women in society. What this then brings to our attention is that women’s oppression is situated in a complex rubric which varies according to different political, economic and cultural contexts and simple solutions may not be applicable universally (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1994). The concept of gender will be further developed in Chapter Two.

In the context of communication education, gender scholarship is linked to pertinent issues like the part the media play in the ongoing social construction of gender in the ideological realm and the material aspects of women’s relation to the media, such as, the unequal access of women to the media, as producers as well as consumers. It is widely expounded that there is an urgent need for consciousness-raising debates which encourage communication students to think and talk about the state and status of women in media and society. A major argument is that communication education has remained essentially unchanged and that there are very little efforts to challenge fundamental assumptions about media knowledge and skills. Gender communication scholars suggest that if communication education sensitises students to gender issues, a capacity may be attempted for influencing potential communicators or media professionals to make significant contributions to shape gender-informed debates in media and society (Gallagher, 1994; Creedon, 1993; Rakow, 1993a, 1993b; van Zoonen, 1989). The analysis of the curriculum and the views of communication educators is thus vital to assess the significance accorded to gender issues in the framework of ideas, research problems and production techniques disseminated in learning about communication.

When I started this study, I had not anticipated that it would be necessary to justify focusing on gender rather than on, say gender and ethnicity, particularly in the Malaysian multi-ethnic context. My reasons are first, I felt that trying to look at gender and ethnicity simultaneously would be too complex and not feasible within the scope and time constraints of this study. Secondly, questions of Malaysian ethnicity are extremely sensitive and appear as taboo topics; thus this will pose problems for both my research and my research subjects. It is worthy to note that ethnic
categorisation has been a major organising principle in Malaysian cultural politics. But because so much emphasis is granted to ethnicity, the gender question remains submerged, giving little attention to the conflicts and struggles encountered by women. My research interest therefore prioritises gender issues as an initial step in articulating the gender agenda in communication education. In doing so, I am thinking here of Gayatri Spivak's (1993) suggestion of adopting a strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest.

On Focusing on Communication Education

Communication education is a field of study that is difficult to define. This field encompasses a range of overlapping areas like speech communication, mass communication, folk media, telecommunications, development communication, advertising and public relations, intercultural communication and professional media training. Given the diversity of the field, stringing a definition is an immense task as this involves competing perspectives and interests. Alvarado et al (1987) assert that it would be quite futile to construct a universally accepted definition that encapsulates the range of perspectives in this area. In addition, there are variations in the terms used to refer to this field of study like media education, media studies, communication studies, mass communication and journalism studies. These labels carry different sets of assumptions and aims in different cultural contexts. In Malaysia, this field of study is known as communication education. While the term media education is usually linked with developments in the mass media, I have used the term communication education to refer to a wider range of interrelated areas linked to mass media, development communication, public relations, production activities and folk or traditional media. Since, this term is the most common expression used in Malaysia and in other South East Asian countries, I have adopted this term in the present study. However, other labels denoting this field of study are also used in presenting arguments and discussion on the understanding of the media.

Much of the early work on teaching communication adopted an innoculatory approach, arising from a deep concern among educationists and literary critics that young people need to be protected against harmful and powerful effects of the media. This formed the major impetus to introducing communication education in primary and secondary schooling. An important turning point in communication education has been linked with models that foster conscientisation and action activities, for example, critical viewer, critical image and consciousness, community media, media skills and

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Spivak also clarifies that there are necessary risks of taking such a position, but this is still a useful approach particularly in considering strategies and the possibilities of mobilising people to do political work (p. 3-5).
sociological approaches. These approaches engage discussion with various forms of media representations, how these are put together, by whom and in whose interest so that this can illuminate the part communication, specifically the media play in making sense of the world (Masterman, 1995; Tufte, 1995; Ferguson, 1991). This is a critical conception of communication education which offers a variety of viewpoints in understanding the media’s role in arbitrating social conflicts in society. It engages with both deconstruction and construction of representation and an inquiry into the ways we decipher the world and the ways others unravel the world for us, linking this with the economic, political and cultural organisation of the media within the wider social environment. These models are used to raise larger social issues, relations of social power and its links to the study of communication institutions, the production of media texts and meanings, and reception by the audience. At the university level, the sociological model and the media skills model have influenced the study of communication. However, communication education programmes at this level have been established in different parts of the world and each university programme commands a particular history of emphases and adopts a model of its own. The major models that have influenced communication education will be discussed in Chapter Three and I will highlight some controversies, particularly in relation to the media skills approach.

Communication education programmes within different social and cultural settings continue to adopt various approaches and assumptions to generate a diverse range of themes that enliven debates on communication. The introduction of communication education in Malaysia has been rapid and strategically placed in higher education. A distinctive feature here is that the priorities of the government impinge upon education systems and in the case of communication education, the major underpinning motive has been to prepare media personnel equipped with sound knowledge of communication and media skills to manage communication industries. The model in Malaysian communication education, particularly at the undergraduate level is one that integrates the sociological approach and the media skills approach. This theory-practice alliance is seen as a useful combination to upgrade critical views and theories on the communication system and profession in the country and to offer students media skills so that they can participate in the communication profession. My interest here is to articulate the gender question within this specific context of communication education. My critique, however could also be applicable to other undergraduate programmes in different parts of the world.

Communication education in Malaysia is relatively a very young phenomenon and is situated as a taught course at the undergraduate and diploma levels. Communication education at the Masters and PhD levels is underdeveloped and currently there are no taught courses offering degrees in this field.
1.2 Thesis Outline

This work falls into two sections. Section I includes chapters on conceptual framework and methodology. Chapter Two is divided into two parts. The first part looks at gender scholarship and its critique on ideological structures like the media and educational institutions which are implicated in the formation of meaning and culture within society. The second part looks at an overview of gender perspectives on communication. This discussion serves several purposes. First it seems fruitful to situate this discussion to map the main movement of ideas in this field. Second, this discussion offers a body of knowledge that can be used for creating curriculum content for issues on gender and communication. Finally this would also attend as a navigation guide for exploring gender issues in the Malaysian context and for thinking about gender media struggles that can take place at different levels.

Chapter Three consists of three parts. The first part presents a discussion on critical education theory. A number of key concepts that enhance understanding and inform the research framework are offered. Gramsci's writings on hegemony is significant for communication educators as it defines both the media and educational systems as important sites for struggle between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic ideas. In addition, Freire's ideas on conscientisation and liberatory pedagogy are also discussed as these have influenced feminist pedagogy. The second part looks at the various definitions used to denote the study of the media. It also advances some of the models that have influenced communication education and raises the gender-question in communication education. The third part looks at a framework for action. It outlines some of the dilemmas and strategies in initiating gender intervention in education.

Chapter Four aims to explain methodological considerations, research procedure and difficulties encountered in the present study. It outlines why the present study adopts a case-study approach and the appropriate methodologies chosen for examining the curriculum and the tutors' views with regard to gender issues. Given the controversial nature of this study, numerous difficulties were encountered particularly during the presentation of data findings and the discussion. I describe some of these dilemmas and how I have resolved them. I clarify the strategies employed to protect the identity of research subjects and the limitations present in the study.

Section II turns to the case of communication education in the Malaysian context. Chapter Five encompasses three parts. In the first part, I discuss the position of women in Malaysia. I look into the specific nature of state development plans that
have emphasised modernisation and economic growth but did not promote the interests of women. Gender planning has emerged in the Sixth Malaysian Plan and this has formed the master plan for the future development of women in Malaysia. Considering that this is the first and only form of gender planning to date in the Malaysian scene, I examine its objectives, its underlying premises and offer a critique of its strategies that aim to improve the position of women. The second part looks at Malaysian gender media research to document the nature and extent of the representation of women in Malaysian media. I offer an overview of literature which illuminates some of the problematic gender-communication relationships in the Malaysian context. The third part looks at Malaysian communication education and the principle policies guiding its philosophy and its objectives.

Chapter Six looks at the case-study of a communication programme offered at the undergraduate level in a Malaysian university. This chapter looks at the representation of women in the faculty staff of this programme. It also charts the philosophical underpinnings of its curriculum structure and the consideration given to gender issues. The Programme selected for this study has been subjected to a number of reappraisals. Various eminent communication scholars have been invited to assess the curriculum structure and communication pedagogy. I contribute my viewpoints from a gender perspective to enhance discussion on the Programme's curriculum structure and communication pedagogy.

In Chapter Seven, I explore tutors' views on gender equality and the position of women in society; on gender-communication relationships; and finally with regard to gender issues in communication education. The role of communication tutors, their ideologies on gender and their views on developing a gender discourse in the curriculum are important in explaining the interest accorded to gender in communication education.

In Chapter Eight, I assess the positioning of gender issues in all the communication courses offered by the Programme. I have developed thematic categories to illustrate the significant exclusion of gender issues. I describe sample courses and highlight the absence or presence of gender issues as lecture topics in the concerned courses. Where absent, some directions for advancing gender scholarship are offered. Where gender issues were present, I look at the major themes that were raised and suggest further issues for attention. In Chapter Nine, I chart some future directions for establishing a gender agenda in the case-study of the Programme. I also
construct a proposal for a separate course on Gender and Communication which can be developed and used in Malaysian Communication Education Programmes.

Finally, Chapter 10 presents summary and conclusions of this study.
CHAPTER TWO

GENDER SCHOLARSHIP AND PERSPECTIVES ON COMMUNICATION

This chapter is divided into two parts. In Part I, I examine the concept of gender and present some of the major tenets of gender scholarship. This discussion also offers the conceptualisation of power in feminist thinking and the focus of feminist critique on ideological practice that maintains male dominance and masculinist ideologies. Part II presents an overview of key debates on gender and communication. I will look at some of the major developments in gender communication studies to highlight the problematic nature of women's relationship to communication, specifically to the media. Different areas that have been researched to give insight to the relation of gender and communication and the various strategies that have been proposed to improve women's status in society will be presented. Although most of the studies quoted here originate from the European-American framework, they can be instructive in charting directions for gender communication scholarship in other parts of the world. In this chapter, I have incorporated contributions from the Malaysian context and I also attempt to identify areas where Malaysian gender research in communication is underdeveloped or absent.

It is useful to situate this discussion on gender communication issues within the overall context of this present study as communication education inevitably responds to the contours of research in mass communication (Tufte, 1995). If gender intervention is to be initiated, it will be fruitful to explore some of the main movement of ideas to understand how gender has acquired a position in this field. In this way, this exercise first, offers a body of knowledge that can be used in creating curriculum content, and secondly, it serves as a navigation guide for exploring gender issues and gaps in the Malaysian context. This discussion also looks at some of the activities that surround the struggles to promote women's autonomy, career advancement in the media profession and in receiving and creating women-oriented knowledge. In particular, I emphasise communication education as an important site for intervention to raise gender awareness and action among potential media professionals.

2.1 Defining Gender

The starting point for this scholarship\(^5\) is that society can be organised in many different ways and one dominant way classifies people into two categories according to biological or sex differences - male and female. The dividing of people into two

\(^5\)The terminology used to refer to this body of knowledge whether as gender or feminist scholarship is a contentious issue. I use these terms interchangeably.
biological sexes is also very much a cultural phenomenon and the concept of gender emerges here - making people into men and women, masculine and feminine. In this respect, sex encompasses fixed qualities that are linked to the domain of biology while gender is linked to social science and encompasses qualities which are shaped through the history of social relations and interactions (Humm, 1989). In each society, people learn to do gender and to constructing it in different ways. Gender is constantly created and re-created out of human interaction - it becomes a social construction that forms an element of human experience.

Brittan (1989) suggests that it is important to recognise the politics of gender formation. Gender, he propounds, should be seen as having no fixed forms, as something which is never static and which is always subject to redefinition and renegotiation. Gender is an accomplishment -- something which has to be worked out in every social situation. He argues that in modern western societies, at least, the way in which people accomplish gender in more or less the same way is secured by the naturalness of heterosexuality, by the central belief that biological differences are central to sexual and gender behaviour. This ensures that there are, then, certain characteristics associated with femininity or masculinity which strongly reinforce expectations of appropriate behaviour for boys and girls, for men and women. Although Brittan's explanations refer to the western societies, they are also applicable to the accomplishment of gender in many eastern countries, including the Malaysian context where heterosexuality and dominant attributes of femininity and masculinity that have been ingrained in cultural beliefs and practices impinge upon the social experiences of men and women.

In this connection, the nature of the relationships between these two sets of attributes is crucial to an understanding of gender. Culturally accepted notions of masculinity and femininity do not exist as simply different but are constructed in a hierarchical relationship to each other. It is masculine values, behaviours and attitudes that are valued more highly than feminine ones. Further, masculinity and masculine values have become defined in direct opposition to femininity and feminine values -- being masculine means a rejection of the feminine. Gender relations rely on this creation of hierarchies. Masculinity carries with it a lot of power and privileges. Gender ideologies serve to conceal the power differentials between the sexes, so that male domination becomes accepted as legitimate, as the 'natural' way for society to be organised. Gender ideologies are reproduced through the practices of institutions, including the media and education and this reproduction of dominant masculinity is termed as hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987).
The concept of gender is eloquently summarised by Lorber (1994) who frames gender as a process, stratification and structure. As a process, gender creates the social difference that define women and men. In social interaction through out their lives, individuals learn what is expected, see what is expected, act and react in expected ways and thus simultaneously construct and maintain the gender order. As part of a stratification system, gender accords a higher status to men than women. What men do is usually valued more highly than what women do, even when the activities are very similar or same. Individuals are schooled to look to male authority and to search for male approval. As a structure, gender divides work in the home and in economic production; organizes those in authority in the family and in the workplace; and defines sexuality and emotional life. Gender identities are thus assembled deliberately and purposefully; they are produced and maintained by identifiable social processes and built into the general social structure.

A core concern of gender scholarship thus falls on women as a category. Anne Whitehead defines that no study of women can start from the viewpoint that the problem is women, but rather men and women and more specifically the relations between them (cited in Ostergaard, 1992:6). The oppression or subordination of women is a key focus and this is seen to work in complex, manifold and in explicit and implicit ways. Various theories have been developed and these theories have taken very different starting points to produce highly complex and often competing set of perspectives to explain how and why women are oppressed.

Liberal Feminism aims to secure equal opportunities for the sexes. It suggests that women are a disadvantaged group and suffer injustices and discrimination and that this problem can be redressed by equality of opportunities for women. It seeks to examine socialisation, sex-stereotyping and sex discrimination and attempts to remove barriers that prevent women reaching their full potential. This movement proposes that women should take up non-traditional roles. It strongly campaigns for equal pay, equal civil rights, equal education opportunities and equal access to the democratic political process (Acker, 1994; Humm, 1989).

Another body of knowledge, Radical Feminism looks at women’s oppression by relating to the construct of patriarchy - a system of social relations in which men have authority and power over women and in the last instance men can dominate women by exercising their physical strength. This theoretical perspective gives attention to male

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6Gender scholarship also deals with the interests of homosexual groups, but my concern here is with women.
violence and male monopolisation of knowledge and culture. It also analyses the sexual politics that take place in everyday life in social institutions. In order to counter masculinist domination, this tradition proposes women-centred organisations like women's media and women's studies to create new participative and collaborative ways of defining reality.

Socialist Feminism, a third school of thought asserts that women are second-class citizens in patriarchal capitalism, a system which depends for its survival on the exploitation of working people and on the special exploitation of women. This focus on women's oppression includes analyses of class and economy. It highlights the position of women within the economy and the family. In this tradition then, both economic and patriarchal oppression are given primary importance in thinking about gender issues. In the long run, it aims to remove gender oppression in part by abolishing capitalism - a goal which is increasingly difficult to realise in contemporary societies (Acker, 1994; Humm, 1989).

In recent years, there have also been efforts to introduce new frameworks and concepts to analyse women's oppression by emphasising the embeddedness of patriarchal relations in a matrix of intersecting inequalities (Riano, 1994; Franklin et al., 1991). Indeed the category women as a homogenous group has been questioned as individuals are distinguished further among themselves by race, class, caste, age, physical ability and other cultural factors. This has brought an heightened awareness of conflicts of interests between men and women and among women. For instance, women of colour find themselves in a position of having to confront gender oppression amidst racial oppression when these dual forms of oppression operate simultaneously (Lorde, 1984; hooks, 1984). The legacy of colonialism and imperialism has also been seen as crucial forms that have impinged upon women's lives in Third World countries, making the assumption that one form of oppression affects all women equally as problematic (Mohanty, 1991; Ghadially, 1988; Jayawardena, 1986). Although the gender perspective engages with a universal theory in that it is a general theory of the oppression of women, there is much disagreement on exactly how uniform this oppression can be when women are located in social situations with conflicting interests and diverse experiences (Spelman, 1989; Davies, 1987).

Within the postmodernist and poststructuralist tradition, feminist thinkers have engaged with constructs of ideology, subjectivity and discourse to offer highly complex understandings of the operations of patriarchal power (Bordo, 1992; Nicholson, 1990; Weedon, 1987). The notion advanced here is that even the self is
much more fragmented than the above theories would have us believe. The oppression of women is a complex concept to grasp as it appears to be fluid, elastic, widespread and often contradictory; and individuals are all variously oppressed and oppressor at the same time (Ang and Hermes, 1991; Hollaway, 1989; Henriques, 1984).

It might have been thought that there was nothing common to all the above arguments, given the diverse array and depth of the viewpoints. On the contrary, these viewpoints are all feminist and in their different ways -- they are all concerned with the need to challenge hegemonic masculinity and the need to improve the position and status of women in society. The challenge that arises from this perspective is directly concerned with politics - a perspective focusing on the oppression of women. Thus from the start, all these differing factions have a political stance. They spring from a need to uphold freedom, justice and solidarity for women and they pay explicit attention to women's experiences.

Another related thread runs through all these gender perspectives, that is the importance of the self or subjectivity which is a starting point that argues that the individual experience or position in a particular discourse is only the first step in a collective enterprise of formulating a gender perspective. The focus is thus on fostering female voice or female subjectivity so that alternative definitions from the ones offered by men are created (Griffiths, 1992).

The arguments that have been presented in this discussion so far attest that the gender discourse is a political view as it relates to oppression and refers to the various ways in which women have been seen to be subordinated and dehumanised and in which social arrangements - institutional and individual structures have been seen to define men as more valuable than women. In addition, this oppression is seen to also manifest among women along other social divisions. Thus for me, a gender discourse here refers to any set of ideas that takes gender as a primary category in the first instance and is used to challenge, counteract or change a status that devalues women. Although there are a number of feminist positions (radical, liberal, socialist, etc), I am using the term in its broadest sense here to describe efforts which take women's subordination to men as its starting point, together with a commitment to try and improve that position. The formulation of a gender discourse that I adopt leans heavily on the definition offered by Chaetz:

First, gender comprises a central focus or subject matter of the theory. Feminist theory seeks ultimately to understand the gendered nature of virtually all social relations, institutions and
processes. Second, gender relations are viewed as a problem. Feminist theory seeks to understand how gender is related to social inequities, strains and contradictions. Finally gender relations are not viewed as either natural or immutable. Rather the gender related status quo is viewed as a product of socio-cultural and historical forces which have been created by humans, and therefore can potentially be changed by human agency.

(Chaefiz, 1988:5)

In sum, gender scholarship advances a commitment to a form of politics directed towards ending social arrangements which lead women to be trivialised, devalued and subjugated. This body of knowledge, bearing multiple theoretical discourses engages with the development of social theory; but it is also a social movement as well as a political practice.

In the context of the present study, it cannot be denied that the gender dimension is linked principally with factors of ethnicity and religion. Malaysia is a multi-ethnic society and efforts at restructuring society are based dominantly along ethnic lines. The link between ethnicity, religion and class is important but evoke volatile sentiments as these are extremely sensitive issues within Malaysian cultural politics. The multiple and contradictory power relations experienced by human subjects are significant but given the constraints in this society, it is not feasible to delve into these multiple interactions and combined complexities that produce gender. In the present study, I shall theorise gender as an issue in its own right in articulating the gender agenda in Malaysian communication education. By doing so, I am aware of the limitations, but I am also taking into account of such factors as convenience, time constraints, sensitivity to controversial issues like ethnicity and the need to think of developing gender action plans. Conversely, I am taking a position where I adopt Spivak's (1993) views on a strategic use of positivistic essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest. Spivak calls for an activist pedagogy that would constantly seek to undo the social construction of reality. She asks teachers to intervene in the world, as she herself does, by being prepared to rethink and reorient personal values and allegiances and by making explicit and calling into question various ideological formations.

In feminist thinking, the understanding of gender brings to light another key element - power. I turn to the conceptualisation of power in the following section.
Power

Gender scholarship conceives power to be both repressive and productive. The circuit of power is seen to work in two major ways. The first refers to 'power over' while the second can be expressed by the notion 'power to' or 'empowerment' (Gore, 1993; Grimshaw, 1992; Bate, 1988). Power over, the first strand of power has been largely critical or pejorative - it concerns primarily to questions of power over another person. It denotes the dominance and the ability to control. It is a form of power that presumes the presence of hierarchy or structured differences in status between and among people. Men have commonly had the power over women and hence much of works on gender have looked at the forms of physical coercion which men have inflicted on women in rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment, assault and brutality, pornography and constant representations of violence to women in media texts.

Gender studies have also explored at more formal and institutional sorts of power which men have over women in politics, communication, business, academia, the professions and the workplace. These are less likely to involve physical violence against women but work towards gaining legitimate consent and are often linked with hierarchical forms of control over women, with authoritarian forms of male domination or with confrontational and competitive personal styles which imply contempt for women.

Maguire (1992) applies Lukes' three dimensional view of power to conceptualise how power over women is exercised. She explains three possible guises or 'faces' of this power. The first face of power is visible in direct action where force or public decisions are exercised. Issues like violence against women and right to income for women are discussed publicly but the conditions are kept under control with no real change. The status quo will be threatened if real change is attempted, thus the prevailing order is maintained to secure the power and interests of the status quo. The second face of power is seen in attempts of institutions to contain an emerging issue by redefining and reconstructing an issue into something less threatening as it emerges into the public arena. If an issue that challenges the ruling power emerges in public debates, a tendency emerges to re-mould or divert the crux of the issue to prevent it from gathering serious attention. The third face of power is seen as the most effective and most difficult form of power to challenge as it relates to the ideological realm of mental production and its presence is hardly recognised. It is in this realm that meaning is secured and a common-sense consensus is gained. It impinges upon the perceptions of individuals and aids to cloud various forms of social conflicts and consciousness of individuals to name their reality. In the present context of gender
subordination, the powerful group, i.e. men maintain the dominant position through the ideological mobilisation of the majority of the population. This majority of the population come to express approval or consent to the prevailing order, even though they do not get any benefit from such systems (p. 19-25). This face of power is linked to two other key concepts, ideology and hegemony, which I will take up in the next chapter.

The readings of these dimensions of power are useful as they are relevant to the present study which relates to two major ideological mechanisms: media and education. The faces of power are fluid, complex, invisible and operate at different levels. Power manifests in culture, opinion, perceptions and legitimation of daily experiences and reality that elude our consciousness. It gives rise to cultural conventions, habitual reactions and general practices that belittle women, overlook them or shunt them into places of subordination by giving them less significance. In the case of the media, these agencies produce identities, role-models and ideals; create dominant and alternative forms of discourse and experience; define situations, set agendas and set limits for the growth of feminist perspectives. In education, the significance accorded to gender issues in educational policies, in the selection and organisation of the curriculum as well as the perception of communication educators towards gender issues would offer some understanding of how male domination sustains its power and encounters resistance in education systems.

While the first strand of power looks at power over, the second strand of power is linked to the notion of empowerment. Here the emphasis moves from power as domination to power as creative energy. Lee (1991) observes that while there are clearly identifiable external structures imposing constraints and boundaries on women, there are also self-enforcing internalised structures in operation. She conceptualises empowerment by developing Solomon's ideas7 that relate to the identifying of direct and indirect power blocks and developing action principles. Direct power blocks are applied directly by some agent of society's major social institutions while indirect power blocks represent internalised negative valuations (of the oppressor) which are incorporated into the developmental experiences of the individual. She quotes Solomon in understanding empowerment as a process that aims

......to reduce powerlessness that has been created by negative valuations based on membership in a stigmatised group. It involves

7Solomon's concepts are specifically directed to the powerlessness of African-American people, but Lee notes that her ideas are applicable to negatively-valued groups like women, gay men, lesbian women and the handicapped.
identification of the power blocks that contribute to the problem as well as the development of specific strategies aimed at either the reduction of the effects from indirect power blocks or the reduction of the operations of direct power blocks.

(Solomon, cited in Lee, 1991:8)

Simon (1990:32) contributes to the conceptualisation of empowerment by asserting that this is a reflexive activity, a process capable of being initiated and sustained only by the agent or subject who seeks power or self-determination. This means that the need to develop empowerment begins with the recognition of internalised oppression from group and organisational dynamics and structures, and by contradicting a sense of victimisation, helplessness and powerlessness.

In this light, the process of empowerment is considered to begin with the individual growth, and possibly culminate in larger social change—a state marked by heightened feelings of self-esteem, efficacy and control, resulting from a social movement which begins with education and politicisation of a powerless group and later involves a collective attempt on the part of the powerless to gain power and influence those structures which remain oppressive (Parsons, 1989:10). To move from the position of exclusion in which they find themselves, the subordinate group must learn to transform its whispers of frustration into a voice that can be heard and valued by the dominant group.

An important point to make here is that self empowerment is necessary, but not sufficient for social transformation. The feeling of empowerment at an individual level is limited if individuals are unable to use their knowledge and skills and stimulate other groups to participate in the social development of a society.

Riano elaborates on the concept of empowerment and explains that it is

......not just individual achievements or assessing certain power positions, but the energising of individual and collective objects to participate in social movements and process of emancipation. Empowerment constitutes the process of working to bring about individual and collective transformation.

(1994:23)

The concept of empowerment is easily related to advancing gender issues in the field of education generally, and specifically in communication education. In the present study, it is linked to fostering gender awareness in media knowledge and media
skills among communication students, both males and females. There is first a need to develop critical consciousness at the individual level, particularly to reduce notions of self-blame and powerlessness among female students. Knowledge is power and the knowledge of gender issues is useful to encourage collective actor-oriented activities. Empowerment then means that by acquiring knowledge, students are able to achieve a capacity to act, to accomplish goals and to support and share responsibilities both in the private and the public workplace and to meet challenges that promote women's interests. If this is related to the faces of power presented earlier, it can then be seen that power over is disrupted, common-sense is no longer accepted and women's experiences are made problematic publicly and politically.

Students, particularly those that aim to be media professionals must be made aware that the media can play a crucial role in generating the meaning of gender in media programmes. They have to recognise the ideological nature of media and the need to give support to equality for women through broadening access of women to the public domain. Communication education is a crucial site of struggle as the presence of a gender discourse would mean the collective acquisition of information, knowledge and skills that would enable both the tutors and students as learners to see their studies as highly relevant to their lives. Gender knowledge brings a sense of connection between what is studied in communication education and the roles and practices that individuals will occupy in future. Subsequently, this enhances the potential of communication scholars as actors to change environmental and structural arrangements that are oppressive.

However, it needs to be acknowledged that this effort has its limits as not all students will pursue liberating activities or challenge 'the given order' or 'the ways things are'. Still, I argue that gender scholarship is pertinent to the training and education of future communication professionals. Media professionals are a group of intellectuals (this concept will be elaborated in the next chapter) who also play the role of educators. This means that they are in a position to take on a particular task of organising and leading alternative world views that value women's interests. Considering that communication students will occupy such important positions, it is crucial that they are sensitised to gender issues and gender power struggles in society.

2.2 Gender Scholarship and its Contributions

Gender scholarship advances gender as a prime element in understanding theory and social practice. As discussed earlier, gender is an organising principle that governs our lives in most pervasive and profound ways, through social practices and
social experiences. Advancing the concept gender into knowledge and practice heightens awareness to the subordination of women by male domination and systems like the state, legislation, economic trends, religion, education and media. Fundamental to gender scholarship is the premise that women have been left out of codified knowledge - that most explanations have not been constructed in relation to women's interests and perspectives. To introduce gender insights means to re-vision the generation and distribution of knowledge by shifting focus to women's diverse ideas and needs as well as to produce new knowledge that will form the basis for learning about gender issues (Bowles and Klein, 1983). The rich diversity of women's views of themselves and their positions creates new categories for codifying these experiences and this offers an important agenda to advance women's interests and their well-being.

Gender scholarship also questions the aspirations to be impartial and objective, the distancing of the observer from the object of research or policy, and the failure to recognise the observer's own ambiguities and contradictions (Brittan, 1989). It undermines many dominant assumptions linked to notions of rationality, reason, objectivity and neutrality. It points to the ideological nature of knowledge in obscuring lived relations, especially in the case of gender. Gender scholarship is thus seen as integral to claim the voices of women in the production of knowledge. To leave out the voices of women means that women's realities becomes unknown and unheard. The result is not just the maintenance of women's invisibility through knowledge that research produces, but an inevitable impoverishment of substantial bases and explanatory potential of knowledge itself (Treicher and Wartella, 1986).

A distinctive feature of gender scholarship is that it connects theory and practice so that both components can fruitfully inform each other. It takes an activist position and is advocating. It is concerned with alternative social arrangements and seeks to set out strategies and priorities for bringing about a more egalitarian world. The gender project thus sets out a journey which is reflexive and is inventing itself as it moves along to give visibility to issues and action plans that give voice to women's interests.

Much of the work on gender has examined male domination and violence, material conditions and ideological structures that operate to sustain the existing social order. In contemporary societies, the family, education and the media are prime educative agents which provide initial socialisation and convey words, languages, images, meanings and ideologies in naming reality. In the past few decades, education
and the media have become evident sites of contestation between different world views and group interests. The feminist critique in particular has drawn attention to these institutions and has placed emphasis on the production of ideas and consciousness in the construction of and maintenance of the existing social systems. My interest in the present study falls on the media and education - two principal cultural forms which articulate cultural experiences, the formation of meaning and disseminate ideologies within society. Both the media and education have colonised the cultural and ideological spheres. They provide social knowledge through which individuals perceive their lives and those of others. More crucially, media and education systems also do ideological work, ordering and assessing social knowledge, distinguishing between preferred and excluded explanations. In this respect, my major concern is related to the ways women's participation and perspectives tend to be obliterated, granting the hegemony of masculinist views in symbolic systems.

In recent years, there has been a growing gender interest in cultural studies which seek to challenge hegemonic masculinity in culture. Gender scholars have turned to examine people, texts, artefacts and human practices to document the masculinist form of cultural expressions. In particular, they have given prominence to cultural forms and expressions that are linked closely to power groups and ideological practice. The focus on ideology is crucial as it has to do with ideas which have social roots and perform social functions. Ideologies can be seen as frameworks of thought, values and beliefs which are used in society to explain and make sense of, or give meaning to the social and political world. It provides ideas within which men and women think about society and their place in it. These frameworks enable people to make sense of events, conflicts and relationships by imposing certain 'ways of looking' at these events and relationships.

Ideologies are found in all societies and help to justify the interests and position of powerful groups at the expense of less powerful groups. Those who hold power depend on ideological mechanisms and the influence of ideology to retain their dominance and to legitimise the different power which groups hold. In so far as a masculinist group dominates social relations, it also dominates the production of ideology. This form of dominant ideas aims to express social relations in terms of the interests of a masculinist group as if they were the common interest of the general society. The way that ideology serves the ruling groups interests is through the generation of ideas, explanations, images and knowledge. In this respect, both the curriculum of the media and education can be perceived as ideological practice. The knowledge and information generated through these social institutions provide frames
of reference within which to understand the relations between different facets of society. Both the media and education perform ideological practice and have an impact upon the ways in which individuals perceive the world intellectually.

At this juncture, it seems useful to reiterate that ideology is also linked to power and gender struggles as suggested earlier in this chapter. Ideology can be seen as a dimension of power when ideas are presented in such a way that male domination and masculine values are accepted as common-sense. Consent and conformity to gender ideologies are engineered as common interest of the general society. But individuals and groups can resist or contest dominant ideologies and processes of social control and develop alternative ideologies. This discussion will be elaborated further in relation to Gramsci’s views on hegemony as a concept of ideology in Chapter Three.

The cultural studies approach is a useful position for gender scholarship as it defines women’s encounters with cultural practice as important areas for critique and development. This approach is useful when the curriculum of media and education are seen as cultural products that relate to specific groups of people with different power. It also illuminates three important points. First, cultural processes are closely linked with social relations. In this case, gender forms the central category, however it is recognised that there are other intersections like race, class, religion and nationality which can be taken into account to give diverse understandings. The second point relates to power and its fluid nature and in the abilities of individuals and social groups to resist or contest dominant ideologies and to define and realise their needs. Finally, the third point sees culture as neither autonomous or an externally determined field, but an arena of social differences, contradictions and struggles (McQuail, 1994; Grossberg et al, 1992).

This of course is not to deny other approaches that highlight material and psychological aspects but to draw attention to a) cultural expressions in texts and artefacts related to media and education; b) cultural practices in the production of media programmes and curriculum-making in education and c) the reception and experience of readers and viewers of these cultural products.

The task undertaken in the present study is evidently a complex one as it relates to two ideological vehicles that are closely interrelated. The study of gender issues in communication education at one level, engages with controversies and contradictions in gender-media relationships both in the material and symbolic realms; and at a second
level has to take into account a different set of factors like the education system, education aims and purposes, curriculum knowledge, the role of communication educators as curriculum-makers and the perception and experiences of communication students. I will deliberate on gender communication research in this chapter and turn to communication education in the next chapter. The present study is primarily taken for communication educators as a way of sharing gender concerns and ideas. My critique places focus on the lack of women's representation, particularly in positions of power and the exclusion of women's authentic voices and experiences in curriculum knowledge.

Communication education responds to social experiences in the media environment and presents various debates for analysis and discussion in this field of study. In the second part of this chapter, I turn my discussion to gender perspectives on communication to articulate some of the main movements that have developed in this field of study.

2.3 Gender Themes in Communication

Communication systems, specifically the media are important as they act as agencies of representation that contribute to the meaning of gender in contemporary societies; and they also perform as vehicles that moderate public dialogue regarding wider social matters (Sreberny-Mohammadi; 1994:5). In a political sense, it is important to recognise that ideas and systems of representation in the media are part of the ideological discourses that involve various interests and contending groups in society. Gender is inevitably a conceptual category that is embedded in the different ways of signifying and making sense of society. In this case, gender is not only constructed in communication but it also informs communication (Wood, 1988:26). Considering that communication systems and information flows have become core components of socio-cultural, economic and political activity, the women-question in relation to communication media becomes complex and is one that cannot be neglected.

Indeed, a major controversy arises when the coverage of public dialogue and entertainment by media systems are informed by a selection of values and perspectives that eclipse women's diverse political voices, experiences and struggles. The perspectives of women are hardly seen as pertinent to social knowledge in understanding the mechanics of power relations and social conflicts. Instead of

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8The role of the media as an agency of representation and information is highly problematic as it also arbitrates between rhetorical claims of rival interests which in turn is influenced by the allocation of resources between different social groups (Curran, 1991:101).
framing women as active citizens, the tendency of media has been to dominantly perceive women as consumers or as sexual objects of pleasure. Such depictions obscure women’s dynamic roles and do not give support to the process of empowering women. The point to be considered here is that the representation of women should arise from a range of creative expressions. Women are implicated in all intellectual, cultural and political enterprises that strive for progress, equality, development and peace, as such it is critical for media to offer a plurality of understandings so that different social groups and organisations of women can participate and express viewpoints that influence their lives and their societies.

One powerful element underpinning, but rarely visible in this picture is women’s lack of control over or access to the means of communication. The context here is primarily an economic and cultural one. There are various interrelated trends that are involved in the increasing domination of the media in a national context and increasing market power in an international context (Mahoney, 1991; Gallagher 1981). It is important to recognise that right from the start women were left out and that powerful groups of men who enjoyed privileged positions were active in establishing communication systems and subsequently, these powerful groups of men who commanded various resources were key actors in interacting with the economic forces that worked principally towards economies of scale and domination of linked markets in media business. The gender struggle in relation to communication is therefore an uphill battle and an important project that demands women’s access to media, freedom of expression, and women’s involvement in the decisions regarding the representation of social reality.

In the following section, I will attempt to highlight some key findings and arguments in the research on women and communication. This is a very difficult task given the eclectic nature of both gender and communication perspectives. I have approached this discussion by raising gender issues in four major areas: media content; media institutions; audience; and development communication.

Media content: image and representation

The stereotypical images of women in the media has drawn a lot of attention. Stereotypes have been seen to be potentially damaging as they reinforce the dominant ideas that denigrate women in society. A popular method of inquiry placed emphasis

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9 The focus here is not one of economic reductionism but one that highlights the interplay between symbolic and economic dimensions of public communication.

10 Scit (1986) raises a pertinent observation that the concept of stereotypes itself is problematic as very little is said about its assumption. Rather it is commonly used to convey negative connotations.
on the presumed biological and psychological differences between women and men. Early gender media research looked at sex role stereotypes, sex differences in 'appropriate' behaviour, interests and skills and the positioning of roles of women and men in the private and public sphere. The major findings state that men outnumber women; women are younger than men and are presented in traditional and stereotypical roles as in housewives, mothers, home-makers and sex objects in media texts; men are depicted in significant roles in areas like employment, politics, science and history while women are featured mainly in the private sphere, circumscribed by their sexuality and domesticity; and men are cast in positive images as independent, brave, competitive and successful whereas women are seen in negative images as dependent, weak and emotional (Tuchman, 1978; Courtney and Whipple, 1974; O'Kelly, 1974; Bushby, 1974; Tedesco, 1974; Dominick and Rauch, 1972).

A good discussion of women's representation in the media has been offered by Gaye Tuchman (1978). Summarising studies of media content in the United States conducted over the span of twenty years, she reaches the conclusion that women are subject to 'symbolic annihilation'. Tuchman argues that, although women form 51% of the population of the United States and compose over 40% of the labour force, relatively few women are seen as working women in the media programmes. Whenever women do appear, they are posited in settings that condemn, trivialise or ridicule them. This underrepresentation and trivialisation of women is similar in prime-time programmes, children's programmes and in commercials. Of those shown to have an occupation, 80% are male. Even in these professions, men are seen as more competent and superior: men are doctors, women are nurses; men are lawyers, women appear as secretaries and so forth (Tuchman, 1978:9-13). According to Tuchman, the media accord an inferior status to women by reinforcing the notion that they matter as housewives, mothers and consumers, particularly in soap operas where women are given prominence.

Meanwhile, analyses of newspapers show that coverage of women has been forcibly introduced by the legitimating of women's movements. However these items have been presented in a constrained manner -- token attention has been offered. Research shows that news items are further segregated or placed in women's pages, which of course also carries predominantly messages that tie women's lives closely to home (Epstein, 1978; Guenin, 1975).

Gallagher (1981) contributes to the gender debate by analysing gender research on media in several countries and reaches the conclusion that similar findings are
present - the striking absence of women in media output. She adds that whenever women do appear, their presence is typified by the following characteristics:

- under-representation of women in almost every part of the world;
- a strong emphasis of the home-orientation setting for women;
- advertisements manipulate images of women to portray them as sex objects and glamour girls;
- the virgin-whore dichotomy is constantly played in the underpinnings of images of women as housewife/mother and as a sexual object;
- under-representation of female workers in all media;
- absence of female workers in top management media positions.

(Gallagher, 1981:72)

Despite significant differences in the lives and interests of women across the world, Gallagher's study demonstrates that the relation of gender to communication in terms of portrayal and employment transcend cultural and national boundaries, indicating the global context of this problem.

Studies on Malaysian media content yield similar findings: a study based on content analysis of newspapers, magazines and romance paperbacks by the Consumers Association of Penang (1982) reports that women are stereotyped as housewives, mothers and consumers of goods. They are always packaged as attractive, demure, passive and submissive, promiscuous women or conniving vamps, whereas the qualities of dominance, power, intelligence, success and strength are emphasised in men (p. 74). The study also points out that one third of the magazine pages are devoted to advertising which sell products such as perfumes, cosmetics, household appliances, detergents and baby foods - which all set the notion that these are necessities that help women to fulfil their roles as the perfect women, the perfect wife and the homemaker (p. 82). These dominant definitions of women do not offer any positive role models and fail to bring about new meanings that can work towards the empowerment of women.

Most studies on images of women and men in the media, have drawn much criticism, particularly in terms of its basic assumptions and research methodology (see Ferguson, 1990; Gallagher, 1989; Creedon, 1989; Steeves, 1987; Janus, 1977). I will raise a few brief points here. In the first place, these studies take biological categories i.e. the division of sexes for granted - as though people naturally belong to universal identities - women are women and men are men, thus throwing little light on the wider
context of diversities and subordination in terms of class, ethnicity, sexuality, age and physical ability (Ang and Hermes, 1991:314).

There are also problems when content analyses circumscribe to positive and negative images by juxtaposing images of women and men as this enforces the notion that positive images of women should be measured in terms of masculine terms, resulting in the need to design 'autonomous', 'aggressive' and 'authoritative' women. This oppositional coding is seen to permeate the increasing constriction of men as the norm and women as the deviant (Gallagher, 1989).

The view here is that media strategies that call for positive images for women have adversely led to the creation of new stereotypes of 'superwoman' and have perpetuated the commercial culture. Indeed in recent years, women's magazines, advertisements and television and radio programmes on women have been found primarily to present messages that claim that women can be independent and have assertive careers while at the same time have no difficulties in being successful wives and mothers; maintaining their bodies 'beautiful' and in good shape. This critique extends the argument that such portraits of women are found to be another form of cultural continuity that do not lead to the empowerment of women in society but induce women to conform to the hegemonic capitalistic patriarchy (Ferguson, 1990; Dowling, 1989).

A major weakness of most content analysis on women's images in media relates to the limited understanding of the structures of social life. Studying sexism apart from its social context, including mode of production and structures of political organisation, leads to superficial hypotheses and misleading research strategy (Janus, 1977). As such, the contribution of this approach to gender communication politics is seen as problematic as the existing provision is assumed as satisfactory where media content, methods and organisational structure are concerned - what is seen necessary is the extension of the existing provision, on equal terms to women. Creedon (1993) contends that a female majority of American journalists did not mean more superior power for women - rather it has meant a reduction in salaries and status for women in

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11These action strategies have popularly been linked to the liberal-feminist framework where the emphasis is on promoting images of women in non-traditional roles and in developing masculine qualities. Following this, a principal trend is to construct women as independent, assertive but at the same time maintaining traditional images and ideas of femininity, particularly in the private sphere. A continuity of conservative images and ideas appears to be reinforced when women are urged to be consumers of numerous products to enable them to cope effectively in both the private and public spheres. (see van Zoonen, 1991; Steeves, 1987).
the field, thus bringing our attention on the need to examine the play of power structures and relationships that operate in society.

Though the work on sex-roles and media imagery has been severely critiqued, it nevertheless has provided a first, essential step in articulating the gender agenda in the communication scene and has led to new fields of enquiry with considerable epistemological legacy. In recent years there have been attempts to foster critical approaches to the study of media content. Cultural studies have gained new importance in media debates. These analyses have attempted to link the symbolic domain and the social-political environment to demonstrate particular constructions of masculinity and femininity, how and why certain constructions gain dominance over others and how dominant constructions relate to the gendered realities of human lives (see van Zoonen, 1994; Krishnan and Dighe, 1990; Winship, 1987; Baehr and Dyer, 1987; McRobbie, 1982).

Under this branch of studies, gender communication scholars have drawn from the theoretical ideas of Althusser and Gramsci to give accounts of the gender relation to the media. Using primarily the concept of ideology, these views argue that media's limited representation of women is a part of a hegemonial process which supports the marginalisation of women. McRobbie (1982) for example, examines the British teenage magazine Jackie and contends that publishing houses are not simply pursuing profits, but are also involved in an implicit attempt to extend the dominant order, particularly in terms of femininity, leisure and consumption at the cultural level (p. 87).

In an interesting Malaysian study, Shakila (1992) investigates the construction of women's relation to men in women's magazines. She reveals that the wife is painted as someone whose security and happiness depends on 'her man'. The texts assert that in order to maintain a happy family, it is the grand task of the wife to be subservient. The study concludes that in defining the role of a 'good wife', it is implied to both male and female readers that subservience is a pleasing attribute that is to be looked for in a potential female partner (p. 4). Research examining the framing of female subjectivities in media texts is a very new phenomenon and this suggests that a lot more work, both quantitative and qualitative, needs to be done on media content in Malaysia.

van Zoonen (1994) observes that there is a increasing momentum in feminist culturalist approaches which examine how masculine and feminine subjectivities and identities are constructed in media texts, specifically in western cultures. Underlying
these studies is largely a view that sees gender as a crucial component of culture and the media as hegemonic institutions that present the capitalist and patriarchal order as normal. van Zoonen supports the proposition put by de Lauretis (1987) that a coherent approach to understanding gender and communication can be examined by perceiving gender as "the product of various social technologies, such as cinema, and of institutionalised discourses, epistemologies and critical practices, as well as practices of daily life" (de Lauretis, cited in van Zoonen, 1994:41). van Zoonen concludes that the cultural studies framework offers an immense potential to make a useful contribution to the understanding of the media as contested sites in which cultural definitions of sexual difference is accommodated, modified and reconstructed. These developments in cultural studies pave new possibilities to exploring media imagery and making meaning on gender, as well as serve to highlight possible directions for the study of gender in the Malaysian cultural context.

Media Institutions

Media institutions have become another focus of gender analyses that relate to women's participation and the portrayal of images and offer complex understandings of women's subordination in society. Existing studies conducted in numerous countries reveal striking similarities across media systems - women are often absent from top management, and from technical jobs; they have lower salaries than men, specifically in highest paid positions; and they are usually located in certain production areas like education and children programmes (Gallagher, 1981; 1987).

Gallagher highlights other problems in media institutions like the need for women to adjust to job conditions tailored for men. For example, the expectation of high performance in youth with no consideration for childbearing and child-care; absence of active women unions and inadequate training and education for women in media are important factors that restrain women from participating meaningfully in this sector. The severe underrepresentation of women in top decision-making positions in media institutions is a burning concern; but the notion that increased participation of women would create changes in media content is by no means clear. There is much contention that the number of increasing women have not made major changes in the presentation of information in the media. Rather, most female media professionals themselves have been seen to support and perpetuate dominant values and definitions. Linne (1986) raises various complexities that confront women in media institutions in

12 Although the cultural relation is widely encompassed in van Zoonen's discussions on feminist media studies, van Zoonen observes the importance of investigating the material aspects of women's relation to the media, for example in the unequal access of women to the media, as producers as well as consumers.
terms of career prospects, personal interests and feminist interests and the feasibility of advancing these competing interests in their profession (see also Balakrishnan, 1994; Ferguson, 1990; Beasley, 1993).

Insofar as Malaysian media organisations are concerned, women are seen to be poorly represented at various levels of the organisation structure. One report records that local media are staffed and controlled largely by men, with less than 15% female participation at the policy and management level (Wang, 1993). There also appears to be little gender awareness among female media professionals. When asked about the representation of women in the media, one woman editor contends that the situation is "not that bad in Malaysia", while another female editor admitted that she never paid attention to it (Hamdan, 1987:202). Considering that media professionals, specifically female journalists have also a crucial part to play in the selection and treatment of social issues, much more work is needed in this area to find out their views on the position of women in media and in society. More in-depth studies are needed to document the work and struggles of female professionals and to explore if gender forms an agenda in their work. This is very much an underresearched area even within the western countries and little is known regarding the aspirations of female journalists or gender activists in the media profession.

An air of mixed reaction and pessimism has been advanced as far as the potential feminist contribution of female media professionals is concerned. Institutional policies, competition, professional values and advertiser's demands in a growing capitalistic economy - intertwined in a masculinist culture are seen as major constraints on women working in media institutions. As Gallagher (1992) states, media institutions must be recognised for what they are - that is increasingly privately-owned, profit-motivated transnational businesses with close links and shared interests with the power structures that operate at national and international levels to capitalise on femininity and women as sexual objects and consumers.

Nonetheless, it is important to observe that even within restricted social space, human agency and negotiations do take place between women and media institutions. Citron (1988) and Hyem (1987) believe that it is possible to work within the constraints and subvert media production in small but significant ways by offering points of view informed by feminist awareness. They see their struggles as disruptions to the functioning of hegemonic masculinity in media institutions but such engagement draws scepticism among gender critics who regard this as a modest allotment of institutional legitimation and as an admission of compromises made by women media.
professionals. The argument here is that mainstream media are controlled by male owners and professionals, thus they will continue to operate to the benefit of a patriarchal society and contribute to the general climate of symbolic annihilation and abuse of women (see de Lauretis, 1987:138).

Radical feminists urge that women should instead create their own means of communication. They propose that a more fruitful gender strategy can be generated through the construction of a women-centred alternative media. Kessler (1984) for example, argues that feminist ideas have gained public forum through these movements that have produced newsletters, magazines, books, radio, slides, video and films. Standing outside the mainstream, these movements have offered an ongoing critique of the mass media while taking up issues usually ignored in public discussion. They have also played a crucial role in feminist politics around the world by forming global networking, consciousness-raising and knowledge creation projects and enabling women to communicate and share ideas with their own words, images and views.

Though this strategy has met with some remarkable success such as in feminist writing and book publications, it has encountered numerous problems in other sectors. Citron (1989:16) draws our attention to the case of feminist film-makers in America who enjoyed 'privileged communication' with audiences in the social and political climate of the 1970's when funds were available for independent distribution, exhibition and discussion but this was no longer feasible when funding was cut in the 1980's. Scarce resources, organisational problems, limited skills, power difference and the diverse and often conflicting opinions and interests have not been always resolved amicably and have resulted in the declining or demise of many feminist media groups. In some cases, feminist media have operated as marginal and isolated movements that have been unable to reach, inform or mobilise larger audiences, thus occupying a peripheral space in society and in the public sphere (van Zoonen, 1994; Steeves, 1987). These observations have placed feminists in dilemma when formulating strategies and action plans.

All these struggles point to show that the gender struggle is a formidable task and I believe that efforts have to be sustained at different levels, whether in mainstream or alternative media as these contestation of ideas are necessary and must continue to keep the diverse gender issues alive, visible and legitimate on the public agenda. Gallagher (1992) and van Zoonen (1994) point out that the potential of articulating the gender critique can be developed further if there is more research on the social and cultural practices at media institutional levels as little is known on women's struggles in
areas like quality and popular press, television news and programmes on current affairs, musicals, quiz shows and sports.

Audience

This is another major area of communication which looks at women as media audiences. The emphasis here shifts from the text to the context of reception where the audience are seen to play an active role in decoding textual meaning. Popular mass entertainment forms such as romance, soap opera, melodrama and popular music which previously seen as 'inferior', have been 'reclaimed' as legitimate objects of critical analysis. Research in this area dismisses the notion of women as passive victims, rather it regards that resistant or subversive readings may be produced from the popular texts which women can use to 'empower' themselves (see Geraghty, 1991; Brown, 1990; Fiske 1986; Seiter et al, 1989, Radway, 1984; Hobson, 1980).

Hobson (1980, 1989) is amongst the earliest to carry out audience research in an ethnographic tradition from a gender perspective. She highlights the importance of radio and television in housewives' daily lives and argues that daytime radio is an important means of negotiating or managing the tensions caused by the isolation in their lives. Her analysis suggests that daily features of radio programming enable women to sequence their domestic activities; yet at the same time this also reinforces their domestic roles. As far as women's television consumption is concerned, Hobson (1989) implies that women exert an active 'choice' of programmes and use these texts as part of their general discourse on their own lives, the lives of their families and friends and to add interest to their own working lives.

Janice Radway (1984), in her investigation of women's romance reading practices, indicates that her respondents read romance not only because it is practically feasible and generally enjoyable but also emotionally necessary as well. By reading romance, women indulge in their own private pleasure and this activity is seen as compensatory as it addresses needs created in them but not met by patriarchal institutions and gendered practices.

In Holland, Ien Ang (1985), explores female viewers' fascination with Dallas. She argues that the melodramatic fantasies produced in soap operas are appealing to women, precisely because they are imaginary and not real. In other words, fictionality of soap operas creates space for women to be out of the complexities of real life for a while. Ang thus suggests that the aim of feminist cultural politics in popular fiction could lie in making pleasure in popular fiction a more collective and public experience.
She reads this as a form of female bonding as this enables many women to deliberately celebrate and share it.

Ang (1990), however offers cautionary notes elsewhere and argues emphatically that the popular itself has to be framed in a social and political context. She puts it succinctly,

"...it would be totally out of perspective to cheerfully equate 'active' with 'powerful' in the sense of 'taking control' at an enduring, structural or institutional level... we must not lose sight of the marginality of this power."

(Ang, 1990:247)

Condit (1989) expands this argument and elaborates that the pleasures audiences experience in receiving texts are necessarily complicated. The ability of audiences to shape their own reading and hence their social life is constrained by factors like audience members' access to oppositional codes, the ratio between work required and pleasure produced in decoding a text, the repertoire of available texts and the historical occasion especially with regard to the text's positioning of the pleasures of dominant and marginal audiences.

The controversy here is that audiences are not entirely autonomous that they could read whatever that they liked into any message. Audiences are positioned within a cultural system which reproduces particular representations of gendered knowledge and in the first instance it is the media industry that sets programme output, thereby setting the framework for viewers' meaning production, thus exerting power.

These arguments in other words, suggest that inspite of essential ambiguity, the range of meanings and subject positions a text offers is not infinite, and most texts have numerous readings which given the economic and ideological location of most mainstream media will tend to reconstruct dominant values of a society, thus stressing the interplay between the symbolic and economic dynamics of public communication.

A specific concern here arises in the attempts to theorise power where the language of resistance is concerned. Women's utilisation of the media and their cultural competence which enable them to generate pleasure, gratification in their own ways within the dominant cultural discourse has been related to empowerment, a concept which I presented earlier in this chapter. In most reception studies, the
creation of pleasure is linked to empowerment and hence power for women. It is maintained that media artefacts like romance novels and soap opera articulate feminine desire or pleasure and this constitutes as part of women's culture and a type of affective resistance to the dominant ideology. Most of these forms of gender analyses on female audiences have essentially then perceived empowerment to refer to the act of active interpretation, pleasure or resistance and this raises problems.

As argued in the discussion on empowerment, this creative power at an individual level is limited if it is unable to stimulate other groups to participate in social development of a society. As Riano (1994) argues, empowerment embodies a process that can bring individual and collective transformation for a better future for women. In other words the goal of empowerment does not rest on developing a sense of personal pleasure, power or control as it is related to the combination of commitment, skills development and working towards social intervention and change. It has to involve a collective attempt on the part of the submerged groups to gain power and to counter oppressive structures.

In relation to audience studies, the recognition of pleasure or resistance alone cannot be deemed as empowerment if it does not work towards deliberate attempts to counter oppressive forces and structures by the agents who seek power or self determination. How for example, will the mere act of reading romances or watching soaps and game shows contribute to alter women's subordination in society? The argument here is that romanticising resistance does not engage in the politics of state and global policy, patriarchal political and economic structures and allocations of public goods. Therefore there are difficulties when the language of resistance is naively overstated and polysemy is equated with pluralism while popular consumption is linked with notions of empowerment and political activity (van Zoonen, 1994; Gallagher, 1992; Corner, 1991).

Media studies adopting reception-oriented approaches have been further open to charges of populism, that is, media products cannot be critiqued if audience demonstrably enjoy it (Gledhill, 1988:71). As such, their utility as instruments of gender struggle is limited as they produce little evidence to inform public debate and the long-term gender struggle to create a more egalitarian environment.

This area of study has generated interesting debates and controversies and these have emanated largely from North American and Western European countries. The flow of global cultural products, the gendered imagery and the contradictory
expressions plus the consumerist ways of life these artefacts encourage affect women in different ways. Yet there is very little recognition to the enormity of this development in the Third World countries, including Malaysia and its implications for the female audience. Problems have not been posed regarding women's use of the media, their preferences and their dislikes and the kinds of issues wanting attention in the media. This clearly summons more research to be conducted in the area of audience to investigate their positions in relating to gender issues in the media. The discussion on gender issues in communication is also attached to the male-dominated enterprise of development. This is a theme that is overlooked in most typologies that describe the patterns of gender issues in communication and I turn to this area of discussion in the next section as it has profound implications for women's struggles in development.

**Development Communication**

The gender and communication relation in Third World countries is notably a crucial area that calls for serious analytic attention as it commands questions regarding the place of women in informing and influencing the nature of development. The gender question becomes increasingly complex in these regions when women's voices are strategically silenced in the venture of development which in turn is connected closely to the political and economic patriarchy systems. One of the key notions guiding the crusade of development is the growth of communication systems. The transfer of technological tools associated with modern communication systems has largely involved men who enjoy a privileged status in society. Hence they have become the key actors in establishing these systems and technology at both local and international levels and in determining the representation of women and their place in society. Traditionally, development communication have also neglected barriers confronted by women in accessing development information and therefore failing to offer information for women's interests (Riano, 1994).

Clearly, promises of national development in Third World countries have not looked into women's interests or the prevailing internal and external power relations that give them a subordinate status. Women have been seen as 'passive' participants in the development communication enterprise. Their involvement in the public sphere has not attracted any major attention. Rather, women only seem to matter in the private realm of home and family. The fact that women are oppressed in social and economic conditions and lack access to communication resources, and that social and cultural conditions pose constraints on their participation in public communication activities have not been perceived as major obstacles. Consequently, political groups
and business interest groups who have been predominantly males have controlled communication media as political channels, business commodities and information systems, and as tools for entertainment for mainly males and upper and middle-class class groups of society, rendering silence to the conflicts women face in their daily lives (ISIS, 1983).

Communication media in these regions have also mainly operated as powerful channels of propaganda and political control of the party. Further, with the encroachment of global economic trends, the media have been increasingly taking up roles as agencies that offer segmented audience groups to advertisers and business industry for profits (Reeves, 1993). Here women have been implicated in the process of transnational communication as they are identified as prime targets for advertising and consumers for luxury goods. Ironically, the constant search for new markets has been attached to development where the marketing of products is situated within the vision of progress and modernisation. As Gallagher (1989) argues, advertising by transnational corporations have dominated Third World media and have targeted not only the elite, middle-class and literate women but also at the enormous masses of poor and illiterate women for products like powdered baby food, harmful drugs, contraceptives, cosmetics and tobacco.

Governments in most Third World countries, Malaysia included, have been primarily concerned with media programming and profits and have reacted strongly against social criticism in the media rather than actualising the support role of the media in national development. Instead of addressing different forms of inequality and oppression in society, attempts have been made to protect government's political control and economic intervention in the media. These are usually couched in terms of national unity, anti-imperialism and so-called 'development strategies which require a reduction in social criticism.' In essence the major difficulty here is that rather than working as engines of equality and democracy, communication media in fact function in support of development interests of ruling political and economic patriarchy power (Reeves, 1993; Zaharom, 1991; Steeves, 1990, 1989; Ogan and Rush, 1989).

What is particularly striking is that within this development context, communication media have little space for the citizenry of women - a social group in its own right. Rather, women are either principally assumed as objects of pleasure or as active consumers. Efforts towards economic development frequently fail to take

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13The involvement of state in economic and media activities in the case of Malaysia will be highlighted in Chapter Five.
account the widespread structures of patriarchy which keep women in subordinate positions. Communication research on women clearly paints a vivid picture of how the media have profound implications by constructing particular definitions and interpretations of the distinctive character and roles of women.

In India, for example femininity is seen to be capitalised and traditional images of the subservient, self-effacing female are repeatedly reinforced in radio, television and films. Violence on women and rape scenes are normalised and deemed as essential ingredients that give pleasure to male viewers, illustrating the gendered nature of media production and film making (Krishnan and Dighe, 1990; Behera, 1989; Ghadially 1987; Bhasin, 1987). Such conventions present women in scenes of degradation that devalue women and perpetuate the notion that abuse of women is not an act of violence in need of attention or a major social problem seriously taken. More critically, such representations point to the social practice in which current beliefs and ideas about women and sexuality are re-constructed, whereby these representations are not only a private male pleasure, but also embedded in gendered social and cultural formations that have defined women's bodies as sexual objects.

There are various dimensions to gender communication problems in Third World regions. In Sub-Saharan Africa, although women grow 80% of its food, evidence shows that development communication media for agricultural programmes largely ignore needs and situations of African women farmers. Steeves (1990) states that while much has been written about 'training and visit' (T&V) system in development communication, the literature contains no reference to women. This situation is worsened when development agents are mostly men (about 95%, according to Food and Agriculture Organisation, cited in Steeves, 1990:4). Moreover, it is reported that male extension workers paid fewer visits to women than men farmers. These male agents were seen to be holding strong stereotypes about women's supposed lack of interest and inability to learn technical information even though evidence showed otherwise. As such, women lacked information on group demonstrations, short courses, loan facilities and access to the services of co-operatives.

The invention of communication technologies and the extension of transnational corporations have further affected women directly through jobs in electronic factories based in third world countries. While jobs offered by transnational corporations do free women from some very conservative norms of patriarchal societies and provide some financial and social independence, they however, subject
these women to new forms of exploitation. In this respect, Lim (1981) argues that these jobs are low-paying, highly stressful and involve health risks for women but these issues are not considered in public debates and in mainstream media (cited in Steeves, 1989:74). This is a relevant issue in Malaysia's pursuit of development. A forthcoming chapter will identify the absence of discussion on the issues affecting women and highlight the involvement of the Malaysian state in capitalising women's work as cheap labour in the electronics sector to justify the growth of the national economy (see Chapter Five).

Development communication is problematic for the limited creative expressions and the marginalisation of women's voices in defining issues for national development. In recent years, there has been a growing momentum of women engaging in small media to advance gender issues and to empower women to participate in debates of development. Global feminist networking, distribution of information and growing consciousness and dedication among women on gender media matters have led them to making feminist films, newsletters, plays, songs and poems to express themselves, to exchange ideas with other women and to counteract dominant stereotypes and myths (Riano, 1994, 1991; Mlama, 1989; Bhasin, 1987; French, 1987).

For example, Riano (1991) elaborates how Latin American grassroots women have developed their own small media to talk about problems affecting women. Radio soaps in this case are produced by poor women who have identified their personal experiences with colonisation, gender subordination, marriage and work. Riano concludes that women's participation in communication production has also helped to demystify the conventional perception of communication technologies as inaccessible, expensive, complex and as requiring professional expertise and male-related abilities (p. 22). However, Riano contends that even though evidence shows that women are active participants in networks of social communication and in maintaining indigenous communication systems that provide information exchange and help, most development agencies adopt a conservative view that approach women as passive members in public communication (p. 24).

Although women are increasingly making themselves visible in development communication efforts, there are many factors that impede women's media empowerment. Sreberny-Mohammadi (1994) draws our attention to salient issues like access to resources and the media, literacy, economic inequality and poverty plus political democracy that pose major barriers to the empowerment of women (p. 16-
She is right to point out to the difficulties, blocks, exclusions and marginalisations that women experience; yet, she does not undermine women's relative strengths and influences in the realm of communication.

These are useful pointers for establishing profound frameworks for gender analysis and action in communication. Indeed, this indicates immense challenges for the development communication project in Malaysia. Various national policies have been constructed to bring about progressive social transformation and the media are used extensively to support the goals of development. Ethnicity has been an overriding factor in restructuring society while the gender agenda seems distanced from the nation's priorities. In Chapter Five, I will argue that the women-question remains a thorny problem as national development policies have been silent on the subordinate position of women stemming from both the private and the public. Not surprisingly, most development communication projects have also failed to articulate the women-question and to implement meaningful strategies. Considering that this is a major lacuna in the debate regarding women and communication in Malaysia, there is a pressing need to conduct more gender analyses and to re-vision development communication plans. This suggests that a lot of work is required to inform knowledge and action to ensure women's concerns are not left out in development communication activities.

The discussion so far has attempted to raise some of the main movements of ideas in the whole debate of gender and communication. Although this is not an exhaustive account, the arguments presented in this discussion are relevant to gender scholarship in communication studies and to the wider gender media politics. I will offer a more focused overview of literature on Malaysian gender communication research in Chapter Five.

2.4 Gender Media Struggles

Gender communication research and activities are crucial and have significant implications for the wider gender political project. More fundamentally, this framework is needed to question communication media and their major role in conveying stereotypical images and gendered values and ideology about women and femininity, as well as the suppression of alternative viewpoints in the creation of women's knowledge and experiences. Several major focal points of the gender

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14A number of issues have received little attention. The area of psychoanalysis, pornography, the intersection of gender, class and ethnicity in relation to the media have not been discussed due to space limitations. A critique of these issues can be found in the following literature: van Zoonen, 1994; Gallagher, 1992; Steeves, 1987.
relation to communication that generate much controversy have been raised: the position of women in the media organisations; the representation of gender in media content; the concentration on the politics of information and citizenship that do not relate to women's concerns; and the politics of pleasure derived from communication texts. The plethora of different points of view, despite fragmentary and competing are relevant to the empowerment and political mobilisation of women. van Zoonen advances gender scholarship as a social movement "that has a double edge of being an interest group lobby and struggling for social and legal change beneficial to women and of challenging cultural preoccupation and routines concerning femininity and gender" (1994:152). In this instance, the realm of communication comes under scrutiny to generate public discussion and to promote women's leadership and knowledge in making sense of social reality.

From the basis of the above discussion, it is evident that the gender communication struggle engages an uphill battle and strategies for ending structural and processual subordination of women must develop at various levels. It is important to note that progress towards improving women's interests can be fully actualised when the pre-conditions of the family structure, labour market structure and career structure that are influenced by state and economy patriarchy are changed.

In the field of communication, strategic actions are needed to challenge male domination in mainstream media institutions and to develop feminist media systems that encourage alternative dialogue and debate about all aspects of development. A more fair distribution of women informed and committed to gender issues in positions of power in media institutions is also essential. The quantitative increase of women will not promise qualitative changes if women themselves are not sensitised to gender issues and alerted to the gendered constructions of reality. Women have to be empowered with knowledge and analytical tools to question male-centricity in given media conventions and journalistic practices. It is important for men to be sensitive to gender conflicts and give support to the gender project that aims to transform social structures that subordinate women.

Research is critical to document the struggles of women in the communication media workplace and to record the symbolic representation of gender issues and images in media texts. Equally important are audience and reception studies that examine women's aspirations and their use of the media. The availability of research information is instrumental to determine the actions that can be taken.
Gender media scholars and activists have given focus to three important sites of struggle: international organisations; mainstream media organisations and women's media; and communication education (Gallagher, 1994). There have been attempts to give consideration to gender issues in international activities, in programming and recruitment policies in mainstream media, in establishing women's media and in giving attention to the curriculum in communication education.

International Organisations

Efforts to work within international organisations to reform mass media has been seen as a crucial step to give recognition to women's perspectives in the media environment. At a global level, the United Nations International Decade for Women (1975-1985) generated much activity and numerous plans were drawn to put women's issues on the international agenda. This has lead to the setting up of women's units in government ministries in many parts of the world, Malaysia included. UNESCO has also initiated research, reviews and conferences on media's representations of women in media content and on women's participation in media organisations (see UNESCO, 1989; Gallagher, 1981; Ceulemanns and Fauconnier, 1979). Attempts have been made to put women's interests in discussions on communication issues in relation to the New World Information and Economic Order and MacBride's Commission Report - Many Voices, One World.

However, the achievements at the international level have drawn cautionary remarks from some gender scholars. Mahoney (1991) suggests that leading action within the framework of United Nations has not been easy as the gender agenda has received little attention and there has been reluctance, resistance and difficulties in political-economy support to advance women's interests (p. 14).

Still, gender activists do work to continue with women's initiatives within United Nations, UNESCO and other regional movements. Activity within the European Community (EC) have also seen women struggle to keep the gender project alive amidst increasing commercialisation in the media environment (see Equal Opportunities in European Broadcasting, 1993; Gallagher, 1990). Various European bodies have taken steps to fund research, workshops, training programmes on Equal Opportunities in the Media; to improve career advancement for women in the media industry, to present diversity in the representation of women in media content and to deal seriously with sexual harassment in the workplace.
In Canada, measures to contribute to the progress towards gender equity in the media have been taken in three national legislatives: The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom (1982); The Employment Equity Act (1986) and the Revised Broadcasting Act (1991). In 1994, the Canadian Radio-television Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) also licensed Women's Television Network, a privately-owned female managed commercial satellite broadcasting which produces and funds programming by and for women (see Jeffrey, 1995).

It is important to observe that the gender agenda has not been widely adopted in many Third World regions mainly because of governmental reluctance to become embroiled with the gender-question. Further, lack of resources, high levels of poverty and illiteracy have also to be surmounted before gender media initiatives and policy options can be implemented successfully. Clearly, the gender media struggle in these regions is an enormous task, but one that is crucial to the social development of society.

**Media Organisations**

Strategies are needed to challenge male domination in mainstream media institutions and to develop feminist media systems that encourage dialogue and debate about all aspects of social, political and economic activity. Studies conducted in 1993-1994 in selected countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America show that women's employment have yet to reach 50% in any country, specifically in positions dealing with the creation and development of media output (Gallagher, 1994). It is further reported that women are almost invisible in the technical area and in senior management. For example, amongst the most influential production executives, heads of departments and programme controllers, women's share of posts are 16% across the media organisations in Latin America, 15% in Europe, 12% in Africa and 4% in India; while there are no women at all at this level in Japan, Malaysia, Malawi, Namibia or Switzerland. Evidently, media organisations are willing to receive the participation of women at lower and middle levels than the top positions - the 'glass ceiling' is still extremely difficult to crack.

Martinez (1995:1) observes some strategies that have been attempted in media organisations, specifically in western countries: a) creation of alternative productions that support critical and progressive initiatives originating in the media community; b) establishment of joint committees at the management level; c) development of association or groups of media professionals; d) establishment of codes of ethics and self-regulation.
Several of these measures have met some achievements when women have been actively engaged in lobbying tactics to press for positive action, specifically in recruiting and selecting women for promotion in media organisations. Since the mid 1980's, a number of broadcasting organisations have developed operational oriented courses and management training for women. In the United Kingdom, this approach has been promoted by British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Thames Television, Central and London Weekend Television (LWT). Similar action plans are also run by Dansmarks Radio (DR) in Denmark and Radiotelevisao Portuguesa (RTP) in Portugal.

In order for women to make a reasonable impact, their numbers must be significantly greater than they are now. More crucially, there is a debate whether women as media professionals advance the interests of women or their own career (Linne, 1986; Tuchman, 1978) and these depict conflicting interests that may impede a diverse representation of women in the media. Nevertheless, it is important to make the point that the equity strategy is still essential, but it is also important to ensure that women are informed of gender perspectives and the importance of gender media empowerment. Only then will women be encouraged to question media policies, production conventions and journalistic practices so that they can contribute effectively towards a more egalitarian world. Apart from strategies within mainstream media organisations, the establishment of feminist media is crucial to give voices to feminist perspectives in all public debates. In many parts of the world, women have attempted to create and control independent media (magazines, video, films, folk media, radio, television and slide productions). By developing alternative forms and practices of media and by engaging grassroots women to participate and to take initiatives to advance their concerns they seek to counter dominant views from mainstream media. The growth of feminist media is crucial to inject critical views, specifically in relation to the matters that concern women to inform policy making in economic, social and political plans.

Communication Education

Communication education first evolved as a response to the controversial nature of media artefacts. Inherently this area of study implicates culture as cultural experiences are generated in media texts, films, picture romances and popular music. Today, communication education has grown into a complex field of study and there are variations in the ways of advancing the understanding of media at different educational levels. Some of the major models adopted in communication education will be discussed in the next chapter. A major movement in communication
education specifically aims to promote media literacy -- to educate people about the media and to construct a critical approach to information offered by the media as well as to contextualise those agencies that produce media. Communication education plays a significant role to develop the critical abilities of learners and to encourage autonomous thinkers who approach media representations as selective and partial and all information as mediated. In other words, a major goal is to illuminate that all knowledge and information reaches the audience as representations and mediations, whether they are presented in factual and fictional forms.

Communication education for critical media literacy and competence underpins this area of study at the primary and secondary level in formal schooling. At the university level, especially in undergraduate programmes, this area of study attracts large numbers of students interested in the media profession. The assumptions and values about gender in the education students receive is crucial if the students are to engage in mass communication practice. It has been widely reported that in most communication education and training programmes, the majority of students are females (Gallagher, 1994; Creedon, 1993). This is seen as a promising route as a capacity may be formed to encourage the dismantling of masculinist assumptions and conventions when more women enter the media industries. In order for this to happen, it is essential to present gender issues in the curriculum of communication education. Such an initiative could also encourage male students to support feminist views and to give a wider representation of women in the media as well as to give access to more women to interact with the media.

The way gender issues are defined and addressed in communication schools is important to make the gender connection visible, and this forms the major interest in the present study. It is important to promote gender consciousness among academic members so that attention can be given to gender questions in their research and in the curriculum they generate in communication studies. The focus given to gender issues in turn could bring about a wider consciousness towards the gender values underlying media representations and media practices. At the university level, students can be asked to re-vision these values and to innovate with alternative constructions in their media production activities. In the case of communication programmes that offer media skills and production activities, women-oriented films and media texts can be used and assessed to inform students of various world-views and techniques that can be employed to construct alternative representations of reality in both factual and fictional media content.
Efforts are also needed to encourage female students to aim for key decision positions so that they can participate in bringing change to media policies and media programming. Leading female practitioners, committed to gender issues can be invited to share their working experiences, their struggles in career advancement, the difficulties they encounter and the strategies they use to secure women's interests in their media organisations.

The incorporation of gender scholarship in knowledge about the media and media skills is integral to sensitise both male and female communication students to the subordination and objectification of women, especially in the media environment. Communication students need to be aware of the silenced voices that aim to promote the well being of women. It is important for students to acknowledge that women are active political citizens who play an important part in social development. The gender enterprise in communication education is thus important to bring individual and collective growth. In particular, it is crucial to make female students aware of themselves as crucial actors that have to struggle and contribute to changing social arrangements that are oppressive to women. Male students have an important responsibility and opportunity too because the ways they produce gender in their media activities will influence the efforts to interrupt the hegemonic ideas that are generated in the realm of the media.

As argued in Chapter One, gender scholars raise concern when gender appears as a missing theme in communication education in many parts of the world. For instance, van Zoonen (1994) notes that gender issues in Dutch Journalism schools were seen as nonsensical and tedious; occupied a marginal and optional place in the curriculum; there was no substantial debate among staff and students, and students working on gender conceptions met with a lack of interest on the part of the faculty. In the U.S., Creedon (1993:3) suggests that the academy has failed to seriously take gender issues into consideration in understanding communication and media practice. She calls for a re-definition of gender values in mass communication education and urges feminist directions to be integrated into this field of study. In this regard, there are very few studies that have examined gender issues in relation to communication education programmes. There is a need to increase the scope of feminist communication critique to include this area as the literature on gender efforts in communication education is sparse.

Early attempts in integrating knowledge about women in communication classrooms have discussed technique differences between single sex and co-educational
activities. Johnson and Goldman (1977) argue for separate communication classes so that women can effectively learn communication skills. Sprague (1975) and Karre (1976) consider a range of techniques that can be used to reduce sexism in communication classrooms and to promote awareness among students about the presence of women speakers as important communicators. Foss (1978) illustrates a course for approaching contemporary feminist rhetoric, while Berryman (1979) describes a course in intrapersonal, interpersonal, group and public communication for women. Vonnegut (1992) argues that traditional American public address courses could include women's texts to achieve a full understanding of how humans use symbols. From the works stated above, it appears that individual efforts are being made to integrate gender issues within courses but these studies do not indicate the overall orientation of syllabus content in the curriculum of their communication programmes.

The present study focuses on this area of struggle - the curriculum of communication education. This area is one site that can offer opportunities for advancing gender media struggles. It is important to consider feminist teaching as relevant political work and communication education as a potential site for radical gender activities within the wider scene of communication as it is not just an academic field but also a point for intervention. Inevitably, some institutional structures may be open to change than others, nonetheless, it is still worth re-evaluating existing programmes to extend the wider picture of the positioning of gender issues in communication education.

Developing such intervention strategies also require a detailed study which informs us about factors such as educational aims and purposes of communication education programmes, availability of resources, views of communication tutors and students to gender issues and the significance accorded to gender issues in the syllabus content of communication education. This appears to be an area that is underresearched and is important, particularly in the case of Malaysia, where communication education programmes play a major role in producing future communication professionals. The present study aims to contribute critique and discussion regarding the views of communication educators as key curriculum-makers and the significance accorded to gender issues in communication courses.

In this chapter, I have clarified that gender is an organising principle within which meaning and value are assigned to different groups of people in the world.
Gender scholarship helps to illuminate understanding of gender relations and the structural subordination of women. The conceptualisation of power in feminist thinking is expressed as both repressive and productive. This acknowledges the constraints of powerful structures but at the same time sets out a capacity for changing oppressive arrangements. In this discussion I have drawn attention to ideological mechanisms that grant the hegemony of masculinist views and I have urged for the feminist critique to be extended to education and media systems.

I have situated a discussion on gender and communication within the context of the present study as the movement of gender ideas in this field have implications for gender activity in communication education. The overview of such a large area of scholarship undoubtedly runs into risks of reductionism and exclusion, nevertheless, the discussion presented above in this chapter is illustrative of the main movements in gender communication studies and offers a starting point for introducing debates on gender issues for communication students. The main aim here is to provide evidence that maps the problematic nature of gender politics and communication and attention is also given to local and global chains of oppression - a chain that ultimately links with economic, political and cultural processes that reserve resources, power and control for small groups of people.

Within the communication context of Malaysia, feminist perspectives to inform public issues have rarely been generated in the mainstream media. In addition, feminist movements have not effectively mobilised alternative media work to counter dominant interpretations of social issues. In this discussion, I have also highlighted contributions from Malaysian gender communication studies and recorded the gaps and the need for more research to be done in these areas. I have also looked at gender media struggles and the different sites where gender intervention strategies can be initiated. I have identified my interest in looking at the site of communication education for gender critique and intervention. I have stressed the need to evolve a gender discourse in this site as a form of counter-hegemonic discourse that questions the knowledge and assumptions underpinning the understanding of communication and media activities, journalistic practices and news room conventions.

Given that communication education in Malaysia produces a large number of graduates who would be engaged in communication related industries and disseminate messages, this study is significant to give insight into how gender issues are being addressed in communication education. Constructing the gender discourse in communication education programmes of course will not necessarily lead to changes
in the media content or in the status of women in society, nevertheless it is still crucial to identify this site as a terrain for gender struggle.

It must be observed that there is much difficulty in conducting a study on gender issues in communication education as there is very little published feminist analysis relating to this research interest in the field of communication education to build on. In the next chapter, I turn to feminist theory, media theory and critical education theory to put together a theoretical framework that will underpin my study.
CHAPTER THREE

CRITICAL EDUCATION THEORY AND COMMUNICATION EDUCATION

The present study is an attempt to investigate how gender issues are approached in the curriculum of Malaysian professional communication studies at the undergraduate level. It aims to explore the views of communication tutors and the visibility of gender issues in curriculum content. It also hopes to propose strategies to initiate changes in curriculum practice. This study is important, particularly in Malaysia as it raises crucial issues regarding the knowledge students receive while being oriented to discussions and skills in communication and media, particularly if these students take up media-related professions in future.

This chapter consists of three parts. Part I presents a discussion of critical education theory to offer numerous concepts and arguments that will be instructive in developing a theoretical framework for the present study. Ideas from Gramsci and Freire will be discussed to provide understanding and directions for the present study. Part II proceeds to terms and definitions used to denote the study of communication and media. Some of the major models that have influenced communication education will be outlined. In relating to the curriculum, it is suggested that an adequate framework should highlight the socio-cultural and the structural context which exert influences on the curriculum in communication education programmes. Following this, the gender link in communication education will be raised to highlight the assumptions of gender and gender values that are being institutionalised in education sites. Finally in Part III, a framework of action that outlines barriers and strategies is offered to inform the current study.

3.1 Critical Education Theory

Critical education theory rests on a critical view of the existing society, arguing that society is both exploitative and oppressive but also capable of being changed. Two theoretical approaches that have emerged in this tradition are the paradigms of reproduction and production. In essence, reproduction theory relates to the processes through which existing social structures maintain and reproduce themselves. Writings by Althusser (1971) and Bowles and Gintis (1976) have influenced the study of education and schooling. The role of education and the process of schooling have been problematised. Underlying the reproduction paradigm is a view which suggests that students are shaped by their experiences in schools to internalise or accept a subjectivity and a class position that leads to the reproduction of existing power relationships and social and economic structures. Education institutions like schools,
colleges and universities are seen as important sources of material and ideological practices. It is through instruction and social relationships in these institutions that students learn ways of viewing social reality and ways of living in the world. While critical educational theorists have been concerned with the reproduction of class through education under capitalism, feminist theorists have been concerned with the reproduction of gender under a system of patriarchy (see Delamont, 1980; Deem, 1980; Deem, 1978; Davies and Meighan, 1975). A major thrust of these education studies falls on the analysis of curriculum knowledge and power to offer an understanding of the ways in which education function to the logic of capitalist and masculinist ideology in society.

The theories of reproduction have made important contributions to critical education theory. A principal criticism levelled at the reproduction paradigm is that its theoretical perspectives fail to recognise the complex and contradictory experience of individuals. Very little attention relates to issues on human agency, resistance and change that can take place in educational institutions (see Apple, 1986; Giroux, 1984).

The second paradigm advances theories of production which examine the social construction of curriculum knowledge and the ways in which dominant forms of knowledge can be critiqued and made problematic (Young, 1971). The studies under this paradigm recognise the power of structural determinants but give attention to the lived experience of social actors. Underlying these efforts, is an interest for a model which will recognise both human agency and the production of knowledge and culture as well as the power of material and ideological structures that produce contradictory social forms and relations.

Ideas from Gramsci and Freire have provided important perspectives to develop theoretical frameworks that can encompass both agency and structure. I will discuss some key concepts which will be instructive in my research. I turn first to the writings of Gramsci and present his arguments on ideology and the concept of hegemony.

Gramsci (1971) suggests that it is important to acknowledge the powerful influence of the material conditions - that is the potent influence of the structural economic institutions of society. But he also highlights the influence of non-economic or superstructural institutions which construct processes of communication and meaning formation which can have a very powerful effect upon the way people interpret and make sense of the world. In his view, it is important to pay particular
attention to the ways in which ideological frameworks may have a profound impact upon the understanding of society and subsequently upon how to work towards social change. In this manner, he stresses the relative importance of ideological and material forces in producing or resisting social change.

Gramsci makes an important contribution by giving prominence to ideology in analysing power relations. He explains that a dominant position is maintained through the recruitment of the mass of the people who come to express consent and acceptance of the primary constituents of the dominant world-view. By advancing hegemony as a concept of ideology, he offers a complex framework to clarify how a dominant group maintains control by projecting its own particular way of seeing social reality so successfully that its view is accepted as common-sense and as part of the natural order by those who in fact are subordinated to it.

Gramsci uses hegemony to describe the social construction of reality through certain dominant ideological institutions, practices and discourses which win consent for the social order. Boggs (1976:39) points out that "hegemony can be defined as an 'organising principle' or world view (or combination of world views) that is diffused by agencies of ideological control and socialisation into every area of life". Hegemony involves the social transmission of certain preconceptions, assumptions, notions and beliefs that structure the view of the world among certain groups in a specific society. Hegemonic ideology attempts to legitimate the existing society, its institutions and its ways of life. Through ideological mediation, hegemonic ideology is translated into everyday consciousness and serves as a means of indirect rule. This is a powerful force for social cohesion and stability which is embodied in everyday experience. In Gramsci's analysis, as Kellner (1990:18) puts it "ideologies cement and unify the social bloc". In this respect, Gramsci employs hegemony to denote a form of social and political control which is gained through consent, i.e. intellectual, moral and cultural persuasions. This consensual aspect is particularly important:

The methodological criterion on which our own study must be based is the following: that the supremacy of a social group manifests in two ways, as 'domination' and as 'intellectual moral leadership'. A social group dominates antagonistic groups, which it tends to 'liquidate' or to 'subjugate' perhaps even by armed force; it leads kindred and allied groups. A social group can and indeed must already exercise 'leadership' before winning governmental power (this indeed is one of the principal conditions for the winning of such power); it subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises
power, but even if it holds it firmly in its grasp it must continue to 'lead' as well.

(Selections of Prison Notes, 1971: 57-58)

Gramsci argues that every individual is shaped through hegemonic ideas and historical circumstances; but Gramsci also points out that hegemony is never complete. It is always in a process of being imposed and always capable of being resisted by historical subjects. In other words, hegemony is never established fully, but is always subject to negotiation and contestation. Gramsci goes on to explain that society is a terrain of contesting groups and forces in which the ruling group is trying to smooth contradictions and incorporate potentially oppositional groups and forces. As such, hegemony can be opposed and be contested by efforts of oppositional groups to produce a counter-hegemony. It is useful to expand this discussion.

Ruling groups attempt to integrate subordinate groups into the established order and dominant ideologies through a process of indoctrination that leads to the internalisation of these positions, values and views of the world. But it is possible that many individuals do not come to accept these hegemonic ideologies and instead actively resist them. Put differently, the process of ideological production and transmission is not one-dimensional, but rather an active process of negotiation that can be resisted or transformed by groups of people according to their own ends and interests. Gramsci argues that a challenge to hegemonic power must, at least in the first instance, take place on the political and intellectual terrain of both the structure and superstructure. He therefore proposes that the emergent group should wage a war of position aimed both at freeing individuals' minds from the clasp of ruling ideology through a process of hegemonic critique and action that subverts dominant practices. In this sense, Gramsci perceives human agents as active and reflective, capable of engaging in a process of conscious intellectual reflection and synthesis which could lead to a greater understanding of material reality and to the development of a new form of political strategy and action.

Gramsci further elaborates that if a social group is to be successful in its aims for social transformation, it must exercise leadership. The extent to which it can lead depends upon the extent to which it is genuinely representative of a cohesive and purposeful alliance or 'historical bloc' of social groups and their aspirations. Gramsci stresses that the emerging alternative hegemony will be successful only 'if it develops a new economic, political and moral leadership, which recognises and is prepared to engage with practical and ideological issues, within both the economic structure and the political superstructure " (Ransome, 1992 :136).
Gramsci's work is important because it provides a model of society -- one that is made up of contending forces and groups. This model reveals that different classes, sectors of capital and social groups compete for social dominance and attempt to impose their visions, interests and agendas on society as a whole. Hegemony is thus shifting and complex - always subject to contestation and change. It is a model which posits divisions between the ruling and subordinate groups and sees the terrain of power as a shifting site of struggle, coalitions and alliances.

In discussing hegemony, it is important to note the role of educational institutions and ideological practice. It is clear that the process of hegemony is dependent upon a suitably educated and politically conscious population. Political education is integral to the formation of an alternative hegemony or legitimate emergent historical bloc. Gramsci discusses how individuals can reach an understanding which is necessary for active participation in both economic and political institutions in society. In his writings on education and the intellectuals, Gramsci writes about the intellectuals who function directly and indirectly on behalf of a dominant social group to organise coercion and consent. He also directs attention to the problem of how to form intellectuals of the subaltern social groups who will be capable of opposing and transforming the existing social order. Gramsci sees the development of advanced political consciousness culminating in the formation of an alternative hegemony in terms of an individual's journey from pre-school kindergarten through common school and university or specialised technical training, to active and fully democratic participation in the organisation of society as a whole (Ransome, 1992:179). For Gramsci, the aspects of political consciousness, rights and duties are important issues in the education of individuals because these challenge what he calls 'magical' or 'folkloristic' conceptions of how the world has evolved. This relates back to the discussion of ideology where the construction of the ruling ideology must be assessed and challenged.

Gramsci emphasises that although every individual has the potential to engage in the development of political consciousness and practice, some individuals will take on the particular task of organising and leading the new historical bloc. According to Gramsci, the individuals who serve to articulate and transmit dominant ideas that justify the dominant order and those who play a leading role in developing an alternative hegemony are the intellectuals. Gramsci argues,

Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals

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which give it homogenising and an awareness of its own function, not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields.

(Gramsci, 1971:5)

Intellectual activity can be expressed for example, through the agency of lecturers, teachers and university students and educational institutions like schools and universities generate ideologies and elaborate various levels of intellectuals. The curriculum of communication school and universities provide the basis of social development and can aim for individuals to participate in social activity "after bringing them to a certain level of maturity, of capacity for intellectual and practical creativity" (Gramsci, 1971:29).

It is worthy to observe that societies are composed of competing groups and contain intellectuals who will transmit hegemonic ideology of the dominant group. But intellectuals supporting alternative ideologies are also present and perform an essential mediating function in the struggles of social forces. Gramsci emphasises the crucial organic function exercised by the latter group of intellectuals,

A human mass does not 'distinguish' itself, does not become independent in its own right without, in the widest sense, organising itself; and there is no organisation without intellectuals, that is without organisers and leaders.

(Gramsci, 1971:334)

Reflecting on Gramsci's ideas, Ransome points out that if intellectuals wish to understand society and organise action, the most fruitful course would be to adopt the point of view of the most underprivileged members (1992:196).

In this regard, it can be seen that Gramsci stresses that intellectuals play an important part by enabling individuals to question the assumptions and values underpinning the dominant hegemony. In addition, they can play an important role in working towards constructing new forms of discourse through which effective opposition and critical expression can be established to support values of justice and equality. It is thus important to create new agendas for political discussion and to raise issues which the intellectuals of the dominant group choose to avoid.

15It is crucial to observe that communication students at the university level, who are intending media professionals engage in intellectual activity through the agency of mass media, another educational institution. These individuals play a significant role in sustaining the dominant order or in advancing an alternative hegemony.
In sum, intellectuals play a central role in articulating the particular form and characteristics of the new hegemony. This activity requires a great deal of analysis and creativity to explore and make sense of the aspects of prevailing social practices, to gauge which ones should be sustained and developed and which ones should be displaced. Intellectual activity is crucial to the emergence of an alternative hegemony. Gramsci's theoretical ideas, specifically on the hegemony model is thus useful in analysing education as part of a process of social-cultural struggle where different social groups compete for social dominance and attempt to extend their visions, interests and agenda on society as a whole.

It is important to raise the work of another educationalist, Paulo Freire in this discussion. In his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972), Freire documents an approach to teaching that is based on both local meaning systems and political dimensions of the lives of the learners. Freire organises his approach to liberatory pedagogy in terms of social relations between the oppressed and the oppressors, and between humanisation and dehumanisation. Humanisation, for Freire, is a goal for liberation - something which has not been achieved, nor can it be achieved as long as the oppressors exploit the oppressed. If humanisation is to be actualised, new relationships among human beings must be created. According to Freire, this requires social groups to identify and analyse existing structures of oppression in the possibility of creating new forms of relationships. He suggests that this process could begin through problem-solving concept of education as opposed to the banking concept where knowledge is imposed in a vertical manner from the teacher to the students. He writes,

> The starting point for organising the programme content of education or political action must be the present, existential, concrete situation, reflecting the aspirations of the people. Utilising certain basic contradictions, we must pose this existential, concrete, present situation to the people as a problem which challenges them and requires as a response - not just at the intellectual level, but at the level of action........ It is not our role to speak to the people about our own view of the world, nor to attempt to impose that view on them, but rather to dialogue with the people about their views and ours. We must realise that their view of the world, manifested variously in their action, reflects their situation in the world.

(Freire, 1972:68)

For Freire, *teaching and learning* are human experiences with profound social consequences. He defines education as one place where the individual and society are
constructed, a social action which can empower or domesticate students. He writes that teachers and students are agents, both engaged in the process of constructing and re-constructing meaning. Freire proposes a liberatory pedagogy in classrooms where the teachers pose problems deriving from experiences of students, social issues and academic subjects in a mutually created dialogue. The classrooms then become intellectual centres which invite students to think critically about subject matter, doctrines, the learning process itself and the society (Shor, 1993:25).

Conscientisation is a key construct to Freire’s thinking which relates to political consciousness that develops out of the personal experience of the need for change and enables individuals to take action against oppressive elements of reality. Freire uses this construct in the context of liberation or marginalised social groups or classes who have to win for themselves the right to being subjects of their history and not mere objects of their social groups or classes. This process of liberation takes place in actions initiated by the oppressed themselves in an effort to solve their daily conflicts. Freire believes that it is only starting from these actions, that the oppressed begin to become critically conscious of their situation, of the contradiction between their real interests and those of the people who dominate and exploit them. He further argues that conscientisation can arise only from dialogue and active participation among the subordinated people. Conscientisation then points to the development of creativity of the oppressed in their process of acquiring power or being empowered to transform structures and mentalities.

Like Gramsci, Freire writes that educators have a crucial role to play by presenting critical problems to students to encourage questioning of dominant assumptions and values about dominant ideologies, knowledge and the ways of making sense of the world. In arguing for a critical pedagogy, Freire stresses the need for educators to question the notion of neutrality and to acknowledge the highly political nature of education. He states:

......education is politics! ......When a teacher discovers that he or she is a politician, too, the teacher has to ask, What kind of politics am I doing in the classroom? That is, in favour of whom am I being a teacher? By asking in favour of whom am I educating, the teacher must also ask against whom am I educating. Of course, the teacher who asks in favour of whom in favour am I educating and against whom, must also be teaching in favour of something and against something. This 'something' is just the political project, the political profile of society, the political 'dream'. After that moment,
the educator has to make his or her choice, to go farther into oppositional politics and pedagogy.

(Freire and Shor, 1987:46)

Freire goes on to argue that there is a strong ideological dimension to this question of challenging and transforming the consciousness of students. The dominant ideology makes its presence in the classroom partly felt by trying to convince the educator that he or she must be neutral. Freire asserts that by advocating neutrality, the educators leave the "dominant ideology in peace" (ibid., 1987:174).

This discussion is an important contribution as it highlights that by adopting neutrality, educators cooperate in sustaining the dominant interests and hide conditions that would weaken dominant ideology. As Shor (1987) points out, "'neutral' teaching is another name for an opaque curriculum, and an opaque curriculum is another name for domestichating education" (ibid:174). Neutrality is an important issue; I discuss the notion of neutrality in my arguments on practical work in Chapter Six and in relation to communication tutors' views on media courses in Chapter Seven.

All forms of education are political, whether or not educators and students acknowledge the politics in their work. Politics is in the subjects chosen for the syllabus and in those left out. It is also in the method of choosing course content, whether there is a negotiated curriculum in the classroom. Politics resides in the questions and statements from educators about the themes being studied, in the freedom students feel when questioning the curriculum, in the silences surrounding certain questions and issues in knowledge. Knowledge is not neutral, the methods chosen, the language spoken and the ways the ideas are organised for continuity or change spell politics.

In essence then, Freire's liberatory pedagogy engages with politics and can be inferred as a praxis that treats people as fully active human subjects capable of initiating change in any political process. It can be seen that like Gramsci, Freire is committed to a belief in the power of individuals to come to a critical consciousness of their own being in the world. From this ability to appropriate reality, action can be taken and reality can be transformed. It can be discerned from Freire's ideas that he proposes a critical reading of reality which takes place in the literacy process -- one which is associated with clearly political practices of mobilising and organising, and this constitutes an instrument of what Gramsci calls counter-hegemony.
The ideas from Gramsci and Freire are central to critical educational theory. Their writings provide important theoretical frameworks to unearth some of the mechanisms in which dominant ideology is reproduced and the ways in which this hegemonic ideology and power is resisted. While Gramsci and Freire provide valuable insights on group struggles in terms of class struggles and economic forces, it is nonetheless true that they failed to theorise patriarchy, masculinist ideology and gender formations. Their writings focus primarily on class conflicts and do not identify the rights of women, female experience and social inequality from a gender perspective.

For example, the hegemony model is impoverished in its failure not only to analyse but more particularly to theorise the dynamics of patriarchy and the social construction of gender. As Mary O'Brien (1987) argues, patriarchy is structured, ideological, historical and oppressive. The process of reification embedded in commodity production obscures the questions which relate to the context of gender oppression. The role of social institutions in the reproduction of social and ideological relations of male supremacy are not assessed fully and the view that "women of all classes are oppressed by men of all classes" does not emerge as a crucial issue (O'Brien, 1987:47). In Gramsci's writings on the intellectuals and education, it is worthy to observe that, the gendered character of the formation of intellectuals through schools and universities is not acknowledged. Intellectuals may create counter-hegemonic strategies to undermine ruling class monopolies on ideological reproduction and the definition of what can be known, but it is likely that they will do so within a historically developed hegemonic masculinity which they may not consciously resist. Consequently, gender conflicts and female experience that evolve in social meanings and relationships - in family, in education, work and community are not problematised. The subordination of women, and the ways gender is reproduced and produced through social practices are not duly defined.

Similarly, Freire's work on the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972) does not give visibility to gender issues. In this work, Freire's formulation of oppression is conceived in terms of class. Education is viewed in the context of mainly peasants and working people's revolutionary struggles while the gender oppression is left out. It is important to observe that value systems are something more complex than capitalist propaganda. Conversely, feminist scholars question the assumption of a single kind of oppression in working towards a pedagogy of liberation. They point out that the proposed liberatory pedagogy is inadequate, particularly for feminist educators who are acutely aware of the continuing forces of sexism and patriarchal structures and of the power of race, sexual preference, physical ability and age in classroom interaction
(see Gore, 1992; Orner, 1992; Kenway and Modra, 1992; Weiler, 1991). In addition, Freire's concept of humanisation is problematised as it does not fully address the particular meanings imbued by women and men, Black and White and other groups. The assumption of Pedagogy of the Oppressed is that in studying against oppression, the oppressed will move toward 'true humanity'. This assumption presents humanisation as universal, without considering the various interpretations this term may bring forth from people of different groups. As Weiler (1991) points out, this does not address the forms of oppression experienced by different actors; the possibility of struggles among people oppressed differently by different groups. She argues,

What is not addressed is the possibility of simultaneous contradictory positions of oppression and dominance: the man oppressed by his boss could at the same time oppress his wife, for example, or the White woman oppressed by sexism could exploit the Black woman.

(Weiler, 1991:453)

Thus a major critique levelled at Freire's ideas is that he has not focused over the contradictions and tensions within social settings in which overlapping forms of oppression exist. Applying this critique to education, gender scholars have expanded this perspective to argue that all school subjects and university courses that offer curriculum are gender-infected - either misrecognising, misrepresenting, neglecting or denying women's voices. Education institutions present partial representations of social reality that generally serve the interests of upper classes, male, white social groups and fragment, distort and smooth over the perceptions and concerns of other subordinated groups in curriculum practice. This is chiefly carried out by devaluing the social contributions and cultural expressions of women generally and working class and minority ethnic women in particular (see Luke and Gore, 1992; Campbell, 1992; Arnot and Weiner, 1987; Thiele, 1986). I will come back to the discussion of gender issues in curriculum later.

Calling into question the ideas of Gramsci and Freire, however, is not intended to argue that their thoughts on social experience is to be discarded or dismissed. Their theories have profound influence to illuminate gender oppression in society. Indeed feminist scholars find that the writings of Gramsci and Freire as rich sources and extend their ideas to the feminist political project. The works of Gramsci and Freire are central to the feminist project which aims to explore oppression, consciousness and the struggle towards social transformation. It also needs to be reiterated here that more
recent works of Freire address sexism and racism as systems of oppression that must be considered as seriously as class oppression.16

Fundamentally, it cannot be denied that feminists share Gramscian and Freirean ideas that see human beings as subjects and actors in history and hold a strong commitment to justice and a vision of a better world and of the potential for liberation. These ideals have powerfully influenced educators and students interested in countering male domination and masculinist ideology in a wide range of educational settings.

3.2 Gender Scholarship as Counter-Hegemonic Pedagogy

Research on gender issues in education is mainly linked to the advancement of women in these settings and to the giving of voice and space to women's interests in curriculum knowledge and classroom practice. Efforts to introduce women's studies programmes and to channel gender issues in the curriculum of various academic fields can become a source of critical learning and conscientisation, which in turn can be part of the creation of a counter-hegemony (MacDonald, 1989; Weiler, 1988; Lather, 1984).

As academic and political perspectives, gender scholarship provides space for women’s thinking and ideas that have otherwise been ignored in the gendered knowledge generated in the curriculum. MacDonald reads this as a ‘remedy’ as it works towards a conceptualisation of theory that is inclusive of women, women’s diverse experience and that allows both educators and learners to share and create women-centred knowledge (1989:146). Feminist educators are struggling in educational sites to encourage the process of conscientisation and to raise issues of sexism and gender oppression in their curriculum knowledge. The significance of critiquing male-dominated curricula texts and practices not only challenges the status quo, but also advances an alternative vision of gender.

Lather defines the significance of constructing gender issues as related to Gramsci’s idea for a progressive social group who create a new historical bloc. Adopting gender as a basic analytic tool will open new possibilities for fundamental social transformation and as Lather asserts, the task for feminist agents as counter-hegemonic groups is the development of alternative institutions, ideologies and

cultures that provide options to how the lived experience of the world can be different from the one defined by the dominant hegemony (1984:55).

Feminist communication scholars share similar concerns (Creedon, 1993; Rakow, 1993a). Gender issues are deeply implicated in communication politics and specifically in relation to developments in the media where particular constructions of masculinity and femininity gain dominance. As such there is a need to give prominence to gender in communication education to question the legitimacy of the social construction of gender systems and gender ideologies in the society and the media. Within the Malaysian context of communication education, this attention is imperative as it prepares a large number of future communication professionals who will be engaged in various activities to promote public discussion and change. It is useful to conscientise potential communicators on the need to give attention to issues of gender dynamics and to include women's perspectives on social and political debates.

The construction of a gender agenda in the curriculum of communication education, however as stated earlier, will not necessarily mean that communication channels would be democratised when empowered female communication students join the communication industries or development agencies. Students' aspirations for future employment often govern their willingness to challenge the status quo. Also, as van Zoonen (1989) notes, there are various other factors to consider like the autonomy the female communication professionals enjoy, their position in the institutional hierarchy, attitudes of colleagues, editorial policy and the ruling social-political forces in each context. The effort to introduce gender issues in the curriculum education is nevertheless a vital step and must be carried out as part of the larger collective gender project. The task of constructing gender issues in communication education will not mean that this work will be achieved without enormous and sometimes overpowering opposition. As Gramsci argues, dominant groups will also struggle to reimpose the ruling hegemony while it is being resisted and contested by subordinate groups. Acker (1994) notes that developing gender initiatives can be easily resisted as most authorities provide relatively little practical support for introducing gender initiatives. Indeed, the issue is seen as one of a large number of cases arguing for priority treatment (see also Whyte, 1986; Pratt, 1985; Orr, 1985). The gender struggle is therefore an uphill battle and demands commitment and dedication. I will come back to a discussion of barriers and strategies in the final part of this chapter.

Both Gramsci's and Freire's works are integral to the present study which is concerned with gender issues in communication education. The exclusion of gender
issues and women's voices indicate the need to identify and analyse the existing structures of oppression in the possibility of creating new forms of ideas and relationships. This study is an attempt to initiate the gender agenda in the curriculum of communication education in Malaysia. The argument for a gender discourse sets alternative ways for thinking about communication media, the nature of its gendered representations and media production practices. Before proceeding to the discussion of gender issues in communication education, it seems useful to look at communication education and the major movements in this field of study.

3.3 Defining Communication Education

Communication education is a difficult area to define as there are various interpretations used to describe the many aspects of this field of study. It is important to stress at the outset of this discussion that communication education is not to be confused with library skills or informational technology or technical operations such as running slide projects, film projectors or educational technology17 such as preparing audio-visual aids and learning to use computer technology. Communication education has evolved as a response to the rapid expansions and controversial developments in the media environment. The focus on the media has become extremely crucial, especially when the media play a major part in producing knowledge, information and cultural experiences. A wide range of perceptions and interests have been involved in proposing this field of study. In working towards an understanding of communication education, a few factors have to be considered.

In the first place, communication education must be contextualised according to specific social contexts. The description of communication education will vary according to different national and local contexts, state policies, educational policies and the place it occupies in different levels of formal and informal education. The purposes and functions of education systems and their interrelationships with media systems impinge upon the development of communication education. Secondly, it is important to note that the growth of communication education will also be influenced by the wider social context of the media ecology in different countries. The media systems and technology, the roles the media play and the place they acquire in the lives of people and in the society vary greatly in different regions. In some countries, the national newspapers may be considered primarily as the voice of an authoritative government, rather than as a vehicle of information, arbitrating between competing groups. In Third World countries, the radio is deemed as an important medium to

17In some areas, media education in interpreted as dealing with educational technology or educational media, that is media which is used to support teaching.
disseminate information and to help in national development. The television, is seen as a medium used only for the privileged in Sub-Saharan Africa; yet in other parts of the Third World region, like in South East Asia, television is very popular and present in many households (see McDaniel, 1994; Domatob, 1991).

The third factor is linked to what the people think about the media: the roles they discern the media play in their lives, the perceived media’s credibility and their interaction with the media in influencing the process of social change or development. These are important considerations which will have to be taken into account in thinking about developments in communication education.

Finally, it is worthy to point out that there are different labels attached to this field and they carry different emphasis in presenting knowledge in relation to communication and media. Given its broad focus, a diverse range of terms have been used to denote this area of study: media education, television studies, visual literacy, teleliteracy, mass media studies, mass communication studies, journalism studies and communication studies. Although a major focus falls primarily on the understanding of media and social relationships in society, the use and interpretation of these terms command different approaches and take different assumptions. In the light of the above difficulties, it is evident that the task to construct a definition that can be used accurately to describe this area of knowledge is highly problematic. As will be shown later, communication education takes different labels and directions in different countries and as such it would be hard to present a definition that can be applied universally.

In the past two decades, the controversial developments in the media environment have led to serious attempts by individuals and groups to define this area of study, to clarify its objectives and to articulate some key principles in the study of the media. Numerous pioneers of communication or media education, regional bodies and international organisations like UNESCO, European Council (EC), World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) have been actively involved in charting directions and approaches in this field of study. Among the early advocates of this field of study have been Len Masterman (England), Antoine Vallet (France), Kaarle Nordenstreng and Minikken (Finland), Edgar Dale (US), Thomas Bauer (Austria), Kevin Canavan (Australia) and Herta Sturm (West Germany).  

See Kumar (1988) for a survey of literature on communication education developments in various parts of the world.
In Britain, a strong case for media education has been established where this subject has acquired a place in the formal education system. According to Masterman (1995;1991), this field of study is crucial, particularly in contemporary societies. He stresses that the democratic control of the mass media is a matter of public interest and public debate and a key indicator determining how democracy is maintained in governments. He defines media education as

one of the key weapons any society possesses for challenging inequalities in knowledge and power, and for closing the gap between those in whose interests media information is produced and disseminated, and those who simply consume it 'innocently' as news or entertainment...... Media education can empower its learners and greatly strengthen the democratic structures of society which it serves by challenging the 'naturalness' of media images, by foregrounding questions of representation, and examining the democratic structure of broadcasting institutions and raising questions of human rights in relation to communication.

(Masterman, 1991:3)

Bob Ferguson (1994) elaborates further on the development of media education in Britain. He describes media education "as a state of mind and practice; a methodology rather than a subject” (p. 9). Recent media education practice here has further attempted to engage students in the discussion of the aesthetics of the media and the pleasure accorded to its audience. Ferguson observes that media education should not unproblematically adopt a position that is celebratory, uncritical of the media and afraid of offending any groups. He insists the need to develop critical thinking, to engage with social conflicts in society and to understand the exercise of power. He reaffirms the need to acknowledge that media studies are political and "would be nothing if they are not political" (p. 14). He strongly invites media educators, researchers, teachers and students to engage critically with theoretical debates about ideology, media and education.

Apart from individual communication educationists, the British Film Institute (BFI) has also attempted to define this area:

Media Education is essentially the exploration of contemporary culture, alongside more traditional literary texts. A media education programme will deal with fundamental questions of language, interpretation and meaning. Such a programme seeks to increase students' critical understanding of the media. Interests
include - the way the media work, how they produce meanings, how they are organised and how audiences make sense of them.
(cited in Prinsloo and Criticos, 1991:11)

This definition points out to the complex nature of media education. Given that the media form an important part of contemporary culture, this definition raises issues for making sense of media, reality and citizenry. This approach has influenced media education in Britain and in numerous European countries. Apart from critical knowledge, practical activity is gaining currency as it is believed that students' own media production and technical insights will unveil their own values, assumptions and standpoints in making meanings and symbols (Tufte, 1995).

In Latin America, communication education places emphasis on liberation. Reading communication and understanding the media is seen as important "to capture the articulation and effective diffusion, in the form of change, of the many world visions of the value-systems of individuals, groups and social classes which continually interact" (Costas, 1991:10). The approach to communication education is frequently intertwined with political-cultural motives and is seen as a crucial part of ideological resistance. Fuenzalida (1991) elaborates further by arguing that media education forms part of the anti-dictatorial struggle as well as against the consequences of authoritarianism. This gives a strong political emphasis to communication education - the primary objective is to democratise the potential to communicate and to participate in the distribution of cultural and communication power. The approach to communication education here implies a positive valuation of the media and the possibilities they present. The focus for communication education is not only on the criticism of the messages but there is an attempt to think about production activities and alternative communications. Thus communication education would not be an end in itself but interlinked with social movements which aspire for social change, freedom and liberation.

Communication education in Latin America is widely carried out in grassroots movements. In addition, communication education is also directed to families for change and for improving family relations affected by television. It seeks to enable people to use television critically and in a way that promotes healthy family relationships. Communication education is also developed in many schools to develop training in the analysis and evaluation of messages disseminated through the mass media (Fuenzalida, 1991).
Communication education is relatively a young development in Africa and Asia. Here the media is used widely for development and there is a need for communication education to compose concepts and strategies that are relevant to the media experiences and needs of these countries. There is very little literature on communication education, its visibility, its obstacles and achievements in different parts of this region. Very little research and published materials that document the objectives of communication education, the place it occupies in formal and informal education systems and the different approaches used in this field are available. The rapid expansion of media systems and satellite technology spell the need for urgent plans and programmes in media education, particularly, if these efforts are linked to the democratisation of public communication and to the people's involvement with the media to influence development and social change.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, media education faces serious problems. In this region, huge attempts have been made for the acquisition of new communication technologies such as computers, satellites and cables. However, media education is almost non-existent in both formal and informal education in most states (Domatob, 1991). Domatob explains that Sub-Saharan Africa's media are to a large extent dominated by the ruling elites who govern the media autocratically rather than democratically. He asserts that the elites control the scarce resources, impose their views and achievements and do not give voice to the ordinary people. He declares that there is much mystification surrounding the media and "media messages are received with reverence, respect and credibility", particularly when the majority of the population are illiterate (p. 32).

Domatob argues that the media can be used effectively for development purposes and for struggles of the poor and powerless people. He asserts that priority should be given to the learning of media theory and media skills to enable people to produce alternative media content. But he is quick to point out that there are major obstacles that impede the growth of media education, particularly when poverty, illness and illiteracy are widespread. Moreover, political repression, state harassment, murders, blackmail and victimisation have led to a culture of fear and silence that hinders debates about the political-economy of the media, control of the media, propaganda, advertising and public relations. As Halloran and Jones (1987) succinctly point out, "there is an important sense in which this kind of education can be seen as 'dangerous' by those who have something to lose. Not only does it disturb the existing disciplines in school curricula, but it challenges power relationships" (p. 167).
In Asia, it is important to note that not all developing societies are alike and that their information needs, media experiences and cultural practices differ from region to region. Referring to the context of India, Kumar (1991) stresses that interpersonal communication, traditional, folk and other cultural expressions are still as vital as modern technological media. Yet, he states that there is a lack of attention given to traditional media in media education. Kumar describes that media education at the school level is at an experimental stage and largely restricted to school children in church-run schools. However he argues that difficulties in this field arise, particularly when media educators in India overstate the manipulative power of the media and the passivity of the media audience. Kumar rejects western approaches in media education particularly, those that focus on the textual analysis of media products, or on the media as social and cultural institutions. Instead, he calls for a shift in emphasis in social criticism and the understanding of public policy. He proposes a model which first relates closely to issues of access - the people's right to receive, to produce and to distribute messages; and second, encourages active participation in decision on the content and nature of messages (p. 23).

In Japan, Suzulki (1991) states that there is much confusion and ambiguity about media education. She notes that media education in Japan is largely discussed as an extension of educational technology; i.e. the use of audio-visual aids like television and other media as auxiliary educational materials. Suzulki describes that media education in Japan faces major challenges - partly, because of the strict government regulation in state and media policies. There is a pervasive fear of being critical; there is a misinterpretation of 'being critical' seen as equivalent to anti-establishment or anti-government. In addition, as in many parts of Asia and Africa, she finds that there is little literature or debate on the media to inform media education. She concludes that media education is clearly an unexplored field in Japan. However, she is not pessimistic about this state of affairs. In recent years, citizens' groups like women, consumers, environment and education movements have shown interest in media critique. This interest has led some groups to give attention to media issues and to develop media education. Conversely, a new task force has been set up in Japan to clarify the objectives of media education and to work on possibilities for media education in the curriculum of social studies in elementary, junior and senior high schools (p. 25).

Like many other countries in the Asian region, communication education is not present in Malaysian primary and secondary schooling. All education policies emanate from the state and so far there has been no discussion of introducing communication
education in the curriculum of schooling. Communication research is a new development. There is an acute lack of empirical data concerning the media situation, the people's perception about the media and the part the media play in people's lives and in society. This data is crucial to inform plans and directions in communication education. More importantly, a major challenge would be to convince the government on the importance of communication education at all levels of education. Efforts to increase political participation will not be welcomed easily as this would challenge the power of ruling groups. Critical criticisms are usually read as comments that are anti-government or anti-establishment. Currently communication education is offered only at the tertiary level to help prepare media professionals for the media industry. I will come back to the discussion of Malaysian communication education in Chapter Five.

It is clear that media education initiatives face major difficulties and require many strenuous efforts, particularly in Third World regions. Nonetheless, many communication educationists continue to struggle for wider and more effective communication education at different levels. In this instance, they utilise the resources and the leverage of international organisations like UNESCO, WACC and EC to bring together representatives from different regions to compare ideas, dialogues and experiences as well as establish networking among different people involved in communication education and research.

**Communication Education - International Initiatives**

International organisations, specifically UNESCO and its affiliated bodies have offered important platforms to advance media education initiatives and to chart definitions that are relevant to the socio-economic milieu of concerned countries and regions.

One of the earliest attempts by UNESCO in 1979 suggests that the concept of media education include "all ways of studying, learning and teaching at all levels (primary, secondary, higher, adult and life-long education) and in all circumstances, the history, creativity, use and evaluation of media as practical and technical arts, as well as the place occupied by media in society, their social impact, the implication of media communication, participation, modification of the mode of perception they bring about, the role of creative work and access to media" (Kumar, 1988).

The decade of the 1980s marked an era which defined the growing interest in media education in different parts of the world. A distinctive international movement began to emerge when numerous organisations expressed thought and reflection and
called for the pooling of resource persons to formulate strategic plans in media education as a response to counter the developments in the media environment. Various seminars and workshops were organised to chart out future directions for the media education movement. Eminent media educators and researchers came together to establish ways of enhancing media understanding, knowledge and skills.

An international attempt to string a definition emerged when representatives of 19 nations issued a declaration at UNESCO's 1982 International Symposium on Media Education at Grunwald, Federal Republic of Germany. This declaration stated that media education was a field of study specifically aimed “to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes which will encourage the growth of critical awareness and consequently, of greater competence among the users of electronic and print media.” The declaration urged the need to acknowledge the power of the media, their significant impact, their global expansion and their importance as an element of culture in contemporary societies. It elaborated, “The role of communication and media in the process of development should not be underestimated, nor the function of media as instruments for the citizen's active participation in society. Political and educational systems need to recognise their obligations to promote in their citizens a critical understanding of the phenomena of communication” (Grunwald Declaration, 22 Jan, 1982).

The Manila Congress (1989), organised by WACC, also highlighted several issues and concerns relating to media education. This Declaration noted three principal considerations. First, the need for media education to respond according to the concrete reality of media ecology in each region. Secondly, people’s perceptions and use of the media were identified as crucial information that are needed to inform media education programmes and action plans. Finally, research particularly on advertising, pop music and youth culture were seen as useful themes that could be integrated into media education (see WACC, (1991) Handbook on Study and Action Programme: Concepts and Priorities). In a recent publication, the organisation describes media education as a field of study that is directed towards

- a critical understanding of global and local media realities inclusive of their structures, processes and value-orientation;
- the creation of participatory, empowering discourses aimed at a broad cross-section of society;
- the formation of an active, discriminatory public, linked to a citizen's movement for democratic media reform;
the establishment of 'alternative' media voices at a variety of levels.
(Thomas and Lee, 1995:2)

Meanwhile, European Ministers of Education passed a resolution on Education in Media and the New Technologies in Istanbul in October 1989. This statement summarises the major developments in the field in the 1980s and sets an elaborate agenda for the 1990s:

Education in the new technologies and the media should play an empowering and liberating role, helping to prepare pupils for democratic citizenship and political awareness. Thus pupils should be given an understanding of the structures, mechanisms and messages of the mass media. In particular, pupils should develop the independent capacity to apply critical judgement to media content. One means to this end, and an objective in its own right, should be to encourage creative expression the construction of pupils' own messages, so that they are equipped to take advantage of opportunities for the expression of particular interests in the context of participation at local level.

(Resolution on Education in Media and the New Technologies, Para 5)

The colloquy on New Directions in Media Education, organised by the British Film Institute (London) and the Centre le Laiison de l'Enseignement es des Moyens d'Information (Paris), took place in Toulouse, France in July 1990. At this meeting, alternative definitions of media education were drawn by participants from Asia, Africa and Latin America. One alternative definition reads:

Media education is an educational process/practice that seeks to enable members of a community creatively and critically to participate (at levels of production, distribution and exhibition) in the use of technological and the traditional media for the development and liberation of themselves and the community, as well as for the democratisation of communication.

(Kumar, 1991:22)

This definition places emphasis on the importance of developing critical consciousness and understanding as well as developing creative skills that will enable communities of people to participate in the production of media messages. This approach calls for the theoretical, analytical and production aspects of media education to be seen of equal importance and as intricately linked together.
The Toulouse Colloquy addressed three particular areas in the field of media education: the involvement of professional media in media education; strategies for media education; and media education and developing countries. This declaration observed that media education should not be left to the province of schools only, but engage various interest parties like parents, media researchers and media practitioners to give feedback on media content and developments in media education. The collaboration of these parties was identified as an essential step to promote media education and to develop the democratization of the media through active participation at levels of production and distribution. It was also recorded that, to a large extent, media education was absent in the curricula of primary and secondary schooling in many parts of the regions, particularly in Third World countries. The conference also noted that there were major challenges in developing media education in the formal school systems in developing countries. Inspite of these difficulties, it was felt that the commitment to media education was important and that efforts could be put in informal education programmes to engage more social groups or social actors who could contribute productively to critical media awareness and actions in the development of their communities.

From the above discussion, it is clear that the attempts to define communication education encompass diverse viewpoints which are conditioned by various cultural and political factors in specific regions. Running through all these attempts is a recognition that traditional and modern media have penetrated into democratic, development and cultural processes. The production of a wide range of information and meanings is essential to the exercising of democratic rights. If all citizens are to wield power and have an active involvement with media, it is crucial that they are able to critically interpret powerful mediated information and cultural experiences that serve dominant groups and creatively produce alternative expressions that question social injustices and work towards a more egalitarian world.

At this point, it is important to make two important observations with regard to the initiatives to formulate definitions and to chart directions for communication education. First, a major concern of media education has fallen principally on developing critical autonomy of children and young people in school. This is a strategy that has strongly been advanced in western countries, particularly in Canada, Europe and the United States. There have been much efforts to present media education in the curriculum of formal schooling and in teacher-training programmes. Numerous booklets and workbooks have been produced to provide teachers with a guide to the field of communication education.
In non-western countries, very few schools offer communication education in their curriculum. The scarce resources and lack of personnel in this field pose major obstacles to the introduction of communication studies in formal education. However, communication education has gained prominence in adult education and in informal education in the community and among social pressure groups. Here, an added emphasis is given to the production of small media and messages that give voice to marginalised groups in society.

A major area that has not received much attention is communication education offered in professional schools and at the universities. This critical area is underresearched and very little is known about the development of this field at these levels. The education and training of potential media professionals is one that requires serious attention. One UNESCO (1974) report stresses that media practitioners, broadcasters and journalists carry heavy responsibilities:

> In the present circumstances, these responsibilities demand that more attention should be given to the professional training of mass communicators and that this training should enable them to become familiar with......mass media as social institutions, and mass communication as a social process....

(UNESCO,1974:19)

Currently, there is very little debate about communication education offered in professional schools and in the universities. There is also no comprehensive survey or review of the present state of affairs in communication education at this level in both developed and developing countries. Consequently, little is known about the values and assumptions that are being institutionalised in communication education, particularly in relation to mass communication practice, news reporting, film-making and radio and television production. In this connection, a number of pertinent questions regarding the education and training of media professionals have to be raised: What are the values and assumptions presented to future news reporters and media producers? What is said about the media audience? How do trainees define their roles, aims and purpose? How do media trainees interpret issues on freedom, autonomy, objectivity, privacy and secrecy, etc; media representations of marginalised groups, media producing gender? On a wider plane these matters relate to issues of democratic communication; media doing gender; information management; and meaning-making and access to the media - debates that need to be given a crucial place in communication education. Thus, communication education in professional schools and in universities make up a vital area for investigation and discussion.
A second observation that I would like to make is the dominance of viewpoints from men in formulating definitions of communication education as well as charting strategies to counter the effects of mass media. Most local, regional and international meetings to discuss communication education have seen very little representation of women, especially of those informed of gender perspectives. Indeed a major goal of communication education has framed the understanding and the study of media in terms of class struggles and very little has been said about conflicts along lines of gender, race, ethnicity and disability. Despite numerous calls by women media activists to create space for gender issues in communication education, many communication departments or schools have contributed little to make an explicit case for gender communication issues. This is an important area that has to be addressed in communication education activities as gender informs communication and communication informs gender (Wood, 1988).

The past decade may have seen some exciting developments and progress in media education, but the case for the future of media education still remains a formidable one. Many areas in Africa and Asia are experiencing major changes in the media ecology, yet there is lack of resources and political willingness to generate information and research knowledge to stimulate debates. In some countries, authoritative rule does not provide a conducive climate for debating controversial issues, particularly those pertaining to media matters. It is therefore important to acknowledge that any media education initiatives have to be culturally-specific as the different tensions surrounding media politics in different countries cannot be simplified easily or applied universally.

There is a clear and urgent need to foster increased participation and networking both at local and global levels to extend thinking and acting on media education across national and other boundaries. The future of media education, particularly in developing countries still remains clouded with uncertainty and it is clear that the issues surrounding media education demand serious analytic attention and policy support.

3.4 Approaches to Communication Education

This section provides a framework to understand some of the main movements or models that have evolved in this field of study. Inevitably, my discussion displays my own set of emphases and exclusions. I have attempted to give accounts of the major traditions presented at the school level, in informal education in communities
and at the tertiary level. It is important to point out again that there have been very little documented work on the approaches used in communication education. Also, many communication education programmes do not fall neatly into the categories that are discussed below. It is not unusual to see several models that are adopted together to form unique characteristics according to the social, economic, political conditions in each of the countries.

The Inoculation Approach

This formed the basis of the first form of media education in many western countries, including Britain and Germany. It arose out of concern over the developments in mass culture which was deemed to have negative influences. The media, in particular, were seen as industries that supposedly perpetuated cultural decline. It was felt that children, in particular, had to be protected against the potential harmful and powerful effects of the media. The proponents of this view urged the importance of introducing media education into the formal curriculum of school education to enable children to discern worthy forms of popular culture from 'corrupting and valueless manifestations', especially in the media.

Two forceful movements were adopted in the inoculation approach to media education. One movement aimed to sharpen children's skills to discriminate authentic culture as embodied in traditional arts and culture. Popular culture emanating from the media was largely considered as a distraction which engaged the lowest level of mental effort and media education was accorded the responsibility to see that young children were oriented to appreciate the superiority of the elitist culture (Masterman, 1991; Halloran and Jones, 1987).

A second movement was more sympathetic to the media and responded more positively to mass media as providing potentially worthy works of educational material. The approaches to learning the media, however, remained largely one of inculcating discrimination as the area of study trained children to look critically and assess between what is good and bad in media content (Masterman, 1991).

The elements of media education found a place in subject disciplines, principally in primary and secondary school education and many teachers and 'high-culture' enthusiasts took up the moral task of ensuring that children were not being exploited by popular culture. However, this approach was fraught with problems as it

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lacked the impetus for further investigation once the programmes were evaluated as bad or good. Masterman points out that passing such value judgements is less productive as this freezes the impulse to open up discussions, thus posing serious problems in the study of media in school education (Masterman, 1991).

The Critical Viewer Approach

The study of the media under this approach again had its roots and origins in western societies and to the increasing recognition that children will continue to view television. Intervention was seen necessary to train students to be critically aware of the reality represented in the media and to shed light into the ways in which information is processed through media packaging. The main aim of this approach is to demystify the media and to demonstrate that media products are not simple and neutral reflections of society but end-products of social processes. Drawing on certain insights of the Freirean pedagogy of liberation, Masterman has pioneered critical modes of learning that stimulate dialogue, reflection and action. He stresses the importance of introducing investigative approaches to understanding the media. He rightly highlights important aspects in this area as dealing with issues in relation to the nature of media institutions, the routine working practices of media professionals and the ways which the media operate as consciousness industries. He outlines four key areas for investigation in media studies: media determinants; media rhetoric; media ideologies; and media audiences.

Another principal variation to critical viewing emerged when much focus was given to images and consciousness which is oriented towards increasing the consciousness of individuals. This approach aims to highlight that media products are not mere reflections of society or 'a window to the world', but products of social processes. The emphasis is to enable learners to be aware of the different representations of individual or groups to the real conditions of existence (Halloran and Jones, 1987:136-137). This is an important turning point in media education as it is linked with conscientisation and action activities which engage discussion with various forms of media representations, how these are put together, by whom and its whose interest so that this can illuminate the part communication, specifically the media play in making sense of the world. This is a critical conception of communication education which offers a variety of viewpoints in understanding the media's role in arbitrating social conflicts in society. It engages with both deconstruction and construction of representation and an inquiry into the ways we decipher the world and the ways others unravel the world for us, linking this with the economic, political and cultural organisation of the media within the wider social
environment. In other words, this approach raises larger social issues, relations of social power and its links to the study of communication institutions, the production of texts and meanings, and reception by the audience.

To date, this model is a development that is popular in most European countries, in the United States and in Australia. There have been strong attempts to integrate media education into the school curricula at the primary, secondary and higher education levels. This offering of media education generally has taken place in three forms:

- as a specialist area of study in its own right;
- as an integrated part of traditional disciplines like language, arts, literature, drama, social studies etc.; and
- as a distinct and separable 'theme' with a particular subject area.

(Masterman, 1991:8)

The Community Media Approach

Both the inoculatory and critical viewer approaches to media education aim to produce critically autonomous individuals and school education is seen as an important site for intervention. Media education is given a position in the formal curriculum and the principal focus is on developing self-criticism and critical maturity among children and young people so that they will be able to encounter media issues critically in the future.

The community media approach places a shift in the emphasis by giving attention to the community as whole. This is based on a belief that media should be studied for their relevance to the local community so that groups of people involve themselves actively with the media and attempt to produce their own media messages to enhance discussion and action on local issues.

This approach to media education looks into the goals of liberation and development. The search for liberation underpins much of the efforts in media education in the Latin American countries. In most cases, social groups and movements, church groups and popular education organisations carry out media awareness activities to struggle against different forms of oppression (Halloran and Jones, 1987). There is an element which emphasises the need to encourage active participation in the media process and to generate local small media. The media are linked to the goal of liberation and media education is given a political role in the distribution of cultural and communication power. Media skills are also offered so that
groups of people can use their own small media to the interests of subordinated groups.

Fuenzalida (1991) asserts that media education is part of a wider process of popular education linked with other social movements that aspire for greater independence and freedom. He describes these activities as important aspects of education that establish crucial steps to resist ideological cultural domination and sustain the liberation of the people. This liberating enterprise is seen as an effort to enable the people to participate in communication where “the receivers uphold the right to communicate, and therefore to establish the conditions that would allow everybody to act as senders and receivers of messages” (p. 15).

The community media approach is also identified in media education programmes in parts of Asia and Africa where the stress is placed on the development process. Various forms of media, including folk media are used to carry out education, health and agricultural campaigns in communities. Alternative media are also used by social groups to induce different points of view in local and international debates. The implementation of grassroots communication processes is seen as an integral element for active participation in the development process. Media education efforts focus on consciousness-awareness, description of the process and methods of communication production and provide practical illustrations of people’s involvement in communication practices and strategies. Communities learn the significance of circulating pamphlets, newsletters, slides or video programmes as an effective way of fostering discussion and negotiation with policy makers and government representatives.

The Sociological Approach

It is difficult to uncover the exact beginnings of this model, but it is widely believed that both America and Western Europe have been influential in establishing the growth of this field of study. There are two principal variations on this kind of approach, namely the dominant paradigm and the critical paradigm. The first paradigm adopts a pro-scientific approach and is linked closely to a tradition which carries notions of ‘value-free’, positivism, empiricism and behaviourism. Drawing heavily from disciplines of sociology and psychology, the major thrust of this focus has been on the end product - reactions, attitudes, influence, effects etc. A broad focus is given to media effects, propaganda, efficacy of messages, deviant behaviour, violence and aggression, morals and socialisation. A major criticism concerns the way this model produces knowledge which is mainly instrumental rather than educational -- it works
to enhance the power of the media and the interests of dominant groups like advertisers and governments over the audiences. There is no effort to promote consciousness-raising or to enable the people to exercise critical autonomy in relation to the media (Halloran and Jones, 1987; Alvarado et al, 1987).

This model which has been very influential in many American universities in the 1970's and 1980's, has been further exported to many parts of the world. Disturbed by the expansion of this model, one UNESCO (1975) report on mass communication education and training cautioned against the unproblematic transfer of media theories, research methods and knowledge to different cultural contexts, without giving due consideration for different social and economic systems and daily cultural routines and conditions which are present in different countries.

Halloran and Jones (1987) conclude despairingly in their report that apart from a few courses in some countries, they found that "there is not a great deal of evidence to suggest that communication education is informed by an adequate knowledge of media as social institutions and communication as a social process, both operating in conjunction with other institutions and processes within the wider social system (p. 165).

A discernible and radical movement emerged in the early 1980's to criticise the dominant paradigm as an adequate approach to understand the media. Proponents of the critical paradigm urged communication research and teaching centres to give attention to theories of society and to take into account of significant locations, institutions, cultures and identities (see McQuail, 1990; Halloran, 1988).

A highly complex setting thus evolved to accommodate conflicting and contradictory discourses such as socialism, democracy, egalitarianism and commerce. In particular, the critical paradigm works to examine wider social contexts and delves into issues like economic equality and the balance of power between classes and social groups (McQuail, 1994; Hamelink and Linne, 1994). There is a growing concern to the commercial monopoly of media industries and the implications of difficulties of access to participation, specifically in the case of less powerful and minority groups. This paradigm has raised numerous issues that deal with dominant media practices and the struggle for alternative expressions amidst the growing market economy. The question of identity and culture has also emerged as major issues in communication studies. The general framework of mediation has gained prominence and there has been a movement to examine what is 'mediated' and the process by which meaning is given and produced (McQuail, 1994:94).
The critical paradigm points to the political nature of communication education and a major emphasis is given to a sense of education for democracy - one which would enable all groups of people to become conscious of social relations and to become social actors that can contribute critically and creatively to alternative expressions.

Media Skills Approach

Another major model adopted in communication education has been concerned with the acquisition of media and communication skills. Given the enormous expansion of media industries, there have been strong demands to create professional skills courses to train students to work in the media. Courses on handling media equipment, news reporting, specialised writing, radio and television production techniques, camerawork, video-editing, film-editing and photojournalism are presented in professional schools and university-based courses.

A major controversy arises when the process of practical work is taken as an imitation of broadcast radio and television or the print media. Here practical work does not necessarily question reproduction of dominant forms of representing reality. The convention and mediation of media systems are not articulated and brought consciously into discussion. This kind of approach to practical work has come under criticism from educationists in media studies (Collins, 1992; Buckingham, 1992; Masterman, 1985).

Specifically, the media skills approach has been widely criticised by the academic community where courses on media skills in higher education have been considered as non-academic and outside the preserve of the university (UNESCO, 1975:18). Further, it has been pointed out that attention paid to the needs of the industry may lead to unhealthy tendencies that duplicate dominant practices and values in media production. Students would emulate existing media conventions and continue to reproduce production values and techniques that are accepted as the norm in the media world. The task to continue to fulfil the industry's needs may also mean that students would also conform to industrial practices instead of breaking codes, critically assessing and dismantling dominant media production conventions (Alvarado et al, 1987; Halloran, 1985).

Masterman (1985) argues that practical activity does not, in itself, constitute media education. He warns of the technicist trap which leads to the belief that media education could be reduced to a series of purely technical operations, and that through
students involvement in practical projects, critical abilities would be automatically acquired. In his view, this form of education and media work is often seen to increase media mystification. It naturalises rather than de-construct media codes and conventions.

But Masterman does not simply reject practical media activity and encourages practical work to be critical rather than a reproductive activity. He re-affirms the primacy of cultural criticism and makes it clear that there is a need for communication lecturers and teachers to consciously forge a connection between practical work and analytical activities. He suggests that this practical component can offer opportunities for students to communicate their own ideas through the production of their own newspapers, radio and television programmes, films, photographs, advertising posters and campaigns. The emphasis here is to encourage students to develop and to interrogate their own position. Practical work, as Masterman argues, is not an end in itself, but a necessary means to developing a critical understanding of the media. If students are to fully appreciate media texts as constructions, their first-hand experience of the construction process will be a fruitful exercise. In this case, students do not only learn about dominant and excluded representations but also explore how media artefacts can be produced differently. The place of creative media activity in media education receives further support from Tufte (1995:27) who succinctly points out that "both the goals of acquiring analytical knowledge and enabling learners to express their ideas aesthetically or technically are equally important."

It is essential to make an important point when discussing about practical media activities in communication education. It is often taken that technical operations can be delivered in a neutral way, i.e. they are value-free. The questioning of values laden in media production is not encouraged. This particular stand fails to recognise that elements of values and ideology are woven into production techniques. It takes a position which astutely avoids overt contact with issues of power that serve dominant groups. It is important to stress that production techniques like camerawork, editing, news layout need problematising, particularly in relation to producing gender. The way the camera moves, its framing patterns, the routines in news reporting implicate values. To a large extent, dominant production practices adopt masculinist views, masculinist gaze and masculine ways of seeing in representing gender in the media (Berger, 1972). In some way or another, the production conventions that are accepted as the 'given' or values that are left unquestioned reflect priorities and concerns of sustaining a neutral position in communication education. I argue that rather than looking at practical work as purely technical and neutral operations, it is worthy to
develop practical work by presenting a critical understanding of the construction process, especially in doing gender in production activities. I will develop this argument when discussing the theory-practice alliance which underpins the philosophy of the communication education programme in the Malaysian context (see Chapter Six).

So far, I have charted some of the terms and definitions that have been formulated to describe the field of communication studies. As stated in Chapter One, I have used the term communication education - a label which is widely adopted in Malaysia and many parts in the South East Asian region. Evidently, the labels, definition and models vary according to different social and political contexts and command different histories and emphases. I have described the principal models that have influenced communication education practice. It seems useful to observe that communication education varies according to different contexts, educational levels and as such may not adopt all the features of a single model. In the Malaysian context, communication education practice is present only at the tertiary level and it is influenced by the sociological and media skills models. Indeed, such a combination is very controversial and has drawn diverse viewpoints from distinguished communication scholars. In Chapter Five, I will elaborate about the development of communication education in Malaysian universities which comes under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education in Malaysia. In Chapter Six, I look at the case-study of the communication programme which is currently in a process of curriculum review. Numerous communication scholars (all men) have been invited as external examiners to discuss its curriculum. Since the theory-skills model underpinning this Programme has attracted much critique in the reports, I assess their comments and contribute to the discussion on this theory-practice controversy, which is also relevant to the gender critique in Malaysian communication education.

It is important to link communication pedagogy in understanding communication education. According to Lusted (1986) pedagogy as a concept, draws attention to the process through which knowledge is produced. Pedagogy addresses the "how" questions involved not only in the transmission or reproduction of knowledge but also in its production. Indeed, it enables us to question the validity of separating these activities so easily by asking under what conditions and through what means we "come to know". How one teaches .....becomes inseparable from what is being taught and, crucially, how one learns.

(Lusted, 1986 :2-3)
Although the present study does not intend to examine teaching methods in communication courses, it hopes to give some focus to pedagogy as a process of knowledge production and as a social vision. Masterman (1985) and Richards (1993) have contributed to a discussion of communication pedagogy. Building on Freirean ideas, Masterman (1985) argues for non-hierarchical learning opportunities and the importance of dialogue, reflection and action within media education. He invites participants of media education to maintain reflexive criticism upon their thinking and actions within dialogue and to understand and intervene in the media (p. 33). Expanding on views from Freire (1972) and Shor (1993), Richards (1993) points out that communication pedagogy should understand and develop the following elements: power, critical awareness, resources, self-awareness, problem-raising, research-oriented, active and policy-oriented. He proposes that such a pedagogy will contribute meaningfully to critical development, ideological resistance and liberation (p. 10).

This approach to communication education also develops a critical sense of pedagogy which is more student-centred. Forms of learning that are experiential, interactive, reflective and productive are seen as integral elements in this area of study. Another advantage emerges when this pedagogy builds new dialogic ways of working with teachers and students who could work collaboratively as co-investigators and co-participants. This has been perceived as an advancement in communication pedagogy as it offers a new epistemology in which knowledge is not an oppressive, inert body of facts and ideas narrated by teachers to pupils, but is actively created by both parties.

I have deliberately limited the focus on pedagogy. In Chapter Nine, I sketch a pedagogy that can offer a social agenda and guidelines to inform the understanding of gender communication issues. While I hope to look at pedagogy as a social vision, I do not intend to assess the instructional aspects in this study.

3.5 Communication Education and the Gender-Question

Scholarship on gender has emerged as one of the most exciting developments in the past two decades. This growing body of knowledge has brought new insights to illuminate how the assumptions of gender and gender values are institutionalised in education sites. Considering that schools and higher education institutions are part of our social systems that can contribute to the development or underdevelopment of women, the gender scrutiny on the curriculum is a crucial debate and one that is

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20 Again, there is very little literature on communication pedagogy. The particular character of pedagogy within communication education has been largely neglected and demands further attention.
related to the present study. In the following section, I offer a discussion of curriculum and raise some issues that are relevant to the present study.

Curriculum

Curriculum is a complex construct and it is important to achieve some clarity over what we are to understand by this term. The curriculum is the very foundation of any educational system and any vision of change within the organisation of education institutions or the structure of the system cannot be affected without rethinking the real substance of education - the curriculum itself. It embodies two major areas of interests: the overt curriculum or official curriculum, and the hidden curriculum. The official curriculum refers to separate subjects or courses (eg., facts, concepts, theories, skills, topics, subtopics) that are arranged sequentially or hierarchically and presumed to add up eventually to a coherent body of knowledge. This knowledge informs learners about a different range of cultural phenomena - the norms, values, conventions and classifications in society. The knowledge that is generated for study is also seen to transmit what human beings see as valuable, desirable or useful (Taylor and Richards, 1986; Whitty, 1985). It helps shape the curriculum experience of learners, either by making them consciously aware of elements previously taken-for-granted or by inducing them to aspects of human culture not previously encountered.

In this light, an important question arises with regard to the inclusion or exclusion of knowledge that relates to dominant and marginal groups. The curriculum involves selection and this is based on the assumption that some aspects merit inclusion more than others. This selection of curriculum knowledge would include points of view, social values and assumptions that become routinised and invisibly powerful. Curriculum knowledge is then fundamentally linked to the selection, organisation, treatment and distribution of knowledge made available to students.

Cornbleth (1990) brings to our attention that often curriculum knowledge is largely mainstream or consensus knowledge, "the knowledge deemed important by dominant groups if not agreed by most people." Usually, excluded groups like women, racial and ethnic minorities have to battle for inclusion of "their histories, cultures and perspectives as legitimate knowledge" (p. 184-185).

The gender critique in this vein links curriculum knowledge to ideology not so much by what it says as to what it does not say. This scrutiny raises the significant silences of curricula texts and the gaps and absences that prevail in the curriculum. This is seen as a version of history that serves to naturalise the status quo by providing
support for the interests of the dominant groups in society. In this case, the curriculum becomes problematic when an eclipse is cast over particular points of view forwarded by women and the sorts of political action that might effectively challenge dominant ideas that perpetrate the subordinate position of women (Kelly, 1989; Whitty, 1985). This is a significant argument as it questions the forms of knowledge that are taken as meaningful entities worthy of study in education institutions.

Weiler (1983) notes that plans for developing or changing curricula tend to reach rather deeply into the normative fabric of society and become a political phenomenon of considerable salience. He points out that,

The making of curricular decisions is thus inherently conflictual and is influenced by a variety of different and not necessarily convergent considerations: the individual's interest in the optimal development of one's talent; the society's actual or anticipated needs for certain kinds of skills and qualifications; the needs based on the existing structures of power, to socialise people into certain attitudes and dispositions towards authority, performance, cooperation, and the like; and the formative weight of the pattern of social relations that prevails in the educational process itself.

(1983: 273)

The debate on curriculum is thus a contentious issue as it represents a substantial and detailed expression of an educational system's objectives and the form of discourses of knowledge that will be presented. The gender-question becomes a matter of considerable significance here as it advances issues that point to the gendered aspects of curriculum practice and the increasingly problematic nature of knowledge itself and what counts as knowledge. This problem intensifies when another related aspect of the curriculum is examined - the unofficial or hidden curriculum.

A hidden curriculum operates and this resides in individuals, groups and within the social institutions themselves. Some educationists refer to the hidden curriculum to mean the things students learn by the ways the work of the education institutions are planned and organised. For example, social roles, tutors' and students' attitudes to gender formations, student-teacher interaction and other ways of life are implicitly conveyed by the values of those who play a part in creating the curriculum arrangements. Thus, even if no apparent discrimination exists within the official curriculum, gendered messages are transmitted in numerous ways such as the values of the educator or tutor, tutor-student interaction, the textbooks that are used, classroom settings and the general environment of the educational institution.
In discussing the hidden curriculum, it is also crucial to recognise that the curriculum does not operate in monolithic ways, rather it encompasses conflicts and contradictions. The complexity in the ways students make sense of and respond to the ideologies and culture of the educational sites have also to be taken into account (Giroux, 1981; Apple, 1986). The hidden curriculum is therefore not merely a terrain of social control but also the ground on which ideological and political struggles are contested. These considerations illuminate the conceptualisation of the curriculum as an ongoing social process comprised of the interactions of students, teachers, knowledge and cultural milieu. It brings to our attention those activities that are deliberately planned in the official curriculum as well as the actual achievements of the hidden curriculum that go on in the process of learning.

In this connection, some sociologists of education extend a critical view of curriculum as a contextualised social process and curriculum knowledge as socially constructed and therefore subject to critique (or interpretation or meaning-making) and reconstruction (Cornbleth, 1990; Hargreaves, 1989; Kelly 1989; Grundy, 1985). The implication here is that curriculum-making is political because it relates to interpretation and critique involving different and often conflicting meanings or constructions of knowledge. The values conveyed by a curriculum are significant, specifically in its selection, organisation, treatment and distribution of knowledge and the social groups and interests that are served and disserved by those values. Hence, the curriculum cannot be understood adequately or changed substantially without paying attention to its setting or context.

Cornbleth offers an useful framework for studying the curriculum by advancing the relevant context as socio-cultural and structural. The socio-cultural context refers to the environment that includes social, political, economic and demographic conditions that are translated into constraints, demands and priorities by groups with diverse and often conflicting interests. An examination of different social forces and interests in the wider social environment is therefore significant as it impinges upon curriculum-making.

There are numerous gender works which use feminist reproduction theory to address the role of educational institutions, specifically schools to understand the nature of links between curriculum practice and its wider environment. Many significant works have focused on education institutions as ideological state apparatuses and basic to this approach is a view that sees women's oppression in domestic and public spheres as being reproduced through social learning and practices
in schools (see Delamont, 1980; Deem, 1978; Wolpe, 1978; Davies and Meighan, 1975). Thus statistical analyses of women's inferior position in the family and economy are tied to sexist texts and discriminatory practices in education institutions. Official state policies are examined for their overt and hidden assumptions about women, their roles and status in society. The examination of official public policies has been a helpful approach to assess the status accorded to women in a particular society which in turn will influence curricular matters as far as gender issues are concerned.

Much of the above critical work has been concerned with curriculum in relation to larger socio-cultural dynamics such as economic and gender relations. Focusing on the ideological function of texts and classroom practices in reinforcing patriarchal hegemony between schooling and women's subordinate status in society, these studies emphasise the ways in which schooling reinforces existing gender problems. A major limitation of this approach lies in the failure to consider human beings as agents who are able to contest and define the ideological messages they receive in education institutions. It fails to recognise the complex and contradictory experiences of individuals (Weiler, 1988; Apple, 1986; Kelley and Nihlen, 1982). In this connection, rejecting studies based on reproduction theories, Archer (1985:41) asserts that, "any theory or approach which treats the boundary of the educational system as unimportant by holding that any kind of social factor or force penetrates education directly" is inadequate as it fails to consider the struggle of human beings as agents who are able to contest and redefine ideological messages in education institutions. Thus, the social interests pursued in the production of curriculum is influenced by the general interaction of social forces, the existing patterns of arrangements in economic and social life and the policies that relate to gender issues. The gender link can be further discussed in relation to the structural context.

A lot of theorising about education has examined the curriculum in relation to socio-cultural dynamics along political, economy and gender lines, but these have often have not taken into account of the more direct setting of the curriculum. Education institutions are not simply channels that convey, reflect or reproduce larger societal patterns. The structural context is important because it both mediates socio-cultural influences and generates curriculum experience. Much feminist work, specifically on the curriculum neglects the more immediate setting - in effect of overlooking the intervening structural context of curricula. The structural context is linked to the interaction of the immediate participants within the education institution. It directs attention to the roles, relationships, patterns of activity and culture of interacting components. As subsystems of national education system, primary, secondary and
higher education institutions and their curricula are subject to structural conditioning and social interaction of the larger system as well as their own internal dynamics. These cultures may be overlapping or distinct, compatible or antagonistic. Shared meanings, beliefs and norms that constitute educator's conceptions of knowledge, their expectations for student learning and the perception of administrative authorities in educational institutions themselves affect curriculum practice (Cornbleth, 1990:30).

Gender scholars in sociology of education have offered evidence that examines the formal organisation of education institutions in terms of gender difference in the staff structure. The argument here is that education institutions demonstrate male superiority by the fact that more men hold positions of authority while most women are seen to have a subordinate status. But using concepts like resistance and counter-hegemony in case-studies, gender research have also attempted to focus on women educators who struggle against hegemonic masculinity and who seek to encourage among students a critical consciousness of sexism and the gendered messages about the roles of women and men in curriculum knowledge (Poole and Issacs, 1993; Weiler, 1988).

In her study, Weiler (1988) conducts interviews to illustrate the struggles of feminist educators who also recognise overlapping oppressions of race, ethnicity and class and attempt to create classrooms that encourage critique on the part of students in relation to a number of different forms of oppression. Thus the complexity of educational institutions as social sites in which individuals of different class, race and gender subjectivities come together is illuminated. This is a significant contribution and bears important ways on how we think about education institutions, since, as a primary agency in the production and reproduction of 'legitimate' culture, the sites of education have not only been one of the things that are strongly struggled over, but are major institutional sites in which these struggles take place.

Kessler et al (1985:43) believe that research into curriculum materials and texts are useful as they reveal how educational texts are sexist and how they approach gender issues. However, they note that discussions of gender issues in curriculum research tend to ignore the aspirations and ideas of tutors and teachers as curriculum-makers. As such, little is known about the tutors' belief-systems and how they accept, negotiate or oppose and resist gender issues and gender initiatives in the production of curriculum knowledge.
A crucial feature that emerges here is the role of the educators or tutors. Tutors in universities, have greater degrees of control over the official and unofficial agendas - over the formal curriculum content and over the host of assumptions which although not spelt out in any curriculum statements, are implicit in all aspects of university life. Evidence indicates that the tutors' attitudes towards assumptions about people in terms of gender, ethnicity, class and so on have an influence in their professional practices whether consciously or unconsciously (Rudduck, 1994; Parry, 1992; Abraham, 1989; Acker, 1988; Hanson, 1987; Skelton, 1985).

The proposition here is that educators should be made a major focus of research as it is important to understand how they perceive the issues of gender in curriculum materials they use and their overall teaching situation. It needs to be recognised that in the world of education, though educators do the main work of sustaining the conservative gender regimes, they are also central to the remaking of gender regimes. Educators, particularly in universities have a measure of autonomy over what they teach, what image they seek to portray of their courses, what material and resources they use and how these are handled. The choices they make - or not make will have different implications for working towards an egalitarian society. These arguments are important and affect the understanding of women's involvements and their interests in the arena of curriculum.

In sum, the socio-cultural and the structural context form important components in the study of the curriculum. The structural context is nested within the socio-cultural context and this has to be given adequate attention in ascertaining the position of gender issues in the curriculum.

At this juncture it is worthy to look into some of the arguments raised in communication education in relation to gender issues. The debates about gender issues with regard to communication education operate at a number of closely interrelated levels: a) the representation of women as communication educators, b) the significance accorded to gender issues in curriculum knowledge, and c) communication students and their aspirations. It is useful to reiterate that the area of communication education is grossly underresearched. While there appears to be some discussion on gender issues in other fields of study, very little research has actually been conducted to examine the gender dimension in communication education. The following discussion presents some literature relevant to gender issues in the context of communication education.
A. Communication Educators

Linda Schamber et al (1989) studied the situations of female educators in communication education faculties in American universities. Schamber reports that much progress is needed in communication education programmes as 76% of the faculty members consisted of male educators in 1988. Interestingly, 60% of the students were females.

Other findings of the study show that academic women were fewer in number in all academic ranks, occupied lower ranks and were paid less than faculty men. According to the study, in 1988, women represented about 6% of all full professors, 17% of associate professors, 32% of assistant professors and 42% of instructors. In view of this finding, Schamber raises the question whether female students are being short changed in terms of role models.

In addition, nearly 200 female educators responded to her questionnaire survey and out of this, 75% of the respondents felt that gender related dilemmas are not major problems in academia. Schamber points out that these results however do not explain the lower status accorded to women in terms of ranks and promotion nor give any clues about the curriculum. She acknowledges that only a third of the respondents returned the questionnaires and suggests that it was probable that the interest in the topic had waned. Nevertheless, several of her interviewees cautioned against an optimistic view for communication education programmes and recorded the following comments:

- women had not been in teaching long enough to see the overt and subtle patterns of discrimination,
- many new female educators did not want to be critical and worried that this may bring problems to their jobs,
- many women who have 'made it' feel that if women were good, they will be able to attain success and not complain.

Schamber's study offers useful insights into the status of female communication educators. This study presents the argument for an increase in the participation of women in this field. This view is similar to a parallel argument about increasing more women in the media profession to improve the representation of women. The evidence in this study reveals that an increase of women will not essentially change curriculum content as women in communication education often perceive that raising gender issues is controversial and unwise and that it can bring professional risks. Frequently,
women themselves have also actively defended the consensus and used their successful experiences as exemplars. The participation of more women in a male-dominated field is important, but more crucially, more women informed of gender perspectives are necessary to support and foster gender initiatives.

Another similar concern in communication education has emerged in Nigeria where most journalists will have to acquire a diploma or degree offered in mass communication or journalism as stipulated by the Nigerian Union of Journalists. This area of communication education in Nigerian universities and polytechnics is a major concern to Okunna (1992) as she believes the education received by journalists will influence their work when constructing images of the world for the vast media audiences and when shaping public opinion on current issues. Student enrolment figures here indicate that roughly equal numbers of male and female students are admitted to these institutions. However, she criticises the absence of women tutors and suggests that this would lead to the marginalisation of gender issues in the education and training of journalists and this in turn could produce a multiplier effect when these students join the media and minimise gender issues. Evidently, Okunna argues for an increased participation of women in communication education programmes so that this serves the purpose of increasing role models for communication students and offers the opportunity for female communication educators to introduce gender debates.

Okunna makes a notable observation on the small number of women in the departments. In the year 1992, she reports that the ratio of male lecturers to female lecturers was 15:1, and in some departments women were totally absent. Okunna suggests the male dominance in communication departments means that the involvement of women in the construction of knowledge on communication and media would be marginal and will limit the definition of professional news gathering and reporting leading to the trivialisation of gender issues and the continuous stereotypical images of women in the nation's mass media. She brings to our attention that communication educators do unwittingly or unwittingly convey certain attitudes, values and prejudices in selecting knowledge for classroom discussion. For Okunna, questioning communication education is important as it does not merely impart knowledge and skills to learners, but also a whole set of values and prejudices held by educators themselves regarding social matters that are pertinent in each society.

Okunna comes to the conclusion that unless change is initiated to include women as tutors in mass communication education, the marginal participation of women and the resultant male domination of the teaching of mass communication will,
in the long run continue to socialise Nigerians to accept the status of women as inferior. Further, she believes that students may be encouraged to conform to the sex-role stereotypes in learning situations and mass media content and this may even lead female communication students to regard themselves as incapable of making significant contributions to society (p. 56).

The question over communication education is a warranted concern, since these institutions have an important role to play in communication and cultural politics. Further, by their very nature of being educational institutions these programmes have a social responsibility to improve knowledge and to assess social change, particularly in relation to subordinated groups with little resources and access to the media; and to make contribution towards a more egalitarian society. The subordination of women in all sectors has to be considered as an important social problem. Though communication education will not necessarily alter all the social structures of society, media organisations, and media artefacts, this area is still a critical site for gender struggles that aim to raise gender conscientisation to promote women's autonomy, career advancement and alternative forms of receiving and creating knowledge.

For gender scholars, education is an object of demand, a source of ideas and a site for political activism (Acker, 1994; Weiler, 1988). As argued earlier, educators are key curriculum-makers that engage in intellectual activity. They play a crucial role in articulating and presenting dominant ideas that sustain the dominant order and in developing ideas and action for organising alternative hegemony. In the present study, it is useful to explore the ideas of communication tutors to gain an understanding of their views on gender issues. These views will be presented in Chapter Seven.

B. Gender Issues in Curriculum Knowledge

At the heart of research in this area is a critique of curriculum knowledge that obscures the significance of gender issues. Dorothy Smith (1978) brings to our attention the peculiar eclipsing of gender issues and the exclusion of women in creating the culture of the society by ordinary social processes of socialisation, education, work and communication. The educational system is an important aspect of these routines and trains people in skills they need to engage actively in society. Smith argues,

.....it teaches them the ideas, the vocabularies, images, beliefs; it trains them to recognise and approve ideologically sanctioned forms of relations and how to identify authoritative ideological sources (what kinds of books, newspapers etc. to credit, what to discredit,
who are the authoritative writers or speakers and who are not). It is part of the system which distributes ideas and ensures the dissemination of new ideological forms as these are produced by intelligentsia.

(Smith, 1978: 286-287)

The point here is that knowledge referring to women's interests have been missing in the theorising and debates on human experience. The discourse of knowledge operates in a manner where the explanation of women's experiences in the world are not taken into consideration or validated. Consequently, the voices of women have not been heard in the development of curriculum for future generations of scholars. Indeed what gets constituted as knowledge is an interesting question, and one that has concerned Spender (1981) and other gender scholars. (see van Zoonen, 1994; Rakow, 1993a; Stacey and Thorne, 1985; Baehr, 1981).

Like Smith (1978), Spender advances the argument that most of the knowledge produced in our society has been assembled by men and as such they have created an academic curriculum (which Spender labels as 'Men's Studies') that excludes women as co-producers of knowledge and as subjects of knowledge. As a result, certain sorts of knowledge and expansion have presided over others.

There is growing evidence that knowledge offered in communication education is problematic. Baehr has been one of the earliest gender scholars to point out to some of the difficulties in the area of this study. She directs our attention to the selection of all-female sample in the classic communication study on media and personal influence - the 'two-step flow' study of Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955), which reflected the fact that American women were perceived dominantly as an enormous profitable pool of consumers whom it was vital to 'persuade' via advertising. This study, according to Baehr, narrows women's interests and locates them as housewives or consumers only, suggesting that women are less influential and knowledgeable about public issues (1981:144).

van Zoonen (1994) claims that notions of objectivity, value-freeness and neutrality are offsprings of the hegemony of gendered modes of thinking that sustain dichotomies such as objectivity versus subjectivity, reason versus emotion, experts versus lay knowledge, and abstract versus concrete. The argument here is that traditional science not only ignores women's themes and experiences but also denies the validity of women's ways of knowing, thus detaching women and their perspectives
and strengthening prevailing notions that there is only a particular (i.e. read masculinist) way of organising the world.

Lont (1993) reiterates that the questions of academic bias need to be addressed. She holds the view that this field of study is mainly a gendered bastion and women are only related to work in areas like portrayal of women’s images in the media. The notion that gender issues cut across all areas of communication study including Communication Technology, International Communication, Media Law and Ethics is not rightly acknowledged (p. 243).

As a result, gender issues lurk in the margins, reinforcing a subordinate status to women’s concerns. Frequently too, when courses on gender issues are available, they appear as options, rather than as a gender-inclusive curriculum. This implies that apart from the students who register for the Gender and Media course, the other larger number of communication students will possibly graduate without being sensitised or oriented to gender perspectives. Where the gender course is absent, individuals interested in this area will not hear of critical developments evolving in gender scholarship that may help towards gender media empowerment and inform their daily routines and practices.

Referring specifically to communication education programmes in American universities, Rakow (1993a) asserts that there has been no major revolution in curriculum knowledge as it remains unchanged particularly in the ways communication educators conceptualise and divide up the field of the inclusion of some topics and the exclusion of others. Rakow forcefully remarks that there has been no shift in power away from the traditionally dominant approaches as far as gender and race issues are concerned and that despite the recognition that communication needs of the majority of the world’s human inhabitants link closely to women and people of colour, these issues appear superficial to most core curricula. Rakow believes that a change is imperative and that communication educators could begin with curricular changes; she urges that “if we want to change the future, we must change the curriculum” (p. 155).

The curriculum is rightly problematised and this concern is warranted as it is so smoothly carried on and so widely accepted that it seems unnatural for students or tutors to question its premises and assumptions. A major difficulty arises when there is much silence on gender perspectives and these topics are rarely seen as important to our knowledge. Evidently, the curriculum of communication education is a site of cultural and political struggle to determine first, which discourses of knowledge about
communication should be produced and learned, and secondly how students could be learning about communication issues and for whose ultimate benefit.

van Zoonen (1989) conducts a worthy study of the professional socialisation of feminist journalists in the Netherlands. One area of her study examines formal education of female journalists in journalism schools. Her research includes document analyses of examination answer scripts, official curricula of Dutch Schools of Journalism and interviews with staff and feminist journalists.

Interestingly, the journalism schools in her study had witnessed feminist initiatives stimulated primarily by female students. The philosophy of the curricula included written statements that acknowledge women and men suffer from discrimination and sex-role stereotyping and that such prejudice could be addressed by consciousness-raising and rational arguments. Courses in individual socialisation history were offered to discuss the position of women. Based on her findings, van Zoonen holds the view that these feminist issues in journalism education centred around contesting sex-role stereotypes and proposed individualistic strategies (p. 8), that is, women must make individual efforts to catch up with men. van Zoonen perceptively observes the absence of thought to issues of social domination, gender and class relations in the curriculum content. The gendered patterns of authority within news rooms and organisational routines of news media and the social responsibility of communication industries did not appear as issues to be presented in the curriculum knowledge.

van Zoonen notes that the female journalists expressed disappointment when they prepared papers about gender issues and had received little interest, support and supervision during the course of their education (p. 10). These respondents stated that they were usually labelled as 'feminist bores' and given the impression that gender issues and feminist role conceptions are nonsensical, tedious and considered marginal to the profession.

van Zoonen makes a summary of her findings and resolves that Dutch Communication Schools do not take gender issues seriously and this is conveyed explicitly and implicitly in the following ways:

- the marginal and optional place of emancipatory issues in the official curricula;
- the lack of interest and supervision when students prepare papers about ethics and role conceptions from feminist viewpoints;
© the lack of substantial debate among staff and students about feminist ideologies in journalism; and
© the rejection of feminist answers by examiners recruited from newspapers, magazines and broadcast news stations during final oral examination sessions.

(1989: 10-11)

These insights are useful to the present study as it shows that the absence of a commitment to gender issues in the curriculum of communication education can be a key source of frustration and disempowerment for students interested in this area. Worse still, it also imparts the view that gender is not a worthy area of study in communication. It even suggests that female students face a chilly environment in communication education departments in universities, particularly if the curriculum is seen to pay little attention to gender and race issues. It further implies that there are serious gaps in making sense of human experiences and social relations. Indeed, the question of sensitising and empowering communication professionals, specifically women professionals becomes a major struggle if gender issues are given less credibility in both the official and hidden curriculum.

Using the evidence from her study, van Zoonen comes to the conclusion that gender issues, particularly in journalism education in Dutch Schools did not make an impact on the professional socialisation of journalists. But van Zoonen succinctly points out, there are also other factors that have to be taken into account like the autonomy of female journalists in relation to their position in the hierarchy of the organisational structure, attitudes and view of colleagues, editorial policy, audience conceptions and wider social-political contexts that will influence the expression of gender issues and the images of women in the media.

C. Communication Students

Parry (1990) carries out another study by employing participant observation and interviews to examine the problems of female postgraduate journalism students in a British university. She argues that gender issues and problems relating to female students were marginalised in the male dominated journalism programmes. Her findings show that sexist attitudes of some male lecturers emerged in course content and the way the courses were taught. One male lecturer was found to advise journalism students not to take a feminist angle as they will be "slung into a ghetto of feminists, like women's page or the Women's Institute" (p. 9). In addition, he was noted to make the following comments:
We don’t contravene the Sex Discrimination Act but we don’t say policeperson or spokesperson. Please some of you feminists, I’ve yet to see a newsroom use spokesperson....A women is either somebody’s wife or somebody’s mother. You don’t say Gloria Boggs and her husband Fred. You say Fred Boggs and his wife Gloria.......

(Parry, 1990: 9-10)

What emerges from these findings is that tutors’ general beliefs about sexism and subordination of women in society and in the media profession can influence curriculum materials and classroom practices. As stressed earlier, the tutor herself or himself is an important element of study as tutor ideology can perpetuate the hegemonic masculinity and be a considerable obstacle to the development of gender issues or anti-sexist pedagogy; particularly if the tutors support traditional gender roles and devalue gender issues.

The female students in Parry’s research were aware that the tutor was reinforcing sexist practices and the subordinate status of women, but they did not openly challenge the tutors as they recognised structural limitations like the power relationship between staff and students. The students observed that they were in a difficult position and that it was not a good idea to upset the staff as challenging their attitudes would bring students into conflict with their own organisational goal.

Studies on communication students have been rare and there is very little gender work that explores the situation these students face in communication classrooms. Indeed this suggests that much effort is needed to investigate and analyse students’ views on gender matters and their awareness of current theoretical debates on gender-media relationships.

The present study does not look into the views of the communication students to explore their views on gender and to find out what their aspirations are towards gender inequality. It also does not investigate students’ views on gender issues in the curriculum practice they experience during the course of their education. Given the time and material constraints, my study focuses only on communication tutors and the curriculum knowledge presented in the case-study of a communication programme in Malaysia.

In Part I of this chapter, I presented perspectives from Gramsci and Freire which are instructive in charting directions for the present study. In Part II, I offered a discussion of terms and definitions formulated to describe the field of media
understanding. I also outlined principal models that have influenced communication education practice. Following this, I raised questions about the selection and justification of value systems that underpin the curriculum. I have observed that communication educators are key actors in curriculum-making and that the construction of syllabus content and reference texts is not abstracted from communication tutors' perspectives. Hence, I have pointed out that it is useful to pay attention to their perception of gender, particularly in relation to the teaching materials they use. Part III of this chapter looks at a framework for initiating action strategies.

3.6 Developing a Plan for Action

It may be useful to draw together briefly the main points underpinning this study into a ordered whole. The theories and perspectives advanced in the discussion of this chapter highlight the creation of dominant ideology and the need to generate new ideas, new forms of culture, alternative social practices and alternative visions for social transformation. Education systems, the knowledge they offer and the practices which constitute them are seen to play a crucial role in accomplishing hegemony or leading alternative ideas that question the status quo. Indeed education has not only been one of the things that is struggled over, but it is a major institutional site in which these struggles between contending groups take place.

Gramsci's concept of hegemony and associated concepts of intellectuals and counter-hegemonic practice, and Freire's views on conscientisation and liberatory pedagogy bear important directions to think about education and its contribution to lead to transformation in society. For Gramsci, while hegemonic control is forceful, diffuse and complex, it nevertheless offers many small but potentially powerful spaces to organise counter-hegemonic discourses and practices within institutions of social and ideological control. Freire's critical pedagogy of conscientisation begins from the problematication of knowledge, language and lived experience. He proposes the development of critical literacy which works towards emancipatory goals by providing language, concepts, readings and experiences of oppressed groups. Both these perspectives place education as one site where intellectuals can attempt a critical pedagogy to foster creative and critical consciousness among students. Taken together, Gramscian counter-hegemonic practice and Freirean liberatory pedagogy provide a helpful agenda for developing gender intervention strategies in education.

The present study does not only aim to examine tutors' views on gender and to understand the significance accorded to gender issues in the curriculum. It also aims to make a practical contribution that could work towards establishing gender initiatives as
counter-hegemonic pedagogy in communication studies. Specifically, it hopes to propose gender action plans in the context of the institution under study.

The literature on developing gender strategies in education is again very sparse, probably reflecting its controversial, complex nature and its formidable undertaking. The following section attempts to give consideration to those barriers, and to suggest, nonetheless that there may be ways for developing points of intervention.

Barriers

a) Socio-cultural context - The socio-cultural context refers to the environment that includes social, political, economic and demographic conditions. It must be acknowledged that efforts to re-distribute power and to re-construct institutions have to take place at macro levels. It is crucial structures are changed at this level. Power relationships between people in terms of gender, class, race and ethnicity are firmly rooted in economic, political, social and legal systems. The state's constitutional commitment to equality of opportunities; official guidelines and policies on gender; education reforms; provision of resources to encourage equal opportunities commission and affirmative action; creation of support groups and women's networks; establishment of childcare facilities and societal value of childcare would largely strengthen the political power base for gender needs and strategies. To put it differently, gender strategies cannot be easily implemented in a situation that is conservative and basically not organised to engage in change.

b) Institutional structures - Fullan (1993) reminds us that the way educators are trained, the way education institutions are organised, the way educational hierarchy operates results in a system that is more likely to retain the status quo. Efforts are needed to examine organisational policy and structure within education institutions to unravel the opportunities that are available for women to attempt career advancement and professional growth. Women face constraints such as entering administrative positions that do not offer career ladders. Further the presence of overt discrimination, lack of affirmative action policies or lack of commitment to gender policies means that sexism and discriminatory practices are not controlled (Weil, 1987). The presence of such barriers do not provide a framework or ethos conducive to active involvement of women and the inclusion of gender perspectives in the curriculum. It is crucial to note that support to gender strategies may decline or be resisted, particularly when gender policies and initiatives would mean radical changes in power relationships and in the organisation of the curriculum (see Burden and Gottlieb, 1987; Hughes and Kennedy, 1985).
c) Tutor ideologies - Tutors and teachers form a large part of education institutions. It is possible that these educators are conditioned by masculinist ideologies and currents within the wider society. Beliefs about education and about gender may be particularly important as a source of support or resistance to gender initiatives. The capacities of educators to deal with change, learn from it and to facilitate students' learning experiences will be critical for the future development of societies. A first task would therefore have to involve educators. It is important to convince them to support gender issues and to encourage them to organise measures that give prominence to gender relationships in raising questions about communication, development and social transformation for a better future. However, as Acker (1994) points out, beliefs and ideologies about teaching, knowledge and curriculum, especially in relation to gender are most difficult to change. This is because this is linked to personal characteristics, values and life. Gender questions call for a shift in power position and status in both the private and professional life. For both male and female faculty members, academic content about negative implications of gender roles and inequality may conflict directly with the person's marital and other intimate relationships and with child-rearing practices. Because of this inherent challenge to one's personal life, there is a natural reluctance to deal with this issue.

It is also difficult to recognise and admit flaws and omissions in curriculum practice. The expectations to have comprehensive knowledge of one's own subject area and to command awareness of major movements in gender scholarship places strenuous demands from educators. Lack of knowledge and absence of research materials on gender issues can lead to a sense of inadequacy. Within the ethics of academic freedom and participatory democracy, considerable reluctance can emerge when feminist points of view are imposed. Further, under these circumstances, it is easy for educators to rationalise that this is not one's field and that the topic on gender can be taken up by faculty members who might be interested. Such tendencies protect educators from confronting conflict, challenging their belief systems and feelings of inadequacies and continue to protect their 'territories' in the prevailing curriculum practice (Burden and Gottlieb, 1987).

But the position of educators as intellectuals in society also puts them in an uncomfortable and uncharacteristic position which might produce dissonance between actions and self images as just and thoughtful people (Aiken et al, 1987). This dissonance may lead to some members to recognise their own resistance and to concede that the conservative stance may not serve them well. As intellectuals, educators prefer to see themselves as role models for students and as experts who
demonstrate awareness of social problems, including women's experiences in society. This offers contradictions and cracks, and creates spheres and spaces to develop gender action plans in educational settings.

Developing Strategies

There are no strategies that offer simple solutions for achieving women's autonomy and for integrating gender scholarship in the curriculum. It is crucial to remember that pedagogical moments arise in specific contexts. A number of factors have to be considered. For example, the social location of the educator and the students, the geographic and historical location of the institution in which they come together; the political climate in which they work; and the academic background of both learners and educators impinge upon the learning process (Lewis, 1990). Evidently, the task to construct a gender agenda is a formidable one. Feminist theories illuminate how serious the situation is and why change is frustratingly slow (Acker, 1994). The different strands in feminist theory consider different gender strategies. Liberal feminist strategies look at individual solutions like changing attitudes or personalities formed through socialisation. The key purpose is to enable learning of career-planning strategies and developing assertiveness through training. A major concern falls on the formulation of policies that encourage women access to areas of knowledge, skills and access to managerial positions. Attempts have been made to establish Equal Opportunities Commission and Sex Discrimination Act to counter policies and practices that are discriminatory and pose barriers for women's interests in the sector of education.

Perspectives from different theoretical strands like postmodernist, socialist and radical feminisms offer complex analyses and arguments to illuminate the position of women; yet when considering strategies, their goals are highly provocative and likely to confront major opposition. It is not easy to devise strategies for ending capitalism and patriarchy. Consequently, most attempts to initiate gender strategies in education have drawn loosely from a liberal feminist perspective. Working within existing economic and political frameworks, gender activists try to create spaces to establish women's leadership and feminist knowledge. Often those who support radical or socialist ideas find the need to pursue liberal strategies in the short run. The difference is that for liberal feminism, these strategies are an end; for other feminisms a means to an end. It has been argued that comparative studies of women's strategies and coping mechanisms of the patriarchal bargain will lead to a better understanding of the ongoing struggles of women to end the subordination and devaluation of women's views and work (Kandiyoti, 1988).
Working from this base, feminist scholars have attempted to challenge institutional power structures by questioning curriculum content, teaching methods and organisational structure. Attempts are also made to build a working commitment across department members to foster collective understanding on gendered images, ideologies and practices in education and in the wider society. The alliances of teaching members, especially among women help to raise consciousness of gender oppression and to increase commitment to gender issues. Efforts are also made to put women at the centre of concern of scholarship. Women Studies programmes and gender scholarship in various fields of study have been developed. The integration of gender scholarship into mainstream courses constitutes an important challenge to traditional disciplines. While it is necessary to set up Women's Studies programmes to offer opportunities for intensive and extensive study of women, collective efforts are also needed to contest traditional curriculum and its masculinist premises in all areas of academic study.

A theme in this study examines the extent to which gender has been accorded significance into communication studies. My interest in communication students as intending media professionals in the Malaysian context leads me to argue for a greater emphasis on building a gender framework in the curriculum of communication education. Building supportive curricula is one means of furthering gender conscientisation and action. While educational strategies cannot eradicate societal and institutional gender inequity, they can produce graduates who are consciously aware of gender struggles and who are better equipped to change gendered values and social practices.

With regard to curriculum knowledge, there is a divergence of opinion regarding whether there should be separate courses on gender or an inclusive curriculum where all courses incorporate feminist points of view. Rakow (1993b) suggests that an integrative approach that combines both strategies will bring about a more holistic and inclusive curriculum.

Strategies will vary according to time, place and personalities. Sometimes the conditions are open enough to produce equal opportunities policy statements. At other times, it may be more realistic to make concrete proposals for a specific course, a feminist tutor, changes in teaching materials, or to organise seminars and workshops with colleagues and tutors to discuss ways in which the curriculum can be extended by advancing gender perspectives (Burden and Gottlieb, 1987).
It is crucial to recognise the complexity of attempting strategies. Evidently, the gender task will be more difficult in some contexts than in others. In areas where communities strongly support traditional gender roles and division of labour, it may be more difficult to seek and sustain strategies that break gendered traditions.

The gender intervention process is exceedingly complex and it is the combination of individuals and societal agencies that make a difference. As Fullan (1993:24) argues, "change is a journey, not a blueprint". It is a process of uncertainty, learning, anxieties and difficulties. Contending with forces of change is a never-ending process and it is essential to be persistent and resilient to find creative ways to struggle for a more egalitarian future. Using the case-study of a Programme offering communication education, I will develop discussion on the barriers that emerge in this context and propose some mechanisms for inducing change in the Malaysian setting. Although the action plans suggested here pertain to the context of the institution under study, they may be useful for charting a gender agenda in other communication education programmes (see Chapter Nine).

3.7 Discussion

While there have been a wealth of studies that have examined gender in various areas of communication, there have been very little attempts to study gender in relation to communication education. Creedon (1993,1989) and Gallagher (1981) report that the majority of journalism and communication students are women and as such it is important that women construct new understandings of themselves and learn to analyse and interpret the world from alternative perspectives rather from masculinist angles. Grunig (1993) reiterates that this is an important area to send forceful messages to students as "today's undergraduate is tomorrow's practitioner; today's graduate student is tomorrow's professor" (p. 277). Thus focusing attention on the academy is imperative and appropriate to conscientise students who hope to engage in the realm of communication. The literature presented so far in this chapter raises questions regarding the realities in communication education programmes. A major concern here is with the values underpinning the selection and organisation of curriculum knowledge for the education and training of communication students who will participate in the creation of gender and meanings in society.

It has been widely propounded that there is a critical need for consciousness-raising debates which encourage communication students to think and talk about the state and status of women in society (Rakow, 1993b,1989; Gallagher, 1981). These views suggest that if communication students are sensitised to gender issues, there is a
capacity for attempting qualitative differences in alternative and mainstream (though, limited) media production and for making significant contributions to promote women's leadership and feminist knowledge in society.

There is a general belief among communication scholars that communication education should present students with a range of tools for analysis so that students can pick up certain viewpoints that they can relate to and pursue in their lives. Discussing the potential contribution of feminist scholarship to the field of communication, Brenda Dervin (1987) reiterates that feminist scholars bring a new dynamic perspective that not only focuses on gender but also on other forms of oppression that operate along intersections of ethnicity, class, age, sexuality, etc. Similarly, Steiner (1989) articulates that communication studies will benefit from the gender discourse as this would challenge the emphasis on objectivity, neutrality and detachment which permeates most communication models. She asserts,

"...it matters who the communicators are, who is allowed to communicate and who is excluded in part because this controls what is communicated, how and to whom."

(Steiner, 1989:168)

This clearly indicates that some efforts are urgently needed to create courses that deal with topics on gender and communication. Though there is a popular understanding that gender perspectives are becoming visible in communication research, and despite a great deal of discussion about the promising capacity of gender perspectives, the potential remains largely unrealised in communication education programmes.

In raising the gender question in communication education, it needs to be reiterated that the structure and content of mass communication need to be changed, as do the structure and value systems of society. Yet there is a need to identify this area as a site for gender intervention as schools of communication education could lead the way for change or perpetuate the problem. There appears to be some initiatives by individual tutors to raise topics of gender and race but these often remain as isolated efforts. Nevertheless, these are important developments and very little documented evidence of these activities and the experiences of female educators in communication education programmes has been produced. In order to bring about changes in the basic values of communication, there needs to be a conscious commitment to start "a chain reaction spreading in myriad directions" (Creedon, 1993:20). The question of domination of women in all aspects of communication is
relevant and this should offer a ground for further study and research. The doing of
gender in the media, language and culture are subjects that communication education
programmes cannot afford to ignore if they wish to engage critically with society and
the media.

The present study is an exploratory effort to provide some thoughts about
communication education in Malaysia and the positioning of gender issues in this field.
In light of what has been discussed, several strategies will be employed to explore the
significance accorded to gender issues in the curriculum of professional communication
studies, specifically at the undergraduate level. Cornbleth (1990) has highlighted that
curriculum is socially constructed; as such it would be important to give adequate
attention to both the socio-cultural and the structural contexts.

1. Socio-Cultural Context

I begin with an initial theoretical discussion on the shaping of the gender debate
in the socio-cultural context of Malaysia. Here attention is given to the position of
women in Malaysian society and the recognition and definition accorded to the gender
problem in state development plans is assessed. In addition, I offer an overview of
literature on gender communication research in the Malaysian context to define
patterns of gender representation in media content and within the media industry itself.
Further, the genesis, development and directions taken by higher institutions offering
communication education will also be explored (Chapter Five).

2. The Structural Context

The structural context sheds light on the more immediate setting that links
interaction among the participants within an education institution to generate
curriculum experience. At this level, this study examines a) representation of women
in the organisational setting; b) the curriculum structure of the Programme; c) tutor
ideologies with regard to gender issues in communication and communication
education; and d) the significance accorded to gender issues in the curriculum content
of communication courses.

A. Representation of Women in the Programme

I describe the organisational setting of the Programme chosen for study and
investigate the gender composition of its students and faculty members. The
representation of women among students and the ranks female staff members hold is
important for role-modelling. The visibility of female tutors in the organisational and
academic hierarchy is also important to challenge male domination and masculinist
ideologies (Chapter Six).
B. Curriculum Structure of the Programme

In this part, I offer a discussion of the main developments in the Malaysian communication education and the approaches to communication education adopted by the Programme. The Programme chosen for this study is currently conducting a curriculum review exercise and numerous External Examiners have been invited to assess the curriculum structure of the Programme. I offer a critique of the reports and contribute my viewpoints from a gender perspective to enhance discussion on the Programme's curriculum structure and communication pedagogy (Chapter Six).

C. Tutor Ideologies

To introduce gender insights in the context of the present study means to question the values and views of curriculum-makers and the generation of curriculum knowledge in this field of study. Emphasis will be placed on the communication tutors themselves as they are implicated the making and remaking of gender regimes. Moreover, faculty members have a significant role in the development and content of the curriculum, as well as relative freedom to decide what will be taught in an individual class. Thus, it would be worthy to study their views and values toward gender issues in relation to course content and reference material; and secondly, to elicit their views on integrating gender scholarship in the curriculum (Chapter Seven).

D. Communication Courses

The selection of curriculum knowledge is a central concern as it is important to understand to what extent gender issues emerge as topics for discussion, analysis, and critique in the course content. Syllabus content and reference texts establish so much of the material conditions for teaching and learning and define what kinds of knowledge are to be offered in classrooms. It is therefore useful to offer an analysis of communication courses and their suggested reading lists. Examination question papers are also significant as they are integral features which highlight the issues that appear as prioritised concerns in the curriculum knowledge of communication education. Chapter Eight will give insights into the curriculum knowledge in relation to gender issues. It seems useful to reiterate that I have not looked into classroom practices to examine gendered patterns in classroom discussion because this would require access into the communication classes. This research approach is highly controversial and not feasible easily within the sensitive Malaysian cultural context. Although this is a limitation, it does not jeopardise the study nor its validity as I have stressed that an analysis of course documents are valuable to make sense of the position of the curriculum activities that are deliberately planned. This study relates to the Malaysian setting, but its critique can also be extended to other communication education
programmes in different parts of the world, specifically when the gender dimension despite significant differences encounters similar problems, indicating the global context of the problem.

The discussion so far has articulated an adequate approach to examine the positioning of gender issues in the curriculum of Malaysian communication education. The study of curriculum courses and the views of communication educators will explain the way gender issues are addressed in the particular institution under study. In addition, the study also directs some attention to developing strategies in communication education.

3. Developing a Plan of Action

A section of this study aims to propose some action plans. It seeks to chart some initial directions, immediate strategies and priorities for a gender agenda, informed of feminist perspectives in communication education. I focus attention to formulating policy statements; building leadership for women; establishing networking and collaboration; conducting gender communication research; and curriculum development. I feel that an important initial step can be taken to organise gender issues in the curriculum. One of the terms frequently used in European curriculum initiatives is 'integration' which refers to the inclusion of equal opportunities in the curriculum and to the development of curriculum knowledge. Integration in this context means that the gender question is not merely a discrete add-on element, but a necessary, substantial and explicit ingredient in the education and training of intending media practitioners. In this study, I use the integration strategy to mean incorporating the understanding of producing gender -- to make this understanding an indivisible part in the preparation of media professionals. I also suggest a separate course on gender and communication and indicate syllabus content and curriculum materials that can be used in Malaysia. The paucity of gender communication research to inform the teaching of gender issues in the Malaysian context is acknowledged, but gender communication scholars cannot afford to abandon this body of knowledge if there are major lacunae in the literature. To a large extent, literature from other parts of the world can be appropriated to explore the Malaysian communication setting and to raise points of difference or departure from western cultural contexts. This is a crucial step in articulating a gender communication agenda in Malaysia. The proposed course that I will construct aims to enable learners to explore gender communication issues in a more coherent and in-depth manner plus encourage them to frame alternative discourse of ideas in their future activities.

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This chapter has set out to map key concepts and arguments to structure a framework for the present study. Ideas from Gramsci and Freire highlight the creation of dominant ideology that serves the ruling groups. They stress the need to generate alternative social practices and alternative visions for social transformation. In this regard, I have stressed that gender scholarship is a form of counter-hegemonic pedagogy that questions male domination and the assumptions and premises of masculinist knowledge. I have extended these arguments to communication education to raise questions about male dominance in communication education programmes. Patriarchal power and masculinist ideologies impinge upon communication tutors, who are key curriculum-makers. The views they hold, particularly in relation to gender issues will impinge upon their curriculum-making and the construction of syllabus content. Failure to place the curriculum under gender scrutiny would mean that the prevailing gender systems and gender regimes will be reproduced. The presence of contradictions and the commitment of gender leaders is crucial to organise alternatives ideas so that the curriculum becomes a crucial site for struggle to introduce points of intervention.

I have emphasised that the gender task is an uphill battle and that various difficulties have to be encountered. However, I have also advanced arguments that suggest that despite restricted choices, actors though embedded within institutional structures can innovate and experiment by making room for manoeuvre, formulate decisions and act upon them. The present study is a first step to contribute to the feminist communication project, specifically in Malaysia. In the next chapter, I turn to a discussion of methodology and I record some of the difficulties I faced in conducting this study.
CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

In the last two chapters, I have located the study of gender issues in communication education as political activity that aims to contribute to the gender project which seeks to challenge hegemonic masculinity. It has been noted that the site of communication education is not just an academic field of study but also a potential site for intervention where dominant discourses in knowledge can be interrupted. As presented in Chapter Three, the major issues include: the representation of women, particularly of those informed of feminist ideas in communication departments; the curriculum structure of Malaysian communication education; tutor ideologies to gender issues in communication and communication education; and the visibility of gender issues in the curriculum of communication courses. In the past decade, gender communication scholars are increasingly urging communication education programmes to place due emphasis on gender perspectives so that the part media play in the ongoing construction of the gender discourse is addressed adequately.

This research adopts a case-study approach to illustrate a specific setting and to give insight into the way gender issues are approached in the curriculum. It aims to first, examine the tutors' responses to gender issues in a particular setting. Second, it intends to assess the significance accorded to gender issues in this particular Programme. Using documentary analysis, questionnaires and focused interviews, this study explores how gender issues are addressed in the curriculum of communication education and links this to various social forces operating at the socio-cultural level, and more crucially to the structural level where communication educators are seen as key actors in the making and re-making of gender regimes. This study is also concerned in initiating gender curriculum intervention and hopes to propose a plan for action for communication education in Malaysia. As stated in the last chapter, while this study recognises the interplay of forces of social reproduction, it also highlights forms of cultural production and the manoeuvring of space for initiating counter-hegemonic work. This work should be viewed as an exploration of issues and I hope it will raise questions and themes that can be pursued in further studies. This chapter aims to explain methodological considerations, research procedures and difficulties encountered in the present study.

4.1 Feminist Methodology

In this chapter, I build upon the work of feminist theorists in the social sciences which begin with a central premise that women must start by first defining themselves
as women. There are three major themes that are pertinent to the feminist methodology. In the first place, the researcher begins her study of social reality from a position of her subjective oppression. Thus in the first instance, the methodology recognises the oppression of women in a male-dominated society. Secondly, the assertion, the 'personal is political' is expressed in different ways: by focusing on knowledge which emerges from both the private and the public; by a rejection of positivism and a possibility of value-free research; by giving emphasis to women's perceptions, meanings and experience as appropriate and important data for analysis and by re-defining the relationship between the researcher and the subjects. Thirdly, the feminist perspective has a practical, activist dimension as well as an academic one which contributes to the changing of the subordinate position of women and to changing society (van Zoonen, 1994; Foss and Foss, 1989; Gregg, 1989; Carter and Spitzack, 1989).

Cook and Fonow (1986) raise five basic epistemological principles underpinning feminist methodology. They include:

- the necessity of continuously and reflexively attending to the significance of gender and gender asymmetry as a basic feature of all social life, including the conduct of research;
- the centrality of consciousness-raising as a specific methodological tool and as a general orientation or 'way of seeing';
- the need to challenge the norm of objectivity that assumes that the subject and object of research can be separated from one another and that personal and/or grounded experiences are unscientific;
- concern for ethical implications of feminist research and recognition of the exploitation of women as objects of knowledge; and
- emphasis on the empowerment of women and transformation of patriarchal social institutions through research.

(ibid, 1986:5)

These are useful pointers in conducting feminist research, however, it may not be possible to fulfil all the above principles in every research. I would like to present a few notes that were particularly relevant in the present study. I must note that the research process itself can become a process of conscientisation for both the researcher and the research subjects. In the process of raising questions on gender, several of the research respondents observed that they were thinking about gender in ways they had not considered before. Common responses included the following: "I have not really
thought about this...", "It is interesting that you have said that,...it never struck me..."", "I am not sure, I didn't think about it before you raised these questions".

Thus, the research questions on gender can raise consciousness and serve as a source of knowledge and insight into gender dynamics and how this is managed in social life. Further, in some cases the process of conscientisation can encourage politicisation and activism on the part of research subjects. Thus the activism generated does not stop at the end of this research, it is just a beginning step to re-establish connections with the research subjects interested in the gender project. I have also not just focused on women only in this research. My research subjects include men. I believe men have a responsibility and a supportive role to play as gender issues affect all our lives.

Perhaps the most important principle that concerned me in the context of the present study was the question of ethics. I encountered major dilemmas in the presentation of this study and I will like to raise research ethics that were important to the specific nature of the present study.

Research Ethics

There is a growing awareness concerning moral issues implicit in the work of social researchers and of their need to meet obligations with respect to those involved in, or affected by the investigations. In the case of controversial research, it has been suggested that participants should be offered the opportunity to remain anonymous or that all information need to be treated with confidentiality (Cohen and Manion, 1994). Researchers must ensure that the subjects are not humiliated or involved in the loss of dignity or self-esteem. A researcher has to be conscious of the ethical issues that pervade the research process, from conceptualising the problem to disseminating the findings. A consideration of these issues pave better possibilities of using the final findings to the benefit of the organisation and to those who have taken part in the study. These considerations become immensely important if the researcher hopes to continue working with the research subjects, especially in initiating consciousness-raising activities and gender strategies in the institution that was researched.

The issue of protecting identities of subjects is a difficult one and is relevant to the participants in this study. I encountered tensions during the writing-up of this study when I realised that identifying people by role may preserve anonymity for an outside reader, but it did not offer the same degree of confidentiality, specifically to communication educators working within the Malaysian institutions. These considerations have influenced the way I have structured the findings and discussion of the study. For example, although it would have been more interesting to work around
the educators in examining their course structure and content, examination question papers and their views on gender issues, this has been deliberately avoided as this would enable the easy identification of the educators concerned. Rather than provide the detailed individual biographies and subsequently, organising the discussion on their course content, I have constructed this material around general themes. Even then, I found major dilemmas in working with the data and presenting it for discussion. I have used pseudonyms and there were further difficulties in deciding to choose names. Unlike in Britain or the United States, where most of the pseudonyms used were English names and could reveal the gender of the participants, the same could not be worked out in the Malaysian context, particularly for outside readers. The multi-ethnic composition in Malaysia and the choice I made in using Malay, Chinese and Indian names would still implicate the identity of the respondents and not protect their anonymity. I would like to point out that I have chosen to use pairs of initials by the side of the participants' views or texts. The first of these is for my own reference and refers to individuals. The second refers to gender, i.e. M for a male participant while F for a female participant.

In this connection, it is important to raise another thorny problem in writing Chapter Seven where numbers were not widely used in relation to the various viewpoints on gender issues. This limitation is acknowledged. However, within a small-scale study, rather than identifying the number of respondents that raise specific viewpoints, I felt that it was more useful to focus on insight and understanding of individuals being studied. Conversely, I have attempted to provide meaningful information about tutors' views on gender issues so that this offers a capacity of problematising taken-for-granted assumptions and making significant contributions to the practice of communication education.

4.2 Case-study

The present study attempts to explore how gender issues are approached in the curriculum of communication education in Malaysia and aims to propose gender action plans that can be initiated at the curriculum level. Communication education is only offered at the tertiary level in order to prepare potential communication professionals for the Malaysian communication scene. In this respect, my focus will be on communication education within a specific university setting (at the undergraduate level) as this offers the opportunity for one aspect of the problem to be studied in some depth within a limited time scale. Hence, I will adopt a case-study approach in which a systematic investigation of a particular instance will be conducted (Niesbet and Wyatt, 1982; Adelman et al, 1977). A case-study approach is useful as it will illustrate
a specific instance - the relation of gender issues to the educational programme concerned, its philosophy and aims, its curriculum content, how it is arranged and the views of communication educators in this context. As stated in Chapter One, the present study is not only concerned with the views of communication educators and the analysis of gender issues in the curriculum knowledge, but it also aims to propose action-plans that can be initiated in the Programme. The case-study approach is a helpful method of study as it would illuminate both tutors' responses to gender issues and the manner in which the curriculum addresses gender issues. Based on the findings, I will propose some future directions for charting a gender agenda in communication education in this institution.

The individualised nature of this study approach is acknowledged, however, it is not the aim of the present study to produce generalisable conclusions but to generate suggestions for interpretation of other similar cases. As Niesbet and Wyatt (1982) point out, the sufficient richness and texture could be provided by a single cultural example which could act as a ground against which other practices might be considered. Moreover, it is hoped that this will set in train several other similar studies with a view to extend the larger picture and contribute to the feminist project.

4.3 Selecting the Site

In Malaysia, there are three institutions of higher learning which offer programmes in communication education. The School of Mass Communication, Institut Teknologi Mara (ITM) offers a three-year diploma study course in mass communication. This is basically a technical training school and provides professionals directly into media-related industries. The other two communication programmes are situated in universities: the Communication Programme at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and the Communication Programme at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). These are four-year study courses which offer degrees in communication. All three institutions are statutory bodies which come under the Ministry of Education and are governed by the Higher Education Policy (1967).

My study places focus on the programmes offered at the university level which have both theoretical and practical components. The curriculum, its philosophy and objectives of the two university programmes are quite similar, although the number of courses and course content may have some variations. Because of the similarities in the philosophy and objectives of the Programmes, the critique on the curriculum generated in one Programme could also be applicable to the other Programme in a different university in Malaysia.
Since my study adopts a case-study approach, I have chosen the USM Communication Programme to conduct this study. The selected site was first established in the School of Humanities in 1970 and offered communication studies as an area of specialisation for the degree in Bachelor of Arts. In 1984, a Bachelor of Communication Programme was established, and this is a four year programme leading to a degree in Bachelor of Communication. In the academic year 1992/93, this programme had a total number of 498 students, about 70.5% of whom were females. In the same year, there were a total number of fifteen serving lecturers, five females and ten males. The programme appeared as a good site for the present study given the interesting composition of its students and educators.

There were also other reasons for selecting this programme as a site for the research project. Over the last few years, this programme has been subjected to a number of reappraisals, and restructuring plans have been drawn up. This is a strategic entry point for gender initiatives as it paves possibilities to initiate research and intervention when curricula matters are open for discussion or change. As stated in the last chapter, gender research and intervention strategies cannot be implemented in a situation that is basically not organised to engage in discussion and change. In other words, until some personal and institutional impediments to an open discussion of the issues are addressed, potentially useful debate on curriculum may not receive the attention they deserve and may stand little chance of implementing change. Since the USM Communication Programme, the institution selected for this study, is involved in the exercise of curriculum review, this offers a timely location to examine the existing status of gender issues in its curriculum and to propose gender initiatives.

It is also important to reiterate that I am a staff member of this programme, currently on a three-year study leave. In a sense then, I can be considered as an 'inside' researcher but not involved in any teaching responsibilities during the period in which this research was carried out. This 'inside' factor is influential in getting the Programme to cooperate in such a project. It is usual that activities, discussions and issues associated with curriculum evaluation evoke less than positive images, particularly if the researcher is an outsider. Being an insider of the Programme meant that I was able to gain access to a number of resources, official documents, handbooks, examination question papers and syllabus content which would otherwise have been difficult or denied to outside researchers. The Head of the department was supportive and did not put obstacles in my way during the course of my research. This of course, does not imply that my position in the research has not been problematic as I have had
to maintain a critical stance throughout the research project. Further, I did encounter some difficulties with some staff academic members who were very busy with teaching, administrative work, attending and chairing committee meetings. A couple of the staff members also indicated disinterest in gender issues and in the present research. Nonetheless, because of the various techniques employed in this study, I feel that my aims to obtain a representative range of responses enabled me to fulfill the objectives of my studies and to provide answers to key questions.

The 'insider' research is not without problems. First, as Bell (1992) notes, it cannot be assumed or taken-for-granted that every member of the institution will cooperate in such a project. Secondly, the 'inside' researcher will be aware of some of the power struggles, tensions and conflicts between differing political and pedagogical views that exist as an essential part of the social relationships in any institution. In this study, I have sketched out only the gender tensions and conflicts that exist in this programme.

Despite these problematic issues there are various strengths to 'insider' research. It is an approach that is particularly attractive to practitioner-researchers who have experienced a problem during the course of the work, see the merits of investigating it and, if possible of improving practice. To a large extent, this approach is utilised by researchers in education research as there is a motivation to improve the quality of education.

4.4 Research Methods and Procedures

The present study aims to first examine communication tutors' views on gender issues and second, to gain insight into the significance accorded to gender issues in Malaysian communication education. Communication tutors are the key actors in curriculum-making and constitute part of the hidden curriculum operating in the Programme. The official curriculum is fundamentally linked to the selection, organisation and distribution of knowledge that is made available to students.

It seems important to justify why I have focused on the official curriculum rather than on the curriculum practice in classrooms to give evidence of the gendered nature of communication education in the Programme. An investigation into the curriculum practice will be able to unfold the hidden curriculum in detail: the routines in the classrooms and the interaction of texts and students as well as the interaction between tutors and students. Ideally, such an exploration of the classroom situation would provide rich description and data that can illuminate the gender dynamics in the
classroom. But this is an approach which is not feasible in the Malaysian context for several reasons.

First, the communication study programme stretches over a four year period and it would have been difficult to select the sample of classes for observation. It would be impossible to attend all these courses in one year. Secondly, tutors might feel very uncomfortable with the presence of a researcher, particularly if their action in the classroom is also examined. This exercise may arouse negative feelings and defensive positions and be seen as undermining the credibility of the concerned tutors. Evaluation or assessment exercises are particularly sensitive in the Malaysian cultural context, especially since they involve the 'water-face' of authoritative sources. Asian values of 'face-saving' are of prime importance in any negotiation, especially when the situation entails the handing over the right of voice, participation and decision-making from a 'superior' to a 'subordinate'. Given these difficulties, an observation into curriculum practice in the classrooms would have not been conceivable in the present study. I have therefore focused on the official curriculum as data and have included various sources of information to provide evidence about the presentation of gender issues in the curriculum of the Programme. The focus on official curriculum rather than classroom practice did not jeopardise the study nor its validity. An analysis of documents into the official curriculum is still extremely valuable and is crucial in assessing the deliberately planned philosophy, its objectives and the curriculum knowledge offered in communication education. In this study, evidence was gathered by a variety of techniques. In this section, I will explain how the research problem was investigated and why particular methods and techniques were employed.

**Documentary Analysis**

Documentary evidence, engages with the systematic use of written, printed or visual materials that serve as important sources of data for investigation. Documentary analysis is widely used in educational research as it offers useful, accurate and relevant information about a wide range of social phenomena (Duffy, 1992; Cohen and Manion, 1985; Johnson, 1984).

Documentary analysis was adopted as a major method of analysis here where numerous printed materials were a valuable source of data. A major argument advanced in the theoretical framework in Chapter Three asserts that any sociological study of the curriculum needs to be contextualised. Two levels have been noted as

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24This is a Malay expression translated literally. It points to the importance of values of respect, pride and prestige of individuals.
influential: the socio-cultural level and the structural level. Given that there was very little feminist critique available in Malaysia, I found it very difficult to offer a theoretical discussion on the gender agenda at the socio-cultural context. I reviewed the state development plans, that is, six Malaysian Five-Year Plans from 1966 to 1995. These were state policies that were constructed after independence and the formation of Malaysia in 1963. I placed emphasis on sections dealing with education and media matters but there was no mention of gender or women in the literature. Both these sections stressed the importance of education and the media in national development and in fostering national unity among the ethnic groups. Gender was not deemed as a distressing social issue or a significant element related to the development debate. Concern for women was mainly marginalised in sections on social welfare and health. I was very disappointed but not surprised, that there was very little information about gender issues on the whole, rather it confirmed the neglect and debilitating of gender issues in Malaysian public policy.

Interestingly, gender planning in Malaysia was first incorporated in the Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991-1995) and this document was an extremely valuable source of data. It seemed worthy to assess the policy and this effort has revealed useful insights on the conceptualisation of the gender problem, the underlying assumptions and the strategies proposed to improve women's lives. I have presented a critique of this policy in this study to illuminate the form of ideas that underpin the gender agenda in Malaysia.

In order to examine the complexities working at the structural level, I collected documents relating to the more immediate setting of the curriculum. These included the Higher Education Planning Committee Report (1967), Universities and University College Act (1971); Curriculum Structure Report of the Bachelor of Communication (1993); Handbook for Communication Programme (1992/93) and External Examiners' Reports on the curriculum of the USM Communication Programme.

I decided to include the External Examiners' Reports for several reasons. Firstly, these reports formed interesting original material related to the discussion of

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23As stated in Chapter Three, eight external examiners were invited to evaluate the curriculum of the Communication Programme. These included the reports from the following distinguished scholars: Prof. I. Ross (1984), Prof. J. Halloran (1985), Prof. H. Schiller (1987), Prof. L. Becker (1987), Prof. L. Rao (1988), Prof. M. Tehrani (1989), Dr. L. Masterman (1990) and Prof. J. Curran (1992).
communication education. Secondly, these reports have been influential in all the discussions on proposals constructing the new curriculum structure for the Communication Programme. Thirdly, all the External Examiners were eminent male communication scholars. Accordingly, a distinctive gender perspective was absent as far as the discussion of the curriculum structure was concerned in these reports. Finally, given that a gender perspective was missing in this debate, I wanted to assess the comments made by the External Examiners and to contribute a gender viewpoint to the discussion on curriculum structure, syllabus content and communication pedagogy. I felt that this was an important attempt to engage more productively with the curriculum question in this Programme.

It must however be noted that these reports were diverse and some of these reports focused on various specific issues. For example, the report by Prof. I. Ross looked specifically into the establishing of a Film Theory and a Film Production component in the curriculum of communication education. As such, I have used these reports selectively in explicating certain themes that are relevant to the discussion of curriculum and gender issues in communication education.

In the current study, I was interested to find out the extent to which gender or women had become a part of the general scholarly discussion in curriculum knowledge. There are various data that could be used to assess the reception of gender scholarship in the curriculum: dissertation topics, journal publications, books in print, course syllabus and examination papers. I have chosen to examine course syllabus, reference lists and examination papers which would demonstrate the significance accorded to gender issues in communication education.

The focus on syllabus content formed an important part of the study. Rakow (1993a) and Spender (1981) remind us that these are more than just groupings of intellectual thought as they emerge as fractions of social systems that compete for power, prestige and recognition within the education system. A total number of twenty-nine copies of course content and indicative reading lists which were offered during the academic session 1992/93 were collected and studied. These documents varied from two to five pages and contained useful information on topics that were presented each week.

It should be observed here that much of the scholarship on gender and the official curriculum, specifically at the level of higher education is not theoretically and methodologically sophisticated. This appears to be an underdeveloped area but I set to
proceed my analysis in a systematic and qualitative manner. Three sources of data, that is the course syllabus, reference lists and examination question papers were identified as relevant areas to establish the degree to which discussion on gender had achieved a place in the Programme's communication education and to what extent gender issues were silenced. I advanced to examine the course outlines to find out if gender appeared as a lecture topic for discussion. I sought to find out if there were any topics that focused principally on gender matters. By this, I do not mean that gender is raised incidentally or as a subsidiary theme, rather it has been labelled as a focus of study in the syllabus content of the courses.

Next, I looked at the key indicative readings recorded on these documents. I was interested in finding out the number of books or articles that were written from a gender perspective in the overall reference list. I also examined each book chapter or journal article quoted in each course content to identify if gender was a central theme in this literature. I have not listed all the books that were registered as references in sample courses listed in the main body of my discussion. I have, however, noted these readings in Appendix B. For the purposes of discussion, I highlighted some of the key readings in each course and recorded if there were any book chapters or journal articles that carried gender as primary themes. My critique on reference lists could be applied in general to the gendered nature of communication books in both western and non-western countries.

Apart from course content, examination question papers were another important source of data that exemplified the forms of preferred knowledge in the curriculum. In other words, the study of examination question papers offered valuable insights to issues that were prioritised as key concerns of the course. This was an extremely useful exercise as it highlighted the insignificance accorded to gender issues as worthy topics for examinations, particularly in the practical-oriented courses.

There are various limitations associated with documentary analysis, particularly in terms of reliability, validity and subjectivity (Duffy, 1992; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). The present study which adopts a feminist methodology has clearly defined the underlying assumptions that are influential when a researcher works from this point of analysis and interprets the research findings. To reduce the problems of reliability and validity, the present study has drawn from a wide range of different documentary sources and has attempted to cross-check these sources so that a better understanding of the evidence can be presented.
Interviews

Interviews are useful as they not only elicit information from the respondent but also offer opportunities to explore ideas, scrutinise responses and investigate their motives and assumptions. The interview format can produce a wealth of valuable data and produce interesting insights into a problem. These are however, some difficulties linked with the interview methods. There are problems like biases and selectivity in setting the questions, analysing and interpreting the data (Bell, 1992; Niesbet and Wyatt, 1982). There is always the tendency of bias creeping into interviews and this a problem that cannot be avoided completely (Gavron, 1966, cited in Bell, 1992:73).

In principle, however, these problems are common in most social science research where one has to constantly encounter these questions. The case of a feminist methodology starts from the basic premise that gender is a cultural construct that forms an element of human experience. It emphasises that gender structures material and symbolic worlds and that women are oppressed groups in society. Hence the assumptions underpinning this methodology are identified clearly at the very beginning of the research.

Interviews were used as a tool of research to offer useful insights into how the gender problem in general, and specifically the gender and communication relation was being viewed in the Malaysian context. I made negotiations to talk to respondents in the field of communication, in communication education and in feminist activities. I was interested to enable the respondents to talk about issues that were significant to them and at the same time to respond to certain topics that formed the major issues of my research.

The interviews were conducted during the period of October 1993-December 1993. A major limiting factor however was time as the respondents were extremely busy in their own job and had various deadlines and job tasks to meet, and hence could not afford long hours of interviewing. Further many of them noted their preference to be interviewed in their working settings during normal office hours. Given these constraints, the focused interview format was selected as a suitable strategy for this study to enable the respondents to raise issues that they felt important and to talk about matters which were closely related to my research.

Gender issues are controversial and a few of the participants felt that gender was a non-issue or a concept which was new to them in terms of academic knowledge. In fact some of them stated that they had not thought much about it while some others
argued that it was not related to their courses. Although, I encouraged them to elaborate on these matters, they indicated reluctance and preferred to move to other questions. Whenever I sensed some uneasiness on the part of participants, I did not pursue these matters. In this relation, I think it is important to recognize that since several of the respondents were not familiar with this body of knowledge, they could not present lengthy discussions.

**Questionnaire**

The focus on communication education forms an important aspect of the present study. In the face of the time-factor constraint, I sought to have members of the Communication Programme to complete a questionnaire which I constructed as a source of additional information. The aim of the questionnaire were as follows:

- To have the educators list the courses that they had offered during the academic year 1992/93 and to identify their research interests.

- To express their views if gender was an important issue to be considered in communication education.

- To elicit staff views on some of the aims and visions that guide their own teaching.

The questionnaires provided useful additional information regarding the research respondents. Twelve out of fifteen staff members returned the questionnaires, some of the answers were incomplete or very brief, while others provided sufficient data regarding their interests and their aspirations. I was able to identify some educators who I have labelled as 'gender leaders' as they had shown much enthusiasm and cooperation throughout the fieldwork.

4.5 **Resistance to Research and Researcher**

It has been widely noted that discussion on gender issues are highly political and pose various risks both to the researcher and her research subjects (Kennedy et al, 1993; Weiler, 1988; Acker and Piper, 1984). During the course of the present study, and specifically in my field work, I frequently experienced people's resistance to considering gender as a significant social issue. Some communication educators, felt that gender equality had already been established in Malaysian society. They believed that this was not a problem and did not impinge upon their work as there was equal opportunity, for both men and women. The presence of a large number of female
students in the programme was further perceived as a clear indication that gender was a non-issue.

For those being researched, research is an intervention in their lives. Feminist scholars in particular have asserted that as a process of intervention, research can cause tensions, reinforce ideas or stimulate people to think about changes in the ways of their lives (Middleton, 1993; Oakley, 1981). Gender is a provoking issue and during this research, I sensed that some of the participants were not open to this as a construct that impinged upon their lives and their work. Accordingly, although I tried to engage conversations with them, some of them did not respond to my research project or looked through and beyond me with ease, while some others talked about various other things but the issues relevant to the research at hand.

Indeed, some of the participants were quite surprised to find out that my research was related to gender issues and felt that I was venturing into an unpopular terrain that would bring no personal nor professional gain. This project therefore offered me the opportunity to see clearly the diverse range of responses and views on gender issues. Interestingly, several of the respondents appeared to frame the gender question in terms of women's access to employment. As long as women had opportunities to seek employment, gender was seen as a non-issue. Therefore, very often gender as a problematic issue was hardly recognised and there were much inconsistencies in the responses of communication educators.

This of course did not come to me as a surprise. As Spivak (1993) argues, it is essential for educators to question and evaluate personal ideas and values. This is certainly a pertinent point particularly in gender research. More than anything, this brought to my notice Griffith's (1992:13) observation that good intentions of improving communication and curriculum practice are not enough in educational research and that complexities exist when one encounters feminist ideas. In this connection, I was also able to detect some discomfort among some respondents who showed some interest but were reluctant to elaborate their views and experiences and discuss in depth about gender issues, particularly in relation to matters that related to the private sphere.

In contrast, there were also a handful of men and women, who were knowledgeable on gender matters and were willing to discuss these issues comfortably and were supportive of gender initiatives. These conversations were productive and fruitful in such settings.
As an exploratory attempt, this study has its limitations. As reiterated several times in Chapters Two and Three, the literature to inform the present study, particularly in the context of gender issues in communication education is very sparse. Indeed this has posed major difficulties for conceptual and methodological considerations. Further, there is a paucity of material related to gender curriculum initiatives in communication education programmes. Clearly, much more work is needed to develop conceptual and methodological frameworks for studying gender issues in communication programmes.

In this chapter, I have explained the methodological considerations, research procedure and difficulties encountered in the present study. I have described that the case-study approach is a useful strategy as it would offer a systematic investigation of a particular setting. I have outlined the appropriate tools of analysis that have been used to give insights into the curriculum of communication knowledge and the aspirations of communication educators. Given the controversial nature of the research problem, I have identified some of the major difficulties that emerged in the study, specifically in presenting data findings and in protecting the identity of the participants. These considerations have influenced the way I have structured the discussion of this study. Though for most of the part of this research is descriptive, attempts have been made to explain the trends that emerge in the curriculum knowledge and in the views of the tutors. I have tried to retain what is significant in terms of the structural constraints and the ways in which actors are able to develop counter-hegemonic practices.

In the following chapters, I present my research findings. I have developed the data findings into some broad categories which form the major themes of this thesis. As I began to turn my data into narrative explanations, I found an increasing impetus to turn critical thought into emancipatory action. In this light, the critique I will offer to the institution could become an appeal for change and an expression of confidence that this possible. I however also recognise the possibility of deep resistance to gender initiatives will exist in any social institution. While this task is enormously difficult, it is still important and worthy to struggle for such a project. Only then can gender conscientisation and action be developed to think about the ways of dismantling male dominance and the masculinist machinery and replacing it with a more egalitarian one.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE GENDER AGENDA IN MALAYSIA

To deal meaningfully with this study, I would like to begin with a discussion of the shaping of the gender debate in the socio-cultural context of Malaysia. In this chapter, my intent is first, to draw attention to the position of women in the Malaysian society. Second, I hope to offer insight into the recognition and definition given to the gender problem in existing patterns of social life and policies already in place as these condition and influence the forms of gender discourses that circulate in the media and the knowledge generated in communication education. This chapter encompasses three parts. The first part gives an initial description of the status of women in Malaysia. It discusses the specific nature of state development plans that have emphasised modernisation and economic growth but did not promote the interests of women. Gender planning has emerged in the Sixth Malaysian Plan and this has formed the master plan for the future development of women in Malaysia. Considering that this is the first and only form of gender planning to date in the Malaysian scene, I examine its objectives, its underlying premises and offer a critique of its strategies that aim to improve the position of women. The second part looks at Malaysian media systems. It also raises major gender themes that have emerged in Malaysian communication research to document the nature and extent of the representation of women in Malaysian media. I offer an overview of literature which illuminates some of the problematic gender-communication relationships in the Malaysian context. The third part looks at the development of Malaysian communication education and the principle policies guiding its philosophy and its objectives. I argue that sufficient debate has not been accorded to gender issues in communication education. It is important to stress at the outset of this discussion, that I found much difficulty in discussing about Malaysian women as there has been very little documentation on women.

5.1 Women in Malaysia

Malaysia is a rapid growing nation in Asia. Its society is multi-ethnic and it is made up of Malays (58.5%), Chinese (31.1%), Indians (9.8%) and other indigenous groups (0.6%). Islam is the official religion, however the Constitution does assure the freedom of worship and practice of other religions. The link between ethnicity and religion is an important one. Constitutionally, all Malays are deemed to be Muslims while the Chinese and Indians adopt various faiths like Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Taoism, Christianity and Islam. While the UMNO-led government has been
responding to Islamic resurgence, it has also been cautious of religious extremism in a multi-religious society and has supported a moderate approach to Islam. The emphasis on identities in reaction of the Muslims on their own religious identity has brought a revivalism of sorts among non-Malays to give prominence to forms, symbols, rituals and ceremonies. The gender-question is an important issue that demands attention as these developments could turn out to reinforce the subservient position of women because of the unquestioning, irrational devotion that religious bigotry is capable of eliciting from its followers.

In Malaysia, Barisan Nasional, a coalition of political parties has ruled since independence. This coalition embodies key political parties defined along lines of ethnicity. Each of Malaysia’s three main ethnic groups has its own political party. The ruling party is United Malays National Organisation (UMNO). The Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) is the principal political party in the Chinese community, while Indians are represented in the coalition by the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC). Notable oppositional parties include the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PAS), Semangat 46 and the Democratic Action Party (DAP). As in many other countries, all political institutions are dominated and headed by men. These male leaders interpret religious laws with regard to gender relations, women’s rights to property and sexual rights. Most major political, economic and social decisions including those for women are made by men. In extreme cases, even the dress code is determined for women as in the state of Kelantan which is governed by the Islamic Party, PAS.

Women form about 49.9% of the total population and embody a complex group, for although they share a common sex, they are differentiated to variations in ethnicity, religion, class, skin colour and residential location. Women encounter various forms of oppression, however, their gender experience varies according to different cultural attributes. As in most societies, in Malaysia, the family has traditionally been a major patriarchal site as it allows men to claim both domestic and sexual exclusivity from women. Marriage and family life are seen as desirable goals for women as they provide her with social identity. There is also much emphasis on the role of women as mothers and the significant part they play towards moulding future generations of caring and progressive Malaysians. Women are also seen as crucial to the promotion of happy families and family togetherness. This view is widely secured in mainstream development activities and is advanced as an important component of local culture.
Historically, peasant women here have been productive by carrying out domestic duties and involving themselves in activities like subsistence agriculture, mining, fishing and craft work but their labour was not accorded any economic value. During the period of British colonial rule (1786-1957), the capitalistic patriarchy system was extended and labour was seen as a marketable commodity. Production for sale gained importance and these changes affected the position of women. Women could no longer afford to remain in subsistence agriculture and were displaced from their earlier activities. In order to sustain their livelihood, women had to look for jobs and they were relegated low-paying work as agricultural workers or accorded gender-defined jobs like domestic help and cleaning, clerical work, nursing and teaching.

The gendered patterns of employment and the subordination of women have been extended during the post-colonial rule. On attainment of independence in 1957, the government has placed heavy emphasis on development based on the modernisation model. This has seen industrial growth taking precedence over issues like class inequality and gender imbalances in the national development. In the past two decades, Malaysia has recorded a remarkable economic progress. It is fast passing as a country once exporting primary products to a newly industrialised country. Greater concessions have been made towards international capital where new government policies have sought aggressively to transform the Malaysian economy into a more competitive one on the world stage. Amidst this rapid change in the Malaysian scene, ethnicity has emerged as a fundamental social issue and an important organising principle of social relations in Malaysia while the position of women has received very little attention. To date, legislative measures have been devised primarily to bring about social and economic equality among ethnic groups. The women question is given a lower priority in state policies.

Women perform most of the housework like food preparation, laundry, child rearing and taking care of extended families. They do more work in the private domain when compared to their male counterparts. A recent study has shown that women workers spent more than six hours a day in housework while male workers barely spent one hour per day (see Rohana, 1994). Rohana argues that almost all men still expected women, even those managing careers, to do the major part of the housework (and this value has also been internalised by most women).

24There is very little literature on the position of women, particularly of non-Malay women during the pre-colonial and colonial period. One source asserts that women from the Malay community, the early inhabitants consisted of two major groups: aristocrats and peasants. Most aristocratic women did not take part in the economic sector and were mainly confined to 'reproduction activities' (Jamilah, 1992).

25The break of racial riots in May 1969 led the government to implement the New Economic Policy (NEP) which is aimed at resolving social and economic disparities between ethnic groups in Malaysia.
The domestic work and the wages of women is seen as 'surplus value' and the state propaganda illustrates this set-up as the 'happy family' ideal inspite of the lack of childcare provisions and other supportive facilities (p. 56). Women also take up jobs in the labour sector. Women form a major component of the labour force and are employed largely in labour-intensive work which are considered inferior to men's jobs, thus justifying lower wages. Jamilah (1992) makes the point that their workload is assessed as being of lesser importance, particularly in the private sectors. Rohana (1994) emphatically points out that alongside with patriarchy, the functioning of global market forces and the collaboration of local and foreign governments and transnationals have worked in complex ways to perpetuate the subordination of women.

The patterns of gender domination can be further demonstrated within a wider understanding of the specific nature of national development policies in Malaysia which do not directly promote the interests of women. The First Malaysia Plan (1966-1970) emphasised economic growth in agricultural production, the provision of greater employment opportunities and the improvement of rural standard of living. These development programmes however failed to note the declining role of women as farmers. Mechanisation had taken over women's job in planting, harvesting and threshing, thus making the women's labour redundant. The modernisation of agriculture in the post-independence era benefited men rather than women as it were men who were encouraged to participate actively in market-oriented agriculture (Ng, 1989).

The Second Malaysian Plan (1971-1975) advanced the New Economic Policy (NEP) which identified ethnicity as a major social organising factor and the need to restructure Malaysian society to correct social-economic imbalances between ethnic groups. This policy has sought to open more professional, civil service and employment opportunities to 'Bumiputera' or 'sons of the soil'. This term refers to the Malay ethnic group and to a small number of indigenous people, known as 'Orang Asli'. This emphasised ethnic consciousness has cast a shadow on gender awareness and the existence of problematic gender issues in Malaysia. The socio-cultural milieu here which operates in a political atmosphere of inter-ethnic rivalry therefore renders gender a low position in the list of the nation's strategic priorities.

The Third Malaysia Plan (1976-1980) had the same aims of the NEP, that is to redistribute wealth and eradicate poverty in relation to ethnic groups. Gender as an issue was given no mention except as an additional clause, acknowledging the need to upgrade the status of women in society. The National Advisory Council on the Integration of Women in Development (NACIWID) was set up in the Prime Minister's
department in 1976 to look into women's matters. Such an acknowledgement however was essentially a token gesture in support of United Nation's declaration of the Women's Decade in 1975 (Wang, 1993). The commitment of government to gender equality is questionable as most national policies have not adopted any feminist perspectives to promote the position of women in society.

The Third Malaysia Plan for example, ironically placed emphasis on export-oriented industrialisation which capitalised on women as cheap labour. The rapid economic development and industrialisation and the expanding urban economy created new job opportunities for women, but these have been basically in labour intensive industries such as textiles and electronics (Jamilah, 1992). More female labour than male labour have been taken in to fill the areas of manual production. It has been conveniently perceived that women possess abilities like keen eye-sight, manual dexterity and the ability to sit for long hours. A plus incentive to these industries was of course the advantage of being able to pay lower wages to women. To date, the Malaysian Constitution does not lay down that there should be no discrimination based on sex; this means that whenever such discrimination occurs, there is nothing to protect and safeguard the interest of women at all. Moreover, if a women is subject to sexual harassment, she will have no legal recourse as the Malaysian Law does not forbid such practices. The Malaysian state offers little protection for women, rather it has capitalised the so-called 'feminine abilities' in its marketing strategy. Lim (1981:184) quotes an investment brochure published by the Malaysian Government that advertises the female labour:

> The manual dexterity of the oriental female is famous all the world over. Her hands are small and she works fast with extreme care. Who therefore could be better qualified by nature and inheritance, to contribute to the efficiency of a bench assembly production line than the oriental girl?

(emphasis added)

The general idea constructed here suggests that women, first by their very biological entity and second by some form of social conditioning and cultural continuity that is passed from generation to generation, are able to endure the manual handling of operation activities at the production line. This perception strongly implies that women are endowed with some inherent qualities to do labour-intensive jobs. In this case, the state plays an important part in continuing gendering activities and preserving the dominant social system. This denotes a clear example of how women as a unprivileged
group are subordinated by being subjects of both the patriarchal state and an oppressive world economic system.

The Fourth (1981-1985) and Fifth (1986-1990) Malaysia Plans saw Malaysia revising its industrial policies to focus on resource based higher technology industrialisation. The Industrial Master Plan reports that industries will be more capital intensive needing less unskilled labour (Annuar, 1988). Such tendencies in state policies will particularly affect female workers as most of them do not possess any technical skills. So far, no concerted action has been planned to empower women for technology-oriented sectors and it has been predicted that higher technology industrialisation will reduce the female component in the manufacturing sector's labour force (Jamilah, 1992).

The first official document on gender planning emerged in The Sixth Malaysian Plan (SMP, 1991: 413-427) and this policy forms a master-plan for the future development of women in Malaysia. Considering that this is the first and only form of gender planning to date in the Malaysian context, it seems useful to examine the conceptualising of the gender problem, its underlying premises and the approaches adopted to improve the position of women in Malaysia.

Gender Planning in Malaysia

The National Policy for Women was constructed in 1989 and this was incorporated as the first form of gender planning that looked into the position of women in Malaysia. The plan asserts that women are active participants in the development process and perform both productive and reproductive roles in the contribution to the growth of the nation. It links women's subordination to both private and public spheres. The conceptual framework adopted here is one that mirrors closely to the Equity Approach\textsuperscript{26}, a liberal framework that aims to ensure an equitable sharing of resources between men and women through a strategy of equal opportunities. This approach emphasises economic opportunities for women as it sees this as synonymous with gender equity and exercises action plans that give women access to employment and the marketplace. Underlying this effort is a belief that sees the need to integrate women into the existing development activities mainly through intervention of government and through top-down legislative measures. The overall objectives of this gender plan are

\textsuperscript{26}Moser (1991) describes five approaches that have been used in gender planning: the Equity, Welfare, Anti-Poverty, Efficiency and Empowerment approaches. The Equity approach has been heavily criticised and dropped by many development agencies and Third world agencies. However, it continues to provide the basis for the framework which underpins Malaysian gender planning.
to ensure equitable sharing in the acquisition of resources and information as well as access to opportunities and benefits of development, for both men and women;

- to integrate women in all sectors of national development in line with their abilities and needs in order to improve the quality of life, eradicate poverty, abolish ignorance and illiteracy and ensure a peaceful and prosperous nation.

(SMP, 1991:413)

The gender problem is conceptualised in terms of the roles that women perform in the private and public sphere. The plan has adopted a framework that largely addresses family development in the private sphere, and labour force and employment in the public sphere. Though the plan acknowledges the private sphere link in women's subordination, its rhetoric steers clear away from the controversial issues that confront the role and the subordination of women within the social context of the family. Rather the plan appears to reinforce the dominant discourse by emphasising that women are accountable for the harmonious relationships in the family and makes no references to the significant responsibilities men have to shoulder in domestic and childcare activities (p. 424).

Domestic violence is a major social problem and is one of the most manifest expression of subjugation of women which cuts across all ethnic groups in Malaysian society. Yet, there is hardly any effort to record the forms of violence against women. A survey report in 1990 reveals that many people felt that battering women was a fact of life and that there was nothing wrong if a woman was beaten up (The Star, 19 December 1993). The Domestic Violence Act was passed as late as in 1994 to allow wife-beaters to be treated as criminals. However, it has been pointed out that this legal instrument will not promise total recourse to domestic violence, especially in the case of Muslim women. The authoritative position in Islamic circles maintain that a Muslim man does have certain limited rights to beat his wife under extreme conditions of disobedience or refusal to have sex (Maznah, 1994: 124-125). Moreover, in a society governed strongly by hegemonic masculinity, whether women will come out to dare their husbands to stand trial is doubtful. In addition, the Domestic Violence Act stipulates that a Muslim woman victim needs to produce two Muslim men to support her allegations. This problematises women's credibility as it suggests that complaints from Muslim women would only be validated when endorsed by men.

Little provision of free legal advice for women, lack of supportive structures that can protect women and their children, absence of efforts that aim to build
women's self-confidence and self-esteem, absence of training opportunities for battered women and traditional attitudes, cultural practices and values that champion self-sacrifice by women suppress domestic problems. Women are encouraged to internalise these values unquestioningly and this prevents the personal from being politicised.

In the area of family development, the gender policy proposes non-formal education for women that covers issues like marital stability, management of family resources and counselling for women. Ironically, questions that challenge culture, the legitimacy of ruling patriarchal ideas, the gendered social structures and processes are not raised to encourage understanding of the complex subordination of women which stems from both the private and public spheres. The group, DAWN makes an important point by stating that any effort that works toward an egalitarian future should define child and family care as a collective responsibility shared by women, men and society as a whole (see Sen and Growth, 1989). This is not recognised in this policy, instead the concern for the status of women in families appears subliminal. On the contrary, the policy seems to prescribe a superwoman model as it stresses that women have important roles as wives and mothers apart from the significant involvement in economic activities (p. 422-423). Does this mean that the roles of women are to expand while men's roles remain unchanged?

Quite clearly, there is reluctance to interfere with the manner in which the power relations between men and women are constructed in the family and society. For example, courses on nutrition, reproduction health and parenting for sustaining adequate healthcare and child care are geared towards women only and these strategies although useful, do not seek to change existing responsibilities and divisions of labour in the families (p. 414). Thus, non-formal education becomes problematic as it is not informed of gender perspectives and fails to advance issues that can build towards women's autonomy and empowerment. Interestingly, this plan adopts a stand that evades discussion on the origins of social structures and relationships that subordinate women within the family context and does not delve into any strategic goals that question these systems. The glaring silence on the issue of redress in the private sphere is clearly a major weakness in this policy.

A study of this policy further reveals a shift in the emphasis of the gender planning to give overt attention to increasing women's involvement in economic activities. The policy suggests that an increase of working women into the existing system would mean an improvement of women's position in society. Attention is therefore paid to women's access to employment and the marketplace through the
provision of technical and business skills and this is based on the assumption that economic participation would unproblematically better the position of women in society. Economic activities may offer some financial and social independence, but this does not mean that women will be free from enduring forms of economic and social exploitation, particularly if education, vocational training and job skills are geared towards conforming to male-dominated industrial practices and do not enhance women's autonomy in economic and social activities.

Chee (1992) observes that women in the labour sector are not only poorly paid but are also exposed to hazardous and stressful conditions that can damage women's health. In agricultural sectors, plantation workers are exposed to paraquat, a banned pesticide in many countries. Up to 80% of the pesticide sprayers in plantations are women from the poorest groups, and they are largely uninformed of the dangers inherent in the chemicals, particularly to pregnant women (p. 24). It seems ironical that more employment opportunities are open to women, but there is no effort to protect them as workers and no consideration is given to occupational health care.

Currently, women account for one-third of the labour force and it still remains that men predominate in the higher ranks of jobs while most women are found in low-ranked jobs in the occupational structure of the labour force (SMP, 1991:416). For example, more than 60% of women in the labour force are located in agricultural and farming sectors and take up jobs as production operators and labourers. Moreover, there is discrepancy between men and women's wages, especially in the private sector, where many employers pay unequal wages and insist upon viewing the woman's salary as supplementary to a man's - a justification for controlled wage discrimination (Jamilah, 1992). The Employment Act, 1955 (Revised 1981) does not prohibit employers to pay their female workers less than the male counterparts for doing the same amount of work. Basic gender discrimination still prevails in the workplace but there is little public discussion on it. Since women possess no legal rights in the first place, legal redress is not opened to them.

The call for increased participation of women in the labour force in midst of the prevailing patriarchal ideology plus unchanging family dynamics means that women are implicated further in expanding work while men's tasks remain the same. The influx of married women and women with children into the labour force and the absence of a movement of men taking equal responsibility for domestic responsibilities, and the lack of alternative arrangements of child care would mean that women have to face tensions and will not have meaningful participation and opportunities in their lives.
Programmes that aim first, to offer knowledge on family, healthcare and childcare matters and second, to provide training skills to increase mobility opportunities within their current fields of employment are necessary. But at the same time, women need to be given knowledge and skills to question hegemonic masculinity and to challenge the existing social order. This includes gender literacy efforts that raise the level of political awareness and encourage women to take political action.

Radical outcomes cannot be envisaged if the action plans focus only on attitudes of women, imposing upon them the whole responsibility for change. This equity approach will be inadequate if the position of women is ascertained on the basis of quantitative access only. Although access to employment is a practical need, the existing systems will have to also be questioned to dismantle social structures and practices. The prevailing gendered cultural routines if left uncontested will maintain physical, economic and ideological power over women. The autonomy of women has to be related to social systems that are supportive to issues of empowerment that increase the capacity of women to relate to their problems critically and accord them the power to make choices and decisions in life.

At this juncture it seems worthy to reiterate that this policy has primarily treated issues of the public and the private as separate, when in fact these domains are intricately linked and affect each other. The efforts to regulate the public domain of employment would be futile if the concerns of women in the private domain remain under patriarchal control. It is important that issues evolving the position of women in the private be given prominence to engage meaningful debates, action and support to pursue the gender agenda. Interestingly, the framing of concepts such as patriarchy, sexism, gender oppression, femininity, feminism are invisible. The framing of gender appears to severe issues of power relations between men and women. In an odd way, gender is seen as implicating women only; matters that pertain to 'women as problem' - rather than as a problem which is linked specifically to the relations between men and women and to the differences among women themselves.

What is disturbing about this gender planning is that the part education and media systems play in perpetrating women's oppression has not warranted any serious discussion. The policy stresses that a large intake of female students in vocational and technical education will ultimately contribute to their greater involvement in higher skilled and better paying jobs in the labour market (p. 424). The nature of gendered education, masculinist ideology in curriculum practice and the absence of gender scholarship at all levels has not been problematised. Subsequently, there is no mention
of strategies that re-dress the curricula offered in schools, colleges, teacher-training institutions and universities. Indeed there is no attention that is given to action-plans that could empower female students. The discussion on education is very thin while no reference is made to the media. These are vital themes that need to be raised in gender planning efforts as public awareness and the sensitisation of the national machinery towards gender concerns can be developed more effectively if there are attempts to address these two powerful social institutions.

Women's struggle for self-development and autonomy is also closely connected with the possibility of expressing themselves in various channels; yet no mention is made to the discourse of literacy, specifically media literacy and the cultural representations circulated in Malaysia. The construction of information by a commonsensical understanding in media sites has to be challenged as these are largely selective and partial constructions that rarely take into account of women's interests. The media also do ideological work, ordering and assessing social knowledge, distinguishing between preferred and excluded explanation in naming reality. The concern with media becomes problematic when very often women's positive representation in public affairs and entertainment is marginal. Curiously, though the first objective of this gender plan aims to ensure equitable sharing in the acquisition of resources and information, it has not identified the media as a crucial arena of gender struggle that is important in building women's citizenship and in promoting the concerns of women. Women need to be critically informed in order to participate dynamically in social and economic development. Women's views and experiences should also be actively advanced in media content so that their voices are not alienated in social and economic development activities.

I believe that any initiative on gender action plans has to address media issues if it hopes to empower women and grant them a meaningful place in the development of the nation. I argue that this area which is linked with political activity cannot be neglected. The involvement with media is necessary as this will provide directions for women to produce understandings of their own social history and the part they play in social development. The policy document on gender planning in Malaysia needs to articulate a clear space for gender media research, discussion and action plans so that more comprehensive implementation proposals to improve the position of women in society can be developed. I will return to a discussion of gender and media in Malaysia later.

As pointed out in Chapter Two, education and media are two principal cultural forms which articulate cultural experiences, the formulation of meaning and disseminate ideologies within society.
To summarise, gender planning in Malaysia aims to increase employment opportunities for women and to integrate them into the existing system without attempting to question or change the social structures and order that prevail in the Malaysian society. It also does not acknowledge that there is a need for appropriate responses to address the diverse groups of women. Although the media is crucially implicated and provides information and direction for social development there has been no attempt to locate the media seriously in the gender agenda. In the case of education, more female participation will not necessarily contribute towards a change in the power relations if the curriculum does not give focus to critical thinking about gender issues in society. The formulation of this gender plan may seem as a major breakthrough, but much more needs to be done at various sectors to articulate a more effective gender agenda to improve the status of Malaysian women.

Women's Movements
Most women organisations comprise mainly of elite women's groups, wives of state assemblymen, parliament members and cabinet ministers, female employees or wives of officers in the public sector and statutory bodies. The major women associations in Malaysia are auxiliaries to ethnic-based political parties, like the Malay-based Wanita UMNO, Chinese-based Wanita MCA and Indian-based Wanita MIC23. These however, remain secondary wings to the male-dominated political parties to the present day. These associations normally focus on women's roles in the home and carry out charity and welfare work. Their activities rarely involve discussions that challenge existing power systems in the Malaysian context.

Historically, the public arena of politics and government of Malaysia has always been dominated by men. There are only two female ministers in the present cabinet. Although there is an increasing participation of women in politics, Jamilah (1992) notes an alarming trend among many female members of the new breed of politicians who approach politics as a career, hence their guiding ambition is to reach the top of the career ladder. Given such aspirations, raising gender issues that challenge men's domination, may not be acceptable especially when such demands may alienate men's support (p. 112)29.

23Wanita UMNO refers to the women's group in the United Malays National Organisation, Wanita MCA refers to the women's movement in Malaysian Chinese Association while Wanita MIC is the women's section in the Malaysian Indian Congress. These are political parties affiliated with the government.

29The path up the political ladder is a competitive and a complicated one. Both female and male politicians would have to maintain their position most often through patronage from the 'big men' at the top as well as show that they have continual majority support from party members at the grassroots division levels.
Within the national machinery, HAWA, the Secretariat for Women's Affairs in the Prime Minister's department aims to play a significant role to raise public awareness and sensitise the government with regard to women's interests. It offers a base for working within the government to improve the status of women through legislation. Although this body is supposed to be a viable mechanism between government and non-government groups to articulate gender issues in the formulation, monitoring, review and appraisal of government policies and programmes, there has been little coordination between women groups and to date, these legislative measures have remained marginal (Wang, 1993:16).

There are also a number of voluntary grassroots movements and nongovernment organisations like Tenaganita (Women's Force), All Women's Action Group (AWAM), Women Crises Centre (WCC), Women's Group of the Consumers Association Penang (CAP) and Sisters In Islam. These groups adopt various ideological orientations in advancing women's position in society. These organisations continue to work to highlight the women's activities in the process of nation-building. The Islamic religious movement advocates a gender model based on separate roles for women and men. The women's group in CAP have taken up gender issues like exploitation of factory workers, domestic violence, prostitution and images of women in the media. Other organisations provide counselling services and free legal advice for women in need of help. Most of these organisations are grossly underfunded and dependent on international agencies. They also rely heavily on the use of voluntary and unpaid women's time in implementing gender projects. One prominent women activist notes that the gender project in Malaysia faces enormous challenges, particularly when resources and supportive social structures are scarce. Further, she observes the need to question traditional social mores that reinforce ideologies which sustain the subservient position of women. She is concerned that gender awareness is absent among groups of women themselves and asserts that both media and education have an important part to play in giving prominence to women-oriented issues.

Limitations to Gender Uprising

It is not easy to initiate popular mobilisation in Malaysia particularly when there are draconian laws like the Internal Security Act (ISA) 1960, which legalises detention without trial. The ISA and other measures, specifically linked to media activities such as the Printing Presses and Publications Act (1987), Defamation Act (1957) and Official Secrets Act (1966) are now part of the Malaysian political landscape. These have been used to a great effect by the Malaysian state to curb political and media activities. In

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30Interview with Mary Assunta, Consumers Association of Penang, 5 December, 1993.
the past, coercion has been persistently used against ethnic-based activists, oppositional political parties and Islamic based movements. Although women associated to feminist activities have not been held so far, these measures do raise thorny obstacles for the feminist struggle.

Within the context of Malaysia, the state not only mediates external demands and pursues its own interests, but also influences the meanings and methods of politics for all social groups in society. The combination of colonialism, capitalist economy, patriarchy, discriminatory culture and democratic state provide social movements with continuing conflicts and struggles in society. Jomo (1990:66) rightly argues that many public interest societies fail in Malaysian politics because they are essentially 'ethnic mobilises' and have not been able to transcend the communalism that divides them. Thus, a major challenge for local feminists groups is to forge intercommunal cooperation and a common platform. It is crucial for this alliance to respect differences but to work together and encourage gender interest by exerting pressure on social justice issues for women.

Most women's groups here are aware that they lack economic resources and need to garner government support in their activities. Jamilah (1992) points out that non-confrontation and non-violent strategies are imperative if gender interventions are to proceed in the cultural setting of the Malaysian context. She suggests that Asian values of 'face-saving' are of primary importance in any negotiations and any forms of hostility will not be tolerated. This means that women have to be persistent, make compromises and keep the gender agenda alive in a process of slow change. The authorities cannot fail to dismiss these voices. Jamilah (1992) argues, women are reliable political party workers, loyal voters and supporters and can pressure the authorities to a certain extent for change (p. 173).

In very recent years globalisation trends, the generative nature of international contacts, ideas and ideologies and the growing number of educated women and the increase of graduates who pursue gender as areas of study in western universities are creating a new fervour in revitalising gender interest activities. There appears to be increasing visible and invisible movements, strident and soft voices asking questions, raising doubts and contesting basic assumptions on gender systems. Interestingly, women in the academy are increasingly raising issues that question hegemonic masculinity in various areas like economy, development, culture and religion (see Kajian Malaysia (1994) Vol XII (1&2), special issue on Feminism: Malaysian Critique and Experience). The inter-ethnic rivalry in present day Malaysia, paradoxically offers a
conducive environment for women's advancement as gender issues are seen as less threatening. Hence, this creates room for manoeuvre for women interested in the feminist struggle. The loose alliance of women's groups, academic women, feminist researchers and trade union women raise forums which allow voices to be heard on regional, national and global matters that affect the lives of women.

In sum, it can be stated that the overall situation in Malaysia still spells massive challenges for the feminist enterprise. Women have to represent themselves and work towards manoeuvring more spaces for gender activism in various sectors. The representation of women in public debates is essential, particularly when women are trying to form understandings of themselves and the part they play in the social development of Malaysia.

While a series of strategies are necessary to secure gender interests in the realm of communication, I believe due emphasis should be given to the importance of a longer-term educational strategy. The present study can be seen as an effort that aims to contribute to the feminist project by raising gender awareness in schools of communication studies that prepare future professionals for the field of communication. It is crucial that all parties with an interest in gender and the media be informed of how gender media issues are being defined and articulated. In the next part, I proceed to offer a discussion on Malaysian media systems.

5.2 The Media In Malaysia

The Malaysian state and the media have been closely intertwined, particularly in the years of the Mahathir administration. In the past two decades the Malaysian media scene has recorded major changes in terms of the quantity of media establishments. Zaharom (1994) points out that between 1981-1985, the number of titles of local newspapers, magazines and journals in circulation increased from 56 to 102 - an increase of about 80%. He states that in 1993, there were 39 dailies circulating in Malaysia (p. 3). The following tables show the different language newspapers present in Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak.
The tables above appear to suggest that the Malaysian public is being served by a diverse range of newspapers in different languages. These quantitative indicators however, do not mean that there is a genuine variety of choices. A distinctive feature of Malaysia is the concentration of ownership in a couple of media conglomerates. The publication of these dailies and bi-weeklies are concentrated in two local media giants: New Straits Times Press (NSTP) and Utusan Melayu. For example, out of the four Malay dailies published in Peninsular Malaysia, the NSTP group publishes Berita Harian and Harian Metro, while Utusan Melayu (Malaysia) publishes Utusan Malaysia and Utusan Melayu. These companies are not only involved in other media-related activities like distribution and broadcasting, but are also closely aligned to political

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**Figure 1. Malaysian Newspapers - Dailies (1993)**

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<tr>
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<th>Malay</th>
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<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Tamil</th>
<th>Others</th>
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<td>1**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarawak</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10*</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes the Sun which does not publish on Saturday and Sunday. Excludes Leader which is a free paper with a limited circulation.

** Includes the Daily Express which is a bilingual (Malay/English) daily.

Source: Zaharom Nain (1994:3)

**Figure 2. Malaysian Newspapers - Weeklies and Bi-weeklies (1993)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Malay</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Tamil</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peninsular</td>
<td>13*</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabah</td>
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<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>3**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes Watan which is a bi-weekly

** Includes New Life Post which is a bi-weekly.

Source: Zaharom Nain (1994:4)

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33See Zaharom (1994), Gomez (1994) and Cheong (1993) for more comprehensive discussions on media ownership and management buyout.
parties in the ruling coalition. The press, like any other media are expected to play a major part in promoting national unity and ideals as enshrined in the Rukunegara.\footnote{Rukunegara (national principles) was formally issued on national day, 31 August, 1970. It echoes points established by political leaders at independence:}

The increase of local newspapers, magazines and journals in circulation in the past decade is remarkable. The concentration of ownership, nonetheless have serious implications for newspaper content and genuine variety of choices. Since May, 1984, the government appointed news agency, BERNAMA, became the sole distributor of news from all foreign agencies. This can be perceived as a form of control, particularly in the case of newspapers. All news items, including features and photographs previously distributed directly to subscribers by international news agencies, now have to be filtered through BERNAMA. It has been argued that the quantitative increase in print materials has not brought a qualitative change. Zaharom (1994) pertinently points out to the media ecology evolving in Malaysia which does not question, examine or challenge dominant discourses.

Within this type of environment, it is not surprising that although we appear to be getting more from the media, what we really are getting is more of the same. In this environment, invariably also where the ownership and control of the media are in the hands of a few who are closely aligned to the government and who also wish to profit from the situation, there has been increasing emphasis on material that are non-contentious and easily marketable.\ldots\footnotetext{ibid:8}

Similar tendencies also emerge in the broadcasting systems. Radio is a significant system medium, particularly in rural areas. Government-owned radio services encompass four nationwide networks and an array of stations at the regional and local levels. In 1990, there were 18 regional and local stations. Programmes
provided by RTM at the national level are in four languages - Malay, Chinese, English and Tamil. Audience for each language transmission is largely limited to members of an ethnic group. There are differences in programme schedules among the networks; however aggregate radio content is usually categorised as follows: 15% of the total output is taken by news; 20% by public affairs, sports, religion and agriculture while the remaining 65% is purely entertainment, consisting of music shows (see McDaniel, 1994).

There are currently two television systems, the government-controlled Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM) and a commercial television station, TV3. RTM acts as the government's primary information engine and promotes development and 'national interest' activities. RTM maintains two channels: TV1 and TV2. TV1 carries the government's voice in the broadcast of news, current affairs, religious and agricultural programmes mainly in the Malay language. TV2 carries news and entertainment in Malay, English, Chinese and Tamil. RTM's objectives are

- to explain in-depth and with the widest possible coverage, policies and programmes of the government in order to ensure maximum understanding by the people;
- to stimulate public interest and opinion in order to achieve changes in line with the requirements of the government;
- to foster national unity in the multi-racial society through the extensive use of Bahasa Malaysia;
- to assist in promoting civic consciousness and in fostering development of Malaysian arts and culture; and
- to provide suitable elements of education, information and entertainment.

(Ministry of Information, 1983)

TV3 was set up in August 1983 as one of the earliest privatisation projects in Malaysia. This in turn was related to the privatisation and commercialisation government policies that campaigned for the transfer of large sectors of the economy and infrastructure from public to private control. Indeed this is a trend that has emerged as a logical consequence of capitalist expansion of Malaysia being part of a wider international system of capitalism. The ownership of TV3 consists

33The Mahathir years in particular, have seen greater concessions being made towards international capital, where new government policies such as 'Look East', 'Malaysia Incorporated', 'Privatisation', Newly Industrialised Country (NIC) and 'Export Oriented Industrialisation (EOI)' have been introduced. The underlying goal here is that these policies would transform the Malaysian economy into a more competitive one at the international level (see Lent, 1991; Zabam, 1992).
predominantly of male members of the ruling party and close associates of Anwar Ibrahim, the current Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister. Hence, close ties are established with UMNO and Barisan Nasional. TV3's programme line depends heavily on imported shows. These include most American programmes like Dynasty, Macgyver, Cheers, Magnum, Miami Vice, and soap operas from Hong Kong and Taiwan. Censorship of television programmes is guided by Islamic principles. The government reacts strongly to sexual overtones in media content. Explicit sex scenes, kissing and hugging scenes are deemed as 'unsuitable' western values which go against the grain of local traditional values (McDaniel, 1994:267).

In 1994, the Utusan Group became part of a consortium of four companies which was awarded the tender by the government to operate a new commercial television station, TV4 (Zaharom, 1994:5). Development of private television, increasing profit earnings and the expansion of advertising in Malaysia has intensified the marketing of sponsorships and sales of spot advertisements in television stations. Following these developments, RTM, the government broadcast station, has also swiftly responded to this commercial struggle for maximising profits and for competing intensively for the advertising dollar. The economics of commercial broadcasting revolves around the exchange of audiences for advertising revenue. Such a situation raises serious questions about democratic access, the representativeness of marginal groups and the future directions of the Malaysian media. As Golding and Murdock (1991) cogently argue, "these needs inevitably tilt programming towards familiar and well-tested formulae and formats and away from risk and innovation, and anchor it in common-sense rather than alternative viewpoints" (p. 20).

The media scene in Malaysia is thus one which is controlled by a few actors aligned to political parties and leaders. Zaharam (1994, 1992) makes connections between political-economy influences and communication media development, asserting that Malaysia's type of media development sustains and perpetuates vested interests, which seriously impinge upon pluralist expressions and democracy. He points out to clear trends in the Malaysian media: the greater commercialisation of the media and the increasing government control over the media in the form of legislative control like the Internal Security Act (ISA) (1960), the Defamation Act (1957), Printing Presses and Publications Act (1984), Broadcasting Act (1988) and Official Secrets Act (1986). He disagrees with the goals of privatisation, stating that the transfer of ownership to private interests is not in the public's interests as it would exclude voices lacking economic power or resources and which are likely to criticise the prevailing distribution of wealth and power. He contends that privatisation has not
brought the democratisation of the mass media but instead has tightened legal, political and economic controls over the media (Zaharom Nain, 1992:149-150). Inevitably, this bestows enormous powers on the government to determine the type of media available to the Malaysian public. It is instructive to observe that the Malaysian Ministry of Information has raised the idea of drafting a National Communication Policy. In 1992, a panel was appointed to design the policy. Up to now, there has been no public declaration by the panel and the composition of the panel has not been revealed to the public.

The developments in Malaysian media raise serious implications for a gender agenda. First, since all major actors involved in the media enterprise have been men, the gender question becomes invisible in the efforts to chart out media policies and practices, specifically those that concern the interests of women. Secondly, the intensive commercialisation will marginalise groups in society - in terms of alternative representation and in terms of provision of programmes by the media. Considering that women occupy a lower status in the definition of economic and political power, the media will tend to advance a power structure in which women play a secondary and a subservient role. The commercial logic will further ensure that only the tried, stereotyped and mass audience formulae will remain secure in media programming, a system which will benefit the privileged groups of capitalistic patriarchy. Put differently, media systems will tend to benefit the masculinist and elite groups, rather than the struggling masses of oppressed women.

In Chapter Two, key findings emerging from Malaysian gender studies in communication were briefly presented. At the cost of some repetition, the following section offers a detailed view of gender patterns in the Malaysian media scene to give a more coherent discussion. It seems useful to problematise some key issues that have emerged in communication research and can be used to feed gender initiatives in communication education.

**Gender Themes in Communication Studies**

As noted in the overview of literature on gender research in communication in Chapter Two, the studies in Malaysia report that media have very little to contribute to the dismantling of oppressive systems that accord a subordinate position to women. To a great extent, the media have been seen as playing a major part in perpetrating limited representations of gender. It seems helpful to recapitulate and summarise key findings and issues that are pertinent to inform gender media struggles, especially in the development of gender issues in Malaysian communication education.
Numerous quantitative studies on images have been conducted in this area and these have primarily focused on television. The studies show that women are portrayed in the private domains of home and family, while men are seen in the public domains as wage-earners, professionals and leaders. Media constructs men as superior, prized symbols; it encourages women to be subservient, to adorn themselves to look young and beautiful so that the men's attention can be captured and sustained (Mustafa and Shakila, 1994; Hamima, 1992; CAP, 1982).

In her study on Malaysian television advertisements, Rodrigues (1984) demonstrates that advertising reinforces occupational gender stereotyping and role models when using children. For instance, milk powder advertisements feature boys as pilots, in sports gears and outside of the domestic domain while little girls are seen in the roles of a dancer, playing with dolls and usually within the kitchen.

Studies on women's magazines meanwhile report that women have predominantly been taken as consumers rather than as important subjects of inquiry or as agents capable of active citizenship. Women do not feature prominently in news and current affairs projects in the public knowledge area. The tendency in magazines has been to pay more attention to the glamorous lifestyles of the middle and upper class groups while the burden and harsh realities of working class women are overlooked (Mustafa and Shakila, 1994; Hamima, 1992; Khor, 1992).

As far as the press is concerned, Rohana's (1985) study reveals that the newspapers are conservative in understanding and framing the roles of women in the country. Women's pages are filled with articles on cookery and fashion and very little discussion related to the subordination of women in society is raised in news coverage. A case-study on press materials on the coverage of the Orang Asli girls (indigenous tribe) reveals that the treatment presented in the reports was discriminatory and biased. Reporters depended on men as news sources and failed to check the information from the girls themselves. Consequently, the girls were framed as promiscuous and distorted references were made to the sexuality of the Orang Asli girls - a discourse that conforms to the ruling order that perceives women as sexual objects (Nicholas, 1992).

Most analyses of images of women and men in media content have been criticised for their basic assumptions and research methodology (see Robinson, 1994; Steeves, 1987; Rakow, 1987). There are similar problems that are relevant to the studies conducted here. In the exercise of reviewing local studies on media content
analyses, I observed that genres are not taken into account when assessing print or audio-visual texts. This is important as the very presentation of a text situates and suggests codes of reading that relate to certain sets of programme structures and practices (Lozano, 1991). While there have been studies on gender in various genres like news, soap opera, quiz shows and dramas in the global context, these attempts have not emerged in local communication research to give a richer understanding of gender media issues.

Further, most analyses tend to generalise about the stereotypical nature of women. The female population of Malaysia are not a homogeneous group and are differentiated by ethnicity, religion, class and other cultural factors. Most of the studies conducted on media content have not looked into the representation of women from these diverse groups. Studies on radio programming also appear absent although radio is an important and a popular medium in Malaysia. As a result, very little is known about radio programmes and how they relate to women. The analysis of media content is important, but such studies will be inadequate if they ignore production practices and media structures within the social context (see Gallagher, 1992; Rakow; 1987; Steeves, 1987). The paucity of research in these areas demand that serious attention be given to these issues.

Women in Media Profession.

Very little systematic research has documented the nature and extent of women's participation in media production. The overall picture in media production is rather fragmented. One report states that women are underrepresented in the media profession as they currently account for less than 15% at the policy and management level (Wang, 1993:10). According to Hamdan (1987:196) all five top posts in the Malaysian National News Agency (BERNAMA) in 1986 were held by men. Out of ten senior news editors, eight were males while two were females. All 15 senior journalist posts were filled by men. At middle-level management there were only twenty-eight female journalists compared to seventy male journalists. In the same year, it was found that in a leading Malay daily, the number of male to female journalists was 61 to 32 while a leading English daily employed 92 male journalists and 59 female journalists. No women held any top post in both Radio Television Malaysia (RTM) and TV3. At the level of producers in RTM, the survey reveals that only one third of them were females.

Hamdan's survey also noted that there were very few women artists in the Malaysian media (p. 196). All leading dailies did not have any women in this sector.
The photographers hired by the media organisations were also dominantly males. One English newspaper had 22 male photographers and one female photographer, while a Malay daily's photographers consisted of 11 men and 1 woman.

It has been said that news organisations are less likely to promote female employees because "women work less at night shifts and are more difficult to transfer around" (cited in Hamdan, 1987: 197). Chief editors assert that female reporters will be given opportunities if they have talent and initiative. One chief editor states that what is at question "is women's full utility, especially when they are married and have children as they are not willing to work late and stay around for stories "(ibid, p. 197). Bob Teoh, in the capacity as the secretary-general of the Cooperation of ASEAN journalists in 1987, concurred with this view, assuming that women who leave work to take care of family duties after normal job hours, are unwilling to work late. It is depressing that first, the notion of taking care of the family is not considered as work in itself, and the competing and conflicting demands on women have not been recognised in both the home and the workplace. Secondly, the gendered nature of media routines themselves are not considered problematic; instead, women become the problem and 'women's full utility' (whatever this may imply) is questioned. This clearly demonstrates that chief editors hold biased and discriminatory views when considering the position of women in media organisations, particularly in relation to career advancement.

Fernandez (1992) offers evidence of discriminatory practices in job distribution, salary and opportunities for advancement in the media profession. Tracing the experiences of some women in news agencies, she contends that very often important and international assignments are not given to women. In addition, she reports that women are overlooked in promotions and are given positions in which they have very little room to make decisions (p. 7).

One creative director from a leading advertising company argues that there are some efforts by committed women to redress representation of women in advertisements. However, these remain marginal as most advertisements prefer to portray women as sex-objects. She voices her concern when these images are condoned and upheld by women themselves. She observes that most Malaysian women are oblivious to advertisements which exploit or demean them and suggests that the absence of protest from women serves to legitimate production conventions that construct them as "less intelligent, less important and less deserving of respect" (Tan, 1992:2).
There are major lacunae in materials recording the activities of women in the media profession. The tensions that are encountered and the negotiations that take place in media organisations will offer useful insights into the position of female media professionals. Clearly, this is another area that warrants further study.

Audience Studies

There is very little documented work that explores the female audience or how the general Malaysian people respond to the media content of women. Rohana (1985) carried out a survey to elicit views from general readers, social women groups and media professionals on the images of women in Malaysian newspapers. Her study reveals the following results:

- general readers seemed happy with the overall coverage, feeling that important issues of women were covered. Though they agreed that women were portrayed as sex objects, they condoned it because they felt that such portrayal was useful as an attraction for the product.

- women groups were more critical in that they believed not sufficient and quality coverage was given to pertinent women's issues and that media offered privileged information on upper and middle class women. These groups found that women were objectified and dehumanised in advertisements.

- media executives from the Press argued that women issues were constructed within the conventional framework as they believed that many of their female readers include housewives and teenagers who enjoy such articles. Some media professionals recognised the need for the media to be more sensitive to the changing times and concerns of women, yet, they maintained that although new issues should be included, conventional interests should be preserved as they were popular among their readers.

The fact that the general readers are content with the impoverished media representations of women is a serious problem which points out to the lack of gender consciousness and the marginal space feminism occupies in the Malaysian scenario. If urgent steps are not taken to develop feminist critique to effect change, the oppression of women will prevail as an unproblematic issue in society.

The study also identified another crucial factor, that is the general readers believe that the media influences their opinion, personal beliefs and self-perception as
the views of the media are accepted "as existing facts and as truths of society" (p. 117). This observation is important as it implies that the media are seen as credible sources that disseminate reality, rather than as problematic agencies of information that convey selective and partial representations of society. Communication media are not neutral nor transparent - they are ideological institutions that arbitrate between competing perspectives that arise from different groups with different resources. Evidently, this signals the need for media literacy programmes which would offer a critical understanding of making sense of the media and their representations of society.

The area of media reception is acutely underresearched and very little is documented regarding gender issues and the responses of the female audience to the ideologies embedded in these texts. Studies are needed to examine the ways people engage with the media and how they make meanings of themselves in relation to representation of gender. The flow of global cultural products, particularly in relation to the media sector have profound implications for women and are a cause for concern and for future research in this area.

Communication Research and Action

In Chapter Two, I have stressed that gender is a communication issue and that it is implicated in all intellectual and political enterprises that struggle for progress, equality, development and peace. Specifically, the media do gender by giving meaning and value to the ways social relations are organised in the world. I have also noted the need to recognise women's lack of control over and access to the means of communication within a setting of increasing political domination and expanding market power. In order to sustain the gender communication agenda, positive steps and actions must be taken to investigate gender bias in media output and employment in the Malaysian context.

Compared with the proliferation of gender studies in many parts of the world, very little systematic research has emerged to document the nature of media and communication relationships in Malaysia. Most of the existing studies are sparse and fragmented. Further these studies have been conducted from a narrow empirical base with little references made to the connections of the wider society. These studies do not articulate the definition of terms and categories, lack substantiative data and offer little systematic compilation of empirical data. Qualitative studies are markedly absent in media research. In the past two decades, Malaysia has actively ventured into the information revolution that has largely benefited powerful groups and specifically men;
yet research into this area remains untouched. Given the importance of information for public debate and policy support, there is an urgent need for research on women and gender perspectives to be presented in the growing information industry.

Currently, there is no feminist media group in Malaysia that produces alternative newsletters, magazines or video programmes for women. Women groups generate some print bulletins but these are usually produced unevenly and rarely offer in-depth research and discussion. Economics play a determining factor in the survival of publications and many groups cannot cope with the large production costs. In addition, the lack of adequate knowledge on media management and production skills pose major difficulties for these gender movements.

Nonetheless, in recent years, there have been signs of a renewed interest in gender media consciousness, especially among female academicians and media practitioners. The Asian Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD) has produced a resource kit entitled, 'Into Focus: Changing Media Images of Women'. This is used in workshops or seminars that involve the participation of women activists, media practitioners and representatives from other social action groups. One communication scholar notes that steps are also underway into setting up a Media Bureau under one of the major women's organisations to monitor gender bias in media employment and media output (Wang, 1993:14). Lillian Tan (1992), a creative director from an advertising agency, maintains that there are women within communication organisations who are willing to cooperate to change women's media images. This opens possibilities for gender media scholars to form partnerships with professional media women to engage more actively in research and gender media struggles.

While this marks a refreshing beginning for women's groups and researchers to work together with female media professionals, it would be naive at the same time, to assume that gender media research and intervention strategies can be easily managed. More often than not, as asserted by Gallagher (1993), women face insurmountable problems when gaining access to information and to do research (which far from being intended for public consumption, may well be regarded as confidential or as official secret) and to implement intervention strategies in media organisations. Moreover changes in a profit motive organisation will become problematic in the likely event of resistance from groups who do not welcome power and structural challenges. More crucially, the feminist enterprise is not just about changing media images; it is also about working towards strategic gender needs like empowering women, redistributing
power and changing social structures that dehumanise women in society. Nonetheless, this cooperation with the media organisations is still necessary to initiate debates and public discussion about gender media issues.

Wang (1993) notes that there is an urgent need to start networking communication and media professionals, communication scholars and social groups who are concerned with gender media issues at both the local and global levels. Advances in feminist theories that are applicable in the local context must also be introduced to inform research, gender planning and action plans. Collective ventures which respect variations are also essential to provide rich understandings of gender relation to communication. As argued in Chapter Two, communication education is a relevant area of struggle and in the following section, I sketch some of the main developments in this area in the Malaysian context.

5.3 Communication Education in Malaysia

Formal communication education in Malaysia is of recent origin and the evolution of this area is closely linked to the needs of the priorities of the government and the media industry. Communication education is nested within university education and it is relevant to look at the educational policies, particularly in higher education in charting the growth of this area. The University and University Colleges Act, 1961 provides for the Minister of Education to be responsible for the general direction of higher education and the administration of the Act. The universities\(^\text{34}\) come under the Ministry of Education and as such the government finances 100% of the development costs and 90% of the operational costs. The other 10% comes from tuition fees and miscellaneous internal incomes. From this, it can be discerned that the government is instrumental in providing and shaping education in the context of development in Malaysia.

The Higher Education Planning Committee (HEPC) report of 1967 which provided a framework for the development of universities, expressed distinctly that university education must respond to national development policies. It featured two primary objectives: first, the importance of national integration and unity among ethnic groups to correct social and economic imbalance and secondly, the need for trained and skilled manpower to manage the economic development of the country. Again,

\(^{34}\)There are seven national universities which all come under the aegis of the Ministry of Education. Of these University Malaysia is the oldest, while UNIMAS the newest was established in 1993. An eighth university, International Islamic University was established as a result of a treaty signed between the government of Malaysia and seven other Muslim countries and does not come under the University Act 1961.
the question of ethnicity was highlighted to redress imbalances among ethnic groups while no recognition was accorded to the gender dimension. In other words, gender was a non-issue and till today, no consideration has been given to articulate gender issues in education policies and initiatives.

The accent on training and skills in university education may be seen as a controversial issue in many parts of the world. The major contention is that this could lead to a tendency to induce students to conform to established ways of industrial practices. Yet, this skills component, particularly in the case of communication education can be aligned with critical communication thinking and used fruitfully to subvert the legitimacy of dominant communication practices in production ideas and techniques. I will return to this argument when discussing the theory-skills debate in the case of a leading programme in communication education in the next chapter.

The Higher Education Planning Committee which was appointed in 1962 ceased to function after the submission of the report in 1967 due to lack of adequate human and physical infrastructure, leaving planning of curricula, academic and other research and development issues related to higher education to the relevant authorities in each university. This means that curricula and examinations planning in higher education has been left entirely to the various departments within the university authorities, suggesting that there is space for grassroots activity to initiate changes in curriculum matters as long as they do not contravene with national objectives.

The origins of communication education can be traced to the modernisation thesis which formed the basis of the route to development in many Third World countries, including Malaysia. This enterprise has given prominence to mass media as important tools that will bring about change in the process of development. The rapid transformation of the Malaysian economy in the post-colonial period, driven by a central economy planning strategy, required a very rapid increase in skilled workers to manage the media systems. The government has hence invested heavily in professional oriented programmes in communication education, situating them in higher education to ensure that communication education grow consistently with national ideologies for development and produce knowledgeable and skilled workers to administer the media industry. Most academic institutions also adopt this modernisation paradigm as it is a model that is acceptable politically and ideologically and does not raise questions that challenge the power of capitalist and ruling classes (Goonasekera, 1995).
The first attempt at formalising communication education was taken in Universiti Sains Malaysia and like most other programmes in the South East Asian region, it was set up in a frenzied hurry with very little planning (Goonasekera, 1995; Zaharom and Kirton, 1989; Lent, 1988). John Lent (1988), the first co-ordinator of the programme observes that little consideration was given to the staffing requirements, structure and organisation of the curriculum, building and equipment and library resources. Despite these limitations, he adds that there was a concern to impart academic knowledge and offer media training courses such as ‘Writing for the Media’ and ‘Journalism’ to train skilled personnel for the communication industry.

The School of Mass Communication in Institut Teknologi Mara (ITM)\(^5\) was established in 1972 based on a report submitted by another American academician, Ralph Kleish and it has been observed that many of the school’s initial courses “seemed to be direct replicas of those of the United States, and more particularly, Ohio University” (Lent, 1988:110). Right from inception, the ITM school has leaned heavily on the media skills approach to produce graduates who will be technically competent in handling communication systems. This Programme organises student internships in media organisations to familiarise students to the organisations’ production conventions. The School’s Handbook advances that it

"......directly engages in the training of students for the mass communication industries....The School provides professionals directly to the advertising, broadcasting, public relations and journalism industries......"

(ITU, 1985:5)

A third communication department was set up in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia in 1975 based on a report that stressed the need for journalism courses. The Board setting up this programme comprised of academics, media representatives and members of other professional bodies. The underpinning of its curriculum appears quite similar to the one in USM as it has attempted to deliver both academic scholarship and the training of media skills.

It is quite evident from the accounts available that the need to provide media industries with skilled personnel offered the catalyst for establishing communication education in Malaysia. Media organisations further claim that the teaching of

\(^5\)This programme however does not lead to a bachelor degree, but a diploma in mass communication. The Institute admits only bumiputera students (i.e. Malays and members from the indigenous groups).
communication education should not be too theoretical as graduates would not have sufficient practical knowledge to be of immediate use to them. This view has gained support from some leading communication educationists who stress on the need to produce graduates that would meet the immediate requirements of media related organisations (see Haji Mohd Fadzilah and Musa Abu Hassan, 1990; Hamdan and Sankaran, 1987). In a recent press article, the heads of communication schools highlighted the emphasis given to media skills in the curricula of their communication programmes. One department head noted a proposed strategy to introduce a year long in-house training during the final year of the education programme. The dean of another school stated that the students were attached to communication or information agencies for a period of six months so that this enables the students to gain from the experience and "knowledge of those already in the industry." This move has been widely welcomed by many media industries, including the Malaysian Advertisers' Association (MAA) and the Asia Public Relations Group ("Universities To Put on Emphasis on Practicals" - Sunday Mail, 12 December 1993).

Arguments about fulfilling trained and specialised workers for media industries have become central to discussions on communication education in Malaysia. Some communication educators have pressed for the utilisation of new communication technologies to improve communication education, suggesting that,

the would-be journalist who has 'hands on' experience with regard to basic computer functions such as word processing, data analysis and copygraphics will have a decided advantage over competing candidates who are equipped with a broad-based liberal education.

(Hamdan and Sankaran, 1987:2)

It is already becoming apparent here that media skills is being presented in communication education without paying attention to value-orientation which is interwoven in production techniques and processes. Zaharom and Kirton (1989) offer cautionary notes over the ways communication students are taught and primed to enter media institutions, "which are closely affiliated with businesses out to maximise profits" (p. 18). Indeed student attachments to media agencies during the course of their education will likely encourage students to write or produce according to prevailing conventions that conform to well-tested formulae that support the status quo. The uncritical acceptance of these media conventions may engineer consent and consensus to the established order and socialise potential communicators to conform to 'given' ways of making media artefacts.
Media are active doers of gender. In the context of the present study, my concern is that this form of training that takes places principally in commercial-oriented agencies will tend to reproduce gendered ways of producing meanings and representing women. Such training will be inclined to uphold ideological representations as natural ones, particularly if media skills that are taught are devoid of critical study and uninformed of feminist perspectives. In other words, specific questions that would contest the prevailing social mores and media conventions will not be raised.

Cultural reproduction of this sort is a poor way of advancing communication education and as Masterman maintains, "it freezes the impulses towards action and change; it produces deference and conformity" (1991:8). Halloran voices a similar concern and warns of the over-emphasis to respond to manpower demands that accentuate the practical and neglect the intellectual as this may lead "to producing students who have learned how to make media artefacts -- but often have nothing to say" (1985:16).

A more meaningful communication education does not lie primarily in technical competence or in the ability to reproduce dominant (including gendered) patterns of media artefacts. Rather I contend that communication education need to work towards critical awareness and understanding and link practical work with analytical activities. Because this theory-practice debate is a major dilemma and one that has implications for the gender struggle in Malaysia, I will take up this discussion in Chapter Six.

Another point that needs to be taken into consideration in assessing the direction of communication education is the background and training of the communication educators themselves. An overwhelming majority of Malaysian academic staff have received their education from foreign universities. An interesting survey that looked at the training of educators at the Masters level, points out that in 1989, out of a total of 11 serving members at USM, 9 were trained in US, 1 in Britain and 1 in the Philippines. In UKM, all 12 staff members received their Masters degree from the United States; while in ITM, 23 out of 25 members obtained their education in the United States, 1 in Britain and 1 in the Philippines. At the doctoral level, all five of the PhD holders in the three institutions received their doctorates from American universities (Zaharom and Kirton, 1989:9). The gender question becomes an important issue given this situation. It is highly likely that if gender viewpoints are not offered in communication education programmes, particularly those that take in
international students, this tendency will also be exported to all parts of the world, Malaysia included.

Indeed there is evidence that the curriculum offered in Malaysian programmes is influenced strongly by the dominant principles, policies and practices generated in the foreign universities. A survey of textbooks and supportive literature in communication programmes in Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines reveals that in 1981, five of the most common books in order of use were:

- Rogers and Shoemaker, (1971) Communications of Innovations;
- Cutlip and Center, (1971) Effective Public Relations;

(Goonasekera, 1995:21-22)

These texts are influential to the present day. Critical debates and ideas, especially on class, ethnicity and gender are marginal in the teaching curriculum. A study by Adhikarya, (1983:131) indicates that there is a ripple effect of particular stream of ideas infiltrating local curricula as most lecturers use about 75-80% of readings used in their foreign education as teaching materials.

Finally, it seems useful to raise another problem relating to Malaysian communication education. The medium of instruction is primarily in local languages in most of Asia, including Malaysia36. A paucity of communication educators, poor finances and inadequate publishing facilities pose major obstacles in the production of communication books in local languages. The lack of proficiency in English, particularly among Asian students adds further difficulties to the acquisition of knowledge from the latest books and journal articles (Goonasekera, 1995:22-23).

There are very little views that raise gender issues in communication education. While female students outnumber male students in communication education programmes, the conflicts female students encounter in employment and in their career advancement are not acknowledged. Goonasekera (1995) urges communication education programmes to provide the best professional training for communication students but fails to raise the need for an explicit gender agenda in communication

36A survey of 60 communication schools listed in the AMIC directory shows that 21 languages are used to deliver communication studies.
education. The case in Malaysia becomes problematic further when there is a common belief among most female communicators that gender does not come to play a part in media work. It is discerned that similar requirements are expected from both male and female professionals and that media employers look for talented people who can deliver goods. Media agencies specify that talent and initiative are important values for female students and communication education programmes are asked to look into this matter (Hamdan, 1987:197). In this respect, a leading female journalist believes that female reporters generally lack confidence and managerial skills and that women need to be more aggressive, confident and persuasive in eliciting information. Concurring with her views, one communication educator urges communication education to advance motivational and psychology courses to develop the confidence of female students (ibid:197). Thus the gender problem is framed to address individual internal blocks (i.e. women are the problem) but fails to acknowledge external gendered social structures and industrial practice that continue to operate and oppress women.

The gender debate receives very little attention and the prevailing views obscure real problems regarding the participation of women in the media and the representation of women in media artefacts. More seriously, it neglects the social and political dimension of gender and supports the notion that communication processes and practices are gender-neutral and the ‘given’ (read patriarchal) ways of making sense and doing communication activities are value-free, objective and unproblematic. Indeed, there appears to be an assumption that news or information is out there in the open and that a journalist can objectively mirror reality. Implicit in this view are notions that do not recognise that journalists exercise selectivity in presenting information and that media artefacts are not gender-neutral or value-free (van Zoonen, 1994; Epstein, 1978; Tuchman, 1978). The patterns of authority within news rooms and organisational routines of news media also failed to get acknowledged.

I believe that there is an urgent need for communication education in Malaysia and in other parts of the world to provide adequate debates and sufficient context of understanding of the gender mechanics of society. Issues pertaining to gender and the position of gender are not isolated issues and relate to all forms of social activity. The gender discourse will benefit communication students as it would provide an understanding that links both the private and public realities of social life. It would question women's continued responsibility for childrearing and the constraints this poses for their professional career and participation in national development. Also gender viewpoints would serve to challenge the emphasis on notions of objectivity,
neutrality and highlight gendered patterns in media production. More fundamentally, it relates to the need to hear the voice of women who have been defined as outsiders by the power structure (Dervin, 1989). In this connection, I share the views of Foss and Foss (1989) who urge that the study of communication should incorporate this perspective to "see how gender has been constructed to denigrate women and seek to change such constructions" (p. 68).

5.4 Discussion

As in many parts of the world, the Malaysian society evolves around systems of unequal social relations, patriarchy included - a system of male authority which keeps women subservient and devalued through social-cultural, economic and political institutions. Patriarchy derives power from men's access to, mediation of and control over resources and social arrangements both in the private and public domains. In this chapter, I have drawn attention to the 'state-centric' nature of Malaysia and to the ongoing interests of patriarchy and capitalism which reveal power relations inherent in the framing of policy and institutional practices. In Malaysia, men are in the position of authority and command leadership in the state machinery. Consequently, the making of state policies and law has emerged as a masculinist enterprise. Their control of the ruling apparatuses of the state, their ownership and inheritance of property, their legal control of women's body, their objectification of women in culture perpetuate the subordination of women. Clearly, male dominance underlies the social systems and practices in Malaysia. This influence of hegemonic masculinity in material and ideological conditions is powerful. If gender movements do not counteract this dominant ideology, the prevailing social order will be accepted as common-sense and as part of the natural order by the wider population, including the majority of women who are in fact subordinated to it.

I have argued that feminism occupies a marginal space and that contemporary gender struggles in Malaysia are embryonic. The International Women's Year in 1975 has opened a new political possibility for developing a gender agenda, specifically within the state machinery. Gender planning has emerged in the Sixth Malaysian Plan, but I have pointed out that the theoretical gender concerns have not been adequately integrated into this planning framework. Missing were issues on domestic inequality, female identity, challenge to cultural representations in the media and gender reforms in education. Indeed the planning has clouded the connexion between women's private and public experience. Concepts on patriarchy, sexism, gender oppression, masculinity and femininity have appeared to be evaded. Despite the commitment to women as subjects and active citizens of development, I have pointed out that the policy adopts a
perspective which deliberately obscures gender dynamics that operate in the family and contribute to the constraints women face in their access to employment. More crucially, I have highlighted the policy's failure to recognise education and media as two crucial arenas of struggle which could lead to gender conscientisation and women's empowerment.

In Malaysia, education is identified as a potentially powerful tool in development. All educational strategies emanate from the state. So far, none of the reports and education plans have given consideration to gender as an important issue in education. Clearly, the gender question is not a key criterion in education initiatives, unlike equal opportunities efforts in countries like Britain, Europe, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States. Although universities in several Third World countries like China and India have established Women's Studies programmes, these courses remain absent in Malaysia. Since there is no official guideline, there is little incentive for universities to develop gender scholarship.

As stated in Chapter Three, the curriculum is a contextualised social process which cannot be understood adequately or changed substantially without paying attention to its setting or context; the relevant context is socio-cultural and structural. In this chapter I have highlighted some of the political, economic and social conditions present in the socio-cultural context. I have described the nature of state's activity (or lack of it) in development -- specifically in relation to gender concerns. I have offered a critique of the gender planning framework which, I argue has not provided adequate frameworks for reform. The trends and policies that are present in the Malaysia's development will impinge upon the selection, organisation and treatment of the curriculum, specifically in relation to interests that are served or disserved by these values.

Communication education responds to the activities and change in the communication scene. In the past decade, major developments have evolved around the Malaysian media but the gender debate remains invisible. Much research is needed to problematise these issues and to give prominence to the gender communication agenda. Lack of research expertise and knowledge on feminist media issues does not illuminate the media's role in arbitrating gender perspectives in social conflicts. Research is not only useful for teaching communication studies, it is also crucial if we wish to engage critically with media and society and give visibility to debates on the problematic gender relationships in society. The absence of gender research also creates an environment where gender becomes a non-issue. Hence in order to sustain
the gender media agenda, research is imperative to investigate the representation of
gender in the media.

The Malaysian environment and its state components are not static, but
constantly undergoing change. The contradictions and inconsistencies, the forms of
contention and struggle create tensions and spaces for developing gender action plans.
Within the Malaysian context, support from the government authorities is important in
sustaining a gender agenda. Any gender strategies will need to be developed from
both top-down and bottom-up measures. This two-way relationship of pressure,
support and continuous negotiation is imperative for change to be implemented. In
light of these strictures, I aim to examine gender issues in Malaysian communication
education and to consider the ways in which this site could be developed to contribute
to gender action in media struggles. In the next chapter, I will look into the structural
context - that is the more immediate setting of the curriculum. Taking the case-study
of a prominent undergraduate programme in communication studies, I will examine the
position of women in its organisational structure and the place of gender issues in the
the philosophy of its curriculum and the model adopted in this area.

The crux of this chapter is that women occupy a subordinate status within
the Malaysian society and that a major silence looms over the gender question in the
country's development activities and in its cultural politics. The first form of gender
planning emerged in the Sixth Malaysia Plan. Despite this breakthrough, the plan
suffers serious limitations in its conceptual underpinnings that fail to question the
status of women in the private and the different stems of gender subordination along
the lines of ethnicity and class within the Malaysian context. Further, this gender
planning has a liberal view and has concentrated mainly on labour force issues that
would increase more working opportunities for women. Regrettably, education and
communication were not identified as critical arenas for feminist interventions.

Research on gender issues indicates that the Malaysian media is overloaded
with traditional constructions of femininity and masculinity and the participation of
women in public knowledge is undervalued. I have also observed the paucity of
systematic research on gender in relation to the media and have argued the need for
more work that can be productive for communication education and gender media
struggles.
Communication education can be seen as a site for raising gender conscientisation among potential communicators who will play a part in public debates and in the development of the media. The presence of gender perspectives is crucial to stimulate debates about the existing patterns of power relations in society and the role of the media in doing gender. The discussion on the gender agenda in communication education, however will be of limited use if it is not well grounded in feminist ideas. In the Malaysian case, the absence of gender-informed debates convey misleading ideas and promote men's interests that actively construct a discourse about the need for motivational and effective family management courses for women. The problem is not women but social structures and institutions that devalue women and accord them a subordinate status.

Within the Malaysian context, ethnicity is given a high position in the list of the nation's strategic priorities. Ethnicity has emerged as a principle factor in the restructuring of social relations and activities and this has granted the gender-question a low priority in the process of social development. Paradoxically, the overemphasis on ethnicity provides a conducive environment for gender struggle as the gender agenda is considered as less threatening. Hence, this makes some room for manoeuvre for women interested in the feminist struggle, in general and the media struggle in particular.
COMMUNICATION EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA - A CASE STUDY

Communication education is relatively a young field of study in Malaysia. At the undergraduate level, this field of study is offered in two universities: Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). Although the course titles and content may differ between these two programmes, the underlying principles and rationales underpinning communication education remain the same. This chapter takes the case-study of the USM Communication Programme to describe its organisational structure, the representation of women in positions of power and as academic members and in the student composition. The Programme is currently involved in the exercise of curriculum review and has been subjected to a number of reappraisals. Various distinguished communication scholars have been invited to assess its curriculum. The curriculum structure of the Programme has attracted much controversy, specifically in relation to the philosophical underpinning of communication education which aims to integrate theory and practice. It seems useful to consider some of these arguments, and since the gender agenda did not acquire any visibility in these reports, I contribute my viewpoints to the discussion on the curriculum of communication education.

6.1 Background

The origins of communication education in most western countries grew initially out of distrust of the media. It was first established by educationists who viewed the mass media as low culture and as harmful, something against which pupils needed inoculation. Pupils needed to be warned and protected against the negative effects of the media and guided to adopt high, cultural and moral values. This formed the underlying basis for the traditional approach to communication or media education. In the past two decades, various perspectives have been introduced into communication education to increase understanding of communication and media systems. Several interrelated traditions - inoculatory, critical viewer, community media, sociological and media skills approaches of media education have been developed in schools and in institutions of higher learning (see Halloran and Jones, 1987; Alvarado et al, 1987). Today, communication education is seen as an important area that can be used to challenge social inequalities, particularly in the case of disparities between the media rich and media poor, particularly in terms of the groups that have access to media technology and media voice and those that don’t (Jones, 1995). Programmes on communication education in different parts of the world have established various emphases and approaches to generate a diverse range of themes.
and debates on communication (see Media Development (1995) Vol XLII (2), special issue on Media Education).

The origins of communication education in Malaysia has developed in a particular context and has been located strategically at the level of higher education. In Malaysia, communications, specifically mass media have been deemed as important elements of information to help bring about change in the attitudes of the people in the process of development. As noted in the last chapter, the rapid transformation of the Malaysian economy since the 1970's, driven by a central economy planning strategy, required a very rapid increase in trained and skilled manpower to manage the economic development of the country. The Higher Education Planning Committee (HEPC) report of 1967 which provided a framework for the development of universities, expressed distinctly that university education must respond to national development policies. It outlined clearly that it perceived trained and skilled manpower as one of the critical prerequisites for economic development, and that universities should prepare people for meaningful employment so that they can be absorbed into the national economy.

In the sphere of communication, the emphasis has been on the need to have technically skilled workers to manage the media systems and professional media practitioners who could effectively disseminate ideas and messages that could promote 'modern' values to enhance the climate for economic growth and development (Zaharom and Kirton, 1989). Accordingly, communication education has seen heavy investments in skills-training oriented programmes to ensure that communication education grows consistently with national ideologies for development. A logical outcome of this project has been to stress the practical skills of professional media production, steering clear away of political sensitivities\(^3\). Consequently, communication education has placed accent on models and paradigms that encourage students to reproduce dominant media production techniques and conventions that do not bring larger politically sensitive questions. These are significant characteristics that have shaped the cultural and representational politics and the function of communication and communication education within a pluralistic society like Malaysia.

The Higher Education Planning Committee which was appointed in 1962 ceased to function after the submission of the report in 1967 due to lack of adequate

\(^3\)The underlying official rhetoric of the Malaysian state is that there is a greater need for the preservation of order -- for political stability and national development and that it is criminal irresponsibility even to allow one word to be uttered if that one word could lead to calamity (see Zaharom, 1992).
human and physical infrastructure, leaving planning of curricula, academic and other research and development issues related to higher education to the relevant authorities in each of the universities. In the following section, I focus on the more immediate setting within which the curriculum is created, i.e. the structural context. This will reveal the social organisation of the communication programme and the webs of power that exist here which are a determining factor to the kinds of knowledge that are selected in this curriculum. I will look specifically in terms of the gender power relationships among the academic staff members in the Programme itself. Various contending forces create conflicts and negotiations that form an essential part that is implicated in the patterns of the social relationships in the Programme. In the following section, I offer a discussion that charts out the beginnings and contemporary developments of this Programme.

6.2 Communication Education in USM: Beginnings and Developments.

Communication education sits within university education which is financed almost entirely from public funds and is subjected to the guidelines for the universities spelt out in the Universities and Universities Colleges Act, 196138. Each university has a governing council that oversees its financial and administrative management and a senate that regulates its academic affairs. Each of these bodies may have its respective standing committees as well as ad hoc committees. As with the other universities, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) is generally co-ordinated by the Ministry of Education and makes representation to the public services department in order to make new posts for staff, and to the Ministry of Education for the approval of proposals for new programmes of study and for the setting up of new faculties or departments.

Communication education in USM was conceived as the first Programme in this area of study in Malaysia following the importance accorded to communication and mass media in national development. This Programme was set up in the School of Humanities in USM, Malaysia in 1970, leading to the award of Bachelor of Arts (Hons) degree. In accordance with the Malaysian Higher Education Policy (1967), the Programme has leaned heavily towards media training, offering largely skills courses such as 'Writing for the Media', 'Journalism' and 'Special Reporting'.

The first co-ordinator of the Programme was John Lent and he described that the Programme "....suffered for want of the bare essentials of a solid programme -

38The University and Universities Colleges Act, 1961 provides for the Minister of Education to be responsible for the general direction of higher education and the administration of the act. The Education minister makes decisions on all education policies, assisted by two deputy ministers and a political secretary. So far, all these role incumbents have been males and not females.
permanent staff, a building and equipment, library resources and well-defined curriculum. Part-time faculty... flew in for lectures in courses with vague and unspecified goals...". It was also added that the Communication Programme was developed hurriedly and lacked clear directions that meet the needs of the nation. (Lent, 1988:110).

Looking at the beginnings of the Programme, Zaharom and Kirton (1989) make the point that there has been a heavy American influence, directly or indirectly, on the department concerned right from its inception in terms of the curriculum content, the initial personnel and the assessors. They observe a strong involvement of American scholars in the initial set-up of the Programme. Further, a university development staff scheme saw an overwhelming majority of the pioneering academic staff members of the Programme receiving their education and training in American universities that heavily supported the dominant paradigm of development advanced by Schramm and Lerner. Following this, the Programme has adopted a communication pedagogy that has largely disseminated ideas on the modernisation thesis. Accordingly, the task of communication and communication education has been based on the assumption that the numerous media, very simply aid development. Despite the criticisms levelled against this paradigm, this model continues to enjoy wide support by communication academics, media practitioners and policy-makers in Malaysia. Based upon a cursory study of course readings and local communications publications, Zaharom and Kirton conclude that there has been a strong dominance of mainstream US communication thinking among local communication scholars. They reiterate that local communication scholars have depended on communication literature by Schramm, Rogers, Lerner and Berlo for their communication teaching and research activities. Interestingly, they also observe that the books available for communication education were largely donated by the US Information Service (USIS) (p. 11).

Since inception in 1971, the Programme has experienced a tremendous rate of expansion and development, particularly in the past decade. In 1983, the establishment of a Bachelor of Communication Programme was recommended by the university senate to offer "sound communication studies and to meet the need to increase opportunities in and training for communication skills" (Report on the Curriculum Structure of the Bachelor of Communication, April 1993:1). This recommendation was approved by the Ministry of Education in June 1984. From 1989 to 1995, the Communication Programme, though still housed in the School of Humanities, has lead to the award of a Bachelor of Communications (Hons) degree. The Programme
evolved into a separate school — School of Communication in March 1995 and is currently continuing with the process of curriculum review.

Structure of Communication Degree Programme.


Philosophy

The programme for a degree in this field of study has been based on the national development policies that call for trained and skilled manpower to meet the needs of the country. The Programme aims to offer knowledge and media skills to students so that they can participate in the communications sector. The approach used here is influenced by the sociological approach and the media skills models. Given the rapid development and expansion of the media in Malaysia, there are strong demands to create professional courses to train students to work in the media. The Programme uses several strategies to develop a sound base in the curriculum structure. These are as follows:

(a) multi-disciplinary which will encourage students to explore knowledge from different areas which are related to communication studies;
(b) liberal approach so that apart from specialising in the field of communication, students can also be exposed to other courses offered by the other departments; and
(c) integration between theory and practice which requires students to apply the knowledge they have studied, in their practical-oriented courses.

Objectives

The objectives of this programme are stated as below:

• to expose students to the knowledge of communication for their personal development and for the use of their society;
• to prepare students for employment in the field of communication;
• to offer training in media production and media skills;
• to do research and consultancy work to assist in the development of the society and to upgrade the national communication system; and
• to offer communication assistance for all national development efforts of the country.

From the statements on the philosophy and the objectives of the Programme, it can be seen that the model adopted in this Programme combines both the sociological and media skills approach. It draws knowledge from disciplines like sociology and psychology and gives prominence to basic skills in media production. This study-plan in communication studies is divided into four level courses, namely Level 100 courses (Year One), Level 200 courses (Year Two), Level 300 (Year Three) and Level 400 courses (Year Four).

Each course at each level is given a code number and this is numbered according to the respective years. The study programme works on a unit system. Each course is weighted according to units and most of these courses carry two, four or six units. Upon passing the course, these units are awarded to the students and they are required to collect at least 120 units for the fulfilment of an undergraduate degree.

Level 100 courses aim at introducing basic communication courses to students. It includes three core\(^{39}\) courses like Introduction to Human Communication, Introduction to Mass Communication and Communication and Society. At this level, students are also asked to take introductory papers in various courses offered by other departments. It is essential for students to take courses like Critical Thinking, Basic Statistics and to select courses from the following to fulfil the unit requirement for the first year: Introduction to History, Introduction to Arts and Theatre, Man and Society, Introduction to Political Science, Introduction to Psychology, Computer Literacy or Introduction To Management.

Level 200 courses aim at guiding students to a better understanding of communication concepts and related theories. The course, Communication Theory is a compulsory course. The Programme offers three areas of specialisation: Journalism, Film and Television, and Persuasive Communication. At Level 200, students also choose their specialisation areas and take the necessary introductory courses to the specialising fields. For example, a student wanting to specialise in Journalism will have to take Journalism 1 while a student interested in Film Studies will register for a course in Film 1. Other courses that are offered as options at this level include Media History and Law, Communication Technology, Script and Screenplay Writing, Radio Production, Television Production I and Communication for Social Development.

At Level 300, the students will continue to take core courses and specialisation courses to fulfil their degree requirements. The courses offered at this level are

\(^{39}\)Core courses are compulsory courses specifically tailored to meet the needs of each specialisation.

At Level 400, students continue to take courses in their various fields of specialisation. They can choose to do a dissertation which offers an equivalent of eight units or take two options which add to eight units. Students can select options from the following courses: A Seminar in Communication Issues, International Communication, Communication Policy and Planning, Writing and Production of Magazines, Media Planning, Advanced Advertising and Public Relations.

All communication students do a major in communication but they can choose to minor in the same department or in other departments like social sciences, languages and science. Thus, apart from communication courses, the students also take elective and option courses offered by other departments. Similarly, the Communication Programme also offers communication courses as part of the minor package or options to students from other departments. The medium of instruction is the Malay language. Students are also expected to study English as most texts and reference materials are in English.40

Numerous Malaysian communication educators believe that the present day communication education has come of age in Malaysia and that it is able to offer sound communication studies and to meet the need to increase opportunities and training for communication skills (Lowe, 1982). According to Lowe, communication education has been accepted as a viable, respectful and useful area of study by the university and media employers and that practical and theoretical courses have been appropriately blended - the twin aims of meeting the country's manpower needs and education have been happily married (p. 93). The focus on practical training to upgrade the students' skills for the communication profession and the success of the majority of communication graduates moving into media-related employment, he argues, fulfils the goals of curriculum planning. These developments lead Lowe to believe that communication education in Malaysia has matured well.

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40The English language problem has been identified as a major difficulty in Malaysian university education. In schools, all subjects are taught in the Malay language while English forms as one subject area in the curriculum. In the university, all lectures and tutorials are conducted in Malay and it has been observed that many students do not have a powerful command of English language to cope with the reading texts offered at this level.
Indeed if the expansion and development is judged according to a number of quantitative criteria in terms of physical facilities, student numbers and academic staff numbers, the optimism is definitely warranted. One form of expansion in the Programme can be seen in its physical infrastructure in terms of new buildings and physical facilities. The Programme currently has a journalism laboratory, a newsroom with telephone facilities and computers, a darkroom for developing news photographs, state of the art film equipment, a film editing room and a film sound studio, a colour television studio, two video editing suites and an audio studio. These expansions in physical facilities were seen as integral to upgrade the teaching of communication studies. Student numbers in the programme has increased over the years and is projected to reach a peak in the near future. The following figure shows the growth in student numbers over several years.

**Figure 3. Student Numbers in USM Communication Programme**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>498</td>
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</table>

The increasing number of student numbers also suggests that communication is an area of which is popular with students. Interestingly, a survey conducted in 1985 (USM, Perantara, Internal Document, 1985) has revealed that almost 75% of the communication graduates from the Programme have engaged in media-related employment and government administrative work in information and development programmes. This report indicates that many students are interested in communication studies and are successful in seeking employment as there is a demand for communication graduates in the communication industry.

The gender breakdown of the students in the academic year 1992/93 revealed that there were a total of 498 students -- 351 (70.5%) females and 147 (29.5%) males. Clearly, as will be reported in the views of communication tutors in Chapter Seven, this has been taken as an indication that gender equality has already been achieved in the Programme. The ethnic patterns of the student composition for the similar year is recorded in the following figure.
From the above figure, it can be seen that there are more female students in the Communication Programme, irrespective of ethnic groupings. The Programme employs affirmative action in the access system relating to student selection and admission. In line with the NEP, the Constitution (Amendment) Bill in 1971, more Malays and natives of Borneo are expected to be admitted into the study-programme. Under the current regulations, intake of undergraduates is made on the basis of 55% Malays or other indigenous races and 45% from groups of Chinese, Indians, Eurasians and others. This set quota system is Malaysia's own affirmative action that responds to the New Economic Policy which seeks to redress imbalance in the multi-ethnic population. Here, the ethnic factor can be seen as influential in composing the patterns of student population in the Programme and in the university.

A further form of expansion can be seen in the increase of academic members. Since beginning, with only two members of the staff in 1972, the programme at USM in the academic year 1992/93 consisted of fifteen serving academic members. There were ten male members and five female members during the period of this research. An ethnic breakdown of the lecturers revealed that eleven lecturers were Malays, three Chinese and one Indian. The Programme is headed by a Deputy Dean and has two Course Chairmen, one heading the Journalism Section while the other in the Film and Television Section. At the time of this research, the Deputy Dean was also heading the Persuasive Communication Section. All the above top authoritative positions were held by men. While engaging in administrative practice, these persons in positions of power were also teaching courses in the Programme. The following figure maps the organisation chart of the Programme to depict the key positions of power.

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41At present, admission into the universities is jointly controlled by the Ministry of Education and the universities. The Centralised Admissions Unit or Unit Pusat Universiti-universiti (UPU) acts as the secretariat for the intake for the minimum entry qualifications, the racial composition and the number to be admitted each year. However, the final selection would be determined by the heads of the departments in each university.
At the time of this research, there was one professor and three associate professors, of whom all were males. As in most departments in the university, women in this Programme occupied the lower rungs of the hierarchical structure. This suggests that the Programme members, both the staff and the students exist within a structure of male hegemony. Power in this organisational structure lies principally in the hands of men and it is men who exercise leadership both in terms of social and ideological relations. The absence of women tutors in positions of leadership have implications for role-modelling, a point which I will take up shortly.

It is worth pointing out that of the fifteen lecturers in the Programme, two lecturers fell into the age range of 51 - 60 years, nine were within the age range of 40 - 50 years, while only four members were aged below 40 years. In this respect, this study documents findings that show that young lecturers, especially in the range of below 40 years seemed more receptive to gender issues and offered a potential

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The data in this and the following chapters pertain to the staff and curriculum patterns in the year 1992/93.
reservoir of talent to initiate gender strategies in the Programme. They had conducted studies on women's images in the Malaysian media, the use of radio among women and some of them were involved in writing book chapters on gender communication issues.

The direction communication education is taking in this Programme can be linked by looking at communication educators and their educational training. All the academic members received their degrees in Masters and Doctorates in communication departments abroad, especially in the United States and in Britain. Many of the lecturers received their degrees in Masters or Doctorates between the years of 1975 and 1990 in communication in foreign universities. Interestingly, many conservative values in communication courses relate to what was salient when many of staff received their doctorates, particularly in the case of older members. As will be reported later in Chapter Seven, some of them admitted that gender was not given much prominence in their formal education in foreign universities. The next chapter further reports that since gender was not a significant issue in the educational and training socialisation of communication tutors, these tutors reproduced patterns of knowledge which silenced the gender discourse in communication studies. A useful point to make here is that the influence of dominant patriarchal principles, gendered educational programmes and practices exported from foreign countries to all parts of the world, Malaysia included, must never be underestimated. This observation is important as it not only acknowledges the forces of reproduction but also calls the need to question existing definitions of reality offered by communication departments in universities that train international students, notably in the United States and the United Kingdom. My critique of communication education and the significance accorded to gender issues therefore can be related to university communication programmes in different parts of the world. So far, no national and international survey has been conducted to find out how many communication programmes, at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels offer courses and debates on gender media issues. This is a crucial area that needs to be addressed.

Several prominent international communication scholars have been invited to appraise the USM Programme. Up to 1992, a total number of eight external examiners had submitted reports on several issues like curriculum, examinations and research. Some were specifically asked to draw up recommendations for the setting up of the film section in the Programme. The external examiners include Prof. J. Curran (1992); Dr. L. Masterman (1990); Prof. M. Tehranian (1990); Prof. L. Rao (1988); Prof. L. Becker (1989); Prof. H. Schiller (1987); Prof. J. Halloran (1985); and Prof. I. Ross (1985). It is worthy to observe at the outset of this discussion that all eight...
external examiners who were invited to evaluate the Programme were men. None of their expertise areas included gender, and the gender question was never raised as an important issue in their reports. A study of their comments also reveal their preferences, principles and underlying rationales for charting directions for the communication education in Malaysia. In the following section, I will discuss the external examiners’ arguments on the curriculum and the model adopted in the USM Programme. As a female interested in gender issues, I will then contribute my viewpoints to the discussion of communication education.

6.3 The Curriculum Debate

Philosophy of the Programme

Lowe (1982:93), one of the pioneers of the Programme reiterates that perennial issues in the communication curriculum planning have been successfully resolved. He highlights the key elements of the current philosophy of the programme which adopts a multi-disciplinary and liberal approach and which aims to integrate theory and practice. Paying particular attention to the practical component, Lowe stresses that the commitment to practical training is inevitable given the nature of media professions. His stance on this issue is expressed in the following terms,

"...we are neither a 'trade' school nor do we steep our students in the rarified atmosphere of pure research. What we have done is to blend the merits of university education with some exposure to basic skills required of any job, more so perhaps in the media related employment. In doing this, we hope to have "married" successfully the twin aim of education and of meeting the country's manpower needs."

(Lowe, 1982:94)

The External Examiner’s Reports do not raise any disagreement with the multi-disciplinary and liberal approach. This approach is seen as essential as it offers the opportunity for students to take courses in other areas like sociology, psychology, language and management and to relate this knowledge to communication studies. Such grounding in other disciplines receives support from all the external examiners as it serves several educational purposes. It provides a broad based education and exposes students to different ideas, concepts, theories and research methods.

The second approach which aims to integrate theory and practice however, has raised controversy among local communication educators and the external examiners. Since this approach is a major concern of curricula planning and implicates the gender discourse, I will examine the theory - practice dilemma in the following section.
The Theory-Media Skills Practice Argument.

What the Programme attempts to do here is to combine courses of theory with the media skills practical activity. It is believed that this would reinforce the components of communication study offered by the programme and that this approach will

- upgrade critical views of students on the communication system and profession in this country,
- upgrade students' skills so as to offer them better job prospects and to upgrade the standard of the communication profession.

(USM, Curriculum Report 1988:3)

I would like to suggest that if the concept of media skills practical activity is clearly defined, this approach will then be dynamic and useful for communication education generally, and specifically for the gender discourse in this field of studies in the Malaysian context. Because of the ambiguity and lack of understanding over the concept of media skills or practical activity, this component has drawn much controversy among communication scholars. At this juncture it is worthwhile to look at the External Examiners' Reports which have generated three different views on the media skills practical component.

The first view urges for a media skills-based, job specific component as this is seen as necessary to prepare students for employment in communication related professions (see USM, External Examiner's Reports, 1988 and 1987). The emphasis here is on developing vocational education and this view receives support from two external examiners, Becker and Rao.

Becker believes that an entirely theoretical instruction leaves the student product "without adequate occupational skills and thus makes the student unattractive to communication industries" (1987:15). Rao (1988:5) echoes Becker's views and asserts that communication is a practical field and therefore should prepare a student for the practice of a specific profession or vocation. They both argue for a vocational approach in the Programme's curriculum. The vocational approach however, can be particularly problematic if it aims narrowly to get students to fit easily into the communication industry as there is a great tendency for students to uncritically learn and adopt industrial norms as the 'given' and to reproduce it.
A second view is sceptical of this practical component and suggests that the presence of both the theory and practical activity give an ambivalent character to the Programme. Halloran (1985:3) maintains that the emphasis on technical competence and vocational skills conveys a notion that communication education in general is "for doers, not thinkers". Halloran concludes despairingly that,

The over-eager attempts to respond to national professional manpower needs and demands is bound to lead to a further emphasis on the practical and a neglect of the intellectual..... They may succeed in producing students who have learned how to make media artefacts ......but often these students have nothing to say.

(1985:16)

Halloran and Schiller perceive that the formulation of the curriculum philosophy and structure will be a fundamental challenge for the Programme - to resolve whether it is going to be a training school for job skills or a centre for critical analysis and research (see USM, External Examiners Reports: Schiller, 1987 and Halloran, 1985). Schiller (1987) contends that the attempt to let both goals reside concurrently will not allow either direction to prosper. He raises questions on the emphasis given to the administrative capability, that is the goal to train experts and manpower to manage media industries. Schiller believes that such an approach will not be highly desirable as a goal of the curriculum, particularly at the university level.

Finally a third view advances that the integration of theory and practical activity as a major strength of the curriculum of the Communication Programme. Masterman (USM, External Examiner's Report, 1990) supports this approach and reiterates that communication is a practice and the study of theoretical issues and models in communication is going to be an arid pursuit if it does not illuminate students' understanding of specific communication practices, or have some relevance to the development of their own abilities as aspiring professional communicators. However, unlike Rao and Becker, Masterman's interpretation of communication as a practice has some cautionary notes. He offers some caveats on practical work and argues that at a university level, practical work

......should be reflective and critical rather than simply reproductive......It is not simply here of learning techniques......but of recognising that questions of value and ideology are woven into and are inseparable from the process of communication at every level.

( ibid, 1990:3)
Masterman hence, points out the importance of recognising value-orientation in the critical inquiry of practical work. He argues the need to raise questions on the construction of media artefacts, the agenda they promote and the interests served by the media. He urges that communication education must pay attention to the kinds of knowledge that attempt to validate powerful groups as well as to investigate which groups are omitted or denied access to the mass media. Masterman asserts that communication education must enable students to understand the mechanics of the media and to encourage the students to give leadership to its social direction. For him, this is a necessary means to developing an autonomous critical understanding of communication media.

In his report, Tehranian (1990) supports the theory-media skills practical work alliance and suggests that this is appropriate to a unique field like communication. He asserts that communication is a field that is

......part academic and part professional. For this reason, it requires a dual approach to its study -- theoretical as well as practical, academic as well as professional, critical as well as administrative.

(1990:3)

However, he notes that this approach makes special demands as the Programme will have to develop not only the acquisition of production and professional skills but also the acquisition of a broad base of knowledge and the skills of critical thinking.

The integration of the dual goals receives further support from Curran (1992). He reaffirms that this is an innovative approach to teaching communication and observes that many undergraduate programmes usually tend to divorce theory and practical work. He reports that the Programme is blazing a pioneering trail in communication education by working hard to forge a connexion between theory and practical activity. He holds the view that a programme that build bridges between theory and practice will invite students to express understanding about media production in a thoughtful and analytical way informed by academic debate (p. 2).

The conflicting and contradictory ways in which the above three views are couched in the reports reflect the different orientation of the individual External Examiners. The views raised in these reports offer possible directions for curriculum planning for communication education in general and particularly in terms of developing a gender agenda in the Programme.
The debate on the curriculum has been primarily a male-dominated enterprise. Working from a gender perspective, I would like to contribute to an alternative view of this theory-practice debate here.

It seems useful first to examine this element of practical activity which has attracted much controversy. What does practical activity in communication education embody here?

For me, a conservative reading will formulate practical activity as the demonstration of media skills. It places emphasis on technical competence and the reproduction of dominant conventions in communication activities. It is highly concerned with the preparation of students for the competitive labour market, armed with skills which do not encourage them to question industrial norms critically or to attempt alternative expressions. Communication students are thus trained to accept media conventions in production unproblematically. Put differently, this leads students to be trained to plan or to produce communication programmes that conform to the existing status quo. The danger inherent in adopting such an approach in communication education is that it naturalises instead of attempting to problematise the dominant patterns in communication codes and conventions. As argued in Chapter Three, the tendency to follow this approach may lead to a form of cultural reproduction (Masterman, 1991). It produces deference and conformity when students attempt to emulate profession communication practices rather than subject them to critical scrutiny. In other words a narrow view of teaching technical skills in a framework devoid of critical inquiry will not challenge existing value-laden practices in media production. In the case of media doing gender, absence of inquiry into media conventions that frame women principally in non-positive ways, marginalise women's concerns and obscure their voices and experience will not be made problematic but legitimised.

It needs to be noted here that media institutions usually adopt programming that is based on well-tested formulae and formats that can maximise profits. If these conventions and production techniques are taken as unproblematic and reproduced in the teaching of practical media skills, then the interests of the dominant groups will be reinforced. The need for innovation, to reflect upon different ways of engaging in media practice and to produce alternative expressions will become non-issues. If communication students are trained to simply adopt these media production routines and practices without any critical questioning of values and ideologies, there will be a great tendency for them to write, to produce and to conform to what sells, where news
and other media artefacts are commodities in the market. The idea that communication education serves to produce technically competent students who will reproduce industrial norms rather than students who will explore issues like oppression and social justice, particularly in the context of development is profoundly political. A curriculum that is designed narrowly to the interests of the business industry will not serve the potential value of education and the developing society at large.

I have much difficulty with the primacy of this position where practical work is mainly seen in terms of reproducing technical skills. This emphasis on technical operations without questioning the techniques and the routines leads to problems. Indeed such a limited understanding of practical communication work will not question industrial norms and in this case, gendered media routines and content. This might leave critical inquiry subservient to technical skills and might not enhance the quality of communication education. I interpret practical media activity as embodying critical inquiry and creative production where communication conventions and codes are deconstructed and alternative directions are chartered. By this, I mean students should question the process and the production convention in specific genres, assess the dominant patterns that emerge and think about alternative constructions that can be attempted. Applying the knowledge gained from their theoretical courses, they can choose to focus on particular genres and attempt to innovate in doing gender in media production activities. I believe that practical activity in communication education is by all means important at the undergraduate level and is a crucial element in the education of communicators, especially in Malaysia. I contend this dual approach is an important strategy that will lead to critical knowledge and empowerment of communication students, especially female students. The opportunities to engage in practical media activity is particularly useful in empowering female communicators. In the case of gender for example, practice-based courses should not only display technical knowledge but engage students more productively to reflect analytically upon issues like camera framing of women; casting of women; genres for women; scripting women characters; constructing alternative images and messages about women of different class, ethnicity, age and physical ability; and treating women as active actors in development communication campaigns. These are crucial issues that students can consider and show inventiveness when students involve themselves in newsreporting, in planning and implementing development campaigns, in constructing advertisements, and in doing gender in radio, video and film production.

It is imperative to remember that techniques like layout, reporting, filming, editing, camerawork, script-writing, lighting, sound and photography are not value-
free and the performance of these skills cannot be deemed as objective or unbiased. Indeed production techniques themselves are not neutral and thus make interesting objects of study. Such an approach in practical work in communication education denies the principal of transparency and makes problematic simplistic notions of communication practices - notions which neutralise and suppress vital questions of meaning, values and discourse, especially in relation to gender.

If students are to understand media texts and development communication projects as social constructions, this practical activity approach will obviously be helpful as it will not only sensitise both male and female students to numerous issues, but also give them hands-on experience and useful insights of their own construction process.

One common argument that is put against media training or skills is that this has no place at the university level and such training should take place on the job. This again begs the question of what sort of training will then take place on the job, especially with jobs that are related to profit-making institutions. Very often, most industries do not deem that production techniques that objectify women or marginalise women's concerns as problematic. Some may even expect new media producers to reproduce dominant conventions. More often than not, training that takes place on the job encourages communicators to internalise uncritically industrial norms and to replicate existing communication practices as well as to conform to the ideas and routines of hegemonic masculinist machinery.

It is also highly possible that training on making women-oriented news, television programmes and films may not be informed of academic debate on gender issues. Also this area may receive little support within the industry. In other words, gender issues may attract limited scope and attention, especially at the training levels in jobs. Within the Malaysian setting, such initiatives may have difficulty in getting support, particularly when gender criticism has not acquired a central position in Malaysian cultural politics. Given this situation, a possible site for exploring and contesting dominant communication patterns and creating alternative ones can take place within the arena of communication education which offers both theoretical and practical work. It is crucial to give support and credibility to efforts that present feminist ideologies. If women wish to be media practitioners, it would be helpful for women to have some media skills and knowledge in making programmes as well as sound ideas on promoting women's solidarity, autonomy and advancement in the realm of the media. An environment conducive and supportive to making women-oriented
programmes within the educational setting will also encourage students to innovate with new ideas and meanings. In other words, I would like to suggest that making women-oriented factual or fictional programmes or attempting media activities informed of gender perspectives could be encouraged in communication education. Both tutors and students can think about dominant norms and conventions that are gendered. They can discuss possible action plans and policies that offer alternative forms of producing and receiving knowledge, support women's work and enhance women's position in media organisations. This could enable students to see support for attempts to give voice and space for women's views in communication activities. In this way, the site of communication education could offer opportunities in pioneering new forms of newsmaking, film-making, script-writing, camera framing and editing techniques, particularly for students interested in disassembling ruling ideas and media conventions.

Practical work has become an integral feature of communication education in Malaysia. Rather than reading this as a constraint that leads to producing docile graduates who will accept dominant communication practices, I contend that practical work which is not abstracted from the context of critical study of the media can be used in the interests of social justice, development and developing people's citizenship. Most existing critiques of professional communication studies do not consider the possibility that these programmes could be sites for consciousness-raising and intellectual activity -- for challenging gender or class oppression or for asserting the value and power of working men and women. It is conceivable to consider communication education as potential sites for critical or liberatory teaching. In particular, this can be used to the advantage of marginal sectors like women's groups by interrogating dominant conventions and placing the production process under close scrutiny so that new directions can be developed. This is a conceptual advance for practice based courses as it would aim to illuminate the gender discourse in communication by questioning and assessing gendered knowledge, norms, values and ideas on communication activities and it would open up possibilities to the construction of alternative programmes which are gender sensitive.

Hence, my reading of practical activity does not support narrow views that advocate technical exercises that emulate industrial practice and that aim to lead students to fit into the current gendered order. I disagree with Rao and Becker who emphasise for this approach -- job-specific component that streams students for employment in communication industries. Reproducing media skills that are devoid of
critical inquiry serves only the power structures or dominant groups in society and will not be useful for gender initiatives.

Neither do I agree with Halloran and Schiller that the dual goals will not benefit the Programme. Rather I argue that this attempt will consolidate the students' educational experience, particularly in the case of the training of intending media practitioners at the undergraduate level. Specifically, critical views on gender in theoretical and practical work can increase students' understanding of the subordination of women in general, and in the field of communication in particular. Further, practical work can fruitfully benefit students, especially students who are interested in experimenting with alternative constructions. Those committed to the gender concern can also put their ideas into practice when they venture into creative and technical areas.

The views of Masterman, Tehranian and Curran on this approach are helpful despite the fact that they have not made an explicit case for the study of gender in communication education. Nonetheless, their views reaffirm the need to dismantle dominant ways of learning communication and to present a range of discourses that lead to a richer understanding of the media.

Hence I reiterate that the approach of integrating theory and media-skills practical activity can be beneficial, especially if ideas and conventions of hegemonic masculinity in the realm of communication are to be interrupted. What I am proposing here is that both the critical and the creative components of communication education need to be developed - whether as theory or conceptual understanding and as practical work or skills. In this way, what is offered is an educational process which seeks students to think critically and participate creatively in communication activities. More favourably, this could also lead to what Masterman (1991:9) discerns as,

.....part of the process of education for the organisation of individuals, for people to understand their rights and duties as citizens and for participation in fighting social injustices.

The effort to introduce a distinctive gender discourse that responds to both theoretical and practical components is important in the education and training of future media professionals. A gender perspective here entails questioning appearances and taken-for-granted practices, probing assumptions and implications. Its purpose here is to foster discussion on various forms of domination at personal and social levels. This approach allows the communication pedagogy to operate on a premise that
sees and treats communication as value-laden and contextualised. A gender discourse will benefit the study of communication as it will generate critical debates on gender, ethnicity, race and class and provoke discussion on programming policies and encourage students to chart alternative directions in gender-media relationships, particularly within the context of Malaysia.

6.4 Discussion

This study finds that the majority of communication students in the Programme are females. In the year 1992/93, females made-up of more than two thirds of the student enrolment - a typical pattern that has emerged in the Programme in the past few years. Unfortunately, these quantitative indicators do not necessarily mean that male domination is being challenged within this educational setting. More crucially, attention must be given to the position women and men occupy in the teaching and administrative positions. As presented in Chapter Two, 'power over' is often linked with hierarchical forms of control over women in the organisation and in the educational setting. In this case-study, women tutors encompass a small proportion, that is one third of the composition of the Programme's academic members. All the professors and the positions of administrative authority were held by men. Women were excluded in any positions of leadership as they were not in any key positions. Further, there was no representation of women in the ranks of Professors and Associate Professors. The small proportion of women present in the authoritative administrative positions and the absence of women in academic ranks reveals patterns of male domination in the formal structure of the Programme.

Power in the formal structure offers the capacity to influence the ideas of staff members, the ability to obtain resources and mobilise resources as well as the ability to accomplish goals and tasks. In the structure of a traditional organisation, the capacity to initiate innovation and to offer opportunities for gender initiatives is highly dependent on persons who command higher ranks in the hierarchical structure of an organisation. If women are not visible in formal leadership positions, they will have less opportunities to gain access to resources and to produce change. Both top-bottom and bottom-up efforts are needed to sustain an agenda that could contribute to gender empowerment both to media and communication education. Efforts are needed to clearly highlight the case for gender issues in the philosophy and the objectives underpinning the Programme and to work towards a more inclusive curriculum. An increased participation of women in communication education is useful so that this serves the purposes of increasing role models for communication students, for building women's leadership and for introducing gender perspectives into the curriculum of
communication education. I will take up the discussion on gender action plans in Chapter Nine. The visibility of women informed of gender perspectives in positions of power and in academic ranks has also implications for role-modelling. I would like to draw attention to this important mechanism in an educational setting.

**Role-modelling**

The visibility of women in communication education is linked crucially to role-modelling. Role-modelling is seen as an effective mechanism that can encourage female students to get their degrees and to achieve professionally. The visibility of women as professors is important for female students to enhance students' scholarly and journalistic achievements (Creedon, 1993; Grunig, 1993; Okunna, 1992; Schamber, 1989).

Taking the classes from female professors who have been successfully hired in predominantly male-dominated institutions can be identified as a potential source of motivation for female students to enter areas that are male-dominated. The presence of female leaders in key positions and in higher academic ranks can also help students to aspire for advancement in their personal and work lives. In other words, there is a need for female faculty role-models with whom female students can identify and discuss problems, anxieties and future plans. In particular, they could discuss about specific issues like gender stereotyping in the profession, wage and job discrimination, sexual harassment and career development. Such discussion can influence students to venture into new areas as well as build confidence in their own potentials. These support mechanisms are crucial to develop individual and collective empowerment for women. Therefore, the presence of women as professors and as key authoritative figures is important as this provides living exemplars and visible support to encourage female students to participate more actively in their profession. In the context of the present programme under study, it can be seen that one third of the faculty members were women during the period of this research. Clearly, more women, informed of gender perspectives are needed within communication programmes to support the gender agenda.

Thus, I argue that the visibility of more women in the faculty is crucial for role-modelling, but this mechanism will be more productive if these communication educators are supportive of gender issues. The programme should hence make efforts to recruit more female scholars who are interested in gender issues. This is important so that gender leaders can encourage students visualise career choices and at the same time alert them to be conscious of the difficulties such as exclusion, resistance,
criticism and rejection in the workforce. This will give prominence to gender issues in both the official and unofficial dimensions of the educational setting.

In this chapter, I have also raised debates on the models underpinning the curriculum. Interestingly, efforts to re-structure the curriculum in this Programme have not addressed adequately issues of gender in communication education. I will like to re-capitulate a few points that are relevant to issues on the curriculum.

Curriculum Structure

In examining the structural context of the educational setting in the USM Programme, this study documents that the debates on curriculum structure and content has largely been a male-oriented enterprise. Subsequently, the gender-question was not given due attention. In the past two decades, gender scholarship has evolved into a distinctive theoretical discourse and has been influential in many academic fields. The gender discourse is pertinent to the study of communication as gender is not only constructed in communication but it also informs communication (Wood, 1988). Despite the significance of gender as an organising principle of social relations, none of the external examiner's reports made an explicit case of the potential contribution of gender scholarship to communication studies.

In line with the Malaysian Higher Education Policy (HEP), communication education here combines the teaching of media skills and the imparting of knowledge on communication. Still, the main impetus in the Malaysian education scene has been to create graduates who would be engaged in communication-related industries and who would operate media systems, disseminate messages and produce programmes to aid development activities.

The notion that communication education prepares communication students for various communication related professions raises important questions, specifically in the case of doing gender in the field of communication. A number of significant curricular questions come to surface. What selections and organisations of knowledge are made available to students? How is knowledge treated? Which knowledge is made available to whom? Who benefits from a particular selection, organisation, treatment and distribution of knowledge? These questions have implications for the future directions of communication education and media development in Malaysia.

I believe that curricula goals and texts that minimise social and intellectual diversity, particularly on gender media issues will mean support for currently dominant
groups and the male status quo. If potential communicators are being offered knowledge in an environment that continues to reproduce gendered ideas by providing an education that devalues women and knowledge on gender issues, how can these aspiring communicators be expected to stop reproducing patriarchal and oppressive beliefs when they themselves participate in communication activities in future? Making a case for gender scholarship, I have advanced my viewpoints on how both theoretical work and practical media skills can be made problematic. It is critical to question the dominant patterns of knowledge and production techniques offered in the study of the media.

In discussing the curriculum and the model adopted by the USM Programme, I have drawn attention to the controversy of the theory-practice alliance. Rather than dismissing the practical component as cultural reproduction or as technical expressions unworthy of debate, I have argued that this component could be developed to critical inquiry of issues in practical activity in media production. I suggest that it is useful to consider the possibility of using both the theoretical and practical components of the curriculum for challenging existing media arrangements, media routines and conventions in media policies and programming practices that obscure the meaningful participation of women, and the trivialisation of their voices and their interests.

Communication education has therefore a vital role and responsibility in influencing the attitudes, beliefs and values of intending communication professionals during the period of university education. If the site of communication education is to contribute to gender media empowerment, it is imperative to assess the current realities of the curriculum structure and content.

A point to be taken here is that communication education should also look into the need to serve the larger groups in society that experience difficulties particularly within the context of development in Malaysia. One of the aims of the Communication Programme raises concern for professionalism. However, a fundamental component of professionalism has to encompass dedication and social commitment to the public, and women who form half of the public have to be given due attention. In order for this to work effectively, critical perspectives on communication, specifically on gender will have to be present in the curriculum. The gender discourse can be advanced productively if the analytical side of the theoretical and practical work are consciously forged by communication tutors. What I am proposing here is that both the critical and the creative components of communication education need to be developed - whether as theory or conceptual understanding and as practical work or skills. In this
way, what is offered is an educational process which seeks students to think critically and participate creatively in communication activities. This I believe would be a fruitful approach as it would entail progressive development of a critical understanding which seeks to extend knowledge of the media, including gender perspectives to develop the students' analytic and creative skills through critical and practical work.

In this chapter, I have continued to highlight that the curriculum is a process of social organisation and it is the context that situates and shapes the curriculum. In the last chapter, I presented insights into the socio-cultural context that can potentially affect the curriculum. In this chapter, I have described part of the structural context, that is the more immediate setting of the Programme. The organisational structure of the Programme currently operates under male hegemony where men make up the majority of the Programme and are in positions of power and in higher academic ranks. I have raised that this has implications for role-modelling and for curriculum-making, particularly when most communication students are females.

In the case of the USM Programme, I have drawn attention to its current curriculum review exercise. I have raised several contending viewpoints on the integration of theory and practice which underpins the model used in this Programme. I have stated that the theory-practice alliance is useful for communication studies as this gives opportunities to reflect analytically on industrial norms and in exploring different ideas and practices in media production. Within the discussion on the curriculum, I have argued the case for gender scholarship in both theoretical and practical components. Considering that gender is produced so smoothly and pervasively in the realm of the media, I have proposed that the curriculum should integrate gender perspectives to assess current gendered media practices and to give support to students to do programmes that are informed of academic gender debates. I have argued that this could benefit the gender media struggles, particularly in the Malaysian context, as the knowledge on gender perspectives and the media skills students receive in communication education can enable students to attempt changes within the constraints of the male-dominated communication industry.

In examining the structural context, it is crucial to place emphasis on communication tutors who are key curriculum-makers and important actors who are teaching tomorrow's communicators. In the next chapter, I examine the views of the communication tutors on gender issues in communication education. Their general ideological perspectives on gender matters will be an important factor in explaining the
significance accorded to gender issues in curriculum materials and in thinking about
developing a plan for action in the Programme.
CHAPTER SEVEN

COMMUNICATION TUTORS: VIEWS ON GENDER ISSUES

In examining gender issues in education, it is important to observe that educators are important bearers who can maintain gender regimes or contribute towards change. The values, beliefs and assumptions of educators or tutors about gender, equality and education usually affects their work as these are likely to be reflected in the professional practice, whether consciously or unconsciously. A major concern which forms the basis of this research aims to gain some understanding of the ideas and views of the people engaged in communication education with regard to gender issues. The exercise of exploring the views of communication tutors is vital as this would give some understanding of the perceptions of the curriculum-makers in the USM programme. These perceptions also form part of the ideological frameworks that are embedded in the hidden curriculum in this educational setting.

I have structured the presentation of tutors' views into three major themes: general views on gender and the position of women in society, views on gender and communication in Malaysia and views on course content and curriculum practice.

7.1 Views on Gender Relationships and the Position of Women in Society

In the first instance, the tutors were asked to give their views on gender relationships and their thoughts on the position of women in the Malaysian society. All the tutors stated explicitly that women and men should be seen as equal beings in society. Their views on the position of women fell into two major categories, those who believed that the position of women was favourable and those who felt otherwise.

In the first category, nine tutors, including women emphatically pointed out that women enjoy increased employment opportunities, even in male dominated areas of work and this has brought to their attention to the improved changes in women's participation in society. Indeed, most of them placed primary focus upon the participation of women in the labour force to account for gender equality. The following were some comments that offered an optimistic view of women's position in society.

AF: It is interesting that you have raised this question......I haven't really thought much about it. I think women have become more conscious of their status and roles particularly those in urban areas and amongst educated women. There are opportunities for women and women play dominant roles in society than they did 20 years ago. In the past, women's role
was predetermined and was confined to home, family, dominated and controlled by family, but now a lot of women have ventured into different areas of work.

BM: The changes are so evident. I believe that there has been a lot of improvement, especially in employment and education. Women are more outgoing and bold. They hold better posts, not like those days. Women now are more progressive and will attempt to take up major challenges. Many of them have got higher education. Their lives have improved in many ways......better pay, more women have say in what they want to do. Jobs which were previously monopolised by men are now open to women. They have become leaders in different areas and this clearly indicates that their capability has been acknowledged by society and by men.

The emphasis on the achievements and the improved status of women was linked principally to the increased participation of women in the labour force. Since, women were seen to have equal opportunities of enjoying higher education and in seeking employment, this was taken as an indication that the issue of gender was not a major problem. One tutor offered the following view:

CM: There are more women working, and many of them are holding key positions in important areas.....A few years ago, we didn't have a lot of women taking up different roles. People are aware of women's issues and more and more people are getting aware each day. The situation is better now for women.

When a further question was posed to ascertain if these tutors thought that all was then well for women and that women were no longer a subordinate group, there were varied responses. Interestingly, all the women in the first category who had first given an optimistic view of the position of the women, acknowledged that there were still some problems with women's living conditions, especially in the private domain; whereas the men in this first group defended their views that women were not an oppressed group in society. There were differences in opinion between women and men who had first suggested that the current situation was favourable to women. Although one tutor admitted that the overall position of women was better, she added that this did not mean women were no longer confronting problems in their lives. She highlighted that the position of women varied according to different class structures.

AF: There are still major difficulties for women.....one group which is badly oppressed are married working women. They are
often involved in jobs that are most tedious and they still have responsibilities of bringing up the children and other household needs. This becomes worse in lower income families like the plantation sectors, where women are poorly paid.

Meanwhile another female tutor who had held the view that there had been positive changes in the status of Malaysian women, felt that more efforts were still needed to help women. She pointed out that although she thought that women were now more successful and had better access to employment and education opportunities, there were still some social and cultural constraints that affected women.

DF: Majority of the men are still chauvinistic....thinking the world revolves around them, taking women for granted to do things for them, treating women as possessions. We still have problems for battered wives, factory workers whose labour is exploited and women are paid low wages, estate workers......who live in poor conditions. So there is still room for more improvement. Women face harassment at work and need to overcome this problem. Women also cannot be expected to carry the image of superwoman, who has to do it all, and do it well. Men have to share women's points of view.

Another female tutor noted that women's position in the home and family life had not changed even though women were more active participants in the public sector. She observed that although women's progress was clearly visible in the employment sector, the same could not be said about their private life, and that women were still seen as subservient to men in the family.

EF: Men and women have to work things out, like sharing the household, family burdens. If men shirk the shared responsibilities, then the poor women have to shoulder double burden, and this will affect the quality of their home life.

It was observed from the comments of the female tutors that though they held an optimistic view of women's status in society, they were aware that there were gender conflicts in the private and the public spheres. In contrast, the men who held an optimistic view of women's position in society appeared to approach the question of women's subordination in a nonchalant manner. Some of them felt that if there were problems, this was related to women, who were inadequate themselves or who
expected things unrealistically. The responses that were given seemed quite intriguing and demonstrated that some of their views that were biased against women.

One tutor noted that men were more suitable for certain jobs than women and this could not be read as subordination or oppression of women.

GM: There are certain matters in which men are more suitable because they are stronger and have the physical ability to endure it. Besides.....it is better for men to do certain things like in the construction sector, transport equipment operators, forestry etc.....If women are not included in these sectors, it does not imply that women are being subordinated or discriminated...the problem arises with women when women want to do things that are more suited to men's ability.

Another male tutor shared similar ideas that women cannot expect to have everything. He believed that men were better and more capable in some areas.

BM: For example, in war, you would not expect women to go to the front-line. Although women can be trained in the army, it is not favourable for women to fight or be killed, in fact the norms of our culture expect us to safeguard women from violence.

Using the concept of natural differences between males and females, the views of the above tutors offer an argument which places focus on men's physical ability. It appears that women should not dispute that men are more stronger than men, and therefore more suitable for certain tasks. This view perpetuates the mystification of women as the weaker, therefore subordinate sex. Raising gender issues was perceived narrowly as women demanding access to work that were physically and culturally not suitable for them. Thus, the process of gendering, which is a social construction, becomes legitimate by emphasising the physiological differences between males and females. From the basis of such comments, it was possible to see how power accorded to men was justified as part of the natural order. These data findings reveal that there was very little understanding regarding gender oppression and the constructed process of gendering as problematic.

The gender movement is concerned with all forms of male dominance and discrimination against women. It is also against all forms of physical coercion which men have inflicted on women in rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment, assault and brutality, pornography and constant representations of violence to women in media
texts. Further, the gender project aims to expose the more subtle and institutional sorts of power which men have over women in politics, communication, business, academia, the professions and the workplace. As discussed in Chapter Two, these are less likely to involve physical violence but work towards gaining legitimate consent and are often linked with hierarchical forms of control, with authoritarian forms of domination or with confrontational and competitive personal styles which imply contempt for women. These subtle forms of gender control operate invisibly and manifest in culture, opinion, perceptions and daily experiences that elude our consciousness. It gives rise to cultural conventions, habitual reactions and general practices that belittle women, overlook them or shunt them into places of subordination by giving them less significance.

In the data, the overt forms of male dominance were rejected as isolated cases while there was not much awareness on the subtle manifestation that place women in a subordinate position. The poor understanding about gender equality among some tutors is a cause for concern as they carry narrow and sometimes misleading ideas about the struggles of women. Some of them believed that gender equality had been attained in Malaysia as there were no barriers to women to join the labour force. Women's subordination was seen as an issue that emerged only in the 'excessive' demands of women themselves who wanted to be involved in all aspects of working life, even if 'it was unsuitable' for them. Clearly, these views suggest the lack of general awareness on gender perspectives. Indeed, one tutor appeared to have much difficulty in accepting the notion of women as an oppressed group, who encounter various social tensions. He believed that I had misconstrued the whole question of women's oppression and was surprised that I was making an issue with regard to the status of women in Malaysia. He fiercely contended that women were not being subordinated.

HM: No, you miss the point. Women are not generally subordinated in Malaysia. It is only an exaggeration to claim that women are subordinated. Realistically, there is no such occurrences...there are of course some isolated cases where there are reports of acts of mindless beating up, aggression and victimisation. To my mind, if women are thinking that they are suffering or facing problems, these are probably relevant to the less educated...traditional housewives in rural and urban areas, but these women are in such positions not to their choosing, but they are there to sheer luck.....All in all, women are well looked after and they seem to behave in a manner best suited to their level of achievements......Malaysian women are accorded status accordingly.
This tutor upheld the view that gender was not problematic in Malaysia. Rather he felt that this was a non-issue and wished to maintain a view that all women were already granted an equal status in society in accordance with Islam.

The question of women's subordination was not perceived as a major social issue among several male tutors. This was not surprising given the limited and ambiguous understanding of gender problems. While describing about the position of women in society, interestingly, no reference was made to any difficulties that arise from the private - home and family life. Although the female tutors held the view that the status of women had improved, they nevertheless made references to the presence of gender problems, particularly in the private realm, something which they could relate to in their gendered lives. They also identified some major problems like sex discrimination, sexual harassment, exploitation of labour, poor wages, poor working conditions and juggling double burdens as major issues that still warrant attention.

Several of the male tutors on the other hand, did not seem to recognise that the subordination of women was a relevant concern and that most of the root problems of women stemmed from the domain of family and home life, i.e. the private. This appeared to be unacknowledged or became unacceptable discourses in raising gender issues. The home and family links did not emerge as topics that are pertinent in relating to women's position in society. Instead these male tutors thought that it would be impossible to satisfy all the 'unrealistic' demands advanced by women. It appeared that there were limitations to women's interests. Further, these male tutors upheld the idea that since women had gained visibility in economic participation, gender was not a problem. Consequently, some of these male tutors felt that women's liberation had already been achieved and hence raising gender issues was irrelevant and tiresome.

Contrary to this position, a minority of communication tutors in the Programme insisted right from the start that there were numerous problematic issues regarding gender and the position of women in society. Four tutors insisted that the position of women cannot be taken as satisfactory. For one tutor, there was much inconsistency in the way women were treated in society. He offered cautionary notes regarding the insensitivity to gender issues and the failure to recognise that women have an important contribution to make in defining their roles and needs in much broader terms.

IM: Women are increasingly taking up positions in important sectors but their presence does not automatically mean that they are concerned with women's rights or the welfare of other
groups of women. Women in working class groups in particular are still subjected to various forms of exploitation. The patriarchy system and male chauvinism at work place is still prevalent and current capitalist endeavours exploit female sexuality.

Another tutor questioned the assumption that increasing the number of women into the labour market would necessarily mean a better status for women.

KF: We need to recognise that women are an oppressed group but this oppression does not affect all women in a similar fashion. Different groups of women experience different problems, and women have been found to oppress other women.......More women are working inside the homes and outside the homes. Women from upper classes can afford domestic help but most women are still doing dual jobs. It is a popular belief that work outside home means liberation of women, but this is not always so......sometimes, it is just that women are more exploited. They may get some financial benefits, but their role is expanding... They do not lead problem-free lives and their problems are not seen as important public debates.

This tutor reiterated that woman have not been heard or made visible as equal partners, particularly in the development process. She made the point that there are barriers that keep women in inferior or subordinate positions and that there are major gender imbalances in the access and acquisition of resources and benefits of development. In fact, she argued that very little public and professional sensitivity to the realities of women's lives in the development process has been raised in the Malaysian context.

KF: Development is a process that brings enormous transformations in people's lives. It can bring opportunities that work towards personal growth, active participation and improvements in society.....But, it can also bring about problems, particularly when the views of people are not heard in rapid changing environments. In this case, we have much evidence that points out that women have been left out in development discussions. Worse still, many of these development programmes have negative implications for women. Women's voices, their ideas and experiences would surely help to identify the problems at hand and assist in the development process but little attention is accorded to them......so little is known about women's lives, especially in the situation of poor classes. Ironically, many people are under the impression that women in Malaysia are privileged
and do not encounter conflicts. But then again, this is also due to the fact that there is not much discussion on gender in the wider society in the first place. Very little published literature has examined the impact of change on women's lives, the effects these changes have on traditional family relationships and the prevailing social practices that seem to block women's advancement.

The common-sense views that define the progress of women in quantitative terms was raised as a problematic issue by one female tutor. She asserted that the position of women varied in different areas.

**JF:** But you cannot only think in terms of quantity alone. To a certain extent, especially women in the field of law have brought some efforts to redress laws that affect women negatively.....various aspects have been discussed like maternity protection, domestic violence, income tax laws, laws relating to sexual offence.....

In the realm of politics, it is quite a different matter altogether. Some prominent female ministers have openly declared that they do not want to be associated with women's issues. If we have such political figures who are in positions of authority but who do not advocate gender problems then, we can anticipate a sorry state of affairs. As it is, there are only very few notable women engaged in politics.....but then again, they are typecast and attached to welfare departments, and if there are women in other ministries, they don't appear interested in women's issues. I don't think you can get much help from female politicians in advancing gender issues.

The subordinate status of women in Malaysia was eloquently articulated in the observations of a male tutor who believed that there had been no real drastic change in the position of women.

**LM:** Overall, 'genderwise', the inequality is very apparent. There are, I feel a number of reasons for this. One, of course, is religious interpretation, where many people of different religious persuasions take a conservative view of what their religions say of women. For example that women should be totally responsible for bringing up children, taking care of home, keeping the hubby happy.....This is of course related to the second point, culture where local ethnic culture also share and reinforce this patriarchal view of gender roles in society. Thirdly, again related to the above two points, there's the problem of Malaysian women themselves, generally, who
unquestioningly subscribe to this subordination. Fourthly, there's the societal infrastructure, for example, laws and legal bias.....shariah courts that aid to subordinate women. In this regard, the constant complaints against the Islamic shariah courts and their unfair handling of women's rights, for example in divorce cases, is illustrative.

The comments that were made demonstrate the tutor's awareness towards some of the gender tensions that are present in the Malaysian scenario. He maintained that there are major challenges for women and suggested that religions can be interpreted to submit women to a subordinate status. He linked these thoughts in explaining the status of women in the Malaysian cultural context and the challenges that face gender initiatives in Malaysia.

LM: These challenges, I believe, operate at different levels, in relation to the different experiences of different groups of women in Malaysia. The first major challenge primarily for women at the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum, is for them to be educated as to their rights and to be informed of their subordination. The second equally important, challenge is for the middle class, successful, professional women. They need to be aware of the subordination of the previous group and to possibly help to overcome this. This is not going to be very easy, of course given the fact that women themselves subjugate women. Hence the question of class needs to be considered, together with those of religion and ethnic affiliation.

The different voices and perceptions of communication tutors are valuable and instructive in explaining the positioning of gender issues in communication education. Their responses illuminate some of the diverse ideas and the contradictions that emerge when communication educators in the Programme speak about gender. These varied responses continue to emerge when the communication tutors were asked to give their ideas on gender and communication in Malaysia.

7.2 Views on Gender and Communication Media in Malaysia

The tutors in the Programme provided useful views, sometimes contradictory, in describing some of the gender controversies in the Malaysian communication scenario. Their discussion focused on two major issues: the participation of women in media organisations and the representation of women in media content.
Women in the Media Profession

Seven of the tutors felt that the current situation in the media was encouraging as more women were visible in this sector. Some believed that this was an important achievement which depicted the satisfactory situation in terms of gender in the Malaysia media.

AF: There are many opportunities for women as the media organisations are taking a lot of women. A large number of our female students have gained successful employment and are doing rather well in their jobs. Over the past few years, many women have become visible particularly in the field of advertising, public relations and journalism and many top positions are being held by women. Women are given important assignments and they are treated like their male counterparts. There is also less discrimination and chances are there for women to be promoted, if they show initiative, hard work and talent.

Another communication tutor supported this favourable view on the position of female professionals in the communication sector in Malaysia.

EF: At one time, this was an area that was largely dominated by men only, but things have changed and there are more women in this field. We see a lot of women as news readers, reporters and as hosts of various magazine programmes in television. Numerous women's magazines have sprung up in the past few years, giving lots of exposure to successful women and writing about topics that interest women. These are welcoming developments in the Malaysian context. I think women are competing successfully with men and are proving that they are capable in this field.

Gender scholarship is not about a simple notion of women against individual men; this body of knowledge is linked to male dominance and the gendered nature of social relations, processes and institutions. From the basis on the views of most of the tutors, it appeared that the gender question was largely interpreted as one of women against men at the individual level. There was little recognition to the various structures in society like culture, tradition, organisational routines, curriculum and pedagogy and sexual politics of everyday life which engage in male dominance. Some of the ideas that were presented by the tutors implied that women and men competed on an equal basis, and men were not to be blamed if there were 'inadequacies with women'. Such responses reinforce the hegemonic ideology which defines that 'women are the problem' and the need for women to be more like men to prove themselves as
capable workers. One female tutor advanced the view that the opportunities for women in the media profession are present, but women have not been adopting the 'right' attitudes that would lead them to better prospects.

**JF:** I don't think you want to listen to this....Let's not put too much blame on males and assume that it is because of them that women do not get promoted. Let me be the devil's advocate here and say that women themselves have to prove themselves. You know males are like that.....so women have to work hard to show them that they are capable.

This female tutor believed that if women were to prove themselves, then, women had to act like men or follow the prevailing rules of the organisation which were assumed to be affecting women and men equally. Aspects like multiple roles, responsibilities at home, childbearing years did not seem as major factors that impinge upon women's lives and their work performance. Here the given masculinist order is accepted as 'natural' and not viewed as problematic. It was deemed that women have to conform to these ruling ideas to attain success like men.

**JF:** Well, if men work hard to get their promotions, women should learn from them and find out what are the criteria for career advancement. You must remember that here, women are basically in a male domain, so it is no point wasting time, whining and complaining......Women should just do their work. Just do it and prove it that women are also equally good. Just make your presence be felt. You have to learn to work within the system.

I remember talking to some editors and they said that if men were promoted, it was because they gave them less trouble......well, they said that with female staff, you have to give time off for maternity, they are forever coming up with excuses like: ...I can't work overtime because there's nobody to take care of the kids. Sometimes, I tend to agree with the editors. Some of the female journalists that I know, they come up with all sorts of excuses like: I can't work overtime because my husband doesn't allow me; I have to pick up the children from classes and so on.......In the first place, if you decide to work, then you have to put your house in proper order. You can't come up with such excuses.....this will then be used against other women. If you want to compete for promotion, these are factors that you have to be aware of......I think you need to be aware of that you are working against the old boys club....I don't know whether there is a conscious effort to disallow women to hold high positions in media.
organisations...I dare not comment on that. It is not a conspiracy against women, I don't want to think of it that way. I don't want to put the blame on females themselves, but women have not proved themselves, I think...this is my viewpoint. I could be wrong, but I believe that women should come forward in a more positive manner.

Ironically, this tutor believed that the ruling system is one that will still bring benefit to women in media professions if women could successfully fulfil the necessary criteria set by the organisation. The suggestion advanced here was that if women aspired to attain higher positions, they were expected to adhere to existing organisational practices. This assumption can be refuted as there have been studies elsewhere that assert that women do not compete on a fair and equal basis. The argument here is that in essence, female media professionals are expected to adjust to the criteria of job conditions which are tailored more suitably for men, for example high performance in youth and no consideration to women's charge in childbearing and child rearing activities Gallagher (1981, 1987).

Some of the tutors' ideologies about gender and their perceptions of women's involvements in the media showed little recognition and awareness of the conflicts that women encounter in the media profession. It was commonly believed women and men had equal chances of participation and promotion. Many of them submitted the view that the underrepresentation of women in senior positions were due to the reason that women were not interested or could not cope with the responsibilities.

BM: The presence of certain limitations in women themselves is a major factor in explaining the limited promotions of women. The orientation of the profession is very challenging and demanding, and requires socialising largely with men. Women have to endure these expectations. Women's commitment to home and family and their physical conditions sometimes stand in their way. Also the safety of women has to be considered.

The major argument here associates the media profession as one that belongs to men, who are seen as more competent and suitable to be engaged in this field. It also encapsulates an idea which suggests that for women to be successful in this profession, they would have to avoid family responsibilities or childbearing. These aspects, are however not relevant to men as dominant traditions allow men to enjoy family life with children. Of course, this would not interfere in their profession as their wives will 'naturally' take the major responsibility for the upbringing of the children. Female media professionals, on the other hand, cannot expect the same from their
partners. Rather than raising problems regarding the structural forces of patriarchy that shape and justify women's subordinate lives, and the lack of support systems and facilities for child care, particularly in the private domain, some tutors linked gender inequality in the media profession to the notion of 'women as the problem'.

The conflicts and contradictions faced by women clearly did not get emphasis in reflecting about the participation of women in the media profession. The experiences of power structures within women's own families and the institutional hierarchy, daily routines and cultural practices that impinge upon women's lives and create gender conflicts did not receive any serious thought. An overriding belief was that if women were to 'make it' successfully in the media profession, they have to show competence and work like men. Curiously, in this case, some women tutors succumbed to a conviction that women were unfit to be promoted if they did not effectively manage family responsibilities. It was accepted uncritically, that women competed with men on equal grounds and had opportunities to get to the top. They conceded to a belief that if women were interested in a career and in attaining promotions, they should be perfectly aware of the conscious effort that is needed to prioritise profession over home and family.

In this sense, it can be seen that even women in communication education have actively defended the consensus. For them, thinking about gender issues was seen as something that incorporated women into the prevailing systems, while the systems themselves were not challenged. This is an obvious area of concern as such assumptions will still perpetrate consent and compliance to the dominance of hegemonic ideas in the curriculum and students may not be encouraged to problematise gender in relation to media professionalism and media routines during the course of their education.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that the Programme appeared as a terrain of contesting viewpoints and positions as there were a number of tutors who did not share the idea that the situation in media profession was favourable for women. Contrary to the previous views, they conceived that the current gender arrangements in media institutions as problematic and complex. It was constantly reiterated that women were poorly underrepresented in the media, particularly in key decision-making positions. One tutor believed that the increase of women in areas like public relations and advertising had not really benefited women.

KF: It may be true that more women are visible, especially in areas like public relations and advertising, but how has their
participation contributed to the well being and progress of women? To what extent, have women who make decisions about media content constructed alternative perspectives? Is there any attempt to challenge dominant constructions of women as pleasure objects, as passive, traditional and subservient individuals......We have not heard about women's lives, their struggles, but the major media concern has been to see women as consumers - targets for advertising. Actually some key professionals are so apathetic to gender issues.....They are unaware of the implications of these value-laden images and messages and seem perfectly happy to capitalise on femininity and the use of women as sex symbols, as glamorous objects. Women producers, reporters and copywriters have narrowly defined women's needs as one that concerns with looks, a slim figure and materialistic lifestyles.

One tutor disagreed that women stood a fair chance when it came to career advancement.

DF: It is surprising...in all communication education programmes, women form the majority of communication students. Every year, we produce large number of females for the communication industry....but what happens to them? Where did they go? Are they being promoted? What sort of work are they doing and what are their experiences? Is it really true that women compete fairly in the media profession? There is some evidence which pointed out to a few cases of discrimination against women. In order to be promoted, a woman has to work so hard, twice as hard as her male colleagues, put twice the effort in order to be recognised.....yet, there are cases where women were capable and competent, but were overlooked when selecting candidates for promotion.

Several other tutors also noted that the increase of women in public relations, broadcasting and advertising brought negative consequences where overt femininity and emphasis on physical looks have formed an integral element for women interested in the media profession.

OM: Women are not taken seriously and the primary focus is on women's looks, their feminine traits rather than their working capabilities. It gives an impression that this is a field for women who have to look good to be good......

Attention was also drawn to the argument that the increase of women had not led to empowerment or the liberation of women. Instead it was also perceived that
this has perpetuated the continuous gender inequality. Some tutors observed that it would be quite fruitless if large numbers of women entered the communication profession but were uninformed of gender struggles, particularly if these women sought to benefit from the capitalistic and patriarchal order by exploiting other women.

The controversy of the status women in Malaysia, particularly in the media profession was well articulated by one tutor. He explained that there are intricate complexities and conflicts not only between women and men but among women themselves too.

LM: As practitioners...journalists, broadcasters, advertising executives, public relations executives, there are loads of women. So, on the surface, things may appear rosy. But closer examination will indicate that they are largely located at the lower and middle strata of these professions. The major players and the major decision-makers are still men.

He stressed that it was naive to assume that women had a fair chance when it comes to the promotion of women in the media. A few points were raised for consideration.

LM: Ethnic background....there's no running away from this in Malaysia. It applies for both men and women. It applies in newspaper organisations...New Straits Times, Star, Utusan, just as it does in TV...RTM and TV3, as it does in media education in universities.......For certain media jobs, as in presenters and newscasters, looks tend to play a major role. We can have bald news presenters, but it'll be a cold day in hell when we have a bald female presenter......

The ethnicity factor, as stated in Chapter Five, plays an important part in Malaysian social context. Social imbalances are dominantly defined along ethnic lines and an increase of Malay participation in economic and social activities is a matter of policy. Media institutions also respond to national policies to ensure distribution of places for the dominant Malay ethnic group. In this sense, this has opened many opportunities for many Malay women. Hence, this tutor rightly raised the point that it is important to recognise this ethnic dimension in thinking about gender imbalances in Malaysia.

From the fieldwork data, the tutors who were critical of women's position in the media profession appeared to be concerned with a recent tendency in the media to
focus principally on women's looks in considering the position and the promotion of women in certain areas of this profession. Their concern on this matter implies that it is likely that the involvement of women as objects of pleasure and symbols of sexuality was gaining importance rather than engaging women in the capacity of citizenry and their abilities to contribute effectively and intelligently to the process of development. The exploitation of women's sexuality in relation to the communication profession is an area of concern as it implicates female identities related to this profession. Clearly, these controversies resound the need for more research to explore this problem and how it might affect the representation and identity of women in this profession. Tutors can then engage students in this discussion more fruitfully in communication courses.

Media Content

A couple of tutors believed that the media content was satisfactory and that the media were actively stimulating discussion about women's concerns.

AF: Many gender issues are reflected and perpetrated by the media. Progress that relate to important knowledge like women's health, nutrition and other cultural activities are presented. Some of the programmes also show that women can participate in different work and hobbies and be successful in maintaining their family responsibilities. Media gives coverage to women on information on everyday events. The newspapers have women's pages that carry important messages for women. On television, women's programmes like 'Nona' help to create interest and increase awareness. They have shown some substantial issues that cater for women executives who hope to advance their achievements in their career, particularly in the corporate field. The media effectively create, maintain and generate the awareness that these are potential areas that women can aim towards a more successful life.

The above comments gave interesting insights into the tutor's belief systems. It is worthy to note that the tutor acknowledged that issues which relate to women's participation in corporate and management sectors were useful but failed to recognise that most of these media stories have a middle or upper class bias and encourage women to aim for "a slice of the capitalistic action"\textsuperscript{45}, rather than looking into these fundamental structures that oppress women. Interestingly, it did not occur to this tutor that this is problematic as these media stories are manifestations or expressions that pertain to the interests of a minority group of women, whereas the large number of

\textsuperscript{45}This is a borrowed phrase from Bungkle (1978) cited in Blundell, 1992:200.
women in the Malaysian labour force are positioned in the lower rungs of employment and are struggling with lower levels of income. The media's neglect in carrying stories on these low income women were not raised as significant issues of inquiry in the views of the concerned tutor.

Again the class factor is relevant and it can be seen that the media's position in carrying stories dominantly of business women has not been identified as unproblematic. Women who have made into the corporate sector have also the means to employ labour to assist with the private and professional responsibilities. They are also in a better position to acquire more material goods for their family, and therefore able to tell stories of success. The media silence on the social conflicts of lower income women's lives did not emerge as a concern for this tutor. Perhaps, given that most of the tutors themselves come from upper and middle class backgrounds and relative comfortable settings, the tensions that are present in the lives of many women, at the lower-income level becomes obscured. The silence on gender controversies in public discussion and in the media sustains a belief that gender is a non-issue, and this hegemonic ideology is so powerful that it has been taken aboard unquestioningly by some communication tutors, both males and females.

While a minority (two) of communication tutors were happy with the media content, a majority (eleven) of the Programme members found various problems with the representation of women in media content.

These tutors pointed out that some social issues that carried women's perspectives might be provided by the media, but these stories were ghettoised into Women's Pages or Women's Programmes. The tutors noted that even then, these social controversies did not appear as regular items. To them, what appeared consistently were news items that domesticate women to household duties and encouraged them to be better wives and mothers. These tutors were critical of the narrow knowledge and information that was offered to women by the media and crucially to the major part the media play in giving constant attention to ideas that demand women to look beautiful, to prepare delicious food and to maintain healthy, happy families.

DF: There is not much attention that is given to evaluating development programmes and the progress, if any, achieved by women. We don't find the media reporting about obstacles that hinder women's well-being. Gender issues resurface only when there are some occasions that warrant for it, for example, International Women's Day, then we hear all the
aspirations and ideas and projects that will be carried out for
women's benefit. But the media do not continuously carry
these activities or reports of women's participation. Just look
at women's pages.......every week, a special focus is given to
beauty ideas, recipes, fashion and hobbies. These items always
take prominence in women's pages. Once in a while we come
across problems like domestic violence, divorce..... While we
can hear developments and trends in fashion circles, gossip
about actresses, the development in women's daily lives, more
substantial issues.....how they feel about what is going around
them are not present. It seems that the media think that these
matters cannot be debated intelligently by women.

Similar views were offered by most tutors. The demeaning portrayal of
women's images is a topic that most tutors talked about at great length. They raised
discussion regarding stereotyped images of women and men in advertisements, in
drama and in game shows.

LM: One gets the feeling that the Malaysian media 'de-genderises'
issues. That is, the gender angle is buried. When it does
emerge as in women's programme, stereotyped images of
women in the kitchen, in fashion are presented.......Hence, far
from stimulating discussions on gender conflicts, the media
tends to project unstimulating stereotypes of women which, I
presume the media feel will improve the quality of life for
women in the kitchen, in fashion etc.....

When the tutors were asked to explain the increasing number of
women and the continuous limited representation of women in media
content, many of them asserted that they had not really thought about it or
were not sure of the factors that caused these portrayals of women. One
tutor explained that it is in this sense that feminist theory has much to
contribute to communication studies, and particularly to the educational
training and professional socialisation of future media professionals. She
argued that the media content remains the same because of the impact of
patrarchy - the systematic subordination of women by men and the
concentration of media power in the hands of a few men.

KF: The increase of women will not necessarily mean that there
will be a radical change in media content, particularly if these
female media professionals are not aware of gender
subordination and are uninformed of gender perspectives. We
live in a male culture and it is not surprising to find that many
women have internalised dominant ideas when constructing
masculinity and femininity as these are taken as 'natural'. The status quo is thus reinforced when women themselves perpetuate the sexist ideology.

The tutors' views on gender and communication relationships reveal the diverse range of competing and sometimes contradictory ideas that make up the Programme. On the whole, the data findings that were presented show that there is a lack of analytic attention that is given to gender issues in communication. Since there are very few communication studies on gender, there is very little literature to document the state of affairs with regard to the representation of women, both in the material and symbolic realms of the media. Most of the tutors' views were based on personal observations and perceptions, and not informed by any systematic, indepth research. Considering that feminism engages a marginal space in Malaysia, it was extremely difficult to discuss gender issues in a more elaborate manner. Only the tutors who had problematised gender in the first place and who were familiar with gender perspectives were able to discuss the problematic nature of gender-communication relationships in more informed and thoughtful ways.

7.3 Views on Curriculum Content

The tutors varied in their teaching experience and in their educational backgrounds. In the last chapter, I have noted almost all of them had received their Masters or Doctoral degrees from the United States or Britain. I have also drawn attention to the male domination in the positions of power in administrative practice and in the academic ranks. Out of the five women present in this Programme at the time of this research, only two of them held doctorates. Three of the female academics identified gender as one area of interest to them, but only one had identified herself as a feminist scholar and had conducted numerous research and published articles on gender related issues in communication. Among men, three held doctorates, three men were associate professors and there were two professors.

The tutors in the Programme were asked to describe some of the goals they aimed to accomplish in their courses. As educators and curriculum makers, they have the opportunity to articulate curriculum goals, to introduce new materials and alternative viewpoints of making sense of society and communication and to encourage students to assess communication systems, media routines and the media products critically.

The tutors asserted that they play crucial roles in this field of education. They gave some comments with regard to their aspirations.
JF: I see myself playing an important role in this educational setting. I hope my teaching has a positive effect towards preparing complete citizens. I am concerned to give more confidence to the students to get jobs in related areas in the media industry.

CM: I aim to enrich understanding, to cross fertilise ideas and to extend sensitivities and broaden horizons so that students can understand the nature of media, the various elements of communication and the issues involved in the techniques that can be used in media activities.

One female tutor felt that women educators have an important role to play in raising gender awareness in their classrooms, and that they could lead discussions that could generate debate among students. She described her role in this field as follows:

DF: To instil awareness in students the need to share responsibility among females and males besides competing to get the best of education. I attempt to encourage students to understand the complex situations that are present in society, and students who will be future journalists, or broadcasters or information officers must respect one another regardless of gender, race and status.....it is important that students are made aware of this in their education. I get examples of media products and ask students to evaluate them critically and I have discussion on how to improve them.

The task of communication education to teach relevant skills in media production was also given prominence and some of the tutors emphasised their role in carrying out this activity in this field. One tutor observed that this should be a major role of educators, that is to ensure that communication students are equipped with technical skills that will enable them to get jobs in the industry.

PM: It is widely accepted that effectiveness in message dissemination is dependent on the technical knowledge and communication skills. Many media professionals and extension agents lack technical skills in communicating the information to the receivers. Handling the media requires special skills. It is important to equip intending media professionals with necessary technical know-how, as this would enhance media professionalism.
Another tutor echoed his views and said that the need to prepare students for the media industries must be taken seriously and that educators have to forge close connection with the media organisations.

BM: My role is to disseminate knowledge to students, to provide them with some understanding of the topics that are being taught. I encourage discussion and conduct research to widen academic knowledge. My courses respond to the needs and priorities of national education policies. I also feel that it is important to co-ordinate with the media industries, and to conduct practical courses or research projects so that there is a close interaction with the media industries.

The idea of producing media practitioners without any sociological perspectives was critiqued by a tutor. He stressed the need for the conception of theory in professional communication courses so that communication education can encourage potential media practitioners who are well grounded in various theoretical positions. This tutor found much difficulty in the assumption that media skills can be taught in isolation of larger social issues. He asserted that the study of media skills demanded some theoretical understanding of power relationships in society.

LM: Ideologically, the department is still very much dominated by people who don't know what the function of theory is. There is also much ignorance......The tendency is not so much in being concerned with the research background or research specialisation....but more with which branch of the media professions the candidate can best fit in. This is unfortunate, of course, but it is a logical outcome of the Programme that has been designed to suit the market, in the form of a technical training school.

Some of the comments of the tutors revealed thoughts of consciousness and agency. This was apparent in the goals of some of the tutors who took an activist approach and had attempted to put their beliefs about teaching and education into practice. They perceived educational sites as important terrain of struggle where communication students can be encouraged to dismantle dominant ideologies and to construct alternative discourses. In this light, the tutors felt that they can work towards conscientising students and facilitate social change and the creation of a more just society.

IM: I try my best to encourage students to think of ways of improving media situation in the country. I try to make students realise the gravity or seriousness of the ownership
patterns today that can affect media performance. My courses take into consideration questions of biasness so that students don't take aboard everything they see in current media practices as the only ways of understanding society. I try to get students to inject more dialogue on the current media trends and how this critique will inform and affect their work or profession in future.

Several communication tutors noted that they were deeply committed to fighting all forms of injustices in society. They identified social conflicts and observed the lack of rigorous media research, debates and thoughtful insight that can address issues of inequality, specifically in the Malaysian context. Social practices that perpetuate patriarchy and the absence of concern over media and its marginalisation of women's struggles were raised as important matters that required serious attention, specifically in the Malaysian context. These tutors stated that they advance debates on social equality in their teaching practice, in the kinds of materials they suggest, in research, in any workshops that they organise. They felt that communication education could bring class, race and gender consciousness into classroom and research discussion to stimulate debates. They considered the media as powerful ideological agents and argued that intervention can be attempted when communication education seriously attempts to question ideas on gender systems so that both students and tutors can reflect on their own beliefs, to articulate contradictions and inconsistencies and perhaps to change them.

KF: I believe that it is important for us to think about issues of gender equality and class issues, and about communication and the students own hope for the future. My role is to help students read images in the media and criticise it if the media fails to portray women, children and old people in more meaningful ways. It is quite clear that the media do not represent gender issues or woman in more intelligent manner. The Programme lags behind in gender studies and it is important to update the curriculum if we want to address social changes in Malaysia. It is important to note that gender issues are not given consideration in our national educational policies, so there is no agenda to look into this matter seriously.

This tutor argued that gender conflicts should be recognised and addressed in the classroom. She emphasised the need to see students who experience various forms of tensions along with gender conflicts. She stated that tutors have an important role to play in supporting gender issues so that these alternative ideas can be brought into
the curriculum to sensitize students to gender issues and to advocate for a better representation of gender images and roles in the media.

KF: There is a need to raise issues and question accepted social values and ideology. This entails critical scrutiny on the media as well as messages of communication education itself. I think we should address the content of the curriculum and the context in which these disciplines are presented. Students should find something in the curriculum knowledge that allows them to examine their own gender identity and cultural identity. This will be a fruitful effort as it would interrogate their own assumptions that will influence their work in future.

This tutor discerned that the task of questioning the given order involved meaningful interaction among educators, students, media professionals and social movements. Rather than engaging in media bashing exercises, she noted that media professionals, media academics and women activists who were committed to communication issues could forge some cooperation, conduct joint research and lobby for change.

KF: One of the problems with working on gender issues is that it can be potentially divisive. It brings out a lot of negative feelings as the criticism falls mainly on the ways women media professionals go about in the daily routines.......the ways they construct images on women and men, the ways that sexuality is over-emphasised.......the ways that women professionals themselves have not supported alternative visions that define women in more broader terms -- women as active participants in defining their views on what goes around them, how various policies and laws affect women's lives and well-being. Women have often been seen as powerful decision-makers in deciding which products to buy....In other words, when you think of women, you think of them as powerful consumers. When attention is drawn to these things, not surprisingly, women professionals feel that they are being blamed and criticized. They become defensive and this alienates them and their contribution, no matter how small to the gender struggle. I think that these are important points to consider when women academics, activists and media professionals work together.

Some of the tutors were sensitive to gender issues and recognised their unique roles as agents in positions to contribute to social critique and change, but they defined their roles in much wider terms that simply giving a focus on women's oppression.
They highlighted Malaysian multi-ethnic composition and the complexity of class, ethnic and gender oppression. In their courses, these tutors aimed to create ways to raise issues of social oppression that will address students' own experiences and what these students hoped to do in future. These tutors were also aware that their values and visions might conflict with the cultural and family values of the students, but they pointed out that it was imperative that students be challenged to expand their own self-consciousness and to become critical of both themselves and the world in which they find themselves.

In this relation, another tutor commented that communication educators, as intellectuals, occupied important positions in the Programme, which provided them with certain opportunities to exercise power and engage in conscious-raising activities. At the same time he relented that educators should be aware of the various ways in which their activities could be constrained. He highlighted that there were clearly understood rules and practices of a hierarchical structure in the institutions themselves; other tutors or administrators sometimes might show resistance if they disagreed with these activities at political and ideological levels. Despite this, he felt strongly that the Programme must deal with social issues that affect the people of Malaysia, even though if these goals become much more difficult to achieve within the contemporary context. He described the part he played in the Programme as follows:

LM: I would see my role as that of making my students and colleagues question taken-for-granted assumptions about communications practice, particularly in Malaysia. A related role will be that of thinking up alternative scenarios, with the help of colleagues and students.

This tutor found some difficulty in the existing national educational policies which do not prioritise critical consciousness, including gender consciousness.

LM: I'm opposed to the national educational priority of 'churning out meat for the market,' so to speak... Hence, my course structures consciously attempt to go against this priority. I try to get my students to go out there and improve the industries, based on the awareness that most of them are going to get jobs in these industries in the final analysis. My present course structures try to make them question the legitimacy of the industries...My course structures are based on the belief that social practices affect, if not determine, media policies and changes in the media. Hence, social changes in Malaysia are central to the way my courses are structured and run....In my courses, the values in the community are in most cases
dissected and seen as created. They are then linked to the development of wider social and media policies. The courses make the students problematise many things that are taken-for-granted as the way things are and I hope they make everyone look for viable alternatives.

These comments point to the presence of a small group of tutors who are critical and see themselves as conscious actors in history and in institutions they work. They shared a commitment to a more just society for everyone and were conscious of their actions as role-models for students. They were also conscious that their action in constructing curriculum content have particular meanings and hence they were concerned deeply with the content of their teaching and how it contributes to questioning the given media practices. The efforts of the above tutors can be interpreted as intellectual activity that provides the basis for an alternative social development. These tutors play an important role by enabling students to question the assumption and values underpinning the dominant hegemony. In addition, they are also working piously towards constructing new forms of discourses that generate effective opposition and critical expression to support values of justice and equality, including gender equality.

As discussed in Chapter Three, Gramsci's views on intellectual activity and the emergence of an alternative hegemony are relevant to the efforts of these tutors. Here intellectual activity is being expressed through the agency of critical lecturers and university students. Various ideologies are questioned and alternative discourses are generated to provide the basis of social development. The ideas and work of these critical lecturers also echoes Freirean ideas on seeing the classroom as intellectual centres which provoke students to think critically about their experiences and the values and principles that are enshrined in the society. By challenging the legitimacy of dominant values and ideas, these tutors were encouraging students to develop a capacity for intellectual and practical creativity in their future activities, particularly in relation to media activities.

Tutor ideologies about gender are particularly important to explain the significance accorded to gender issues in communication education, especially in relation to the materials they use in the curriculum. The description of the data so far unveils how communication tutors perceive gender issues in general and in particular to gender-communication relationships. It clearly exposes the mixed perspectives and the disagreements that different tutors hold in this Programme. On the basis of the responses received, three groups of educators could be identified: (1) those who did
not show any particular concern about the position of women in society and in communication-gender relationships; (2) those who felt that there was some improvement in women's position in society and in the media profession but admitted that the representation of women in media content was problematic; and (3) those who recognised gender conflicts in society and the problematic part the media play in the social construction of gender, specifically in producing gender and in denying women's critical perspectives in public debates. A small proportion of the Programme members belonged to the first group, but the majority of the members fell into the second category. I have identified members who fell into the third group as gender leaders who can play an important part in developing action plans that aim to highlight gender issues in the field of communication and communication education. The data on the perceptions of tutors will also shed light on the curriculum materials used in their courses, especially in terms of giving voice to the gender discourse or silencing it in communication courses. A further discussion on communication courses will be presented in Chapter Eight.

The findings of the data show that the views that the tutors hold on gender matters can influence the syllabus content of their courses. One tutor who believed that gender was not a problem and that gender equality had already existed in Malaysia, stated that he had not raised any gender issues in his courses. Belonging to the first group of tutors identified in this study, he did not show any particular concern about the problematic position of women in society. He admitted that his courses did not include any materials and resources that advanced gender perspectives.

HM: This is not a popular topic in mainstream Malaysian context.
   It is more relevant among the extremist leftist....There is so much to cover in my courses, there is so little space and time.
   To me, I don't see why I should present gender issues when there are more important and relevant skills to be learned.

From the above comments, it can be inferred that this tutor dismissed gender issues on the grounds that it was an 'extremist issue' and therefore not one suited to the Malaysian context. In this case, the concerned tutor did not accept the gender question as a pertinent issue in Malaysia, and one that involves crucial consideration in education. The tutor preferred to distance himself from confronting the substance of gender arguments and gender scholarship. He appeared reluctant to encourage students to assess particular visions of the world, particularly those that challenge the prevailing order. By not acknowledging gender oppression, it can be inferred that this tutor was defending the status quo. Interestingly, he appeared to have difficulty in
perceiving communication education as highly political. This form of resistance and refusal even to consider the arguments can be seen as one reason to explain the silence on gender issues in the curriculum.

In the case of the second group of educators, many of them explained that gender issues did not arise in their courses because even though they were aware of gender conflicts in society, they had not really thought deeply about it. The tutors expressed the view that they were not very familiar with this body of scholarship that questioned social relations and practices in society.

DF: There is very little information available on the status of women in society. Gender conflicts are usually seen in terms of overt forms of violence against women like battery, rape......and because many women are participating in the public sector, this conjures an impression that gender is not a principal problem in Malaysia. Yes, there has largely been a concern on issues of access, particularly for women in the media industry, and generally I suppose we have a majority of female students and they seem to have an equal opportunity in participating in this industry. So, in terms of getting jobs, it is believed that the gender problem is sorted out. However, we don’t know much about their position in their organisation hierarchy. There, of course, is no denying that women are underrepresented in all top positions in media organisations. Also, there is very little work that explores how women go about organising their daily routines. I must admit that we know very little on how these women feel about gender equality and what they can do about it. I guess that there is so little work and action that aims towards promoting awareness to the gender problem......and I guess all this information is crucial to our work in communication education. We need to give more prominence by doing more research into gender issues and we need to do more reading on these perspectives if we wish to engage in this area.

The note of thinking about gender equality simply in terms of equal opportunities for access was rightly problematised as a crucial point as there is a need to think beyond increasing the number of women. By looking at quantitative terms only, the gender discourse takes a liberal view of seeing women as a disadvantaged group. The goal here seeks to find more space in the prevailing system to incorporate women. The increasing participation of women in public sectors like education and the media can falsely propagate a belief that gender equality has been achieved. The increasing number of female communication students entering the communication
industry will not necessarily mean that there will be a radical change in media structures and media content. Communication students need to be encouraged to think about the fundamental structures that oppress women in society, viable ways of initiating intervention, developing support systems for women and contributing to social change. Communication education can contribute to this effort by offering analytical skills to communication students to be critical of the current gender arrangements in society (Rakow, 1993a; 1993b).

Gender is a major organising principle that structures the material and symbolic world and our experiences of them, yet there appears to be much confusion and ambiguity in understanding the concept of gender. The tutors were asked to give their views on developing an action plan for integrating gender issues in their curriculum materials and teaching practice. The responses of some of these tutors recorded some difficulties in recognising gender as a construct that affects social reality, particularly in both media and education practice. One of the important findings of this study is the diverse interpretation (and misinterpretation) of the gender-related issues. Some of the following comments show difficulties in understanding the dimension of gender as one that is implicated in educational experience.

OM: It is related to the emancipation of women and the equality of the sexes. For education and teaching purposes, gender is quite neutral.

HM: Gender does not play a part in my classroom. In fact, I have found that the female students are more active and vocal in tutorial sessions. They are also more hardworking and are the ones who do the readings before coming to class.

Several tutors in the Programme comfortably noted that gender was irrelevant to their courses.

PM: The discussion regarding the various values and gender oppression in society are not so important and necessary. I see the gender issue as not really related in terms of my own work....I don't believe that the courses will have different implications for male and for females....This is because my course is more practical-oriented and concerns the techniques of production only. Media production has nothing to do with gender.

BM: There is no discrimination in education....the students are treated equally. It is irrelevant whether they are males or
females......it is up to the students to comprehend the education that is offered to them.

It was assumed that the curriculum structure and the knowledge generated in the courses are intrinsically free from bias and that there is no pressure in communication studies to conform to gender stereotypes or news values that obscure women's perspectives. This idea of gender not being implicated in the understanding of media production techniques was also shared by another tutor.

GM: I don't think gender affects my course. In my course, the students do various practical projects. They collect information, mount pictures and I don't think this involves gender in any way.

It was interesting to note that raising the issue of gender had meant different things for different people in this Programme and these expressions were articulated in different ways. To some extent, gender was linked as 'women's problem', rather than as a process, stratification and a structure relevant to the relationships of both men and women. The following were some of the tutors' diverse expressions pertaining to the gender struggle.

AF: Gender is a dominant ideology that structures thought processes and action. I suppose it eventually means a reconceptualisation of the discourses of a good mother, child-rearing, good wife etc.....which are all taken-for-granted.

OM: It is about women's rights, having equal pay, equal opportunities in work and other women's problems.

EF: This relates to shared responsibility, respect for one another and a harassment-free world, and roles that are not taken-for-granted.

CM: This is related to stereotyping and this is serious in the media. I believe women are being subjugated to the men's whims and fancies and this is a cause for concern.

KF: No discrimination based on sex, such as in promotion or job distribution. People can get the opportunity to have a more balanced view of the world and not a view which is gender biased.

IM: It would mean equality for women at work, equal opportunities for promotion, for intellectual discussion etc...
JP: Gender equality has been discussed for a long time. Their origins are from western culture. Those who are active in this field are largely people who received western education and who have followed social movements, including gender movements in western cultures. In Malaysia, gender issues have not received much attention, possibly because the values in our culture vary from western culture. Also there is this religion factor that needs to be considered. Very often, gender debates are not resolved effectively. The same matters are raised repeatedly without any proper action or resolutions.

DF: It relates to women as marginalised groups and the exploitation of women as sex-objects, particularly in the media. I think it is a good idea to include maybe a lecture and some tutorial discussion so that we can increase students' awareness to women's problem.

LM: At one level, I take gender equality as meaning equal opportunities between gender - male and female in society. At another level, I take this to mean equality within a particular gender grouping. For example, where all women, irrespective of ethnicity, colour, are provided equal opportunities in society...particularly, opportunities in the workplace. Gender equality also, of course means equal responsibilities, between males and females, in terms of child rearing practices, domestic chores.

The wide variety of responses indicated diverse perceptions, sometimes ambiguous or sceptical in understanding gender. The view of raising gender issues which is seen a western import and therefore not a suitable one to the eastern context is an interesting one. It is important to observe the tendency in indigenous countries to label all western ideologies as bad and harmful to local culture. Although there is a flow of progressive ideas which question the social consensus, these are not encouraged as it challenges the prevailing power configurations in local contexts. By using a blanket framework that deems all western ideologies as 'unsuitable' to indigenous countries, it is possible to suggest that hegemonic masculinity is reinforced so that there is resistance to giving more power to women in local cultures.

The findings of this data reveal that the overt forms of subordination like physical violence towards women, sexual harassment, stereotyping of women in the media were identified as issues related to gender but the subordination of women in subtle forms in daily cultural practices escaped many tutors' attention. Interestingly, some tutors even pointed out that gender was not related in education and teaching practices. Little recognition was given to more formal and institutional sorts of power...
that implicate gender in the profession and the workplace, and in curriculum-making efforts. Within the context of Malaysia, there is very little recognition that gender is a major organising principle that structures material and symbolic worlds. To date, there is very little gender research in all areas and feminism takes only a marginal place in local debates and politics. Curriculum and teaching practice in universities and in schools have been barely explored from gender perspectives to illuminate the gendered forms of receiving and creating knowledge.

At this juncture, I would like to raise a couple of points in relation to the responses of the tutors. First, the assumption underlying media skills practical activity is based on a belief that this activity does not implicate gender. In other words, techniques of media production are neutral and value-free. I have much difficulty with responses which emphasised that the learning of media skills as simple transmission of technical operations that do not relate to gender questions. As argued in the last chapter, media techniques also engage with questions of values and ideology, particularly in the case of doing gender. Media techniques are not transparent and do not involve impartial images and messages. It is important to dispute the notion of technical neutrality as this often embraces dominant media conventions as legitimate. The notion of neutrality is problematic as it is often taken to mean that the prevailing order is legitimate, thus allowing powerful groups to operate unopposed. In this case, this order is often taken to mean a bias which annihilates women's perspectives. It does not encourage radical innovations or critical reflection, including the questioning of gender in media production.

The teaching of media skills will be more fruitful if it is informed of gender perspectives as this would bring to light dominant conventions that produce gender in the media. Possible alternatives of looking at different angles of a story or a news report from women's viewpoint could be explored in the practical courses. The absence of concomitant commitment to opposing systemic injustice and inequality may perpetuate the silence on gender issues in communication courses. As I will argue in the next chapter, gender is implicated in production techniques, in the framing of shots, camera angles, lighting, selection of news sources, lay-out of news items or features and these factors work together in different ways to produce a narrative structure about women's roles, their images and experiences.

In the process of stressing the teaching of media skills, the social and political context in which media production takes place appear to be de-emphasised. Political neutrality does not underpin the basis of teaching media skills. There was an inclination
on the part of some of the tutors to remain neutral on issues such as gender, ethnicity, class as this would also mean that the tutors had to make standpoints on these matters and venture into controversial political territory and be embroiled in 'sensitive' issues. Instead, they preferred to stay clear away from discussing these disturbing issues. The nature of education is highly political. Education encompasses strong ideological dimension and to assume a neutral position actually means to give support to the dominant (read masculinist) world views (Shor, 1993; Freire, 1972).

A second point I would like to draw attention to is the way gender issues are implicated in curriculum practice in an educational setting. The production of ideas and consciousness in curriculum is important as it articulates cultural experience. The curriculum can be seen as frameworks of thoughts, values and beliefs that are used to explain and make sense of or give meaning to the social world. It provides ideas within which students think about society, the media and their place in it. The curriculum provides social knowledge through which students perceive their lives and those of others. Fundamentally, the curriculum also does ideological work by ordering and assessing knowledge, distinguishing between preferred and excluded explanations. A major difficulty arises when communication tutors perceive education sites as not problematic -- especially when curriculum experience tends to obscure the dynamics of gender, granting the hegemony of masculinist views.

Many communication tutors did not identify the way communication education is implicated in perpetuating gender imbalances in society and specifically in the education of intending communication professionals and the possibility of developing counter-hegemonic pedagogy in communication education. In this regard, education, specifically communication education has to be problematised. For example, issues on what counts as academic knowledge and how it has come to be provided have to be examined. The views of the tutors indicated that they were largely unaware that curriculum knowledge encompasses partial understandings by silencing gender perspectives which advance women's experiences and concerns. These issues have to be considered in curriculum materials and curriculum practice. The lack of attention on gender matters in classroom discussion would mean that communication education would play a major role in encouraging hegemonic discourses that do not challenge the subordination of women. Consequently, this could lead to the acceptance of the status quo and common-sense hegemony of male dominance. Communication education could thus, produce graduates who will conform rather than question the legitimacy of existing media institutions and policies.
Interestingly, several tutors were careful to observe that the design of curriculum and course content was heavily influenced by their own educational background. They pointed out that the approaches espoused in their education at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels in foreign communication education programmes were often instructive in local curriculum-making and these approaches were reproduced in the syllabus of their courses.

AF: The way we make curriculum is our own, depending on the current trends in globalisation, on one's own consciousness and one's own background, one's training, one's exposure to issues of this sort, right? The formal education that we receive in universities plays an important part. So we carry with ourselves the baggage from various kinds of training and bring it back, look at our local priorities and then we produce our own curriculum.

CM: Many of us received education in various overseas universities. Often we pick up various topics that will inform contemporary discussion in the local and international context. I think in many universities, courses on communication did not give much focus on gender. Of course, there was discussion about sex-stereotyping in media content..... especially in advertisements, but really nothing much. It is quite difficult for us to discuss about gender because our post graduate education had nothing substantial to say about gender issues. Maybe we need people specialised in this area to raise such critical issues in our Programme.

This is a useful observation and I would like to make a point here which is important and relevant to communication education programmes that take in international students. Most communication tutors in Malaysia have received their education in foreign universities, particularly in the United States and in Britain. The experiences and ideologies these tutors were exposed to during their formal education or training might produce ripple effects. If their education had not explicitly generated questions on gender, these tutors could in turn reproduce and eclipse gender matters in curriculum-making when they return to the local countries. In other words, the knowledge acquired in foreign programmes on communication education would often be replicated in local curriculum. If gender themes were absent in communication education in foreign universities that were attended by local tutors, this silence on gender issues could be further perpetuated in the curriculum of local communication education. As such, the gender question is an important one that needs to be addressed in all universities offering communication studies, particularly those that
take international students who are potential media practitioners, media researchers and academics in the field of communication.

In this study, a number of the communication tutors noted that they were not raising gender issues and controversies in their courses and teaching practice. Some of them conceded that there was much room for improvement. Some of them noted that there was an indication that communication students might be interested in gender perspectives as the students had sometimes raised issues related to gender in their course assignments.

EF: I think it is a good idea to include maybe a lecture and some tutorial discussions about gender perspectives, so that we can increase the students’ awareness about the gender problem.

DF: Maybe there should be a specific course on gender affairs or something in the Programme.

The idea of incorporating gender issues into communication courses received some support from male educators too.

OM: In the context of development communication, it is imperative to include gender issues because of the weakening of women’s contribution in rural development.

Another tutor noted the importance of having communication courses exploring different values and roles attributed to women and men in society, and specifically in the field of communication.

CM: They (women and men) are a world apart. In the field of advertising, the normal practice is that the copy for women as target audience shall be awfully ‘soft’ and be appealing in nature. Usually it contains high doses of nuances and subtleties.

The tutor explained that the use of women as sex-symbols was considered as a norm in advertising industries and this was not seen in the least as problematic. Hence, he felt that it was important to generate discussion on such matters in communication courses.

Interestingly, there appeared some ironies and inconsistencies in the positions held by a group of tutors. For example, some tutors presenting theoretical courses felt
that gender issues should be taken up by those teaching practical courses, while tutors offering practical-oriented courses accorded this responsibility to theoretical courses. One tutor seemed reluctant to introduce gender perspectives in practical-oriented courses.

GM: Not as a conscious effort to do that. If it seeps through, that is a different matter. The course is so compact with the ingredients of knowledge required in production in a short span of time. In such cases, issues like male, female cannot be brought in.....Maybe the negative portrayal of females can be discussed in theoretical courses.

In sharp contrast, the need to give focus on gender in practical-oriented courses was raised by another tutor.

AF: In some courses, I think one should do it, especially in practical courses. In film-making, for instance, there could be specific topics actually. For example, the use of female body in films, very specific you know, you can do it. In Journalism, you can look how you want to counter it, is there such a thing as gendered news values and news making.

One other tutor stated the importance of acknowledging that there were problems with gender-communication relationships, but she also held the opinion that courses were already loaded with different issues and that it may be difficult to encompass all the issues relevant to communication.

JF: Many issues are worth exploring....class, race, power, poverty....I guess it is a matter of a practical way of appropriating it.

As stated by Rakow (1993a), there are contending perspectives contesting for space in the curriculum and in most cases, questions that relate to a majority of the people like women, i.e. gender perspectives seem to be missing in curriculum knowledge. Gender perspectives which relate to all levels of people are not considered, ghettoised as women's problems and excluded in curriculum knowledge. In this respect, the two concerns, that is the male monopolisation of culture and knowledge and the sexual politics of daily lives and the contribution of education institutions towards the silencing of gender issues and gender imbalances in society have been problematised by gender scholars who argue that these are pertinent issues that cannot be ignored in education (Rakow, 1993a; Spender, 1981; Smith, 1978).
Curiously, some of the tutors did not appear willing to accord any responsibility in their courses but preferred to shift the task of raising gender issues to others. What emerged from this data is that tutors can appear to be in favour of gender issues in its most general terms, and yet at the same time be sceptical about the relevance and significance of this body of knowledge in their own courses. Often curriculum innovation means more work and it is not unusual if tutors are found to be unmotivated to take practical steps to alter curriculum knowledge. Subsequently, action often fails to take place where such initiatives might reduce bias or improve opportunities (Acker, 1994).

The diverse range of views and contradictory standpoints clearly illustrate complexities and difficulties in making changes in the curriculum. Discussions on gender are provocative and are potentially threatening, particularly with tutors who occupy the unsettling position of non-experts if they are not informed of gender perspectives. This poses a situation fraught with problems. On one hand, as Aiken et al (1987) argue, refusal or failure to initiate changes create guilt and dissonance between tutors’ actions and their self-images as just and thoughtful people. To maintain their identity as intellectuals, they have to reconcile such dissonance, particularly if they wish to see themselves as liberal and supportive to women.

On the other hand, particularly in the context of gender issues, tutors are not simply being asked to adopt new textbooks or adapt course content and examination papers, but to alter fundamental aspects of practice. They are also required to think about themselves and their beliefs in disquieting new ways. Fullan (1982) argues changes to materials, teaching approaches and beliefs are necessary in implementing initiatives. While teaching material are less difficult to alter, the same cannot be said about tutor ideologies, as belief-systems relate to deep-rooted conscious or unconscious assumptions and values regarding certain issues (p. 247). This poses major challenges to initiating gender issues in the curriculum of communication education.

The data so far has unfolded the diversity of people and their varied perspectives that make up the Programme and the offering of communication education. Evidently, the gender task is an uphill battle which could mean that gender action plans may face resistance and may not be easy to initiate.

In this relation, it is important to observe that the Programme does not function in an uniform manner. As a terrain of contestation and struggle, it is important to
recognise multiple realities, contradictions and diverse social practices that allow the elucidation of actors' interpretation and strategies. From this point of view, spaces can be manoeuvred within constraints to advance alternative ideologies by social actors to influence curriculum activities in the institutions.

In this Programme, a third group of tutors, including men, emerged as 'gender leaders'. These tutors were seeking to disrupt prevailing notions of what is seen and taken as natural or the norm, specifically in the construction of gender. They were concerned in encouraging debates about gender and were trying to interrupt hegemonic ideas in thinking about communication and media professionalism. These tutors were putting conscious efforts and were presenting lectures and tutorials, focusing specifically on gender matters in their courses. This inclusion was deemed necessary in attempting to raise questions regarding democratic representation by the Malaysian mass media.

The tutors offered some comments on the importance of presenting gender issues in communication education.

LM: We really would need to provide courses on gender studies to get a grasp of the theories informing research on gender. There aren't available in many...if any, communication programmes in Malaysia. What's therefore needed is firstly, a grounding in the theories. The next step would be an application of the theories in communication.....I would suggest the following: communication education should lay bare and analyse gender inequality in the communication industries. Communication education should cut through the myth that the world of mass media is a glamorous one, meant primarily for women with style and class, where form is more important than substance.

This tutor also emphasised the need to link gender within larger political-economy concerns in communication education to give a more complete picture.

LM: The very nature of the economic system in Malaysia is exploitative. And it would be too simplistic to argue that this is because of male domination...class and ethnic factors need to come into play.

According to another tutor, successful communication education involves an empowerment of learners. She emphasised that communication education should not just think about producing students to take positions in their industry, but also to
encourage students to think about their own assumptions on gender and their contribution to the process of social transformation.

KF: Women, for the matter men, have to understand and sieve through some of the theories forwarded by feminism and see its relevance for us and our culture...... There must be the raising of gender awareness of what we are expected to do everyday. If female students are apathetic about what goes on in the media, inadvertently they will not be empowered. We may have an increase in the number of female students in communication, but until and unless they are conscious of gender issues, they'll never report news, make videos, films etc. about women for women.

Taking into account of the enthusiasm and support shown by this group of gender leaders, I argue that developing gender action plans can be seen as a project of possibility within the Programme. Paradoxically, the lack of understanding of gender appears to offer a potential to articulate a gender agenda in the curriculum. Further, given that this is a relatively young programme which is aiming to grow and expand in the coming years, integrating gender scholarship can be given recognition, especially if a strong case is made for it. One tutor has this to say,

LM: Frankly, there is not much understanding on what feminism is all about. Hence, most of the department - wouldn't react adversely to such initiatives, since it would be seen as trendy and progressive - as long as, and this is important, they feel they will not be required to do so for their courses. Hence, if the initiatives are in the form of inserting these perspectives into individual courses, I feel there won't be any problem. The onus would really be on the individual lecturers concerned to bring in these perspectives, first into courses and later to argue for their inclusion as part of the basis for the overall curriculum.

These tutors noted that the gender struggle should enlist male and female participants who can contribute effectively to a richer understanding of media and society.

KF: I don't think feminist struggles should be left to female educators only. There are some men who recognise injustice and have a commitment to gender equality issues.

LM: Female educators are not necessarily feminists......In this situation, I certainly believe that sympathetic male educators
have a pivotal role to play in order to bring feminist perspectives. In the first place, they would need to insist that feminism is not meant to be merely a female preoccupation, particularly if genuine egalitarianism in Malaysian society is what is being envisioned.

The above comments indicate support to the idea of equality, including gender equality. The aspirations of gender leaders, both men and women in the Programme is important to extend the expression of an alternative range of ideas and examples of role-models in this institution.

7.4 Discussion

The task of exploring the views of the communications tutors is important to the present study as it reveals their ideological perspectives with regard to gender, specifically in relation to communication media and communication education. This study shows the diversity of people and perspectives that make up the structural setting of the Programme. It seeks to suggest that tutor ideologies is a major factor to be considered in developing gender curriculum intervention in communication studies.

Tutor Ideologies

A major argument in Chapter Three spells out that tutors play a major part in the more immediate setting of the curriculum and that tutors, both male and female do the main work of sustaining the gender regimes; yet they are also central to the remaking of alternative social transformations (Rudduck, 1994; Acker, 1994; Kesslar et al, 1985). The proposition here is that the perception of tutors towards gender issues is an important factor that influences the ways gender debates are addressed in the curriculum. This is a crucial area to be considered in developing a gender plan for action.

In raising questions about gender, the study unveils the enveloping power of the hegemonic masculinity which have influenced the views of the tutors in making sense of the mechanics of the media and gender relations in society. In Chapter Five, I have stated that women occupy a subordinate status within the Malaysian society; yet there seems to be silence over the gender-question in the country's development activities and in its cultural politics. Although gender-planning has emerged in the Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991-1995), I have asserted that this plan suffers serious limitations in its conceptual underpinings that fail to question the status of women in the private and the different stems of gender subordination along the lines of ethnicity and class. Further, I have argued that this gender planning has adopted a liberal view
and has defined the gender problem mainly in terms of access to working opportunities for women. Thus, the gender debate at the wider socio-cultural content appears to be debated within this frame of access into the labour market rather than encouraging the empowerment of women at the same time.

An overview of existing gender studies on communication demonstrates that the Malaysian media has been found to conceptualise femininity, masculinity, relationships and sexuality in traditional ways. These studies conclude that the media offer limited constructions of women: housewives, mothers and glamorous girls (see Chapter Five). These dominant constructions convey rules and conventions that reinforce the subordination of women. A major argument that has been presented to explain this situation is that women have less power than men to produce and circulate alternative representations. Although this leads to major gender controversies, the debate on gender-communication relationships has not been duly acknowledged in the wider society and in communication education.

In this chapter, this study finds that the gender-question in general was not perceived as a major problem by a large number of communication tutors in the Communication Programme. It can be said that the wider social gendered ideas and practices appear hegemonic enough to carry along tutors unwittingly or unwittingly to cast major silences on gender media controversies in the curriculum. Their action, in this light, is seen rooted in tradition and common-sense, thus reproducing gender regimes.

A majority of the Programme's tutors appeared to hold the view that gender equality had already been achieved in Malaysia and that the representation of women in the labour force, including the media sector was satisfactory. Indeed, the general impression of many tutors was that there were no gender problems as women were seen as enjoying equal access to opportunities in employment and education. The visibility of women in the labour force, in the media profession and the female majority in student enrolment in communication studies programmes were seen as evident indicators of gender equality. Interestingly, the tutors' responses did not delve deeply into the oppression of women stemming from the private domain. The focus on the private appeared an area that the tutors seemed hesitant to discuss at length. While the women tutors conceded that there were difficulties in women's position and responsibilities in the private domain, many male tutors, on the other hand, felt that women were enjoying an equal status in the family and assumed that women did not experience any tensions in their lives.
To a large extent, the concept of gender was not one that had received close attention among communication tutors. There were ambiguities, contradictions and inconsistencies in their responses to questions on gender raised in this study. For example, although a majority of tutors felt that the representation of women in the media profession was satisfactory, they also added that women were poorly depicted in narrow roles in the media content. The study further finds that a number of the tutors framed gender conflicts as relating to 'women as the problem' rather than the social structures and institutions that pose barriers to a more meaningful expression of women's voices and women's participation. Many tutors, men and women believed that if a gender problem arose, this was related to 'inadequacies' present in women themselves, who were not managing professional and family tasks effectively. These arguments obscure the material conditions and ideological structures that sustain the gendered social order. They also ignore the roots of gender oppression that emerge in the private sphere. In fact, there was little understanding on the idea of gender as a major organising construct that structures the material and symbolic worlds and social experiences of people. While overt forms of male dominance and aggression against women in the forms of violence, rape, sexual harassment and battery were recognised, these features were dismissed as isolated cases. Further, the more subtle forms of gendered motifs that pervade at the institutional level, in administrative and cultural practices, in the educational settings - particularly in the curriculum and pedagogy were not discerned. Thus, there was little recognition on the need to question the assumptions underlying curriculum knowledge about communication studies. As argued in Chapter One, the gender-question in communication education is important, particularly when the students are given education and training to engage in the construction of information and meaning in various communication-related professions. The ways communication tutors organise the curriculum and the prominence given to gender issues in their courses have profound implications when communication students research and involve in communication activities in future. This findings of this study show that a major task would involve a programme for sensitising academic members to gender issues and the relevance of gender knowledge in the Malaysian context. I will return to this point in Chapter Nine.

The findings of this study also raise three important issues which need attention and discussion: neutrality; the interplay of gender, ethnicity and class; and resistance.

Neutrality - It is essential to emphasise at the outset that education is not initiated, organised or applied in a social political vacuum. In one way or another, the areas or topics that are selected, the use of concepts, techniques, categories, systems of
classification issues that are advanced in the curriculum are indications of what is considered to be important or problematic and reflect priorities, values and concerns of curriculum-makers (Rakow, 1993b). It cannot be assumed that the curriculum knowledge generated in an educational setting is intrinsically free from bias.

From the basis of the data derived from the responses of the tutors' offering practical courses, this study reveals that their views convey a notion that practical work is concerned with technical operations and these are neutral actions that do not implicate values. The argument here is that media skills or technical competence can be delivered in a neutral way by detaching values and taking a neutral stand - a stand, which in fact masks the masculinist bias in media production. By assuming that technical operations are neutral, certain interests that are served by existing communication practices were not seen as problematic. If, the values laden in media production are not recognised, the unquestioned assumptions in the 'given' masculinist order will be accepted or taken-for-granted. I think that this is a major limitation as the curriculum will then not locate professional skills within a critical and theoretical framework. As Masterman (1990) argues, practical work is not a question of reproducing production techniques, but of recognising that elements of values and ideology are woven into and are inseparable from the process of media production. I propose that rather than looking at practical work as purely technical, neutral operations, it would be productive to develop practical work by presenting a critical understanding, particularly in the case of doing gender in media production activities.

**Gender, ethnicity and class** - Gender is a mechanism that structures material and symbolic worlds (van Zoonen, 1994). In Chapter Two, I have emphasised that gender experiences differ as women do not appear as monolithic, unified group and that it is questionable to assume one form of oppression affects all women equally. Although the gender perspective engages in a universal theory of oppression of women, there is much disagreement on exactly how uniform this oppression can be when women are located in social situations with conflicting interests and diverse experiences (Riano, 1994; Franklin et al, 1991).

In contemporary Malaysia, it is important to understand the complex interplay of ethnicity and class in debating about gender issues. The implementation of the New Economic Policy and other state development plans, couched in ethnic terms has been aimed at improving ethnic inequality and economic imbalances in Malaysia. In accelerating the process of restructuring Malaysian society, there have been affirmative actions which have been directed to increase employment levels and the economic
power of Malays, including Malay women. The link between ethnicity and gender is thus important, but a daunting one to examine in research. In Malaysia, the range of cultural differences is enormous and research would have to deconstruct not only the three major ethnic components in the Peninsula: Malay, Chinese and Indian, but also to further deal with the range of cultural differences of indigenous groups and immigrant communities in the East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak. Moreover, the link between ethnicity and religion cannot be ignored easily. All Malays are deemed to be Muslims, while the majority of Chinese, Indian and indigenous communities are Non-Muslims. The resurgence of Islam and the religious and cultural revivalism among Non-Malays and Non-Muslims tends to give prominence to forms, symbols, rituals and ceremonies that further intensify the oppression of women.

In addition to ethnicity, the question of class is also critical in examining gender experiences, especially in particular ways in the new economic patterns that are evolving in the Malaysian context. In a society that promotes and celebrates a culture of entrepreneurship and competition, the class category is invariably pertinent in articulating gender experiences in Malaysia. There is currently very little discussion on these complex cultural intricacies; indeed such expressions are seen as dangerously divisive and highly volatile and are hence strongly guarded by numerous laws in Malaysia (see Chapter Five).

In relation to tutors' responses to gender issues, it needs to be recorded that there was a near silence on ethnicity in terms of its impact on Malaysian women. The argument on the class connection gained some visibility in tutors' responses, particularly in relation to factory and plantation female workers. It was not surprising that discussion on gender issues steered clearly away from ethnic and religious angles as these are considered as highly sensitive debates. Evidently, the gender discourse is highly controversial and carries risks for the tutors as they are not only asked to question the pedagogy of communication but also invited to think about themselves as privileged in some ways other than by gender. Only a few tutors, specifically the gender leaders articulated the need to consider questions of class, religion and ethnic affiliation to give a more richer understanding of women's relationships to communication and communication education in Malaysia.

The sensitive nature of religious and ethnic issues pose major difficulties in approaching gender issues, as the question of gender oppression indirectly raises other forms of inequality, including ethnic inequality. In other words, in raising gender issues, questions about other significant agendas are also simultaneously raised. This is
a major dilemma for gender activists in Malaysia. There is a need for a 'softly-softly' approach which takes a non-confrontational stance when addressing gender issues, particularly those that focus on ethnic debates (Jamilah, 1992). This means that working out gender policies and action plans will require tact and compromises to avoid waves of resentment or resistance.

In this respect, the gender agenda is a formidable one and faces major challenges, particularly in Malaysia where the acceptance of social critique, specifically in relation to ethnicity and religion has not progressed sufficiently to encourage open discussion in this direction.

Resistance - A large majority of the tutors agreed that gender issues should be incorporated in the curriculum of communication studies. Yet, one important finding in this study reveals that even when tutors appeared to be in favour of introducing gender issues in its most general terms, they can also at the same time be not willing to integrate gender perspectives in their own courses. As in this case-study, there were competing views on who should bear this responsibility. Tutors offering theoretical courses felt that practical courses should raise gender issues whereas tutors teaching practical-based courses proposed that theoretical courses should advance gender questions. This can be read as a form of resistance where tutors are unmotivated to take practical steps to alter curriculum knowledge, thus failing to take action where such initiatives might reduce bias or improve opportunities. According to Acker (1994), doing nothing is a form of action itself with consequences and any project on gender requires a sound understanding of the issues involved; resources, motivation and genuine interest in positive action to promote women's power.

Related to this situation is the nature of gender issues which are highly provocative and controversial. It is not a question of adapting course content or adopting new textbooks, but asking tutors to think about themselves, their beliefs and assumptions in disquieting new ways (Spivak, 1993). It is also highly unlikely that tutors would adopt the gender perspectives given the marginality of gender awareness and action and the lack of government support in Malaysia. This raises major difficulties and suggests that gender initiatives may not be easily implemented, particularly if they challenge deep-rooted beliefs.

It is important to reiterate that the tutors who make up this programme held a diverse range of views, indicating the complexities inherent in this institution. Indeed the Programme clearly does not function in a monolithic manner and contradictions
materialise in the social relationships present at this site. While gender issues appear to be an area that received little analytic attention from the majority of communication tutors, it is important to observe that there were a small number of communication tutors who recognised gender imbalances in relation to media and communication education and were consciously making efforts to introduce gender communication issues. Within this educational setting, these tutors can be identified as crucial actors who create space for alternative activities and ideas in the curriculum.

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In this chapter, I have highlighted that communication tutors constitute an important part of the immediate structural setting of the Programme. The task of examining tutor ideology is valuable as it unearths their values and belief systems about gender oppression in society. This study also offers the perspectives tutors hold about gender-media relationships and the significance they accord to raising gender issues in communication education.

This study suggests that the tutors are shaped through the hegemonic ideas and a majority of them did not show much awareness to gender oppression in society. Generally, it appeared that gender was non-issue to most of them. Some even believed that gender equality had already been attained in Malaysia. By not problematising the experiences of women, the ruling order which sustains the oppression of women is left intact. In other words, the dominant position of the masculinist order is maintained, accepted as common-sense and as part of the natural order. The present study thus raises critical questions about the ideas of tutors and their curriculum and their relation to larger gender dynamics. Insight into these social realities are important as it depicts some of the potential difficulties that may be faced in creating gender action plans in communication education.

But this study also documents the diversity of people and perspectives and the contradictions that mediate the texture of the curriculum, suggesting that hegemony is not complete. The presence of a few tutors who support efforts to establish gender scholarship and the need to subvert dominant ideology and practices shows that the Programme is made up of contending groups. In discussing tutor ideology, it is clear that in the case-study of this Programme, a first step would be to raise the gender awareness of the staff members. A fruitful course to raise gender conscientisation will be to organise seminars and workshops that enable individuals to question the assumptions and values underpinning the dominant hegemony. It is important to
create gender agendas for discussion and to raise issues which are considered to be non-problematic. This study can be seen as a contribution to problematise gender oppression and an attempt to argue for the case of a gender agenda in the education of intending communication professionals. In the next chapter, I study the communication courses that are offered in this Programme to assess the significance accorded to gender issues.
CHAPTER EIGHT

COMMUNICATION COURSES: AN EXAMINATION OF GENDER ISSUES IN CURRICULUM CONTENT

In this chapter, I assess communication courses offered in the USM Programme to gain insight into the significance accorded to gender issues in the official curriculum of communication education. The positioning of gender issues in the course syllabus of communication courses is examined not only to allow the documentation of possible gender gaps that underlie most communication courses but also to identify the types of themes that are being generated in discussions on gender. This concern forms the central basis of this chapter which will reveal how gender issues are approached in the curriculum of this programme. The main argument to be presented here is that gender issues occupy a marginal status and that gender is insignificant and appears largely as a non-issue in the bulk of the overall curriculum. Some of these patterns of exclusion will be unravelled in the analysis of courses in this chapter and I will raise a few issues that can be used to provoke gender debates in the communication courses. In this way, I do not only offer a critique of the courses, but turn to a practical demonstration of the potential of gender criticism in communication studies.

This chapter is based largely on a document analysis of course outlines, reading lists and examination question papers. The Communication Programme handbook, twenty-nine course outlines and their respective examination papers for the academic year 1992/93 were collected and the selection and organisation of topics in each course was studied. Each course had a set of objective statements, topics for discussion each week and a reference list of indicative readings. The course lectures ran over a period of fourteen weeks. My first task was to investigate if gender appeared as a topic in these course documents. The information offered by communication tutors were also used to ascertain the gender gaps and when gender issues were present in the courses, the forms of gender scholarship used in the conceptualisation of the problem.

Examination question papers were an important source of data as they offered further evidence on the positioning of gender issues in the various courses. The examination questions unveiled further the act of naming the issues and the human experiences that were deemed as significant or relevant to the understanding of communication. The focus placed on gender issues may influence the students'
perception on the importance of gender issues during the course of their education and in turn may impinge upon the work they do in their future professions.

It is important to emphasise at the outset of this chapter that there has been little work on research strategies to conduct the analysis of courses offered at the level of higher education. Because this area is acutely underresearched, the ways used to carry out this task in the present study is not highly sophisticated. I have examined the course outlines and searched if any topics on gender are presented in the syllabus content. In the case of reference books, I examined the table of contents to look for headings that use key words like gender, women, female, women’s movement and equal rights movement to frame the titles of discussion in book chapters.

I have presented the findings of the data on communication courses in terms of four major themes: (i) gender as a non-issue; (ii) gender issues: a casual reference; (iii) gender issues: a liberal view, and finally (iv) gender issues: a critical view. In the first category, none of the topics in the courses give gender issues a central focus in the discussion of the communication problem. In the second category, though gender is not a central focus in the selection of any of the topics, there are some attempts to relate to gender-linked concepts in the examination papers. In the case of courses that devote topics on gender, I have attempted to infer the forms of perspectives employed in the discussion by examining the data offered on syllabus content, examination questions, reading list and the views of the tutors. I have then classified these courses into two categories: the liberal and critical view. These themes will be further discussed in the sections that follow. In addition, I will select sample courses and discuss them in detail to exemplify the placing of gender issues in the communication courses.

I would like to also add here that I found much difficulty in offering a critique on the findings of the content of the courses, specifically where I have attempted to illustrate the extent the ideas on communication exclude, marginalise or give token attention to concerns of gender and to women as people. To a large extent, the subject matter reflects male concerns, deals with concepts and paradigms that centre on male activity and women do not become central concerns that deserve close attention. While writing up this chapter, I have observed that each weekly topic provides ‘male-stream’ knowledge. Further, the gender question can be explored in

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45 O'Brien (1981) uses this phrase to argue that social and political theory was, and for the most part still is, written by men, for men and about men.
multiple ways, according to different media, genres and theoretical approaches⁴⁶. Thus the critique and suggestions for gender issues I offer are illustrative, but not exhaustive.

The following sections look at some patterns of omission and inclusion of gender issues. I have developed a systematic discussion on communication courses that cover a wide range of areas within the field of communication to offer some insights into the problem of the gender gap in curriculum knowledge. I have selected sample courses from the components of introductory courses, core courses, options and practical-oriented courses to depict the pervasive nature of this problem and to demonstrate that communication scholarship in this programme encompasses gender exclusion in a manner that is substantial and seems routine. In this respect, I feel that an useful way of approaching this discussion is by describing a concerned course and its reading list, its examination question paper and offering examples that depict the silencing of issues linked to women's subordination in the communication agenda. This is followed by some suggestions in thinking about gender communication issues. I do not aspire to prescribe definitive approaches on how these issues can be advanced. Instead I hope to offer some insight into interpreting various aspects of communication and the media from gender viewpoints. I have also attempted to illustrate courses which give visibility to gender issues and have elaborated the manner in which these issues are approached.

While no means exhaustive, the discussion on the curriculum content on which this analysis is based is nevertheless representative of the patterns that emerge in communication education as far as gender issues are concerned. This exercise, invariably has illuminated that the task of bringing gender issues as a significant concern of the curriculum is immensely difficult given the hegemonic masculinity in the construction of knowledge in communication studies. More importantly, this raises the limitations of adding women into the existing knowledge when what is required is a fundamental change in the direction of this field of study (Thiele, 1986). I will return to this concern at the end of this chapter. This exercise calls into question the basic assumptions, the posing of problems and the accepted way of doing things in research and in generating knowledge in this field of study (Gallagher, 1989:76). In this study, I raise gender issues within the existing frameworks of knowledge that are being offered in the courses. I would like to note that some data that I could and would have liked to use here is clearly attributable, or makes obvious reference to certain members

⁴⁶Indeed feminist scholarship itself has experienced rapid developments over the past two decades, indicating that its premises and concepts cannot be prematurely closed as it is constantly evolving in innovative ways to unearth the complexities that frame women's lives (Cook and Fonow, 1986:5).
of the staff. I have therefore chosen to make my discussion general rather than specific. The discussion on the place of gender issues in the communication courses of this programme is presented in the final section of this chapter.

8.1 Gender as a non-issue

Courses that do not include gender as a topic for discussion in the syllabus content are classified under this category. The gender connection is invisible here and lacks what Oakley (1974) terms as 'sociological presence'. The courses simply leave out questions of gender and women in relating to the study of communication. Hence, women are omitted as subjects related to the discussion of communication - knowledge informed of gender perspectives are absent and learners are not alerted to the social systems and practices that affect women's lives. The following list shows the courses that fall into this category. The findings and analysis of sample courses are also reported to demonstrate the omission of gender-related issues.

**Introductory Courses**
1. Introduction to Human Communication

**Core Courses**
2. Communication Theory
3. Communication Research Methods

**Options**
4. Media History and Law
5. Communication, Class and Conflict
6. Theory and Basics of Advertising
7. International Communication
8. Public Relations
9. Communication Policy and Planning
10. Advanced Advertising
11. Media Planning
12. Communication for Social Development

**Practical-oriented Courses**
14. Journalism I
15. Photojournalism

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47The list of courses assessed in this study and the Malays terms for these courses are attached in Appendix A.
Interestingly, the findings of this study reveal that this category constitutes the majority of the courses of the USM Communication Programme. From the above list, it can be seen that to a large extent, the question of gender is not given any prominence. Out of a total number of 29 courses, 22 or 75.9% of the courses do not give gender a central focus or as topics for discussion. This alarming proportion reveals the presence of a serious gender gap and highlights how matters related to the subordination of women do not emerge in the knowledge generated in the curriculum. While several of the above courses have advanced class as a central concept of oppression, gender on the whole appears to be missing in the discussions on communication. It can then be inferred that the concept of gender has not been employed widely in the course content to envision alternative forms of oppression that operate principally in our social systems. The omission of gender issues in the knowledge on communication perpetuates the dominant patriarchal ways of making sense of the social conflicts in the world. In the following section, I present sample courses that do not conceive women's oppression and concerns as topics of study.

A. Introduction to Human Communication

Course syllabus

This course aims to introduce several approaches in studying human communication to understand the principles and strategies influencing human communication. A study of the course syllabus shows that it raises the discussions on the types and codes of verbal and non-verbal communication to assess various factors that impinge upon the process of communication. Numerous concepts presented for discussion include: encoding and decoding; language, symbols, non-verbal symbols like body language; behaviour attitudes, values and beliefs; meaning; role; and self. In addition, the course also explores the methods and ways in which human beings communicate in interpersonal, dyad, small groups and organisation contexts.
Reading List

Indicative readings including books like *Asas-Asas Komunikasi Antara Manusia* by Kincaid and Schramm (1978) and *The Silent Language* by Hall (1959) have very little to say about gender as a major organising principle that impinges upon human interaction and communication and accords different power status to men and women. None of the book chapters offered any discussion on the concept of gender and the forms of social practices it generates in communication. In these readings, the term sex (based on biological differences) is used as a variable that affects human activity. Feminist writings which give the construct of gender a significant focus and which explore numerous concepts or issues in human communication do not occupy a position in this reading list.

Examination Paper

In the examination paper, the students are required to answer four out of seven questions. Different areas are questioned like the conflicts in interpersonal communication, non-verbal communication strategies, and issues on defense mechanisms and effective communication in persuasion and propaganda. One question calls for discussion on the influence of attitudes, prejudices and ethnocentrism in the problem of racial unity and communication in Malaysia. There are no questions that relate specifically to gender in human communication.

Comment

In general, this course discusses the various factors that impinge upon the process of effective communication. Interestingly, the concepts 'self', 'role' are noted as important constructs in communication. However, gender as a theoretical category and not a simple variable, and that the doing of gender as part of our daily routines are issues not raised as points of discussion.

Gender impinges upon a major part of our lives and our social interactions. Gender is often implicated in the messages that individuals send and receive and it also influences every setting in which individuals interact with others or interpret their experiences. The effects of gender expectations and ambitions vary across individuals, and in many situations gender ideals based on certain ideas on masculinity and femininity produce complications or tensions to individuals and their relationships. It seems appropriate then, that the concepts sex and gender are introduced and made

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48See Appendix B for the references listed in sample courses discussed in this chapter.
problematic in the discussion of the self. The differences between the constructs sex and gender can be given a central focus as human communication creates and re-creates gender as ideals for each sex. If individuals struggle both to achieve gender ideals and to cope with the restrictions those ideals produce in their lives, it seems useful to question the basic assumptions of dominant ideas that shape these perceptions. To realise more fully the ways in which feminist thought may change and enhance scholarship on interpersonal communication, I move on now to suggest some directions for advancing the problem of gender.

The concept self is not new and has been an important construct which lies at the heart of communication processes. The self or subject is a social construction - the underlying belief here is that meaning and the making of them are linked to the social structures. As such it would be interesting if the learners in this course can explore the assumptions individuals have about themselves: their development, their freedom and their self-identity and how these assumptions make a difference to their interaction with communication. The gender discourse also implies an understanding of other social attributes such as age, colour, ethnicity, class and educational level. The intersection of gender, class, ethnicity and how these attributes affect self-identity and gender experiences particularly in the Malaysian context seem like interesting and valuable exercises.

Having made the self problematic, the discussion can then be linked to gender stereotyping, sex-roles, social myths and the cultural constructions of masculinity and femininity as points of concern. This will engage students to think about their own behaviour, about the messages they receive and about their involvement in communication process. Attempts can be made to highlight that these meanings are not only meanings of the self, but also meanings of social experience. Apart from giving attention on individuals, roles and socialisation, the social experience can be related to social systems and structures of domination and this in turn can be linked to questions of power, politics and conflict. This will forward an important point in feminist thought and broaden students' understanding of the bases of not only gender stereotypes, expectation and behaviour, but more importantly the wider questions of women's inequality and subordination in both the private and public dimensions of society. Introducing the gender discourse can raise interesting questions and issues about power, its distribution and maintenance in society and sensitise students to the gendered norms and meanings that are produced in society.
The following readings can be useful in developing a session on gender:


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**B. Communication Theory**

**Course Syllabus**

An evaluation of the course outline indicates that it begins with discussions on the development of communication theories within the context of society and in relation to other factors such as power relations. The students are exposed to perspectives from sociology and psychology, two primary disciplines which have influenced communication research and theory-building. Discussions in this course encompass areas like audience studies, communication and development, content analysis or media texts studies, studies of media organisations, and shifts in the paradigms of communication studies.

**Reading List**

This course has an impressive list of readings. However most of the books have very little to say about gender theoretical perspectives. For example, the books *Perspectives in Sociology*, an edited collection by Cuff et al (1979), *Towards a Sociology of Mass Communication* by McQuail (1969), *The Myth of Mass Culture* by Swingewood (1977), *The Passing of Traditional Society* by Lerner (1958) and *Mass Media and National Development* by Schramm (1964) do not devote attention to the gender issues in various aspects of communication (see Appendix B). Evidently, gender is taken as a non-issue, and this demonstrates the exclusion of women's experiences in communication thinking in most books.

There are however, a few exceptions in the reading materials. Books like *Media, Culture and Society* by Collins et al (1986), *Television Mythologies* by Masterman (1984) and *Media Analysis Techniques* by Berger (1982) give gender viewpoints and raise criticism regarding gender symbols in the media. But considering that the course syllabus does not raise any topics on gender in the course, the presence

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35It may be possible that new editions may acknowledge feminism as a distinctive body of knowledge. Interestingly, the third edition (1990) of this book which attempts to integrate post-modernist viewpoints has excluded feminism as a distinctive social theory in thinking about developments in society.
of these issues could easily be neglected or overlooked in understanding communication.

Examination Paper

Students are required to answer three out of the six questions presented in the paper. Students are asked to comment on three of the following issues: the generation and building of communication theories has to be seen in the context of the developments in society; reception studies as an extension of uses and gratification theory; the discussion on ownership and control of media in Malaysia; critique on theories of development that emphasise diffusion models and the role of the media in development; the forces of imperialism and colonialism in the international communication system; and the use of concepts like hegemony and relative autonomy in the analysis of media texts and institutions. Feminism as a social theory or gender as a theoretical category is not given any significance in the course content and in the examination questions.

Comment

This is a crucial course as it deals with concepts, theories and paradigms that will inform the understanding of the various traditions, research questions and approaches to the study of communication. From the basis of the analysis of course content, this study finds that the topics offered for discussion exclude experiences of women and the understanding of power relationships that operate between men and women. Gender oppression and the problematic relationship of media and gender are not raised as important issues for discussion in communication debates.

The absence of feminist thought poses a major barrier to the goal of producing significant developments in theory and methods of inquiry in this area of study. Sensitivity to gender is important as it is a major principle of social organisation which informs communication and is in turn created by communication. In Chapter Two, I have articulated some women-communication relationships which are problematic. If gender is a missing theme in the syllabus content, this would only perpetuate the notion that gender is irrelevant to the study of communication. Consequently, this may encourage students to accept the given values imparted in understanding communication and in learning about media practices. The presence of a gender discourse can enable the questioning of conventional wisdom that has developed in making sense of the ways gender is produced in media and communication technology.
Interestingly, this course places emphasis on power relations, however this has been framed in terms of class. Gender oppression is still neglected in debates on societal change. It is important to recognise that social oppression does not only emerge in terms of class divisions but also in terms of gender hierarchy. By silencing the gender question, the concrete experiences of women become invisible. Women are excluded from communication theories and women's involvement in social processes and communication activities do not gain any attention. The presence of a gender discourse will contribute to a more sophisticated articulation of power relations among human actors in society. Further, a key element in feminist theory advances the fluid nature of power which can be expressed as 'power over' and as 'power to' or empowerment. As discussed in Chapter Three, the viewpoints on power and empowerment are instructive in explaining the interplay of structure and agency in feminist thinking. As such, this perspective also paves the possibilities into exploring how women as social actors are both constrained and at the same time can work towards altering social structures.

In this course, the gender discourse is also relevant to the various topics that have been identified in the syllabus content. For example, in relation to audience studies, gender viewpoints have reclaimed popular mass entertainment forms like romance books, soap opera and women's magazines as objects of critical analysis in communication. There is a wide literature that proposes that woman are active audiences who negotiate their own meanings and their own aesthetic appreciation. Notions such as resistance and subversive readings and the making of pleasure in popular texts a collective and public experience have been key issues in gender audience studies. Gender audience studies has also attracted much critique, particularly in terms of linking empowerment with the consumption of popular texts (see Chapter Two). These debates present useful knowledge regarding women's experiences with the media.

Studies on the gender and communication relation in development reveal that much of the development communication enterprise is based on gendered knowledge and practices which devalue women and their voices (see Chapter Two). As noted by Moser (1991) and the group DAWN (Sen and Growth, 1987), development must encompass women and the complexities that women encounter in their daily lives. Deeply implicated in this effort is development communication which can help play a support role by giving prominence to women's voices and gender issues. However, as the evidence in Chapter Two points out, most development communication projects perpetuate inequalities, and reinforce dominant ideas on masculinity and femininity.
Given that there is a paucity of material related to gender issues in the Malaysian context, it seems worthy that the course on communication theory places attention on this discourse to stimulate research and discussion in this area.

An extensive number of books have been offered as reference materials relevant to this course (see Appendix B). Most of these books listed in this course do not deal exclusively on gender as central themes and this appears to reinforce the marginal status allocated to the concerns of women. However some edited collections advance some chapters that offer gender analyses and discussion. The book, *Television Mythologies* edited by Len Masterman (1984) for example is a collaborative attempt that unravels some of the social myths that are perpetrated by British Television in the 1980's. This book has presented some interesting chapters that are related to gender issues. Rosalind Brunt for example, offers a critique on the television programme, 'What's My Line'. She argues that the television show espouses genteel sexism toward women. Despite the fact that some women are presented in non-traditional roles, she points out that the show constructs dominant roles that conform to the ruling ideas that appropriate women and men to certain gender roles (p. 21-28). In other chapters, Lewis considers the patriarchal power factor - sexuality as one of the determinants in television games while Brundson writes about soap operas as the opium of female masses. Other books by Collins et al (1986) and Berger (1982) give some focus to women as subjects in their book chapters.

The following readings are useful resources that can advance gender viewpoints in this course:


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51 Brunt suggests that women's jobs were usually low paid, casual or unskilled working class jobs, while men's jobs rarely step out of the masculine roles and usually involve higher status and earning power. In addition she makes the observation that the show appears to insist that women who had taken tough jobs were much too feminine for these tasks.

52 Lewis illustrates how women only appear as attractive assistants - subordinate to the male hosts. He also contends that women become objects of flirtation or as targets for sexist jokes.
C. Communication Research Methods

Course Syllabus

This course presents the philosophy of social science research, its methods and concepts. Emphasis is given to qualitative research and there are attempts to include discussion on the differences between mainstream or service research and critical research. Topics that are presented in the course include content analysis, participant observation, documentary analysis and survey research. Various tools of analysis are discussed and the course states that this is linked to social theories that have influenced the various fields in communication research. Questions regarding the validity of these methods in different social settings and under different political, economic, social, historical circumstances are raised as important issues in the course outline. Similarly, the course also notes that it assesses problems relating to notions of value free research and research ethics.

Reading list

Again, it can be seen that despite rigorous developments in feminist thought and methodology in the past decade, journal articles or books relating specifically to feminist methodology do not appear in this reading list (see Appendix B). The book, *Media Analysis Techniques* by Berger (1982) looks at the analysis of images of women, however issues regarding the framing of questions and the underlying assumptions guiding research methods are not debated.

Examination Paper

The examination papers covers numerous issues that include the following: discussion on the link between theory and research methods; the advantages of field work in contrast to laboratory studies in the field of communication; assessing the notion that scientific research is objective; a discussion on the research issues to be considered when conducting participant observation or content analysis; and the limitation of quantitative data in content analysis studies.

Comment

Gender criticism has much to contribute to communication research. Hence it is useful that recent developments in feminist methodology be included in this course to inform gender-related research in communication and to question the underlying epistemological assumptions in positivist and critical research which have left out the understanding of women's experiences. There are many feminist scholars who have
explored various principles that can guide feminist methodology.

Within gender communication research, early studies on gender examined media images of women and men and sex-role differences in the social participation related to the private and public spheres. Quantitative content analysis has been a popular method to describe numbers, roles and other characteristics of the portrayal of women and men in various media. Many of these studies have attracted strong criticisms which have pointed to the limited understanding of the structures of social life and studying sexism in isolation from its social context. In recent years, large-scale surveys, interviews, semiotic and structural analysis, psychoanalysis and ethnography have been used to interpret gender-media relationships.

This development of critical works on gender is seen by many communication scholars as an important turning point that has contributed to the paradigm shifts in the field of communication studies. Hence feminist thought shares similar concerns with the critical research approach that addresses research issues like scientific objectivity and positivist traditions. Inspite of this crucial contribution, it seems odd that although feminist analysis is relevant to the established and emerging themes in theories of communication, this discourse continues to escape the attention of major scholars in this field. In fact, very little research carried out within critical research paradigm has attempted to question the underpinning assumptions and taken-for-granted ways of doing things which are embedded in and contribute to the structures of gender subordination. Gallagher (1989:77) suggests that gender-related works that take women and women's experiences as a starting point for critical reflection and analysis constitute a distinct paradigm itself as it offers an alternative theoretical viewpoint which provides new categories and concepts for constructing research.

These contributions by feminist thought are important issues that can fruitfully inform courses in communication research and methodology. As noted in Chapter Two, currently there exists major lacunae in feminist research in areas like popular culture, media institutions and audience studies in Malaysia. Discussion of feminist

53This approach encompasses the following main features:
- the significance of gender as a basic category of all social life and the subjective oppression of women in society,
- the importance of experience and knowledge which emerges from both the private and public dimensions of social life, thus rejecting positivism and a possibility of value-free research,
- an activist approach which places emphasis to seek social change, in relation to social systems and practices that denigrate or devalue women.
research and methodology is important to pioneer feminist critique in the Malaysian experience.

The following readings will be useful in advancing feminist methodology as an area of discussion:

- Rakow, L (1986a) "Feminist Approaches to Popular Culture: Giving Patriarchy its Due." *Communication, 9*:19-41.

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**D. Communication For Social Development**

**Course Syllabus**

This course introduces definition, scope and issues of development. Various areas are presented for discussion: the transformation of traditional societies to modern ones based on theories of modernisation; diffusion of technologies and development; the impact of colonialism and dependency; and the emerging third world nations with a central state exercising strong political influence over development process. These are then linked to specific issues like poverty, famine, unemployment and inequality. In this light, the course states that it aims to depict the role and importance of communication in support of development and in solving under-development related problems.

**Reading List**

Again, there are no readings that are informed of gender perspectives and the glaring absence concerning the problems relating to women's lives can be clearly noted in this list of references (see Appendix B). Books like *Communication and Development: Critical Perspectives*, an edited collection by Rogers (1976), *Communication and Change: The Last Ten Years and the Next* by Schramm and
Lerner (1976) and *Apa Eri Pembangunan* by Husin Ali (1976) seem to show no regard for gender issues.

**Examination Paper**

Students are required to answer three out of five essay questions that are set in this paper. The following issues have been raised as points of discussion: development and diffusion of technologies; role of development communication and participatory approaches in development; anti-poverty programmes and polarisation of income in the Malaysian context; limitations of the modernisation thesis; and finally rural development, poverty and its relation to low levels of education of the rural population.

**Comment**

An analysis of the course syllabus reveals that specific issues like poverty, population, famine, unemployment and inequality are identified as major issues related to development while gender remains as a non-issue in this debate. The issues on development have revolved around the contemporary world capitalist system and the political-economic process that dominantly define people in terms of classes. Though gender is intricately linked to all aspects of development, the course does not place any significance on gender. There is much evidence that shows that the development enterprise has worsened women's lives and increased the burdens of their work. Despite this, the oppression of women that is linked to patriarchy and capitalism is not raised as a problematic issue. Subsequently, the subordinate position of women to that of men and the gender conflicts that emerge in the public and private sphere are not acknowledged within the debate of development.

The group DAWN (Sen and Growth, 1987) has emphatically pointed out that development cannot afford to ignore women for several reasons: women are fundamental to the reproductions and survival of human communities; women’s work takes place both inside and outside home in diverse and widespread forms and women make the poorest and the most oppressed groups, particularly in the third world regions. Moser (1993) has advanced ideas on gender planning in the development process. The involvement of women in communication activities within gender planning is of immense importance in the contexts of developing economies - an issue that is worth exploring in the discussion on communication for social development.

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54 This book in Malay looks at the context of development in the Malaysia. The arguments presented here raise development issues in terms of class and ethnicity while gender appears as a non-issue.
Taking into account that gender is implicated in all aspects of development, it seems relevant that the course highlights the notion that women's views and experiences need to be considered in development and development communication projects. If communication is to play a support role in development, then there must be increased sensitivity towards gender in thinking about development communication. In this respect, communication courses can play a crucial role in alerting students to the multiple difficulties that confront women and the barriers that emerge in the development programmes.

A fruitful direction can be charted out in this course by advancing a topic which looks into the gender-link in development. Problematic concepts like development and the types of development and how this benefits women can be raised as points of contention. Dialogues among communication learners can also be generated by giving recognition to women's interests in the development enterprise, especially in terms of distribution of power and control in society and in working towards increased equality and empowerment for women (Sreberny-Mohamadi, 1994:20). In this relation, the notions of development communication and the assumptions that the numerous media very simply aid development need to be questioned. Ideas on development communication which have stemmed largely from the writings of men like Lerner, Schramm, de Sola Pool and Pye do not place interest on gender issues. Thus feminist critique can be levelled against the patriarchal premises (and promises) imported in these debates on development and development communication.

The absence of systemic understandings of gender issues in communication and development have been addressed by numerous gender scholars. Steeves (1993a) and Riano (1994) contend that many state development projects have failed to grasp women's interests, even when women have been important publics. Indeed some of the studies presented in Chapter Two testify that development communication functions mainly in support of development interests of ruling patriarchal political and economic power groups rather than thinking about social justice and empowerment for women.

In the context of contemporary Malaysia, the lack of gender discussion marks major lacunae in thought and work on development communication. The role of the media in sustaining certain forms of development or male domination is a potential area of study and can offer valuable discussion and useful insights into the development communication practices in Malaysia.
The reading list clearly denotes the lack of feminist literature in this area. The following references can be helpful in presenting ideas that recognise gender insights in exploring communication for social development:


E. International Communication

Course Syllabus

In this course, various media systems in the world are studied. This encompasses the four theories of the press and this is linked to the study of media systems operating in the Malaysian context. Comparisons and contrasts are explored. The philosophy and the ideology underpinning various international media systems are also discussed. Some of the media policies developed in certain countries are advanced and examined in the course. In addition there are other issues that emerge as topics for discussion: the imbalances in international flow of information and communication products; the New World Information and Economic Order; international flows of television programming and media effects, specifically in relation to national culture; foreign news in the media; media and nationalism; transnational corporations; electronic colonialism and telecommunications.

Reading List

None of the reading materials have any articles or book chapters on gender issues in an international context (see Appendix B). Books like *International News* by Fascell (1979), *Electronic Colonialism* by McPhail (1981) and *Media Policies in Changing Cultures* edited by Gerbner (1977) do not raise any gender controversies. This further illustrates that gender issues are not framed within the debates on international communication.
Examination Paper

Six questions are presented in this examination paper and the students are required to choose three questions and answer them in three hours. The questions seek discussion on the following matters: role of a free and pluralistic media in the democratic and economic development of a nation; imbalances in information flows between the countries of the 'North' and the 'South' and the New World Information Order and Economic Order; transnational news corporations, domination, political and cultural implications; coverage of the Gulf War and the media war; globalisation and the role of television, traditional paradigms and alternative developments in the international communication scenario; and the coverage of the Olympic Sports and its relation to (i) international unity and co-operation, (ii) imbalance, hegemony and other difficulties.

Comment

Amidst the various international developments, there is silence on gender issues and hardly anything is discussed concerning the place and role of women and the gender conflicts that have emerged within the international communication scene like representation and participation of women in media systems, impact of transnational communication corporation on women's lives, feminist global networking, and pornography. It appears that gender is treated as an entity which has no connection to international communication and that the developments in this area do not affect or pertain to women. By neglecting the dimension of gender, this course on international communication implicitly supports the notion that international communication is largely a male-centred activity and has no bearings on the position and the role of women in society.

An analysis of the subject matter in this course suggests that a conventional approach which eclipses the gender concerns is adopted. Like most of the other courses in the programme, this course perpetuates the notion that international communication processes themselves are gender-neutral. For example, human rights and the struggle for a plurality of perspectives are major issues in international communication. However insofar as the gender-link is concerned, the relevance of the analysis and the study of the role of the media and other actors in promoting or denying voices and rights to women has remained glaringly absent in this course.

Gender issues can be raised in relation to the turbulent international communication ecology. The case of the Gulf War which is raised as a topic for discussion in this course can be used to illustrate the gendered media reporting. In the
senseless slaughter and destruction of human lives, the issues that women were raising in this period of turmoil hardly gained any visibility in the media. The pleas from women who argued against the use of force in settling conflict situations were largely silenced in the mainstream media. The war game and military debate appear to belong to a domain that is reserved for men only. Roach (1991) draws a connection between sexism, the war system and media reporting. Interestingly, she brings to our attention that "death, destruction and war were all reduced to an ice-cold, rational discourse with a definite sexual subtext" in the language used to relate to this conflict. These are useful observations that can be raised for discussion in the course.

One prominent scholar, Steeves (1989) maps five global gender issues that can stimulate discussions on the international context of development: gender and transnational corporations; representations of women in global mainstream media; women's roles in mainstream media organisations; women's resistance to global media oppression; new technologies and global networking. Evidently, these issues form useful pointers for introducing gender debates in the Malaysian communication context.

Taking into consideration that the development of new communication technologies is a topic advanced in this course, I would like to briefly dwell on this area in the contemporary context of Malaysia. Since the 1970's, Malaysia has taken a leap into the communication and information field and introduced its privatising and industrialisation programmes in these sectors. Interestingly, a major criticism levelled at these programmes is that only a privileged group of ruling elites benefit from new technologies while a large proportion of the Malaysian people are unable to gain any rewards from these technological expansions\(^5^5\). This raises various questions in relation to oppressed groups that have scarce resources. Crucially, women's needs and interests, in terms of thinking about access to information and exploring the ways of adapting these new technologies as a means of increasing participation in a technological world at both local and global levels have important bearings. These issues can be raised in this course.

\(^5^5\)The catalytic role of telecommunications in Government policies concerning modernisation has been widely critiqued, particularly in the light of state intervention in the economy and the centralisation of power. In addition the emerging trend of 'money politics' which links political power and business opportunities is seen as a point of concern (see Zaharom Nain, 1994; Jomo K., 1989; Chandra Muzaffar, 1986). For example, Rahim and Pennings (1987) report that only a small percentage of the computer installations are used for development purposes. The most prominent large-scale uses of computers are the military, executive branches of government, transnational corporations, universities and large research institutions (cited in Lent, 1991:187). The gendered dimension becomes evident when noting that the key actors in these areas are men and their interests are primarily sustained in the working towards technological progress.
In this connection, it seems useful not to pass a monolithic view of communication systems as simple ideological channels reproducing gendered messages to passive agents. It seems worthy to see communication as an arena of struggle among contending interests groups and to think about developing strategies within the concerned constraints. There have been various actor-oriented strategies that have attempted to put gender in public debates and that have demonstrated ways in which women are seen empowering communication (see special issue on Women Empowering Communication in Media Development, 2/1994; Riano, 1994; Rush and Ogan, 1989). Global feminist networking, distribution of information and growing consciousness among women on media issues have led to the production of feminist films, newsletters, plays, songs and poems which enable women to express themselves, to exchange ideas with other women and to counteract dominant media stereotypes and myths. In this way, the importance of local knowledge, global collaboration and strategic action indicate some of the effective networks and group alliances that bring women together to interact with the local and global power. This suggests that actors do matter as do the networks and discourses in which they are involved and within which they reproduce.

The presence of a gender discourse within the agenda of international communication involves a challenge to any assumption that separates this dimension from the voices of women. An alertness to gender means that the course can encourage the exploring and deconstructing of dominant codes and conventions that have framed debates on international communication. Raising questions about the gendered systems and their processes at various levels and thinking about action-strategies and alternative constructions will enliven and enrich debates in this area of study.

Writings on gender are not included in the reading list. The following references will be useful in initiating discussion on gender issues in international communication:


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F. Television Production I

Course Syllabus

The course aims to introduce the technology of television production and gives the opportunity for students to produce simple video programmes. An examination of course syllabus shows that the course places emphasis on technical production aspects. Students learn how to handle the cameras and to frame shots with different camera movements. Attention is given to the lay-out of sets, designing floor plans, lighting techniques, the writing of shooting scripts and the operating of mixing panels. As crew members of production teams, the students take turns in playing serious roles like cameraman, soundman, director, floor manager, interviewer and reporter.

As part of the coursework, students will plan and produce television forums, interviews and magazines. The finished programmes will then be played back so that the students can evaluate their productions.

Reading List

Books in this course, including *Broadcasting in the Third World* by Katz and Wedell (1977) and *The Programme Maker’s Handbook* by Watts (1982) do not raise gender issues with the debates of broadcasting and television production (see Appendix B).

Examination Paper

In this examination paper, students are required to answer three questions. The first question is compulsory. Students are asked to view a video clip from a drama and then write a critical account of why they liked or disliked the drama. Students are also invited to write about their views if they were to change the storyline, picture composition and characterisation of actors. In addition, students are required to answer two out four questions from the following:

Interestingly, the terminology used to denote roles in media production demonstrates gendered language in English.
a description of how they will go about producing a television forum consisting of a chairperson and three invited guests. They are asked to draw a floor plan and to describe a suitable setting,

- discuss the depiction of Malaysian culture in local television programmes,
- offer an assessment of local news production in terms of their format, presentation and content,
- provide a description of the roles played in each production and the qualities of a successful television director.

Comment

This practical-oriented course concentrates on media production activity as technical matters only and puts very little attempt to develop critical approaches to the study of television. In Chapter Six and Seven, I have highlighted that media practical skills are not neutral operations but are interwoven with values and ideologies. This course falls into the technicist trap as it is centrally concerned with technical competence and the reproduction of dominant conventions, leaving out questions that raise the assumptions underpinning these production practices. This may lead students to uncritically learn and adopt dominant industrial conventions as routine or norms. As Masterman (1990) argues, practical work should be reflective and critical rather than simply reproductive.

It seems useful to integrate television criticism in this course to highlight some of the gendered values that are embedded in production techniques. In this instance, the issue of women's relationship to her body in Malaysian culture seems like a worthy area of investigation and critical evaluation. Further, there is much feminist theorising about the use of women's body in visual media like films and television (see Shefer, 1990; Mulvey, 1975). The major critique here is that the framing of images of women contribute to the reproduction of control over female sexuality as well as male violence towards women. These issues are helpful to understand the role of the body in femininity and the importance this has assumed in the making of television programmes and films. The discussion can further raise the importance of questioning the cultural standards of defining femininity and beauty. In Malaysia, ethnic categories and religion are pertinent within sexual oppression, yet there is no discussion on women's

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57Mulvey (1975) explains three basic looks that can be linked to television production: the look of the camera in filming situations; the juxtaposing of male and female figures within the film narrative; and finally the look of the spectator which identifies a parallel position to the look of the camera. Her work has inspired critical developments in the narratives of different television genres in feminist television criticism.
relationship to her body among different ethnic groups in the Malaysian cultural context.

A practice-based course like this could also seek to elicit a more pointed analysis by engaging students to reflect analytically upon issues like the different treatment in camera framing, the designing of settings presented in game shows, musicals, women's programmes, talk shows etc. in relation to the gender of performers. What are the dominant camera movements framing women? How does this differ in various television genres? How have women in different classes, ethnic groups, age and ableness been presented in television content? The construction of television symbol systems that depict femininity and masculinity i.e. gender sign-systems in relation to all kinds of television programmes can be made important objects of scrutiny. For example, the camera movements, editing sequences and sound capturing a man in action and the difference in production techniques if the actor is a woman in a similar action will clearly offer interesting interpretations of doing gender. In this connection, it is important to focus explicitly on the difference in narrative conventions and its ideological implications.

I have noted in the last chapter that production techniques themselves make interesting topics of television study as they are not neutral and vital links can be made to questions of meanings, values and discourse. Techniques like reporting, filming, editing, video camera work, set design and photography cannot be deemed as objective and unbiased. It is crucial that the 'naturalness' of the television image be deconstructed to demystify the neutrality of production techniques. These forms, their sophistication and their representation are constructed so smoothly -- as an almost ideological innocent practice (Masterman, 1985). These symbols or units within television production and how this fits into the total gendered structure of the larger pictures of the programme can be raised as interesting debates. This would enable students not only to display technical knowledge but to reflect analytically upon the issues raised by making television programmes.

The following readings can be used to develop gender criticism in television production courses:

The discussion so far has provided evidence that demonstrates the omission of gender issues in communication courses. The omission of gender issues can be linked to the responses of tutors to gender issues in the curriculum materials in the last chapter. Clearly, those who argued that the representation of women in the media scene was satisfactory had not accordingly raised any gender issues in their courses. In the next sections, I look at courses that give visibility to gender issues in communication courses.

8.2 Gender Issues: A Casual Reference

In this instance, there is no clear evidence on the presence of gender issues in the course syllabus. No specific topic gives attention to gender-communication issues as central themes. However, casual references are made in classroom discussion and there is some mention on gender in the examination paper. In this sense, gender is not given a significant focus within the course syllabus but marginal attempts are made to give some visibility to gender issues. To a certain extent, this can be interpreted as token gestures rather than a serious concern to giving prominence to gender power relations, women as oppressed social groups or as subjects of inquiry in relation to communication.

The findings of this study reveal that out of 29 courses, three courses fall into this category. These include the following:
1. Communication and Society
2. Journalism II
3. Magazine Writing and Production

I will report the analysis and the findings of a sample course and offer some thoughts on gender communication issues that can be approached more productively in this course.

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58 This account is derived from the views given by communication tutors.
G. Journalism II

Course Syllabus

The course aims to encourage students to think critically about the developments in Journalism, specifically from sociological perspectives. The press and other media are looked and assessed from the context of its society. In addition the course attempts to expose students to news values and the techniques of news gathering and writing of news stories and articles. Students will also participate in exercises of news writing, news presentation, editing, layout and design, photography for publication and produce the campus newspaper, *Berita Kampus*. By integrating theory and practice, the course hopes to orientate students to the understanding of the social, cultural, economic and political factors that impinge upon the role of journalists and news organisation, specifically in the context of the local media.

Reading List

The reading list has a number of references which focus on women and gender issues (see Appendix B). For example, the edited collections, the *Sociology of Journalism and the Press* by Christian (1980) includes two chapters in a section on Women and the Press and the book, *The Manufacture of News* by Cohen and Young (1981) has two chapters on gender issues contributed by Tuchmann and Butcher. In his book, *Understanding News*, Hartley briefly discusses the abandonment of women in news. These debates raise the problematic relationship of women and the news.

Examination Paper

In this examination paper, the first question is compulsory and students are required to write about four of the following concepts:

a. ownership and control
b. secondary sources
c. symbolic annihilation of women
d. ideology
e. labelling

The students are also asked to answer two out of four of the following essay questions:
- the role of primary sources in defining the agenda and relating this to their experiences in the production of the campus newspaper, *Berita Kampus*,
- the role of the state and its influence on the press in the Malaysian context,
• advertising and its implication to patterns and types of news making, specifically in relation to pluralist perspectives on the press,
• the Print and Publishing Act and Official Secrets Act and its relation to media and national interests, democracy and public accountability.

It can be seen that the women-question appears marginally only in the first question. The problematic gender-news relationship does not emerge in the section of essay questions.

Comment
This course attempts to orientate students to the understanding of social, cultural, economic and political factors that impinge upon news production and the role of journalists. The controversies that are raised however are framed mainly in terms of class and ethnicity while gender forms a marginal concern. This course does not present any topics that give central attention to gendered news values and news production. However casual references are made pertaining to the symbolic annihilation of women in the press. As such, it does not offer any serious challenge to the discussion of making news, rather it can be read as a token gesture that makes a marginal case out of women.

The manifestation of this tendency further arises in the examination paper where one of the five concepts presented in the discussion in Question 1 is on the symbolic annihilation of women. None of the essay questions elicited any debate on gender-linked issues.

The reading list encompasses some interesting articles that can be used to develop a more fruitful discussion on gendered patterns of news making and the exclusion of women in different news genres.

A useful topic can consider the definition of news or news worthiness. The implicit assumptions in selecting what makes news, the process of news gathering and the selection of actors can offer lively discussion on the gendered patterns of news making. Various questions can be raised: What is the position of women as newsmakers in the front page news? To what extent is the participation of women elicited in hard news, soft news, editorials and issue-oriented articles? How are women and their concerns covered in news? Is gender linked to the reporting of social issues? What patterns of ideas are generated in women's pages? How do institutional policies,
professional values and advertisers demands encourage gendered dimensions in the construction of news? What are the possible strategies for intervention?

These questions will be useful in constructing substantial debates on the gender relation to news. The following articles can aid discussion on these issues:

8.3 Gender Issues: A Liberal View

Courses that approach gender issues from a liberal view are listed in this category. The liberal view, in this case, is one that gives a significant focus to images of women, sex-role stereotypes and prescriptions of sex-appropriate behaviour. The major controversies on women-media relationships deal with the portrayal of women and men in private and public spheres; obscenity and the use of women as sex-objects. What seems apparent from the analysis of topics for discussion, reading lists and the examination paper is the emphasis that is placed on the media images of women. The gender problem is framed largely in terms of sexism, male chauvinism and the need to integrate women into the present system on an equal basis. Questions linked to the domination of women and power relations, the notion of women as a homogeneous, universal category and the presence of oppressive socio-economic structures are not engaged in an effort to understand the problematic media-gender relationships. Thus the major limitation of the discussion in gender media issues in the course lies in its disregard to the oppression of women embedded in our social structures and the need for social transformation.

From the analysis of the courses in this study, one course, that is Introduction to Mass Communication is listed in this category. The following section looks at this course to give insight into the ways gender issues are addressed in this perspective.

H. Introduction to Mass Communication

Course Syllabus

This course introduces students to aspects of mass communication as a process of socialisation in modern societies. It enables students to study mass media industries

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59This course appears in both semesters in the academic year 1992/93. It is offered to students from other disciplines in the first semester and to communication students in the second semester. The course syllabus is the same but the examination papers are different. I have chosen to report the findings of the examination paper offered to communication students in the second semester.
more closely and to assess critically the role of the media in gathering and disseminating information in society. The course hopes that this would help students to acquire the skills to critically evaluate the roles and products of the media.

The course looks at the history, development of newspapers, magazines, films, radio and television in general and specifically in Malaysia. The discussions focus on the structure, organisation and the roles of the contemporary media industries. Particular attention is given to issues like media bias, stereotypical portrayals, ownership and control, technological development of the media and its social implications. Apart from this, various areas related to the use and implementation of communication like advertising, public relations, persuasion, propaganda and development are explored.

Reading List

In this list, books like *Media di Malaysia: Satu Kumpulan Esei* by Mansor Ahmad (1983) and *Pengantar Komunikasi* by Mansor Ahmad et al (1984) (see Appendix B) are important references as they are written in the Malay language and relate to the Malaysian context. However, there are no references to issues on gender, oppression of women, the politics of sexuality or other feminist concerns. The book by Cassata and Molef (1979) offers a chapter that discusses sex-role stereotypes, images of women in American advertisements and women employed in the industry.

Examination Paper

The examination paper is divided into two sections. The first section offers a format of structured questions which required very brief 3-4 line answers. There are five short questions and one question asks students to give two examples of local advertisements and to explain how these depicted the stereotyping of women. They are also asked to do the same to illustrate the stereotyping of men.

The second section requires students to answer essay questions. Three questions are given and the students are asked to discuss two of the following issues:

- the portrayal of images of women and men in local magazines;
- advertising, its relation to the depiction of 'progressive' living and the social implications;

60The medium of instruction is carried out in the Malay language. Even though English is the second language, most students find it very difficult to comprehend books written in English (see Goonasekera, 1995)
• difference in the selection of news, first page news and news sources with references to local press organisation; and the role of the editor in news presentation.

Comment

The analysis indicates that there is some debate on gender -- the stereotypical portrayal images of women and men in media content. Issues like underrepresentation and trivialisation of women are raised as significant controversies. Problems like men outnumbering women, the over-emphasis given to the physical appearance and youth of women, the treatment of women as sex-objects, specifically in commercials, the depiction of women as dependent, weak and emotional and the absence of women in genres like news and sports within the Malaysian media context are raised as points for discussion. Further, the examination paper calls for the discussion on the portrayal of images of women and men in local magazines.

The discussion on media images is useful as it demonstrates the extent to which media function as a mechanism that play a part in the construction of hegemonic ideas on sexual norms and attitudes. There is however a difficulty in this tendency on describing media images of women and men in isolation of the social structures that operate in society. The focus on media portrayal of women appears to be disconnected from questions of power relations, mode of production, and the structure of political organisation in society. In addition, there seems to be hardly any discussion on the participation of women in media institutions, female audience and reception studies, and gender issues in development communication activities. A review of the reading lists further suggests that feminist critiques on image studies and critical works on the construction of femininity that have emerged from the cultural studies tradition have not gained much prominence.

As presented in Chapter Two, there are distinctive gaps in communication studies, particularly in the Malaysian scenario. Considering, the multi-cultural make-up of the people of Malaysia, very little attempt is made to articulate issues regarding the intersection of gender, class and ethnicity in exploring women-communication relationships. Indeed Riano (1994:35) perceptively points out that the formations of gender identity and the oppression experienced by women are intertwined with other "core variables like race, class, age and generation, sexual orientation, history, culture and colonialism." These issues are highly relevant to the Malaysian context and

61 This information is also drawn from the views of the tutor who indicated the range of themes that are raised in this session.
require serious systematic attention in the overall curriculum of communication education, and particularly in an introductory course on mass communication.

Another limitation in the discussion of gender is the absence of thought on women's agency contexts, particularly in relation to feminist media work. Indeed exciting developments have taken place in women's networking and communication activities. The vacuum of discussion in this area will tend to lead to a simplistic and pessimistic understanding of the immense complexity of women's involvement in the communication and cultural environment. Subsequently, feminist thinking about developing strategies and the potential contributions of students, however minor, remains an unaccomplished task.

To sum up, it can be said that the emphasis on portrayals of images in non-traditional roles and occupations alone is inadequate. A wider study needs to be charted in other areas linked to media content. Inquiry into the participation of women in media institutions and issues in female audience and reception studies can be introduced to set a more lively agenda for the discussion of gender issues in relation to gender formations and gender ideologies in society.

In recent years research adopting a cultural studies perspective has approached communication as a process through which culture is created, modified and transformed. In this light, media texts become crucial sites of struggle over the meaning of gender. According to van Zoonen (1991), a useful framework that looks into the media's social construction of gender will examine the location of the media in economic structures, their unique characteristics (e.g. broadcast, print), the particular genres, the audience they appeal to and the place they occupy in the daily lives of the audience (p. 45). By looking into these various angles, a wider contextualised understanding of gender can be introduced to set a more lively agenda for the discussion of gender communication issues.

The following resources can be used to develop discussion in this course:

8.4 Gender Issues: A Critical View

Courses that offer gender issues as central topics for discussion in the course syllabus and which offer critical views were listed in this category. A critical view here is seen as an approach which makes power an issue and examines the oppression of women in society, relating this to the part communication play in the social construction of gender. It starts with a belief that meaning and the making of them are indivisibly linked to social structures and can be explained in terms of that structure and its history.

From the analysis of the courses in this study, only three courses offer critical perspectives on gender issues. They are as follows:
1. Intercultural Communication
2. Communication Technology
3. Issues in Mass Communication

The following section looks at one sample course.

I. Intercultural Communication

Course Syllabus

The course aims to raise awareness regarding communication and culture. It explores the elements of superstructure, specifically culture in relation to the economic base so that students are sensitive towards the factors of power relations and ideology in a society and between nations. Culture is looked upon an arena of struggle between social forces concerned, where messages transmitted via mass media would bring meanings and images of significance at both national and international levels. The dynamics of transmission of messages and images within the social context where the dominant groups guard their interest and strive to maintain hegemony are analysed through case-studies. Focus is also given to concepts like power, ideology, hegemony and the expressions of resistance in relation to counter-cultures.

Reading List

The reading list includes materials that relate to gender issues (see Appendix B). The book, *Television Mythologies* by Masterman carries some useful readings. Brake (1980) includes an interesting chapter on the "Invisible Girl and the Culture of
Femininity versus Masculinity in his book, *The Sociology of Youth Subcultures*. Hebdige (1979) raises some observations on females in subcultural groups in his book, *Subculture: The Meaning Of Style*; however the discussion on females is marginal. The wider concern is focused with most sub-cultures that are male-dominated. The ways these sub-cultures explore and celebrate masculinity and the subordinate status relegated to girls are not raised as specific points of contention in his book.

**Examination Paper**

In the examination paper, Question 1 is compulsory. Students have to elaborate on four of the following concepts:

- culture
- consent
- common sensical
- stereotype
- contending cultures
- technological determinism

They are also asked to answer three of the following essay questions:

- the interplay of culture and politics in relation to dominant and sub-cultural groups,
- music, rock groups and social awareness in the Malaysian context,
- communication technology and pluralistic participation in culture, specifically in the case of sub-cultural groups that use communication technology to advance the interests the interests of their groups,
- femininity, women and sub-cultural activities.

**Comment**

A study of the course documents shows that the influence of critical perspectives is salient here. There is an effort to explore concepts like ideology, hegemony and power. These concepts are relevant in the study of gender - the definitions, how it is expressed and maintained. The ideas are then extended into the cultural arena, linking them with questions of power, access and the creation of social knowledge and struggles over meaning.

In this light, there is a specific attempt to forward the gender dimension in the arena of intercultural communication. The topic dealing with gender issues begins with a premise which realises that women's exploitation is framed by cultural experience. The discussion focuses on how gender has been constructed and how women's subordinate status is reinforced in media's construction of gender. It looks at
the representations of femininity and the place of women in media messages and images. It also explores some of the activities women have engaged in to counter these representations generated by mainstream media.

The reading list includes some articles on gender. Though these offer interesting points of discussion the concentration on media texts, recognition needs to be given to other forms of cultural gender struggles. A major limitation lies in the absence of issues related to ethnic and class diversities. The female population of Malaysia is not a homogeneous group. It is differentiated by ethnicity, religion, class, geographical location and other cultural factors but there is very little discussion surrounding these diverse groups. The flow of global cultural producers into the Malaysian media, Islamic resurgence and the revitalism of other religions and cultural identities amidst a rapid economic and social transformation have profound implications for Malaysian women. The ethnic tensions surrounding the Malaysian cultural context raise important questions. This cultural intricacy and the different gender experiences can be taken up as themes for discussion.

The reading list carries some edited collections which advance chapters on gender issues. A primary focus falls on media texts. There is very little literature on cultural struggles that ensue in other domains related to media organisations and audience. The following references can be used to enliven the discussion on gender issues:


8.5 Discussion - The Place of Gender Issues in Communication Courses

Gender, an organising factor that shapes the material and symbolic world experiences influences the formation of ideas, beliefs, attitudes and impinges upon the ways people go about doing things in the cultural institutions in which they live and work. The study on gender issues in the area of communication education is important as it tells about the information, knowledge and skills that are perceived as important, meaningful and relevant to the study of communication and to the roles and practices
communication students will engage in their future professions. The analysis of communication courses here shows the extent to which gender is given prominence in the syllabus content. It also illuminates the themes that are taken up when gender issues are present in communication courses.

The findings of this study on communication courses show that out of a total of twenty-nine courses, gender is a non-issue in twenty-two courses; it is given a casual reference in three courses; one course offers a liberal perspective on gender issues, while three courses devote attention to a critical study of gender issues in communication. This offers a clear indication of the exclusion of gender issues in the curriculum of the communication programme as a majority of the courses treat gender issues as insignificant. The following arguments are based on the evidence that has emerged from the analysis of communication courses.

Invisible Gender Issues

It has been asserted that women are overlooked from discussion or analysis of the human landscape and the perspectives that structure the selection and presentation of knowledge in the curriculum are gendered (Acker, 1994; Rakow, 1993a; Wood, 1988). A major observation that has surfaced in this study supports this view and shows that gender issues are excluded from discussion through choice of topics in the course syllabus and in the selection of issues in the examination papers. The courses concentrate on aspects of social life like inequality and development based on class and ethnicity, while the gender connection appears to be devalued. This creates a major gender gap in the curriculum - a silence which leaves gender issues unheard in relating to the field of communication. This silence pervades the introductory courses, core courses, options and the practical-oriented courses. Almost three-quarters of the communication courses offered in this programme have nothing to say about women's social position, their subordination and the problematic women-communication relationships in society. There seems to be an omission on the study of women as subjects, the oppression they face in society and the counter-hegemonic activities they engage in countering their social injustices inflicted upon them, particularly in connection with communication.

Examination question papers have provided strong evidence on the positioning of gender issues in the various courses. This analysis shows that gender is not linked in the issues and human experiences that are considered as significant or relevant to the understanding of communication and society. Such omission is embedded in assumptions about what issues are worthy of study and in conceptualising questions
guiding the agenda of the study of communication and media production work. These routines of curriculum knowledge and assessment are important sources of meaning that can influence students' alertness and perception to the importance of gender communication issues.

In this respect, the introductory course on Human Communication, core courses on Communication Theory and Communication Research Methods for example, do not raise gender as a theoretical construct or a central category that influences communication activities. This is particularly inadequate as it obliterates the existence and the experiences of one half of the human race. A large number of options, including Communication for Social Development, International Communication, Media History and Law appear to be suffused with communication models that have been subject to feminist critique. Concepts such as class, race, community, socialisation, social control and social conflict have not taken the gender dimension seriously into consideration. In fact, it is important to establish connections in the ways a gender hierarchy is used in the construction of groups in terms of class and race.

These courses teach students the issues to be aware of when learning about their roles as future communicators and in carrying out their work. Courses that render gender invisible imply that the status quo is accepted and the oppression of women is not recognised specifically in relation to communication and culture. The conceptualisation of communication questions are not linked to gender, suggesting that this is not worthy of critical concern. The silence on this gender dimension could be perceived as giving a subordinate status to knowledge on women and hence, reinforcing the hegemonic view which gives legitimacy to men's power and dominance.

In the case of practical-oriented courses, almost all of the courses (except for Journalism II, which offers casual references to gender) do not give any significance on the gendered assumptions that impinge upon media production techniques. Definition of technical concepts, decisions about news values, narratives, camera work, editing sequences and settings are important components in the process of doing practical media work. How one frames these concepts and conventions in media work and how this contributes to the social construction of gender are not illuminated in these courses. The assumed neutrality of these production techniques mystify the 'naturalness' and the ideological values embedded in media artefacts. Further, the manner in which existing fashionable routines and mores of mainstream media are accepted uncritically tend to perpetrate the confined and narrow range of doing gender
in communication. This, I argue is an inadequate approach for preparing students for their professional life as it is conceived, carried out and evaluated in terms which ignore larger questions relating to gender formations and ideologies in society.

Masterman (1990:2) points out that university communication courses should encourage future media workers to reflect upon issues relating to the role and function of the media within democracy, questions of cultural and representational politics and the ideologies underpinning media routines and practices. Although Masterman does not make a case specifically for gender, his ideas are relevant to the project of questioning gendered media routines and to the building of dialogue on ways in which the gender discourse can be initiated to dismantle existing assumptions, knowledge and production techniques that render a subordinate status to women.

Apart from the gender gaps in course syllabi and examination papers, the extremely limited number of references to feminist scholarship in the reading lists provides further evidence of the lack of the literature on women and gender issues. This is particularly troublesome given the depth of feminist critique in this field and the growing body of scholarship on the relevance of gender-related issues in communication. Such a situation suggests that despite increasing published articles, gender scholarship is not making visible prominence in the reading lists. The neglect of feminist thought on gender communication issues is increasingly serious and testifies to the fact that the reading lists are inadequate and need to be re-visioned.

In this respect, it also appears that the courses are heavily reliant on literature and models constructed by scholars who have been first and foremost struck by class and race oppression while gender oppression has been significantly devalued. Being part of a highly patriarchal society and subject to the enveloping powers of a complex gendered culture, most authors in the field of communication have not paid much attention to women's oppression. Consequently, these authors who have been in a position to define societal relationships have assembled issues considered integral to communication studies. The dynamics of gender has been overlooked in this enterprise. Rakow (1986b) observes that men have been in a position to 'structure the structures', to make their use of metaphors and metonyms count, and to construct a symbolic system which fits and explains their experiences, creating a gendered world within which individuals take their gendered places. This has resulted in the marginalising of women-communication issues and most writings and edited collections have not taken up these problems adequately.
Within the contemporary context, it can be said that a number of comprehensive and critical works by gender communication scholars are available to build the knowledge base of gender communication studies. (Works, for example by van Zoonen, (1994); Riano, (1994); Gallagher, (1994, 1992, 1987); Sreberny-Mohammadi, (1994); Creedon, (1993); Rakow (1993a, 1992); Streeves (1993a, 1989); Modleski (1991, 1984); Rush and Allen (1989); Carter and Spitzack (1989); Baehr and Dyer, (1987); Mattelart (1994; 1986); Ang (1985); Radway (1984); Tuchman (1978); Epstein (1978) etc.)

Despite this proliferation of works, most books and edited collections in the reading lists of the courses in this Programme are seen to work in ways that exclude feminist concerns. Of course, it must be recognised that most of these readings have to be updated and books that advance gender perspectives have to be added into the reference lists.

It must also be acknowledged that major lacunae still exist regarding women-communication relationships and much remains to be done to illustrate the issues surrounding the complex involvement of women in the communication scene. In the context of Malaysian communication education, the lack of local literature may mean heavy reliance on overseas reading materials. The diverse ways in which the subject of gender is approached is a revelation that the gender question pervades most areas of study. The international literature will be useful so that here in Malaysia, gender scholars can begin to critique it and develop new angles that are relevant to the Malaysian experience. The contemporary Malaysian scenario, its ethnic pluralism, its meeting of western and eastern cultures, its import of western television programmes amidst the strengthening Islamic influence, its rapid social change and development of communications technology offer a wide spectrum of questions that relate to gender and the cultural impact of the media and technology. The Communication Programme can pioneer directions in Malaysian communication research and media development by taking active steps to explore the different experiences of Malaysian women and putting these issues into strategy and policy debates.

This analysis on communication courses has highlighted the silencing of gender issues in the bulk of the official curriculum of the Programme. Invariably, it is also important to recognise that there are a few courses that make an attempt to address gender issues. The following section turns to courses that give visibility to gender issues.
Visible Gender Issues

The data in this study show that only a small proportion of courses make an attempt to give some visibility to gender issues. Some courses give casual references by noting the existence of women as a marginalised group, but do not devote any topics that give attention to gender oppression in an analytic fashion. In this category, the reading lists do not encompass any writings on media texts as sites of struggle over the meaning of gender. Further, in these instances, gender as issues of communication are not raised in the examination paper. Token attention is given when students are asked to describe constructs like symbolic annihilation and gender stereotyping briefly rather than to relate them to the social controversies that are linked to fundamental structures in society and the part media play in the ongoing social construction of gender. Such tendencies might continue to pervade the subordinate status accorded to gender issues as it may suggest that these are not major concerns worthy of serious assessment and discussion.

Insofar as the presence of topics on gender issues are concerned, only four courses have been found to give these controversies a significant focus in course syllabus and examination papers. I have classified the presentation of these issues into two views: the liberal and critical view. In the case of the liberal view, one course i.e. Introduction to Mass Communication attempts to provide some examples of studies that document fairly detailed description of sex differences but it fails to unravel why these differences emerge. For example, the reading materials include arguments that suggest that the media depicts women largely in terms of their sexuality and domesticity while men are seen as assertive, rational and authoritative figures acting primarily in the public domain. In this instance, the reading materials offer little discussion to explain why this phenomenon occurs. The readings do not examine the historical basis for the construction of sex role stereotypes or suggest that their roots lie in hierarchical social and economic structures which must be transformed before the stereotypes can be eradicated. Although it is important to actively encourage representation and participation of women in non-traditional areas, it is not enough to see equal terms for women. This goal cannot be seen as an end in itself if it does not relate to empowerment for women and social transformation in a wider scale. Indeed if women are seen only as trying to 'catch up' on what they missed out, then the existing social systems are validated and strengthened.

Only three courses in the programme offer topics which are centrally concerned with critical perspectives on gender issues. A study of reference materials show that these courses provide readings on the oppression of women and how this is linked to
social structures and that social transformation is needed to bring a more egalitarian society. The notion that the reproduction of existing social relations depends on the acceptance of the dominant ideologies, i.e. systems of beliefs and values by groups of oppressed people is seen as relevant where women are concerned. These courses offer useful readings to enable students to explore the ways the media play in creating dominant patterns of hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity.

However a major limitation arises when there appears to be no theorising or alertness to the complex intersection of gender, ethnicity and class and its relevance to the Malaysian context. The different potential impacts of class and ethnicity upon the lives of women appear as taboo topics. This avoidance can probably be traced to the lack of research, the atmosphere of over-sensitivity to ethnicity and the marginality of gender criticism in Malaysian cultural politics. Clearly, more resources and efforts must be made to encourage such discussion. As stated earlier, a much broader framework is needed to explore gender experiences and women's involvement in communication activities in Malaysia to extend feminist critique in communication debates.

The discussion on gender issues in communication courses in this Programme raises several significant points about the legitimation of hegemonic ideas and the struggles that evolve around the curriculum. The analysis of communication courses clearly show the neglect of gender issues across a wide range of courses. The study of gender does not appear in most course syllabi and women's problematic relationship to communication is not recognised as pertinent to research and practical media work. This conveys the notion that gender is irrelevant and insignificant in doing research or media work. It implies that knowledge generated in the curriculum contributes to perpetuate the status quo by failing to address gender issues. It continues to neglect the oppression of women and the importance of understanding media as important sites of gender struggle.

The construction of knowledge which silences the gender discourse serves to legitimise the existing patriarchal systems as common-sense and as 'natural'. By producing little or no discussion on gender controversies, curriculum knowledge plays a role here to perpetuate the existing gender oppression. The dismissing of gender-linked problems results in the eclipsing of important analyses and issues which remain inaccessible to the majority of intending communication scholars and communication practitioners. This might in turn produce ripple effects and further eliminate women's voices and concerns when students take up places in media activities.
The major silence on gender communication experiences is a perplexing problem as it reinforces dominant patriarchal cultural conventions and general practices that devalue women, overlook them or put them into places of lesser importance. The study suggests that the continued exclusion of work that raises the oppression of women is largely absent, hence this supports hegemonic currents that render gender as a non-issue in social experience. Subsequently the conventional history of ideas generated in the curriculum knowledge might draw a veil over women's scholarship, the understanding of feminism and social responses to it (Gallagher, 1989:84). Students are therefore not alerted to the patriarchal power, cultural institutions and practices and the acceptance of the legitimacy of male dominance. This indicates that what is present in the curriculum is dangerously deficient as it conforms to the logic of dominance that grants invisibility to women's subordination in society.

The Programme, however does not operate in a monolithic manner. By contrast, there is also evidence that shows the presence of feminist critique in the existing programme. These however remain marginal. A handful of courses are particularly concerned with the impacts and interactions of patriarchy and capitalism in connection with women-communication relationships. These courses offer discussions that question the hegemonic ideas and values of masculinist world views. However, the material that is currently available is inadequate for making sense of key feminist debates in the realm of communication in a coherent manner. It does not provide a sound theoretical context which students can use meaningfully when exploring the gender relation to communication.

The emphasis on gender issues has been linked closely to the images of women. There is a need to bring together knowledge about female audience, women in the communications industry, in alternative media and in women's movements and the grassroots together in an effort to understand the gender dynamics in the field of communication. Equally important is the need to channel discussion towards addressing personal and institutional efforts that can contribute towards the improvement of women-communication relationships. This is clearly important for would-be communicators who would like to develop areas and topics upon which they will be able to speak with some authority. The existing fragmented ideas on gender issues obscure the intricate relationship to the study of media, culture and politics and its connections to structure and policy.
Hence, it would be useful if space is created in the curriculum to offer a course on gender and communication so that students interested in this discourse could hone independent research and investigative skills. The arguments presented here certainly make a case for advancing a body of work which engages with various aspects of communication and gender. While, I have attempted to introduce some gender issues in the courses that have been examined, I feel that a separate course on gender and communication is also essential and I offer syllabus guidelines to develop such a course in the next chapter). The knowledge students receive during the course of communication education form maps of meaning and might influence their future professional work. I am not asserting that communication students will automatically adopt feminist perspectives. Nonetheless, the specific experiences of communication education and the prevailing features of professional socialisation that are offered to communication students shape their conception of what to do in communication activities.

By way of conclusion, it seems useful to make a few observations on the implications of this critique. This study on the curriculum of communication education makes clear that women's experience are excluded from the understanding of communication and practical media activity. The study of communication in this Programme marginalises women and their contribution to society. When women are present, they are interpreted through categories which frame them as variables or as consumers. In other words, women are missing from the central focus of theories and concepts that are generated in this field. Women become invisible as they do not appear as people or subjects in their own right.

Placing women's experiences into communication studies will direct attention into issues that involve, or are of concern to women. As a consequence, women will emerge as actors in the realm of social thought and action. This will enhance gender conscientisation among intending communication scholars and media practitioners so that they will be more concerned with patriarchal relations and the part the media play in the social construction of gender. It is also hoped that gender scholarship will make students more responsive to bringing about changes for the betterment and empowerment of women in the workplace, in the home and in society.

Some may even resist these ideas. Moreover, van Zoonen's (1994) observations are important — a number of factors have also to be taken into account such as the autonomy of female journalists in relation to the hierarchy in media organisations, editorial policy and wider socio-political contexts (see Chapter Three).
While the integration of gender experiences into communication education is an essential one, it nevertheless raises another problem. It must be pointed out that incorporating the women-question into communication studies is still not a simple matter when the tradition of communication theory does not explicitly define women, intrafamilial relationships within the scope of debates on communication. The concepts on modernisation, development, politics, citizenship, public, private, reason, family, symbolic reproduction and media production all seem to be inadequate. This suggests that gender scholarship needs to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions about the family, the traditional gender roles and its relation to the wider world of political society. It also implies that the gender concerns will have to interrupt established theoretical preoccupation and coherency in this field and this may not be easily welcomed or resolved in the immediate future.

This demonstrates the task of putting women's experiences back into communication studies while at the same time offering a critique of the male-centric understandings, concepts and paradigms is particularly a formidable one. In the case of Malaysia, where gender criticism occupies a marginal space in the wider social context, integrating gender scholarship into communication education is crucial to raise consciousness of gender oppression and to increase commitment to gender issues.

I would like to argue that communication education is an important site for developing gender critique and encouraging a reassessment of the dominant ideas and conventions that impinge upon communication thought and media production work. In this light, it is worthy to attach significance to this gender gap in the existing curriculum and to explore ways of initiating intervention strategies. In the next chapter, I offer some suggestions for charting a gender programme for action in communication education.

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I have devoted much of this chapter to unearthing the significance accorded to gender issues in the communication courses in the case-study of the USM Programme. I have developed thematic categories to illustrate the significant exclusion of gender issues in communication education. Sample courses have been described and some suggestions have been drawn to offer possible directions for the courses.

The findings of this study reveal that gender issues are poorly represented in the courses. To a large extent, there appears to be little appreciation of gender oppression as problematic and this pervades both the theoretical and practical
components of the curriculum, where very little is raised about controversies in
gender-media relationships. This has serious implications as erasing gender
experiences may not encourage communication students to be sensitive to issues of
women's oppression in media and society. This might encourage graduates to
comform rather than question the legitimacy of existing media practices and policies.

Despite these grim findings, this analysis also reports an emerging discourse of
fragmented feminist ideas that are being raised in several courses. These efforts
although marginal, appear to counter the dominant ideas that render women as
invisible and gender issues as insignificant in thinking about media developments in
society. The value of women's communication activities and the amount of control
women exercise over their lives are important issues that need to be raised in the
curriculum of communication education. The potential contribution of gender
scholarship to communication studies is enormous as this might open up the study of
communication and gender to scholarly investigation and present new ways of
engaging in media activities.

The integration of gender issues into communication scholarship is essential,
yet at the same time it is crucial to recognise that a fundamental change is also
necessary in the direction of this field of study. There are grounds for some scepticism
-- what can be done and should be done about these difficulties remains a thorny
problem. In the following chapter, I outline some initial strategies that move towards
a curriculum that builds women's leadership and feminist knowledge.
CHAPTER NINE
DEVELOPING A PLAN FOR ACTION

It is when people become challengers, when they take initiatives that they begin to create the kind of spaces where dialogue can take place and freedom can appear. And it is then, and probably only then, that people begin thinking about working together to bring into being a better, fairer, more human state of things.

M. Greene, (1986)

Communication at the undergraduate level in Malaysia is an important site for producing communication professionals. As stated in Chapter One, Malaysian communication graduates are mainly absorbed as journalists or television producers, as development agents or information officers in government agencies, as copywriters or creative workers in advertising agencies or as public relations officers in both government and corporate bodies. The focus on communication education is therefore an important area for gender scrutiny, particularly when students are given education and training to engage in the construction of information and meaning in various communication and media related activities. Although communication education is only part of the communication system, it plays a crucial part in the construction of the attitudes and understandings of gender which will later influence upon students' future communication and media practices.

This study has taken a case-study approach to investigate the significance accorded to gender issues in the curriculum in one of Malaysia's leading programmes on communication. This study has selected the USM Communication Programme to study the views of its communication tutors and to assess if gender issues appear as topics of inquiry and discussion in the curriculum. This study suggests that a major problem lies in a general lack of understanding where most tutors still fail to appreciate the effects of gender oppression and differentiation, and perhaps more seriously, they often fail to recognise these issues as problematic. This study further records that gender issues were largely missing in most of the communication courses. By ignoring gender issues, this study suggests that communication education in this Programme is not enabling students to question the hegemonic masculinity that they will encounter in communication activities. The omission of knowledge about gender experiences reflects that this critical issue does not emerge as a priority in the study of communication. Conversely, this raises questions regarding which groups of people are identified as subjects worthy of study; what factors to take into account in the conceptualisation of questions guiding research; what issues to consider in methods of
data collection; and what issues are related to the understanding of production techniques.

This study reveals the diversity of people and perspectives that mediate the texture of the curriculum. The viewpoints of communication tutors unveils the conflicting and contradicting ideas communication tutors have about gender relationships and the role of the media in representing women. In the case of this Programme, the study also finds the presence of a few gender leaders who are committed to equality issues and who have given attention to gender questions in their courses. I have argued that in doing intellectual activity, these members and their interest towards gender issues as well as their attempts to advance topics on gender experiences in the curriculum contribute to the challenging of the hegemonic masculinity.

This study aims to build a more radical conceptual framework for thinking about the women-question, particularly in relation to institutional policies and curriculum practices. It is interested in initiating strategies that build women's leadership and curriculum knowledge to enable learners (both tutors and students) to share learning materials that bring women's voices and experiences out of shadows and make them legitimate curriculum content. It is also a conscious effort to challenge ideological notions of the possibility of objectivity and neutrality in media practices. It calls for the need of a gender perspective to re-think and re-vision conceptions of power, equality, justice, freedom, public and private and the media's role in representing women in the study of communication. Gender intervention in curriculum can be seen as attempting a capacity to conscientise tutors and students to gender issues and to invite them to study their lives, power relationships and to value women's experiences and voices in their future media activities.

This chapter offers recommendations for charting directions for a gender plan for action in the Malaysian communication education scenario. Various mechanisms for introducing change are discussed. I also propose a separate course on Gender and Communication and offer a syllabus guideline that can be used to introduce debate and research on gender communication issues.

9.1 Gender Initiatives as Counter-Hegemonic Pedagogy

This study recommends the formulation of a gender policy at the institutional level and places an emphasis on the need to address gender issues in the curriculum. As argued in Chapter Three, research on gender issues in curriculum can be seen as
activist work involving intellectual consciousness-raising that question dominant discourses in the production of knowledge and information. The efforts to channel gender issues in the curriculum of various academic fields have been part of the creation of counter-hegemony. Feminist initiatives to attempt changes in the curriculum draws upon critical education theory which alerts us to the structural reasons underlying curricular exclusion and bias, and identifies the curriculum as a site of ideological struggle. The focus on the interface between human agency and material structures, both constraining and enabling opens out the potential of the curriculum for helping people understand social reality and developing individual and collective strategies. While it is necessary to acknowledge structural constraints, it is equally important to recognise that actors are capable of making room to manoeuvre (even within restricted social space) to carry out projects that question the dominant order. Aware that there are social and cultural barriers, gender leaders have to attempt to 'bargain', 'manipulate' or 'manage' the situation for the benefit of women — a strategic mechanism which is referred to as patriarchal bargaining (Kandiyoti, 1988). Thus when thinking about gender intervention, it is essential to engage with struggle, negotiations and compromise (MacDonald, 1989; Weiler, 1988; Lather, 1984).

Gramsci's ideas on hegemony and counter-hegemony are especially instructive in clarifying the dimensions of the task of curricular intervention. As presented in Chapter Three, Gramsci develops the concept of hegemony to explain how a dominant group's leadership can come to be accepted by force or consent by subordinate groups. The concept of hegemony illuminates the workings of dominant ideologies that govern particular ways of seeing the world, human nature and relationships which articulate the interests of dominant groups as common interest, 'common-sense' and 'natural'. Counter-hegemonic work emerges when attempts are made to challenge common-sensed knowledge and representations by asking whose interests they served, how they were constructed and what alternative discourses were being repressed.

This research effort has obvious relevance to the advancing of gender scholarship in communication education as it views knowledge as socially constructed and hence open to contestation and change. The task here is the development of counter ideologies and cultures that can provide an alternative to hegemonic masculinity. Efforts to develop gender action plans will enable silenced voices to speak out and assume leadership for their views and concerns. This study can be seen as a contribution to the feminist task as it problematises gender issues in communication studies and the views of communication tutors and calls for women's advancement and the representation of women's voices in the curriculum. This study
also identifies communication educators committed to gender struggles and the possibility of attempting a gender project that would allow committed actors to articulate and diffuse alternative world views that re-assess and deconstruct dominant discourses and bring to light women's perspectives in the production of knowledge, information and meaning. Constructing a gender agenda in the curriculum of communication education is part of counter-hegemonic work to ensure that "knowledge, itself a form of social power, is not produced solely in the interests of the powerful and the influential, to the detriment of the powerless and weak" (Evans, 1982:73).

In thinking about the gender agenda in communication education, one cannot ignore Freire's writing on liberatory pedagogy which rests on a belief in the human capacity to feel, to know and to change for a more humanitarian order. Freire's ideas are central to developing gender action plans. The entry point is the practice of conscientisation - the coming to a consciousness of oppression and a commitment to end that oppression. Within communication education, by providing critical tools of understanding gender-communication relationships, communication learners are seen as subjects of the world who will be able to enjoy opportunities that allow them to interpret their experiences, their ideas and create knowledge in media related activities. Drawing from the Freirean pedagogy, feminist scholars have developed a feminist pedagogy that provides students with knowledge and skills and inspires them to continue gender work in their future activities after they have completed their study programmes (Luke and Gore, 1992; Weiler, 1991; Nemiroff, 1989).

The views on domination, oppression, hegemony and liberatory pedagogy have profound importance for initiating a gender project in communication education. These ideas are instructive in the present study which aims to propose some gender intervention strategies for communication education programmes in Malaysia. Clearly, a lot of work needs to be done to counter barriers (see Chapter Three) and to think about forward looking strategies. In Malaysia, feminist ideologies occupy a marginal position in the wider structures of the socio-political context. Clearly, more support from central government is necessary to change social attitudes towards women and to put women's issues to the forefront of national development and media debates. The state's constitutional commitment to gender equality; official guidelines and policies on gender; provision of leadership and resources to encourage gender policies and affirmative action; the creation of women support groups and women's networks and the establishment of childcare facilities would strengthen the political power base for gender needs and strategies and help to reform education systems. The near silence on
the issues stated above means that the task of developing a programme for action to
better women's advancement and to generate alternative forms of receiving and
producing knowledge would be a formidable one. But the growing interest in
feminism, particularly among the women in the academy (see Chapter Five) and the
growing expansion of women in the labour market opens avenues for improving
women's autonomy and women's knowledge. Further the presence of contradictions
and points for intervention can give rise to opportunities for working towards
deepening the cracks of hegemonic masculinity.

At the structural level, i.e. the immediate educational setting, I have pointed
out that the Programme is currently reviewing its curriculum structure. This means
that this presents conditions which organise the Programme to engage in discussion
and change. However, as argued in Chapter Six, the efforts to examine the role of the
Programme, its organisational policy and curriculum structure have not raised any
questions regarding the opportunities that are available for women to attempt career
advancement, professional growth and to create a more gender-inclusive curriculum.
Communication tutors constitute a major component of the immediate educational
setting and this study finds that a major barrier that emerges in this context is tutors' ideologies. In Chapter Three, I have drawn attention that tutor ideologies produce a hidden curriculum of gender and can reinforce the silencing of women's voices and concerns. As stated earlier, many tutors often fail to recognise gender oppression and differentiation as problematic issues. It may be then that a crucial task would have to involve communication educators to raise gender consciousness and to convince them that gender is a fundamental principle that organises social and material experience and that the study of gender would effectively enhance the study of communication.

In following section, the suggestions I raise are by no means exhaustive; nonetheless, they point towards some initial directions, immediate strategies and priorities for a gender agenda in communication education. While it is essential to be critical of existing hierarchical arrangements and structures in educational systems and to argue for a complete transformation, this chapter focuses on what can be done in the context of the Programme in the immediate future. Although the suggestions offered here are directed to the Programme, they can also be appropriated to communication education programmes that hope to build an agenda on gender. I draw attention to five different mechanisms for inducing change: policy statements; leadership for women; networking and collaboration; gender communication research and curriculum development.
9.2 Some Future Directions

A. Developing a gender policy

The importance of equal opportunities policies has interestingly been recognised in education, as well as the workplace in different social institutions in many parts of the world. In the Malaysian context, it is important to ensure that there is support from the top of the department, when drawing up policy statements. If a directive comes from the head of the department, there would be fewer problems when trying to implement policy. This top-down approach is crucial to initiate awareness and discussion on building gender strategies, on changing attitudes of staff members and to ensure that time and resources are allocated for the documentation and implementation of action plans.

A representative working party can be formed to assess equal opportunities policies in particular countries to examine strategies, statements of intent, successful practice. These findings can be reported for discussion within members of the Programme. Clearly, the equal opportunities policies in other countries cannot be replicated easily and indigenous input, critique and capability will have to be taken into consideration. It seems vital for the Programme to define what is being attempted with the department. There needs to be proper understanding of the meaning of gender policy and the discussion should encourage the different ways in which the members locate themselves in relation to the issues that are addressed by such a policy. Dialogues should examine the attitudes towards gender issues and raise awareness of gendered procedures, behaviours, language and knowledge that exist in educational settings. Such discussion may be forcefully useful to counter feelings of defensiveness or of isolation among communication tutors. Further such dialogues among peers, colleagues and members of the research community can impel a context which conveys legitimacy to gender concerns. The discussion on action plans could centre on specific issues like the structure of the Programme; the Programme's mission statements and aims, its curriculum philosophy and syllabus content; staffing patterns and recruitment; staff training and development; students development and support services in working and learning conditions. A clear statement of the Programme's commitment to gender issues will need to be given in its publications, like the Communication Programme Handbook and in internal documents on the curriculum structure. Realistic goals can be set with yearly targets to achieve long-term objectives for the employment and the

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63Gender strategies have widely been known as 'equal opportunities' in many countries in Europe, US, Canada and Australia. In most cases, policies on equal opportunities attempt to take action against discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, disability, religion and sexuality. In Malaysia, there are policies attending to re-dress ethnic imbalances. Rather than using the term 'equal opportunities', I have framed the gender concern as a gender policy, but I do recognise that issues of difference and diversity are to be acknowledged.
representation of women within the Programme's staff structure and for the integration of gender scholarship within the curriculum.

It is also necessary for the policy to address the complex interplay of issues such as gender, ethnicity, class, sexual preference and disability. In this connection, this policy will work alongside the national policy on rectifying ethnic imbalances in educational opportunities (see Chapter Five). The recognition to ethnicity is necessary and the Programme can enrich its role by appreciating the variety of life experiences that surround the Malaysian society. Clearly, the Programme will pioneer new directions and leadership in Malaysian communication education by embracing different cultural perspectives. In this regard, it is essential that the tutors' views on the specific issues listed above is taken into account. The task of drawing the policy should be collaborative and enable different members in the Programme to come together and share their concerns. The policy should define specifically the targets or goals and make clear precise achievement intentions. For each target or goal, a specified set of actions need to be articulated to ensure that the stated target will be achieved. It is important to consider time schedules and resources that are available to carry out the plan. Finally, a monitoring and reporting system is also essential so that progress according to the schedules can be traced and the time scale and programme of action plans can be revised where necessary. The presence of a gender policy is important to reaffirm the Programme's commitment to improving women's autonomy, leadership and participation in matters pertaining to communication education, communication research and media production activities.

B. Building women's leadership

The patterns of representation of women in position of educational leadership in this Programme show that (i) women form a small proportion of the teaching faculty and (ii) all positions of power and higher academic ranks are held by men. The lack of representation of women in formal positions of leadership in the current education service is problematic from a number of points. It suggests that the talent and skills of many women in the Programme are not being adequately recognised and this serves to reinforce gender stereotypes in society. The representation of women in senior positions is crucially important for role-modelling for female colleagues and students. If communication students are not accustomed to seeing women in positions of authority and men in positions supporting women's initiatives, this will limit their views about the capabilities of women. For female students, the visibility of women in educational leadership will affect their educational experience, particularly in terms of
mentoring activities where students can share concerns and views on advancing the position of women in the family and the workplace.

In this light, the Programme must be encouraged to recruit more women, including feminist tutors and involve them in key power positions as they have an enormous contribution to make as intellectuals and as education leaders. It is crucial that women have opportunities over formal authority and over resources to accomplish management tasks. It is vital that practical and moral support is given to women to assume leadership roles and to establish activities with other women. Access to management development training must be available for women to develop a broader range of competencies and skills. Women face subtle and blatant discrimination and numerous structural and cultural barriers which impede their integration and career advancement in the workplace. Leadership programmes for women must give attention to dealing with resistance and opposition to women's initiatives and to the experiences of sexual harassment. Various critical measures have to be taken into account in these leadership programmes to raise discussion regarding the need to change the attitudes and views of colleagues who resist gender intervention strategies. Further, it is also crucial to recognise that women and men have family responsibilities, and effective support like childcare facilities are important to enhance professional and personal responsibilities.

C. Networking and collaboration

Networking and collaboration are widely used as a means of extending solidarity and professional reinforcement among women. Women in the Programme can form peer relationship and team-building within the Programme's members to raise awareness on gender conflicts in communication and generate discussion on communication and the role of communication education. In addition, networking and collaboration can be established with members from other departments in the university who share similar concerns. Within the Malaysian context, gender criticism occupies a marginal position and many people are unclear about what entails feminism, gender criticism and gender policies. Gender scholars in the academy have an important role to play to unearth the ways the gender dimension pervades social beliefs, practices and experiences and to work towards gender conscientisation to contribute to the universal debate on the women question. Seminar sessions or workshops can be held to raise gender consciousness and to bring to light current developments in gender scholarship and the different forms of work undertaken to advance gender issues in communication studies. It is useful also to hold meetings that bring together gender scholars from other academic departments to compare ideas, dialogues and experiences to help work
towards a holistic framework for fostering critical understanding of gender communication issues. Special events for staff and students can be arranged to raise gender awareness and give maximum visibility to the issues of gender experiences. Male scholars in communication will need to be encouraged to see that they have a crucial role to play, particularly since gender issues are not the concerns of women only. Hence, it is vital that gender scholars collaborate to organise these activities that illuminate male dominance which is embedded in social structures and practices. The mechanisms of networking and collaboration can prove to be valuable as these devices can encourage mutual support, shared expertise and advice on consciousness-raising activities and on building women's advancement and alternative forms of receiving and creating knowledge.

Apart from establishing networking within the university, it seems useful for the Programme to establish connection with the larger social environment, particularly in cross-institutional partnerships with government organisations, development agencies, community groups, media watch groups, women activists and media organisations. The Programme can promote discussion on gender communication issues and draw attention to the need of grants and support for more research in the field of communication. Alliances can be established with different agencies to attract support for funding and to organise activities on gender media awareness. National meetings and workshops can be held to provide information on research findings and publications on gender media issues and to lead towards the formulation of gender policies in the Malaysian media. In this respect, resources of information on bibliographies on local and international research on women and communication, directories with profiles on resource persons in government agencies, media organisations, development agencies, feminist scholars and women's groups must be made available to enhance networking and collaboration among the different groups with an interest in the representation of gender in the media. Female representatives from the organisations listed above could also be invited as guest speakers to describe their work or discuss particular issues with the academic members, students and with members from other organisations. Networking activities at the international level will further assist better exchange of resources and ideas that have been generated in feminist works in different continents. This presents greater opportunities for co-operation among communication educators and researchers to validate and disseminate new ideas on communication research, curriculum development as well as enhance long-term international co-operation in this field.
D. Research on gender communication issues

The gender relation to communication is an area which is acutely underresearched in Malaysia and clearly much more work is needed if the Programme wishes to lead discussions that respond to the developments in the Malaysian communication scenario. Research is integral to make a case for the gender agenda, to inform the study of gender issues in communication education and to contribute to public debates and policy-making. It is also crucial to know how the media is used and for what purpose. The question of media's perceived credibility should be treated as an important issue in gender media research. Additional questions which demand systematic investigation are: How women use the various forms of media? Which do they use for information, for entertainment, for education? Which ones are more credible? What is happening to the print media with the advent of the electronic media? What are the literacy problems and how do difficulties in reading and writing affect people who are informed by the media?

Systematic and detailed gender research is also needed on media texts, production media processes, struggles of female media professionals in mainstream media, women's groups and their involvement with the media and politics, and research on women as audience and cultural consumers. Within the Malaysian context, it is also crucial to examine the representation of women with respect to different ethnic and cultural groups to offer a wider understanding of gender-communication relationships. In this respect, it is crucial to recognise that alliances and partnerships can be forged with media professionals so that they can contribute actively towards gender research and debates in communication. The media profession is an occupation which requires women to live with, and handle constructively a multitude of dilemmas, tensions, contradictions and uncertainties. Research can be a mode of empowerment for women in the field of communication as they will be able to perceive, interpret and remake the definitions of careers and commitments to formulate strategies that give them security and maximum flexibility within the particular 'patriarchal bargain' offered by their circumstances in media organisations (Kandiyoti, 1988). The findings of research can provide a framework for creation of views and experiences and also inform students of the immediate experiences and manoeuvring that takes place in the workplace culture of the media.

Additionally, in the realm of communication education, a number of tasks can be taken to advance a gender approach to the study of communication. This could include research projects that ask questions through making problematic those common-sense assumptions about women and women's experiences in communication.
and communication education; the occupational and educational aspirations of communication students; and students' attitudes towards gender issues and gender action plans in this area.

E. Curriculum Development

The curriculum is an important site for intervention and it is crucial that new developments in gender scholarship are presented in curriculum knowledge to orientate students to gender issues in the study of communication. It is also important to re-consider the philosophy and objectives of the curriculum to support the gender vision that aims to provide students with critical thinking, knowledge and analytical skills to understand gender oppression and the ways of challenging these experiences. If communication education is to progress towards social justice, it is critical to ensure that communication students are able to analyse and challenge the structures and processes that oppress them at both the personal level and within the wider social dimension of groups and communities that are subjugated to perpetuate a hierarchy of power and privilege. In the context of communication education, this must include an understanding of the structures and purposes of media institutions. Communication students need the skills to explore the ways in which knowledge and information as constructed and structured, contributes towards the legitimation of inequalities and oppression. The existence of hierarchies in terms of subjects, and furthermore, what content within those subjects constitutes 'valued knowledge', is itself circumscribed by patriarchal forces and its dominant cultural values. Students therefore have to be equipped with the intellectual skills to examine critically the nature of media practices and content so that they can in turn consider and challenge the ideologies that underpin the selection of knowledge in the media.

In this regard, it is important for the Programme to produce curriculum on gender issues. Existing communication courses that advance gender topics need to be updated to include shifts in feminist thinking and to develop a wider and in-depth understanding of the oppression of women in different cultural settings. It would be worthwhile if all current courses could introduce gender viewpoints to generate a more gender-inclusive curriculum. In particular, core courses which are compulsory courses must give serious attention to the gender dimension so that all communication students will be aware of an alternative discourse that raises issues on gender experiences in relation to communication. At the same time, it is crucial that a separate course on gender and communication be offered in the Programme. Such a course would give opportunities for students interested in gender communication issues to sharpen their
Communication educators need to work collaboratively to develop resources and curriculum material on gender issues. There may be inadequate theories and local research findings and literature on Malaysian gender matters may be scarce. But this does not mean the study of gender issues in communication studies should be delayed. On the contrary, it is worthy to assess knowledge generated in other cultures and appropriate research questions and methodology that respond to local cultural contexts to identify points of similarity and differences; and more importantly, to create new evidence and knowledge. The involvement of academic staff members in gender communication curriculum can be seen as a part of strategy towards empowerment of educators. In coming together to discuss ideas, research, syllabus content, educators can work towards production of knowledge that is meaningful, relevant to local contexts, critical and ultimately emancipatory.

The gender agenda in communication education is a uphill, long-term struggle and it is important to recognise various forms of resistance can emerge in this effort. Clearly, gender intervention strategies are highly complex and controversial as they entail new analytical skills that enable the understanding of gender issues. More crucially, a change in educators' beliefs, values and ways of thinking about gender values and curriculum practice are not easily achieved. This involves risk-taking, time for reflection and a high degree of motivation, dedication and commitment. In this connection, it is important to see the gender agenda as a journey, loaded with uncertainty and major challenges. It is crucial to appreciate that difficulties are an actual part of intervention process, but this could enhance inquiry and embrace issues that delve deeper into root problems. In other words, conflict is essential to any successful change effort and as Fullan (1993:25) argues, "problems are inevitable, but the good news is that you can't learn or be successful without them".

9.3 Towards a Pedagogy For Gender Communication Studies

In this section, I outline some basic principles and diverse perspectives surrounding the gender discourse in the study of communication. The framework that I suggest does not provide a complete account of all principles and diverse perspectives surrounding the gender discourse in communication; it may, for the time being, serve the purpose of initiating debates on gender issues in Malaysian communication education. I have drawn ideas from Masterman (1985), Shor (1993) and Richards (1993) to develop a pedagogy for gender communication studies (see
Chapter Three). The following points are instructive in developing a feminist pedagogy for this field of study.

**Power** - Society is built around the principles of hierarchy, inequality and conflicts and it is important to understand relations among specific groups of people with different power. It is worthy to note which groups exercise dominant power in society and how power is currently organised and used in society. It is crucial to advance the premise that society and history can be made and remade by human action and by organised groups. Education is one important arena that can raise issues that question the dominant order. Some fundamental questions guiding pedagogy will be: Who benefits? In what ways? Students should be encouraged to explore how relations of gender domination and subordination are reproduced and challenged in existing cultural, political and economic forms of interaction.

**Critical consciousness** - It is important to inculcate analytical tools of reading, thinking and interpreting that re-assess and de-construct surface impressions, traditional myths and opinions to produce meanings of any event, text, image statement or situation. For example, critically examining the values which are internalised into consciousness with regard to matters like parenting, domestic labour, divisions in paid work illuminate gender questions, especially in relation to reality and the media's representation of this social experience.

**Situated** - The course material is situated in student thought and experiences to encourage self-reflection and social-reflection, relating the material to their conditions. Students should be encouraged to question dominant values about gender and reflect on their own values, beliefs, knowledge, language and experiences to interrogate their own processes of learning and socialisation. In making this exploration, while gender forms a major focus, it is worthy to remember that issues of gender cannot be separated from other areas such as ethnicity, class, age and disablement, which are also integral to students' experience. In this context, students from different subgroups must be encouraged to share their views to articulate the diversity of gender experiences and critique in the Malaysian scenario.

**Dialogic** - Dialogue is encouraged to enable students and the tutors to pose problems deriving from their own concerns and to build knowledge and contribute to the understanding of doing gender. This will problematise themes from everyday life as well as raise topical issues from society into academic subject matter. The learning
process is interactive and co-operative so that a rich exchange of ideas and experiences is generated.

*Research-oriented* - Pedagogy should encourage research and offer opportunities to students to research their own conditions and raise problems about society and build this into the academic material.

*Activist* - Students must be urged towards a more profound understanding of the forces of privilege and the need for struggle to dismantle hegemonic masculinity. The pedagogy aims for an activist goal so that the purposes of critical dialogue, research and analysis encourage students to relate knowledge to power and enable them to challenge and fight the exploitation, control and subordination of women by the powerful; the objective is to contribute to women's advancement and to enhance alternative ways of receiving and creating knowledge.

These are important elements that offer an active and participatory mode of inquiry. This vision of pedagogy will enable tutors and students to make sense of the diverse range of relationships between gender and communication and invite them to engage in activities that question the status quo. In this respect, potential media professionals will be encouraged to be continuously aware of power relationships underpinning media messages and meanings. This pedagogy will also offer opportunity for future journalists, broadcasters and development agents to produce news, stories and projects that are sensitive to gender concerns. It would enable them to be conscious of groups that benefit and those that do not when certain techniques are used in information-gathering and in the presentation of messages. Students will also need to be aware of the crucial part they play for improving the lives of the oppressed and the strategies that can be employed to enable marginalised groups to become co-creators of public debates and culture.

9.4 **Proposed Course on Gender and Communication**

Most of the gender issues in communication have been relatively unexplored in Malaysia. I feel that it is important that steps are taken to organise a collective investigation into this area - something that would help orientate learners to develop gender consciousness in media and allow them to think about constructive course of action. In this section, I will offer a syllabus guideline for introducing a course on gender communication issues to enable students to focus on the gender question in communication. It seems important to raise a few points at the outset of this discussion. First, Malaysian communication research is acutely underdeveloped and
there is very little literature on gender issues. As argued in Chapter Two and Five, there are major gaps in Malaysian gender media research. Hence, I have relied very heavily on western materials to inform this course. Given the dearth of local material, I have chosen to present some issues from the western cultural context in the hope that these issues will be reinvented in the local context to assist discussion and give direction in Malaysian gender communication education and research. Second, I would like to state that the medium of instruction in Malaysian universities is in the Malay language. Although, English is a second language, communication educators have observed that students' command of the English language is quite weak and students have difficulties in using reference materials in English (see Chapter Six). Clearly, more materials are needed in the Malay language. Considering this situation, I have given a few indicative readings in English rather than an extensive list of reference materials. Thirdly, time and material conditions may not allow a wide range of issues to be included in a semester. While a separate course offers a focus on gender issues, it seems useful that other core courses like Introduction to Mass Communication, Communication Theory, Research Methods and Communication and Society also present curriculum material that raises gender questions. Fourthly, it would be useful to reiterate that, at the undergraduate level, students are educated and trained primarily to be media practitioners; the course will therefore raise questions relating primarily to the construction of images, messages and meaning in media activities. Finally, it is crucial to note that a good deal of the course content may not be predictable. Students bring a range of interests and preference which emerge as matters of concern. Thus it seems fruitful if students could identify their interests and negotiate the course syllabus to include topical issues that are relevant to their lives. In the following section, I outline some guidelines for drawing a course on gender and communication.

GENDER AND COMMUNICATION

This course aims to present an alternative paradigm for studying communication. Gender becomes a fundamental category which is seen to organise human social relations. Various strands of feminist theory and key concepts will be discussed to enable students to develop a critical perspective on the basic issues related to feminist knowledge and struggles in society. The course also hopes to introduce students to various gender communication issues, specifically the role of the mass media in the social construction of gender. It seems useful here to reiterate here that I work with a theoretical orientation that sees women as an oppressed group in a patriarchal society. This course looks for issues that concern specifically with the meaning of femininity and the place accorded to women in society. The point here is that knowledge referring to women's concerns have been missing in the theorising and
debates on human experience. It is important that women's interests are taken into consideration. Thus, the course will examine various feminist critiques of the mass media and research findings related to the representation of women in media content, within media industries and in audience studies. Students will be invited to focus on personal and collective experiences and examine them in the light of current research on gender issues. The course hopes to enable students to explore strategies that can be initiated to enhance women's advancement in media institutions, to improve the representation of women in the media content and to contribute to feminist-oriented programmes and debates.

This course can encourage students to raise questions and to advance different cultural perspectives in their work to develop a richer understanding of communication. Students can be invited to discuss the course outline and selection of topics so that they can raise any interests or concerns that could be included in the course syllabus. Students will conduct their own original investigations into a relevant topic of their own choice.

In the following section, I offer some guidelines for developing gender issues in communication studies.
Block 1 The Social Construction of Gender

This course can begin by exploring the concept of gender and examining the arguments that define gender as different from sex. Students can assess the admired qualities in men and women and raise discussion regarding what it means to be masculine and feminine. The following questions can be advanced to stimulate discussion: In what ways is gender socially constructed? How fluid are gender categories? How is gender anchored in other intersecting attributes? How do different groups of people interpret gender? This session can also attempt to throw light on how gender as a process, stratification and structure creates social difference, unequal status and organises interactions in the private and public spheres. Following this, students can be invited to discuss key concepts in feminist thinking like patriarchy, feminisms, ideology, representation, private and public spheres, power, empowerment and agency.

Indicative Readings


This session can look at the key features of feminist theory. It can chart the different strands of feminist theory to offer a wide understanding of women's oppression. Discussion can centre on questions of research methods and ethics which are salient to feminist studies. In addition, the class can examine feminist critiques of mass communication research and the ways in which feminist theory and communication studies can fruitfully inform each other. Students can be urged to explore issues like structures of mass media systems, ownership of print, broadcast media, the increasing power of commercialisation and media conglomerates, the expanding role of advertising and the implications for women's interests.

Indicative Readings


Block 3  News

It may be interesting for students to examine the values underpinning news reporting in television and print media. They can assess the gender values that are linked to anchors, interviewers, subjects of news, sources of news and news language. It is possible to suggest some of the following questions: How are women represented in different news genres: sports, crime, political, education, human interest, entertainment etc.? How do news media cover women's issues and contemporary women's movements? To what extent are women included in national policy discussions in news coverage?

In addition, this session can be linked to wider issues like the role of the media in democracy with regard to the feminist movement. The consideration of the media's role in creating representative space for democracy in late capitalism and the barriers to this establishment seem as fruitful issues that can be raised for debate.

Indicative Readings

McLaughlin, I (1993) "Feminism, the Public Sphere, Media and Democracy." Media, Culture and Society. 15: 599-620.


Block 4 Gender and Ethnicity in Television Drama

The ethnic dimension is a crucial part in gender discussions. It may be appropriate to explore the ways in which meaning and identity are constructed through texts and discourses in terms of gender and ethnicity. Students can participate in a discussion on the practices of the media in attending to the representation of racial and ethnic groups. The issue of gender and ethnicity may be framed differently according to different genres. There are many possible viewpoints that can be presented. I develop this discussion within the context of soap opera and popular drama. These programmes are used to disseminate social issues, particularly in the Malaysia's multi-ethnic society. It is possible to suggest students to reflect on the local dramas to discuss the representation of the different ethnic groups. In particular, they can offer their views on the following issues: How are women's experiences and images expressed in these dramas? How do constructions of femininity vary in different ethnic dramas?

Indicative Readings

This session can look at women as active communicators in development and the roles they play as development agents and as users of traditional and modern media. It is possible to review critiques on the information transmitted to women and the lack of women's access to communication means, particularly in development plans. It seems fruitful for the class to assess communication strategies for women's development and empowerment. It may also be worthy for students to debate why development communication efforts need to think about women and the importance of funding communication for women in development.

Within the context of Malaysia, students can also discuss the relevance of feminism in Malaysia and offer a critique on the Gender Planning Plan advanced in the state development plans. This session can also examine some of the local development communication campaigns to assess the significance given to gender issues in these projects.

Indicative Readings
Block 6  

Body Image in Advertisements

Feminists have interpreted the emphasised attention on women's bodily appearance within a broader understanding of male domination. This objectification is analysed as part and parcel of a general system of male control and possession of femininity. This discussion can highlight the heavy emphasis placed on women's appearance, particularly in relation to the projection of women's bodies in advertisements. The session can prompt discussion on how the media, particularly visual media attempt to attract women consumers. It can explore the characteristics of dominant stereotypes of women and men; the different ways in which masculinity, femininity, beauty and female desire are constructed in advertisements. It may also be significant to look at some of the production techniques and narratives that are used by advertisements to communicate gender roles.

Indicative Readings

Flick, M (1990) The Advertisements as the Generalised Other. Bergen: University of Bergen, Department of Sociology.


Block 7 Audiences

This discussion can look at the contributions of reception studies to the understanding on female audience. Students can examine arguments concerned with the view that various television genres offer women opportunities for negotiation of their own meanings and their own aesthetic appreciation. It may be possible to address the issues of pleasure, fantasy and ideology by raising some of the following questions: How do women use and 'make meaning' from popular television texts? What social and psychological needs of women are met by genres targeted to them (eg. women's magazines, soap operas)? What is the controversy surrounding women's use of pleasure in women's genres?

This session can also raise numerous issues regarding the politics of pleasure female audience experience in receiving media texts and the problems of romanticising resistance activities that do not engage in the politics of state and global policy and political and economic patriarchy structures. Questions on polysemy, pluralism, popular consumption, empowerment and political activity can be discussed in relation to audience studies.

Indicative Readings
Block 8  Media Institutions

This session can attempt to offer a critical understanding of mainstream media policies particularly in relation to the coverage on women and the participation of women as media producers. It may be interesting to allow students to debate employment opportunities, promotions and the types of assignments given to women. The discussion may bring up issues like working conditions, sexual harassment and gender discrimination. Also, the discussion can deliberate on the 'glass ceiling' effect in the media profession and the barriers that women encounter in career advancement and access to management posts. Following this, students may explore ideas on creating openings in the mainstream media and how institutional policies, professional values and advertisers' demands affect feminist initiatives.

In addition it is possible for students to study gender issues in their own media production activities: the production of gender in different genres, scriptwriting and building storyline, news reporting, film production and video-shooting situations. The purpose here is to encourage students to develop and to interrogate their own position, specifically in relation to questions of value and ideology which are intricately woven into the process of media production.

Indicative Readings
**Block 9  Public Relations**

It may be useful to have a session on women’s work in public relations. Such a session can raise questions regarding the gendered norms that affect women in public relations. Students can examine the controversy surrounding salary and status of women in public relations. It may be beneficial for students to think about action plans, particularly in terms of organising associations of women and networking to facilitate lobbying to enhance personal growth and professionalism in this sector.

**Indicative Readings**


Block 10 Gender and New Information Technologies

This session can examine the impact of technological change on women's communication and cultural practices of women audience and consumers. A major argument states that the introduction of new information technologies has not improved the situation nor the social image of women. This discussion can explore feminist critique of gender and technology interactions. It can look at the rapid expansion of new information technologies and raise questions about the barriers between levels of hierarchy, form of control and authority in the mass communications sector. It is also possible for the students to examine the relationship between political-economy interests of the communications industry and its implications for women. Also, this session may advance issues that pertain to the cost of new information technologies and women's access to new information technology, specifically in coordinating and networking activities on wider local, national and global levels to address social, political and economic debates.

Indicative Readings


Block 11  Communicating Alternatives

It may be stimulating to present a session that explores how women as social actors are both constrained by and can manoeuvre space to alter social structure. Such a session can chart issues on the scope for change, and the ways in which new understanding can empower women. The discussion can examine women movements and feminist social groups and their involvement in media political power. It can also explore women's media activities to empower communication. In addition, students can be invited to identify major barriers to women's access to mainstream media. The discussion can look at alternative communication systems that women use to advance women's views and concerns and assess the activities of women's media, their success and difficulties they encounter.

Indicative Readings


Block 12 Gender Strategies and Policies
The increasing commercialisation and political control of the media have significant implications for women. It is possible for this session to deliberate on the forms of positive action that can be organised for a wider representation of women in media content and in the media profession. This discussion can look at some of the examples of women's action and strategies that have been adopted in regions like Europe and Canada and explore the success and difficulties in establishing and implementing gender policies. It may be useful to raise the question whether increased participation of female professionals is likely to change media content. Students can discuss on the possibilities of influencing media policy on recruitment and career development of media women in Malaysia. Strategies that are feasible in the Malaysian context to ensure greater diversity in programme policy and content can also be mapped. It may be useful to encourage students to look into the core issues that need to be considered in drawing up and implementing gender policies.

Indicative Readings

An appropriate way of ending this course can be done by evaluating students projects and coursework in the last session. Students can discuss their research projects, share new ideas and identify problems and opportunities they encountered in the course. Students can also be invited to reflect on their own personal views and experience in light of the issues raised in this course. It may be possible for students to discuss their role as intending communication professionals and their aspirations with regard to exploring avenues of action and development to bring women's voices to the media forefront. Finally, it may be worthy to suggest students to give comments on the course content and structure and learning methods to make future sessions more effective and responsive to students needs.
At this juncture, it seems important to reiterate that my objective in constructing guidelines for this course on Gender and Communication is not to create a definitive map of feminist scholarship but rather to chart some possible directions of what appears to me as interesting and fruitful lines of inquiry. The syllabus guidelines are intended to be neither exhaustive or prescriptive -- this collection is an attempt to introduce some main movements of discussion that have emerged in gender media studies. Nonetheless, it is important to bear in mind that pedagogical moments arise in specific contexts -- the social location of the educator and the students; the geographic and historical location of the institution in which they come together; the political climate in which they work; and the academic background of both learners and educators impinge upon the learning process (Lewis, 1990). It is not appropriate to think that I have constructed a definitive 'model' for teaching gender communication issues. It is important to take into account the complexity of contingent and material realities. My intent, is to articulate a reflexive framework that would allow gender conscientisation to evolve and contribute to a counter-hegemonic practice, particularly in the Malaysian context. My hope is that through such shared dialogue and struggles, communication students might develop a capacity to engage in discussion and action on alternative constructions of media messages, images and meaning.

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In this study, I have found little evidence of gender content in communication education in the USM Communication Programme. The absence of critical study of gender relationships prevents students from fully examining expectations, assumptions and ideological discourses embedded in mass communication practice. Such a component is important in the education and training of intending media practitioners.

I have drawn ideas from Gramsci (1971) and Freire (1972) to argue for gender action plans and scholarship as counter-hegemonic activities that could contribute to debates on women's advancement and alternative forms of producing and receiving knowledge. Certainly, providing communication students who will be future media practitioners with approaches to examine and challenge their own assumptions and values and to critically assess media practice can enhance gender conscientisation and gender media empowerment.

I have offered suggestions for charting directions for a gender agenda in Malaysian communication education. Following this, attention has been drawn to five mechanisms of inducing change in the immediate future: developing a gender policy; leadership for women; networking and collaboration; gender communication research.
and curriculum development. In addition, a pedagogy for teaching gender communication issues has been presented and a syllabus guideline for developing such a course has been constructed.

By way of conclusion, it is observed here that educational strategies alone will not lead to a fundamental restructuring of society, but all the same, communication education must be aware of its own potential for change and the ripple effect which such re-vision could have on other institutions and people.
CHAPTER TEN
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study has aimed to examine gender issues in Malaysian communication education. Taking the case-study of the USM Programme, this study has examined the gender composition of faculty staff and the views of communication tutors on the dynamics of gender, specifically in relation to communication and curriculum materials they use in communication education. The study has discussed the philosophy of the Programme, its objectives and the models underpinning the curriculum. In particular, it has focused on the syllabus content of communication courses to assess if gender issues appear as topics of inquiry and discussion in the study of communication. Based on the findings, I have proposed a Plan For Action that can be taken to build a gender agenda in the Programme, informed of feminist perspectives. In this final chapter, the main themes and arguments of this study will be summarised. I will also identify some of the limitations and contributions of the study.

10.1 Gender and Communication Media

The first section of this study has noted the importance of recognising the politics of gender formation. In particular, it has drawn attention to male domination and the values of masculinity that carry a lot of power and privilege and accomplish hierarchical relationships in gender formations in society. In this respect, gender ideologies serve to conceal the power differentials between the sexes, so that male domination is accomplished as legitimate and as the natural way for society to be organised. The gender critique has placed emphasis on the production of ideas and consciousness in the construction of and maintenance of hegemonic masculinity in existing social systems (Lorber, 1994; Brittan, 1989; Connell, 1987). Specifically, media and education have become crucial sites of contestation as they provide social knowledge through which individuals perceive their lives and those of others.

In this study, I have stressed that the media have become core components of socio-cultural, economic and political activity in contemporary societies. The media play a major part in articulating public affairs and in generating cultural experience. The media are also agents of representation that do ideological work -- defining reality, producing social meanings and setting agendas and debates that inform the citizenry. I have argued that major controversies arise when gender is accomplished so pervasively and smoothly through the practices and programming policies of the media. Although the role of the media in the gendering process is a complex one, it can be suggested that the media are involved intricately in arbitrating between different kinds of
masculinity and femininity, providing the context for certain kinds of values, attributes and behaviour to be dominant or hegemonic. These dominant images of masculinity and femininity affect and influence the way gender hierarchies are created and the power differentials that are sustained in society. Some of the gender issues in communication research have been raised in Chapter Two to articulate the problematic gender-communication relationships and the dominant constructions of gender in the media. This discussion has raised some of the difficulties that arise with regard to the social representation of women in media organisations and the construction of gender images and ideologies in media texts. Further, the study has also raised a feminist concern toward celebrating the polysemy of media texts and the resistance of the audience and the need to engage in oppositional activities in public knowledge and public life. Within the context of developing countries, the place of women in informing and influencing the process of social development, the impact of technological change on women's lives and the needs of women in development communication programmes have been advanced as crucial areas demanding serious attention in communication research and action.

Following this, it has been observed that strategic actions are needed to challenge male domination so that women's leadership and alternative forms of producing and receiving knowledge and information can be developed in the realm of communication. It is important to acknowledge the actions are crucial in three major sites: international organisations, mainstream media and women's media organisations; and in communication education (see Chapter Two). Because of my own interest in communication education, I have focused on this area -- particularly in the Malaysian context where communication education prepares a large number of students interested in the communication and media profession. As stated in Chapter One, the gender debate in Malaysian communication education appears to entrench gender imbalances in the field of communication as the schools of communication here have been urged to present family management courses in the curriculum for female students to conform to the status quo, rather than challenging it. I have expressed the need for a gender agenda, informed of gender perspectives in communication education. In this light, I have argued that Malaysian communication education demands research attention because the significance accorded to gender issues in the education and training of intending communication professionals has implications not only for the students' own growth and development but for the consequences of their own future activities in media-related work. Because so little is known about gender issues in Malaysian communication education, I have conducted this study 1) to ascertain the views of communication tutors with regard to the gender-question in
communication and communication education; 2) to investigate the significance accorded to gender-communication relationships in curriculum materials; and 3) to develop directions for a plan for action. The present study can be seen as an exploratory effort to provide some thoughts about the positioning of gender issues in communication education and an attempt to articulate some initial intervention strategies.

I have recorded that I found great difficulty in developing a research framework for the present study as there has not been much work done in this area. Further, I have noted that the task undertaken here is complex as it relates to two ideological vehicles that are closely interrelated. At one level, the study of gender issues in communication education engages with research on controversies and contradictions in gender-media relationships in both the material and symbolic realms. Here communication education is developed based on the research findings in mass communication. At another level, the study has to consider a range of factors in the field of education like education's aims and purposes, curriculum knowledge, the role and values of communication tutors as curriculum-makers and the perception and experiences of communication students. The sparse literature on communication education at the university level has posed major difficulties for developing conceptual and methodological considerations to inform the present study. In the main theoretical discussion, I have explained that the curriculum which forms the foundation of the educational system is socially constructed and that the relevant context has to give adequate attention to both the socio-cultural and structural setting (see Chapter Three). The socio-cultural setting refers to the wider social environment that includes social, political, economic and demographic conditions that impinge upon the curriculum. The structural setting refers to the more direct setting which gives attention to the immediate participants, relationships and patterns of activity in the educational institution. In this study, I have focused on communication tutors as key curriculum-makers and the official content of the curriculum in the Programme. In the following sections, I present the conclusions of the study.

10.2 The Socio-Cultural Context

Communication education cannot be understood fully or changed substantially without paying attention to its wider socio-cultural context. An examination of different social forces and interests in the wider social environment has revealed certain findings which will impinge upon education.
The Marginal Position of Gender Criticism

As in many parts of the world, the Malaysian society evolves around the patriarchal systems which derive power from men's access to, mediation of and control over resources and social arrangements both in the private and the public domains. I have pointed out to the 'state-centric' nature of Malaysia and the position of men who command authority and leadership in the state machinery. Using the state's five-year Development Plans as main sources of critique, this study has observed that ethnicity is the major overriding factor in Malaysian development while the gender-question has been accorded a low position in the nation's strategic priorities. Although gender-planning emerged in the Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991-1995), a study of the plan has revealed that the concerns of women have not been adequately addressed in its planning framework. I have argued that the policy obscures the connection between women's private and public experience. Issues on domestic inequality, female identity, challenge to cultural representations in the media and gender reforms in education were disturbingly missing. It has been highlighted that the plan failed to recognise education and media as two significant arenas of struggle which are crucial to raising gender conscientisation and women's empowerment.

In Malaysia, education is identified as a powerful instrument in development. All educational strategies emanate from the state. Communication education is nested within university education and comes under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. Nonetheless, I have also pointed out that at the university level, communication tutors have greater freedom to determine curriculum structure content and therefore are crucial actors in curriculum-making. The Higher Education Planning Committee (HEPC) of 1967 which provided a framework for the development of universities, expressed distinctly two primary objectives: 1) the importance of national integration and unity among ethnic groups to correct social and economic imbalance; and secondly, the need for trained and skilled manpower to manage the economic development of the country. I have noted that gender is a non-issue and that this silence looms around the policies in education. Since there is no official guideline, I have suggested that there is little incentive to develop gender debates and action plans. Considering that gender criticism occupies a marginal position in Malaysia, I have argued that these trends that do not give visibility to gender will impinge upon the selection, organisation and treatment of communication education and its curriculum.

The Malaysian Media

This study has noted that the Malaysian state and the media are closely related. A distinctive feature of the Malaysian media is the concentration of ownership in a
couple of conglomerates which are closely aligned to political parties in the ruling coalition. Two clear trends that have emerged in the development of the media in this country is 1) the increasing government control over the media in the form of legislative controls and 2) the greater commercialisation of the media. It has been noted that there has been a remarkable quantitative increase in papers, magazines and journals in the past decade. Despite this increase, it can be argued that the Malaysian people are not given a genuine variety of choices but rather more of the same non-contentious, well-tested formulae and formats that conform to gender ideologies that are accepted as legitimate, common-sense and natural. By making connections between political-economy influences and the developments in the realm of the Malaysian media, I have suggested that Malaysia's type of media development sustains and perpetuates the interests of patriarchal systems that trivialise, marginalise and render a lower status to women's voices and concerns. In order to illuminate the representation of gender in the media, I have offered an overview of gender media research in the Malaysian context. This discussion has noted that there is a paucity of published material on gender generally and specifically in the field of communication. Many of the studies reviewed appeared patchy and lacked theoretical or systematic rigour. Despite these limitations, a review on gender media research in Malaysia (see Chapter Five) has revealed the following:

- the representation of women is dominantly framed in the home setting, as consumers and as sex-symbols;
- the participation of women in public knowledge is undervalued as the media depends heavily on men as news sources;
- the underrepresentation of women in media organisations and the absence of female workers in top management media positions;
- the presence of sexism and discriminatory practices in job distribution, salary and the lack of opportunities for women's advancement in the media profession;
- audience appear satisfied with the representation of women and femininity and condone narrow images of women as sex-objects as they feel such portrayal is useful, especially in advertisements;
- audience see the media as credible sources that disseminate reality, facts and truths of society and the media influence the opinion, personal beliefs and self-perception of the people.

The state of Malaysian gender media affairs is perplexing and I have stressed the need for further research to problematise the gender-question and to give prominence to this dimension. Research is also useful for informing communication
education and to give visibility to debates on gender-media relationships. The gender communication debate has to be situated within wider developments in the Malaysian society. The growth and production of media artefacts are influenced and constrained by a variety of social, political and economic factors. I have highlighted the 'state-centric' nature of Malaysia and to the ongoing interests of patriarchy, the functioning of global market forces and the collaboration of local and foreign governments that work in complex ways to perpetuate the subordination of women. Since men are largely in positions of power and exercise leadership in the state machinery, as in media organisations, I have argued that male dominance underlie the social systems and practices in Malaysia and this influence is powerful in both the material and ideological conditions of the media. The gender domination has been illustrated within a wider understanding of the specific nature of national development policies which do not directly promote the interests of women. Moreover, the Malaysian social-cultural milieu is one that grants ethnicity as a principle factor in the re-structuring of social relations and development activities. Interestingly, this gives the gender-question a paradoxical edge. Because ethnicity is given a high priority in the process of social development, gender is considered as less threatening and this creates spaces for those interested in gender issues to manoeuvre room to promote women’s autonomy and feminist knowledge. In Chapter Five, I have noted that in most recent years, there has appeared increasing visible movements particularly among women in the academy and women in grassroots organisations who are raising doubts and contesting basic assumptions on gender systems and gender ideologies.

10.3 The Structural Context

The structural context mediates socio-cultural influences and directs attention to the more immediate setting that links interaction among the participants within an education institution to generate curriculum experience. In this study, I have focused a) on the representation of women in the organisational setting; b) the curriculum structure of the Programme; c) tutor ideologies with regard to gender issues in communication and communication education; and d) the significance accorded to gender issues in the curriculum content of communication courses.

A. Representation of Women in the USM Programme

In Chapter Six, I have described the organisational setting of the USM Programme. This study has noted that the gender composition of students for the year 1992/93 revealed that 70.5% of the students were females -- a typical pattern that has emerged in the Programme in the past several years. In the same year, women formed only 33% or one-third of the faculty staff. All the positions of administrative authority
and higher academic ranks were held by men. This reveals patterns of male domination and power within the formal organisational structure of the Programme. I have argued that there is a need for the visibility of more women in formal leadership positions as this serves the purposes of increasing role-models for communication students, for building women's leaderships and for introducing gender perspectives in the curriculum of communication education. It needs to be emphasised that role-modelling is an effective mechanism that can motivate female students to aspire for advancement in the personal and professional lives. The presence of female scholars committed to gender issues is essential to encourage students to visualise career choices and at the same time alert them to be conscious of the difficulties such as exclusion, discriminations and resistance to gender initiatives in the workplace.

B. Curriculum Structure of the Programme

In examining the structural context of the Programme, this study has observed that the model underpinning communication education in this Programme is one that is influenced by both the sociological and media skills approach. Communication education combines the learning of media skills and the imparting of knowledge on communication. Still, I have noted that the main impetus in the Malaysian communication education scene has been to create graduates who would be engaged in communication related industries so that they can manage media systems and produce programmes that will assist the state development plans.

The Programme is currently reviewing its curriculum structure and has invited distinguished scholars to evaluate the curriculum. Interestingly so far, all the External Examiners of the Programme have been men. I have observed that this curriculum review exercise has largely been a male-oriented enterprise. Despite the significance of gender as an organising principle of social experience, none of the External Examiners' Reports made an explicit case of the potential contribution of gender scholarship to communication studies. On the whole, gender was a non-issue in the debate of curriculum structure and content.

In discussing the curriculum and the model adopted by the Programme, attention has been drawn to the controversy of the theory-practice alliance. I have proposed that both the critical and creative components of communication education -- whether as theory or as conceptual understanding and as practical work or media skills are equally important. Making a case for gender scholarship, I have suggested that it is worthy to use both the theoretical and practical components of the curriculum for challenging existing media arrangements, media routines and conventions in media
policies and programming practices that obscure the meaningful participation of women, their voices and interests. It is important to offer an educational process which seeks students to think critically and participate creatively in communication activities. In this regard, I have reiterated that a critical understanding of gender formations is essential to extend knowledge of media criticism so that the Programme can aim to develop students' analytic and creative skills through critical and practical work (see Chapter Six).

C. Tutor Ideologies

In this study, I have observed that it is important to recognise that communication educators are important bearers who can maintain gender regimes or contribute to the remaking of alternative social formations. The values, beliefs and assumptions of educators or tutors about gender are likely to influence their professional practice. As such, I have aimed to gain some understanding of the ideas and views of the tutors engaged in communication education with regard to gender issues, specifically in relation to communication and the curriculum materials used in communication courses (see Chapter Seven).

In raising questions about gender, this study has unveiled the enveloping power of the hegemonic masculinity which has influenced the views of the majority of tutors in making sense of the dynamics of gender in relation to the developments in the media. This study has found that the gender-question in general was not perceived as a major problem by a large number of communication tutors. This is a disturbing finding. The problem lies in a general lack of understanding where many of the tutors failed to appreciate the effects of gender oppression and to question taken-for-granted assumptions concerning gender ideologies. They certainly failed to recognise the urgency of this matter and their own role in dismantling gender ideologies and formations. I have suggested that the wider social gendered ideas and practices appear hegemonic enough to carry along communication tutors unwittingly or unwittingly to cast gender as unproblematic. The general impression of many tutors was that there were no gender problems as women were seen enjoying equal access to opportunities in employment. The visibility of women in the labour force, in the media profession, though marginal, were seen as evident indicators of gender equality. Moreover, the presence of a female majority in the student enrolment of the Communication Programme has been taken another indication that there are no pressing problems.
I have raised three important issues with regard to the views and responses of the communication tutors in the Programme: neutrality; the intersection of gender, ethnicity and class; and resistance to gender initiatives.

**Neutrality** - It needs to be emphasised that education is not initiated, organised or applied in a social political vacuum. Education is therefore not neutral as proposed by some communication tutors of the Programme. In one way or another, the areas or topics that are selected, the use of concepts, techniques, categories, systems of classification issues that are advanced in the curriculum are indications of what is considered to be important or problematic and reflect priorities, values and concerns of communication tutors who have greater autonomy as curriculum makers. It therefore cannot be assumed that the curriculum generated in the educational setting is intrinsically free from bias or neutral.

From the basis of the data derived from tutors’ responses, this study has highlighted that it is popularly believed that practical work which is concerned with technical operations are neutral activities that do not implicate values. The arguments offered by some tutors is that media skills or technical competence can be delivered in a neutral way by detaching values and taking a neutral stand. I have contended that this supposedly neutral stand in fact masks the masculinist bias in media production. By assuming that technical operations are neutral, certain interests that are served by existing industrial gendered practices were seen as non-problematic. If the values laden in media production are not deconstructed, the unquestioned assumptions in the 'given' masculinist order will be accepted as legitimate, common-sense and natural. Far from demystifying the media, such a position would induce communication students to conform to the general dictates of hegemonic masculinity and to the prevailing media policies and production patterns.

**Gender, Ethnicity and Class** - In contemporary Malaysia, it is important to understand the complex interplay of ethnicity and class in debating gender issues. The link between ethnicity and class is important for a fuller understanding of gender experiences in Malaysia. In relation to tutors’ views, this study has recorded that there was a near silence on ethnicity in terms of its impact on Malaysian women. While the argument on the class connection gained visibility in tutors’ responses, their discussion
steered clearly away from ethnic and religious angles. The sensitive nature of these issues pose major difficulties in approaching the gender-question. Further, in raising gender issues, questions about other significant agendas like religion, ethnic inequality, class oppression are also raised. Considering that the acceptance of social critique, specifically in relation to ethnicity and religion has not progressed sufficiently in Malaysia, it was not easy to encourage open discussion in this direction. Evidently, this means that there will be some difficulties in establishing a radical gender agenda which advances issues on gender oppression that relate specifically to ethnicity among scholars, tutors, students and media professionals in the field of communication. I have supported Jamilah's (1992) suggestion that a 'softly-softly' approach which takes a non-confrontational stance will be clearly needed.

Resistance - A large majority of the tutors agreed that gender issues should be incorporated in the curriculum of communication studies. One important finding in this study has revealed that even when tutors appeared to be in favour of introducing gender issues in its most general terms, they can also be at the same time not willing to integrate gender perspectives in their own specific courses. As the case of this study, there were competing views on who should bear this responsibility. Tutors offering theoretical courses felt that practical courses should raise gender issues while tutors teaching practical-based courses proposed that this task should be advanced in theoretical courses. Thus, I have suggested that a large number of tutors failed to recognise that the gender-question is relevant in all courses and by doing nothing in their own courses, resistance to initiatives that might reduce bias or improve opportunities is produced. Doing nothing is a form of action itself with consequences for the formation of gender relations and ideologies. I have highlighted that related to this situation is the nature of gender issues which are highly provocative and controversial. This is not a question of adopting course content or adopting new textbooks, but asking tutors to think about themselves in disquieting new ways. While teaching materials are less difficult to alter, the same cannot be said about tutors' ideologies, as belief-systems regarding the gender dimension relate to deep-rooted conscious or unconscious assumptions and values.

This study has also found that the Communication Programme does not function in a monolithic manner but embodies competing and contradicting experiences.

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64 The link between ethnicity and religion cannot be ignored easily. All Malays are deemed to be Muslims, while the majority of Chinese, Indian and indigenous communities are Non-Muslims. The resurgence of Islam and the religious and cultural revivalism among Non-Malays and Non-Muslims tend to give prominence to forms, symbols, rituals and ceremonies which have implications for gender experiences.
that mediate the texture of the curriculum, suggesting that hegemonic masculinity is not complete. This study has also documented the presence of a small number of tutors who recognised gender imbalances in relation to the media and in communication education. They were consciously making efforts to introduce gender perspectives into the curriculum. Within this educational setting, I have suggested that these tutors can be identified as crucial actors who can work towards creating space for gender initiatives in the Programme. The presence of this group, though small, is significant as it alerts us to see education and curriculum-making as a site of contestation. Using the hegemony model, I have pointed out that the diverse people and ideological perspectives that make up this Programme present this site as a terrain of contestation, contradiction and struggle. This in turn opens up opportunities for contesting dominant ideas and pedagogy and for initiating change in the Programme. The visibility of this group of gender leaders is important to establish a gender agenda in the Programme which involves intellectual consciousness-raising and a vision to advance alternative viewpoints that challenge the dominant hegemony. Drawing from the ideas of Gramsci and Freire, I have reiterated that gender initiatives in the curriculum can provide a source of critical learning and gender conscientisation. A gender agenda can forward feminist thinking and ideas which have otherwise been ignored in the curriculum knowledge of communication education (see Chapter Eight). Such an effort, I contend, will work towards an interruption to the hegemonic masculinity as it will offer a pedagogy that is inclusive of women, women's diverse experiences and will allow both educators and students to share and create women-centred knowledge in understanding communication and media skills.

D. Communication Courses

Another primary focus of the study falls on the communication courses offered by the Programme. I have studied the syllabus content of the communication courses presented in the year 1992/93 to reveal the knowledge, information and skills that are perceived as important, meaningful and relevant to the study of communication. This has been an useful exercise as it has illuminated the extent to which gender was given prominence in the courses and the range of themes that were available when gender issues were presented in the courses.

The findings of this study has shown that out of a total of 29 courses, gender is a non-issue in 22 courses; it is given a casual reference in 3 courses; one course offers a liberal perspective on gender issues; while only 3 courses present a critical understanding of gender issues in the study of communication (see Chapter Eight).
Invisible Gender Issues

It has been asserted that women are overlooked from discussion or analysis of the human landscape and the perspectives that structure the selection and presentation of the knowledge in the curriculum are gendered (Acker, 1994; Rakow, 1993a; Creedon, 1993; Wood, 1988). A major finding of this study supports this view and has shown that gender issues are excluded from discussion through the choice of topics in the course syllabus, in the selection of issues in the examination papers and in the selection of reference materials. This has created a major gap in the curriculum -- a silence which leaves gender issues unheard in relating to the study of communication. This silence pervades the introductory courses, the core courses, options and practical-oriented courses. More than three quarters of the communication courses offered in the Programme had nothing to say about women's social position, their subordination and the problematic women-communication relationships in society. It has appeared that there is an omission on the study of women as subjects, the oppression they face in society and the counter-hegemonic activities women engage in countering social injustices upon them, particularly in connection with communication. By rendering the gender dimension invisible, it is implied that the status quo is accepted and the oppression of women is not recognised as a worthy concern which demands critical attention in the realm of communication. The silence on this gender dimension could be perceived as giving a subordinate status to knowledge on women and therefore reinforcing the hegemonic view and taken-for-granted assumptions which give legitimacy to men's power, dominance and experience. This is particularly perplexing given the depth of feminist critique in this field and the growing body of gender research on communication issues. I have argued that the exclusion of feminist knowledge supports hegemonic currents that render gender as a non-issue in social experience, drawing a veil over women's knowledge, the understanding of feminism and social responses to it. Subsequently, this might mean that communication students will not be alerted to patriarchal power and the acceptance of male dominance in cultural institutions and practices. This in turn might produce ripple effects and further eliminate women's voices and concerns when students engage in media-related activities.

Visible Gender Issues

This study has found that only a small proportion of the courses made an attempt to give visibility to gender issues in communication. A handful of courses offer discussion on the impacts and interactions of patriarchy and capitalism in relation to women-communication relationships. There is however a further difficulty. A few of the courses give casual references but do not give attention to gender oppression in
an analytic fashion. In this case, token attention is given and students are asked to discuss constructs like symbolic annihilation and gender stereotyping. Only four courses are found to give gender controversies a significant focus in course syllabus and examination papers. I have classified the presentation of the issues into two views: the liberal view and critical view. In the case of the liberal view, the major emphasis of the course has been on sex differences and sex role stereotypes in images and roles of women and men in media content. The three other courses adopt critical perspectives on gender issues by raising questions on gender formations, unequal power relations and the link between oppression of women and social structures in society. These courses offer useful readings to enable students to examine the ways the media play in creating dominant patterns of hegemonic masculinity.

However, I have noted that the gender discussion in these courses have not given due emphasis to the complex intersection of class and ethnicity and its relevance to the Malaysian context. I have suggested that a broader framework is needed to explore gender experiences and women's involvement in communication activities in Malaysia to extend feminist critique in communication research and debates. While the integration of gender experiences into communication education is an essential one, it nevertheless raises another problem. I have pointed out that incorporating the gender-question into communication studies is not a simple matter when the tradition of communication theories does not explicitly define women, intramural relationships within the scope of debates on communication. For example, concepts on modernisation, development, politics, private, public, reason, family all become inadequate when their taken-for-granted assumptions are deconstructed. Consequently, I have highlighted that the task of putting women's experiences into communication education while at the same time offering a critique of the male-centric understandings, concepts and paradigms is a formidable one. It appears the alliance between feminism and education is highly controversial -- an uneasy one and that difficulties are inevitable when the production of knowledge and cultural practice is embedded in the overall social structure. Still, I have added that communication education is an important site for developing gender critique and encouraging a reassessment of the dominant ideas and conventions that impinge upon communication thinking and media production work. In the discussion of communication courses, I have advanced a few questions that may be used to introduce gender viewpoints within the existing courses (see Chapter Eight). In this way, I have not only offered a critique of the courses, but I have turned to a practical demonstration of the potential of gender criticism in communication studies. Gender informs communication and communication in turn informs gender and the study of gender can be ignored only if
communication education wishes it to be irrelevant to the understanding of communication.

Based on the summary findings of this study, it can be concluded that the Programme does not accord significance to gender issues in communication education. This has been conveyed explicitly and implicitly in the following ways:

- the underrepresentation of women, especially feminist tutors in positions of power in both key administrative positions and academic ranks;
- the lack of understanding on gender formations and ideologies and the failure to recognise the role of communication education in dismantling or perpetuating the hegemonic masculinity;
- the popular belief that education, knowledge and media skills can be delivered in a neutral way;
- the lack of substantial debate about gender issues in communication courses;
- the lack of an adequate framework in the course programme to advance gender issues in a more in-depth and coherent way;
- the lack of discussion on women's empowerment in the media.

These insights impart the view that gender is not deemed as a worthy area for study in communication education as the curriculum pays little attention to the problematic gender-question. It also implies that there are serious gaps in making sense of human experiences and social relations with regard to communication. By casting a major silence on gender issues, communication students who as intending communication practitioners will be not conscientised to gender conflicts in society and in the field of communication and this reinforces the currents of hegemonic masculinity.

This study has also documented the presence of a small group of tutors who are committed to gender issues and who are interested in gender initiatives. The presence of this group is crucial and paves avenues for developing gender action plans in the Programme.

10.4 Developing a Plan For Action

Communication education, the practices it constitutes and the knowledge it offers play a crucial role in accomplishing hegemony. Although communication education is only one part of the wider communication and education systems, it plays a crucial part in the reproduction or reconstruction of gender formations and
ideologies, which will influence students' understanding of gender and communication in their future communication activities. Gramsci's concept of hegemony and associated concepts of intellectuals and counter-hegemonic practices, and Freire's views on conscientisation and liberatory pedagogy have been instructive in charting directions for gender action plans in communication education. The present study has proposed some intervention mechanisms that could contribute to a counter-hegemonic pedagogy in communication education. I have stressed that it is necessary to be critical of existing hierarchical arrangements and that the structure of education and communication systems need to be changed, as do the structures and values systems of society. The suggestions that have been raised here by no means are exhaustive and focus on what can be done in the context of Malaysian communication education in the immediate future. I have drawn attention to five mechanisms for inducing change: 1) developing gender policy to initiate project work, open discussions and consciousness-raising sessions and debates on action strategies on the theme of gender; 2) building women's leadership so that women have opportunities over formal authority and over resources to accomplish management tasks and to make contribution as intellectuals and as education leaders; 3) networking and collaboration to extend solidarity and professional reinforcement among women; 4) developing more systematic and detailed gender research on communication to inform the study of gender issues in communication education and to contribute to public debates and policy-making; and 5) curriculum development to integrate gender viewpoints to make a more gender-inclusive curriculum. With regard to curriculum development, some basic principles towards a pedagogy for gender communication studies have been outlined. Additionally, syllabus guidelines for introducing debates on gender communication issues have been presented (see Chapter Eight and Nine).

I have emphasised that the task of developing gender action plans is exceedingly complex and that it is a process of learning filled with uncertainty, anxieties and difficulties. Contending with forces of change is a never-ending process and it is essential to be persistent and resilient to find creative ways to struggle to promote women's autonomy, leadership and knowledge in both education and communication systems.

By way of caveat, it seems worthy to reiterate here that a fundamental change in all social structures and value systems is imperative to improve women's position and to advance women's viewpoints and concerns. It is important to achieve an

65 As noted in Chapter Three, integration in this context means that gender is not merely a discrete add-on element, but a necessary, substantial and explicit ingredient in the education and training of intending communication professionals.
understanding of the tight weave of structures that hold male domination in place. In other words, it is important to realise that the larger forces on the wider social stage that sustain gendered inequalities have to be countered. The gender aspiration can only be realised effectively if gender issues are addressed in all social systems, social practices and development policies. Factors such as market trends, state regulation, media's editorial policies, audience conception, the autonomy of female media professionals and the wider developments in the socio-cultural and political setting will have to be taken into account to influence the expression of gender systems and ideologies. Constructing a gender agenda in communication education programmes will not necessarily lead to changes in the media content or in the status of women in the society. Notwithstanding, it is still crucial to identify this site as a point of intervention to conscientise communication students, to enable them to question gender formations and gender ideologies; and to encourage them to change social arrangements that are oppressive to women. Educational strategies alone will not lead to a fundamental re-structuring of society, but all the same, communication education must be conscious of its own potential for change and the chain reaction or ripple effects that such efforts could have on other institutions and people.

10.5 Limitations of the Study

The present study is the first attempt to analyse communication education in Malaysia and it can be seen as an exploratory effort to evoke discussion on gender issues in this field. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, I have found great difficulty in developing a research framework for the present study as there has been very little work and published literature on gender issues in communication education. Specifically, there has been little research investigating the state of affairs of communication education at the higher education level. This has posed limitations in developing conceptual frameworks and methodological strategies for the present study.

In the case of methodology, I have adopted a case-study approach in the present study to enable a systematic investigation of a particular instance. I have acknowledged the individualised nature of this study approach, however this study has not aimed to produce generalisable conclusions but to generate discussion for interpretation of similar cases in order to extend a larger picture of communication education. There have been difficulties in the choice of research methods. Ethnography has been widely used to assess gender issues in curriculum practice. But I have argued that this approach would not be feasible in the Malaysian context, particularly in a conservative establishment like the university. This exercise may give
rise to negative feelings and defensive positions and can be seen as undermining the credibility of authoritative and powerful figures like communication tutors. I have therefore focused on a document analysis of the official curriculum. The analysis of documents on communication courses have proved to be extremely valuable as it has shed light on the aims and the objectives, the curriculum structure and syllabus content that are deliberately planned. Also, I have explored the views of communication tutors. Since there was generally a lack of understanding on gender, it was not easy to elicit in-depth and specific discussions from the tutors. Further, considering the controversial nature of this study and the marginal presence of feminist critique in the Malaysian context, it was difficult to pursue the discussions in detail. More crucially, I have had to take into account of ethical problems and this has posed limitations to the presentation and discussion of the findings. Questions of confidentiality and anonymity were important and influenced the way this study was structured and written. In addition, the present study was interested in strategies for change and it was essential to retain a non-confrontational environment for further research and for initiating discussion on action plans. Despite its limitations, the study is useful as it raises the gender-question as an important issue in communication education which requires serious attention.

10.6 Contributions

The present study has aimed to extend gender critique to communication education as there has been very little debate and written material in this area. Very few studies have attempted to provide detailed research on the views and values of communication tutors as curriculum-makers and the significance they accord to gender issues in the curriculum of communication education. As stated in Chapter Two, the task of research in communication education is complex as it responds to both mass communication and education research. Working from a gender perspective, this study has sought to break new ground by using insights from feminist theory, communication theory and education theory to build a framework for investigating the case of Malaysian communication education, which is an important site for preparing potential communication professionals to direct the development of the Malaysian media. This is an important step forward to illuminate how the gender-question is approached within communication education programmes. This study has revealed the diverse people and the contradictory perspectives that mediate the curriculum experience -- the forces of domination, resistance and negotiation and why the process of change can be so frustratingly slow for the gender struggle to improve the representation of women in both communication and communication education.
Gender criticism occupies a marginal space in the Malaysian context. In the realm of communication education, the lack of understanding on gender formations and the oppression of women has given currency to the masculine view which asserts that building a gender agenda means that family management courses should be included in the curriculum of communication education to enable female communication students to perform effectively the duties of a wife, mother and a full-fledged professional. My study refutes the above view. By problematising gender, the social experiences of women and women-communication relationships, I have aimed to articulate a gender agenda, informed of feminist theoretical and political considerations to initiate alternative directions in Malaysian communication education. Feminist knowledge is essential for at least addressing and hopefully beginning to challenge gender ideologies and imbalances in society. Thus a major contribution of this study has been to problematise gender, communication and communication education in order to extend feminist critique on gender experiences in Malaysia. To paraphrase Harding (1986), in the best of feminist research, the purposes of research and analysis are to provide useful information that will empower people so that they can challenge and fight their manipulation, control and exploitation by the powerful; the objective is to transform the status quo. This study has provided useful information regarding gender communication courses and has expressed the importance of extending gender critique in communication education. I have also proposed a plan for action and drafted syllabus guidelines for a course on Gender and Communication which can be presented to introduce gender debate among communication scholars and intending communication practitioners. The syllabus guidelines do not offer a definitive map of gender communication issues, but chart some fruitful lines of inquiry that can contribute towards gender conscientisation and empowerment.

The entire research project has been a complicated intellectual enterprise for me as I have attempted to integrate scholarship, feminism and activism. As a scholar and an activist, I have attempted to use the research process for personal and professional growth. More crucially, I have used the information gathered to advocate for gender action plans in communication education. The research experience has presented me with a practical, conceptual and ethical minefield and I have faced dilemmas in trying to combine the roles of researcher and advocate in attempting to balance my scholarship and political goals. This research is valuable as the study problematises the patriarchal Malaysian state, male dominance in social systems and practices, the Malaysian Gender Plan and the legitimacy of hegemonic masculinity in communication and communication education. More crucially, it brings into light feminist knowledge so that efforts to shape the direction of curriculum reform in the
narrow interests that support the status quo can be challenged. The present work not only questions masculine privilege and domination through the results of the study, but also observes that this effort in communication education to build a gender agenda is just the beginning of a long process of continuing struggle and negotiation.

While this contribution describes the case of communication education in the Malaysian context, it is worthy to note that there is very little gender research on communication education in different parts of the world. It is hoped that this study will set in train several other similar studies in this acutely underresearched area with a view to extend the larger debate on communication education, communication and to contribute to the feminist project.
APPENDICES

Appendix A

List of Courses offered by the USM Communication Programme. (Course Titles in Malay)

- Introduction to Human Communication (Pengantar Komunikasi Manusia)
- Introduction to Mass Communication (Pengantar Komunikasi Massa)
- Communication and Society (Komunikasi dan Masyarakat)
- Communication Theory (Teori Komunikasi)
- Communication Research Methods (Kaedah Penyelidikan Komunikasi)
- Communication Technology (Teknologi Komunikasi)
- Media History and Law (Sejarah dan Undang-Undang Media)
- Communication, Class and Conflict (Komunikasi, Kelas dan Konflik)
- Theory and Basics of Advertising (Asas-Asas Periklanan)
- Intercultural Communication (Komunikasi Antara Budaya)
- International Communication (Komunikasi Antarabangsa)
- Public Relations (Perhubungan Awam)
- Communication Policy and Planning (Polisi dan Perancangan Komunikasi)
- Advanced Advertising (Periklanan Peringkat Maju)
- Communication for Social Development (Komunikasi Untuk Pembangunan Sosial)
- Evaluation of Communication Materials for Development. (Penilaian Bahan-Bahan Komunikasi untuk Pembangunan)
- Journalism I (Kewartawanan I)
- Journalism II (Kewartawanan II)
- Photojournalism (Kewartawanan Foto)
- Television Production I (Penerbitan Televisyen I)
- Television Production II (Penerbitan Televisyen II)
- Film Production I (Penerbitan Filem I)
- Film Production II (Penerbitan Filem II)
- Magazine Writing and Production (Pemulihan dan Penerbitan Majalah)
- Script and Screenplay Writing (Penulisan Skrip dan Lakon Layar)
- Basic Radio Production (Asas-asas Penerbitan Radio)
- Planning and Implementation of Communication Campaigns. (Perancangan dan Pelaksanaan Kempen Komunikasi)
- Issues in Mass Communication. (Isu-isu Komunikasi Massa)
- Media Planning (Perancangan Media)
Appendix B

List of Reading Lists of Sample Courses

A. Introduction To Human Communication


B. Communication Theory


De Kadt, E Williams, G (eds) (1977) *Sociology and Development*.


Lerner, D (1958) *The Passing of Traditional Society*.


C. Communication Research Methods


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Bulmer, M (1977) *Sociological Research Methods.*

**D. Communication for Social Development**
Husin Ali (1976) *Apa erti Pembangunan?*

**E. International Communication**
Gerbner, G (ed) *Mass Media Policies in Changing Cultures.*

**F. Television Production I**
Niesbet (1972) *The Technique of Sound Studio.*

**G. Journalism II**

H. Introduction to Mass Communication.

I. Intercultural Communication.
Appendix C
List of Reports Examined.

A. Official Publications on Gender.

B. Official Publications on Higher Education.
2. Universities and University College Act (1971).

C. USM Communication Programme, Internal Documents.

D. External Examiners’ Reports.
2. Masterman, L (1990), External Examiner's Report, USM.
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Suzuki, M.F. "Teaching the Japanese to be Critical." Media Development. 27(1):24-25.


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