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Globalisation, 'In-Between' Identities and Shifting Values: Young Multiethnic Malaysians and Media Consumption

By

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to examine the identities of youth from different cultural background in Malaysia that has been formed through consumption of media. The forces of globalisation reportedly have de-centred the self from the core, leading to multiple, fluid and contradictory identities. Individuals have been displaced from their backgrounds, and have emerged as 'individuals,' in contrast to past collective identities. People are self-reflexive in constructing their sense of self, with the media playing a role in nurturing one's quest for self-identity (Thompson, 1995).

This issue is of particular relevance to young Malaysians. Within this locality, young people's lives are deeply embedded in the collectivities of ethnicity, religion and national identity. At the same time, Malaysia has adopted an open economic market. The de-regulation of Malaysia's broadcasting services enables a mass penetration of the global media to influence young Malaysians. This study is interested in examining how these conditions have affected young Malaysians' identities through media consumption. While other studies have explored 'identity' through the consumption of the global media by local audiences, such studies have focused on hybridised cultural practices. This study takes into account de-centred identities by examining shifts in 'values' among different ethnicities, as reflected in consumption of global and local television programmes, differentiating this from previous research works. This study draws on Giddens' (1990) concept of 'reflexivity' in examining this issue.

This study found that the global media plays a significant role in young Malaysians questioning tradition against modernity. They admire life outside Malaysia, and view it as more 'modern' and 'liberating,' compared to the perceived closed life of Malaysian culture. Yet, this does not conclusively show that young Malaysians have completely abandoned local cultures and values. Rather, it shows they can fully adopt values they admire into their lives while continuing to live within the bounds of their parents and community.

Young Malaysians have appropriated the various forms of global cultures derived from media consumption as a means of forging their 'sense of self,' which articulates a need to project an 'individual self' rather than emerging from their collectivity. Although religion and ethnicity remain important in their lives, these young people do not see themselves solely restricted by these identity markers alone. Their cultural identity contains characteristics of other global cultures as well. It is an intersection of various forms of identities, negotiated between religion and ethnicity within global youth cultures, diaspora, gender, lifestyles and taste. Young Malaysians can best be described as having 'in-between identities' - 'global - local subjects' borne out of the hybridisation of values from both sources.

Ethnic minority Malaysians display two identities, due to their consumption of international programmes. First, overseas Chinese and Tamil television programmes enable youth to hybridise their youth identity into Western-Asian popular youth cultures instead of drawing solely from one or the other. Second, this type of exposure leads young Malaysian-Chinese to have feelings of 'cultural superiority' over the local Malay films and drama.

Key words: Malaysia, identity, ethnicity, media consumption, globalisation, Diaspora, youth, reflexivity and modernity.

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Introduction : Exploring Tensions of 'Fluidity vs. Solidity' in Global Media Studies

One reason young people were selected as subjects to examine 'social change' and globalisation in Malaysiais because they epitomise the future. Giroux (2003:141) aptly said that young people - "embody the projected dreams, desires and commitment of a society's obligations to the future. "

This study begins in exploring young Malaysians' identity, considering the advent of globalisation, manifested through the flow of information and communication technologies, along with the de-regulation of the media industry. Until 1985, Malaysia's broadcasting services were from the public broadcasting services. It disseminated national ideologies and cultures to the public, forming a more unified and fixed identity. After the Privatisation Policy was launched in 1985, the first commercial television station was introduced, offering Malaysians alternative entertainment (Karthigesu, 1994a). By the 1990s, a new development had taken place. There was an intense race by developed nations to launch their own satellite television, expanding their services to Asia; Malaysia followed suit. This period of time marks the de-regulation of the media industry in Malaysia. The reason for the de-regulation exercise is thought to be out of fear for yet another wave of 'Western imperialism' (Ang, 2001). In 1996, Malaysia's first satellite television – Astro – began operation with the launching of Malaysia East Asia satellite, MeasatMesta - 1 (Zaharom & Wang, 2004). The influx of 'media-scapes', 'ideo-scapes' and 'techno-scapes' (Appadurai, 1990) into the lives of Malaysians stemming from satellite television, put into question the possibility of more fluid and multiple identities. It also drew the issue of cultural conflict between the embedded local cultures and the presence of new sources of identity formation through the media. This issue prompted local scholars (Samsudin & Latiffah, 1999; Latiffah & Samsudin, 2000), to explore the consequences of this change on young Malaysians.

While the initial concern was in linking young people's media consumption with their 'morality', this study shifted its focus towards looking at the process of identity formation and of the construction of new identities. A recent study on 'identity' shows its usefulness in analysing cultural change. (Butcher, 2004) shaped the direction of this study. Elsewhere, international studies on 'identity' and consumption of the global media on young, local audiences have also moved into highlighting the various identities that have emerged among young people, which are now referred to as fluid and multiple (McMillin & Fishkeller, 2009; Mayer, 2003; Durham, 2004).

This, in no way suggests that local cultures are being due to globalisation. In fact, studies have shown that the result was the opposite (Miller, 1992; O'Connor, 2005; Gritxi, 2006). Global modernity, meaning the linking of the distant with the local, led to the 'self' bring de-centred from the stable core of national cultures. Modern 'identity' is now mutable and fluid; it is the tension between 'solidity' and 'fluidity' that has yet to be widely explored (Kempny, 2002). Globalisation has certainly opened up the possibility for a young person to develop an identity distinct from his own predecessors. A study was conducted by Yangzi Sima and Peter C.Pugsley (2010) on China's 'Generation Y,' indicated those born between 1978 – 2000. Living with a more affluent lifestyle, members of 'Generation Y' use blogs to construct identities around concepts of individualism and consumerism (Sima & Pugsley, 2010). This is in stark contrast to the collective values held by older Chinese generations.

Valentine et al (1998) made a similar comment regarding the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), whose work lacks attention to the role of 'ethnic cultures' as part of youth identity. Previously, effort was put forth to understand the tension felt by young people between tradition and local cultures with global modernity, notably in the work of Gillespie (1995), who looked at this issue through the perspective of a young British-Asian migrant.

Still, more work is necessary to cast the net wider into other communities, with more diverse local cultures, and with different experiences of globalisation. While some studies acknowledge the tensions that arise among young people caught between tradition and global modernity, they have often focused on limited groups. More specifically, youth have often been viewed as a homogeneous group, whether in terms of class (Siriyuvasak, 2008; Kjeldgaard, 2003), gender (Huang, 2008; Quin, 2004; Bloustein, 2003; Moss, 1993; Wood, 1993) or age (Stern, 2008; McClung et al, 2007; Ornia, 2004; Livingstone, 2002).

It is not known if young people from differing ethnic groups face different challenges regarding cultural tension. What issues of cultural tension, regarding 'solidity' vs. fluidity, do different ethnic groups faces that differ from the others? Taking note of what Buckingham (1998:142) said during his research, young people should be seen as "sites of conflict" and, "points of intersection" between a multitude of potentially conflicting discourse, social identities and experiences. This study aims to view young people as complex and dynamic beings. Young multiethnic Malaysians come from different religions, ethnicities, regions, social classes, genders, ages and political histories, which raise the complex issues of 'solidity' and 'fluidity'.

Apart from examining 'solidity' and 'fluidity' from the perspective of tension between 'tradition' and ' global modernity', young Malaysians face another dimension of identity issues - 'ethnicity'. Young Malaysian Chinese, Indian and Kadazandusun are struggling against cultural marginality, and exclusion as citizens in maintaining their ethnicity. What is the role of satellite television in regards to these young people's sense of ethnicity, apart from cultural conflict?

Past studies, such as Carstens' (2003), have found that young Malaysian Chinese's heavy consumption of overseas Chinese films is an attempt to reaffirm their ethnic identity as a result of the National Cultural Policy. Malaysian media content is otherwise dominated by the Malay-Muslim culture.

Juliana's (2002) study further revealed evidence of 'cultural marginalisation' among young non-Malays, although her approach was too focused on politics.

This study pursues this issue by dividing subjects into dominant and minority groups, examining the differences sociologically. In addition, 'identity' – 'cultural change' and 'ethnicity' are explored to see how they impact the formation of identity among young Malaysians through media consumption, within the context of globalisation.

This research involves a study on the media consumption of multiethnic youth in Malaysia, and explores media consumption with a comparative approach, taking into consideration different cultural beliefs and political histories. By seeking to draw a comparison between young Malaysians from four major ethnic groups – Malay, Chinese, Indian and Kadazandusun – the complexity of their social identity is demonstrated. 'Ethnicity' includes different religions, cultural beliefs and practices, social classes and political histories, all of which have produced different concerns about ethnic and national identities.

In examining 'identity' from the context of 'tradition vs. modernity' and 'ethnicity' in terms of media consumption, this study separated consumption of imported and local media through reception studies, and the consumption of the media during everyday lives. While most studies tend to study an audience's consumption of foreign television programmes (Kim, 2005; Haven, 2001), it is more effective to look at it from the point of both imported and local media consumption. This allowed the dynamics of 'identity', 'cultural conflict,' and 'ethnicity' to be differentiated.

Finally, a lack of attention has been given to examining young Malaysians' media consumption and identity formation in their own private spaces. This is attributed to lack of an ethnographic approach among local media studies. In this study, a full ethnographic study could not be conducted particularly because long-term participant observation wasn't possible due to time constraints. Instead, a combination of methods was utilised, such as reception studies through focus group interviews, in-depth interviews and a media

consumption diary, to try to gain as much insight into Malaysia's youth culture as possible. Such an approach was adequate in highlighting the context of young Malaysians' media consumption practices in their everyday lives.

Murphy & Kraidy (2003) criticised the way 'ethnography' was being used in reception studies as lacking the actual practice of ethnographic methods, but this study follows what Moores (1993: 4) said: So long as the " aims of the inquiry" are identical, then it qualifies to be termed as "ethnography".

Throughout this study, the patterns and context of media consumption of different ethnic groups revealed the significance of ethnic identities because of consumption of ethnic-based media. Apart from that, it was seen that global cultural influences are unable to completely penetrate the sanctity of local cultures. Strong forces of local cultures and conformity to traditional authority and cultures roles, ascribed upon young people in their everyday lives, prove a formidable buffer. Nevertheless, global cultures serve to provide options for young Malaysians to construct an 'in-between' identity; One that negotiates and shifts between tradition and modernity, as well as nationality and ethnicity, global and local youth cultures.

To sum up, this study aims to encapsulate Ang's view (1996), which quite rightly states that audience studies should look more into media consumption on an everyday basis.

> "In other words, what we need is more ethnographic work not on discrete audience groups, but on media consumption as an integral part of popular cultural practices, articulating both 'subjective' and 'objective', both 'micro' and 'macro' processes" (Ang, 1996: 137)

Structure of The Thesis

This thesis is made up of nine chapters, which have been divided into several parts aimed at bringing a broader understanding of the subject matter.

Chapter 1 is entitled *'National Culture, Shifting Identities and the Media* 'which gives a general description of the living conditions of the young people chosen for this study. It also highlights the real concerns of young Malaysians pertaining to their cultural identity. It is imperative to start by highlighting how young Malaysians have been included by the state into the process of nation building through various nationalist projects.

Next, the underlying tensions that occur among young Malaysians expressed through the media are examined. These are signs of conflict between young ethnic minority Malaysians and the state, contrary to the state's vision of producing a united and patriotic youth.

The gaps within Malaysian youth studies are discussed, focusing on theoretical frameworks, and approaches and methodologies, used in studying Malaysian youth culture, including the limitations of local media studies on youth. This chapter discusses the debates within globalisation theories as well as several key concepts such as 'identity', 'ethnicity' and 'Diaspora.' Giddens' (1990) 'self-reflexivity' gives this study further analytical tools.

Chapter 2 provides the context of social realities that constitutes the lives of young Malaysians. This chapter sets out to describe Malaysians' social and cultural lives before moving on to highlight the lifestyles of young Malaysians, which consist of traditional and modern lifestyles. The emergence of shifting identities is also discussed here.

Chapter 3 highlights the Malaysian media system, which is characterised by multiethnic content. Apart from highlighting the existence of a multiethnic media, this chapter attempts to show the significance of commercial television stations that mark the beginning of the media's interest in young people as a

specific target audience. The emergence of privatised television stations and satellite television offers various choices of foreign and local programmes for young people.

Chapter 4 explains the methodologies used and explains the rationale for the choice of those methods. It also explains how the research was conducted and the ethical issues involved.

An overarching theme of 'In-between identities' is covered in chapters 5 through 8. Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the findings gathered from reception studies of imported and local youth television series, and the diverse readings from across ethnicity, gender, age, religion and local culture. Both chapters demonstrate the differing attitudes and values among young people during reception.

Insights into the daily media consumption activities and patterns of young people are offered in chapters 7 and 8. The similarities and differences in terms of the context of consumption among young Malaysians' of different ethnicity are described. The theoretical framework, key concepts and initial research questions framing this study conclude this study in chapter 9. In this final chapter, it is shown that young Malaysians', like youth elsewhere, are experiencing shifts and multiple identities at a more rapid pace than in the past. What sets them apart is the fact they have to negotiate 'religion' and 'ethnicity', along with other non-cultural sources of identity.

Chapter 1

National Culture, Shifting Identities and The Media

1.0 Introduction

This chapter begins by describing two contrasting situations, enveloping the lives of young Malaysians. State and local academics view young people as potential hedonists and deviants that need guidance. Consequently, young people have been increasingly drawn into various citizenship projects aimed at producing the ideal Malaysian nation (*Bangsa Malaysia)*[i].

As a counter reaction, young Malaysians have found ways to present themselves as active citizens, constantly debating the state-defined youth identity against their own sense of self. In this respect, the media has become an important tool for young people to express themselves. Using the new media and global media programmes, young Malaysians are said to have begun constructing alternative identities which bifurcates into different levels of identities – national, ethnic to youth identities.

These various expressions of identity illustrate that young Malaysians' identity issues are no different from their global peers, which are characterised by fluidity and multiplicity. Perhaps what sets them apart is how certain ethnic groups, such as Chinese, Indian and Kadazandusun, are still battling with questions of 'belonging'.

Issues pertaining to 'identity' in Malaysia are further problematized when forces of cultural globalisation cause tension between 'tradition/collectivism' and 'modern/individualism' among young Malaysians (Rokiah, 2003). Recent local studies have found that ethnic Muslim Malay youths show signs of wanting a shift in lifestyle and are critically reassessing their own identity, which has long been dictated by ethnic tradition and religion. This raises the

issue of the sustainability of the state in policing national cultures and values among young Malaysians.

Thirdly, this chapter proceeds to discuss the key concepts that guide this study, as well as a review of past media studies on media consumption, identity and ethnicity among young people, before setting out the objectives of this study and stating its theoretical position.

This study argues that the global media has become an important symbolic cultural resource for young Malaysians to move beyond the boundaries of national cultures and tradition, and questions its legitimacy in determining 'who they are'.

1.1 Propagating National Cultures, Local Norms In Their Everyday Lives

Young Malaysians are exposed to various sources of cultural ideals. At an official level, they are increasingly involved with the state's construction of national culture through various nationalist projects, both in and out of school. Being 'Malaysian' is about being patriotic to the country that surpasses 'ethnicity'. It is important that youth are made to believe in the need of sharing a common loyalty to the nation, in order to help the country to become a developed nation by the year 2020. The idea of 'the noble Us' (Malaysians), sometimes referred to as "Asian Values" [ii], as opposed to the corrupt cultures of the West, is constantly reiterated in the media.

For the past few decades or so, young people under 18 have been included in various nationalistic projects by the state, such as the *Rakan Muda* (Young Partners Programme). Recent interest in young Malaysians by the state was shown through the introduction of the *Pusat Latihan Khidmat Negara* (translation: National Service) in 2003, an ambitious project to encourage young Malaysians to become patriotic citizens and be nationally integrated (EPU, 2006). It is plausible to say that National Service was introduced partly to help Malaysia meet the nine challenges of becoming a developed country by the year 2020, where patriotism is identified as the key to the creation of an

advanced, developed nation. It is believed that by being patriotic, young Malaysians will strive harder to work for the country, *Bangsa Malaysia* (Malaysian nation). The *Bangsa Malaysia* youths are envisioned to be patriotic, industrious, moral and spiritual Malaysians, without having individual ethnic, territorial and religious identities compromised. Various measures have been taken to instill 'patriotism' in the younger generation. One such move was to incorporate ‘patriotism’ in key subjects like history, and to educate students to recognise a sense of '*Malaysianness*' .

The move to include young people directly in the state's policy is indeed intriguing. Past national policies, such as the New Economic Policy (NEP)[iii], which ended in 1991, have never really focused on young people. But that changed when the National Development Policy (NDP) and Vision 2020 was introduced. Young people began to receive special attention. The Seventh Malaysia Plan is said to be the country’s first development plan that has a specific chapter for young people (http://www.unescap.org/esid/hds/youth/youth_malaysia.pdf). What this suggests is the beginning of a concerted effort to instill a sense of national identity above ethnic identity.

A question is raised regarding the constraints that young Malaysians may be facing while becoming part of this ambitious plan. And more importantly, it needs to be known if such policies will pose different problems to young Malaysians of differing ethnicities. Given the history of Malaysia's ethnic relations, the question of national identity above ethnic identity would certainly be perceived differently by different ethnic groups.

At home, where ethnic culture and tradition are most frequently practised and nurtured, distinct cultural values and beliefs among young people of different ethnicity have, to some extent, been produced. This is not confined to Malaysia alone. It is well documented that in among Asian families, ethnic and religious culture and practices characterise young people’s home life. Parents often play a role in maintaining cultural and religious tradition and identity with children. They use various means, including the media, to achieve this aim

(Gillespie, 1995). In Thailand, it has been said that middle-class youth, who seem to have found a way to express sub-identity through consumption of J and K-pop (Japanese and Korean pop) fashion outside the home often have to bow to home rules and local class norms. In other words, the consumption of outside popular culture has been viewed as a challenge to Thailand's social norm (Siriyuvasak, 2008). This is similar to the case of Malaysia. In exploring the construction of young Malaysians' identities through their use of the Internet, Latiffah & Samsudin (2000) found that young Malaysians assume various pseudonyms that are sexually suggestive. Participants in this study expressed a strong desire to exclude parents from activity on the Internet, which suggests that young Malaysians are trying to create personal space, marking out individual identity.

While all this was found in other sectors of Asian youth, it is still relatively unknown among Malaysian youths. Not much is known about young Malaysians' youth culture, let alone sub-cultures, and the challenges they face with the prevalence of the dominant cultures at the macro and micro level in this era of globalisation. With regard to Latiffah & Samsudin's (2000) studies, does this suggest that young Malaysians are increasingly moving away from tradition?

One of the main reasons why one is unable to answer this question is largely because the majority of studies on young Malaysians are often confined to moral panics and the ill-effects of the mass media (Samsudin, 1995). Not much is known about ordinary young people during this period of globalisation. How has globalisation affected the social and cultural lives of young Malaysians through the consumption of the global and local media?

As young Malaysians are at the centre of two somewhat distinct senses of identity – national against ethnic identity, modern against traditional values – what is the implication of globalisation on identity?

In order to get a sense of young Malaysians' position, a look was taken into the trends and developments of the research undertaken regarding young people by local academics.

1.2 Underlying Ethnic Tensions In Malaysian Society

In reality, young Malaysians' lives are far from smooth. One of the major tensions that exist lies in the tension between ethnic culture and national identity, although this is often not widely exposed. In his meticulous study on the construction of 'national identity based on selected secondary school textbooks in Malaysia,' Mustafa (1990) reveals how 'Malaysian identity' is biased towards a specific ethnic group. Even though national unity among all ethnic groups became the main objective of the country's education system and curriculum, he found that textbooks often emphasise certain ethnic groups over others.

Thus, Mustafa followed this up by surveying and interviewing young Malaysians and found that young people's sense of identity is in actual fact variously polarised from 'Malaysian' to 'Malay-Malaysian' and 'Chinese-Malaysian' to ethnic 'Malay' or 'Chinese'. About 99 % of the non-Malay students read *The Star,* an English language daily paper widely known as owned by a Chinese political party, one of the major component parties of the ruling National Front coalition. *The Star* is popular among these students because of its critical and independent reporting of the state and is said to be the channel for Malaysian Chinese to express discontentment with the state. On the other hand, Malay students' media consumption shows ambivalence between ethnic loyalty in reading Malay newspapers, as well as *The Star* to satisfy a need for a critical view of the state (Mustafa, 1990)

In addition, the use of national culture in the media as a form of national identification has proven problematic for young Malaysians. In a study by Juliana (2002), it was found that some young Malaysians do not seem to recognise the national culture as a culture for all, but saw it as a promulgation of the Malay/Muslim hegemonic culture on television; This was despite the fact that the *Bangsa Malaysia* already existed at this time. Nevertheless, Juliana's respondents were not adolescents, but young adults of age 20 and above. Moreover, little is known about whether experiences during reception are reflected in media consumption as a response to the state's national identity and culture.

Young people continue to exist in polarised forms and at school tend to socialise within ethnic communities (Santhiram, 1995). Therefore, a tension has formed between how young people define themselves in the context of Malaysia, and the state's discourse of Malaysian society. The accuracy of the state's perception of an ethnically integrated Malaysian identity is put into question by the continued tension among young people, contradictory to the official view.

As the eligible age to vote in Malaysia is 21, young people in Mustafa's study had already shown a political inclination in ethnic politics, through media consumption. Although his study was limited to examining the consumption of newspapers, Mustafa's findings do show that the choice of newspaper is significantly shaped by individual ethnic interest. The high consumption of their own ethnic-based newspaper reflects their sentiment as ethnic minority in this country. However, only limited attempts by local academics have been made to understand how of the use media in propagating national ideology is affecting young Malaysians.

Mariah et al (2007), who investigated the level of engagement of young multiethnic Malaysians in national policy and campaigns in public advertisements, found that Malaysian-Chinese students only show interest in government campaigns if they depict the life and culture of Chinese people. However, both Malay and Indian students show a higher level of engagement. This displays a continued tension between ethnic and national identity, even 51 years after independence and with all the efforts to nationalise the education system for young people.

In recent times, there has been a shift in the sense of cultural identity. Lim (2008) found that young non-Malays' viewing of a local version of the popular global reality TV programme, *Malaysian Idol,* is a means of constructing their own version of Malaysian identity where they are able to maintain a cultural identity while being known as 'Malaysians'. Bringing in the notion of *Bangsa Malaysia*(Malaysian nation), introduced in 1991, Lim (2008) offers an optimistic view that young non-Malays have begun using *Malaysian Idol* as an alternative means of reinventing a sense of nationalism and expressing what *Bangsa Malaysia* means to them. The use of *Malaysian Idol* is an example of the media serving as a means for non-Malays to reconstruct a national identity as a Malaysian.

Globalisation, in this respect, has certainly paved the way for young people to express themselves publicly via non-political channels. What is important in Lim's study is that while she views it as a positive change in minority youths in Malaysia, it nonetheless also implies that they have chosen to resort to symbolic means of redefining the official national identity via a more neutral site such as *Malaysian Idol*. Nevertheless, it also raises another issue, that of class. The participants in *Malaysian Idol* reflect a certain group of young people in Malaysia. The majority of them are urban, articulate, English-speaking youths who consume American popular culture. This is the group of youths who has been able to survive the heavily criticised national policies.

Elsewhere, young Malaysians continue to find ways to express their constraints and dissatisfaction. In a National Youth Survey conducted by the Merdeka Center for Opinion Research, a local think tank in 2007 found that 51 percent felt that the government gives equal treatment to the people, with the majority of Malays and indigenous *Bumiputera*s agreeing. However, Chinese youths differed in their opinion and were most often seen as having a negative perception of the government (Merdeka Center for Opinion Research, 2007).

This sense of articulating one's ethnic interest has become more blatant in recent years. Young middle-class Malaysians have begun using new media to voice their opinions about many current issues that were often debated by adults. Back in 2006, an uproar was caused by a young Malaysian Chinese, Wee Meng Chee – who calls himself Namewee, who made a music video of himself while studying in Taiwan. It contains criticism and satire of the pro-Malay/*Bumiputera* policies under the NEP and its effect on Chinese schools and education in Malaysia. In the video he is said to have made comments about the Malays and Islam in the country. Claiming that he is merely being patriotic, he presented the video, called *Negarakuku* (translation: My, My Country), in the form of a Mandarin rap using the national anthem tune. His video, which was uploaded on the video sharing network www.Youtube.com, received support from young Malaysian Chinese, and through the posted comments one could see the underlying tension of young non-Malays towards the state and the national policies. His video triggered a debate between the young Malays/*Bumiputera* and non-Malays and reflects the unsteady relationship between young people of different ethnicity. No doubt, the video incurred the wrath of the state (see http://www.thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2008/9/23/nation).

What this shows is that there is still a continued struggle among young people to contest the state based on ethnic sentiments. Hence, as the newly reconstituted national identity – *Bangsa Malaysia* – seeks to move young people above ethnic identification into something more universal like patriotism, has it changed anything?

Why do young Malaysian Chinese continue to resist the state and, in some sense, exclude themselves, as evident in Mariah et al.'s study (2007)? Why does cultural/ethnic identity still prevail? What can one infer from the contrasting developments in Lim's study (2008) against that of Mariah et al. (2007) and Carstens (2003) and Namewee's controversial rap video for *Bangsa Malaysia*? What does this reflect of their cultural identity and values? Are all young Malaysian becoming more insular? Or is it limited to certain groups of young Malaysians?

What is interesting about all these developments is that they are often expressed through media consumption. This suggests that young Malaysians communicate more frequently through the media. In view of the past and recent developments discussed, this raises several questions. For instance, while those studies have succeeded in suggesting shifts and tensions in attitude towards state-defined identity by young people, unfortunately, 'identity' here has been narrowly confined to political identity.

These studies ignores the flows of the 'mediascapes' that have actively flowed in and out of their lives through their consumption of the new media and global television programmes. Hence, 'identities' and questions of 'values' should be extended towards shifts in socio-cultural values and identity. How globalisation and forces of global modernity that have permeated in their lives have evoke the process of reflexivity towards ethnicity, religion and tradition that is embedded in their lives against the non-traditional nature of contemporary youth culture. Indeed, there are already strong evidence in the rise of the 'me culture' in the 1990s among young Asians and the cultural tension that they face with tradition in asserting their 'individual self' (Siriyuvasak, 2008; Sima & Pugsley, 2010).

Young people are evidently resorting to the new media to assert their individual self based on sexuality and gender, charting out their own biography, which means, they are seeing themselves more as an individual rather than drawing from a collective resource of identity like ethnicity, religion

or class. Why this issue is significant to Malaysia is because it is said that for the first time, young Malaysians' lives were directly influenced by the trends of the global youth culture as a consequence of globalisation, which is already changing their 'socialization patterns, processes and experiences," (Krauss, 2008 : 75).

However, the problem with local Malaysian studies is that it does not situate youth studies and the media, within their social setting. Hence, it remain unknown of what those changes are, in what way, it is changing young people of different social identities. It is for this reason that this study direct its attention to the tension that arise between 'individualism vs collectivisim' which encapsulates the questions of 'tradition vs modernity' and 'ethnicity'.

In terms of type of media content, there has been no concrete analysis of the consumption of both imported and local television programmes as a means of making sense of young Malaysians' identity in terms of the possible shifts in values and attitudes from ethnicity and tradition among young Malaysians. Wilson (2007) in studying Malaysian audience's reception of Oprah Winfrey's talk show highlighted the cultural tension in among Malaysian audience who resented the idea of discussing their intimate marital problems openly at a talk show. Such an act contradicts with the teachings of their religion and culture where discussing the weakness and flaws of their partners to an outsider is a sin. Thus, they reacted strongly against the participants of the show, who spoke openly about their troubled marriages. Although this was an important finding in the study, however, it was not seen to be so by the researcher.

What this study prove is that, imported television programmes can easily elicit evidence of cultural shifts in among local audience. Another problem with Wilson's (2007) study was its audience were from an older age group, so it is not known if such a situation would have been similar with a younger Malaysian audience. Would a younger Malaysian audience have reacted similarly like the older group of audience? Would those reactions be differentiated across ethnicity? Hence, to better identify the true spectre of

shifts in cultural values of multiethnic Malaysian audience, it would only be effective if it were done by using both imported and local television programmes.

Secondly, the group of young people that came under study was not representative of all young Malaysians, particularly in addressing question of 'ethnicity'. There seemed to be more emphasis on non-Malays, especially the Chinese, when other young people, such as the native Kadazandusuns in Sabah, pose a significant identity issue. In addition, young Malays were also neglected in the study of identity and media consumption. Much is not known about whether young Malays' media consumption is similar to that of the Chinese, where it serves as a form of symbolic resistance to the national culture.

As there are no comparative studies including all young Malaysians, to what extent can one assume that the issues of preserving ethnic identity are more rife among the Chinese? How do other young Malaysians feel about the position of their ethnic culture and identity in the context of national culture? What is greatly needed is to take into consideration the possible differences in outlook by ethnic groups in Malaysia that not only encompasses young people from the major ethnic groups in West Malaysia, the Malays, Chinese and Indians, but also the indigeneous youths in East Malaysia, such as the Kadazandusun in Sabah.

Although the respondents in the studies of Juliana (2002) and Mariah et al. (2007) were multiethnic, both studies failed to address the context and reason behind the different opinions and stance expresed by the various ethnic groups due to their primordial values.

Finally, most studies have ignored the micro-factor of young people's life, especially their home life, the role of parents and tradition as against the state in trying to understand young Malaysians' identity formation. Past studies have overlooked young Malaysians' everyday lives and how this provides the context of their media consumption. This part of their life is equally crucial as a

source of identity formation, particularly pertaining to their social identities. As most parents in Malaysia see one of their responsibilities as ensuring that their ethnic and religious identity is maintained through their offspring, home life is the most appropriate place to look at young Malaysians' cultural values.

Another important point is that owing to the fact that for most Malaysians, the tradition and custom of filial piety towards parents and respect for elders is greatly adhered to, young Malaysians spend a great deal of time at home with their parents. This may involve enjoying many family leisure activities together, such as watching television. It is plausible then to deduce that this is probably where parents nurture their children's cultural values. Therefore, it is essential that this aspect of their lives is looked into.

But to what extent this continues to happen for all young Malaysians remains unknown. What all this points to is the inadequacy of the approach and focus taken thus far in addressing the issue of 'identity' in young Malaysians. The same is true in studies of media consumption. These two factors are indeed crucial, particularly when a study involves multiethnic respondents. Both factors are a significant feature of their socio-cultural lives at home. And the role of parents in nurturing their children's cultural identity suggests that if one is to understand anything about young multiethnic Malaysians, it must begin with these two factors.

1.3 Conceptualising Key Concepts

Before proceeding further into giving the broader picture of young Malaysians' identity, this thesis would first begin by discussing 'identity' and 'ethnicity', which serves as the core concept of this whole issue of identity among young Malaysians. To a certain extent, this chapter will also explore the concept of 'diaspora' as well as touching on cultural globalisation theories.

1.3.1 Identity

‘Identity’ is a broad term that encompasses various types of identity such as gender, national, sexual, class, religion or ethnicity. What had become a central issue in the study here was how it has been seen as something fixed and unchanging. And various studies have since set out to dispel that perspective, to show that ‘identity’ is, on the contrary dynamic, constantly shifting, multiple and socially construct.

The complexity of today's lives with more connectivity with the outside world also means that people are increasingly assuming more positions in their lives, that sometimes, contradict each other. The fact that identity is not something that is fixed is evident in the case of young people and their identities. A significant pattern was found in youth cultures in the 1990's. Youth identities are now found to be much more fragmented and diverse that it can no longer be identifiable along class or ethnicity alone (McRobbie, 1994). To some extent, youth scholars argued for the use of other concepts such as “lifestyles”, as a much more appropriate concept to be used in studying youth identity (Miles, 2000).

This continued emergence of identities that are more diverse and fluid led Woodward (1997: 3) to view that there is perhaps a “crisis of identity” occuring in contemporary society. To some social theorists, society are increasingly becoming more individualised. People construct their identities from different sources based on “taste”, “lifestyles” and consumption due to the weakening of traditional identity markers of “ethnicity”, “class” and family times attributed to late modernity (Beck,1992). Giddens (1991) believe that people are becoming more 'reflexive' and that the consciousness towards the 'self' is becoming ever more acute in the age of 'post-traditional society'.

All of these seem to challenge the essentialist views of 'identity' as something stable and fixed. The essentialist notion of ‘identity’ is that it is “singular, integral, altogether harmonious and unproblematic” (Calhoun, 1994: 13). In

order to fully grasp the whole discussion concerning 'identity', this section will focus on laying out the contrasting notions of 'identity' from both the essentialist and social constructionists' view.

In general, the essentialist notion of ‘identity’ is that identity is something that is fixed, biologically-rooted and natural (Woodward, 1997).The idea that 'identity' is fixed means that people are defined through categories such as class, gender, ethnicity or race and that this remained stable and unchanged throughout. 'Identity' is then also static of which people are made up of these specific categories like class or ethnicity and not a cross-section of the two.

What is problematic with this notion of 'identity' is that it gives the idea that human beings exist with only one dimension of the ‘self’, where this remained constant and stable. The idea that 'identity' is biologically-rooted is evident in the case of gender. An essentialist concept of a gendered identity for women is based on her physical attributes. She would be defined as a “mother” and “wife” denying that she can also be a successful professional or as someone with great leadership quality at the same time. A woman is identified from only one aspect, one that is based on her physical attributes.

This suggests that people are born into a particular 'identity' as something that is given or natural, is characteristics of essentialist notion of 'identity'. It suggests that 'identity' is independent from history, social, political and economic conditions that surrounds the individual. As 'identity' is already there, it is not affected by the conditions and context that envelopes the individual. More importantly, 'identity' is presumed to exist not in relation to society and the social relations of the individual with the society or the outside 'Other'. This presents an unrealistic way of viewing 'identity', as individuals are constantly in a relations with their social world in their everyday lives.

Such an approach towards conceptualising 'identity' is too limiting and narrow. By conceptualising society based on class, for example, such a notion is considerably totalizing. It suggest that people remained embedded in class structure, living their lives within their respective class status, ruling out the

possibility of social mobility where people can move upwards from their existing social status . In contrast, contemporary identities are based on a more civic and political platform such as environment, feminism and race-based movement. Elsewhere, the emergence of ethnic and national consciousness proves that class is not an adequate tool to examine 'identity' (Laclau, 1990 cited by Woodward, 1997).

Essentalist notion of 'identity' draw heavy criticism from social constructionists. As a counter-argument, social constructionists challenged the idea that 'identity' is fixed and based on one central categories as core feature of one's self (Cerulo, 1997). It does not believe that 'identity' is pre-determined by any core criteria nor does it exist solely on essential core category. Rather, it viewed 'identity' as an intersection of various social identities such as class, gender, ethnicity, language, nation and religion. A person can be a woman, black, working class at the same time. For each of these social identities, she assume different positions and person. Consequently, instead of being fixed, 'identity' should be understood as flexible and multiple.

In addition, instead of believing that 'identity' is something natural and given, social constructionists believes that 'identity' is socially-construct. 'Identity' are constantly being re-defined and reproduce depending on the conditions the individuals and society are in. Individuals draw on the various resources ranging from their social, political, economic conditions and forge their own identities.

As 'identity' involves is socially-construct, it is constantly going through various process of negotiation, re-defining and contestation. This throws open to essentialists' thought that 'identity' is biologically-rooted (Woodward, 1997). Social constructionists argues that 'identity' is not biologically-rooted and given but it is historically-based. Ultimately, this suggests that 'identity' is contingent. 'Identity' is liable to change over time driven to changes in the social economic, political landscape in their private and public sphere.

This also proves that individuals do have the autonomy, to some extent, to re-define and forge new identities either as a symbolic gesture against exclusion and marginalisation or changes in their social world. Woodward (2000) highlighted the dual situation of structure and agency where "structure' formed a specific 'identity' that is based on constraints upon people, wherereas as agency, people have the choice and power to formed their identity.

Methodologically, social constructivist studies 'identity' by looking at how people construct identity based on their own experience, interactions between themselves and society, contradicting the natural, biological and historical fixing. In undertaking such studies, scholars focus their attention to the ways socialization agents such as school, popular culture, media and family organize the self of a person (Cerulo, 1997).

The contrasting perspective on ‘identity’ can be divided into three forms of ‘identity’ - 'enlightenment subject', 'sociological subject' and the 'post-modern subject' Hall (1992). The 'enlightenment subject' alludes to the essentialist notion of 'identity' while the 'sociological subject' and 'post-modern subject' represents the social constructionists' view. However, what differs between these two is that there are limitations within the 'sociological subject' that 'post-modern subject' went to different directions.

Postmodernists differ slightly from the social constructionist on how to look at ‘identity’. They argued that what have been done is not critically to uncover the process of constructing identities but merely ‘cataloguing’ those differences (Cerulo, 1997). Identities were also seen in binary position for example, ethnicity is seen as ‘black’ or ‘white” but not ethnic minorities and diaspora.

Secondly, postmodernist scholars disagree that identities such as gender, ethnicities and national identities are a product of interactions. Rather, it ignores the role of power in classifying those identities (Connell, 1987; Gilman, 1985 cited by Cerulo, 1997).

In addressing these inadequacies, postmodernist broaden the scope of its study by examining ‘the real, present day political and other reasons why essentialist identities continue to be invoked and often deeply felt’ (Calhoun, 1995:199 cited by Cerulo, 1997). It is more critical in its focus and approach whereby it goes further into specificity and diversity. They not only study categories of identity based on gender but also explore other categories together such as ethnicity, class and sexuality that co-exist with gender.

More specifically, they have begun focusing on minority groups and explore them together with other categories such as British Asian Muslim working-class women. Such an approach takes constructivist further by exploring not only how people construct their identity but it highlights the existence of different forms of social identities that are there, but was ignored. Hence, this brought forth, identities that may be long existed in the society but receive less attention from scholars.

Structural and economic changes have made it impossible to accept the notion that 'identity' is something fixed, natural and biologically-rooted. History have shown that 'identity' change, some re-define and constantly shifting through time. Therefore, it is crucial that 'identity' is conceptualised as something that is multiple, fluid, processual, contingent and historically-based. Of which, it is potentially dynamic, evolving and individuals are always assuming different positions. This study shares a similar position with the social constructionist. Having said that, the subsequent discussion will further examine the various definitions of 'identity' along the terrain of social constructivism. As 'identity' is socially-construct and historically-based, scholars of these school of thought offers various defintions to 'identity'. Hall (1996:4.) defined it as a “ process of articulation, a suturing, an over-determination not subsumption” and a process of “becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from’ so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves”.

Weedon (2004:19) drawing from Althusser defines 'identity' as "..a limited and temporary fixing for the individual of a particular mode of subjectivity as apparently what one *is,*"

Jenkins (2004) saw 'identity' as a process and not as something given. In defining 'identity', he does not see construction of identity as a product of a personal and individual choice or decision. Rather, it involves the constant interaction between individual with society.

> " It is the systematic establishment and signification, between individuals, between collectivities, and between individuals and collectivities, of relationships of similarity and difference.
>
> " Identity is our understanding of who we are and of who other people are, and, reciprocally, other people's understanding of themselves and of other (which includes us). The outcome of agreement and disagreement, at least in principle always negotiable, identity is not fixed"
>
> (Jenkins, 2004 : 5)

'Identity' is being constructed through a constant process of understanding and making meanings out of interactions between individuals and society. Hence, he criticised Giddens (1991) emphasis on the 'self' and reflexivity whereby 'identity' is not formed out of individual alone but is relational to the society as well.

Woodward (1997; 2000) offers a broader definition of 'identity'.

1. Identitiy is about how an individual see him or herself and how others viewed the individual;

2. It involves the internal and the subjective, and the external.

3. People possess multiple identities;

4. Identity is also shaped by opportunities and constraints;

5. Involves active engagement on the part of the individual to decide which identities that he identifies himself to;

6. Identity is marked by similarity and differences;

7. People use symbol to represent themselves;

8. Identity can be formed through the unconscious self following Freud's psychoanalysis theory;

9. Interpellation where people recognize themselves through symbols, images that was hailed at them;

10. Identity is not fixed and unchanged;

Definitions given by Hall (1996) and Weedon (2004) is more towards the individual wheareas Jenkins (2004) and Woodward (2000) saw 'identity' as a process involving the individual and society. Jenkins (2004) and Woodward's (2000) views on 'identity' draw another point that it involves attaching oneself to a particular group.

This process leads to the emergence of similarities and differences which adds to another characteristics of 'identity'. The fact that 'identity' is construed as consisting of both similarities and difference highlighted the fluid nature of 'identity'. Hall (1990:225) underlined 'difference' in studying 'identity' because it represents " 'what we really are'". It is 'difference' that brought about the multi-faceted aspect of our background, experience and context which then shapes 'who we are' and 'what we have become'. These are histories that provides the resource for individual and society to construct their identities (ibid).

‘Identity’ from the perspective of similarity and difference has also been found in a more sophisticated discussion of ‘identity'. Lawler (2008), in particular explains that people are not only the same or identical with oneself, in the sense, that everyone were born as 'men' or 'women' but we are also differentiated by other factors such as nationalities, ethnicity or religion. A person may share the same gender as a ‘woman’ but as a person, a woman can also be identified in other categories at the same time. For instance, a person can be a ‘woman’ but also assuming different roles such as a ‘mother’, in a different social position as ‘middle-class’ or from different ethnicity – ‘Asian’. In this sense, a person is made up of different and multiple identity which they can be identified of. No one person can be the same as to the other.

The strength in Lawler’s (2008: 8) conception of ‘identity’ is that the true ‘self’ it must be understood not only from ‘within’ the person but as socially produced “between persons and within social relations”. This differs from Jenkins (2004) and Woodward (2000) who saw 'identity' as being constructed by the individual in relation to society. It is precisely because the individual’s sense of who they are, is being determined by their social world that Lawler (2008) argues that the presence of ‘difference’ or ‘uniqueness’ as she prefers to call it does not solely comes from the individual themselves but the fact that the social world has some influence to one being ‘different’. What this means is that identities that was produced was never individually construct but it is collective in nature. Hence, identity is often negotiated and is subjected to conformity towards social rules. The role of society and structures in shaping our identity draws different explanation from these scholars. By offering his *internal-external dialetic of identification* model, Jenkins' (2004) view ‘identity’ as a process which entangles the individual with the collective. By *internal* , Jenkins refer to how one see him or herself through a process called self-definition while *external* implies how others have perceived us. And one’s identity is constructed simultaneously by how we have seen ourselves and how others perceived us. Jenkins' model did not emphasized the role of the institutions as a source of constraint or tension in identity formation. In

contrast, Lawler's (2008) argument that 'identity' is not detached from the individual to society but the 'self' is embedded within the social world.

> " The idea that we can 'be whatever we want to be' relies on an illusory eclipsing of the social world. Against this, the perspectives I have presented here conceptualize identity, subjectivity, personhood – all these slippery and yet necessary terms – as *embedded* within and *produced* by the social world. The social world both produces and constrains us as persons"
> (Lawler, 2008 : 144)

Lawler (2008) viewed the 'outside' or social world has having greater control over the individual. What Lawler is proposing is that, it is looking at the complex formation of 'identity', one must begin by loking at the social world they are embedded in. Her points echoes with that of Woodward (1997; 2000) who spoke of constraints in the form of structures and agency, taking into account how structures can shape our identity, beyond our control and the tussle between structure and agency, creates a tension in identity. However, Woodward is more optimistic whereby while it is important to consider the role and influence of structures in shaping our identity, she also believe people can influence social structure and reproduce identities out of it. In expanding the role of structure in constructing 'identity', Malaysian scholar Shamsul Amri Baharuddin (1996) offers the definition of 'identity' in the context of Malaysia based on two form of social reality – the "authority-defined" and the "everyday-defined". By "authority-defined", Shamsul (1996:477) refers an identity that is "authoritatively defined by people who are part of the dominant power structure,". "Everyday-defined" identity, on the other hand, refers to "one which is experienced by the people in the course of their everyday life" (ibid). He argues that in the context of Malaysia, both forms of identity exist, juxtapose with one another. Shamsul's definition suggests a two-level social reality in which one's identity is defined through both levels.

What one can gather here is that identity is certainly not something natural, fixed and within complete control. Rather where it may be processual, change, multiple, fragmented but it also sometimes leads to contradicting identities. But what is more crucial here is to look deeper and beyond, into those multiplicity and diversity of identity where it is formed not necessarily out of free-will but sometimes due to constraints. Lawler (2008) underlines the role of the social world as the prime factor for identity construction.

Jenkins (2004), on the other hand, views that identity is a consequent of human actions through interactions. By comparison, Woodward's (1997) definition seems to be more encompassing where she saw it as involving individuals and society, subconscious self as well as structures and agency. Generally speaking, her views involves looking at the process of identity formation vertically and horizontally. Vertical, in this respect means the relations among individuals and between society while horizontally, revolves around the relations between institutions and legislations with individuals. Another important definition for 'identity' is the idea that the 'self' in this age of late modernity has become a "reflexive project" by Giddens' (1991: 32). In the following section, Giddens' idea of the 'self' will be discussed.

1.3.2 'Self-Identity' and 'Reflexivity'

According to Giddens (1991), 'self-identity' is not something that is natural and readily exist. He believes it needs to be continuously created, reworked and maintained by the individual particularly in a post-traditional society. But what is pivotal in Giddens' idea is that the construction of one's identity is a result of a reflexive process by the individual. It is about how one understood oneself.

> " To be a 'person' is not just to be a reflexive actor, but to have a concept of a person (as applied both to the self and others). What a 'person' is understood to be certainly varies across cultures, although there are elements of such a notion that are common to all cultures. The capacity to use 'I' in shifting contexts, characteristic of every known culture,

is the most elemental feature of reflexive conceptions
of personhood,"
(Giddens, 1991 : 53)

As tradition become increasingly weakened, he argues that individuals are forced to negotiate and make decisions based on available lifestyles. In providing more weight to Giddens' (1991) ideas on 'identity' as an individual project, Bauman (2000) explains it by using the term 'liquid modernity'. By characterising the present lifestyles as going through a phase of 'liquid modernity', Bauman argues that modernity sought to dismantle any form of solidity such as traditional loyaltites or customary rights that are seen as irrelevant and obstruct individual freedom. Thus, today's society have to move into a phase of 'universal comparison' from "pre-allocated 'reference groups'" in which the task of constructing identity has been very much one's own labour (Bauman, 2000 : 7)

In this respect, the media plays a part in constructing new forms of identity. Thompson (1995) states that the process of self-formation is also being nurtured by mediated symbolic materials due to the weakening of traditional sources of identity. Although individual ties with their local culture, lifestyles and values are not totally destroyed in modern societies but the development of information and communication systems have allowed new forms of intimacy to be formed.

" ....the development of the media has increased
the capacity of individuals to experience, through
mediated quasi-interaction, phenomena which they are
unlikely ever to encounter in the locales of their daily lives,"
(Thompson, 1995 : 208)

What this means is that, one's life world is extended by the media in which, it becomes another source for people to make sense of their lives and themselves. Nevertheless, contemporary views concerning 'identity' are critical of Giddens' notion of the 'self' and 'reflexivity' as an individual project.

Jenkins (2004) argues that 'identity' must be seen together between individuals and society at large. In addition, he dispute the view that ‘reflexivity’ is a modern phenomenon. This study, is of the view that the ‘self’ and the process of reflexivity, is indeed an individual project but their actions are based on their relations with the society and structure. They are reacting, questioning their social world and made sense out of it, by constructing their ‘self’ around these conditions. The ‘self’ cannot exist in isolation whether it concerns ‘individual’ or group identity. Despite the criticism made against the concept of ‘reflexivity’, it is a useful concept in studying identity particularly in a globalised world because one’s everyday life becoming more mediated (Thompson, 1995; Kim, 2008).

It is for that reason that ‘reflexivity’ will be used as a concept in trying to examine how young Malaysians construct their identity in the context of ‘cultural conflict’ and ‘ethnicity’ in their consumption of the media.

1.3.3 Defining Ethnicity & Diaspora

The second key concept to be examine here is 'ethnicity'. Three school of thoughts offers different way of defining 'ethnicity' namely the primordialist, the instrumentalist and constructivist (Taras & Ganguly, 2008).

The primordialists regards ethnicity as something natural, given and biologically-rooted. Ethnicity was formed out of natural primordial attributes such as ancestry, myth, language, religion, custom, tradition, diet, dress and other cultural attributes. Assumably, people constitute as from one ethnicity when they share common cultural attributes mentioned above while those who do not, are marked out as of different ethnicity.

In addition, the subjective and psychological feeling of bonding, sense of belonging which induces people to identify themselves with a particular ethnic group constitutes ethnicity. The fact that an individual identifies himself with a

particular ethnic group and its culture, forms part of the formation of ethnicity and the strengthening of it.

The instrumentalist approach in studying ethnicity, differs from the primordialist whereby ethnicity is seen as “a tool used by individuals, groups, or elites to obtain some larger, typically material end” (Taras & Ganguly, 2008 : 12). What this means is that ethnicity eixist when there is a group of people whether out of defense or provocation, as a response to threats or opportunities for themselves or group, will manipulate certain ethnic symbols for material and political gain.

The third approach is the constructivist. Constructivist rejected both primordial and instrumentalist notion of ethnicity. It opposes the idea that ethnicity is given and natural, nor does it agree that it is a tool for manipulation. Rather, it suggests that ethnicity is socially-construct whereby human being form ethnic group through shared belief in common ancestry. In other words, ethnicity exist through actions and choice and not given or natural. Ethnicity is contingent of changes in society, political and economic which influences group members' interaction with the society and how they view their own ethnicity. It is out of necessity that shifts in cultural practices and beliefs had to be done, in order to ensure the sustainability of the group identity.

Frederik Barth (1969) are among the most influential scholar under this school of thought. His contribution to the study of 'ethnicity' was by introducing the concept of 'ethnic boundaries” as a way of viewing 'ethnicity' or as he called it 'ethnic group'. The concept of 'ethnic group' is useful in understanding the nature of ethnicity and how it operates. 'Boundary' that was implied here means the social boundaries that encircle around an ethnic group. It is not the cultural traits that is important but the sociality that continues within the ethnic group that creates a boundary where members of the group stays within and marking out non-members as outsiders. Ethnic group boundaries can be produce and re-produced.

> “If a group maintains its identity when members interact with others, this entails criteria for determining membership and ways of signalling membership and exclusion”
> (Barth, 1969:15)

'Identity' with regards to ethnicity, is determined by the continued social contact among group members as a way of maintaining these boundaries. 'Boundaries' in this sense, can be interpreted as a means of maintaining sameness for individuals who identifies themselves to an ethnic group while at the same time, marking out differences to those who do not. Ethnic boundaries have a role in organizing people's social life. It is through the actions and decision of individual in ascribing and self-ascribing cultural similarities to another person, to allow the person to be a member of the group is what makes ‘ethnicity’. Its existence and continued existence relies on subjective feeling of how one sees himself as well as others perceived them. More importantly, it changes over time depending upon situation and how one continues to see themselves (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007). ‘Ethnicity’, therefore is fluid and contigent.

A somewhat similar definition was also made by Eriksen (2002:4) where 'ethnicity' is referred as “aspects of relationships between groups which consider themselves, and are regarded by others, as being culturally distinctive”. ‘Ethnicity’ is also seen as a form of “classification of people and group relationships” (Eriksen, 2002). This is in contrast with Nash (1996) who identifies three key elements of 'ethnicity' to be kinship, commensuality and religious cult which serve as cultural markers that maintain ethnic boundaries.

Taras & Ganguly (2008: 1) offers a lengthy definition:-

“...as a large or small group of people, in either traditional or advanced societies, who are united by a common inherited culture (including language, music, food, dress, and customs and practices), racial similarity, common religion, and belief in common history and ancestry and who exhibit a strong psychological sentiment of belonging to the group”

The fact that 'ethnicity' relates to being culturally distinctive to non-group members indicates that the 'ethnicity' of a person depends upon similarity or affiliations, the individual shares with the group which is distinctively different to outsiders. This means that in determining similarity or differences, there is substantial amount of selecting and appropriating of cultures involved in order to form an ethnic group.

However, this process is not as easy or straightforward as it seem. Nagata (1974) argues 'ethnicity' should be defined situationally according to one's needs. In highlighting her point, Nagata (1974) found that 'ethnicity' is fluid in multiethnic Malaysia. For example, many of the Muslim Malays' custom and tradition, particularly wedding ceremonies actually originates from Hindu tradition but this is not shared by other Muslims of Arab descent in Malaysia. However, the definition of ‘ethnicity’ in Malaysia consists of two level that of ‘authority-defined’ and ‘everyday-defined’. Which is problematic going by Nagata's example. Culture, tradition and beliefs was purportedly used as a means of promoting a group's cultural distinction over others were never natural or given but was borrowed and appropriated into another ethnic group. Another evidence that points to the fact that ‘ethnicity’ is socially-constructed in Malaysia lies in Hirschman’s (1987) study on how the definition of ‘ethnicity’ had been systematically re-defined through the Malaysian census report.

Attempts at refining the definition of 'ethnicity to capture a more dialetic nature of 'ethnicity' can also be found in Brass (1991). In defining 'ethnicity', Brass (1991:19) believes 'ethinicity' to be an “objective cultural markers but which also recognizes that they are susceptible to change and variation”. By objective cultural markers, he refers to cultural features that distinguish an ethnic group from one another such as language, religion or colour. Brass' definition implies although a group are clearly marked out of its cultural distinctiveness, such differences are not fixed or static but is liable to change.

Some scholars attempt to define 'ethnicity' as something processual that is constantly evolving. Through his 'basic social anthropological model of ethnicity', Jenkins (2008:169) made several propositions to understanding 'ethnicity' which is:-

(1) Ethnicity is a matter of 'cultural' differentiation (bearing in mind that identity is always dialectic between similarity and differences);

(2) Ethnicity is a matter of shared meanings – 'culture' – but it is also produced and reproduced during interaction;

(3) Ethnicity is no more fixed than the way of life of which it is part, or the situations in which it is produced and reproduced; and

(4) Ethnicity is both collective and individual, externalized in social interactions and the categorization of others, and internalized in personal self-identification

Eventhough, 'ethnicity' is associated to a group of people who are linked by shared ancestry, language, either with national or regional origins, differentiating from those who are not culturally similar. Fenton (1999) argues that such definition is open for contestation and re-definition. Instead, Fenton (1999: 10), suggested that ‘ethnicity’ should be seen as a “social process, as the moving boundaries and identities which people, collectively and individually, draw around themselves in their social lives,”.

Fenton also views it as a dimension of social relationships encompasses between groups’ relations into global and local, macro-meson and micro ethnicity and de facto de jure ethnicity. In his later works, he (2003) further explained that ‘ethnicity’ is a social construction of ‘descent and culture’.

> “ A further step or two would be to say that ethnicity refers
> to the social construction of descent and culture,
> the social mobilization of descent and culture, and the
> meanings and implication sof classification systems

> built around them. People or peoples do not just posess cultures or share ancestry; they *elaborate these into the* idea of a community founded upon those attributes*,"* (Fenton, 2003 : 3)

Finally, Eder et al (2002) suggests that one needs to consider the structural context from where 'ethnicity' is being defined. He argues that one cannot assume that 'ethnicity' are often constructed in a peaceful and stable state but to take into account that it can exist as a consequent of conflict and tension.

Definitions given by all the scholars mentioned in this chapter seemed to point to several directions. The first is where 'identity' as a whole concerns itself with the process of identifying oneself in which elements of similarity binds people together but at the same time, those similarity also serve to marked out difference to those who culturally dissimilar. It serves as a means of forming alliance for these individuals to establish themselves as a 'group' as well as marking out their boundaries. This brought to the second point where with the exception of Nash (1996), 'ethnicity' is seen as socially-constructed through interactions, create and re-create ethnic boundaries and constant process of identifying similarities and differences. Of which suggest that 'ethnicity' itself is not something fixed and natural.

A pure primordial approach that sees 'ethnicity' on the basis of common ancestry, custom and language is problematic for a more complex societies like today because cultural traits within a group could actually be a product of an 'imagined society' which has been re-defined, re-constituted, re-invent and re-produced. These processes of identification itself, is constantly evolving, hence, 'ethnicity' is not necessarily a natural or given identity but rather, is socially-construct. More importantly, the macro setting and the conditions of where ethnicity is being situated within, that propels it to being re-invent, re-define and reconstruct.

Despite, the various definitions offered from the three different strands of thoughts, what can be inferred from the meaning of 'ethnicity' is that it is a collective identity, which unite individuals through cultural markers that serves to distinguish themselves from outsiders. This study strongly believed that 'ethnicity' is contingent. It goes through moments of constant negotiation, expanding of boundaries and even doing away with some practices which are irrelevant. All these happen either due to changes in economic and social condition, the role of institution and external forces of globalisation that triggers the recreating of 'ethnicity'. Although it exist on primordial ties but those are essential merely for symbolic purposes of group identification. In reality, 'ethnicity' is constantly evolving, appropriating outside values and practices over time, to ensure its relevance and sustainability. It is another form of collective identity that serves to bind those who see themselves as culturally similar to each other, that as Fenton (2003) said people elaborate on those cultural traits, as a way of group identification. The community rebuild and expand its ethnic boundaries for the purpose of continuity and maintenance.

But what is more crucial here is how have media globalisation aided the construction and reconstruction of one's ethnicity in among young multiethnic Malaysians? What form of ethnic identity, that are being produced across ethnicity?

1.3.4 Conceptualising 'Diaspora' and addressing 'ethnicity'

With regards to ethnic minority Malaysians, although they originates from China and South India, there are issues pertaining to the use of the word 'ethnicity' with 'diaspora' in the existing literature, which is perplexing when applied to Malaysia. In the context of Britain, non-white British are considered to be 'diaspora' when they are British citizens. But in Malaysia, where Malays and indigenous are the equivalent of the white British, non-Malay Malaysians, such as the Indian and Chinese, are considered to be of another ethnic group,but never labelled as 'diaspora'. In fact, Malaysian Chinese and Indians

were never viewed as a 'diasporic community' simply because they have been citizens of the country since Malaysia first gained independence in 1957.

It is more apt to use the term 'ethnicity,' rather than 'homelands' and 'diaspora'. In support of this argument, Tan (2004) emphatically states that Malaysian Chinese should rightly be regard as another ethnic group because while they may be identified as ethnically “Chinese” in relation to other ethnic groups, that does not make them “Chinese” in the sense of Mainland Chinese. Tan (2004) underlines the fact that one should not view “Chinese” in a fixed and totalizing manner by equating Malaysian Chinese as similar to other Chinese elsewhere. It is the locality from where they build their lives that makes them different from one another. For example, Malaysian Chinese differs from Indonesian Chinese, in terms of the language they speak. The influence of local indigenous languages means Malaysian Chinese speaks Chinese using Malay words and expressions not understood by other Chinese speakers overseas.

> “Even the Chinese-educated Chinese Malaysians
> who may share many similar literary interests with
> people in China or with ‘Chinese-educated’
> Chinese in the Philippines, may have different subjective
> experiences of being Chinese. For a Chinese Malaysian,
> his experience is shaped by his experience as a Malaysian.
> Similarly, a Chinese American is shaped by his experience
> of being an American,”
> (Tan, 2004: 132)

Therefore, factors such as the experience of being within a particular locality detach them from the ‘Chinese’ in China. This brings up the point of nationality. While one may be ‘Chinese’ in Malaysia, nationality differentiates them from other ‘Chinese’ elsewhere. It is nationality that polarises ethnicity as well. Malaysian Chinese see themselves as a hyphenated identity, ‘Malaysian-Chinese,’ not as simply ‘Chinese.’ Conceptually, although 'diaspora' has been

defined through various ways, its most general criteria remain that of 'dispersion.'

> “Etymologically, the word ’diaspora‘ stems from the Greek *diaspeirein,* meaning ’to disperse,’ or as *speirein* suggests, ’to scatter,’ as if seed. ’Diaspora‘ thus refers to a dispersion, or scattering, of people belonging to one nation or having a common culture beyond their land of origin,” (Cunningham & Sinclair, 2000: 10)

Helly (2006: 3) also defines 'diaspora' using 'dispersal' as a constitutive element of the term in which she states it is a “loss and dispersion as the result of a forcible displacement of people from countries or regions defined as their cultural and historical centres.” In contributing to the various debates on the concept of 'diaspora', Brubaker (2005: 5) suggests three core elements that define 'diaspora':

1. Dispersion in space (either voluntarily, traumatically across state borders);
2. Homeland Orientation (whether imagined or real);
3. Boundary-Maintenance;

Cohen (2008:17) provides a more exhaustive list of the 'common features of diaspora,' which he draws from William Safran.

1. “Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions;

2. Alternatively or additionally, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions;
3. A collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history, suffering and achievements;

4. An idealization of the real or imagined ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation;

5. The frequent development of a return movement to the homeland that gains collective approbation, even if many in the group are satisfied with only a vicarious relationship or intermittent visits to the homeland;

6. A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history, the transmission of a common cultural and religious heritage and the belief in a common fate;

7. A troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group;

8. A sense of empathy and co-responsibility with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement even where home has become more vestigial; and

9. The possibility of a distinct, creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism."

Additionally, Cohen (2008: 18) offers a typology of '*diasporas*', which he labels the 'ideal' types of 'diaspora', suggesting the breadth of the term. The 'ideal' type of diaspora has been classified as *victim*, *labour*, *imperial*, *trade* and *deterritorialized.* However, these terms have been contested by social constructionists particularly in linking 'diaspora' with homeland, as it now rendered irrelevant in the context of today's current situation involving diaspora (Cohen, 2008: Tsagarousianou, 2004), and for its essentialist and primordial approach (Sökefeld, 2006).

Among the key arguments against the use of the word 'home' or 'homeland' is that it views 'diaspora' from an essentialist notion of static and fixed diasporic identities. Drawing on Benedict Anderson's 'imagined community' Fazal & Tsagarousianou (2002: 6) argue that diasporic identities are "imagined,"

where its “sense of belonging” is socially constructed on the basis of an equally “imagined” common origin, mythic past, diasporic condition or some other raw material upon which identities can be imagined”. Tsagarousianou (2004) went further to say that as an imagined community 'diaspora' are continually reconstructed and reinvented. The presence of media technologies and the diasporic media have become crucial tools in reconstructing and reimagining diasporic identities (Tsagarousianou, 2004). Similarly, Sökefeld (2006: 267) proposes it be defined as “imagined transnational communities,” of which he draws from the social movement theory.

Further criticism of the way diaspora was conceptualised from the notion of 'homeland' and transnational communities notably comes from Floya Anthias (1998). In provoking a more dynamic way of examining 'diaspora', she pointed out two problems that have been overlooked. The first is the inability of most scholars to address problems of loyalty among diasporic community between homelands and host countries. Also, the failure to acknowledge the intersectionality of class, gender, trans-ethnic alliances and power relations within diaspora.

In the context of the ethnic minorities of Malaysian, the Chinese and Indians, this study is of the opinion that their consumption of overseas Chinese and Tamil programmes should be seen as an ‘imagined diasporic’ audience. This is because while they can be considered ‘diaspora’, they have little affiliation with their ancestral lands anymore. The only connection they may have is the similarity of custom, religion and language. In everyday lives and their interactions with fellow Malaysians, they are to be identified as an ethnic group, but outside Malaysia, their position is categorised as ‘diaspora.’

‘Ethnicity,’ in the context of this study, lies in how ethnic groups in Malaysia ascribe themselves and how others ascribe them culturally. In addition, their cultural attributes are constantly being reworked due to changes in time and situations. The focus here is more towards the subjective and psychological feeling of how they see themselves and others. This study defines ‘ethnicity’ following Barth’s stance (1969). This study also draws on Fenton's (1999,

2003) definition of 'ethnicity' that engages the broader institutions and society of the global-local, macro meson and micro ethnicity and de jure de facto in defining ‘ethnicity’. In this, each ethnic group constructs and re-constructs their cultural attributes through the change of time and situations. Only in the context of analysing their consumption of overseas Chinese and Tamil media will they be defined as ‘diaspora’.

1.4 Cultural Globalisation, Media and Local Identity

The question of ‘identity’ and ‘ethnicity’ cannot ignore globalisation as part of the process in constructing it. As our lives are increasingly linked with the development and changes at the global level, ‘identity’ therefore needs to be engaged with cultural globalisation theories.

To begin, Giddens (1997:19) famously defined globalisation as:

> “ ...The intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.”

The very characteristics of modern lives as a result of globalisation are ones of disembeddedness and reflexivity (Giddens, 1997). While there have been numerous views on what defines globalisation, Giddens’ definition of globalisation, remains relevant and significant today. The time-space distantiation is contributing to the disembedding out of one’s locality (Giddens, 1990). This was made possible as globalisation was said to be overriding the sovereignty of nation-states and local cultures, and weakens traditional identity markers like ethnicity, class and religion. This notion has some implications regarding ‘cultural identity’ and ‘ethnicity’ that will be discussed separately.

1.4.1 Media, Cultural Globalisation and Question of Imperialism

One of the main criticisms towards the occurrence of globalisation is the possibility that the linking of the global and the local will lead to a cultural homogenisation, which to be precise – the Americanisation of the local culture.

It was based on this view that the cultural imperialism thesis came about. The thesis, in essence, assumes that the dominance of Western media over developing countries will result in the homogenising of local consumers into one global society, adopting one common culture, presumably from the U.S. Assuming this is so, local identities will be at stake, as people will abandon their religion, ethnicity and tradition to embrace cultures and values of the West, particularly the US.

However, it is important to state here that cultural homogenisation, which is viewed as a form of cultural domination, did not begin with globalisation. Rather, it goes a long way back to when a UNESCO-sponsored study was conducted by Nordenstreng & Varis (1974). This study shows a one-way flow of cultural production from the United States to developing countries (Jin, 2007). This sparks an argument from Marxist scholars, from among the political-economic bent, to suggest that the high importation of US cultural products were aimed at promoting its consumerist ideology. Audiences from developing nations have no choice but to subsume those cultures.

The globalisation phenomenon, which saw global capitalists overriding local capital markets in the 1990s, made the argument put forth by those scholars concrete. While cultural imperialism did not begin during globalisation, but rather earlier, the threat seemed real with the deregulation of broadcasting services. Asian countries are voicing their strongest opposition to global satellite broadcasters, who are reported to be actively expanding business in Asia. Malaysia's former Prime Minister, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamed, was among the strongest opponents to the acquisition of Hong Kong's Star TV by

media magnate Rupert Murdoch in 1993. Such a move was viewed suspiciously as another wave of 'Western imperialism' (Ang, 2001).

However, the cultural imperialism thesis drew wide criticism from scholars who rejected it on several grounds. First of all, cultural domination does not all come from the West or US, as there are various other countries that are major importers of audio-visual materials, such as India and China (Sinclair & Harrison (2004). In fact, the thesis neglects the existence of the spread of regionalization of television markets towards countries that are culturally similar, or what Straubhaar calls the 'geo-linguistic' market (Straubhaar, 1997).

This suggests that the outside cultures that come into a particular country do not always come from the West, but from other regions, which shares some cultural attributes.

Others have attacked the thesis as retreating into the old hypodermic-needle theory of media effects on audience (Morris, 2002) The fact that local audiences are able to negotiate, resist and make meanings of their own from global media text proves that American programmes have little influence on local audiences' cultural identity.

Fejes (1981) criticise the media imperialism thesis as ignoring the internal factors operating on the national and local levels that may react to or resist external forces of media imperialism. The thesis assumes that the occurrence of media imperialism operates in a linear direction. In addition, other studies have adopted the term 'hybridization' and 'appropriation' of global cultures to explain the local reception of the global media (Butcher, 2003).

Scholars from the postmodernist turn contribute to the debate by arguing that cultural changes should not be viewed from a pessimistic view of cultural imperialism. Mike Featherstone (1990), for one, does not believe that cultural globalisation will lead to a global culture that produces cultural homogeneity. Rather he believes it will result in diversity, variety and richness. He sees the

meeting of the global and local cultures as a phenomenon of cultural interrelatedness. Cultures that flow in and out of a state are viewed as 'third cultures,' as "conduits for diverse cultural flows" (Featherstone, 1990:1).

He repeated his stance by suggesting that globalisation leads to cultural fragmentation (Featherstone, 1995). Global culture is not to be seen as a common culture, but as a field in which "differences, power struggles and cultural prestige are constantly being played out" (Featherstone, 1995:14). The two key concepts of 'syncretism' and 'hybridity' are the rules rather than the exceptions in viewing the cultural phenomenon of globalisation.

King (1990) argued that global culture is not tied to any particular place or period. Pietersen (1995) celebrates global cultures as 'melānge,' and thus introduced the term 'hybridization' to replace 'cultural homogenisation.' Bauman (1998) contributed to the argument by suggesting that globalisation does not homogenise societies but the collapsing of the temporal and spatial distant are inclined to polarize them. Recent discussions on cultural globalisation saw the discussion ebbed back into the argument for and against the emergence of cultural imperialism, but moving in new directions.

Sonwalker (2001) argues that the emergence of India's local television channels, based on geo-linguistic affinities and similarities that have reached out to India's diaspora across the world, has all the makings of turning India into a 'little/cultural imperialism' instead of the West. This was further supported by Banarjee (2003), who draws from Straubhaar's 'cultural proximity' idea that globalisation has actually stimulated the growth of local cultural production instead of homogenising it.

Taking India as an example, domestic television programmes have begun producing more programmes based on geo-linguistic affinities and similarities for local audiences (Banarjee, 2003). Strelitz (2002; 2003), who opposes the cultural imperialism thesis, argues that the penetration of global cultural through the media of local South African youths are uneven, depending on the context of the lives of local youths.

Nevertheless, scholars such as Chadha & Kavoori (2000), while rejecting the existence of a common global culture, show other ways of how US cultural imperialism operates. They argue that while US programmes are being successfully controlled by local states, its influences are evident where local broadcasting sector are forced to imitate US commercialised models of broadcasting. The problem with this is that it delimits innovation and diversity, as well as having little impact in the creation of a public sphere.

Local cultures are also being compromised through the so-called hybridization process, as pointed out by Wang (2003). Cooperation in filmmaking between global and local companies led to a 'de-culturalisation' and 're-culturalisation' of local cultures in global films. Citing the example of the study on the hybrization of two Chinese films - '*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon'* and '*Mulan'*, Wang and Yeh (2005) argued that 'love' and sex' were played up, while the reality of the Chinese cultures of filial piety and social hierarchies were downplayed.

Jin (2007) reinvigorated the US cultural imperialism debate by demonstrating how US domination works in more sophisticated ways in Korea. Transnational corporations (TNCs) formed joint ventures with Korean broadcasting sectors, resulting in a foreign cultural influence in the production of local Korean programmes in the post 1997 era. Through capital investments and the production of local cultural products, Jin argues that cultural imperialism from the West in Korea is far from over.

Kraidy (2002) refined the cultural imperialism thesis by proposing an 'intercontextual theory of hybridity.' To Kraidy, 'hybridity' is not about the mixing of the global and local cultures. Rather, he interprets it as an articulation of hegemonic power. Instead of analysing 'hybridity' from a political economic perspective, he argues that it should be seen as a process of creating consent and coordinating interests from a broader context involving the socio-political and economic arrangements.

Hybridity, as argued by Kraidy, is a communicative practise where intercultural and international communication practices are continuously being negotiated in interactions of differential powers. He is especially critical of those celebrating transnational cultures that emphasize on hybridity, which he sees as “practices of hegemony,” and espousing neo-liberal ideologies (Kraidy, 2002:335)

In taking a middle-ground approach, Chalaby (2006) refused to call the dominant presence of US audio-visual production in Europe a form of imperialism. He instead suggested that this phenomenon should be seen as the ‘US cultural primacy’. This is because instead of imposing their cultures onto the locals, US cultural producers hybridize their content with the local European cultures (Chalaby, 2006). From the various debates and ideas highlighted and discussed, the question of cultural imperialism from the US is not over and continues with new evidence and arguments by scholars. The question that arises here is how this affects Malaysia.

Perhaps one of the weaknesses of the recent opponents of the cultural imperialism thesis was that their line of argument remained faithfully and deeply entrenched within the question of ‘structures’, and continued to exclude the local audience from their discussion. As an audience’s consumption of the media often involves negotiating and resisting media messages, one must look beyond to the question of cultural effects by the media. What is more central to the study of ‘identity,’ cultural globalisation and local audience is how the ‘self’ is being constructed through mediated experience (Thompson, 1995).

It is more crucial to uncover the kinds of identities constructed through the interaction of global and local cultures in the media. Understanding how local audiences respond to the process of the in-flow and outflow of global and local cultures will help answer the questions of this research.

The constant contrasting of the world outside, particularly the US with their own locality, through the process of reflexivity among Korean women proves that the consumption of the global media is more complex than the question of cultural domination (Kim, 2008). The Korean women in Kim's studies (2005) were envious of the kind of Western individualism and freedom in portrayed in Ally *McBeal*. At the same time, they criticised the 'sexual freedom' depicted. In this respect, the media causes the need for individuals to rethink one's surroundings.. Such an approach offers fresher way of studying the implication of the 'inflow and outflow' of global cultures on the 'identities' of local audiences. Apart from looking at the practice of combining global and local cultures, a closer look at 'values' and 'attitudes' is meaningful in understanding the changes globalisation makes on one's identity. With this view in mind, this study would like to further explore 'identity' by looking at the 'values' and 'attitudes' among more culturally complex youths of different ethnicities, genders and ages, through the process of 'reflexivity.'

1.4.2 Media, Diaspora and Globalisation

Globalisation has a different implication on diasporic audiences in the construction of ethnic identities. Instead of devastating local cultures, it can also be a form of empowerment to marginalised cultures of ethnic minorities.

Information and communication technologies, such as satellite television, are consumed by diasporic communities as a means of maintaining ethnic identities, for memories and for maintaining ties to homelands. According to Naficy (1999), Internet homepages helped 'homeless' exiles create a place. In C.Lee's (2004) study, the older Korean generation watches Korean television programmes via satellite television mainly to reinforce their ethnic identity as Korean immigrants in America.

Apart from cultural continuity, some diasporic communities use ethnic media to keep themselves abreast of what is happening in their homeland (Lewis & Hirano, 2000). The construction of ethnic identity among diasporic

communities through the media does not confine itself to the domestic space of one's home, but extends to public spaces, such the Cypriot Community Centre for British Greek Cypriot (Georgiou, 2001).

Ethnic communities' consumption of media from home countries also raised tension between the national and diasporic regarding citizenship and transnational consciousness. Sinclair et al (2000) took up this topic in a study on the extensive use of Chinese-language media by Australian Chinese.

In the case of Malaysia, media globalization has resulted in Malaysian television to represent diverse cultures, providing wider choices and access. While there have been numerous studies on media consumption and ethnic identity among diasporic communities, very few of those studies viewed consumption as a result of cultural marginalisation in one's home country.

Consumption by diaspora has been mainly to maintain both national and ethnic identities. Whilst, Carsten's (2003) work pointed out that Malaysian Chinese's consumption was due to the marginalisation of the Chinese community's culture in Malaysian media. The question is, with Malaysia launching its own satellite television, giving more access and space for Chinese and Indian cultures to appear, is the question of marginalisation still relevant? If not, then what are the reasons behind their media consumption?

Secondly, to what extent is young people's consumption of their own ethnic media aimed as cultural continuity and resistance, given that they are also exposed to other global cultures, such as the West, in their living room? Nevertheless, given the current political conditions, consumption of the global and local media has spurred a process of rethinking and self-evaluating.

1.5 Position of Malaysian Youth Within Local Youth Studies

There is a wide-ranging and substantial body of literature in the field of youth studies in Malaysia, but not one study explores the issue from a broad range of theoretical perspectives. Instead, empirical studies on youth in this country are very much dominated by the structural functionalist paradigm. Researchers often frame their concern around how youth culture will affect young Malaysians and the country's nation-building plans (Mohammad Shatar & Samir Muhazzah, 2008; Latiffah & Samsudin, 2000;Samsudin & Latiffah,1999). There is also a tendency to study young people from the perspective of their moral and cultural values (Ummu Kolsome, 2008). And even studies on young people's media consumption is linked to their moral behaviour and values (Samsudin, 2001; 1995).

Young people who enjoy entertainment programmes are more inclined to indulge in deviant activities, like loafing[iv]and drugs. Consequently, Malaysian youth studies are often too policy-oriented from the perspective of improving the implementation of the existing national policies. None are intended to bring about a better understanding of young Malaysians and the youth culture. This results in the tendency to view young people from the narrow perspective of 'youth as deviant.' Although these studies attempt to understand young people, the focus has been on young people and subcultures from the perspective of 'deviant.'

This is most prominent in the area of psychology, which is often geared more towards the issue of youth morality. Subcultures are most often understood as an act of defiance, where young people's involvement in subcultures, such as illegal motorbike racing, is linked to alcoholism, drugs and pre-marital sex.

On the other hand, young Malaysians are also seen as 'youth as hedonists.' The assumption is that young people's media consumption is more for entertainment, which consequently leads to the development of loose moral values. Once again, it is presumed that the kind of media programmes they

enjoy lead to drugs, alcoholism, pre-marital sex, illegal motorcar racing and clubbing. Even when there have been attempts to enrich the current literature, it has been confined within the ambits of the ‘moral panics’ of teenage involvement in heavy metal music (Kai & Fu, 2006).

In short, in understanding young people’s media consumption, the emphasis is more on monitoring and regulating their behaviour and values (Samsudin, 2001). The field of education, on the other hand, concentrates more on students' classroom performance and the learning process rather than the constraints and pressure that young people experience at school (Mai & Tse-Kian, 2005). If there are attempts at understanding the problems of depression among young people, it is often more about determining the relationship between depression and its effects on academic performance (See & Lee, 2005) without delving into their home life and social environment.

All in all, the implication of using a structural functionalist paradigm with a statistical tool as a way of analysing data is that it tends to only reveal the question of ‘what’ and ‘how’ but not ‘why.’ Thus young people only speak through statistics in many of these studies, leaving out any attempt to understand the context of their life. In trying to understand young people's media consumption brought about by globalisation, Samsudin & Latiffah (1999) and Latiffah & Samsudin (2000) present impressive statistical data of young Malaysians' media consumption patterns in terms of ownership, duration of media usage and type of media programmes. They argue that the media-rich environment experienced by young Malaysians is due to the success of the country's economic policy, which has improved Malaysians' standard of living. However, it does not offer any explanation of what this means in terms of young people's lives.

How they use the media, and whether young people have more freedom to express themselves and construct their own youth culture away from the confines of tradition, is not explained in this study. Again, one of the reasons for this is that it is grounded within a structural functionalist paradigm with the

aim of investigating the effectiveness of government policies on young people. Many of these studies rarely include the question of structural pressure.

Local academics among the critical and cultural studies scholars are also to be blamed for this problem because they rarely counter-argue with empirical studies. While some have attempted to offer an alternative perspective by showing the state control in regulating national culture through popular music (Tan, 1992), young people are only brought up as an example of the state's measure to control young people's consumption of popular music, both foreign and local.

This is not saying that this study does not acknowledge the reality of how the number of youths, especially teenagers, involved in crime has increased. The presence of new sub-cultures that are deviating from religion and local norms is indisputable. However, over-concentration on the question of examining young people from the cause and effect link, especially in the field of media, means that understanding of young Malaysians in the local context will remain limited.

In a broader context, there have been various important developments that have occurred in the lives of Malaysians, especially for young people. The choice of media available in Malaysia has increased and many Malaysians have access to new and traditional media at home. Young Malaysians' media consumption is diverse. They tend to consume more than one type of media in their everyday lives. The emergence of new media has a cultural bearing on young Malaysians. Zakiyah's (2008) study of the influence of cybercafés on the emergence of deviant activity among young people demonstrates the problem of space. In this study, working-class youths lived in two-bedroom flats crammed with large families, which led them to create their own social activity outside by going to cybercafés. The main focus of this study is more on young people's involvement with drugs, alcoholism and pre-marital sex. But another compelling fact in that study was that cybercafés became places for them to create their own youth culture through socialising with friends, sharing jokes, problems and meeting the opposite sex.

This suggests that the advent of new media such as the Internet provides the young generation with the space and freedom to construct their own youth culture. For example, while cybercafés become a source of concern for the authorities and some academics as the breeding ground of other deviant behaviours, it is found that young Malaysians frequent cybercafés partly because they are places where they can manoeuvre in a non-conformist culture.

In addition, young Malaysians are using new media to negotiate between their cultural and youth identities. The interviews with Malaysian teenagers at cybercafés in Latiffah & Samsudin's study (2000) show that these young people enjoy going to cybercafés because they want to be free from the constraints of parental control. Yet, they claim they avoid intrusive pornographic materials on the net.

Rokiah's (2003) fascinating study of young Malaysians' consumption of Western fashion broke new ground by further exploring young Malaysians and their lives. Her study shows that young Malaysians, especially the Malays, find Western fashion less restrictive than the Malay traditional costume, which is one reason that they prefer Western fashion. What is critical here is how the consumption of Western clothes and fashion symbolises individuality, independence, empowerment and freedom from adult control. Muslim girls negotiate between maintaining their religious faith and expressing their youth identity by wearing the headscarf with Western clothing.

What these studies show is that there is conflict between tradition and modernity among young Malaysians. Young Malaysians seem to be trying to break free from some aspects of tradition such as adult control and local norms of social behaviour. Ummu Kolsome's (2008) effort to explore the value systems of young Muslims and non-Muslims shows a form of tension or conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims regarding the importance of Eastern values in governing their social behaviour.

In trying to further explore these 'tensions', the use of Cultural Studies as a theoretical framework in studying young people is very useful. To date, it remains limited in all areas, particularly in media studies in Malaysia. Thus, many studies fail to consider how political and ideological factors have some connection to local youth culture while trying to make sense of these 'tensions'. Many studies also fail to consider the importance of young people's 'cultural practice' as a means of understanding them. This reluctance to use cultural studies has probably stemmed from the belief that it is often related to a challenge to the dominant institutions (Zaharom, 2003).

What all this proves is that there is a need to broaden the study of young people into ordinary, mainstream youths rather than those in subcultures. The fact that ordinary and mainstream youths actually represent the majority of young Malaysians and that they, too, raise the issue of the struggle between tradition and modernity, structures and agency, means that there is a need to explore these groups of young people as well. In addition to the list of limitations given above, it is intriguing how some scholars are still preoccupied with the study of young people from the perspective of the past economic policy of New Economic Policy (NEP) , which ended in 1990 (Agadjanian & Hui, 2005). More studies need to be done on the media consumption of young people, particularly in the post-NEP era where the manifestation of affluence and cultural globalisation is increasingly apparent, and on what this means regarding young Malaysians' identity.

1.5.1 'Youth as Deviants and Hedonists'

In tracing the development of Malaysian studies on its youth, it can be said that the first genuine interest in them began with the state's concern that Malaysian teenagers spend more time loafing at shopping malls and complexes. Samsudin et. al (1994), who was commissioned to conduct a study on 'loafing' among Malaysian teenagers, found that teenagers spend 16.3 hours a week chatting with friends in public places (Samsudin, 1995).

These young people are largely from the low-income group and have low self-esteem. They argue that there is nothing deviant about loafing. About 73 % said that they loafed because they wanted to meet friends, 68 % thought that it was not a waste of time, 62 % viewed it as a current social trend for teenagers and 52 % did it to release their worries. In trying to see the role of the media with these groups, Samsudin et al; (1994) found that the majority of these teenagers enjoy entertainment programmes (Samsudin, 1995). They prefer entertainment magazines more than nationally published educational magazines like *Dewan Masyarakat* or *Dewan Siswa.*

Hence, there is an attempt to simplistically link young people's involvement in deviant activities like loafing with their media consumption pattern. In the interpretation of this study, those who enjoy loafing are inclined to consume media for entertainment.

The problem with this is that it is not known if consumption of the media for entertainment is done for pure pleasure or other factors. Besides loafing, recent interest in Malaysian youth studies focus on the on-going culture of illegal motorbike racing among male youths. This form of subculture is locally known as **'***Mat Rempit*', which is similar to a motorbike gang, and is seen as deviant. '*Mat Rempit'* essentially refers to a group of male youths who are involved in illegal motorcycle racing. The act is illegal under the Road Transport Act because they race on public roads. They tend to race in the middle of traffic, endangering not only themselves but also pedestrians and other motorists.

They not only hold illegal racing, but have also gotten involved in the social problems of gambling, motorcycle theft, sexual promiscuity, alcoholism, drug abuse and gangsterism. The media no longer depicts *'Mat Rempit'* as just a group of illegal motorcycle racers, but rather 'thugs' and criminals. Studies conducted on '*Mat Rempit'* have identified it as constructing a specific culture and lifestyle. Rozmi Ismail (2005) describes the '*Mat Rempit'* lifestyle as an attempt to promote a group identity by constructing subcultures through rugged fashion styles and adopting masculine nicknames for themselves and

the group. They have slang and see racing as a form of urban leisure activity (see www.youth.org.my/ippbm/prosiding/p3_romi.pdf). However, this study, which is a psychological study of *Mat Rempit*, only sought to identify the kind of personality associated with the show.

It did not try to explore this form of subculture further by identifying the kind of pleasure they derive from illegal racing and winning those races. It is unclear if this subculture is part of an attempt to reassert working-class identity in urban cities as part of a strategy to survive in the city, as did the *Mods* and *Teddys* (Cohen,1987;Widdicombe & Wooffitt,1995; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007).

In a somewhat different reading of another urban male subculture, which involves largely Malay males – '*Mat Rock'* or '*kutu*[iv]– Lockard (1995) describes them as "frustrated urban blue collar workers and unemployed youths," who turn to heavy metal music as a source of expressing their sense of marginalisation. Heavy metal often talks critically about social, political and economic issues, and how these have affected the '*Mat Rocks.*'" However, unlike *Mat Rempit,* the *'Mat Rocks*' do not receive wide attention from the police, state and academia, simply because they merely express their individual identity through consumption of heavy metal music and are often seen at rock concerts sporting long hair and wearing denim jeans (Tan, 1992).

While *Mat Rocks* do not pose a threat to the state, heavy metal music does clash with the state and is seen as a negative influence from the West on young people. The state is actively regulating open-air concerts, although it does not dampen young people's enthusiasm for foreign popular music. Tan (1992: 301) argues that heavy metal "provides outlets for youths to air their discomfort and criticisms of society." This view certainly conflicts with the mainstream view of 'youth as hedonists.' Young Malaysians' consumption of heavy metal music is based on their penchant for rock concerts and its culture suggests that they are non-conformists, and are seeking avenues that allow them to express their social and political views of the establishment.

For the state and some academics writing from the structural functionalist stance, young Malaysians' consumption of foreign popular music and culture reflects deviancy and immorality. On the other hand, Tan (1992), Lockard (1995) and Khai & Ku (2005) argue that the existence of state control, religious extremism and 'moral panic,' where young people lack space to express themselves, is among the reasons why they engage in this specific youth culture.

The flaws and limitations of the studies carried out on youth by those using a functionalist approach have been widely acknowledged (Umi, 2002). What is still sorely missing in these debates is the acknowledgement that there is still a lack of empirical, ethnographic evidence of young Malaysians' consumption of global and local popular culture and media, and what their consumption means to young Malaysians in terms of their cultural identity and values. Thus there is a vacuum in Malaysian youth studies from the cultural perspective.

Secondly, while there have been attempts to look theoretically at the social and cultural life of young Malaysians, they lack imagination and depth. For example, Rokiah's work on young Muslim Malays' consumption of Western fashion (2003) did not relate their desire for individuality and freedom to the bigger issues of state ideology and hegemonic control of national culture. To what extent is young people's, especially Malay-Muslims, consumption of Western fashion truly based on their own individual choice, and not a form of counteraction against the dominant cultures promoted by institutions? These questions are important because in reality, young Malay-Muslims face greater religious and cultural sanction in the public sphere compared to their non-Muslim peers. Thus, this change in consumption behaviour may be a reaction to the control imposed on Malay-Muslim youths.

1.6 Approaches to Youth Studies

In contrast to local youth studies, there have been various theoretical positions in studies of young people and their identity internationally. The most influential works on youth cultural studies are those brought about by the

Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in Birmingham in the 1970s.

Young people have been studied from the perspective of their involvement in subcultures as a symbol of resisting the dominant culture imposed by the state or the dominant order. The focus of scholars from CCCS has been largely on working-class youths, who have emerged with a distinctive lifestyle and identity, and theorised that the existence of a style-based lifestyle is actually a form of resisting authority. This is well documented in *Resistance Through Rituals*, a collection of works by all the scholars who have studied various forms of youth culture as a form of 'resistance' (Hall & Jefferson, 1976).

Such works have been intellectually stimulating in that they offer another way of understanding young people and their lives. Nevertheless, this framework of analysing young people and the use of the concept of 'resistance' against the established order, influenced by Gramsci's (1971) concept of 'hegemony,' has been widely criticised for its narrow view.

One of the main weaknesses lies in the overemphasis on subcultures as a way of understanding young people, which is very limiting. The problem with this is that not all young people are involved in subcultures. The 'straights,' or mainstream youths (Huq, 2004: 22), often do not come to the attention of scholars. On the other hand, Clarke et al. (1976: 16) have already forewarned that the group of young people they studied "never enters a tight or coherent subculture at all." They acknowledge that the subcultures of the young working or middle-class group could either be permanent or temporary. In other words, young people may shift their lifestyles, thus scholars need to be open to other ways of studying young people rather than linking them to a specific subculture. Such concerns continued when Buckingham (2008:5) argued that studies on "'the more mundane, even conformist, cultures of young people who are not members of such 'spectacular or oppositional groups (or indeed on affluent middle-class youths)'" remain scarce.

The limitations of CCCS' approach encouraged many scholars to expand their outlooks and explore young people in other ways. For instance, Willis (1990) introduces concepts like "symbolic creativity" and the "grounded aesthetic" to explore how young people are able to create their own life independently from hegemonic influences (Epstein, 1998: 9).

Elsewhere, problems remain with the kind of young people that are being studied. Huq (2004) identifies this as an 'omission.' She refers to how scholars have been studying young people strictly based on 'class,' that is the working-class group, whereas young people draw from various sources of identity. Here, scholars such as McRobbie & Garber (1976) bring attention to the creation of a specific subculture from a gender perspective, specifically girls. By highlighting the existence of a girls' subculture, McRobbie & Garber (1976) strongly criticise the marked absence of girls in the study of youth subculture. Elsewhere, 'ethnicity' comes to fore in the study of youth culture (Back, 1996; Gilroy, 1987 & 1993).

In the analysis of the structure of class for black youths, the study of youth culture became more complex when how black youths dealt with racism was examined. These studies show how these youths negotiated their identities not only in terms of class and gender but also of 'ethnicity.' Others, such as Gillespie (1995) and Qureshi (2006), further enrich the study of youths of different ethnicities by looking at them as having a diasporic identity. The study of identity has also included exploring questions of national identity (Strelitz, 2002; Parker, 1998; Griffith, 1993) and also religion (Dwyer, 1998).
From the 1990s onwards, there has been an inclination towards adapting a postmodernist approach to youth studies. Part of the shift in theory and methodology in studying young people is attributed to the fact that youth culture is increasingly more diverse and fragmented, so much that McRobbie (1994) proposed that the field of youth study in the 1990s should be specific in nature.

The shift was also driven by the idea that young people have become more individualised in this period of late modernity, which has led many to move away from constructing their identities with traditional markers such as family ties, religion, ethnicity or class. Such a notion was partly influenced by the *individualisation* theory suggested by Ulrich Beck (1992), which states that young people form identities by individual choices, away from family ties, region, ethnicity or class, which were weakened by late modernity. Hence, the study of youth and its culture in the 1990s influenced many scholars to shift direction to looking at other forms of young people's cultural activities, such as 'neo-tribes' (Bennett, 1999) or media fandom (Bloustein, 2004).

Others saw young people's lives as one that is based on consumption and taste. Among the most influential concept in studying 'consumption' has been Bourdieu's (1984) 'cultural capital' as a theory of taste. Some scholars have since borrowed Bourdieu's idea in examining the practice of 'club cultures' using the term 'sub cultural capital,' notably in the work of Thornton (1995: 1997).

Others resorted to using concepts like 'lifestyle' and 'consumerism' as a more apt way of understanding youth culture (Osgerby, 2004; Miles 2000). In studies of consumption practices, young people are not seen from the standpoint of 'resistance.' Post-subculturalists have shifted away from theorising youth from the axis of resistance against the dominant culture and more towards negotiating and appropriating, as the way young people construct identities. 'Struggle' in this sense is not seen as 'resisting against,' but negotiating within the constraints imposed by structure.

The use of 'lifestyle' as a concept for understanding young people in this period was strongly espoused by Miles (2000) to replace 'subculture.' He promotes the idea that youth lifestyle is a more appropriate concept because only through lifestyle does one see how it is "an active arena within which the everyday struggles associated with the dialectical relationship between structure and agency can be worked out" (Miles, 2000: 12).

Reimer (1995) also considered ‘lifestyles’ in studying young people. In her study on Swedish youths and their lifestyles, including media consumption, Reimer concludes that young people’s lifestyles are commonly identifiable by the leisure and entertainment activities indulged in. Although she does not discount the role of class and gender, she found these factors to play an unimportant role, particularly in the choice of leisure activities of young Swedes.

The whole idea that young people are no longer constructing their identity along ethnic, class or religious lines, and that there is a need to use a more general concept like ‘taste,’ ‘lifestyle’ or ‘entertainment,’ is indeed thought-provoking, but requires a more in-depth analysis.

It has been suggested that young people are becoming increasingly homogeneous in terms of social identity, such that they are identifiable by lifestyle and taste. This view is very provocative, but it has yet to be fully examined or studied in the context of young people in developed nations. Moreover, considering the evidence of how young people still struggle and demand recognition of their cultural identities, how can it be said they have moved away from all sources of traditional identity? And in Asian societies, where local tradition and religion is a major part of young people’s life at home, how could one discount this factor? As some recent studies have already shown, traditional identities like religion have become more enhanced, even as young people consume new media (Nilan, 2008).

Perhaps ‘taste’ and ‘lifestyle’ may be one way of understanding young people in this era, but this cannot be the only way to do so. Other factors have to be considered, such as the local conditions where young people are situated, which are perhaps, a more encompassing way of approaching the study of young people.

Against all the arguments made, it is difficult to believe that young people are discarding religion and ethnic culture for a more non-traditional identity markers, as suggested by Beck (1992) and supported by Reimer (1995).

Rather, much evidence suggests the opposite. Young people are actually in constant 'negotiation' and 'struggle' with tradition and modernity and with their ‘ethnicity’, whether outside or at home. The questions that remain unanswered are how do those processes take place, to what extent have they succeeded, what forms of identities are reproduced and whether or not different ethnic groups have different considerations at play.

Although the existing approaches and theoretical direction in studying youth has tended to move away from the perspective of ‘resistance’ and ‘domination,’ in the context of this study, there are some points to consider. First of all, with respect to the local Malaysian youth, the culture of defying or speaking out openly against authority is still considered deviance.

Thus it may not be accurate to contextualise young people’s relationship with institutions and authority as strictly resisting, as it is not an easy relationship. Hence, in their effort to express their independent views, often through negotiable ways while conforming to rules, young people also manage to find ways of fulfilling their desires. Young people negotiate between a situation where the cultural values of filial piety to elders form part of their lives and the need to be themselves.

Moreover, taking into consideration Hollands’ (2002) criticism of the tendency of the post-modern approach to youth studies being too concentrated on club culture, post-subcultures and neo-tribes, this study proposes a broader approach to studying youth, where the focus is on the context of their media consumption and reception, including home life and parents, religion, ethnic culture and tradition.

Following what Buckingham (1993) and Murdock (1998) have argued, gaining an understanding of young people has to be done by looking at their social setting and activity first before studying their responses to a media text. This is felt to be critical, as it will broaden the study of young people's consumption of the media and not merely focus on wants and needs.

Buckingham (1993) goes on to say that one must consider the diverse ways in which young people construct 'meanings' within different social contexts. More importantly, he (1993: 14) also cautioned about the need to realise that the audience sometimes constructs meanings depending on the situation, in which it may "not [be] of their own choosing." This most aptly describes young people who are both students and a child, particularly when their consumption occurs largely at home. In this context, this study looks at the possible diverse ways that young multiethnic Malaysians construct their identities in between the forces of cultural globalisation and their own localities.

1.7 Youth, Media Consumption and Identity

This section aims to bring together the study of young people, media consumption and identity formation by drawing on some of the developments as well as the limitations of studies conducted so far. Studies of media consumption among youths in the context of globalisation have indeed moved in various directions.

Leichty's (1995) study of young Nepalese shows that their consumption of foreign television programmes serve as a means of contrasting 'quality living' with the reality that they experience in their own country, which is, perhaps, their way of trying to break away from the hegemonic culture of *Bikas* (state ideology of progress). The state's use of the term *Bikas* as a form of identifying one's sense of Nepaleseness against the reality of the country's status as one of the world's Least Developed Countries (LDC) has brought tensions with young Nepalese who contest and resist the idea.

It is through young people's consumption of American films and television shows that they have become aware of what they are lacking. The struggle between young people and the state continues, as is evident in Gritxi's work (2006) among young Maltese. The pervasive influence of the global media and young people's consumption of it has created a unique Maltese identity. Gritxi (2006) disagrees that it could replace or weaken the local cultural

identity of Malta, but has found through their discourse that it builds a different Maltese identity, one that embraces global modernity. What this study shows is that the struggle of young people with national identity is an on-going dialectical process. Young people's acceptance of national identity very much relates to the political, economic and social conditions they are living within. Young people will resist if they feel that national identity proves a disadvantage or marginalises them from acquiring a 'quality' life.

If young Maltese's sense of national identity was differentiated by class, South African youths, however, was differentiated by ethnicity. It is found that while rural South African youths known as the 'homelands' identifies themselves to the local culture in local television programmes, the White, Coloured and Asian South Africans identifies themselves more towards imported programmes (Strelitz, 2002). This serves to show that the country is facing an issue of a fragmented sense of national identity among young people.

Consumption of the global media often leads local youth to reflect and make sense of themselves in terms of 'tradition against modernity.' Young Lebanese Maronites admire the perceived individual freedom that exists in West, which they identify as 'modern' values. Their understanding of 'modernity' comes from what they see in American comedies – *The Cosby Show* and a teenage serial drama – *Beverly Hills 90210* (Kraidy, 1999). There are times when young people contest local tradition and culture and reflect on their own individual needs (Kim, 2008; Huang, 2008).

The clash between 'tradition and modernity' is also relevant among migrant youth. At home, their lives and parents are a site for maintaining their cultural identity against the cultures of their new homeland, outside. Young British Asians in Gillespie's study (1995) negotiated their various social identities within these conditions as well as constructing new forms of identities through consumption of the media.

While all these studies have succeeded in highlighting the various dimensions of young people's identities affected by media consumption, they focus on a specific group of young people through their gender, as in the case of Kim (2005) and Huang (2008). On the other hand, Gillespie (1995), who studied British Asian youths of different religions – Hindu, Muslim and Sikh – did not highlight the difference in the values of Muslims youths compared to Hindu and Sikh youths. Consequently, this study differs in several ways. Firstly, it attempts to show that there are differences in how Muslim youth construct their identity from non-Muslim youth as influenced by media consumption.

And in the context of how Malaysia is facing similar issues regarding ethnic identity among its young people, it is imperative to interview young people from all ethnic groups instead of just focusing on one specific ethnic group, as Strelitz (2002) did.

This approach is appropriate, particularly when studying a multiethnic audience where issues of ethnic relations and cultural exclusion are still being confronted, as in Malaysia and South African societies. Therefore, this study has been expanded to explore whether all ethnic groups face similar problems of cultural exclusion pertaining to their own ethnicity and how they deal with this in their everyday lives.

In response to Gritxi's (2006) study, the question is raised about the adequacy of the methods used to study young people's cultural identity. While Gritxi is able to demonstrate that differences in cultural identity are a class phenomenon, he did not explore the difference in class deeply. This requires a look at the relationship between the context of consumption and young people's social life. Examining media consumption patterns within the private domain of the home can achieve this. There are many questions to answer: How is cultural identity formed within the confines of the private life of young people? What are the constraints and challenges that they face and are there are differences or similarities across ethnic groups? How do all these factors contribute to the kind of cultural identity that exists among different groups of young people?

Finally, what previous studies lack is a comparative approach in determining the differences and similarities in attitude or opinions among young people. All these studies have assumed that young people are a homogeneous group and have failed to pay attention to the specificity of social identity.

For example, Strelitz's (2002) study examines young people of different ethnicities, social classes and political histories, yet he focuses on Black South Africans regarding cultural identity and values, and not on other young South Africans. As is found in Gritxi's study (2006), it appears that the class factor differentiates Maltese youths' reception of the local and global media programmes available in Malta. Young middle-class people seem to criticise local television programmes as being of low quality, but view global programmes otherwise. On the other hand, working-class youth find themselves able to relate more to local programmes than global television programmes. This shows that audience studies need to take into account the different social identities of the audience in question.

1.8 Objectives of The Study

Based on the discussions above, this study identified several objectives that it sought to investigate through media reception and consumption.

1) To examine what possible shifts of identity have emerged in young multiethnic Malaysians' through their media consumption;

2) To examine young people's attitude and values among different ethnicities towards the tradition and modernity constituted within imported and local media, if there are any differences or similarities;

3) To highlight the constraints that young Malaysians' face in negotiating between tradition and modernity, through their media consumption;

4) To find out if there are differences in the levels of identity – ethnic, religious, diasporic or individual, being reproduced from among different ethnic groups through media consumption;

1.9 Conclusion

To recapture the broad issues that have been raised and discussed, this study set out to discover whether young Malaysians' identities have been affected as a consequence to the de-regulation of the media industry and globalisation. As the country emerges as one of Southeast Asia's most developed nations, it strives to achieve equilibrium in modernity vs. tradition. Young people are drawn into various states' nationalists' projects to produce a *Bangsa Malaysia* (Malaysian nation) where they will grow to become not only productive but patriotic citizens. Part of the reason for this ambitious plan was to provide a 'cultural buffer' against the fear that globalisation, particularly through the media, would disembed young Malaysians from their local cultures and values. 'Identity' in this study, will be examined from the context of the clash between 'tradition' vs. 'modernity', whether young Malaysians are becoming more individualised despite growing up in an environment that had emphasized collective values and practices. In relation to that, how have that affected their sense of ethnicity.

However, existing local studies on Malaysian youth and youth culture remains inadequate in studying the construction of identity. Contemporary views on 'identity' in this age of late modernity suggests that young people have more alternative in constructing their identities than from traditional identity sources. Identities have since become more fragmented, multiple and self-reflexive (Kellner, 1992). Drawing on contemporary theories of 'identity', this study examines young Malaysians' identities in line with the current theories of 'identity.' In doing so, the concept of 'self-reflexivity' by Giddens (1991) is used to address the interplay between media globalisation, questions of 'tradition' vs. 'modernity' and ethnicity among young people.

In taking a more holistic approach, young people are seen as a diverse group of people with their own specific social identity, based on ethnicity, religion, social class, geographical location and political history.

Endnotes

[i] Bangsa Malaysia or Malaysian Nation, was the newly reconstituted national identity of Malaysia replacing the NCP. It was introduced by former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamed. Instead of an ethnic-based identity, *Bangsa Malaysia* is based on patriotism and was well-accepted by the non-Malays (Lee, 2007). It has been defined as a nation that is made up of Malaysians who are share a common political loyalty and commitment to the nation, while peacefully coexist with its differences – territorially and ethnically (Mahathir, 1993).

[ii] Asian values: This term attacked the Western's notion of liberal democracy and Asian states are searching for the meaning of 'democracy' in the context of Asia. According to Khoo (2002:51), it is a "preference for systems of government underpinned by moral values, social norms and cultural attitudes said to be derived from Asian philosophical traditions and historical experiences." Although the term often refers to system of governance but former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamed translated these values into various national policies that calls on Malaysians to adopt Asian values such as discipline and industrious devoid of Western way of life.

[iii] New Economic Policy (NEP) was formulated as part of the government measures of addressing the problems in among interethnic relations after May, 1969. It was a 20 year economic plan which begins in 1970 to 1991, its main objective was to restructure economic imbalances that occurred between the Malays/Bumiputeras with the non-Malays and to eradicate poverty. However, despite trying to bridge ethnic relations through economic means, critics saw it an another attempt at strengthening the position of the Malays and Bumiputeras when the policy introduce a quota system for various financial assistance and government appointments to the Malays and *Bumiputera*.

[iv] Loafing or locally known as "lepak", caught the attention of the government who observe that Malaysian teenagers, are often found to be loitering or hanging out at shopping malls for most of their leisure time. Assuming that this activity will lead to young Malaysians, to be susceptible to negative influences like drugs, the government commissioned a local university to study the effects of loafing on young Malaysians.

[v] '*Kutu*' is a Malay word carries a literal meaning for head lice. Connotatively, it also means 'parasites' to a group of alienated urban Malay male youths who loaf around in shopping malls and attend rock concerts. It is a pejorative term for them, who are seen as hopeless and depend on family to support them.

Chapter 2

The Social Realities Of Young Malaysians' Lives

2.0 Introduction

As mentioned in the first chapter, one cannot understand the construction of young Malaysians' identity through the media consumption without looking at the wider context of the audience's life. This chapter discussed the social, political and economic condition that is embedded at the macro and micro level of young Malaysians' lives.

It began with describing the cultural and religious make-up of Malaysian society. And show that the shape of Malaysia's identity and to a certain extent, ethnicity is very much rooted in how the state have drawn up its development plans. The idea that governs Malaysia's development policies and programmes is geared towards social cohesion among ethnicity, achieved through developing and modernizing the country.

From this chapter, one would be able to see how Malaysian identity and ethnicity operate through a fixed and static definition. This is followed by how those definitions are being propagated to young people. This chapter also highlighted the problems with the fixed and static official definition against the reality of Malaysian identity that is actually shifting and fluid. Finally, it takes a glimpse into the Malaysian youth culture and lifestyles.

2.1 The Religious and Cultural Make-up of Malaysia

Malaysia actually consists of two parts, East and West Malaysia. Its ethnic population resides according to its geographical make-up. The Malays, who are the dominant and original inhabitants of Malaysia, reside largely in Peninsular Malaysia, or West Malaysia. Separated by the South China Sea and situated on the east is East Malaysia, made up of Sabah and Sarawak. The indigenous *Bumiputera*,of which the Kadazandusun are a part of, (translation: Prince of the Soil), are the original inhabitants of Malaysia and found mainly in East Malaysia.

As a result of the British colonial rule between 1786 and 1957, other ethnic groups such as the Chinese and Indians migrated in large numbers to Peninsular Malaysia. According to Gullick (1981: 52), the Chinese came to various parts of Peninsular Malaysia, particularly the state of Malacca, beforehand, but the mass migration of Chinese did not begin until "the second quarter of the nineteenth century." The mass arrival of Chinese and Indian peoples to Peninsular Malaysia was partly due to economic reasons. The booming economy of tin, initially found by the British in the state of Perak and Selangor, resulted in Chinese flocking to these areas (Means, 1970). Malaysian Indians largely live in Peninsular Malaysia, in contrast to the Chinese, who can be found in almost every part of Malaysia. Thus, when the country sought independence from the British, the Chinese and Indian migrants, who by then saw Malaysia as their home, had to be accepted as citizens.

According to the latest figures on Malaysian population released by Malaysia's Economic Planning Unit (EPU) in 2010, Malaysia's population is estimated at 28.2 million. The number of Malays/*Bumiputeras* has risen to 17,947,371 million, in contrast to only 6,520,559 Chinese, 1,969,343 Indians and 347,692 residents of other ethnic groups (http://epu.gov.my/html/themes/epu/images/common/pdf/eco_stat/pdf/1.2.5 pdf). This means that the Malays and indigenous *Bumiputera* continue to be

the major ethnic group in Malaysia. The indigenous Bumiputera group includes the natives to the East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak. The Kadazandusuns form the largest indigenous group in Sabah. Together, the 'Malays' and '*Bumiputera*' have similar privileges and rights accorded to them as the natives of the country, under Article 153 of the Federal Constitution. The special rights given to the '*Bumiputera'* were part of the agreement when Sabah and Sarawak agreed to join the Federation of Malaya to become part of 'Malaysia' in 1963.

In Malaysia, youths are defined as people between the ages of 15 and 40 under the National Youth Development Policy (http://www.youth.org.my/ippbm/dokumen/DPN.pdf).In 2005, there was a reported total of 11.1 million youths in Malaysia (EPU, 2006), comprising 41.5% of the population. The greatest proportion of these are Malay and *Bumiputera,* comprising 57.9% of the youth population, of which 47.2% are Malay and 10.7% are non-Muslim *Bumiputera*. Chinese comprise 24.9% while 7% are Indian (http://www.unescap.org/esid/hds/youth/youth_malaysia.pdf).

In terms of religion, Islam has the greatest number of followers,with 60.4% of the population being Muslim. Religion is seen as a major aspect of cultural identity for Malaysians, as the country's population is made up offollowers of all the major religions of the world.

Based on the report given by the Population and Housing Census of Malaysia 2000 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2000), about 19.2% are Buddhist, 9.1% are Christian, 6.3% are Hindu and 2.6% follow Confucianism, Taoism or other ancient Chinese religions. What characterises Malaysia's population is the fact that ethnic identity correlates strongly with religion. For example, the Malays are all Muslims. There are no Malays who are followers of other religions, but there are Non-Malay Muslims.There are 69,043 Indian Muslims and 57,221 Chinese Muslims (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2000).

Chinese are largely Buddhists (4,324, 971 million), whileIndians are mostly Hindu (1,412,686). The Bumiputera, Chinese and Indians comprise the Christianpopulation of Malaysia. Among them, the Kadazandusun in Sabah and the Ibans in Sarawak comprise the greatest portion, about 1,273,968 followers. Chinese followers number 539,556 and Indian followers are estimated at 130,408.

Malaysia officially identifies itself as an Islamic country, making Islam the country's official religion, and giving it a special position enshrined under the Federal Constitution. Nevertheless, the government allows Malaysians the freedom to practise other religions apart from Islam, which was guaranteed according to the constitution. Consequently, one can easily find mosques, churches and temples everywhere.

Part of the reason why religion and ethnic culture is a key characteristic in Malaysian cultural identity is that the state's ideology of the *Rukunegara* places the belief of the existence of God as the main principle of country's identity. Therefore, despite professing different religious beliefs and cultures, the basis of Malaysia's value system is on religion and spirituality. The government ruling Malaysia never envisaged being a secular state. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the cultures of Malaysiansare fixed and unchangeable. As it has adopted a capitalist economic system and is becoming more open to the global economy, Malaysians are embracing a consumerist culture. The presence of transnational companies from fast food, toy and entertainment industries has become a part of Malaysians' way of life (Lee, 1992).

Abdullah (1996, cited by Merriam & Mohammad, 2000) who identified Malaysians' cultural values to have five characteristics: -

(a) Collectivistic – one's identity is formed through a group;
(b) Hierarchical – the emphasis is on respect for the elders;
(c) Relationship-oriented – Malaysians are not individualists, but are said to have close ties to family, the home, the country or social groups;

(d) '*Face*'– the concept of maintaining one's face or dignity is essential in Malaysians' social behaviour;
(e) Religious – Malaysians are religious or spiritual.

This is problematic, as no other study has been done to characterise Malaysia's common cultural values. Hence, this cannot solely confirm the collective values of Malaysians.

2.2 Relationships, Marriage and Social Taboos in Malaysian Society

This section serves to demonstrate how culture affects multiethnic Malaysians in their private sphere. In doing so, this section touches on 'marriage' and the general taboos pertaining to gender relations, as a way to demonstrate how 'marriage' and the customs associated remain a significant aspect in the social lives of modern Malaysians.

Marriage is highly regarded by the Malays, Chinese, Indians and Kadazandusuns, and is considered sacred. Each ethnic group defines the importance of marriage based on ethnic culture and religious beliefs. For example, as the family is believed to be the basis of existence in Chinese society, the Chinese view marriage an important means of creating Chinese society. According to Chew (1979), the Chinese social system lies in its family system.

The Indian Hindus believe marriage is for life, and do not consider 'divorce' an option. In addition, it is believed that a person's fate to marry is predestined in heaven. The term *thirumanam* isa combination of two words– *thru*meaning'godliness' and *manam* meaning 'enjoined hearts.' Therefore, marriage is a spiritual union according to the Hindu religion (Rajantheran & Manimaran, 1994).

For the Malays, being married elevates one's social status, as being a spinster is thought "worse than being married to a stranger" (Wazir Jahan, 1990: 25).

Each ethnic group has its own rituals and beliefs for performing the marriage ceremony,although similarities in terms of customs exist. Essentially, the marriage ritual and customs among the Malays, Chinese, Indians and Kadazandusuns consist of the crucial tradition of *merisik* (to inquire), *meminang* (to propose), engagement and marriage. The initial stage of *merisik* and *meminang,* will be initiated by the men's family as a customary way of asking for the woman's hand in marriage. The reason for the *merisik, meminang* and the engagement, was to instil self-control among yet to be married couples.

Couples are forbidden to cohabit. And in some ethnic communities, if a man fancies a girl, has no means of supporting her, and yet takes steps to live with her, he could be subjected to a trial by the local village head. This could result in the couple being forced to marry. Such act known as *naik* (Aplien, 1994) by the Sungai people, a sub-ethnic group of the Kadazandusuns, are often frowned upon.

Each ethnic group holds differing views about the meaning of marriage that tie to religious teachings and govern moral values. In spite of differences in beliefs, multiethnic Malaysians mostly disapprove of sexual relations outside marriage. Pre-marital sex and adultery are forbidden. All ethnic groups, based on the teachings of their religions, consider these grave sins. This extends to co-habitation, which is not a common social practice in Malaysia. Acceptable sexual relationships are those within a marital context. For this reason, no terms exist to define a 'partner' or civil partnership; the only terms used are 'spouse' or 'husband and wife.'

This indirectly means that social relations between men and women are often seen from the perspective of marital relations. According to Islamic teaching, unmarried Muslim couples are not permitted to be in close proximity with each other, especially in secluded spots. The state Islamic religious department

authorities monitor the social behaviour of Muslims, and those who are caught in close proximity with members of the opposite sex are usually fined or jailed.

This is not to suggest that the social life of the young and single is entirely limited. In the past, marriages were usually pre-arranged by parents. Malaysian families now rarely follow this antiquated custom. Today, Muslims and non-Muslims in Malaysia are free to choose and marry the person of their choice. They are free to date, provided they abstain from sex until they are married. However, public displays of affection are not condoned by any of the ethnic groups.

2.3 Disseminating Morality and Cultural Values To Youths

All these taboos and prohibitions are inculcated into young Malaysians at home and at school. In school, the process of shaping young Malaysians' moral and cultural values takes several forms. One of which comes in the form of moral and religious education. Religious education is part of the Malaysian education system at both primary and secondary levels. Specific subjects such as Moral Education and Islamic Studies are taught to all young Malaysians. Non-Muslims must attend Moral Education classes, and it is compulsory for Muslim students to attend Islamic Studies. This demonstrates the extent of the dissemination of social, moral and cultural values among young Malaysians of all ethnicities.

The official view of pre-marital sex and co-habitation is seen explicitly in the syllabus of Health Education taught to 13 to 17-year-old students. In its syllabus, all students are taught the meaning of 'marriage' from the perspective of Malaysia's national culture, which is fundamentally based on religion. For example, it states that a family institution is one that is formed as a result of a marriage and is created according to "religion and societal norms" (http://www.moe.gov.my/bpk/sp_hsp/pk/hsp_p_kesihatan_f12345.pdf). This rules out co-habitation and civil partnership as acceptable forms of family life in Malaysia. Starting from the age of 15, young Malaysians are introduced to

the definition of the family institution and the prohibition of pre-marital sex. By the age of 16, they are taught to understand the physical, mental and emotional implications of pre-marital sex, which involves unwanted pregnancies. Young people are also taught to say 'no' to pre-marital sex and peer pressure. At 17, more complex issues pertaining to sexuality are taught.'Abnormal sexual relations'are introduced, and defined as bisexual, homosexual, multiple partners and sexual promiscuity. In addition, students are taught the dangers of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV/Aids, when indulging in pre-marital sex (http://www.moe.gov.my/bpk/sp_hsp/pk/hsp_p_kesihatan_f12345.pdf).

Sexual relations are defined acceptable only within the confines of marriage, which typifies social relations and values in Malaysia. Sex is considered a means of procreation, and not for mere personal gratification.

To what extent do young Malaysians share a view similar to the official view regarding relationships and sex?

2.3.1 Malaysian Youths' Views and Values Regarding 'Relationships'

Sociological studies on the views of youth in Malaysia regarding relationships are lacking. For this reason, a medical point of view regarding pre-marital sex offers the best perspective on young Malaysians' attitudes towards relationships.

Although these studies had the intention of examining the sexual behaviour of youths from a medical perspective, the responses given also have social and cultural implications. A study by Ng & Kamal (2006), who interviewed a group of young adults in Malaysia, found that some young Malaysians do not view sexual relations as being within a marital context. Rather, they have no qualms about sex outside marriage. Male respondents purportedly looked for older women for sex because older women rarely seek committed relationships. Many of the respondents involved were not looking for

committed, long-term relationships. This shows that some young Malaysians have a more unconventional attitude towards sex and relationships. In a somewhat younger age group, Lee et al. (2006) found a similar occurrence of pre-marital sex among young Malaysians. With first sexual encounters happening at a mean age of 15, boys were reported to be more experienced than girls.

This alarmed experts, as many of these young people showed no concern about the possible risks involved. Siti Norazah & Low (2000) attribute the change in attitude and values towards sex to the rapid modernization occurring in Malaysia, which has led to significant social change. The rising age for marriage and the decline in traditional values pertaining to interactions between members of the opposite sex have been identified as the contributing factors to the prevalence of pre-marital sex among young Malaysians.

This certainly is contradictory to moral lessons taught in school. Both studies by Lee et al. (2000) and Ng & Kamal (2006) show that young people have alternative views about relationships that are not based on religious or ethnic culture, as expected by school and society.

Even though these studies show that pre-marital sex occurs across ethnic groups, they fail to take into account religion and ethnic culture as factors. Different ethnic groups are likely to have different perceptions of sex and relationships.

Young people were not asked for their opinions regarding religious or ethnic views of relationships and sex. Still, these studies offered helpful insights into the social values of young Malaysians. More research is needed to explore young Malaysians' values from a more social perspective. There is a great need to closely examine the similarities and differences of young people's attitudes towards social relationships in the context of separate religious and ethnic groups.

Additionally, data regarding values would be more effective if it were conducted in a natural, everyday setting, rather than through surveys. This suggests looking at the lives of young people from a broader perspective, involving the cultural resources used on a daily basis that shape their values and lifestyles. In short, it is essential to get a rounded feel of Malaysia's youth culture.

2.4 Malaysian Youth Cultures

In order to really grasp the situation of young Malaysians, it is important to take into consideration the complexity of Malaysian society, one that consists of differences in ethnicity, class, education, religion, language and geographical location, which in itself produces young Malaysians of various identities.

For example, young Malaysian Chinese who receive Chinese education have the tendency to develop a penchant for Hong Kong popular music and films because of their proficiency in Chinese languages (Tan, 2004). Carstens' (2003) study shows that young Malaysian Chinese consume overseas Chinese films and programmes partly to enhance their proficiency in their own language. On the other hand, Chinese students who attend national schools are more inclined to favour English songs because they are more conversant in English. To further complicate things, religion and class differentiate young Malays. Young urban Malays tend to prefer Western popular culture to local Malay songs, whereas the more religious Malays listen to Islamic nasyid music and Malay songs rather than English songs. A third section of Malay youth, which is becoming more prevalent, includes religiously conscientious Malays who prefer a mix of global and local culture. They wear a *hijab* with jeans and t-shirts, while listening to American and Japanese songs, rather than adhering to Malay popular culture.

The following section focuses on several aspects of the lives of young Malaysians –socio-cultural lives at home and consumption of popular culture and new media. Aside from the various identities that have been identified in previous local studies, this section seeks to offer another aspect of young Malaysians' lives.

2.4.1 Socio-Cultural Lives

Young Malaysians' lives, irrespective of ethnicity, religion and class, are very much influenced by religion, custom and culture. However, it is the level of attachment of their parents to religion and ethnic culture at home that differentiates young Malaysians from one another.

Thus, some young Malaysians have a more liberal upbringing. Also, religion, ethnic culture and values permeate their social worlds, such as through school or the media. Ethnic minorities tend to take extra measures to preserve the cultural identity of their children.

This is exemplified by Indian parents who go to the extent of sending at least one of their children to a Tamil medium school or Indian language classes. Young Malaysian Indians also attend Hindu religious classes or Indian classical dance and *Sangeetham* (carnatic vocals) classes as a way of strengthening their ethnic and cultural identity (Balasubramaniam, 2006). Similarly, Chinese parents who wish their children to be able to continue speaking, reading and writing in their mother tongue send their children to Chinese medium schools (Tan, 2004). Young Kadazandusun, who comprise the majority of Christian *Bumiputera* face a much more mixed cultural upbringing. Young Kadazandusuns have to create a balance between attending church and its activities with the other aspects of their lives.

Islam is a way of life for the Malays, thus their activities and worldview essentially revolve around the religion. Learning to read the Quran and other aspects of becoming a Muslim, such as fasting and prayers, are integral parts

of Islamic parenting. By the age of seven, a child generally has to start to pray and join their family in congregation prayers at home. Malay parents in urban areas are most conscientious about their children's religious and moral education. It is said that although Malaysian schools compel Muslim students to attend Islamic Studies, their parents still send them for extra religious classes outside school (Abdul Rahman, 2002). However, the enforcement of this practice varies from one family to another, depending on the degree of religious consciousness of the family. Nevertheless, learning to read the Quran, praying and fasting is something that becomes part of almost all Malay families' home lives.

The Islamic resurgence between the late 1960s and 1970s led many Malays, especially the younger generation, to become more religiously conscious. Various studies have shown how this transformed the social landscape of the country. The resurgence emerged as a response to the failure of the NEP to help the Muslim Malays, in which the Islamic model of development was believed to be the best alternative (Zainah, 1987). According to Jomo and Ahmad Shabery (1992), the resurgence was a 'cultural response' led by several Islamic groups who fought for more spiritual lifestyles against secularism. The influence of the movement was significant. The number of young Muslims wearing Islamic attire rose from the period before the resurgence occurred. In the early 1960's, the majority of Malay women did not wear a headscarf, choosing instead Western clothing. However, after the influence of the Islam resurgence, Muslim women begin donning the modest Malay traditional attire – *baju kurung* and a headscarf. Discarding Western mini-skirts and dresses, the headscarf is becoming a natural part of Malaysian Muslims' identity (Zainah, 1987).

With the state widely promoting Islam in various aspects of public life, such as the introduction of Islamic banking, television broadcasts of national and international Quranic reading competitions during the month of Ramadhan, the call to prayer on Malaysian television and radio, Islam has moved from being a way of life in Malay homes to the official Malaysian culture. The state is active in promoting Islam and its values in the public sphere, but only for the

Muslims. This is why Malaysia is often regarded to as one of the most moderate Islamic countries. The implication of this development is that over the years, young Muslims have tended to blend two identities – religion and modernity.

In general, whether religious or ethnic cultural identity is more prominent in their lives, young Malaysians inevitably do not lead a life that is completely free from tradition. What differentiates between them is how their parents set their home lives and, of course, how young people perceive forces of tradition and modern values for themselves.

2.4.2 The Lifestyles of Malaysian Youths

Studies to understand Malaysian youths and their lifestyles in the age of globalisation have been varied, but are still limited in documenting the cultural practices in the everyday lives of young people. In a study conducted by Latiffah et al (2009), 30 young people of all ethnicities were interviewed. During the course of their study, it was found that young people own the latest communication technologies, such as *iPods*, *Blackberry*s and laptops, and have access to the Internet at home. They watch television, either direct from the set or streamed from the Internet, and would watch television with their parents, except certain programmes that their parents deemed 'unsuitable.' These programmes they opt to watch friends (ibid). Young Malaysians also rely on the Internet for sex education.

A survey conducted in Malaysia by *Synovate Malaysia* in 2009 offered information from 900 respondents. This study showed that 35% of young Malaysians use the Internet most of the time, while a quarter of them spend more time watching their favourite shows on television (www.nst.com.my/CurrentNews/NST/Sunday/National/25259571/Article/index.html). This shows that in spite of having access to the Internet, and other forms of communication technology like mobile phones, watching television remains the main form of media activity.

However, the study did not delve into the context of their consumption. In addition, it did not specify the socio-economic status and the geographical location of the young Malaysians surveyed. Another glimpse of young Malaysians' lifestyle can be seen in the work of Samsudin & Latifah (1999), who attempted to explore young Malaysians' identity and media consumption in the post-NEP era.

Table 2.1: Leisure and Recreational Activities of Young Malaysians

Leisure Activity	13-15 yrs	16-20 yrs	21-25 yrs
Shopping Malls	94%	93%	97%
Cinema	53%	58%	65%
Place of Worship	89%	84%	89%
Restaurant	95%	95%	97%
Self-Defense	38%	36%	26%
Uniform org	75%	62%	34%
Concert/Theater	47%	51%	54%
Religious activities	79%	78%	79%
Charity Work	76%	68%	63%
Karaoke/pub/disco	71%	54%	75%
Video centre/			
Cybercafé	48%	54%	46%

Source : Samsudin &Latiffah (1999)

Table 2.1 above shows the results of questionnaires completed by about 1,700 young Malaysians of all ethnicities, ages, genders and classes on how and where leisure time was spent. This table attempts to show a balance of leisure, such as browsing and spending time at shopping malls and restaurants, and religious activities as well.

The success of Malaysia's economic plans and the country's commitment to trade liberalisation in the 1990s also saw the Malaysian society becoming highly mediated (Samsudin & Latiffah, 1999). Depending on their socio-economic status and their geographical location, Malaysians have wide access to the media. In their latest study conducted by Latiffah et al (2009), consumption of the media has now become one of the major social activities

in young Malaysians' lives. Table 2.2 below reveals the large amount of time spent watching television, listening to the radio and consuming new media sources.

Table 2.2: Patterns of media consumption among young Malaysians

Media Use	**16-20 hours per week**	**21-25 hours per week**
Watching Terrestrial Television	18	19
Watching Satellite Television	15	12
Personal Computer	14	16
Surfing Internet	7	12
Playing Video Games	6	7
Listening to Radio	15	20
Reading Newspaper	5	7
Using other computer software	7	8

These are insufficient in describing young Malaysians' identity because there is no indication of what these mean to their sense of 'self', nor did it succeed in demonstrating a shift of 'values' from those of collectivism to individualism.

2.5 Managing Inter-ethnic Relations in a Plural Society

As Malaysia boasts of being multiethnic and multicultural, such cultural diversity can sometimes pose a challenge to inter-ethnic relations. Therefore, managing ethnic relations becomes one of the biggest challenges for any country in a plural society. It is important to stress here that these differences need to be managed carefully to avoid problems of cultural and religious sensitivity. Owing to the fact that Malaysia had once experienced an ethnic riot in 1969 between the Malays and non-Malays, it became apparent that managing ethnic relations needed to become a top priority for the government. Various steps have been taken to achieve this goal.

2.5.1 Education

Education is one of the key areas that the state foresaw as an effective tool in managing ethnic relations among young people. Historically, Malaysia's education policy has always been to create an education system that will lead to a united Malaysian with a clear sense of Malaysian consciousness. The need to do so was particularly crucial since Malaysia's education system is characterised by the presence of vernacular schools. Notions of 'national identity' have been made implicit to the young through education, so that being 'Malaysian' is not something that is taught but rather comes naturally to mind. It is so natural that it is like having "a nose and two ears" (Gellner, 1983: 6). In the years before independence, the government already was conscious of the need to 'nationalise' existing schools in Malaysia as a means of uniting the people.

Based on two major education reports – The Education Committee Report, 1956 (The Razak Report) and the Education Review Committee Report, 1960 (The Rahman Talib Report) – national identity was to be constructed through the use of Malay as the medium of instruction, one standard curriculum and common public examinations for all (Singh & Mukherjee, 1993).

The May 13th ethnic riot [vi] pushed the government to intensify national integration and characteristically a 'Malaysian identity' and culture. With the New Economic Policy (NEP) and National Cultural Policy (NCP[vii]) as the main national policies underpinning all measures to achieve national unity, conscious efforts were taken to construct a distinctive Malaysian identity in textbooks. The use of Malay as a medium of instruction, in addition to being a language subject, for vernacular [viii]schools involving Chinese and Tamil schools, has meant that the language has a far reaching implication for the next generation of Malaysians. First, non-Malay students become trilingual, proficient in Malay, English and Mandarin/Tamil, while Malay students are bilingual, speaking Malay and English at school. The decision to transform Malaysia's education system into a 'national' system was, in some sense, an

effective way of creating national identity. With the new generation able to speak, read and write in Malay, it was believed that the ideals and aspirations of the state could be easily communicated, as they would be able to understand them literally and also laterally. According to Gellner (1983), the initial step taken towards forming a nation is through the creation of a 'high culture' in the form of a mass standardised education system.

'High culture' refers to employing one standard medium of instruction to enable effective communication among multiethnic citizen where shared meanings exist. It enables standardised knowledge to be imparted because it is taught based on one common language, understood by all. It is through schools, Gellner (1983) goes on to argue, that the task of inculcating deep loyalty to the nation in its citizens and maintaining the high cultures has helped to organise people. A standardised curriculum plays an important part in the creation of a nation with a clear national identity.

Textbooks are written with a local Malaysian context and perspective. Subjects, like Geography, teach students about the 13 Malaysian states, their economic activities and the exact location of the capital. It is essential that young Malaysians know the existence and the exact location of the 13 states first before anything else.

This is a strategic move towards creating an 'imagined political community' where a sense of belonging is built based on a sense of pride, not only among the three major races, but also among the inhabitants of Peninsular and both East Malaysia. Young people from Peninsular Malaysia may not have otherwise known about people in Sabah and Sarawak, but through education, they can feel like they have known their Sabahan and Sarawakian peers as if they could "meet them, or even hear of them" (Anderson, 1991: 6) despite having the South China Sea between them. Peninsular Malaysian students can equally share the pride of having Mt. Kinabalu, the highest mountain in Southeast Asia, with their Sabahan peers.

Similarly, young Sabahans and Sarawakians can identify Kuala Lumpur as the site of the National Monument, Muzium, Parliament, Merdeka Square and even the location of the National Palace. They will know it as a city of importance where major events take place and a symbol of their nationality. Over the years, the Malaysian government has streamlined its strategies to improving inter-ethnic relations by attempting to achieve two objectives. One is to teach young people about all the traditional customs, beliefs and religious teachings, in an attempt to instil in them tolerance for other Malaysians. The second is to imbue a strong sense of pride about being Malaysian. The concept of *Bangsa Malaysia* is most evident here in that Malaysians can exist with their distinct ethnic identities, but all share the common pride of being Malaysian.

To achieve this aim, more subjects have been introduced to Malaysian schools with a heavy emphasis on educating and disseminating the definition of the Malaysian culture and way of life. As Brown (2007: 318) rightly says, "public education in Malaysia – particularly, but not exclusively, at the pre-university level – is promoted as a nation-building tool, seeking to inculcate a sense of Malaysian-ness and patriotism".

Hence, one finds that subjects such as moral education, local studies, history and civics and citizenship have been introduced for that purpose. This became evident with the introduction of the idea of 'cultural diversity' and recognising Malaysian culture in schools from various perspectives. For example, incivics and citizenships, young Malaysians are taught the various principles of all the major religions of the country, and the local customs and traditions of all the major ethnic groups, to promote understanding of different ethnic cultures of Malaysia (http://www.moe.gov.my/bpk/index.php?option=com_wrapper&Itemid=66).

In the primary four syllabuses, students are taught to recognise and appreciate Malaysian culture, which is defined as multicultural. One of the ways to do so is to discuss the local traditions of the existing ethnic groups by

studying eating customs (http://www.moe.gov/bpk/index.php?option=com-wrapper&Itemid=66).

For example, Malays, *Bumiputeras* and Indians eat with their fingers, while the Chinese use chopsticks. In the primary five syllabus, students are taught various forms of traditional music anddance, languages and dialects, and dressing customs, as well as the appropriate way to visit a Malaysian home ((http://www.moe.gov/bpk/index.php?option=com-wrapper&Itemid=66)). In secondary school, Malaysian students begin to learn the fundamental principles of all the major religions in the country. They learn the significance of religious and cultural festivities, like Eid Fitr and Eid Adha (Muslims), the Chinese New Year (Chinese), Wesak Day (Buddhist), Deepavali and Thaipusam (Hindu & Indians), Christmas (Christians) and *Tadau Kaamatan* (Kadazandusun).

Interethnic relations are also one of the key topics taught in History, where an aim in Malaysia is the development of an ethnically integrated nation (myschoolnet.ppk.kpm.my/sp_hsp/sej/hsp-sej-f4a.pdf). However, it is through History lessons that the ideals of national identity are given heavy emphasis. Brown (2007) criticises such a move as an attempt to use education to strengthen the position of the existing government.

Irrespective of how it is seen, the importance of teaching young people about all the major religions and customs of multiethnic Malaysians cannot be denied. In fact, students are asked to plan a presentation of traditional attire of one of the local ethnic groups under the present curriculum. Such subjects, topics and class activities did not exist between the 1970s and 1990s.

The sole purpose of nationalising education was to ensure young Malaysians had a clear sense of ethnic and national identity. This is the idea that Malaysians see themselves first as ‘Malaysians,’ then identified by ethnicity second.

2.5.2 Multi-ethnic Media

The media is the next most important institution that the state used to manage ethnic relations. One of the main characteristics of Malaysian media is that it is prohibited to discuss, criticise or question the religion and ethnic culture of any ethnic group in the country. This prohibition is a measure to prevent the recurrence of the 13 May 1969 ethnic riot.

Since the 1970s, no media source in Malaysia has been allowed to conduct public discussions or criticism of the special rights of the *Malays/Bumiputera*, the position of the king and state rulers, The Federal Constitutions and Islam, or condemn the culture and religion of the non-Malays. This continues even now that the Malaysian broadcasting industry has been commercialised.

The state ruled that the Malaysian media was to ensure continuity in terms of cultural identity towards the ethnic community it served. This explains the existence of multiethnic media in Malaysia. Multi-language broadcasts began in 1963 when Malaysia first launched its television service to the nation. According to Kitley and Zaharom (2003), the multiple language programming was part of the government's plan of nation building after the Communist insurgency. However, as times change, the multiethnic media has become a unique feature of the Malaysian media system. With such a system, one is able to witness the proliferation of multi-ethnic print and electronic media. In Peninsular Malaysia, Malay, Chinese and Indian readers are able to read newspapers and magazines in Malay, Chinese and Tamil, while in East Malaysia, such as in Sabah, a unique system is found. Malay, English and Kadazandusun languages are used daily. Broadcasting services, such as the radio and television, are also multiethnic.

The main purpose of this is to allow the promotion of the cultures and languages amongst all ethnic groups, as well as to fulfil the entertainment needs of different ethnic groups.

2.5.3 National Development Policies (1970-onwards)

One important aspect concerning Malaysia's national development policies is that it is very much influenced by the state of ethnic relations among its people. The New Economic Policy (NEP) (1971-1990) was introduced, largely in reaction to the ethnic riots that erupted in 1969.While Malaysia was experiencing steady export growth prior to 1970, critics claim there was insufficient focus given to equity distribution among different ethnicities (Malaysia, 1965).

In terms of income, there is a wide disparity among different ethnicities. For example, the average monthly household income for Malaysian homes was RM264. A Malaysian Chinese's gross monthly household income of RM394, followed by Malaysian Indian's incomes averaging RM304.The average for a Malay household wasthe lowest,only RM172 (http://www.epu.gov.my/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=a169673a-7e1f-4088-9625-3a604e340e73&groupId=34492). The socio-economic imbalance among ethnic groups in Malaysia resulted in ethnic riots (http://www.epu.gov.my/web/guest/neweconomicpolicy).

The NEP, which was introduced not only for growth and equity distribution,also aimed to promote social cohesion among different ethnicities based on two main objectives:

- "To reduce absolute poverty, irrespective of race, through raising income levels and increasing employment opportunities for all Malaysians; and
- To restructure society to correct economic imbalances, and to reduce and eventually eliminate the identification of race with economic function"(http://www.epu.gov.my/web/guest/neweconomicpolicy).

Apart from economic approaches, several measures have been identified in trying to create a national identity, an identity that all ethnic groups could be identified. This was documented in the Second Malaysia Plan (1971). Those measures were:-

(a) "The formulation of educational policies designed to encourage common values and loyalties amongst all communities and in all region;
(b) The cultivation of a sense of dedication to the nation through services of all kind;
(c) The careful development of national language and literature and of art and music;
(d) The emergence of truly nationalsymbols and institutions based on the cultures and traditions of the society;"

(Malaysia, 1971: 3)

However, the government's move was widely criticised as favouring the Malays and Bumiputera group over other ethnic groups like the Chinese and Indians (Jomo, 2004). Yet, even as the NEP drew close to an end in 1989, the Chinese were already averaging a gross monthly household income of RM1,631, followed by Indians averaging RM1,209. Malays remained the lowest, averaging RM940 (http://www.epu.gov.my/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=a169673a-7e1f-4088-9625-3a604e340e73&groupId=34492).

Despite the constant criticism, the thrust for more development that is inclusive all ethnicities has continued with subsequent national development policies from 1990 onwards.

Eradicating poverty remains its main agenda,and providing education for all ethnic groups is seen as the vehicle for upward social mobility.The new plan is referred to as The Third Outline Perspective Plan,2001-2010 (http://www.epu.gov.my/html/themes/epu/images/common/pdf/3rd_OPP_cont_chap4.pdf).

Industrial and vocational training was provided for the poor in the rural areas, in addition to credit facilities to aid them in starting businesses (.(http://www.epu.gov.my/html/themes/epu/images/common/pdf/3rd_OPP_cont_chap4.pdf). Various schemes were drawn up under the Third Outline Perspective Plan aimed towards low-income Malaysians.

The government's attempt to achieve 'development' in a holistic sense is the most important feature in Malaysia's national development policies. These policies were created with the hope that while achieving material and wealth development, the fruit of those developments was to be equally shared by all ethnicities. This serves as the basis of Malaysia's cultural values, characterised by balancing the material with the spiritual, cultural and humanitarian success, and of becoming modern yet still traditional in spirit and values.

2.6 Challenges to Inter-Ethnic Relations

Apart from the challenge of changes in social values, nothing is more challenging than the kinds of tension and problem that arise in managing inter-ethnic relations. Past problems of inter-ethnic relations were rooted in economic issues where the ruling government, which was, incidentally, Malay-Muslim dominated, was accused of launching national pro-Malay/*Bumiputera* economic policies at the expense of the Chinese and Indians (Gomez, 1999).

But nothing is more sensitive than the challenges concerning culture and religion. As Malaysians' religious faith is often identified through their ethnicity, ethnic identity became fixed. For instance, because the Malays are all Muslims, the Federal Constitution defines Malays as Muslim, and vice versa, under Article 160 (a) and (b). Consequently, it is hard to separate 'Malay' from 'Islam' in Malaysia.

> "Islam is not only the faith of the Malays: it serves also as one of the core foundations upon which their self-identity is based."
> (Frith, 2000: 117)

This proves very problematic because in reality, there are non-Malay Muslims among the Kadazandusun, Chinese and Indians, although the number is not as large as amongst the Malays. The consequence of this definition has put non-Malay-Muslims in a dilemma, as it may imply that as Muslims they have now become 'Malays' in Malaysia. This is indeed a major issue, as this restrains non-Malays from becoming Muslim while retaining their ethnic identity as 'Chinese,' 'Indian' or 'Kadazandusun.' Among non-Malays, the Chinese are particularly sensitive to this definition because the community perceives being Muslim as needing to assume a new surname, as they would now be known as 'Malays.' Various studies have been conducted to highlight the problems faced by Chinese who become Muslims (Lam, 2004; Tan, 2000).

Because Chinese culture places a heavy emphasis on family lineage, especially continuing the family surname, it has been perceived that conversion to Islam means disowning one's cultural identity. Moreover, before 1996, converts were required to take a Muslim name;Women were required to adopt 'binte Abdullah' (daughter of the servant of God) and men 'bin Abdullah' (son of the servant of God) as their surname (Lam, 2004). This heightens the perception that conversion means discarding one's ethnic identity.

This problem is significant because it affects ethnic relations between the Malays and non-Malays, especially with the Chinese. According to Tan (2000), Muslim Chinese face a dilemma because the Chinese community does not accept their status as Muslim. They are viewed as having become 'Malay' while the Malay community often suspects they converted to gain the special privileges accorded to Malays. Due to this problem, the number of Chinese becoming 'Muslim' is rather small, accounting for only about 0.4% (ibid). As the number of non-Malays becoming 'Muslim' has steadily increased from 3,826 in 1991 to 7,377 in

2004(http://www.islam.gov.my/informasi/statistiksaudarabaru.html), the issues pertaining to the definition of ‘Muslims’ as Malays remain critical.

Conversion to Islam also leads to the issue of interethnic marriage, as one of the main reasons for conversion to Islam is marriage between a Muslim and a non-Muslim. Daniels (2005), who conducted an extensive ethnographic study on the issue of building national culture in Malaysia, found that beneath the surface of the purported harmonious multiethnic relations in Malaysia lie tensions among non-Muslims towards Islam. Interethnic marriage between Muslims and non-Muslims also raises the pertinent issue of preserving one's ethnic culture and identity. Non-Muslims see a problem with marrying a Muslim, particularly Malay, since Islam clashes with their ethnic culture and religion.

When marriages take place, some of the ethnic culture of the non-Muslim, such as offering prayer to their ancestors and food restrictions, can no longer be practised. Non-Muslims feel they can no longer maintain their old way of life once they have married a Muslim. However, if a Catholic girl marries a Hindu or Christian Indian, it is a different situation altogether. Even though there are differences in beliefs and cultural practises, these problems are often negotiated (Daniels, 2005).

For example, if a Catholic girl wishes to marry her Hindu boyfriend, her family, through the Catholic priest, negotiates with the boyfriend about the differences. An agreement can be made for the children born out of the marriage to become Catholics even if the husband does not wish to convert (Daniels, 2005).

It is also said that in contrast to Islam, which is very firm about conversion, Christians are much more flexible about the issue of conversion. Perhaps what makes this negotiation easier is that non-Muslims do not have many food restrictions. Christians, Hindus and Buddhists have no prohibitions over the consumption of pork, which is forbidden for Muslims. In addition, marriage between a Buddhist-Taoist and a Hindu is also easier because they pray to

similar gods and deities (Daniels, 2005). Such problems involving differences in religious beliefs, practices and restrictions are inevitable in Malaysia. It has become a factor that most couples and families consider before a relationship begins with someone of a different race and religion. This is most pronounced where interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims are concerned.

As Malaysia follows the teachings of the Holy Quran, it does not allow mixed marriage between Muslims and non-Muslims. It is also forbidden for Muslims to marry a non-Muslim under Islamic law in Malaysia (Tan et al., 2008). Although there are exceptions in Islam, where a Muslim man may marry a non-Muslim woman without conversion, the Malaysian government has decided that a Muslim man must marry a Muslim woman, allowing for conversion. This is believed the best way of escalating religious conflict.

As mentioned in this section, conversion to Islam, especially via marriage, is never easy. Marriage with Muslim-Malays is challenging because it means adapting to their ethnic cultural practices. For instance, if a non-Muslim Chinese marries a Muslim-Malay, he or she would have to conform or adopt the Malay way of life since such marriages involve different religions and ethnicities (Tan et al., 2008). However, it would be easier if he or she married a Chinese Muslim, where the issue of different cultures does not arise. Marriage with a Muslim-Malay also means that the non-Muslim family has to adjust to the change in lifestyle and beliefs of their children. The state might have tried to promote racial and religious tolerance through schools, which have to teach young people tolerance and respect for different religions and customs. However, in reality, this would only be useful if interethnic relations do not lead to marriages among Malaysians of different ethnicities and religions. In addition, schools do not address issues pertaining to interethnic marriages where conversion is involved.

Thus far, young people's perception of interethnic marriages between Malay-Muslims and non-Muslims, and whether this has affected their relations with peers of different religions and ethnicities, has not been widely explored.

Neither has the effectiveness of the dissemination of the idea of respecting different cultures and traditions and tolerance of other religions.

Furthermore, the reality of issues the issue of tolerance in interethnic marriages ties to individual ethnic identity, requires some study. Finally, it is worth investigating how young people make use of the knowledge they gain from school about respecting diversity when dealing with issues of interethnic marriage. What is the position of young people in this case? How do young Malays, Indians, Chinese and Kadazandusuns react to the outstanding issue of the conversion of someone of a different ethnic culture where inter-religious marriage involving a Muslim is concerned?

2.6.1 Shifting Identities in Malaysian Societies

The definition of 'ethnicity' from the primordial and fixed perspective is indeed problematic in this case. This occurs when someone from a different ethnicity embraces a different religion, thus changing the existing notion of his or her ethnicity. When the constitution defined the 'Malays' as the 'Muslims', it created a challenge for newly-converted Malaysian Muslims.

Jan Stark (2006) provides an account of the dilemma faced by Malaysian Indian Muslims, who are best described as 'shifting identities.' They are pulled to become "Hindu" by virtue of their ethnicity, but are also 'Malay' due to becoming Muslim. Because one's ethnicity is often defined through religion, ethnicity is, therefore, fixed and bound by religion. This leaves no room for the possibility that through social interactions, people are often drawn to embrace a new religious faith. Hindu/Indians face this predicament if they wish to become Muslim.

Stark (2006:383) argues that Malaysian Indian Muslims have shifted between "resisting and adapting" to state policies that strictly define one's identity. A similar problem is also encountered by Malaysian Chinese Muslims (Ma, 2005). Malaysian Chinese Muslims, as a result of their religious status, find

themselves shifting between 'ethnicity' and 'religion.' As with the Indian Muslims, the Malaysian Chinese Muslims are viewed suspiciously by the non-Chinese Muslim community, and are not accepted as 'Chinese' by the non-Muslim Chinese community. In the end, they are left in a state of "ethnic limbo" (Ma, 2005:89) due to the static definition of identity and ethnicity.

Problems relating to 'shifting identities' in Malaysia are not only confined to non-Muslims converting to Islam, but also Malay-Muslims who wish to change religious faith. Kortteinen (2008) highlighted a case where a Malay woman, who was a Muslim, changed her faith to Christianity. The woman, *Lina Joy*, went to the higher court to have her religious status of 'Muslim' be removed from her identity card (MyKad).This challenged the meaning of 'ethnicity' and Malaysian identity because she was an ethnic '*Malay.*' She feared backlash for having her past religious status removed from her identity card.

While there were 7,377 newly Muslim converts in 2004,(http://www.islam.gov.my/informasi/statistiksaudarabaru.htm), how many of those were ethnic Indian, Chinese or any other non-Malays who became Muslims was not specified. There was also no information regarding if those conversions were due to marriage or done out of their own free will. In addition, there are no figures on the actual number of apostasy among the Malays to date. This is probably due to the fact that it is a highly politically sensitive issue in Malaysia. Such figures, if there are any, have not been publicly released or made easily available to researchers (Lam, 2004).

Nevertheless, 'shifting identities' is believed to be small in number compared to the majority of ethnic groups that are largely identified through their original religion. The reason for this may be due to the difficulties that arise stemming from the definition given by the constitution, as well as the social, political and economic repercussions that comes with shifting to a new 'identity.'

Another important point to discuss is the compromise in terms of religious practices through marriages between an Indian/Hindu or Christian with a Buddhist/Chinese. This practice does not change the socio-demographic

profile of the Malaysian population. This is because the compromise is only in terms of practice, but does not lead to an official conversion of religious faith. The religious identities of resulting children may remain either Hindu or Christian, depending on the compromise made before marriage. This is in contrast to conversion to Islam, where it is compulsory for children to become Malay-Muslims.

All of this shows how two conflicting identities 'authority-defined' and 'everyday-defined,' suggested by Shamsul (1996), operate in Malaysian society. What Shamsul failed to mention is that varying identities in Malaysia are often contradictory and conflicting rather than in harmony. Therefore, that is how Malaysian identity should be studied.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter provides a glimpse of the social and economic realities surrounding the lives of Malaysians. Since independence, Malaysia has strived to transform its economy from a fully agrarian to an industrialised economy. This marks a shift from tradition to modernity. This chapter also shows the fluidity of Malaysian social identities regarding religious identity, which challenges the 'ethno-religious' way of defining Malaysian ethnicity.

Although Malaysia aims to be a modern and industrialized country, it also seeks to maintain its local cultural identity through the dissemination of cultural and religious values to young people at school. Similarly, Malaysian parents strive to inculcate ethnic and religious identities in their children. Such conditions well describe the contrast of tradition and modernity in the lives of young Malaysians. More importantly, the complexity of combining modernity and tradition mean that young Malaysians' are facing various form of identities issues, regarding ethnicity and religion, as well as individual, modern subjects. Due to the fixed notion of 'identity' and 'ethnicity,' young Malaysians sense of self is most definitely affected. Therefore, it is within this myriad of economic, political and social realities that young Malaysians are forced form an identity.

Unfortunately, it is not widely known how young Malaysians negotiate their identity against the conflicting sources of ‘authority’ and ‘everyday-defined’ identities in their everyday lives, with the fixed notion of ‘identity’ and ‘ethnicity’ in the media. Despite focusing on media penetration and cultural identity, Samsudin and Latiffah (2009) fail to show how the media is used to construct young Malaysians’ various social identities. They also failed to show what new identities are emerging based on this situation. While numerous international studies have highlighted the contrast between lifestyle and cultural values among young people, articulated through media consumption (Roussou, 2002), there is yet such a study among young Malaysians. This is particularly pertinent, as Malaysia is becoming an increasingly mediated society. It is based on this inadequacy that this study is intrigued by what social identities are being articulated by young Malaysians, and if ethnic groups are affected differently, by the media in the next chapter.

Endnotes

vi. May 13th, -an ethnic riot that broke outin 1969 when the government-led coalition parties – Alliance lost to majority of seats opposition parties - Gerakan and DAP. In celebrating their victory, it was said that Gerakan and DAP's supporter held a parade in Kuala Lumpur, where Chinese and Indian demonstrators jeered at the Malays. According to Means (1970), the demonstrators believed that they succeeded in overthrowing pro-Malay policies and this sends a wrong signal to the Malays. Malays, viewed this as challenging them. Hence, this sparks riots which resulted in a state of emergency was declared. The implication of this event was that fostering close ethnic relations would remained the government's main concern in every policies formulated.

vii. National Cultural Policy 1971 was introduced in 1971 as an attempt to create one common national culture that all Malaysians can identify themselves to as a national identity.
Principally, Malaysian national culture consists of three criteria :-

A) a Malaysian national culture is one that has to be based on the culture of the indigenous of the region;
B) However, cultures from non-Malay groups that are deemed suitable would also be incorporated into the national culture;
C) Islam will be the most important element in the national culture
(A.Aziz Deraman, 2001)

However, NCP was rejected by various quarters from among the non-Malays because they claimed in reality, only the cultures of the Malays and Islam were being featured as the national culture, leaving out the cultures of the other ethnic groups (Mustafa & Wang, 1996)

viii. Vernacular- In the context of Malaysia, such schools refer to Mandarin and Tamil schools, where the main medium of instruction is Mandarin and Tamil. The fact that Chinese and Indian political and cultural activists continue to fight for the existence of such schools sparks a debate on racial polarisation among young people. Non-Malay students who attended vernacular schools are more fluent in speaking their own mother tongue than those who attended national government school, which uses Malay and English as their medium of instruction.

Chapter 3

The Malaysian Media System

3.0 Introduction

The Malaysian broadcasting industry has gone through two phases of development. This chapter is divided into these two phases, the pre-privatisation phase (1963-1983) and the privatisation phase (1984-onwards). Commercialisation of the broadcasting sector in the late 1990s saw an important trend. Media narrowly focused on young people, although they were potentially an important niche market audience for advertisers.

In spite of the commercialisation of the media, the state impresses upon all Malaysian media, irrespective of whether it is a public or commercial in source, that they have a role in nation-building, particularly to influence the young.

Nation-building in this sense refers to managing ethnic relations and promoting local culture and religion as a Malaysian cultural identity. This is done by introducing a multi-ethnic media.

Essentially, this chapter shows the kind of media environment that young Malaysians are exposed to as well as the culture that the media produces.

3.1 Malaysian Media in General

The Malaysian media is unique in system and content. Due to the multiethnic nature of its population, the Malaysian media is multiethnic, be it print or electronic. The national newspapers are available in Malay, English, Tamil and Mandarin, and in East Malaysia, such as in Sabah, the national dailies and regional newspapers are trilingual. They are essentially English dailies. but the

middle section is divided into Malay and Kadazandusun sections. Therefore, it is not exactly an English daily, but more accurately a trilingual daily for local Sabahan readers.

In the electronic media, with the exception of television, all languages – Malay, English, Mandarin, Tamil and all the languages of the indigenous people in East Malaysia – are broadcast. Malaysian television broadcasts in four languages – Malay, English, Mandarin and Tamil. Multi-language broadcasts began in 1963 when Malaysia first launched its television service to the nation. The real challenge was to decide which kinds of services were appropriate for a multiethnic audience. The idea was to broadcast programmes in three different languages – Malay, Chinese and Tamil – on one channel based on a ratio of 45:40:10 (Karthigesu, 1994b). However, the government had to find ways of balancing English programmes in RTM1, because it still relied on imported programmes to fill airtime. This resulted in a new language distribution ratio of 45 (Malay):30 (English):20 (Chinese): 5 (Tamil) (Karthigesu, 1994a). According to Kitley and Zaharom (2003), one of the reasons for multiple language programming in broadcasting is the government's plan for nation-building and national culture.

Over time, the above formula was revised. What remains is the idea that a Malaysian media does not only exist in the Malay language but also the languages of other ethnic groups. Irrespective of the type of ownership, whether public or commercial, all media sources are expected to play a role in nation-building, fostering national unity and promoting local cultures and values. One ways for the media to fulfil this role is to allow legislative means from the state regulate the content, rather than self-regulation. The government felt that if a constructive role was played by the media, it would foster ethnic relations and local cultures. Some critics still argue that the introduction of media-related laws are a means of controlling democracy in Malaysia.

The existence of specific laws, such as the Sedition Act 1984, serve to regulate the Malaysian media from publishing, reporting and commenting on potentially sensitive issues, such as religion and race (Umi, 2002). In addition, other laws, such as the Defamation Act 1948, the Printing Presses and Publication Act 1984 and the Official Secrets Act 1986, were introduced to control the dissemination of issues that may provoke racial unrest. All have been widely criticised as a means for the state to control public discourse (Zaharom, 2002).

Socially, the Malaysian government has resorted to introducing a rating system for films and television, arguably as a means of weeding out cultures and values that are deemed unsuitable for a Malaysian audience, especially for young people. The rating system is as follows:

U: general viewing suitable for all levels of society;
18SG: 18 + with non-excessive violent/horrifying scenes;
18SX:18 + with non-excessive sex scenes;
18PA:18 + with political/religious/counter-culture elements; and
18P:18+ with a combination of two or more elements.
(Umi, 2002)

Elements considered unsuitable are sex, horror, violence, profanity, and religious blasphemy, as well as political ideologies that seem to challenge the national culture and norms. The broadcasting and multimedia industry is regulated by the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Act. The Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), among others, regulate and monitor the promotion of local cultures and values. The promotion of cultures of all ethnic groups is believed to benefit young Malaysians.

Within this context, the multiethnic Malaysian media must comply with the existing laws and the rating system. Aside from these, the multiethnic media has become a tool for representing the interests of the ethnic community. For example, the Malay dailies usually highlight problems and issues affecting the

Malay and *Bumiputera*s, while Chinese and Tamil newspapers have become a space for both communities to discuss individual issues of concern. In terms of news coverage, all Malaysian media gives due attention to reporting the Prime Minister and events of national interest, with other stories revolving around their own ethnic readers.

In terms of ownership, only the electronic media has two systems of ownership, public and private, while the print media is all privately owned. Consequently, audiences are exposed to different forms of television programmes in terms of content. Programmes on public broadcasting stations tend to closely adhere to national policies.

3.1.1 Pre-Privatisation Era (1963 – 1983) : Public Broadcasting Services - Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM)

The first television network was *Radio Televisyen Malaysia* (RTM), which is under the control of the Department of Broadcasting in the Ministry of Information. This places broadcasting services under the direct control of the state. In the same year, 1969, the ministry issued a directive which states the role of the RTM as:

a) To explain in depth and with the widest possible coverage the policies and programmes of the government in order to ensure maximum understanding by the public;

b) To stimulate public interest and opinion in order to achieve change in line with the requirement of the government;

c) To assist in promoting civic consciousness and fostering the development of Malaysian arts and culture; and

d) To provide suitable elements of popular education, general information and entertainment.
(Radio Television Malaysia Handbook, 1975 cited in Karthigesu, 1988 : 307)

To cater to the needs of all ethnic groups among the Malaysian audience, RTM consists of two channels - RTM 1 & 2 for television (Zaharom, 2002; Mustafa & Wang, 1996).

Even though it was never clearly stated who the target audience for RTM 1 is, it is apparent based on its programmes that it serves predominantly the Malay and Muslim audiences. In addition, RTM 2 offers programmes in Cantonese, Mandarin, Tamil and English, and caters to non-Malays. To supplement the inability of local production houses to produce Chinese and Tamil programmes, RTM tends to outsource these programmes from Hong Kong and India.

As it is under the direct ownership of the government, RTM's news programme, whether in Malay, Mandarin, Tamil or English, reports government activities, plans and speeches, and rarely gives coverage to opposition leaders. Its news programme often gives more prominence to government messages of nation-building and national unity compared to commercial television stations.

The state uses RTM 1 as a tool to disseminate and reaffirm elements of national culture. For instance, there are more Islamic elements in RTM 1; before the start of a broadcast, there is a reading from the Quran. Its talk shows are avenues for official views to be disseminated and national policies to be explained, and often avoids issues of democracy that are sensitive, and religious and cultural issues that allow critical public engagement and debate.

3.1.2 Privatisation Era : Commercialisation of Television Stations

The privatisation of the media began in1984, a year after Malaysia launched its Privatisation Policy. One of the reasons for the commercialisation of television services was to increase the number of entertainment programmes, which RTM was unable to fulfil (Karthigesu, 1994a).

The first commercial television station in Malaysia was TV3, which is handled by a company called *Sistem Television Malaysia Berhad* (STMB). TV3 proved to be more popular than RTM, especially among urban Chinese viewers, because it brought in more of the latest imported Chinese programmes. Prior to TV3, video cassettes (VCR) rentals of Hong Kong films were high due to the lack of sufficient entertainment for non-Malay audiences (Rahmah, 1995). The popularity of TV3 spurred the emergence of more commercial television stations. In 1995, another station called *Metro Vision* was launched, which is owned by a consortium of four companies. Two of them are the Utusan Group and the Melewar Corporation, both of which are closely aligned with the government (Zaharom & Mustafa, 2000). However, *Metro Vision* collapsed during the economic crisis in 1997-8.

The third station isNTV7, which was owned and operated by Natseven TV Bhd but is now a wholly owned subsidiary of the sole media conglomerate in the country – Media Prima Berhad (http://www.ntv7.com.my/Home-2008/About-Us.aspx). Its target audience is urban Chinese and youths. NTV7 first made its appearance in 1998.

Table 3.1 : Lists of type of television services & ownership in Malaysia

Stations	Ownership	Year
Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM 1 & 2)	State-owned	1963
TV3	Commercial	1984
	(terrestrial)	
Metrovision	Commercial	1995
	(terrestrial)	
NTV7	Commercial	1998
	(terrestrial)	
8TV	Commercial	2005
	(terrestrial)	
TV9	Commercial	2006
	(terrestrial)	
Mega TV	Cable operator	1995
		(terminated)
Astro	Satellite TV	1996

Source: Author's own table

The latest station, 8TV, was launched in 2005. TV9 or Channel 9 began operating in 2003, but ceased operation two years later. However, under a new owner, Media Prima, it was re-launched in 2006. Both stations added more choice of entertainment for Malaysian audiences. All four commercial stations – TV3, 8TV, NTV7 and TV9 –are claimed to be successful by owner Media Prima Berhad. Despite owning other media sectors, such as radio and print, television remains Media Prima's major source of revenue. According to its Operation Review report for 2008, all four television stations received a 50% audience share last year (http://www.mediaprima.com.my/pdfs/2008/operationreview09.pdf).

The most important development in the Malaysian broadcasting industry was the advent of Astro (All Asia Television & Radio Organisation). Astro is a cross-media group, which offered the country its first satellite television in 1996. Astro is under Astro Holdings Sdn Bhd, owned by Usaha Tegas Sdn Bhd and its affiliates Khazanah Nasional Berhad (http://www.astro.com.my/portal/indices/index_96.html). Astro has

revolutionised the Malaysian television viewing experience. It links the Malaysian audience with the outside world and opens up their worlds wider than ever before. It imitates global television formats for its local programmes. Astro's customer base has grown. To date, a total of 2.93 million subscribers, or 49% of the total population, of which 61% are urban and 27% are rural subscribers (Astro All Asia Networks Plc, 2010). It boasts of 1.7 million Malay subscribers, 679,000 Chinese subscribers, 319,000 Indian subscribers and 222,000 subscribers from other ethnicities (ibid).From 22 channels in 1996, Astro now offers 119 pay-TV channels across Malaysia and Brunei (http://astroplc.com/09/aboutus).

One of the most attractive features of Astro is that it offers a more diverse choice in terms of local and imported programmes. It is not only diverse in terms of genre but it now has more specific channels for each ethnic group. Astro distributes and produces television programmes in the various languages of Malaysia.

It claims to offer 38,000 first-run hours of original multi-language content, which consists of 31 television channels from various genres (www.astroplc.com/09/aboutus). Malaysian audiences are able to watch the latest programmes from the US, Europe, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and other Asian countries such as the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia. Astro is most attractive to Malaysian Chinese and Indians. The reason is obvious; they are able to watch more of the latest entertainment in their own language rather than relying on free-to-air stations like 8TV, TV3 or RTM2. There are specific channels for the Chinese audience, such as *Astro Wah! Lai Toi,TVBS Asia,Astro Shuang Xin* and *Astro On Demand*.

The entertainment needs of the Malaysian Indians are fulfilled by Astro on *Astro Vaanavil* and *Sun TV.* This channel targets the Tamil audience, but not only broadcasts Tamil programmes, but also other South Indian dialects such Telegu and Malayalam as well (http://www.astro.com.my/epg/channel.php?id=413057). It offers a wide variety of entertainment programmes and genres for the Malaysian Indian

audience. This is one of the reasons why Astro is able to continuously maintain such a high number of viewership among Chinese and Indians, about 89% (Astro All Asia Network Plc, 2009: 27).

Astro also it strives to bring in programmes that focus on sub-ethnic groups of the Chinese, such as Hokkien, as well as Mandarin, Cantonese and Telegu. Thus this has become a continued attraction for these groups. *Celestial Picture* is the subsidiary of Astro that produces aggregates and distributes Chinese films, dramas and entertainment to local Chinese audiences, and is based in Hong Kong (www.celestialpictures.com/level2_et.html). Astro also has a joint venture investment with Sun Direct TV in India (Astro Annual Report, 2010).

For the Malay audience, two of Astros most popular programmes - *Akademi Fantasia and Gelanggang Raja Lawak,* each share a total of 1.2 million viewers. *Akademi Fantasia*, a talent competition reality TV show, won 1.2 million viewers during the finale of its seventh season and *Gelanggang Raja Lawak* equally won 1.2 million viewers during the final of its third season (Astro All Asia Network Plc, 2009).

3.2 Radio

Malaysian radio listeners have a wide variety of radio networks from public broadcasting services and commercial private stations. They can tune into various programmes depending on their musical taste, lifestyle and ethnicity. As with all the other media, a variety of languages are represented on Malaysian radio stations, catering to all ethnic groups.

The National Network of RTM uses the Malay language, but RTM also offers networks in other languages, such as English, Mandarin and Tamil. Perhaps one of the greatest strengths of a government-owned media like RTM is that its radio service is the only one that is able to produce programmes for the *Bumiputera*s in East Malaysia, who speak various indigenous languages.

Networks such as Sabah VFM boast of having multiethnic broadcasts, where local listeners are able to listen to programmes in Kadazan, Dusun, Murut or Bajau. This is the non-Malay network for local listeners. Sabah FM, on the other hand, produces its programmes entirely in Malay (http://www.sabahfm.my/profil.php).

Commercial radio stations focus only on the Malay, English, Tamil and Mandarin languages. Media conglomerates, such as Media Prima Berhad and Astro All Asia Networks, provide commercial radio stations. Under Media Prima Berhad, three radio networks are available – Fly FM (English), Hot FM (Malay) and One FM (http://www.mediaprima.com.my/pdfs/2008/Media%20BAHASA.pdf).

Airtime Management & Programming Sdn Bhd (AMP) manage Radio services by Astro All Asia Networks. This station has about 11 million listeners throughout the country (a 51.2% share of listeners) (Astro All Asia Network, 2009: 35-36). Among its popular radio networks are ERA (Malay), My FM (Chinese), Hitz.fm (English) and THR Raaga (Tamil).

3.3 Print Media

The focus on print media in this section is mainly on newspapers, which are widely consumed by Malaysians. As aforementioned, the multiethnic nature of the Malaysian media means that newspapers in all languages flood the market. They are classified into mainstream and regional dailies.

There are nine Malay-language mainstream dailies, including national and regional dailies and weeklies, such as *Utusan Malaysia, Mingguan Malaysia, Berita Harian, Berita Minggu, Harian Metro* and *Metro Ahad.* Malays as well as other races read these, but because these newspapers tend to focus on the Malay and Muslim community, the majority of the readership is Malay.

English dailies include *The New Straits Times (NST),The Star* and *The Sun.* Among these three, *The Star* is the most popular daily. It is the most read newspaper in Malaysia, with 1,082,000 readers of the weekday editions and 1,022,000readers of the Sunday edition(http://thestar.com.my/info/thestar.asp).

The main Chinese dailies in Malaysia are *Nanyang Siang Pau, Sin Chew Daily* and *Guan Ming Daily*. However, there are also Chinese dailies in East Malaysia that focus on the local Chinese interests in Sabah, such as *OCDN.* Leading Tamil dailies in Malaysia are *Tamil Nesan, Malaysian Nanban* and *Makkal Osai.*

The existence of various newspapers based in varying languages has created an enormous choice of reading materials for Malaysians, who often prefer to read newspapers in their mother tongue.

3.4 Youth Media : International and Local

The past and current developments within the media industry, and the Malaysian media utilised for nation building, impacts young audiences. The fact that the media very often has to be mindful of what is an acceptable 'culture' and entertainment for its audience affects the kind of programmes that target young people. This was further complicated when the government decided to increase the production of local television programmes, as opposed to foreign ones.

The proportion of local television programmes has always been greater than imported programmes. For public broadcasters, such as *Radio Televisyen Malaysia* (RTM), the ratio had always been 70:30 local to imported programmes. In December 2008, Malaysia's Information Minister announced that local programmes would be raised by another 10%, reaching 80% ((www.bernama.com.my/bernama/v5/newsgeneral.php?id=379066). Private television stations were then driven to raise the number of local programmes

through home-grown productions. One reason the private stations followed suit was because despite being commercialised, they will never be completely

independent of the government's influence, particularly regarding media policies (Rahmah, 1995). Therefore, although not directly under the government, they maintain close associations with the government, meaning, they must be 'compliant' with all national policies. This resulted in having more local youth programmes, as opposed to foreign productions.

This section touches on two issues: The types of television programmes available for young people, and the proliferation of youth culture in teenage magazines. This will provide some insights into Malaysia's youth culture through the lens of the media. In terms of television programmes, young Malaysians aren't spared from adult debates regarding the ill effects of television. Parents reacted negatively to the idea of having television at home because they believed that through it their children would be exposed to violence, sex and crime. These fears were expressed in the newspapers in letters to the editor (Karthigesu, 1994a). However, such fears did not deter the government from carrying out its plan. The programmes available for young people in the 1960s to 1980s were very much confined to cartoons and family serial dramas such as *Little House On the Prairie* and *Eight is Enough,* all of which were imported. The top priority of the Ministry of Information at that time was nation building, where all programmes were selected for the benefit of Malaysians in general. Although some programmes were allocated for young people, most were mainly children's programmes, such as cartoons. Otherwise, options for young people were adult family-oriented series.

Imported programmes for children/young people on RTM 1 comprised just 1 hour and 45 minutes, reached three hours on RTM 2 and was only for two hours on TV3, yielding a total of 6 hours and 45 minutes a week. In contrast, local programmes for children/young people comprised 1 hour and 15 minutes on RTM1 and one hour on TV3, for a total of only 2 hours and 15 minutes a week (Zaharom, 1996).

The small number of imported and local programmes for children and young people at that time is indicative of how young people were viewed as an audience. The government had strictly vetted all programmes, including those for children and young people, to ensure that they were informative, educational and entertaining, so in other words, "conformed to the government's wishes" (Karthigesu, 1988: 321).

However, things took a turn after the privatisation of the broadcasting industry. This marked the beginning of the rising interest in young people as a specific audience market in Malaysia. For the first time, young people received specific attention. Television stations, such as 8TV and TV9, were created specifically for young people. 8TV, for one, admits that its target audience are those in their twenties and below, as stated on its website.

> " The people in 8TV are from the target audience.
> Our staff's average age is 27 years,"
> (http://www.8tv.com.my/About.aspx)

In addition, it aims to make young Malaysians aware of the existence of youth culture as a distinct group among the Malaysian demography.

> "To break all conventional rules and turn
> traditional TV watching into a compelling
> interactive experience.
>
> You're not just going to sit there and watch TV.
> You're going to be part of it.
>
> We're going to make TV the coolest thing since
> … the television was invented!"
> (http://www.8tv.com.my/About.aspx)

3.4.1 Imported Television Programmes

Owing to the fact that 8TV not only targets young people, but specifically an urban and Chinese audience, it's programmes consist of a mix of Asian productions, mainly from Korea, Japan and Taiwan, as well as those from Hollywood that target young people. Foreign programmes such as *America's Next Top Model*, *American Idol*, and *Hello My Lady (Korea),* as well as the local reality shows *One In A Million* and *I Want To be A Model,* are some of the most popular programmes among young people.

TV9, better known as Channel 9, is the latest free-to-air television station that although not claiming to be for young people, has more programming suitable for children and young people then RTM 1, 2, TV3 or NTV7. What differentiates TV9 from 8TV is its appeal to the Malay audience, with an emphasis in disseminating traditional local Malay and Islamic values in its programmes. Therefore, programmes for young people are a blend of Islamic and Malay cultures, which intend to create a unique Malay youth culture apart from 8TV. 8TV, in contrast, is a mix of Chinese and Western-oriented youth culture. TV9 also has a mix of foreign and local programmes. Foreign programmes are usually American and Japanese cartoons, such as *Spongebob Squarepants*, *Popeye*, *Catdog* and *Inuyasha* (Japanese). TV9 also strives to produce local programmes such as *Mari Mengaji* (Let's Read The Quran), a Quranic learning programme for children and young people.

The privatisation of the broadcasting industry and the advent of satellite television have not resulted in lessened state control. Rather, control is maintained in the form of licensing. Although Astro brings a whole range of global popular cultures to the homes of many young people, it is also is expected to produce home-grown entertainment that promotes local cultures and values as part of its condition to acquire a licence. This results in the sprouting of local programmes that imitate global format programmes. Amongst the most popular local reality TV shows are *Malaysian Idol* (now known as *One In a Million*), *Akademi Fantasia* (Fantasy Academy) and

Mencari Cinta (Looking For Love) (Moy & Garma, 2006). In spite of the popularity of the three local reality TV shows, audiences still prefer Western reality shows such as *Fear Factor, The Apprentice, American Idol, The Amazing Race, Survivor, Xplorace* and *Newlyweds* (ibid).

The influx of foreign programmes, cartoons, anime and entertainment shows, have introduced global popular culture, attracting young people. On Astro, young Malaysians are able to watch more cartoons on channels like *Nikelodeon*, *Disney Channel* and *Animax.* Young Malaysians are able to watch foreign entertainment programmes such as MTV and Channel V, all unavailable on terrestrial stations.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has brought attention to two important aspects of the Malaysian media. The first is the diversity of cultures and languages represented. One of the characteristics of the Malaysian media is that it has segmented itself according to ethnic group. Thus all forms of media in this country cater specifically to an ethnic group.

This diversity in television programmes was further enhanced by the commercialisation of television broadcasting services. Astro, which was responsible for the mass influx of Chinese and Tamil programmes from overseas, was able to secure its popularity among the non-Malay audience. To a certain extent, it has broadened the multiethnic Malaysian audience market further by introducing channels that cater to sub-ethnic groups, like the Hokkien-speaking audience of the Chinese, and Telugu and Malayalese of the Indian groups. It is now a site for the flourishing of sub-ethnic identities through sub-ethnic programmes. The question remains as to what these programmes imply for young Indians and Chinese. Does this reassert or reaffirm their attachment to their ethnic culture and identity?

The second important development is the departure from how young people were seen by the media in the 1960s to mid-1980s when the broadcasting industry was privatised. In the early years of television services in Malaysia, young people were never given much space and attention, evident in the low number of young people's programmes broadcast (Zaharom, 1996). The Islamic resurgence in the 1980s greatly influenced the general view towards foreign popular culture as detrimental to young Malaysians' moral values. But with the privatisation and liberalisation of the broadcasting industry, foreign popular youth culture has been reintroduced into Malaysian television. This means that young Malaysians are again open to other forms of youth culture, away from the national culture. The fact that commercial television broadcasting services are fully owned by Malaysian companies does not mean they are promoting local cultures in authentic form. Rather, it resorts to indigenising local programmes. Many of the local programmes maybe 'local' in language, anchors and content, but the formats are infinitely global. How this has affected young audience's identities and ethnic ties remains in question. Attempts at addressing this issue are made in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 4

Methodology

4.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the design of this research. This includes the research questions used to guide the study, as well as the methodologies, sampling and procedures used, locations, and ethical issues related to the study, and also the challenges involved in the fieldwork.

4.1 Research Questions

As mentioned in the Introduction and in Chapter 1, this study investigates how young people of different ethnicities use the media to make sense of their identities. It also aims to determine if there are differences and similarities between ethnicities, in terms of their attitude towards ethnic culture.

Post-subculturalists paid attention to young people's participation in specific cultural practices, such as of club-culture, *neotribes* and raves, in a study on young people and identity (Bennett, 1999a, 1999b; Thornton, 1995). Elsewhere, scholars such as Miles (2000), argue the concept of 'lifestyles' is more useful in studying young people. As most Malaysian teenagers are not into club-culture, due to the cultural and religious connotations attached to it, this study examines their identity through their values and attitudes as well as their media consumption in their everyday lives.

France (2007: 158) stresses that one of the flaws in the post-structuralist approach was that it "over read and overemphasised 'agency' over structure" and concentrated more on style and dress. This study gives equal weight to the role of institutions (state and media), authorities, such as parents and teachers, peers, religion, ethnic tradition and home life, which are all embedded in the lives of young people.

In addition, this study decided to follow the path of Gillespie (1995) and Strelitz (2002), who see media consumption as a means to explore and examine young people's construction of identity. While Gillespie looked at migrant youths in betweenthe British Punjabi, and Strelitz looked at local 'Homeland' youths in South Africa, what differentiates this study is that although the Chinese and Indians are ethnic minorities, they are no longer considered migrant. Secondly, this study broadened its focus by looking at a multiethnic group.

By broadening the ethnic composition of youth to be studied, the question of 'identity' and 'ethnicity' will be more complex. In addition, this study also identifies with the work of Pilkington (1994), who argues that in a situation where youth are part of the state's nationalistic agenda, there has to be another way of studying youth and their culture. As there are similarities to Malaysian youths, this study looks at this factor in analysing young Malaysians and their lives. Thus, in investigating their identity, media consumption and globalisation, this study examine show different ethnic groups identify themselves with Malaysia's national culture through the local media, against the global media. It also looks at the interplay of diaspora, ethnicity, religion and national cultures, with globalisation, in media consumption practices.

Finally, this study explores the assumption that young people are more entertainment-oriented (Reimer, 1995) in their media consumption, and how this impacts their ethnic and religious identities.

As consuming the media is said to be one of young Malaysians' main social activities, as discussed in Chapter 2, this study further explores media consumption by attempting to discover what the media means to young Malaysians, as well as how their consumption is situated within their cultural background. Why is their consumption 'entertainment-oriented?' Driven by this interest to comparatively explore young multiethnic Malaysians' use of the media, the context of their media consumption and the role of ethnic tradition and religion for each ethnic group, several research questions are set to pursue this issue.

4.1.1 Media Consumption

First of all, it is imperative to address the patterns in media consumption. Instead of only looking towards the types of media being consumed, and the programmes being watched, this study goes one step further by examining why these programmes and forms of media are chosen, in the context of their everyday lives as young people and as members of their ethnic and religious community. In addition, this study examines the implications of consuming media on a daily basis, and how this allows space for young people to construct their own youth culture and identity.

Thus, the first seven research questions are also concerned with the context of media consumption, both at home and outside. These questions try to ascertain what role the media plays for young Malaysians by looking at the context of their consumption, particularly the meaning of 'entertainment.' Past local studies, by Latiffah & Samsudin (2000), are more concerned with issues of accessibility of the media to young people and what media they consume, with the assumption that with wide access to the media at home, one is widely exposed to outside cultures. The initial assumption of these studies was that awareness and high media penetration are linked to young people's consumption of foreign cultures. In addition, Samsudin (1995) believes that consumption for entertainment contributes to deviant behaviour. However, this study aims to determine if media consumption is indeed motivated purely by hedonistic reasons, based several questions.

1) To what extent is young Malaysian's media consumption more oriented towards 'entertainment' and 'pleasure,' and why?

2) Are there any differences in terms of ethnicity and age, and why?

3) What are the similarities, and why?

4) Is there a difference in terms of the context of media consumption among youth of different ethnicities and ages?

5) What are the constraints to their media consumption?

6) How do different ethnic groups consume the local and foreign imported media content or programmes, and why?

7) What are the similarities and differences in terms of consumption of foreign and local media content among different ethnic and age groups?

4.1.2 Media Reception – Home Life, Institutions and Tradition

Latiffah & Samsudin's (2000) study of young Malaysians' use of the web shows that one reason for its use is to feel free from the constraints of local norms and culture. This suggests that new media is a tool for them to achieve this aim. The question then arises that if this extends to other media, would it provide a similar function? In addition, is this indicated in their daily media consumption, and are there significant differences in terms of ethnicity and age? Joseph (2000, 2006) used the notion of difference in studying ethnicity on Malaysian girls, and found more complex identities being negotiated, ones that were multiple, shifting and contradictory. This begs the question of how this is related to the media and young Malaysians' media consumption.

8) Why are differences occurring? Is this due to a trend, or it is related to the present context of their lives?

9) To what extent are culture, tradition and religion no longer major factors in young Malaysians' lives, as reflected in their interpretation of media?

10) Does young Malaysians' consumption of the media serve as a means of breaking away from institutions, authority and other traditional sources of

constraint, such as religion and ethnic culture? Is there a common pattern among all ethnic and age groups?

11) Is there a difference between how young people from different ethnic backgrounds use the media to negotiate between ethnicity, religion and local culture?

12) How do they construct alternative identities through the media? Are there any difference in terms of ethnicity and age?

13) What kinds of identities emerge from the consumption of the media? Is it different between different ethnic and age groups?

14) What differences in cultural values are perceived in the lives and cultures depicted in foreign, as opposed to local media, and how are these differences viewed differently between different ethnic and age groups?

These questions were posed to determine the reception and perception of young Malaysians of the cultures, values and norms that are disseminated through the media, and their reactions to them. In past local studies, young Malaysians have rarely been asked about the influence of norms and institutions in their consumption practice, whether through the media or through fashion. The research questions outlined explore whether or not the consumption of the media is also a symbolic act of reacting against the "appropriate cultures and values" disseminated in their lives, and how different ethnic groups react to it.

Research Question 12 aims to investigate whether the current assumptions that young people rely more on non-traditional identity markers to make sense of their identity is a general, universal phenomenon for all young people of different political, social, economic and cultural conditions.

Rokiah's (2003) study suggests that young Malaysians use Western fashion to break out of the moulds of tradition and pursue a more individualistic sense of self. Does this mean that young Malaysians are opting for a more homogenised and non-traditional identity?

Research questions 10,13 and 14 also take into account the differences in ethnicity and age as factors in media use in dealing with institutions and authority. This study examines the reaction of young Malaysians of different ethnic groups to the media's role of promoting local cultures and values for all ethnicities.

4.2 Audience Reception Studies

The use of a reception study for this research was to examine the shifting values and attitudes among different ethnic and age groups in making sense of media texts as an active audience. Drawing from various cultural backgrounds, home environments, genders, ages and political histories, young Malaysians are assumed to make diverse and complex readings of the media.

In addition, it is also from these varying background and life experiences that consumption of the media is assumed to take place for different reasons. The encoding-decoding model (Hall, 1980) has been most influential in inspiring researchers to examine audiences. An assumption that audiences make more than one reading of the media has highlighted the polysemic nature of media text. Morley's (1980,1992) seminal work on the 'Nationwide Audience' drew criticism, but remained significant. This work drew to the attention of researchers that social, political and economic backgrounds or positions of the audience members were important factors in understanding how they perceived the media. Both scholars made important contributions, causing more researchers to consider deeper cultural connotations, rather than basing media consumption solely on psychological and behavioural purposes. According to Ruddock (2007), the Users & Gratification Theory ignores engaging 'culture' into audience studies but focuses largely on the

psychological and biological aspects of the audience. Audience studies from the Cultural Studies perspective can address the research questions raised here most effectively. This is because an audience's consumption and reception of the media is based on more than just psychological factors, but also social and political ones.

This study argues that the most critical reasons for media consumption can be determined only by looking into the context of consumer's lives. This is to highlight what those implications mean to their lives and their identities. Therefore, audience studies drawing from cultural studies were used to address the research questions of this study.

The use of popular culture is the most effective gauge of young people's values and attitudes towards complex issues that involve negotiating with institutions, authorities, local cultures, tradition and religion. This is because young people easily understand popular culture. The use of 'relationships' is effective in comparing young people of different ethnicities with different cultural and religious attitudes, as well as the values gained as a result of media consumption. The subject of 'relationships' is a social and cultural process that young people are familiar with, and is likely to yield a more engaging and critical discussion.

In most audience studies, selected groups were shown visual materials such as clips from soap operas, sitcoms, advertisements, music videos or the news (Havens, 2001; Griffith,1993).They also were given a vignette of a situation and asked to discuss it. In the context of this study, participants were also shown two visuals of youth dramas. The first drama chosen was *Hanazakarino Kimitachiche*, better known as *Hana Kimi*, a Japanese teenage romantic comedy serial drama reproduced in Taiwan on 8TV in 2007. The second drama chosen was a local Malay serial drama for youth called *Gol & Gincu The Series* (Goalposts & Lipstick).

For *Hana Kimi,* participants were shown the first three scenes , which highlighted the story. On the other hand, for *Gol & Gincu,* a specific scene from the episode "*Mencari Keluarga"* (Looking For a Family) was shown, which touched on interethnic relationships.

After watching these clips, the moderator threw in the first question to start the discussion. The interview sessions took place in school libraries and multipurpose audio-visual rooms, where audio-visual equipment, such as televisions and VCD players were available. The interviews ran between one and two hours.

4.3 Methods Used

The various studies of media consumption, identity formation and young people have employed various theoretical frameworks, approaches and methods. However, taking into consideration the aim of this study, the research questions were tested using an ethnographic approach, drawing on focus group interviews and diary methods. The reason for engaging in these methods was to facilitate the researcher to examine young Malaysians' identities, as a group and as individuals, as well as at the public and private sphere in their everyday lives. By doing so, a broader picture of young Malaysians' identities would result.

Thus, this research involves multi-qualitative methods. Audience reception studies were conducted through focus group interviews, while the diary method was employed to examine media consumption patterns. In order to clarify any discrepancies found in the data, follow-up in-depth interviews were conducted. An important note to make is that respondents engaged in the reception study were also involved in the media consumption diary.

Since the aim of this study was to explore 'identity' formation of young Malaysians from different cultural backgrounds and ages through their media consumption, the various methods used were decided upon because they

were viewed as suitable to achieve this. In addition, they enabled as much insight as possible on the context and the process of a multiethnic audience's media consumption.

Moreover, as this study involves the question of ‘cultural change’ and ‘ethnicity,’ and consumption of the global media, an examination is required of both their views and attitudes towards media, and also the on-going process of their media consumption.

The context of media consumption and the ways it has helped users construct their identities is evident by reviewing their daily use. Knowing more about the context of their consumption has provided an understanding of the reasons for their consumption. All these activities cannot be gauged through questionnaires, particularly when one is keen to examine the differences and similarities across ethnic and age groups.

Unlike past studies in Malaysia on young Malaysians' media consumption, this study did not seek to make a causal link between moral values and media consumption, as this is considered to be too simplistic an approach in theorising young people and their use of the media to make sense of themselves. Rather it is more concerned with the question of how young people of different ethnic cultures and religions use the media to negotiate the various identities that they are positioned in. More importantly, what new forms of identities are being constructed as a result of the media, and are these differentiated by age or ethnicity? The answers to these questions will more accurately explain the shift of values and identity in the age of globalisation.

A quantitative approach is unable to answer the questions of ‘why’ and ‘how’ in sociological studies. Since qualitative studies are ‘interpretive,’ they are able to describe the life of the respondent and also make inferences about why they behave in certain ways (Bryman, 2004). Qualitative studies are contextual, and take into account the surrounding factors of the respondents in answering ‘why.’ Hence, they have a stronger explanatory power to

illuminate the occurrence of a social phenomenon. The second strength of a qualitative approach is that it is able to study process. How a phenomenon occurs due to a certain factor and the process of it can be observed and documented when using a qualitative research method.

There has been lot of discussion about combining both qualitative and quantitative methods to fill the gaps in each method, referred to as triangulation. However, Spicer (2004) believes triangulation should only be used to re-examine the data as a way to exploring the research problem further. Nevertheless, triangulation was useful in this study as a means of re-examining the data acquired through qualitative approach. This increased the validity and generalizability of the data, since quantitative findings were similar.

4.3.1 Focus Group

A focus group interview is a group discussion based on a specific topic or issue. The flow of the discussion is guided by a moderator or facilitator (Tonkiss, 2004; Cronin, 2001). The focus group has a wide range of uses, including as a pilot study in research to gauge the population's view of the research problem and also to gain feedback from the population being studied upon completion of participation. The use of focus group interviews here helped understand the workings of young Malaysians' identity as a group.

The rationale for using a focus group interview was in accordance with what Barbour & Schostak (2005) and Macnaghten & Myers (2004) reported. They believe focus groups are useful in exploring group norms for a particular issue. Focus groups were ideal for this study since it was aimed at investigating identities of young people of different socio-cultural backgrounds by examining their attitudes and values. In looking at how different ethnic groups make sense of 'relationships' in *Hana Kimi* and *Gol & Gincu* ,patterns and similarities or differences in values in terms of ethnicities or ages were sought.

One of the main strengths of focus group interviews is that the researcher, through group interactions, is able to learn something of the experience and perspectives of a particular group towards the subject matter (Macnagthen & Myers, 2004; Morgan, 1997). Other methods, such as participant observation, are also useful in gaining insights into the relevant communities' perspective, culture, values and norms. Researchers most often favour this method because it enables the observer to gather a rich amount of data on the group being studied at close hand. According to Bryman (2004), the participant observer/ethnographer usually gets involved with the communities by observing and listening to the conversations among the communities. This enables researchers to immerse themselves with the community under study.

However, as much as participant observation shows great strength in studying values and norms of a group or community over other methods, it was too time-consuming for the purposes of this study. Focus group interviews achieved the same purpose, and better fit the limitations of this study.

In relation to this study's objective of comparatively studying a multiethnic audience's identity, it was not feasible to conduct a full-scale ethnography, which includes participant observation, due to time and financial constraints. Doing so ran the risk of what Deacon et al (1999:267) call "what you see is what you get: the limits to immediacy," meaning the knowledge a researcher can gain is confined only to what he can afford to observe before him.

This study was conducted in two states, to meet the need of an ethnically diverse population, and was self-funded. Completing research during a short period of time would have posed problems of validity. For these reasons, focus group interviews were the most appropriate method for this study.

Another advantage of focus groups is that it allows the researcher to collect information directly, in a short span of time. According to Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook (2007), focus groups allow researchers to interact directly with participants, allowing for clarification through follow-up questions, unlike questionnaires.

One of the obvious strengths is that focus groups can obtain data from individuals who are not “particularly literate” on wider social and political issues (Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook, 2007 : 43). In this sense, they enable researchers to gauge views from sensitive groups.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, this study gained insights on the attitudes and values of different communities through the various ways ‘relationships’ were viewed, and how this affected the construction of their identities. Different ethnic groups, particularly from different religious and cultural backgrounds, approach the question of ‘relationship’ from their own socio-cultural background. Differences could exist between groups and also within groups; consensus in how they made sense of the subject matter was not always reached. This allowed the researcher an opportunity to examine the question of identity, based on the breadth and depth of the discussions held in a focus group interview.

Additionally, the emergences of the possibility of other forms of social identity such as gender, apart from ‘ethnicity’ and ‘age,’ related to their attitude and values, was allowed to emerge as a result of the group discussion. This resulted in broader research findings.

Bryman (2004) points out a significant strength of focus group interviews, which is that it allows participants to bring forth issues relevant to them and their communities that the researcher did not anticipate. Taking into account time and financial constraints as well as the logistics involved in conducting a multiethnic youth study, the most appropriate method for this study was focus group interviews.

4.3.2 Weakness of Focus Group Interviews

In spite of the advantages of focus groups, there are drawbacks researchers should be aware of. Weaknesses can be categorised into problems pertaining

to control and handling of the interview session, quality of the findings gathered and interpretations of the data.

One of the main criticisms levelled at this method is that the audience is studied in an artificial setting rather than their natural surroundings. This was addressed in this study by conducting a media consumption diary to cross reference data gathered.

Other problems can arise when a novice interviewer does not have the ability to conduct the focus group interview properly. Bryman (2004) highlighted this issue, saying it is evident when the discussion is open-ended and participants are left to run the discussion.

Controlling the discussion too greatly can pose another issue, where the interviewer's bias provides cues on expected responses (Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook, 2007).

Critics of this method feel focus groups data in terms of being overly generalized (Fern, 2001). Since the number of respondents is generally small, there is a risk that the data gathered does not accurately represent the population under study. But, Krueger & Casey (2000) argue that focus group interviews are not meant to generalize but to go into great depth on a particular research problem. Hence, it is appropriate to concentrate on a small group of respondents. The difference between focus groups and surveys is that the latter offers breadth, which allows generalisation, while the former is more of depth (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Barbour & Schostak (2005: 42) further challenge the focus group interview method, stating this method is not a "natural way of 'getting' the data."

An important issue is the one of *trust,* since respondents may try to impress the interviewer by giving answers that seem to please the interviewer. 'Honesty' among participants is sometimes in question, as withholding information during the interview is possible. The extent at which interviewers can get honest and uninhibited answers from participants is unclear.

Barbour & Schostak (2005: 42) question the value of focus groups, asking to what extent data can be viewed as “the evocative of ‘truth’, of ‘reality’, of the ‘conditions of everyday life’.” This problem is most pronounced when focus group interviews are used as the only method in a study, where results rest heavily upon the presumed honesty of the participants. This is not to suggest that the interviewees lie intentionally, but recognises that young people have less life experience to guide their responses (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

Less life experience leads to a question of the appropriateness of engaging young people, as they have limited knowledge to make sense of what is asked during an interview. This means researchers need to use caution when formulating research questions for studies focused on young people.

Less assertive young people may feel pressure to conform to the opinions of more dominant individuals in the group, even if their opinion differs. This leads to the question of validity. As data is gathered based on people’s opinion, the validity of the data is inherently questionable. Krueger (1998) states this issue can be addressed with probing by the interviewer to extend answers and clarify the respondents’ intentions.

4.3.3 Diary Method

The diary method was used to cross-examine young people's media consumption in the context of their everyday lives. Since reception studies are conducted in an artificial setting, the diary method could confirm if their attitudes were consistent with their everyday practices. In addition, the media consumption diary could show if opinions expressed during the focus groups continued in a practical form in their everyday lives. They also were a practical way of gaining insight into the social conditions that influenced the construction of their identities. Buckingham (1993) reminds scholars of the importance of studying young people’s consumption of the media by situating it within the wider context of young people’s social relationships and experiences. This inevitably shifts the study of young people away from the media effects mould.

Diaries were helping in answering research questions 8, 10,11,12,13 and 14 by allowing for the examination of why the media becomes a context in which young people construct alternative identities. They allowed a broader view of the context of their media consumption, with specific attention paid to participant's everyday activities and experiences. Research into the context of consumption has been conducted in various ways. For instance, Gillespie (1995) examined media consumption through ethnographic methods by watching her respondents' television programmes with them at their homes. Livingstone (2002) studied young people's consumption of the new media through a combination of methods. Interviews with young people and their parents, surveys and diaries were all used. Strelitz (2002; 2004) used surveys and reception studies to look at media consumption among young South Africans. Moss (1993) used media consumption diaries to determine the reading patterns of teenage romance novels among young girls. These studies share the commonality of focusing solely on one particular group, an age, gender or ethnic group.

This study has a broader scope, and uses media consumption diaries to examine media consumption instead of questionnaires. This allowed for a better view of the context of their media consumption, not just at home, but also in other contexts of their life. Since this study involved different ethnic groups and ages at the same time, the diary was the most appropriate since it allows young people to relate their consumption themselves, allowing for information to come forth the interviewer failed to anticipate. Time constraints and varying geographical location made it impossible to observe all ethnic groups.

In addition, the use of media consumption diaries allows young people to express their views in a condition in which they feel comfortable and natural, without the intrusive presence of the researcher. According to Bryman (2004: 141), there are various ways to use diaries in social research, namely:-

(i) Diary use as a method of data collection;
(ii) Diary as a document;
(iii) Diary as a log of the researcher's activities

Alaszewski (2006: 2) went a bit further by defining the characteristics of a diary study:-

(i) Regularity;
(ii) Personal;
(iii)Contemporaneous;
(iv)A record;

Since this study intended to explore the daily social activities of young people and how they react to the context of their consumption, constant, regular documentation of those activities was required. Diaries have been used for different purposes and at different stages of research. Kjeldgaard (2003) used diaries as a means of identifying his informants in the first stage of his research, while Couldry (2006) used diaries at the initial stage of his study to gain a clearer sense of the research problem.

The format of the media consumption diaries in this study was a combination of a log and a semi-structured interview diary. The initial format of the media diary was strictly a log, but after sending it out in a pilot study, it was found that such a format was inadequate to provide insights into their consumption. Thus it was modified to include several questions that probed into the context of media consumption. The format of the modified diary was partly adopted from Heather Elliot's (1997) diary, best explained as a 'diary-interview' (www.socresonline.org.uk).

Loosely following the format of her diary, participants were asked to jot down what they watched, read, listened to or looked at, and were also asked to reflect, comment and share their views, thoughts and feelings about each instance of media exposure.

The diary was structured to be participant-friendly to accommodate the age of the respondents. The use of only a few questions and sparse jargon created an easy to use, introspective diary format. The diary created with an open format, leaving space for respondent to include information not anticipated by the research objectives. This format allowed young participants to express their views comfortably and freely. Communication with the researcher was encouraged, should the respondents have needed further clarification on how to use the diary.

To determine the overall media consumption pattern, this study adopted what Crook & Light (2002) term ‘time-use’ diaries, which seek to gain insights into consumption in terms of the times they use the media. For instance, it allowed for data to be gathered about the patterns of media use on the weekdays vs. on the weekends. This was to determine if time differentiated the types of media consumed, i.e. what media was often used before school, and if difference sources were typically used after school.

The shape of this diary was modelled along the lines of the media diaries used in Walters, Quinn and Walters' (2005) study. To aid the diarists, a completed page was included as a sample, as suggested by Coxon (1994) and Bryman (2004). Essentially, the respondents were asked to record their daily media use based on several criteria:

(i) Time/Date/Week(Start and end time for use);
(ii) Type of media and channel (for television and radio);section (magazines and newspaper); or website (Internet);
(iii)Language of the media used;
(iv)What was watched/read/listened to/surfed;
(v)Foreign or local content/programme.

One reason diaries were open to all forms of media, instead of solely focusing on television, was to get a wider sense of media consumption. Furthermore, in a media-saturated society, it would be wrong to assume that young people

watch television, as many various types of media are available for entertainment and informative purposes.

A vital point to mention is that why and what they consumed was important, but also why they did *not* consume the media at all on a particular day also held importance. This question allowed young people to explain the reason, which involved the condition and context of their lives that had impeded consumption. This is what Alaszewski (2006) implied when using diaries for naturalistic research. This method provides access to “facets of social life which members of social groups take for granted and are therefore not easily articulated or accessed through research methods such as interviews” (Alaszewski, 2006: 37). One cannot assume that young people consume the media every day and regularly in a linear manner.

It is also important to consider that sometimes there are other compelling factors that restrict media consumption, or shape media consumption, for reasons other than pure 'entertainment' or 'pleasure.’ Through the diary it was possible to determine two things. First, on the basis of the time factor, it was possible to understand why and what media was consumed. Secondly, by probing for a reflection on the media chosen, it was possible to understand the meanings behind their choices.

Most studies run diary studies for a period longer than a week, and some run as long as three months (Couldry, 2006; Kjeldgaard, 2003). Gauntlett & Hill (1999), solely used the diary to study British audiences’ consumption of television for a five-year longitudinal study beginning in 1991. No consensus has been reached regarding the ideal length of time a diary should be kept (Fu, 2007). A week period was decided upon for this study for several reasons. Although a longer period of time could have yielded more accurate results, an issue of boredom could have arisen given the young ages of the participants. If diarists had been given a longer period of time, they might have become withdrawn from the project, and returned diaries incomplete.

This study involves a multiethnic group, representing many languages, but participants were asked to write only Malay and English.

4.3.4 In-depth Interviews

In the event of any queries or clarification of the diaries or focus group data, the participants were contacted for another in-depth interview.

An interview was conducted with a second group of participants to ensure accuracy of the results. Prior to the in-depth interview, participants were asked to provide their email address and mobile phone number in the diary in case a follow up was needed. This study required members of all the ethnic groups to be contacted for further interview.

4.4 Information on Visual Materials Used For Reception Studies - Hana Kimi & Gol & Gincu The Series

Hana Kimi, adapted by a Taiwanese producer from a Japanese *manga* (comic) called *Hanazakarino Kimitachihe*,means 'For You In Full Blossom' (http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/encyclopedia/manga.php?id=2028). It is a *shojo manga*or girl's comic. According to Cooper-Chen & Kodama (1997: 102), *shojo manga* often carries the theme of 'idealized love' and is downright sentimental, suitable for female readers. Hence, *Hana Kimi* as a *shojo manga* is understandably romantic.

The story revolves around a 15-year-old Chinese American girl who plots to win the heart of her high-jump idol, who is far away in Taiwan. The quest to prove that true love exists is pursued through the unthinkable and unimaginable means of disguising herself as a boy, because the boy of her dreams is a recluse who attends an all-boys' school.

Despite the fact that *Hana Kimi* was originally produced in Japanese, the Taiwanese version was first shown to Malaysian audiences. This show was aired on 8TV in Malaysia on 24th May 2007. Data regarding the popularity of the show in Malaysia are not available, but its wide spread popularity can be inferred based on the fact that the show is shown simultaneously in Singapore, Malaysia and the Philippines. The programme has been rebroadcast in Singapore on Channel U and Hong Kong's TVB (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanazakarino_Kimitachihe). Viewership ratings for this programme are so high that Japanese and Korean television stations fought for its broadcasting rights (http://star-ecentral.com/news/story.asp?file=/2007/10/9/music/19095693&sec=music). One of the reasons that *Hana Kimi* was chosen for this study was because it raises the possible question of cultural conflict brought about by globalisation of the media.

The idea that a girl would go so far for a boy, without parental consent, is provocative to a young audience who lives in a society that heavily emphasises morality and cultural values. How is this contradicting reality perceived by young Malaysians, and is there a general pattern of reception amongst them?

With regards to *Gol & Gincu The Series was chosen because* this programme is one of the first local programmes that attempted to offer an alternative view on many issues affecting Malaysian society; most local dramas support the established view of the state.

In its own version of nation building, *Gol & Gincu* offers a feminist perspective towards the established view, culture and norms of women in Malaysia. It aims to break down the stereotype of local women, particularly Malay women, as passive individuals who conform to a particular traditional role dictated by the state, religious authorities and local cultural norms in the media. However, after running for three years on 8TV, the series moved beyond women's issues and explores social and political issues. It attempts to break down the

sensitivity and taboos of sensitive issues in the hope of engaging the public in a more open and critical discourse.

For this study, the chosen scene involves an interethnic relationship between a Chinese girl and a Malay boy. It touches on the sensitivity of ethnic politics and also the position of Islam. In the two selected dramas, the use of ordinary and interethnic relationships were used as a means to expose how young Malaysians from different cultures, religious beliefs, gender and geographical locations use the media to negotiate their identities. Using different relationship situations allowed for an examination of how the media may become a context for contesting or negotiating existing 'authority-defined' ethnicity.

4.5 Sampling

Most studies using focus group interviews identify participants through their involvement in the research problem. To meet the research aims of this study, it was necessary to choose research participants based on age and ethnicity.

As the focus group method involves a specific research topic, most studies suggest that the appropriate sampling method should be purposive sampling, where participants are selected specifically for the purpose of the research (Tonkins, 2004; Cronin, 2001; Morgan, 1997). The main purpose in sampling for a focus group is to "minimise sample bias" rather than aiming for generalizability (Morgan, 1997: 35). The use of purposive sampling does not necessarily mean that the views expressed by participants will be congruent with the research aim. Rather, it is done in the hopes of producing dynamic discussion. Skilled interviewers word questions to have the least influence in respondent answers. In order to do so, sessions need to be run in a semi-structured and open manner. This allows participants to freely discuss their views. Interviewers should only facilitate the discussions.

This issue of representation and presupposition is what Bryman (2004) calls stratifying criteria. This involves sampling focus group participants to ensure participants are stratified through socio-demographic factors like age, gender, class and ethnicity. By doing so, the researcher gains layers of views from relevant participants.

Purposive sampling of participants in focus groups refers to sampling participants possibly related to the research, but also selecting them based on factors such as sex, race, age, religion and social class.

Morgan (1997) recommends participants should be homogeneous only in terms of background, but not attitude. Similar backgrounds don't always produce parallel views. Using participants that are close friends runs the risk of the group having similar opinions, leaving no room for debate. Likewise, using strangers could result in a lack of interaction, also leading to a lack of meaningful discussion. Both would defeat the purpose of focus group interviews.

Therefore, conducting focus group interviews successfully, Tonkins (2004) suggests, groups should be homogeneous, but unknown to each other. Workplace acquaintances or members of a social club are acceptable choices, since similarity exists only in terms of background and not necessarily attitude.

The personality type of participants is another important factor to consider. Bloor et al. (2001) cautions that moderators should separate individuals whose personality may affect the interactions of other group members.

4.5.1 Sampling for Focus Group and Media Diary

For this study, various factors have been taken into consideration in sampling participants, also participants in the media consumption diaries. As this study aims to determine the differences in the reactions of young Malaysians to institutions, authorities and traditional identity markers such as religion and

culture by differentiating them through ethnicity and age, the sampling procedure for the focus group took into account both of these factors.

For a more rich and diverse discussion, the sampling of participants was further stratified according to gender, religion and geographical location. Thus, participants for this study were of diverse and complex backgrounds. Sampling participants from various backgrounds in one study is not unusual. Lewis' (2006) study seeking health information from young people was diverse in terms of age, social class and nationality. Thus, it produced rich and dynamic findings, representing contrasting views on the issue.

4.5.1.1 First Level of Sampling Ethnicity and Age

For the purposes of this study, recruiting was best done according to the type of school individuals attended. In Malaysia, 'national' government schools are multiethnic in composition. However, Malay students predominantly attend this type of school because instruction is largely in Malay. The other type of school is the 'vernacular' type,, which is a national school utilising the national curriculum, teaching Malay and English alongside an ethnic language such as Mandarin or Tamil. Most often, the language of the school is indicative of the ethnicity of the students.

Given the large number of ethnicities represented in Malaysia, it was not possible to sample all ethnic groups in the country. Thus, this study represents the four main ethnic groups, Malay, Chinese, Indian and Kadazandusun. The inclusion of the Kadazandusun was to broaden the sample to include not only the three major ethnic groups in Malaysia, but also an indigenous population from East Malaysia. Although other indigenous groups reside in Sabah, the Kadazandusun was selected because it represents the largest portion of the population, at about 18.4% (Population and Housing Census of Malaysia, 2000: ix).

It is also important to mention that the exclusion of the Ibans, another indigenous group from Sarawak, was due to the difficulties of interviewing members of this community because of location. In order to recruit students based on ethnicity, Malay and Kadazandusunparticipants were recruited from national government schools. Chinese and Indian students were recruited from vernacular schools. This ensured the study had an adequate number of participants representing each ethnic group. The selection process began by obtaining a list of schools from the respective state education departments, available on the departments' websites.

Criteria used in selecting those schools were ethnic composition, co-education and type of school (national or vernacular). School heads of each school were asked to provide student volunteers of specific ages, excluding those who were in exam classes. Students were to be selected based on specific ethnicity, be of mixed gender, and be known consumers of the media.
Willingness of both participants and parents was also necessary. The group selected from each school was of a differing ethnicity.

Ethnic composition and the location of the schools were the criteria Dolby (1999) and Buckingham (2000) used for their studies on young people and media consumption. Sampling in this manner may run the risk of presupposing the data, however, based on the two notable studies mentioned, the sampling of young people based on the ethnic composition of schools provides a broad spectre of views among young people.

Schools with the greatest number of a specific ethnic group will tend to follow the ways and culture of their ethnicity to a greater extent than others with a lesser majority. This is based on Santhiram's study (1995) on the experience of Indian students who transferred to national schools from Tamil vernacular primary schools. These students had problems adjusting to their new social life due to a lack of proficiency in Malay. Joseph (2006) found that young Malaysian girls had a different perception of ethnicity than others, which they drawn based on their interactions with students of differing ethnicities in a national school. By studying young people of different ethnicities located

within a school dominated by a single ethnic group it is possible to examine how these young people negotiate their ethnicity and other identities within a natural setting.

These past studies show the effectiveness of sampling based on the ethnic makeup of schools. This helps to document and explore the various life experiences presented to young people within a natural environment. Since this study aimed to determine the extent at which youths of differing ethnicities form their identities based on their media exposure, using schools most representative of particular ethnic groups was appropriate.

As most of the schools listed have websites, it was possible to obtain background information on the schools easily. After identifying desired schools, it was necessary to obtain permission from the relevant authorities to work with the students. Schools were approached with a letter of permission obtained from the Ministry of Education.

Participants were divided into two groups of 13-14year-olds and 16-17year-olds. Fifteen year-olds were excluded because they were involved in public examinations. This factor is discussed in the ethics section of this chapter.

‘Age’ was one of the main variables necessary to determine the broad range of opinions among young people, as age determines the level of maturity.

In order to obtain diverse views, participants are divided according to age. Older students were grouped together, separated from younger students. This was a precaution to prevent younger students from becoming intimidated by the older students. Each group was homogeneous in terms of ethnicity to ensure members were comfortable openly discusses issues of ethnic sensitivity. Groups of mixed ethnicity, especially among young people, could lead to students feeling reserved and holding back opinions, in fear of offending participants of a different ethnicity.

The use of 'ethnicity' as a main variable in this study was not aimed producing an 'essentialist' view of the Malaysian audience. Morley (1992), who was widely criticised for using 'class' in studying audience reception of the programme *Nationwide,* said one needs to consider the critical role of social positions, which provide the context of the respondents' interpretation.

> "While we cannot take a determinist position and assume that someone's conceptual/cultural framework will be automatically determined by their social position, we do need to bear in mind the way in which social contexts provide the resources, and set the limits within which individuals operate"
> (Morley, 1992:88).

The social contexts of each ethnic group and how it related to their consumption of the media is important for this study. Social context isn't necessarily culturally-linked to ethnic culture, but also includes factors such as gender, home life, peer relations and so on. This study upholds the view that identity is not fixed, but fluid in character, both at individual and group levels. This includes the possibility that an ethnic group may not have shared values. It is also important to not rule out the possibility that members of the same ethnic group may have differences in values and attitudes that shapes different identities altogether, which ultimately suggests that social position isn't the only factor that shapes identity. 'Ethnicity' had been employed here to allow for the finding of similarities or differences of the formation of identities among the culturally diverse and dynamic character of the Malaysian audience.

4.5.1.2 Second Level of Sampling – Gender, Religion and Geographical Location

The second level of sampling involves stratifying participants according to gender, religion and geographical location. The rationale behind stratifying

according to gender is to give participants a broader representation as well as to uncover contrasting views between genders.

Religion as a variable is linked to ethnicity. In this study, all Malays are Muslim, the Kadazandusun are all Christians, and the Indians were all Hindus. The Chinese were a mix of Christians and Buddhists. As this study involved an investigation of cultural values and attitudes towards religion and tradition, it was hoped that the young people would draw on their complex social and cultural background in making sense of the media.

Finally, geographical location was a necessary aspect of sampling. Owing to the fact that the Malays and Indians reside mainly in Peninsular Malaysia, it followed that the recruitment of Malay and Indian participants had to be done in the capital city of Kuala Lumpur. Chinese participants were not recruited from Peninsular Malaysia because there is a large Chinese population in almost every part of Malaysia. Therefore, the recruitment of participants took place in two different locations. Malay and Indian participants were studied in Kuala Lumpur, and Chinese and Kadazandusun participants were studied in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. 'Class' or socio-economic factors were not the main variables in sampling participants because this was already reflected through their geographical locations.

The selected areas were urban and sub-urban areas. As the Malays, Indians and Chinese participants were recruited from urban schools in Kuala Lumpur and Kota Kinabalu, socio-economic background represented were mostly of the middle-class. Kadazandusun students selected attended a fully residential national school located in the sub-urban area of Kota Kinabalu, reflecting a mix of low and middle-class groups. In recruiting participants, headmasters or senior teachers of each school were asked to help in selecting the participants based the study's criteria.

There are varying opinions as to what the ideal group size is for focus groups. Bryman (2004) suggests a range of between four and six people in a group, because it is difficult to stimulate discussion amongst a large number of

participants. Krueger & Casey (2000) suggest it would be unwise to have ten to twelve people in focus group interviews meant for academic or non-commercial purposes.

A reason for this is that a focus group with more than ten people is difficult to control and may limit other participants from joining in the discussion. Thus, the ideal group size is proposed to be between six and eight people. Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook (2007) suggested a number of six to twelve people, while Morgan (1997) suggested a number between six and ten. Both Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook (2007) and Morgan (1997) feel that a focus group with fewer than six people would make the discussion, dull as well as having the possibility of some participants not turning up. More than 12 could create problems in managing the discussion.

Taking into account the fact that the participants for this study are young people of various ethnic groups with different sets of values and different socio-economic backgrounds, this study set the group size at between six and eight for each session. In addition, the possibility of a participant withdrawing at the last moment was taken into consideration. Another important factor considered was the cultural homogeneity of the group. Each session comprised an ethnically homogeneous group, owing to the aim of this study to gauge the opinions and attitudes of each different ethnic group. Overall, the participants for this study were selected based on ethnicity and age, and divided further into geographical location, gender and religion. Finally, it was necessary to be mindful of selecting participants who were regular consumers of television and other media.

Table 4.1: The socio-demographic profile of participants involved in focus group and media consumption diary for 16-year-olds

No	**Ethnicity**	**Gender**	**Age**	**Religion**	**Identity**	**No. of Group**
1	Malay	Male	16	Muslim	M1	Focus Group 1
2	Malay	Male	16	Muslim	M2	Focus Group 1
3	Malay	Male	17	Muslim	M3	Focus Group 1
4	Malay	Male	17	Muslim	M4	Focus Group 1
5	Malay-Chinese	Female	16	Muslim	M5	Focus Group 1
6	Malay	Female	16	Muslim	M6	Focus Group 1
7	Malay	Female	16	Muslim	M7	Focus Group 1
8	Indian	Male	16	Hindu	I1	Focus Group 3
9	Indian	Male	16	Hindu	I2	Focus Group 3
10	Indian	Male	16	Hindu	I3	Focus Group 3
11	Indian	Female	16	Hindu	I4	Focus Group3
12	Indian	Female	16	Hindu	I5	Focus Group 3
13	Indian	Female	16	Hindu	I6	Focus Group 3
14	Chinese	Female	16	Buddhist	C1	Focus Group 5
15	Chinese	Female	16	Christian	C2	Focus Group 5
16	Chinese	Female	16	Christian	C3	Focus Group 5
17	Chinese	Male	16	Christian	C4	Focus Group 5
18	Chinese	Male	16	Christian	C5	Focus Group 5
19	Chinese	Male	16	Christian	C6	Focus Group 5
20	K/dusun	Female	16	Christian	K1	Focus Group 7
21	K/dusun	Female	16	Christian	K2	Focus Group 7
22	K/dusun	Female	16	Christian	K3	Focus Group 7
23	K/dusun	Male	16	Christian	K4	Focus Group 7
24	K/dusun	Male	16	Christian	K5	Focus Group 7
25	K/dusun	Male	16	Christian	K6	Focus Group 7

Table 4.2: Full socio-demographic profile for focus groups & media consumption diary for 14-year-old participants

No.	Ethnicity	Gender	Age	Religion	Identity	No. of Group
1	Malay	Female	14	Muslim	M8	Focus Group 2
2	Malay	Female	14	Muslim	M9	Focus Group 2
3	Malay	Female	14	Muslim	M10	Focus Group 2
4	Malay	Female	14	Muslim	M11	Focus Group 2
5	Malay	Female	14	Muslim	M12	Focus Group 2
6	Malay	Female	14	Muslim	M13	Focus Group 2
7	Indian	Female	14	Hindu	I7	Focus Group 4
8	Indian	Female	14	Hindu	I8	Focus Group 4
9	Indian	Female	14	Hindu	I9	Focus Group 4
10	Indian	Female	14	Christian	I10	Focus Group 4
11	Indian	Male	14	Hindu	I11	Focus Group 4
12	Indian	Male	14	Hindu	I12	Focus Group 4
13	Chinese	Female	14	-	C7	Focus Group 6
14	Chinese-Indonesian	Female	14	Christian	C8	Focus Group 6
15	Chinese-Indonesian	Female	14	Christian	C9	Focus Group 6
16	Chinese	Female	14	-	C10	Focus Group 6
17	Chinese	Female	14	-	C11	Focus Group 6
18	Chinese	Female	14	Christian	C12	Focus Group 6
19	K/dusun	Female	14	Christian	K7	Focus Group 8
20	K/dusun	Female	14	Christian	K8	Focus Group 8
21	K/dusun	Female	14	Christian	K9	Focus Group 8
22	K/dusun	Male	14	Christian	K10	Focus Group 8
23	K/dusun	Male	14	Christian	K11	Focus Group 8
24	K/dusun	Male	14	Christian	K12	Focus Group 8

Table 4.3 : Lists of Participants involved in in-depth interviews

No.	Ethnicity	Gender	Age	Religion	Identity	No.Focus Group
1	Chinese	Female	14	Christian	C13	Focus Group 9
2	Chinese	Female	14	Christian	C14	Focus Group 9
3	Indian	Female	17	Hindu	I13	In-depth Interview
4	*Chinese-Indonesian	Female	14	Christian	C8	In-depth Interview fr FG 6
5	* Malay	Female	14	Muslim	M9	In-depth intervew fr FG 2
6	*Chinese	Female	16	Christian	C2	In-depth interview fr FG 3
7	*Chinese	Female	16	Buddhist	C1	In-depth interview fr FG 3

* In-depth interviews after focus group session.

Prior to the start of the fieldwork, the sampling of the respondents from four ethnic groups were equally divided in gender with 3 boys and 3 girls for each age group, making a total of six in each group. The initial number of respondents was only 48 instead of 49 in the four groups.

The in-depth interviews were conducted individually with three girls from (1) 14 year old Malay, (2) 16 year old Chinese girls and (1) 14 year old Chinese-Indonesian girl of the focus group and media diary respondents. Other interviews involved three girls, including one 17 year-old Indian girl and two 14 year-old Chinese girls. These girls were not part of focus groups or media consumption diary respondents. In-depth interviews with these three girls were conducted to clarify emerging issues related to non-Malay respondents raised during the reception studies. These are indicated in table 4.3.

Changes in terms of gender composition occurred on the actual day of fieldwork. Six boys selected to participate for the 14-year-old focus group sessions for the Malay and Chinese groups withdrew on the day of the fieldwork. Alternatively, six girls volunteered, changing the gender composition of the focus groups of the Malay and Chinese students. Two boys volunteered to be part of the interview session of the older Malay students, increasing the number of boys involved in that group.

As indicated in table 4.2 above, the Malay and Chinese 13-14 year-old groups consisted of mostly girls and only two boys, while the Indian group remained equally split. Consequently, the number of female respondents was 31,and only 18 male respondents. There were changes to the ethnic composition of the Chinese and Malay groups. Two of the 14 year-old Chinese girls were in fact of Chinese-Indonesian parentage. However, the girls reportedly consider themselves to be more ‘Chinese’ than Indonesian. A 16 year-old Muslim Malay girl was of Chinese-Malay parentage, but also reportedly considered herself ‘Malay,’ despite her Chinese heritage. Table 4.2 indicates the composition of young Malaysians interviewed in the focus group interviews and media consumption diaries.

4.6 Pre-testing

A pilot study was conducted prior to the actual fieldwork. It was conducted to pre-test the reception studies and involved testing the focus group questions, visual materials and group interactions that occurred during the interview. Diaries were also pre-tested to assure effectiveness. The pilot study helped to refine both the research questions and the diary format.

However, the pilot study was conducted on only one group consisting of young people of mixed ethnicity. It involved five students, all 16-year-olds, including two boys and three girls. A pilot study focus group was also conducted with 14-year-olds and it is through this that questions were rephrased to enable 14-year-olds to participate in the research. Participants of the pilot study did not know one another well, but were selected because of the similarity of age and ethnicity.

They were first shown visuals of *Hana Kimi* and *Gol & Gincu The Series.* It appeared that members of the group had prior knowledge or were familiar with either one or both of the series. One of the significant results of the pilot study for the focus group was that group interaction was effective, and discussions were engaging, even though they were not familiar with each other. The interview guide was refined based on the pilot study at a point where participants were asked to discuss or comment on a specific scene. It was felt that although general questions, such as what thoughts on the programme, could be asked initially, the following questions must be more specific, as young participants are not that adept at expanding discussions.

The pilot study conducted with younger groups highlighted the need to also refine the interview guide to be more specific, leaving out some open and general questions. This was because they were either shy with the researcher, who was a stranger to them, or because they were not able to engage in discussions unless the questions were more specific to the scene.

As mentioned earlier, the diary was initially structured to be more of a log, but after sending it out, it was found that such a diary would not yield much information about their consumption. Also, participants often scribbled comments beside the log of the programmes they watched, indicating that they were capable of filling in a diary-interview.

For each media source used, participants were asked to provide additional information. This was to ensure they remembered what had been consumed and to capture their actual reaction at the time of consumption.

4.7 Data Analysis Methods And Process

In analysing data gathered from the focus groups, the in-depth interviews and the media diaries, it was decided upon to mainly use Thematic Analysis (TA) over other qualitative data analysis methods, such as Grounded Theory, Frame Analysis, Narrative Analysis, Discourse Analysis or Conversation Analysis.

Thematic analysis (TA) is a commonly used analytical method in qualitative research. The rationale behind the use of TA in this study was that it didn't begin with a particular theory. Secondly, its aim was to discover the patterns of values that existed among different ethnic group through their daily media consumption. In investigating these patterns, it was sought to identify the patterns in the ways young Malaysians' identities were affected by their media consumption. Were there differences or commonalities in attitudes toward ethnic culture and tradition from across ethnicity and age?

This is parallel to how Braun & Clarke (2006:79) defined TA, "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data." Aronson (1994) added that this form of data analysis mainly looked at "identifiable themes and patterns"(http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/BackIssues/QR2-1/aronson.html), when analysing the subject's way of living and behaviour.

Identifiable themes or patterns, in this sense, can be detected by looking at the repeating ideas or words spoken or written by the subject in the study. Grbitch (2007:32) made this clear when she elaborated that TA focuses on "repeated words or phrases, case studies or evidence of answers to the research question/s which have been devised." She further added that apart from repeated words, themes are also be seen in other ways, such as use of metaphors, past relevant research findings,myths from the area studied or from the researcher's own instinctive feeling.

As TA concentrates on analysing the recurring themes in the data, such themes provide an indication to the researcher of a particular pattern found within the data. In this respect, it help to address the question of identity construction by gaining insights of the kind of identities that were constructed by different ethnic groups.

One of the many advantages of using TA was its flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2006).It allowed for coding of the data at the initial stage free, from any theoretical position. Only after a pattern was identified and a mental picture of the data was drawn was the data aligned with relevant literature.

Braun & Clarke (2006) further identified nine advantages of TA to be:-

(i) Easy and quick methods to learn and do;
(ii) Accessible to novice researchers for qualitative research;
(iii) Results are accessible to the educated general public;
(iv) Useful for working within the participatory research paradigm;
(v) Able to summarize key aspects for a large body of data, and offer a 'thick description' of the data;
(vi) Highlight similarities and differences across the data set;
(vii) Generates unanticipated insights;
(viii) Enables for social and psychological interpretations of the data;
(ix)Provides suitable information or data for policy development;

However, TA can easily be confused with Grounded Theory because the analysing procedures are identical. According to Ezzy (2002), both coding processes are similar, consisting of Open Coding, Axial Coding and Selective Coding. However, some fundamental differences between the two exist, which are important for researchers to distinguish. First of all, the aim of thematic analysis was to merely identify themes located in the data (Ezzy, 2002). Grounded Theory's aim was to produce or generate a formal theory from the data (Grbitch, 2007). Grounded Theory is more sophisticated as a qualitative data analysis method. Because Grounded Theory is aimed at producing a theory, its data analysis procedure is far more rigorous than TA.

Analysis using TA begins after all data are collected. Grounded Theory, on the other hand, uses theoretical sampling whereby more data are collected (Ezzy, 2002). Although Grounded Theory offers a similar flexibility, it is not use as a data analytic method because the study of media consumption and identity among young Malaysians has been addressed in past studies. Grounded Theory is often used when there is little or no prior knowledge of the subject matter. Those studies, however, were lacking the context of young Malaysians' consumption in their everyday lives, and the comparative approach taken into looking the patterns of media consumption and attitudes across different ethnic groups.

Using triangulation further strengthened the analysis. Statistical analytical tools, such as Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), were used to specifically analyse data from the media diaries. This was done to ascertain patterns of media consumption comparatively among different ethnic groups. While qualitative analyses explain the meaning behind their consumption, quantitative analyses help validate the findings through the number of hours spent consuming the media.

4.7.1 Data Analysis Procedure

According to Hayes (2000), Braun & Clarke (2006) and Grbitch (2007), thematic analysis follows a specific procedure.

1. Transcribing all interview materials;
2. Reading through the interview transcripts;
3. Make descriptive data summaries;
4. Sorting out various parts of the data into subthemes through coding;
5. Subthemes were produced into ‘proto-theme’
6. Create matrix of summary;
7. Examine the themes and the text, compare and contrast where themes were added and refine;
8. Integrate and identify the core category or theme;
9. Write a report.

Although the procedure outlined above by scholars is the fundamental procedure for thematic analysis, three more coding stages found in Grounded Theory were adopted. Open, axial and selective coding were used for a more rigorous procedure of analysing the data. This was still within TA because it was done after all data had been collected.

After transcribing the interviews and diary data, the data was imported into the qualitative data analysis software, NVIVO 8.Then, all data was read through again to form a mental picture of the data. Next descriptive data summaries were created for both focus group interviews and diary data for all ethnic and age groups.

The next step was to code all transcribed interviews and diary data into NVIVO. It was coded individually, from one ethnic group to another, as well as by age group. The coding process began using Open Coding, where all transcribed interviews and diary data was coded, resorting to in-vivo codes in NVIVO in line with thematic analysis being inductive or data-driven. Then a matrix of summary codes or sub-themes was produced across ethnicities and

ages. It was here it was found that different ethnic group have the tendencies to use cultural concepts, beliefs, views and metaphors repeatedly.

Having a matrix of summary sub-themes or codes allowed for the review and refinement of those sub-themes. This enabled not only the refinement of the codes, but also allowed for adding more themes. Refining the codes was done after it had been peer-reviewed by a colleague of a different discipline.

After this procedure was done exhaustively, comparisons and contrasts across ethnicities and age groups were looked for. This process revealed the similarities and differences between these two variables. A pattern of similarities and differences was noted in values from both reception studies and media consumption diaries. Then, the similarities from the differences were separated by patterns. For both similarities and differences, all sub-themes or codes were then re-organised, integrated and grouped into several major themes.

The analysis moved to the level of axial coding, where the relationship of all the codes were examined. The process of examining the relationship of all the codes was facilitated by “conceptual mapping” Grbitch (2007:33), or what Attride-Stirling (2001) called “thematic networks,” a web-like illustration of themes, where themes and patterns from similarities and differences are brought together into one model. Through this map, several major themes emerged.

The final stage of analysis was selective coding. The conceptual map helped to further integrate several major themes until the core code or central theme of the data was identifiable.

4.7.2 Position of the researcher in qualitative studies

In contrast to conducting quantitative research that calling for objectivity and detachment from the respondent, the qualitative researcher's role is the reverse. Since the constructivist paradigm assumes that there is no objective knowledge, that knowledge is subjective and socially-constructed by the respondents, the researcher needed to get close to the respondents. This allowed for precise interpretation of the 'truth' that was constructed by the respondent or subject, and for understanding from the perspective of the respondent.

Detachment is an issue for qualitative researchers because interpretation of data relies on their experience and knowledge of the research problem. This can only be achieved through close and constant contact with the respondents. Researchers need to get involved with the respondents and their lives. The purpose of qualitative research is defeated if the researcher is detached from the subjects under study.

The involvement with the respondents in this study was sometimes indirect and other times personal. For example, in order to make sense of multiethnic youths' values and identity and its relation to their media consumption, I assumed the role of an observer when conducting the focus group interviews, where involvement was confined to being a moderator. The face-to-face interviews and the watching of the two television programmes were moderated, and during the course of doing so, interactions and reactions were observed and noted.

In addition, following de Bruin (2001) and Dhoest (2009), the session began with questions about their favourite television programmes, including foreign and local programmes. From there, the topic moved to the programme selected for this study.

To avoid adding researcher bias, I refrained from asking leading questions. The sessions began with the participants describing what they understood from the scenes shown. The discussion developed from there, follow-up questions were asked to clarify unclear answers.

Conducting the analysis on the media consumption diaries was done from a different role. The diaries allowed the private domains of participant's lives to be revealed. Although the diaries were physically detached from the respondents, they allowed for a more intimate involvement with the research subjects. The accounts of their lives, experience, emotions, and how those related to their consumption of the media, allowed for a broader picture to be drawn of the data. The diaries opened up the context of their worlds, of which their media consumption was situated. This gave me an understanding of their identities, as a group and as individuals. It also provided me with an understanding of *why* certain media sources were chosen over others, because those specific media sources were the basis of how they constructed their sense of self.

Those media sources provide them with the resources to identify with *who they are,* which eventually forms the basis of their identity, away from the axis of traditional identity markers.

The combination of both methods have helped address the criticism levelled against qualitative studies by Alvesson & Sköldberg (2000: 9), who state that most 'data collection and analysis' in studies is "unreflective and should be impugned."

Promoting the idea of 'reflexive empirical research,' research was conducted in a reflective manner, where the purpose of conducting empirical work is to generate understanding and knowledge for the researcher rather than determining the truth.

> "The research process constitutes a (re) construction of the social reality in which researchers both interact with the agents researched and, actively interpreting, continually create images for themselves and for others: images which selectively highlight certain claims as to how conditions and processes – experiences, situations, relations- can be understood, thus suppressing alternative interpretations," (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000: 6)

The key point highlighted here is that research in qualitative studies should ideally involve constant reflecting and awareness, on the part of the researcher. Thus, this put to question whether past studies have been lacking in this aspect. The role of researcher is not only to collect data on the field, but also at the analysis stage, and in both stages researchers are constantly reflecting what they are doing(Roulston,2001). Roulston (2001:280) argues for 'reflexivity' when using thematic analysis in analysing data. Failing to do so, she said, will result in what she considers to be a "naive and 'romantic' reading" of the data derived from interviews.

In response to this, this study took into consideration the issue of reflexivity during the course of the fieldwork and analysis being conducted. Transcribing interview data promptly and identifying questions necessary of further discussion achieved this aim. Hence, in-depth interviews were followed with a further discussion with a particular member of a focus group, as well as interviewing another group. A similar procedure was used for diary data. Reflexivity is certainly a critical issue concerning constructivism. Researchers rely on the respondents' accounts as the constructed reality, as well as the researcher's own frame of understanding of the subject matter and of the respondents. As much as researchers try to interpret the reality from the perspective of the respondents, there is a propensity for them to present the data uncritically.

The focus group interviews provided insights into how young people of different ethnicities, ages and genders construct their identities as a group, but media consumption diaries and in-depth interviews allowed for further analysis of the data received. Both methods involve reflection and constant contrasting of data. These processes provided me the opportunity to assume the role of a direct observer and moderator.

4.7.3 Problems and Limitations of Thematic Analysis (TA)

Despite being the best option for this study, TA has its limitations. Braun & Clarke (2006) listed down several of its problems to be:-

(a) Data is too broad due to its flexibility;

(b) It's difficult to develop specific guidelines for analyses at advanced levels, meaning researchers are unable to know which aspect of their data should be reported;

(c) As it does not use any pre-existing theory, interpretations of data using TA are very basic and merely descriptive;

(d)TA lacks the standing of an analytic method like Conversation Analysis (CA) or Discourse Analysis (DA) which implies that it is seen by researchers who lack the skill to use more established data analysis methods.

Finally, TA can de-contextualize the data, as respondents are treated as a homogeneous unit because data is analysed based on the similarity or differences of themes. On the whole, TA has the potential to be an established qualitative data analytic method if it is further developed and refined, because its flexibility enables a rich and dynamic set of data.

4.8 Logistics and Challenges In Conducting The Fieldwork

On the whole, young Malaysians are very shy. Because their education system is based on rote learning, one has to be aware that they are not adept at communicating spontaneously in a discussion.

Moderators need to be careful not to ask value-laden questions of right and wrong throughout the interview session, because they would have perceived interview sessions as being similar to answering exam questions. Moderators, therefore, need to be flexible and relaxed while conducting the interview.

The ethnicity of the researcher proved to not be an obstacle for groups of young multiethnic participants, especially when they were asked to talk about interethnic relationships during their reception of *Gol & Gincu The Series.*

Participants were very willing and open in discussions, and did not regard it as a problem. Perhaps the major challenge in conducting fieldwork of this nature in Malaysia is not the participants but rather with the authorities, such as teachers and headmasters. While Malaysian schools are familiar with social research, they are not familiar with reception studies. They are more comfortable with questionnaires, as they can just collect the survey questions from the researcher and distribute them to the students, with little contact by the researcher. However, when I approached the selected schools upon receiving approval from the Education Ministry, many of the headmasters were reluctant to allow this interview. One of the main reasons was that they did not understand how reception studies were conducted, and feared the research was for commercial purposes. Also, some headmasters insisted on seeing the list of questions before allowing students to participate in the research. This interfered with the research, as it was asked that some questions be changed or omitted.

Another challenge arose when some headmasters changed the composition of the groups. As the study was sampled based on ethnicity, some headmasters mixed group members. Collecting diaries from the school also proved to be a challenge because of the time factor. Most schools are involved in extra-curricular activities, so the headmasters or senior teachers often changed the collection dates. This prolonged the fieldwork period.

In tackling all these issues, fieldwork was delayed after receiving approval from the Ministry. Rather, several trips were made to brief the schools about the research and how it was to be conducted.

One of the ways to resolve the problem of reluctant headmasters was by allowing them the authority to determine the day, time and place of the interview. This way, they had more control over the research at the outset.

Secondly, in order to further appease their uncertainty, they were given consent forms, information guides and a copy of the approval letter to pass on to the parents, which included details of contact numbers so that parents and schools could ask for clarification. Parents, schools and participants were free to withdraw from the research at any time, without offering an explanation. This gave them further autonomy and assurance they were not being exploited. The response from parents and guardians was positive. Participants were mostly excited to be involved, because they found the reception study quite different from the usual experience of answering survey questions. Almost all parents and students consented to the project.

After the initial shyness during the focus group interview, the participants were rather expressive and enjoyed being given the opportunity to discuss issues as an individual rather than as a child or a student. A most important point to consider when conducting focus group interviews with multiethnic participants is for the researcher to be aware of and knowledgeable about each ethnic group's cultural values, beliefs and practices. Without this knowledge, a researcher could miss out an interpretation of their nuances and inferences in their expressed opinion. Researchers also must also be proficient in the

various dialects used in the Malay language. Malay students from Kuala Lumpur speak Malay differently, and therefore may express the meaning of a certain point differently from others.

The in-depth interviews were the most essential part of the research, not only because they helped me effectively make sense of the data but also because they gave the participants a wider opportunity to add more points to either the reception or media consumption diary studies. Moreover, as the participants already knew me, they were more open to talk.

The key to smooth implementation lies in two factors. First of all, researchers must possess good negotiation skills. When faced with headmasters or senior teachers trying to change the project, such as the sampling of the participants or interview questions, researchers must be firm in negotiating.

Secondly, a transparent and orderly research procedure eases many problems such as reluctant headmasters. To an extent, it won the trust and access of the affected parties because it was possible to prove that this is a bona fide academic research project.

4.8.1 Ethical Considerations

Due to the fact that this research involved young people, clearance had to be obtained both from the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) under the Prime Minister's Department and the Educational Planning & Research Division of the Malaysian Ministry of Education. Without it, research cannot be conducted within the school compounds.

Another aspect taken into consideration was that students were involved in public examinations. Under instruction from the Ministry, these students are prohibited from participating in research. Therefore, participants of ages 15 and 17–18 were ruled out.

Secondly, Loughborough's Central Ethical Committee does not allow research to be conducted off-campus involving human participants, especially young people. In addition, the committee prohibits a researcher from making contact directly with students, and must be done through a third party such as the Education Ministry or schools. To address this concern, consent forms were sent to parents and guardians of the selected participants. Prior to notifying parents, selected schools were contacted by letter with a copy of the letter from the Ministry.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter touched on the various methodological aspects and issues of this study. In order to examine how young Malaysians of different ethnicities with different cultural backgrounds use the media to make sense of their identities, and if all young Malaysians construct their identities away from traditional factors such as class, ethnicity, religion and local cultures as a consequence of globalisation, multi-qualitative methods were used.

Students were engaged in audience reception and media consumption studies in which methods like focus group interviews, media consumption diaries and in-depth interviews were used. The rationale behind using audience reception studies was to examine how young people make sense of their identity through the media drawing on their social positions, backgrounds and experiences. Using popular culture such as a youth television drama with topics such as 'relationships' were anticipated to elicit more insightful and fruitful discussions, as well as tracing the cultural shift in values among young people. The use of a media consumption diary was to find out the common media consumption pattern among young Malaysians across ethnicities, which an indication of the possibility a common youth identity existed. Secondly, the diary helped to document the different ways ethnic groups use the media in their everyday lives. Lastly, diaries helped to trace consumption patterns for culturally similar media content against non-similar ones.

The sampling of young people according to ethnicity was because ‘ethnicity’ is a major characteristic of Malaysian society. It also allowed the researcher to examine cultural shifts among different ethnic groups. In addition, it also helped to raise the issue of ‘ethnicity’ more markedly among ethnic minorities against the dominant ethnic group. Furthermore, young people have various levels of identity, all of which should be examined from the standpoint of their various backgrounds.

The use of focus group interviews and diary methods was not without limitations. Although focus group interviews and audience reception studies are often criticised for the artificial setting, this problem can be overcome in many ways. A series of in-depth interviews can be conducted, and the use of multiple research methods helps alleviate concerns. In the case of the diary method, Alaszeweski (2006:115) highlights three of its weaknesses to be “cost, selection bias and possible inaccuracies and biases”. However, this was taken into consideration, and not found to be a deterrent.

Steps were taken to analyse the diaries immediately upon collection, and a series of in-depth interviews with the relevant diarists were conducted to make up for inaccuracies. Research projects inherently have limitations, weaknesses and challenges, but prudent researchers probe for clarification in answers through in-depth interviews until questionable content is amended.

Secondly, it is crucial for any researcher to have good negotiation and bargaining skills when dealing with authorities or institutions.

Chapter 5

Multiple Identities, Shifting Values : Tradition vs Modern Subjects

5.0 Introduction

Analysis of the whole set of data gathered, including from focus group interviews, media consumption diaries and in-depth interviews, brought an overarching theme of 'In-between Identities.'

Young Malaysians' identities were found to be fluid, intersecting various social identities and level of values. They speak from a gendered perspective, but positions shift to ones related to ethnicity. Perspectives also shifted in terms of values and belief systems between traditions, both modern and collective vs. individualism. Nevertheless, one consistent pattern was found throughout. 'Values' divided young Malaysians into those who use cultural beliefs and norms from their respective ethnicity and religion and those who identify themselves from neither. This situation was not always fixed and consistent, but was dialectic between individual self and collective identities and social normative values.

This question of differing, shifting and sometimes conflicting values dominates throughout the four data analysis chapters. This chapter begin with a discussion on how young Malaysians view outside culture against their own cultural background and experience through the reception of an Asian teen romance drama – *Hana Kimi*.

5.1 'Relationships" – Cultural Conflict of the Local Situation vs. Hana Kimi

As discussed in Chapter 2, the development of 'relationships' in Malaysia is very much determined by religion and ethnic culture. For Malays, relationships and marriages are shaped by the Islamic faith. Only parts of Malay *adat* (customs) that do not contravene Islamic teaching are adopted as cultural practice.

For instance, Islam, as discussed in Chapter 2, strongly forbids pre-marital sex and considers it a major sin. Therefore, free mixing of male and females who have reached puberty, which may lead to pre-marital sex or physical intimacy, is prohibited. This shapes how young Malay and Muslims construct their relationships, although at present, many date and take time to get to know each other. Generally, they abstain from sex during the courtship period while dating freely and openly in public spaces. Usually, after a year of courtship, they begin to consider marriage.

In the Malay wedding custom, a man proposes to a woman by sending his family to approach her parents for her hand in marriage. If it is accepted, an engagement follows. A date for the wedding is also set during the engagement ceremony. The man pays a dowry to the girl. This sets the role of the man as the initiator in the relationship. According to Wazir Jahan (1990), men have the upper hand in selecting a spouse, since he is the one who sends his family to ask for the girl's hand in marriage.

Parents whose children have reached puberty are often more watchful of their interactions with the opposite sex to avoid any incidences of pre-marital sex, considered to be "acts of immorality" and a sin (Wazir Jahan, 1990: 25). Similarly, the Chinese and Kadazandusun wedding customs also follow the rule that the man proposes to the girl and presents a dowry as a gift. As no research into Malaysian Chinese weddings and beliefs has been made, an in-depth interview was held with a local Chinese academic on the matter. According to him, a girl pursuing a man would be looked down upon in the

Chinese community and also the man's family. The religions of the other ethnic groups studied do not play a significant role in their daily lives, so they follow the customs and norms of their ethnic culture.

5.2 Overview of the Data

Data was gathered from eight focus group interviews and another three in-depth interviews involving 52 young people. Three girls not from the earlier focus groups were interviewed and identified as 'C13', 'C14' and 'I8,' while a repeated interview was conducted with a respondent referred to as 'C8' because her opinion was different from the rest of her group, focus group 3. The identities of each student were changed to provide anonymity. They are identified by labels such M1/Boy, indicating the first Malay boy in a group.

Interviews were conducted in Malay for the Malay and Kadazandusun group, and the Indian and Chinese students preferred to speak in *Manglish (*Malaysian English).One will note that in the excerpts of the interviews with the Indian and Chinese students there is the inclusion of Malay words such as "*lah,*"and Chinese wordslike "*loh,*" "*mah*" and "*woh*" in *Manglish,* which are meant to emphasise a point at the end of a sentence.

The selected scenes of *Hana Kimi* were taped from the television. Before the focus group discussion began, the participants were shown four scenes from the first episode of *Hana Kimi.* The first scene features the heroine, *Rui Xi*, the Chinese American teenage girl, disclosing to her best friend her secret plan to go to Taiwan in the summer to attend Ying Kai Boys' School in an attempt to win the heart of her high-jump idol, *Quan*. To demonstrate her determination to pursue true love, she cuts off her hair, indicating that she will resort to disguising as a boy to achieve that aim. The second scene shows how she copes on her first day of school dressed as a boy. She bumps into *Quan,* who does not recognise her. The third scene led the audience to see how she was coincidentally placed in the same class as *Quan*, which gives her the opportunity to get closer to him.

The fourth scene shows her making her first attempt at approaching him, but fails miserably when he takes no interest in her.

In analysing their reception of the media's notion of 'romance' in *Hana Kimi*, it was found that the programme became a site for young Malaysians to contest and to promote their cultural values by contrasting them with the values in the drama. Those who conform and draw from religion, local norms and practise used the programme to debate and criticise 'modern' outside social and cultural values that in their view are corrupting and eroding the noble, traditional local values manifested in *Hana Kimi*. Drawing on their respective religions and ethnic cultures, those who opposed the drama argued that the kind of relationship in *Hana Kimi* was culturally inappropriate, even to young people. The opposing participants viewed the represented relationship drama as pure entertainment.

Consequently, their reception *o*f *Hana Kimi* was differentiated by *difference*s of values. This was further complicated by gender and levels of maturity manifested. This polarised young Malaysians' understanding of 'relationships,' showcasing the polysemic nature of the text. Transcripts of the interview were keyed into NVIVO 8.

5.2.1 Themes Identified

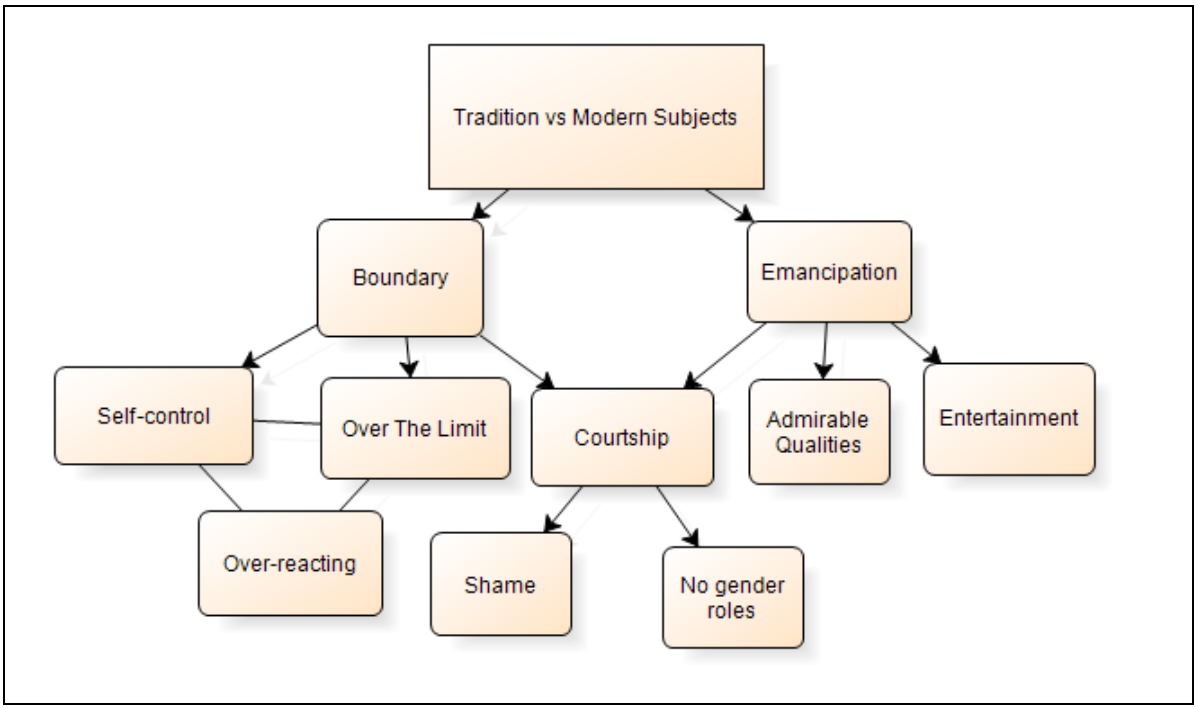
Young Malaysians' reception of *Hana Kimi* evoked issues of differences in 'values' in both age groups and ethnicities, due to the different way they viewed an 'ideal' relationship, which stems from different belief systems. What was also found were differences in the sources of knowledge that shaped how these young people see the world. One group made sense of the world and life drawing from various traditional sources like religion, local norms, beliefs and norm. This particular group of respondents reflected ideas from these sources. They see life as structured and ordered by rules, whether based on the concept of 'fate' (religion), ethnic culture or local cultural practices. Consequently, 'life' is not about individual needs or decisions, and he or she

must take into consideration the consequences of their actions on others. In addition, men have limited control over their lives and destinies.

Another group made sense of life based more on logic and rational. They never talked about consequences of one's action on others. They viewed decisions solely based on the logic of what one needs, and how best to get it. Apart from different belief systems, the various positions were also due to 'age' factor, which relates to different levels of maturity. The central focus for the older groups' reception, regardless of their belief system, lies in the 'characteristics' of the heroine - *Rui Xi.* In contrast to the younger group, while they debated *Rui Xi*'s characteristics, they were also concerned with the practical issues, such as the practicality of entering a boys' school undetected. Perhaps, what is interesting here is that despite the topic being 'relationships', 'gender' was not significant in characterising their reception compare to 'values.'

After collating the sub-categories, which touches on the various positions on her characteristics, the themes were then refined into two central themes of 'Boundary' *and* 'Emancipation*'* for the older group. 'Boundary' had four categories: *self-control, over the limit, common-sense* and *courtship* while 'Emancipation' produced three categories: *admirable qualities, entertainment* and share *courtship*, as shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Overall Themes for 16-year-old reception of Hana Kimi



For the younger group, the two themes identified were 'Boundary' and 'Accommodating.' 'Boundary' produced four categories, *self-control, rules, patience* and *dignity.* 'Accommodating' had five categories, *extraordinary person, circumstances, individual decision, shifting values* and *mutual process. Self-control* was another shared category between the older and younger group for the theme 'Boundary.' There was an exception in terms of 'ethnicity.' Indian students were the only ones who had a different stance in regards to 'courtship,' which produced a subcategory called *'mutual process'.*

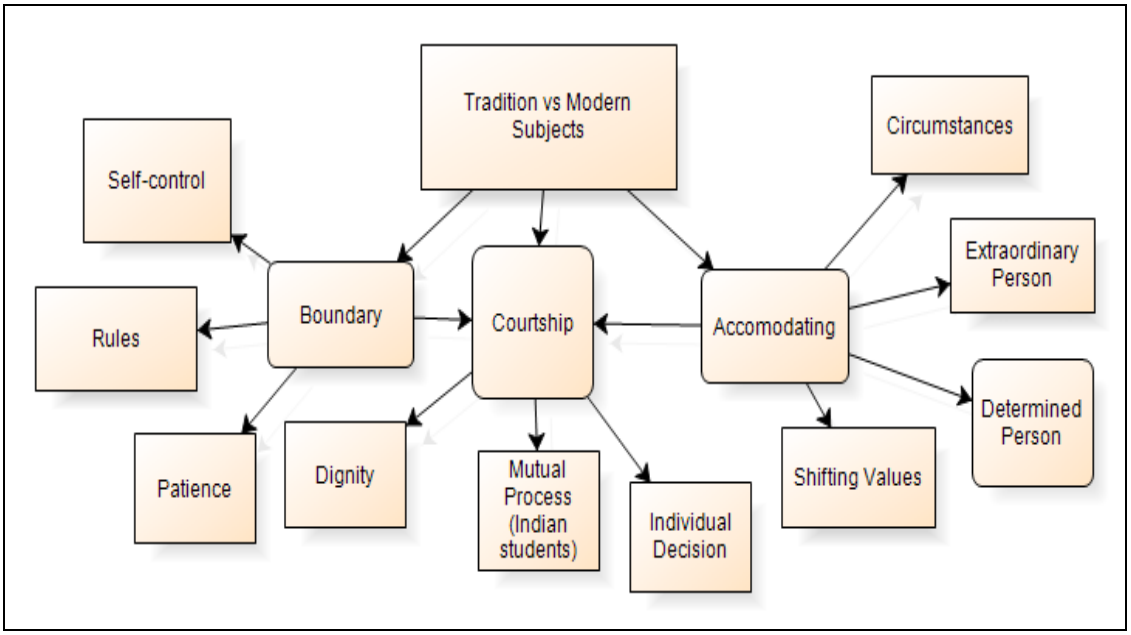


Table 5.2 : Overall Themes for 14-year-old

The term 'boundary' as a theme was found in both age groups, and was most apt to capture the essence of the discussion. 'Boundary' implies limitations or parameters where for everything that one does, there has to be a limit. These limits are dictated by social norms, religious rules, logic, social conventions, sanity and official laws. *Rui Xi* was viewed as someone who had gone out of the boundaries, hence receiving a hostile reception. For different ages, 'boundary' touched on various perspectives of control and restraint. There was an air of difference where culture and religion were concerned, and older students who identified with the theme of '*Emancipation*' were nonchalant about it.

In fact, they admired 'individualism' as very refreshing and celebrated liberal-democratic ideals as the current way of life. While the younger group placed under the theme of 'Accommodating' have yet to become more assertive about breaking away from boundaries of local culture and religion, their tones were more apologetic and accommodating of *Hana Kimi.*

5.3 Theme 1 : ‘Boundary’ (16 and 17-year-old)

For those placed under this position, their strong reactions against her ranged on variety of issues related to the problems with her characteristics which led to a debate of what appropriate behaviour in courtship was, and how that forms a ‘relationship’ and ‘romance.’

5.3.1 ‘Self-Control’

The main criticism levelled at the character was attributed to the way she courted the hero, i.e. entering an all boys’ school, pretending to be a boy. Both genders were rather scathing of this. *‘*Self-control*’* has four further subcategories*: studies, fate, risky behaviour and protect modesty.*

Studies refer to how as a young person and student, *Rui Xi*’s main priority was towards her studies. Three participants – two boys and a girl -- felt that so long as she was still in school, her studies should come first. As ‘relationships’ were viewed within the domain of adulthood, these students accepted the idea that *Rui Xi*, like any other teenager, was too young to be involved in a serious relationship.

“Cos she's student right?....(she needs) to think of her studies. She must focus (on her studies), if she goes on like that, her studies would be disrupted. She can’t concentrate because all she ever thinks about is love...when her future remains uncertain,” (M1/Boy/16-year-old/Group 1).

“This really shouldn’t happen...because she (Rui Xi) should be patient...wait till she finishes her studies...then (meet the boy of her dreams). Anyway, even if the boy have begun to like her and get close to her...it doesn’t mean that the boy would like her if she turn-up in her true identity. Because he accepts her as a boy, so he might not like her if she were a girl, then all that effort would all be in vain,” (M7/Girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 1).

”Basically, at this age, we are encouraged to study and not to love,” (I2/Boy/16-year-old/Focus Group 3).

Fate refers to the belief that soul-mates are predestined by God, and not solely the product of human action and effort. M1 was the only student who used religion in making sense of *Hana Kimi*. For him, the need for restraint or control of one’s emotions and desires is also aligned to his Islamic belief that humans have no total control over their destinies, including finding a soul-mate.

Although one may strive to achieve what they desire, in the end, it is God who has the final say. For M1, who sees himself as a devout Muslim, the question of meeting true love lies not only with the disguise, but the fact that there is a higher being which has a divine power that predetermines our fate. This is what will determine the existence of a ‘relationship.’ In this respect, one should not be overly eager or zealous in pursuing ‘romance’ and ‘relationships,’ as soul-mates are predestined by God.

“It’s up to ‘*jodoh’* [ix](fated soul mate). If it is indeed her ‘*jodoh*’, they will eventually be united. I mean if you haven’t met anyone, then that means, your ‘jodoh’ hasn’t arrive yet.’ But the fact, we are still students...I mean if one were to go to that extent of disguising, (I think) it’s not proper,” (M1/Boy/16-year-old/Focus Group 1).

Apart from confining oneself to the responsibility of studies, and leaving matters of the heart in the hands of fate, *Rui Xi*’s decision to travel alone without her parent’s knowledge was perceived to be endangering her life. An Indian girl disapproved of this, thinking such a move was foolish and risky.

Risky Behaviour relates to the question of ‘risk’ that led one girl to conclude the inappropriateness of *Rui Xi*’s action to pursue the hero in such a manner.

“She's really crazy. I mean, she doesn't even know that guy. And, she doesn't know what kind of person he is, and she just wants him. I mean I think that's a bit too much *lah*. She should have gone to Taiwan and studied in a normal school, try to get to know him through friends. Or, try to get herself involved in something that he's also involved in. She would have tried some other way to get to know him,” (I13/Girl/17 year-old/in-depth interview).

As a girl, she felt there was great risk involved in going off to meet a total stranger, away from the knowledge of her family. This was another aspect that supported the idea of a need for ‘self-control,’ as one might be too blinded by infatuation to realise the risk involved.

The text also evoked a sense of protest among boys and girls on how a girl should behave towards the opposite sex, particularly when puberty is reached. Thus, the question of ‘protect modesty’ became a subcategory for the category of ‘self-control.’

As boys and girls experience physical changes to the body, both sexes become conscious of each other. This poses a need for a boundary between how close can both sexes can be when interacting.

Malaysian students have been taught against close proximity with the opposite sex after reaching puberty. Associating with someone of the opposite sex before marriage is viewed as culturally and religiously inappropriate. It is also feared that this lead to pre-marital sex and unwanted pregnancies, which is seen as tarnishing the dignity and reputation of the individuals and families involved.

Drawing from this, some of the participants disapproved of the text because the disguise enabled the heroine to share a room with the hero. Even though she was disguised as a boy, to these students, *Rui Xi* had taken the disguise a bit too far and had compromised her own dignity.

“Basically, after boys and girls reach puberty, the girls are more shier and the feelings are more shy. So, it’s not logical that the girl is willing to go to the boy,” (I2/boy/16-year-old/Focus Group 3).

“No, because she's a girl. Classmate can *lah*...hostel cannot be...because he's a boy and she's a girl,” (I4/girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 3).

The need to think before every action is essential so that human beings are not driven by pure needs and wants, but also of rational sound mind. Humans are rational beings whose lives are contextualised within the rules of local cultures, norms and religion, are not completely and autonomous agents. For every action taken, there is always a consequence to others that must be considered. The effect of *Rui* Xi’s actions would be reflected on her morality as a person and a girl.

“Actually, a girl shouldn’t change her appearance because of that (boys), It leaves an impact.. It has an impact on her morality,” (K2/Girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 7).

The underlying meaning behind these narratives is that a girl is allowed to mix freely with the opposite sex without compromising her dignity and modesty.

5.3.2 ‘Over The Limit’

The actions considered to be out of boundary of normal behaviour were interpreted with a negative standpoint of obsession, psychotic and boy-crazy behaviour. The disguise was viewed as beyond the normal rational acts of people in love.

“This girl is really obsessed with that guy- that she’s willing to change gender,” (M2/Boy/16-year-old/Focus Group 1).

“She's cutting her hair to see the boy because she's crazy of the boy. She's willing to cut her hair, join the school to see the boy. Be closer to be with him,” (I3/Boy/16-year-old/Focus Group 3).

“It is abnormal. She’s overboard cos she doesn’t have to do that (disguise). There are plenty other guys, that she could easily find,” (M3/Boy/17-year-old/Focus Group1).

“I don't think...any sane girl would do that,” (I13/Girl/17-year-old/in-depth interview).

“(It’s overboard)...it’s not like she knows him well enough.. . just because she is grateful that he saved her life. It doesn’t necessarily mean that she needs to behave that way, like she’s so obsessed...,” (M5/Girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 1).

The various use of the word ‘crazy’ by these participants indicates the interpretation of *Rui Xi* as someone who acts compulsively. This indicates a perceived need for ‘self-control,’ particularly when engaging with the opposite sex. This was further corroborated with the use of the word ‘overboard,’ which suggests her actions are beyond the normal limits of how a girl should feel towards a boy. In other words, instead of viewing her as a typical character, a girl madly in love, the participants viewed her as someone whose feelings were excessive and obsessive. A tone of disdain and disapproval was also detected in the second Malay boy’s statement when he describe her as ‘obsessed’ instead of ‘in love,’ The extent at which she pursued him, by disguising herself, was considered ‘over the limit’ by this boy.

A similar reference was made by an Indian boy, who made references on the excessiveness of her feelings for the hero. He viewed the situation of the girl being ‘crazy for the boy’ with disdain.

Over-reacting was a typical response to *Rui Xi*'s daring move to woo the boy she fancied. Both boys and girls were particularly critical of her decision to resort to a disguise.

"What's important is-- I would have just told [*Rui Xi]* not to be stupid, cos I think that [disguise] is really stupid. A girl shouldn't pretend to be a boy, just to get close to him. I mean, there are plenty of other ways. Like since the boy had saved her life, I still think there are plenty of other ways, like saying 'thank you'," (M6/Girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 1).

"Soooo, not realistic. Nobody's gonna do something so stupid *lah*... Yeah, act, dress up like a boy and go into to a boys' school just to know a guy," (C6/Boy/16-year-old/Focus Group 5).

"I suppose there's so many other ways that she could have taken, but she just choose to do something silly. That nobody would actually do," (I13/Girl/17-year-old/in-depth interview).

For these participants, her behaviour wasn't logical or normal. Even thought it was an innovative way of beginning a relationship, this was not accepted by these students, who approach life in a more rational manner. There was also a tinge of feminism here. There was a consensus that girls shouldn't stoop so low just to get attention from a man. This was evident in M2's comment, that *Rui Xi*'s disguise was an act of being too eager to please the opposite sex.

The value of honesty as a virtue was evident, as some students were uncomfortable with the disguise because of its dishonesty. Negotiating the moral value of being truthful was seen as important in a relationship.

"I would make the move to approach him. In a proper way,*lah.* Maybe through his friends. No, I mean after all, he would want to know me for the person I am, not somebody I'm not," (I13/Girl/17 year-old/in-depth interview).

“ Be yourself,” (I2/Boy/16-year-old/Focus Group 3).

“ Be confident,” (I6/Girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 3).

5.4 Theme 2 :‘Emancipation’ (16 and 17-year-old)

In contrast to those who opposed the drama, those who supported it had positive views of the drama. As aforementioned, the types of positive receptions of the drama were split into two categories. The first category is the opinion that there was nothing wrong with *Rui Xi*’s move. The young people who felt this way had great admiration for her. The second category is the opinion that the whole story was mere entertainment.

5.4.1 ‘Admirable Qualities’

Not all participants disliked *Rui Xi*’s characteristics. In fact, a group of girls supported *Rui Xi*’s actions because they were viewed as merely romantic, and her a person who believed in true love.

“Not all girls would be willing, but in this movie, that girl used to be very fat.. . She was willing to lose weight so that she can meet the guy. As she was willing to make that sacrifice...to meet the guy. Not all girls are willing to do that,”(C1/Girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 5).

“She just wants to prove her love.. . that she was willing to cut her hair and disguise herself as a boy and goes into a boys’ school,” (M7/Girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 1).

“She's so confident of her love, then it's okay,” (I4/Girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 3).

“She's confident with herself. She can do anything for her love. She's daring,” (I6/Girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 3).

"I wouldn't look down on her. *Ya,* I think it takes a strong person to do that also. I mean if she is in the right mind,*lah,"* (I13/Girl/17-year-old/in-depth interview).

What is interesting about the narratives of all these girls is that they all share an admiration for girls who stand up for themselves and pursue their goals against convention. This group didn't consider *Rui Xi* too bold, or acting excessively. What was considered to be 'bold' and inappropriate behaviour of a girl by the other group of students was viewed as courage and determination by these girls.

This feminist view of how a girl should behave runs in contrast to the opinions of girls in another group. These other girls hold tradition to constitute the ideal behaviour for a girl. As the other group insisted that one should always think of the consequences of one's action, individualism was not seen as an evil thing. Rather, *Rui Xi*'s determination in finding true love was greatly admired by these girls. The key thing for them was that as long as one has faith and is clear about how she feels, it does not matter what others think of her. Additionally, they felt there was nothing immoral about this, as long as her conscience was clear.

5.4.2 'Entertainment'

The only group that found the texts to be pure entertainment, and viewed it far beyond the morality-individuality dichotomy, was the Kadazandusun group. Both boys and girls in this group found *Hana Kim*i and the various scenes shown to be hilarious. This, to some extent, reveals how broad-minded they are, such that a text does not always have to be viewed from a cultural perspective.

Interviewer: “What do you think this story is about?”

“Pursuing love. Like [Rui Xi] is willing to do something that is not logical. To get that guy. Eventhough that story does not make any sense, but if one were watching it, it’s really entertaining...if one wants to watch it, that person can get addicted to the story,” (K2/Girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 7).

“To me, this story is about this girl who really wants to meet and get to know this guy. That she was willing to do anything. But the best part of it was there is elements of humour in it,” (K4/Boy/16-year-old/Focus Group 7).

“I think this story is very interesting eventhough.. . I haven’t really watched it.. . but when I first saw it, I was driven to want to watch it again and the acting is really reflecting today’s teenagers. The acting was funny too. Especially when she’s feeling awkward trying to become a boy, that she can’t shake off her true identity as a girl,” (K3/Girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 7).

Despite realising that such a drama carries unsuitable values, which draw disapproval from the older generation particularly, the K2 group maintained the story was entertaining.

“But it’s very entertaining. It suits teenagers. But if the old folks were to see this, they would definitely say “typical of young people’s film,” (K2/Girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 7).

This reveals that while they recognise the drama may have little social value, they still saw light out of the situation. None of them debated the appropriateness of the heroine approaching the hero at first sight.

5.5 Theme 1 : ‘Boundary’ (14 and 15-year-old)

The theme ‘boundary’ for the younger age group produces four categories: *self-control, rules, dignity* and *patience.* Another factor that differentiates the

reception in terms of age was the tone in which they reacted. The younger group, particularly the Malay group consisting of all girls, was particularly hostile to the story, with the exception of only one girl. Five out of six girls were appalled by the approach taken by *Rui Xi* to woo the hero. Other ethnic and gender groups also expressed this feeling, as they considered *Rui Xi*'s move out of the acceptable limits of human behaviour.

5.5.1 'Self-Control'

This category captured the underlying meaning behind some participant's feeling of being appalled. They viewed *Rui Xi*'s behaviour compulsive and unnecessary. Every point raised by these participants indicated they felt she had taken her infatuation too far. Under this category, three subcategories were identified: *morality, transgender* and *overboard.*

'Morality' was identified as a subcategory of 'self-control.' Participants, who construed the heroine's behaviour as beyond the accepted norms of a person, reflecting her morality, brought up this issue. Someone who is immodest about her feelings, particularly towards the opposite sex, has questionable morality.

"How could she go to that extent- of disguising as a boy...just to look for love? Why can't she just wait for her 'jodoh?' She's got to believe in [jodoh] . . . that she would be able to find love...not by leading her life as a boy, just to look for love," (M12/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

"Why can't she just call him," (M9/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group2).

" Exactly, really immoral," (M11/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

"Why not meet outside school? Even if she likes the guy, she doesn't have to disguise as a boy. There will be a time when they will meet outside school. She can then tell him how she feels. If she really wants to get to know him, maybe she can ask some male friends to help introduce them," (K11/Boy/14-year-old/Focus Group 8).

The disguise was viewed as going too far in the courting process, as there are more proper ways of gaining the attention an object of desire. Based on what one Kadazandusun boy stated, it was apparent that *Rui Xi* was acting beyond the proper social norms he was familiar with. The thought of asking another male friend to make an introduction was suggested as a more acceptable and normal way. Because of her assertive methods, this group perceived *Rui Xi* unfavourably.

Another dimension of morality found disturbing by some Kadazandusun participants was the disguise as a metaphor for 'transgender.' Using the word '*pondan,'* meaning 'transgender,' in the interview, a boy referred to the disguise as an act of crossing sexual identity.

Interviewer: Supposing you met someone who had to do this, what would be your impression of that person?

"Too much," (K12/Boy/14-year-old/Focus Group 8).

Interviewer: "Why?"

"Her behaviour...to the point that she's willing to be a transgender ,"(K12).

"I would advise [her] not to do that," (K10/Boy/14-year-old/Focus Group 8) .

"Advise her, [that] she needs to accept God's will. As we all have our own religious beliefs. If she wants to be with that boy, do it properly. Like say 'hello' and greet him nicely, not by disguising.. . it's disgusting. She should consider having a group study, exchange ideas and build mutual understanding with each other. Not this way," (K9/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 8).

In the context of Malaysian society, the only sexual identity recognised is heterosexual. Other forms of sexual identity are not accepted. The boys expressed their opinions of *Rui Xi* with tones of disdain and contempt. Her act

of resorting to disguise was seen as akin to cross-dressing, which they considered degrading.

Another example of ‘excessive behaviour’ was the extent at which *Rui Xi* went to attract the boy. It was viewed as unnecessary. The study group who identified with this category were not willing to go that far for love. They argued from the perspective of breaching social norms, which they believe dictates how individuals should behave in public.

This group’s viewpoint was that ‘love’ is about logic and convenience. The notion of a ‘relationship’ is situational and conditional. It is not about devotion, commitment and unconditional love but convenience and rules.

“I’m not willing to go to Taiwan. . . just to do that.. . to change identity,” (M11/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

“As if, there are no other guys. If I were the guy, I would think that girl is overboard. Like she’s too obsessed with [him]. ‘Cos this is uncalled for...if I were the guy, I would put her in a mental institution,” (M12/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

“Yeah, especially going to a boys’ hostel,” (M11/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

“In terms of experience, this is really outrageous,” (K10/Boy/14-year-old/Focus Group 8).

“Yes, cos [Rui Xi] too hasty. Maybe she’s afraid another girl would have gotten him,” (K11/Boy/14-year-old/Focus Group 8).

5.5.2 ‘Rules’

Two subcategories were defined under the theme of ‘rules’: *official identity* and *deception.* These involved the question of ‘access;’ The younger participants were vexed at how the heroine managed to enter a boys’ school

without being discovered by the official. An official, in this respect, was not confined to school authorities, but included immigration officials as well.

Younger participants expressed a belief that one's identity is given to an individual, and that 'identity' is not something an individual can create. In this respect, 'who they are' was defined by classification through official documents, or *official identity,* in the form of an identification card (ID) as the accepted 'identity' of a person.

"Identity, you need an IC (identity card) if you're going to become someone," (I9/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 4).

"Because we have to cut our hair and to go into the school, we also can't cause we also need to have the IC," (C12/Girl/indepth interview/ Focus Group 9).

"If one were to enter into a boys' school, there must some form of checking right? How did she suddenly get in? What about her birth certificate, she must have faked her birth certificate," (M13/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

"She probably paid her way in," (M8/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

"Just because she wants to get into this school, she was willing to do something that might get her arrested by the Immigration Department," (M13/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

"But she just wants to prove true love exists," (M8/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

"Sure, if one were too obsessed with love, that's true," (M12/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

"To the point of cutting her hair from America," (M9/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

“ This story is not only socially wrong but it is also wrong in terms of the country’s laws,” (M13/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

“People must really think we are crazy,” (M10/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

“We have to fake our ID, passport and all... then go to jail. All for the sake of true love,” (M13/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

Rules in this story were not only perceived to be breaking state laws, but laws of morality. This group implied the rule of human relations to be one where people are supposed to be honest with each other, and not hide behind a disguise. Indian participants could not understand why *deception* of the one you love would be acceptable.

Interviewer: Why do you think it's stupid?

“Because she's changing her identity, it's not real,” (I9/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group4).

“Yup, she's bluffing,” (I11/Boy/14-year-old/Focus Group 4).

Interviewer: What did you mean by stupid?

“Don't know how to say it,” (I7/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 4).

“Just tell them how you feel. Just give it a shot,” (I8/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 4).

“If it's not for you, then it's not,” (I11/Boy/14-year-old/Focus Group 4).

5.5.3 ‘Patience’

‘Patience’ as a theme relates to surrendering to fate. This category comes the response from one Malay girl, who drew from the Islamic belief of ‘soul-mates’ as predestined by God. The Malay word for fate in relation to soulmates - ‘*jodoh,’* and was used extensively. She expressed a belief that a person can strive to find his or her soul-mate, but there is a limit to doing so, as it is up to *‘jodoh.’* God ultimately determines soul mates, so the success of finding true love greatly depends on if God has decided that the individual is her *‘jodoh.’*

What this girl constantly emphasised was that *Rui Xi*, like any other girl, shouldn’t be too anxious to find true love, as it all depends on whether it is time for her ‘*jodoh*’ to arrive.

“She does not need [to disguise herself]. If she really wants to find her ‘*jodoh*’ [in Taiwan], I think it’s unnecessary. I’d advise her not to do it. She will meet a better guy,” (M9/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

“When I saw this story, I remembered a similar English film, but the English film made better sense. That story showed how this girl was so interested in football that she disguised herself as a boy and entered into a boys’ school. But at the end, she found love there. At least that was interesting, but not [Hana Kimi].She became a guy because she was looking for love,” (M12/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

Both M9 and M12, who are Muslim, drew their understanding of the existence of love and relationship as something natural that comes from fate. The English film, combined with M12’s understanding that soul-mates are predetermined by fate, led her to conceptualise ‘love’ and ‘relationships’ as things one should not seek or hunt for. These things are unexpected.

In this sense, one must be patient and have faith that ‘love’ and a ‘soul-mate’ will come when it is time. The English film that M8 saw strengthened her belief in what was taught.

5.6 Theme 2 : ‘Accomodating’ (14-15-year-old)

The theme of being ‘Accommodating’ was expressed, with support of *Hana Kimi.* Many of the views categorised under this theme showed a tolerant and accepting attitude towards *Hana Kimi*. Participants made allowances for the disguise and its motive, and viewed it from a wider social context of life experience, rather than drawing on it purely from tradition, culture, religion, social norms or state laws. Under this theme, there were three subcategories: *extraordinary person*, *circumstances, determined person* and *individual decision*.

5.6.1 ‘Extraordinary Person’

Some participants described feelings of admiration towards the action of *Hana Kimi*, and fit into the subcategory of ‘extraordinary person.’ While they admitted the disguise was a crazy thing to do, expressed prejudice towards *Rui Xi*, still looked beyond the surface. A girl resorting to disguising herself was believed something only an eccentric person would do. They expressed a belief that she was brave to go against the norm.

“If people really like [someone], they will do anything,” (C12/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 6).

“If that girl is really crazy over that guy, yeah, there is such a thing,”(C9/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 6).

“There are probably people who are a bit crazy, who is in love,” (C7/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 6).

“It’s like, zany, it can happen,” (C12/Girl).

“I think [Rui Xi] was just trying to, you know, let the boy see her...so he could easily fall in love with her. She wasn’t trying to woo him,” (C9/Girl).

An eccentric person is someone who does not live by convention, neither of religion or tradition. Hence, they excused her from going against tradition. For these girls, while recognising her actions were not ordinary, they didn’t view it as necessarily wrong. They expressed that the ‘disguise’ was a creative way to attract the boy, and the mark of *Rui Xi* being an eccentric person. The key part of their argument was that nothing was wrong with *Rui Xi*, she is just one of those extraordinary people. In a larger context, there are no fast and hard rules, which dictates how people should behave in love. One has to be broad-minded and open to accept irregular behaviour in situations of love.

5.6.2 ‘Determined Person’

Apart from being eccentric, *Rui Xi* was admired for being a determined person, which made her different from other girls. Unlike those who condemned her, Rui Xi was admired by some for her single-mindedness and for being focused on what she wanted.

“She doesn’t want to quit. She doesn’t want to *putus asa* (give up),” (I8/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 4).

“She wants him, she *wants* him,” (I9/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 4).

“I’ll support [Rui Xi] because it's her choice. It's her life. So I support her. The way she thinks. Don't waste your time,” (I7/Girl).

Her single-mindedness may have seemed out of convention to those who opposed her character, but these participants were unaffected by her lack of adherence to standards of behaviour.

5.6.3 ‘Circumstances’

A particular girl felt there was nothing unconventional or wrong with *Rui Xi* disguising herself, because in reality, life does not run as smoothly as we hope for. Different people have different contexts in life, which sometimes force them to make unconventional decisions.

This participant drew a parallel to a Korean romance serial drama, *Coffee Prince,* which also depicts the heroine pretending to be a ‘boy’ in order to work as a waiter in a restaurant that forbid female workers. She did this in order to pay up her family debt as a responsible daughter.

“But like the *Coffee Prince,* she wore a t-shirt and tied a piece cloth around her breast. Just like that story [Hana Kimi], this girl works with this guy who owns the coffee shop. Initially, this guy likes the girl but she does not feel the same for him. In that story, she disguised as a guy because she was the breadwinner of the family after losing her father. She has a younger sister and a mother...,” (K9/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 8).

Interviewer: “So, you think there is such a thing in life? That people really disguise himself or herself?”

“No (laughingly),” (K10/Boy/14-year-old/Focus Group 8).

“Yes, there is a possibility. Maybe because of the circumstances she is in,” (K9).

This shows how the media broadens young people’s understanding of life by showing them the various conditions and context of people’s lives. In the case of this girl, she used both dramas to see life beyond the context of her own life. This ‘disguise’ was immaterial to her, and more importantly, the action that led to her opinion, a question of why people resort to doing unconventional things, is what concerned her.

5.6.4 ‘Shifting Values’

The role of parents or older family members is pivotal in the lives of young Chinese. They often refer to an older figure in the family during the process of articulating meanings. This is attributed to the Chinese culture, which emphasis on sons and daughters being filial to their elders (Granet, 1975). While they do not use religion as the basis, the Chinese believe that this issue involves a girl's dignity, and older female members in the family teach young girls to refrain from pursuing boys. However, modernity has influenced one Chinese girl in the study to shift her values from that of her elders.

“In my opinion, it depends on who falls in love first. That should be the person who makes the first move. ‘Cos, if that person doesn’t start it, then that person will risk losing their true love. But to me, a girl going after a guy is rather illogical. I wouldn't dare to do it ‘cos I'm a very shy person. I wouldn't dare to chase after a guy. My auntie thinks a woman cannot go after a man, ‘cos if she does, it will degrade a woman’s dignity,” (C9/Girl/14-year-old/In-depth interview).

Interviewer: “So, do you agree with your aunt on that?”

“Hmm . . .No.It’s modern times now.Ithink it’s pretty normal[for a girl to make the first move],”(C9).

It is not only obedience to elders that is shifting amongst young people. In the instance of one 14-year-old Malay-Muslim girl in the 14-15-year-old group, her viewpoint differs from her group’s view regarding ‘*jodoh,*’

Although five of her group members denounced the disguise as being too eager and degrading, this girl was of the opinion that the disguise was not immoral, but only part of an effort to achieve her goals.

“Well, yeah, sure. But as M12 said, we must have faith in *jodoh (fate),*but don’t tell me we’re just gonna sit and wait? I mean, we must show some bit of effort, we must also look for [our soul mate] ,”(M10/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

M6’s interpretation is in line with the Islamic point of view. The religion insists that Muslims must first exhaust all resources and avenues in achieving their dreams before completely surrendering to fate.

The differences of interpreting the meaning of *‘jodoh*’ show different ways of making sense of one’s faith and aligning that with the creation of individual identity.

5.7 ‘Courtship’

‘Courtship’ was a characteristic of the drama perceived by the 16-17 year old. However, a similar meaning associated to the social process was also found in the 14-15 year old participants. The reason why ‘courtship’ was extracted out and placed on its own was to demonstrate the complexity of young Malaysians’ gender related identity. Although both genders share a similar position, it appears that girls made a stronger stance on this issue than boys. This was because the main character was a girl in an unconventional modern relationship. The gender reading of ‘romance’ and ‘relationships’ here cannot be taken as isolated and singular cases, but must be seen in context with other social factors such as ‘values,’ which come from different cultural backgrounds and ages. Malay, Kadazandusun and Chinese girls each draw from religious and local norms.

Boys, on the other hand, were moderate regarding this factor. Stronger male voices were heard among those who supported the way the ‘relationship’ was constructed.

5.7.1 ‘Shame’

‘Shame’ is a subcategory of ‘courtship,’ categorised under ‘boundary.’ ‘No gender roles’ was a sub-category of ‘emancipation’ for the older group. Malay and Kadazandusun girls in particular were scathing about *Rui Xi’*s decision to pursue the hero.

Older Malay girls uphold patriarchal views of men, where it is appropriate for men to take the lead in matters of the heart. Referring to it as “culturally inappropriate” for a girl to make the first move, older Malay girls used Islamic values as a cultural framework to oppose the heroine’s move.

“It should be the guy who should go after the girl because it would appear ‘culturally inappropriate' for a girl to be going after a guy. Anyway, as we know, guys will be the head of the family, so he has a higher stature [than women]. So, let him look for the girl,” (M7/Girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 1).

The word “higher stature” indicates an Islamic/Malay value in Islam, where men are considered to have a “higher stature” than women because as head of the family, a man shoulders heavier responsibility. Not only does he have to be the breadwinner, but he also heads the family congregation prayer at home. Men have to assume both economic and religious roles at home and outside. Because of this, M3 thinks it only makes sense and is right that the boy makes the first move. Since men head the family, it follows for a man to choose his life-partner.

Not only was this problematic for the Malay community, it is also seen as against the Malaysian culture, and not the norm for girls to go after a boy in a relationship. Another Malay girl expressed this opinion.

“I think there is some logic in this story ‘cos the guy (*Quan*) doesn't know [*Rui Xi]* and the girl is really interested in him. But in a Malaysian culture, or any other culture elsewhere, the guy should always make the first move,”(M5/Girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 1).

For another Malay girl, the question was more about how the process took place. A boy must ensure that the girl is not embarrassed if he rejects her when she confesses her feelings for him. And even if a girl is really interested in a boy, she should not resort to a disguise like *Rui Xi*.

“If the girl were to [make the first move] . . . is really inappropriate, girl going after the guy . . . she should do it the proper way,*lah.* Not to the extent of disguising. And guys should accept the girl. If the feeling is not mutual, just say so. He doesn't have to despise the girl,” (M6/Girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 1).

A reason why the girls felt a man should take the lead was also out of concern for the potentially rejected girl’s dignity. As men propose marriage, it follows that men should pursue the girl. This conceptualises ‘relationships’ based on the patriarchal role of a men as the initiator of a ‘relationship.’ Therefore, if a girl were to do so, it would seem that she had gone against the rules of how a girl should behave in a relationship. As this was not the rule, the girl would be seen as too eager.

“It’s a humiliation for girls. That girl has no shame,” (C1/Girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 5).

Kadazandusun girls also discussed gender roles in relationships. They shared the view that men should initiate relationships. They were particularly cynical of the way ‘relationships’ were promoted in *Hana Kimi*. For them, it was a sign how the world has gone upside down.

“It used to be the guy that goes after the girl, now it’s the other way around, things have gone upside down, the reverse!,”(K1/Girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 7).

“Yeah. And there are even women proposing to men. It's not a problem but it's not normal,” (K2/Girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 7).

“As they say, it's 'modern times' now, right? So even if it is abnormal, it's OK,” (K1/Girl).

This shows how some young people disapprove of modern ways, which they consider too liberal and without boundaries. The tone was somewhat more moderate with boys. Although they disagreed that girls are overtaking their role, they were not strongly opinionated regarding this issue.

“If it were up to me. If a girl chases after a boy, it would seem weird because it’s always guys. Although I am not too preoccupied with chasing after girls, but yeah, the interest for girls is there. But, it’s alright for a girl to fancy a boy but to chase after him, I would see her differently,”(K4/Boy/16-year-old/Focus Group 7).

“Even if she really wants to meet up, don’t [use a disguise]. Chasing after the boy in school,” (M2/Boy/16-year-old/Focus Group 1).

“If the girl chases the boy, they become a couple right? You go out with friends, your friends will criticise your girlfriend,” (C6/Boy/16-year-old/Focus Group 5).

5.7.2 ‘ No gender roles’

In a completely opposite view from those who negatively spoke of girls pursuing boys, those who supported *Rui Xi* spoke of it from the ideals of the liberal-democratic principle of individual right and freedom. ‘Relationships’ are an individual matter and are driven by an individual’s needs, not dictated by local culture, norms and tradition. Therefore, there is nothing wrong with a girl making the first move.

“In my opinion, it does not matter, who chases after who. Anyone can do so. If the girl likes the boy, just go ahead. But in this case, she was overboard,” (M3/Boy/17-year-old/Focus Group 1).

Interviewer: “Would you look down on a girl who made the first move?”

“No. Why should I? She was brave enough to let her feelings known. Sometimes, even guys are afraid to let the girl know [his feelings]. Can you imagine a girl doing that? I don’t care, anyone come forward,” (M3/Boy/17-year-old/Focus Group 1).

His views shared by another Malay boy, who expressed the belief that gender division in courting is now blurred due to changing times.

“To me, it’s normal nowadays. There are all sorts of people. Girls chase after boys, that’s okay. Boys chase after girls. That’s common right? It’s a common way of life now and at this age, there are women who chase after a man. People may say anything. In my opinion, it’s ok, it’s normal,” (M4/Boy/17-year-old/Focus Group 1).

Interviewer: “What kind of girls do you like?”

“It depends what kind of girl she is. In terms of looks, I’ll think about it. I don’t mind if she can’t cook,” (M4).

It is interesting how these boys’ views of an ideal girl have shifted from the traditional expectation of a girl to have domestic household skills, such as cooking. The shift from attributing an ideal woman based on biological attributes, as a mother and wife and a homemaker, means they no longer see girls, from an essentialist view.

The shift from men initiating relationships was also attributed to the shift in women’s role in society. Emancipation of women and liberal feminism inspired this 17-year-old girl to believe that courting is not confined to a strict gender role.

“I think it's a case for both, especially now that the girls are more independent. I mean, if they want something nowadays, I suppose they'll do anything to get it. So, it's okay for the girl to make the move,*lah,”* (I13/Girl/in-depth interview).

Interviewer: “When you say, it’s okay for either one to make the move, was that your views? Nothing cultural about it?”

“No. I think if I were to go back to cultural, I think the Indians would want the guy to make the first move,” (I13).

Interviewer : “Asians always want the guy to do so. If it were the other way around, they would see the girl as . . . ?”

“I think they still want a very different, soft, quiet girl so if the girl makes the move, they would see her as too open, being to brave or bold,” (I13).

5.7.3 ‘Courtship’ : Dignity

The 14-15-year-old group expressed a belief that men should court women, to maintain the ‘dignity’ of a woman. This relates to ‘shame,’ where a woman who goes after a man is seen to have little dignity be shameless. A pattern was repeated among the Malay and Kadazandusun girls. The older girls argued it from the practical role of a man as a ‘husband’ and breadwinner, and the younger Malay and Kadazandusun talked about it from a more cultural and moral view, drawn from cultural practices.

“She’s too eager. She’s willing to do anything. She’s willing to go that far,” (M12/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

“Yeah, it can degrade one’s dignity,”(M13/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

“If it were the girl [who pursued the man], that’s like the well seeking for the pail,” (M9/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

“If it were the girl [who pursued], and suddenly, she was going to tell the guy that she likes him. It doesn’t seem right,”(M10/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

“Besides, what will people say?,” (M13/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

The reference of the ‘pail’ by M5 was taken from a Malay proverb, which confirmed these young girls’ belief that what *Rui Xi* did was socially wrong, according to Malay culture. There are specific gender roles in courting, which have served to strengthen these girls’ opinion. Using the metaphor of a well, the proverb implies that a girl who pursues a boy is akin to a well that seeks the pail to draw water from it. What this proverb suggests is that in reality, it is the boy who should seek the girl. A girl who goes about looking for a boy to court her is a negative reflection of her dignity. The young Kadazandusun girls also used the Malay proverb. Within the context of the proverb, there are elements of “shame” and “pride.” The use of this proverb in interpreting *Rui Xi*'s actions suggests that they accept the traditional views of relationships. In matters pertaining to relationships and courting, there are clear and specific gender roles. The use of this Malay proverb and of the Islamic belief of fate, these young Malays’ demonstrated knowledge of the media’s effort to infuse “modern” social values in gender roles.

“If a girl goes and says [she likes him] to a guy, then he would turn around and say ‘you're really thick-skinned,”(K9/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 8).

“Yeah, if a girl goes up to a guy and confesses her feelings to him, and the guy doesn't like the girl, she would be ashamed,”(K7/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 8).

The Kadazandusun students feel ‘shame’ has a severe penalty, and if a girl crosses the boundaries by approaching the boy first, she could be subjected to it. There is greater importance in a girl protecting her dignity and honour than for a boy.

‘Shame’ is intertwined with dignity. Another question of ‘dignity’ is brought up when a girl confesses her feelings to a boy before the boy expresses his interest in her. Malay girls against the idea of girls confessing feelings to the boy, expressed a belief that it would turn the boy off, as he would see the girl

as too eager and bold. The girl would suffer humiliation, which they refer to as 'shame.'

"If (a girl) confesses, all the more reason the boy will avoid the girl. Suddenly, the girl came and said she likes him, he would really avoid her," (M9/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

"And, if the boy says he doesn't like her, she would be ashamed. If a boy confess to a girl and the girl rejects him, it's no big deal. But not to a girl.She would be so down" (M10/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

In relating to the question of 'dignity' and shame, Chinese girls display a more critical view of girls courting boys. For the girls, 'shame' was used to refer to shameless behaviour.

"Girls like that are a little crazy and stupid," (C11/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 6).

"I think girl like that are cheap and cheeky. Like they don't know any shame," (C10/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 6).

5.7.4 'Mutual Process'

In comparison to other ethnic groups, which were differentiated by 'values,' Indian students showed a different pattern. Indian students from both age groups and genders unanimously felt gender roles had little significance in the courting process. They expressed a belief that courtship is a mutual process, where both men and women are open to pursue each other.

"It works both ways. If the girl likes the boy, she will go around. If the boy likes the girl, he will go after her," (I2/Boy/16-year-old/Focus Group 3).

"Ya, it's normal. Some girls are willing to do that, *lah,"* (I3/Boy/16-year-old/Focus Group 3).

“Only one person liking the other person, but he doesn't like . . .,”(I11/Boy/14-year-old/Focus Group 4).

“It's one side only,” (I12/Boy/14-year-old/Focus Group 4).

“*Ya*, one side only. It's not cool.It's kinda weird,” (I9/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 4).

Interviewer: “So, it should be the guy going after her?”

“No, both [should be pursuing each other],” (I9).

“It should be both,” (I10/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 4).

While other participants strongly insisted on clear gender roles in courtship, the Indian group believed relationships were two sided. A boy pursuing a girl would be just as ‘abnormal’ as the other way around, because it would be one-sided. Therefore, it does not matter who initiates the relationship, as long as it turns into a mutual process.

5.7.5 ‘Individual Decision’

One of the reasons why some students do not share the view that courtship is a gender phenomenon is because they believe ‘relationships’ are formed based on ‘who falls in love first.’ Some young people found it acceptable for a girl to express her feelings first. In that sense, it would make sense for a girl to court a boy at the initial stage. Hence, ‘relationships’ form out of ‘feelings,’ which are not dictated by logic or gender roles.

“*Y*eah, it's normal because girls also can like boys and then boys can also like girls. So that’s normal. I think if I really like [a boy] then I can go after him, but if like, we were not [in a relationship and] he liked me, then [he could go after me],” (C13/Girl/14-year-old/ Focus Group 9/in-depth interview).

Interviewer: “Do you think your friends would accept you pursuing a boy?”

“I think maybe they would,” (C14).

Interviewer: “They do? Why?”

“Because it's my personal thing. They are not me,” (C13/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 9/in-depth interview).

5.8 Conclusion

The responses from *Hana Kimi* show an intersecting of various dimensions of social identities among young Malaysians. Differences of values, levels of maturity, genders and different cultural contexts intersect. The most compelling conclusion was how globalisation and modernity have led to the emergence of conflicting values of individualism against collectivitism, creating disparity in culture and emancipation among young people. Globalisation, in this sense, is polarising young people in terms of values (Bauman, 1998). This chapter demonstrated the process of reflexivity and how it operates for individuals from different social backgrounds. It spurs young people to question modern ideals through the media, which result in differing belief systems.

Conflicting ‘values’ are seen in different belief systems on the role of local culture, norms and religion. A debate exists between the questions of ‘individual rights’ and ‘morality and culture’ regarding *Rui Xi*’s decision to pursue the hero by disguising herself as a boy. There is tension between acting on pure desire and acting collectively based on social norms, traditions and culture, which dictates gender behaviour in social relations. Those who criticised the drama used a cultural critique towards modern-day social relations as a sign of a culturally eroding world. In contrast, those who liked the drama celebrated the deconstruction of ‘relationships’ in which women are not seen by gender, but as an individual with needs.

A conflict in values also brought into sharp focus the differences of gender identity among girls. Some girls demonstrated a more traditional view of the role of girls in a relationship, and others rationalised the negation of gender roles based on the emancipation of women. This was further split by age group. The older girls expressed more traditional views and talked of 'relationships' from a more concrete aspect, in terms of 'marriage' and 'household responsibility.' The younger girls clung to inherited and given forms of established knowledge in the form of Malay proverbs, religious concepts of 'fate' and the normative definition of 'shame'. Their conversations raised issues pertaining to the resistance of some young Malaysians towards sexual identity. The issue of being 'transgender' was raised among the Kadazandusun group, and while being unexpected, it highlighted an important aspect of how some Asian youths perceive 'relationships' as only between 'heterosexual' couple, and do not consider 'transgender', 'homosexual' or 'lesbian' couples valid.

This links to the role of culture embedded in the lives of these young people. How deeply culture is embedded in their lives shapes their notion of 'relationship.' To what extent does this affect how young Malaysians shape their identities?

These ideas and viewpoints reveal that through their understanding of 'romance' and 'relationships,' young Malaysians values are shifting away from the boundaries of tradition, norms and religion.

Cultural globalisation through the media divides young Malaysians in their values, representing identities both fluid and solid. The question remains, to what extent is solidity maintained through local dramas?

[ix] '*Jodoh'* is a Malay term referring to fate pertaining to soul mates and marriages. It is a word contextualised within the Islamic teachings that man does not have total control over their fate including *jodoh*. While one can strive to find one's *jodoh*, in the end it is God who has the final say.

Chapter 6

Collectivism vs. Individualism

6.0 Introduction

The following chapter further expands on the theme of 'in-between identities' by highlighting the debates and tensions that arise among young Malaysians concerning ethnicity. This chapter aims to reveal young Malaysians' sense of collective identity, which looks at the position of 'ethnicity' in their lives. 'Ethnicity' is a very significant aspect of Malaysians' identities. The reason for this is threefold. One, 'ethnicity' is the most distinctive features of collective identity in Malaysia, second only to class. Second, ethnic consciousness is very alive due to the politicisation of 'ethnicity' by political parties. This has triggered a strong sense of ethnic consciousness among Malaysians. Finally, the role of the Malaysian media in disseminating constructed truth in depicting Malaysian society in its drama and films raise the issue of collectivism.

With the view that in the age of late modernity, fixed and coherent identities such as ethnicity are no longer significant to young people raises the question of 'disembeddedness.' The assumption that globalisation means disembedding one out of their local identity and linking them to the global world means young people no longer turn to traditional and collective identities, such as 'ethnicity,' to make sense of who they are. In the context of Malaysia, the notion of 'ethnicity' as 'authority-defined' is fixed. Thus, against the conditions they are living in, do young Malaysians share a similar view of 'ethnicity' as authorities, and if there has been a shift, how have they used 'ethnicity' to form their identities?

Based on social and political conditions, young Malaysians express ethnicity differently. Despite adopting modern lifestyles, ethnic consciousness continues to be strong. This was expressed differently among different ethnic groups. It was also found that some young Malaysians' drew on various

sources, such as everyday experiences, in making sense of their ethnicity. This results in a more flexible form of 'ethnicity.'

In exploring this difference, young Malaysians were asked to view a scene featuring an interethnic relationship involving a couple of different ethnicities and religious faiths from a local youth drama – *Gol & Gincu*. It was found that what differentiated them was the degree of how they expressed and asserted their cultural identities.

This chapter provides a background to interethnic relationships and the challenges involved when marrying a Muslim. A background of the production company that produces *Gol & Gincu* is also discussed briefly.

6.1 Interethnic Relationships – The Religious and Political Context In Malaysia

The specific episode of *Gol & Gincu The Series* chosen for this study is about a relationship between a Chinese girl, who is the leading character of the series, and her Malay boyfriend. In Malaysia, interethnic relationships between Malays and non-Malays are not only about different ethnic cultures and values, but also different religions. Relationships with Malays present very complicated cultural issues for non-Malays and non-Muslims. Firstly, both the Islamic Family Law for the Federal Territories 1984 and the Islamic Family Laws Enactment for Sabah 2004, section 10, state that:

1) No man shall marry a non-Muslim except a *Kitabiyyah*[x]
(2) No woman shall marry a non-Muslim
(www.mswp.gov.my&www2.esyariah.gov.my)

However, it is important to make clear here that conversion is not a man-made law or state law, but is rather a state-enforced law from the Surah Al-Baqarah of the Holy Quran[xi].

Hence, the remedy for non-Muslim Chinese, Indians and Kadazandusuns who wish to marry their Malay-Muslim partner is to convert to Islam. In Malaysia there is no civil marriage for Muslims. All Malaysian Muslims come under the purview of the *Syariah* law – the Islamic jurisprudence. Thus, if a Muslim wishes to marry a non-Muslim, or vice versa, the non-Muslim partner first needs to embrace Islam. While they accept this, it is the cultural consequences of assuming a new religion that makes them unhappy.

In Malaysia, conversion to Islam for non-Malays has a significant consequence to one's ethnic identity. For many, conversion means they lose their ethnic identity altogether. As mentioned in Chapter 2, in the Federal Constitution under Article 160 (a) and (b), a Muslim is defined as 'Malay,' so when an individual becomes a Muslim, this suggests he also becomes 'Malay.' Theoretically, they assume a new cultural identity, which involves changing their way of life. Marriage between non-Muslim Chinese and Indians is a lot easier, despite different religions, than marriage between non-Muslims and Muslims. This has been a cause of uneasy ethnic relations particularly in Peninsular Malaysia, because many non-Muslims wish to retain their ethnic identity while assuming a new religion.

A further repercussion of this concerns the relationship between parents and the newly converted offspring. The fear that they are now 'Malay,' instead of Chinese or Indian, leads parents to feel that their family ties have been severed and that they have lost their children to a new religion with a new cultural identity. Their view is not of their children merely becoming Muslim, but rather that by becoming Muslim, their children have now become 'Malay.' Although there is no truth in this in reality, the stigma remains embedded deeply within many non-Muslim non-Malay families because of how the constitution defines Muslims, as well as how the official view of being 'Muslims' is often linked to being 'Malay' and adhering to Malay customs.

This problem attributed to the definition within the Federal Constitution is further exacerbated by the term *'masuk Melayu'* [xii](to enter into a Malay community). This term is widely used among the Chinese and Malay communities to refer to those who have become Muslim, either through marriage or individual choice, as being similar to becoming Malay (Mohammad, 2002). According to Lam (2004), studies have shown that some Chinese who convert to Islam are rejected by their own communities, who see them as abandoning their traditional culture and the superiority of the Chinese identity in favour of the Muslim religion. This is due to the problem that a 'Muslim' is a 'Malay.' The problem then draws the Malaysian Chinese Association (MACMA) to argue against the narrow interpretation of 'Muslim' in Malaysia because of its exclusivity and rigidity in defining who are Muslims in Malaysia (http://web6.bernama.com/bernama/v3/news.php?id=329351).

The Federal Constitution defines Muslims as such because Muslims in this country have mainly and historically been Malay. Over time, as more and more non-Malays have converted to Islam, this definition poses problems, but there has been no effort to amend the constitution.

In the context of the episode of *Gol & Gincu The Series* about interethnic relationships, the highlight is on a Malay-Chinese relationship because the Chinese constitute the second largest non-Malay non-Muslim ethnic group in the country. The use of a relationship between a Malay person and a Chinese person is symbolically aimed at highlighting two pertinent issues. The first is unsteady ethnic relations between the Malays and Chinese, due to political and economic differences. The number of Chinese Muslims in this country is still very small, accounting for about 57,221, or just 1% of the total Chinese population in Malaysia (Tan, 2000 and Ma, 2002 cited in Lam, 2004).Therefore, the use of a Chinese character by the producer of *Gol & Gincu* to represent the non-Malays and non-Muslims seems appropriate in discussing the relationship problems between Malay-Muslims and non-Malay non-Muslims.

Second, this episode seeks to subtly bring attention to the various consequences of a relationship with a Malay-Muslim from the perspective of a non-Malay non-Muslim. It is not about problems with Muslims in general, just Malay-Muslims because of the problematic definition of 'Muslims' being 'Malay' in this country. The requirement to convert is not mentioned at all in the series. Yet the consequence of such a relationship would ultimately mean that the girl would have to convert in order to marry her boyfriend, especially since Ling is a Buddhist and does not come under the category of *Kitabiyyah*. By using two characters from different ethnic groups, Muslim and non-Muslim, the producer seeks to send the message that this is also about religion.

In truth, the requirement to convert, to some extent, is perceived with suspicion and sometimes is viewed negatively by non-Malay non-Muslims. This does not imply that interethnic marriages between the Malays and Chinese are uncommon. There are many marriages between the two ethnic groups, but interethnic marriages are not common in Peninsular Malaysia because of tense relations between the Malays, Chinese and Indians. This is partly due to the fear of many non-Malay parents of their children becoming 'Malay.' Interethnic and inter-religious marriages are more common in East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak.

Against this scenario, the backdrop of the social and political reality that exists in multiethnic Malaysia, *Gol & Gincu The Series* tries to send out the message that Malaysians should learn to accept one another. Through the demonising of the Chinese girl's father, the message urges non-Malay and non-Muslims to shed all forms of racial biasness towards the Malays. In the scenes shown, the heroine's father does not directly indicate distaste for the boyfriend on the grounds of his Muslim religion or Malay ethnicity. Regardless, the insinuation, illustrated by the Chinese ticket-seller's snide remarks to the girl after seeing her Malay boyfriend of wanting her to 'become a Malay,' echoes the typical reaction of a Chinese to another Chinese who is involved with a Malay-Muslim.

This attempt strives to draw the audience and the state to a critical and open discussion of the realities that exist regarding ethnic relations between the Malay-Muslims and the non-Malays non-Muslims. The use of a Malay character is ideological because it brings to light the problem of the term '*masuk Melayu*' (becoming a Malay and a Muslim) as the central issue of interethnic relations in the country. In another situation, as there are Chinese Muslims, the ethnic culture of a non-Muslim Chinese marrying a Chinese Muslim is not affected as long as the practices do not contravene Islamic law.

However, marriage between a non-Malay non-Muslim and a Malay-Muslim poses a problem regarding the sustainability of the non-Malay non-Muslims' ethnic cultural identity. *Gol & Gincu The Series* attempts to illustrate what tolerance and compromise regarding the differences of culture and customs could result in.

Perhaps one of the strongest points made in this episode was the producer's opinion that the state should consider the anxiety felt by non-Malay non-Muslims involved in interethnic relationships with Malays Muslims. While support was shown for the state's position on 'national unity' between people of different ethnicities, and having a 'Malaysian' identity under the concept of *Bangsa Malaysia,* the producers of *Gol & Gincu The Series* shift slightly away from the official view of the kind of Islam that has been promoted. While *Gol & Gincu The Series* accepts Islam as the official religion of the country, it also seeks to promote a more moderate brand of Islam.

6.2 Interethnic Marriages- Muslim versus Non-Muslim in General

According to the Islamic faith, a Muslim girl is not permitted to marry a non-Muslim man because as a husband, he not only holds the responsibility of looking after the family, but also has a religious duty to the family. However, this is usually resolved in interethnic relationships when the man agrees to convert to Islam. There is an exception in that a Muslim man may marry a woman from among the *Kitabiyyah* category because the religion of the child will be that of the father.

Nevertheless, because Malaysia is a multiethnic country, the government feels that it is more appropriate that a marriage between a Muslim and a non-Muslim takes place only if the non-Muslim partner embraces Islam. This is to avoid complication if the marriage dissolves, so that it can be easily be settled under one jurisdiction, which can also administer custody of the children and maintenance for the former spouse.

Thus in Malaysia, any non-Muslim man or woman who wishes to marry a Muslim needs to convert to Islam. For such marriages, it is crucial for both families of the Muslim and non-Muslim couple to agree and consent to the marriage, particularly the non-Muslim family. These families typically have an aversion to interethnic marriage involving a Malay-Muslim. The consent and blessing from the non-Muslim parents are very critical because it affects family ties if the parents refuse to accept their Muslim son or daughter-in-law.

6.3 Non-Malays and Non-Muslims Reaction Towards Muslim vs. Non-Muslim Marriages

According to the Chinese tradition, a person's name bears great significance to his family. The surname reflects heritage and is passed on from one generation to another, thus a son plays an important role in carrying on the family surname (Lam, 2004). It is thought that when a daughter becomes a Muslim, she loses family ties because of her new Muslim surname. This misunderstanding arose prior to 1996 when new converts were required to adopt an Islamic name by stating their name as ‘bin Abdullah’ (son of the servant of God) or ‘binti Abdullah’ (daughter of the servant of God) as his or her surname when registering with the Department of Islamic Affairs and Administration of the state of Selangor (JAIS) (Lam, 2004). This has led Chinese families to interpret this as meaning that anyone who converts to Islam has to take on a Muslim name, leading to the loss of the Chinese surname, which indirectly means a loss of ethnic identity.

Since 1996, this is no longer required (ibid). Non-Malays are allowed to keep their surnames, in addition to their Muslim name as a first name, which merely indicates a new religious status. In 2007, the religious authorities of the state of Perlis in the northern state of Peninsular Malaysia ruled that non-Muslims converting to Islam could retain their surname without having to add an Arabic name (http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2007/3/11/nation/17113564&sec=nation).

6.4 Background of the Episode 'Cari Keluarga' (Looking for Family) – Gol & Gincu

Gol & Gincu The Series is a production of the independent production house Reds Communication, which presents the views of the new generation of multiethnic Malaysians, although the majority of the production team is non-Malay(http://www.red.com.my/people.htm).

An interesting aspect of this programme is its subtle suggestion of change to the media landscape of Malaysian television programmes by challenging the dominant view of the role of women, as well as various social and political issues. It weaves in criticism of the mainstream view of the ideal Malaysian woman and society that is propagated by the media in every episode of its series, and is able to avoid censorship.

Its ability to bring to light social and political issues has resulted in such popularity that to date it has run continuously from 2005 on 8TV (www.mediaprima.com.my). Unfortunately, Media Prima Berhad, which owns 8TV, could not provide any information in its annual report of the actual number of viewers.

It is crucial to explain the two scenes chosen from this series before proceeding with an explanation of its reception by young Malaysians. The first scene is at the cinema, where the main characters – *Ling* (Chinese girl) and *Atoi* (Malay boy) – are on a date, trying to decide which movie to watch.

Ling decides that they should watch a Malay movie, much to the surprise of her boyfriend, who already has the preconceived idea that Chinese do not like watching Malay films. *Ling* argues that since they have already watched a Chinese film on their last date, it is a compromise to watch a Malay film. When she buys the ticket, the Chinese ticket seller tries to dissuade her from watching a Malay movie, insinuating that Chinese or even Japanese films are a better choice. However, she insists. When her Malay boyfriend turns up at her side, the Chinese ticket seller makes a negative insinuation in Cantonese, saying that he now understands why she wants to watch a Malay movie. She is becoming a 'Malay,' since she is dating a Malay boy.

In the next scene, her boyfriend takes her home. The girl's father confronts them and takes an instant dislike of the boy. Incidentally, the boyfriend has the appearance of a member of a heavy metal group, sporting long hair and wearing a leather jacket. Her father warns her against seeing the boy, which she protests. Ling's father categorises her boyfriend as the Malay derogatory term '*kutu*' (refer to Chapter 1). Literally translated, '*kutu*"'means 'head louse.' However, in this episode, *kutu* has been translated as 'parasite' in English subtitles. Both terms 'head louse' and 'parasite' have similar connotations, referring to someone who sponges on someone else's position or wealth. By using the term 'head louse,' her father is implying that the Malays are such. Although he does not make any direct references to the boyfriend's ethnicity, it is implied as '*kutu,*' or parasite, is associated with a specific youth subculture generally found among young urban Malay men.

The use of the word '*kutu*' in the dialogue is meant to expose the real reaction of non-Malay non-Muslim families towards the Malays, and also to stress the fact that Malaysia is still facing problems regarding ethnicity. Most significantly, this episode attempts to elucidate interethnic relations. The

producers of this programme offer alternative views of the issue. Rather than producing the series in support of the views of the dominant institutions (Karthigesu, 1994a), *Gol & Gincu* speaks from the perspective of the non-Malay non-Muslims.

Another interesting aspect of this episode is that the producers are bold enough to showcase the reality of Malay and Chinese interactions by including the phrase 'becoming a Malay' and '*kutu*' in its dialogue. Recording from the television, this episode was shown to the participants of the focus group interviews in the resource centres of the schools.

6.5 Conflicting Positions on 'Ethnicity'

After viewing, participants were asked to discuss the segment in a focus group interview. The scene was chosen because it raised one of the most common yet critical issues challenging ethnic relations in Malaysia, converting to Islam. Embracing Islam through matrimony is one of the most common reasons of conversion. However, it draws mixed reactions among families of non-Muslim Malaysians, as it is often perceived as a redefinition of one's ethnicity.

The discussions following the *Gol & Gincu* segment indicated a divided position among young Malaysians' concerning ethnicity. The notion that a fixed, collective identity, such as one of ethnicity, has been disembedded is not completely true. Rather, some young people see themselves first from a stance of ethnicity and clings to various primordial symbols such as religion and inheritance for their identity. In contrast, others see themselves as individuals based on personal characteristics instead of cultural attributes.

Thus, young Malaysians' reception of the episode shown were based on two central themes – 'Primordial Values*'* and 'Rationale*.'* This was due to the various ethnic backgrounds, religious beliefs, political histories and family background of each participant that created a dynamic discussion on 'interethnic relationship.'

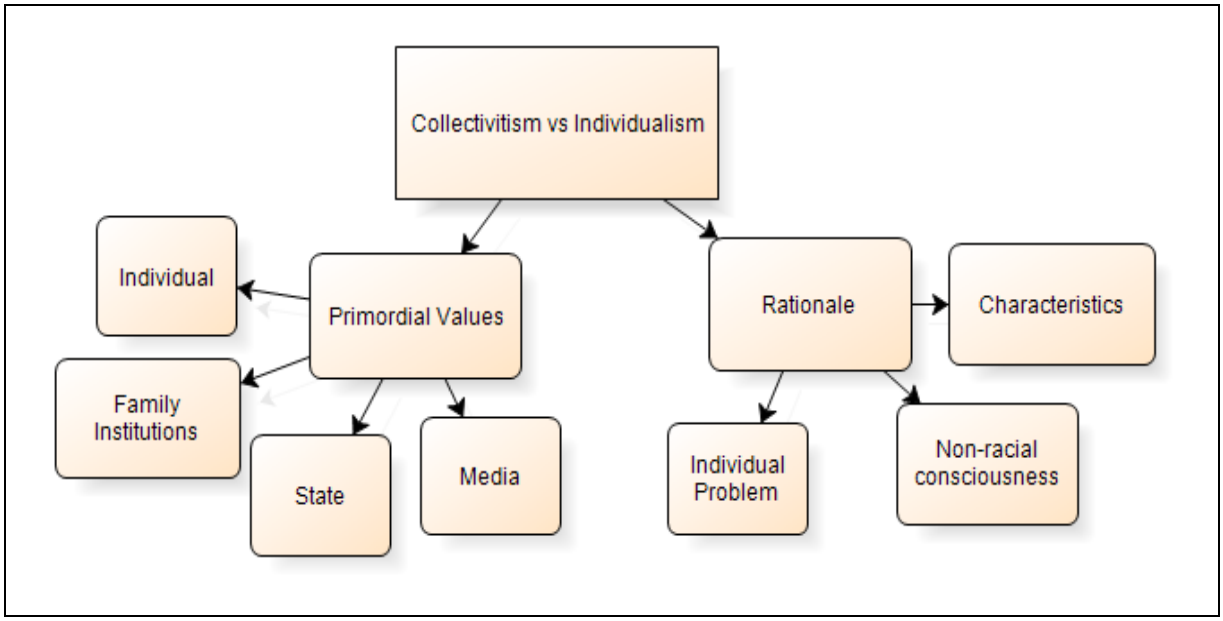


Table 6.1 : Overall Themes for Gol & Gincu (14 & 16-year-olds)

The coding of 'Primordial Values' as one of the main themes was made after going through the responses of every participant who supported *Ling*'s father. In essence, this theme captures the views that 'ethnicity' is something fixed and historical.

References made to carrying on family names, religion, cultural practices and insistence of maintaining ethnicity in its authentic form, in the context of living in a multiethnic society, were found in some participants' reactions to *Gol & Gincu*. These fell into the definition of primordialism by Harold Isaacs (1975)(cited by Cornell & Hartman,2007). This was further supported by Nash (1996) who identified ethnicity as kinship, commensuality and religion.

On the other hand, other participants' reactions showed a shift in value systems away from the confines of ethnicity, using rationality to make sense of 'ethnicity.' They displayed a rather flexible and open attitude towards interethnic relationships. 'Ethnicity' is something constructed, where the ethnic boundaries are open to be renegotiated and not fixed, as suggested by Barth (1969). It is open for redefinition and it is trans-historical.

Their positions were drawn from the ideals of equality and plurality. What is most significant in their logic was that while they rejected ethnic stereotyping and all forms of ethnic labelling, the sense of identity was above ethnicity and drawn largely from the inner quality of the person.

In terms of identity formation, the differences of ethnicity among participants were expected to have influence. However, wasn't completely true. Although the main characters depicts people of Malay and Chinese ethnicity, the response from participants were not influenced by ethnicity at all. Rather, it was found that the power of life experience in the form of parental influence, family values, home life, school and friends, had more of a role in shaping their ethnicity. It was also noted that the media serves as a significant political and cultural resource for them in making sense of interethnic relations.

In addition, religious faith was a critical reservoir in shaping their attitude towards cultural and religious differences. Political, social and economic situations, which sit at the macro-level, played an important role in the lives of some of the participants.

As these are all contextual in nature, young Malaysians' identities cannot be easily pinned by social identities such as ethnicity, religion, gender, age or class. Rather, it is more accurate to say that the context of their lives shapes their ethnicity. To what extent ethnicity and religion were embedded in their lives determines their 'ethnicity.' The deeper it is embedded in their lives, the stronger their primordial attachment becomes. In turn, this influences how they see themselves against the other culturally distinct members of society, as well as their position as citizens of a multiethnic country.

Finally, it was 'context' that explained the differences of 'values' among these participants. Because 'context' was the most significant factor, each position was contingent of the situation.

6.6 Theme 1: 'Primordial Values'

'Primordial values' as a central theme refers to the question of 'continuity and maintenance' of one's own ethnicity, be it through language, custom, religion or ancestry. This theme produces four categories, namely *'Family Institutions', Individual', 'State'* and *'Media.'* Each of these categories show how 'continuity and maintenance' of primordial symbols such as custom, lineage and religion operates.

6.6.1 'Family institutions'

This category refers to the role of parents and family members as an institution, which carries two key roles. The first, a role in determining a child's life-partner, based on common ethnicity. This was in support of a parents' decision to ensure the continuance of the family cultural identity. Both instances led to a discussion of maintaining the status quo in the family.

By marrying someone of the same ethnicity and religion, the family cultural identity, either of ethnicity or religion, is preserved. In relation to this, participants in this position found the father's disapproval justified; it is necessary to protect the family's cultural identity. By allowing his daughter to marry a Malay-Muslim, her Chinese culture and identity would end, as she would no longer be allowed to practice the family religion or continue with Chinese customs that contravene Islam.

In addition, participants expressed views of inter-ethnic relationships. Those who defined their identity strongly by a particular community, whose culture is distinct from others, seemed to prefer marrying someone of the same ethnicity. 'Ethnicity' is defined by the authenticity of one's culture, derived from heritage, common roots and ancestry. Hence, by marrying someone based on shared culture and ancestry, one is able to continue and his existing way of life. Drawing from their own family experiences, the older Chinese and the younger Kadazandusun groups shared reservations concerning the fear of losing their ethnicity through interethnic relationships with Muslim-Malays.

A participant described a situation where his grandmother disapproved of his uncle marrying a Filipino[xiii]. He believed scenes shown from *Gol & Gincu* were accurate of real life in Malaysia.

"If the ticket–seller, like that say, "introduce another movie," cannot,*lah*. The company will not let you do that. But if he say you want to be a Malay, because you date a Malay guy, that is true,*lah*. My grandmother also like that say. My uncle, his wife is Filipino, they very disgrace the family of Chinese," (C6/Boy/16-year-old/Focus Group 5).

Interviewer: "Why is that? Why do people say that if they see a Chinese dating a Malay?"

"'Cause of Chinese tradition," (C6/Boy/16-year-old/Focus Group 5).

This echoes the general fear of the Chinese people. By having a Malay boyfriend, the students acknowledge that Ling would inevitably have to convert if marriage was decided on. This augmented a fear that she would have to change her surname, meaning severing of their family lineage. According to these participants, the father's reaction was normal for any Chinese family.

Interviewer: "Is [Ling's father's reaction]true to what really happens in a Chinese family when a daughter goes out with a Malay guy, or any guy?"

"No," (C4/Boy/16-year-old/Focus Group 5).

"No. Just Malay,"(C6/Boy/16-year-old).

Interviewer: "Why?"

"Because of religion," (C1/Girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 5).

“If that guy is a Muslim and the girl is Chinese, then she would have to convert to Islam and become a Muslim,” (C2/Girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 5).

Interviewer: “Why would you disagree with converting to Islam?”

“[We’re] afraid of losing the Chinese culture, the surname,” (C6/Boy).

There was no question from C3 and the others about whether the father was being racist. They accepted it as the ‘right’ thing to do because he was merely protecting tradition. If parents oppose interethnic relationships, it is in the interest of protecting their Chinese identity from being eroded. It is not a question of being unfair or racist. The fact that there is no question of seeking negotiation between *Ling*'s father and *Ling* as a way of resolving this problem marks a lack of an attempt to negotiate with parents on this matter. It also indicates an unwillingness to be involved in an interethnic relationship if parents or grandparents oppose to it. The fear of becoming ‘Malay,’ mentioned in the dialogue, struck a harmonious chord with this group when C3 singled out this scene in the discussion. According to the discussion, the father sees *Atoi* as a useless person, describing him as ‘*kutu,*’ and not a good match for his daughter. The question of not being a good match for one’s child was heard through the conversations of the young Chinese participants.

Interviewer: “Do you think it’s true that Chinese families don’t like their daughters to go out with a Malay guy?”

“Yeah, only with daughters, ‘*Cos* [parents] feel that Malay men are all bad. Even the news says that they get into crimes like rape and drugs,” (C9/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 6).

“[Our] parents doesn’t like daughters to marry Malay guys. Also because they are not good at making money,” (C8/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 6).

As parents were held in great respect by most participants, parental consent was seen as crucial. In order to ensure that parents would consent to their choice, they tend to choose someone from among their own ethnic

community. By going against their parents' wishes, they reported fear of losing ties with their parents.

The fear that choosing someone of different religion will break family ties was another area of concern, particularly for the 14-year-old Kadazandusun participants. These respondents stated that parents are the divine authority, whom cannot be defied and need to be revered. These young people reported cases of family members who married someone outside their ethnicity; Resentment towards these family members made them realise it was against the norm for their families.

Interviewer: "Have any of your family members ever married a Malay?"

" Yes, they are becoming Muslims," (K10/Boy/14-year-old/Focus Group 8).

Interviewer: " How did your family react to the change of religion?"

"They accepted it, but with a heavy heart," (K7/Girl/14-year-old).

Family reactions to members of the family who embrace another religious faith due to marriage gave these young people reason to believe that interethnic marriages potentially cause families to break-up.

Central to young Kadazandusuns is the parent-child relationship after marriage. The importance of parents and maintaining a relationship, even after marriage, was strongly articulated by the 14-year-old Kadazandusun group. Therefore, in order to avoid the loss of family ties, they are careful in their choice of life partner. The frequent mention of 'parents' in their discussion not only signifies strong family kinship ties, but also reflects perseverance with a traditional way of life. Relating to *Gol & Gincu The Series*, they mentioned that parents have the right to decide on their children's choice of life partner. They believe that one should not go against one's parents' wishes and that it is crucial to win their blessing in matters of the heart. K6 believe that

interethnic marriages causes friction between parents of the non-Muslim partner, due to religious differences.

“One bad thing about [interethnic marriages] is the customs. If there's someone who marries a Malay they have change religion. You can't visit the non-Muslim parents' home,*‘cos* all the cooking utensils are considered haram (forbidden). Even if we have washed them thoroughly, they still say it's “haram.” So, it causes a rift in family relations,” (K9/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 8).

“It would be hard for me if an issue of [cooking utensils] was found offending to us. My family would have felt offended. If it came to that, I would have had to really consider whether to go through with [an interethnic relationship]. I would still ask my parents about it, but if they still can take it, I go ahead. But, if it was up to me, I wouldn't go on,” (K10/Boy/14-year-old/Focus Group 8).

This conversation showed how they view relations with other ethnicities, and how that has led them to prioritise ethnicity via parents over everything else.

“I would really think about [interethnic relationships], whether to accept or not. I would need to talk to my parents first. If they say ‘yes,’ then I accept, but if it were up to me, I wouldn’t want it,” (K10/Boy/14-year-old/Focus Group 8).

“To me, I would try to avoid from having an[interethnic] relationship, you know. It’s better if you want to look for a life-partner, you get someone of the same race. But if it is unavoidable, then what to do? But if we befriend those of a different race, like, it can create problems. Who knows, parents refuse to consent,” (K8/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 8).

This conversation exemplifies why young Malaysians try to adhere to their parents’ wishes by choosing someone from among their own community. The choice of a life partner is not one that is based on only feelings of ‘love’ and commitment, but is largely shaped by parental acceptance, consent and blessing, and mostly with someone of a shared ethnicity and religion.

Parental consent was crucial for the participants who were from interethnic marriages. Relating her experience, one Muslim girl, being of mixed Malay-Chinese parentage, admits that without consent, life would be unpleasant for the couple.

“In my opinion, a relationship that involves different religions is really hard. Like me, I'm half Chinese. If my parents disapproved [of an interethnic relationship], it would be difficult. ‘Cause, overall Malaysia may seem to be peaceful, but the reality is that nearly half of the people still stick to their own kind. The Chinese with the Chinese, the Malays with the Malays,” (M5/Girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 1).

To a large extent, the conflict between wanting to maintain the status quo with the changing of social relations among young Malaysians has proven problematic. One Malay-Muslim boy expressed reluctance in accepting interethnic relationships.

“To me, different ethnicities are okay, so long as it's the same religion. But in this drama, it shows that different religion is a bad thing. I mean, how can they get married when the father disapproves? A marriage that does not have the blessing of the family is bound to have obstacles.[I mean] how can they get married when there's no [parental] blessing. It's not a good thing,” (M1/Boy/16-year-old/Focus Group 1).

Perhaps the most apparent reason why parents and family as institutions play a role in determining children’s life-partner among Malaysians has something to do with the role families have in educating their children to be aware of their ethnicity. Only by doing so is there continuity in their family cultural identity.

“I think it's more of the religion. Because I'm sure [my parents] want me to go on with the religion. So, by getting involved in [an interethnic relationship], it would just break the [family],” (I13/Girl/17-year-old/in-depth interview).

“Society thinks because some Chinese [convert to Islam and become] Malay, maybe change their religion, so their parents maybe don't like it,” (I2/Boy/16-year-old/Focus Group 3).

6.6.2 ‘Individual’

Parents express a desire for their children to have an attachment to primordial values, so some young people feel strongly about their ethnic identities. The narratives provide insights of how ethnicity and religion is placed in their lives. Drawing from a firm attachment to ethnicity and religion, these young people have negotiated issues of interethnic relationships, which consequently has led to the belief that such relationships will lead to the diminishing of their cultural identity.

The level of religious devotion among young people has made them more attached to their own religion. This has led to their refusal to abandon their own religion. Young Kadazandusun participants felt strongly in this regard.

Interviewer: “Do you think the [Ling’s] father is afraid that his daughter might marry her boyfriend?”

“Yes, there is that possibility, *‘cos* if the Chinese girl were to marry the Malay [guy], she would have to convert to Islam. So, the father does not want her to marry the guy because of that. It’s more to her parents not the children. It’s the parents that do not approve” (K9/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 8).

Interviewer: “So, it is something to do with religion. If you were to befriend a Malay, could your family accept it?”

“If it involved religion, I admit it would create problem, because if it is in our religion. If the [Ling] changed religion, it’s a major sin. It’s like she abandoned God. So, for us, we couldn’t do it, it’s like really sinful,” (K9).

Apart from losing religious identity, young Indian participants expressed concern pertaining to cultural interpretation of the patriarchal position of a man. The problem brought up is how a non-Muslim man must convert in order to marry his Muslim girlfriend. One Indian boy clearly disagreed with this.

To him, a wife's role is to follow her husband. Hence, he expressed the belief that a Muslim wife must follow her husband's religion and customs, and not vice versa.

In his view, the ruling that requires the non-Muslim man to convert results in the weakening of a man's position in a relationship, since the man follows the woman. The consequence of this is the degeneration of the non-Malay community in terms of religion and ethnic culture. He would then have to follow the new religion's customs, which are Malay.

Thus, in order to resolve this problem, he believes that logically, a woman should follow her husband. Therefore, if the woman is a Muslim who wishes to marry a non-Muslim Indian, she should have to follow the religion of her future husband. This is in line with the logic of "women-following- men" (Daniels, 2005:195).

"Just like an Indian marries a Muslim. They have to transfer to a Muslim even though the wife is a Muslim, but he's an Indian. So our race is going. Is finishing slowly like that. That's the main problem, if the husband is a Muslim and the wife is a Chinese. The Chinese has to become a Muslim. But why, when the husband is a Chinese, the wife is a Muslim? The wife is supposed to follow the husband's ways, but why is the husband [made to follow the wife]? It's not fair. We lose our Indian and Chinese [identities],"(I11/Boy/14-year-old/Focus Group 4).

The portrayal of Muslims as protagonists in this series propels some Muslim participants to defend their religion, particularly conversion. They believe that conversion to Islam should not be viewed as the source of interethnic conflict. They argue that many non-Muslims convert willingly without compulsion.

“But there are those who are willing to change their religion, to follow their boyfriend,” (M9/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

“Yeah, that’s their own choice. It shouldn’t matter,” (M11/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

Primordial attachment in the form of protecting one’s cultural identity also means continuing to speak their mother tongue outside the home. However, this proves problematic for Chinese students because a lack of proficiency in the national Malay language results in clashes with Malay schoolmates. Ethnic labelling, or incidences of derogatory racial name-calling, occurs due to the inability of many Malaysian Chinese students to speak proper Malay. Many Malay students see this as a sign of disloyalty to the country. Pejorative terms referring to non-Malay students as descendants of immigrants, using skin colour, are typical racist remarks used among Malaysian students when involved in a fight.

“Like when[Chinese] cannot understand Malay, [Malay students] always chide us. It’s not very nice,” (C7/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 6).

“[Malay students] call Chinese students’ Chinese from *Shantung*’,” (C8/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 6).

Interviewer: “Meaning?”

“Can’t speak Malay. Only Chinese,” (C8).

Interviewer: “I see,”.

“Just arrived from China. Then, Chinese will call the Malays ‘*fan chai,”* (C8).

Interviewer: “What does that mean?’

“ Dark-skinned children,” (C8/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 6).

Similar language problem are also documented in Santhiram’s study (1993) among Indian students in Malaysia.

6.6.3 ‘State’

‘State’ was also identified as one of the institutions that ensure ethnicity remains bounded purportedly through policies, as perceived by non-Malay participants.

While this is not an outright rejection of other ethnicities, especially towards the dominant Muslim Malays, they still expressed dissatisfaction about power and wealth distribution among ethnicities in the country. It is against this context of life that they see themselves as being marginalised, and that’s why *Ling*’s father’s reaction seemed believable. He was protecting the remaining pride and dignity of the Chinese culture against the risk of conversion.

“[The government] raised the salary of the Malays. The Chinese [don’t get a] raise. So, it's not balanced. It’s not fair,” (C6/Boy/16-year-old/Focus Group 5).

“‘Cos in Malaysia, everything is for the Malays. Islam and all. It’s like [the state] holds everything,” (C1/Girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 5).

“Double standard. *‘ Cos* it’s always Malays wanted to apply for anything. The government would give but not with the Chinese,” (C11/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 6).

The context of this situation has led these participants to become more defensive and attached to their ethnicities. The state is viewed as an institution that maintains primordial values, which belong exclusively to the Malays through political, cultural and economic dominance. Instead of serving an institution that fosters close ethnic relations, dismantling ethnic boundaries,

the state is perceived as playing a reserve role. This sense of defending ethnic rights on the part of the Chinese gives them a sense of belonging.

Another important factor that emerged from the reactions to *Gol & Gincu* was the social and political history concerning each ethnic group in the study, and how this shapes their own understanding of the series. Older Kadazandusuns used the imbalanced division of labour between the Malays and Chinese as a means of understanding why *Ling*'s father viewed the boyfriend as a "parasite." Historically, the Chinese have always worked independently in trade and business, unlike the Malays, who are mostly government officers.

Thus, the major criticism levelled at the Malays was how they have been viewed as being too dependent on the government for survival, which forms a "subsidy mentality" (Mehmet, 1986 cited by Gomez, 1999:184).

"Perhaps it is the way all ethnic groups here have lived because most of the Chinese people are doing business right? The Malays are only involved in the non-commercial sector. So, maybe the father thinks Malays are only dependents. They are parasites. They depend on the economy that the Chinese have worked on," (K2/Girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 7).

Some Malay students disagreed with the issues of marginalisation of ethnic minorities. The argument was based on a belief that ethnic minority Malaysian are better off in Malaysia than the homeland of their ethnicity, so they have no reason to be dissatisfied.

"There is no guarantee that the educated [ethnic minorities] would be able to survive in their own country," (M9/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

Evidence of continuity was also found when M9 supported the idea of living within ethnic communes when she expressed support for the dominant Malay political party – UMNO. Instead of seeking for the blurring of ethnic boundaries, she sees such 'boundaries' as crucial.

”Even the poor can go to school in [Malaysia]. That is what UMNO is for. We have leaders to take care of their own ethnic community,” (M13/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

Using historical knowledge on how this country gained its independence, some respondents further argued that state policies regarding Malays and indigenous groups was part of the agreement, in exchange for accepting ethnic minorities as citizens. This knowledge led them to believe that special rights for Malays and indigenous *Bumiputera* is unquestionable.

“It was the other races that really wanted to stay [in Malaysia]. My father said the sultans have agreed [for non-Malays to stay], but they must accept the special rights of the Malays. The Malays are special, but we’re not *that* special,” (M12/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

6.6.4 ‘Media’

The ‘media’ is fundamental to the lives of young Malaysians, and shapes their perception of their own ethnicities, ‘us,’ against other ethnicities, ‘them.’ However, cultural dominance, as opposed to cultural plurality, in terms of the content of local Malaysian television programmes and films, cause dissatisfaction among ethnic minority Malaysians. Representation of other ethnic groups in the Malaysian media was another major issue that emerged in the interviews. This shortfall of multi-ethnic programs was severely criticised for failing to portray the true ethnic landscape of Malaysian society, which is made up of various ethnicities, religions, languages and cultures. Non-Malay participants view the fact that the local Malaysian media largely depicts Malay and Muslim Malaysians as attempt to ensure ethnic boundaries remain tightly bonded.

“Most of the Malay films are more towards [Malay] culture. They are not open like other films. Like in the West, the films are more [culturally] open, but unlike in Malaysia,” (K2/Girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 7).

“It's not showing *just* Malay, the whole story is a Malay story, but the Indians and Chinese will come just under one or two scenes. Just show only, but I'm opposing that because it's a multiracial country. Every scene should have *one* Malay and *one* Indian or *one* Chinese,” (I2/Boy/16-year-old/Focus Group 3).

“You combine all this, you get a good movie, cause if you say English half right, and you change it into Malay comedy, it's kind of funny. And all of this, we are Malaysians, and Malaysians are of many races,” (C6/Boy/16-year-old/Focus Group 5).

“Probably, a film that has different races in it, and it shows the different lifestyle of people, not just the Malays, I've watched a few dramas, Malay dramas. It's all about the Malay family, and how they live. I think most dramas are like that. They don't show anything else about Malaysians whereas there are so many other races in Malaysia,” (I13/Girl/17-year-old/in-depth interview).

It is not only the problem of under-representation and exclusivity in the media, but also the purported act of reducing the number of ethnic programmes on the television has been viewed as another form of marginalising their position as citizens. For example, Chinese students claim that Cantonese serial dramas from Hong Kong, which usually aired at 6:00-7:00 pm were replaced by Malay programmes.

“*Ya*, they cut a lot. Last time, [Malaysian television] has Chinese dramas, but they cut off the time and changed it to Malay movies,” (C6/Boy/16-year-old/Focus Group 5).

Interviewer: “Is this for all channels?”

“Yup,” (C6/Boy/16-year-old/Focus Group 5).

Interviewer: “What about the others, do you agree with what he said?”

“Make it balanced. Malay, Chinese and Indonesian [programmes],” (C3/Girl/16-year-old, Focus Group 5).

By reducing the airtime for Chinese serial dramas and replacing them with Malay dramas, these participants felt their ethnic groups were not being treated fairly. They argued that each ethnic group should have a right to belong in a multiethnic country like Malaysia. Thus, it is only reasonable that major ethnic groups be allocated sufficient airtime for their programmes to be shown. Cultural exclusion, in this sense, makes them feel discriminated against. A lack of multi-ethnic programmes is a failure in exchanging cultural knowledge among fellow Malaysians, which they feel is key in any multiethnic society. The need for the local media to broaden the representation of the Malaysian identity to include other ethnic groups came to these young people, who were inspired by the way American films are able to include casts of varying ethnicities. Participants felt the Malaysian media should emulate the West in this respect.

“I just feel uncomfortable because there is discrimination here. If it is a [local] Chinese film, then it is all about Chinese culture. If they show wedding customs, [local media] is not open and then Malay films are not on par with Hollywood,” (K2/Girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 7).

6.7 Theme 2 : ‘Rationale’

‘Rationale,’ on the other hand, refers to non-cultural values and attitudes in making sense of interethnic relationships. Unlike those in the ‘primordial values’, ‘logic/rationality’ refers to the idea that participants draw on the ideals of equality and individuality, with no racial interpretations.

These young people did not evaluate the show from an ethnic or religious standpoint, but expressed concern towards the inherent qualities of individuals. Under this theme, three categories were identified – *‘individual problem’, ‘characteristics’* and *‘non-racial consciousness.’*

6.7.1 ‘Individual Problem’

‘Individual problem’ represents the issues of interethnic relations in *Gol& Gincu* on a personal level, and not the true situation of ethnic tension in Malaysia. These participants do not believe that the country is experiencing a major ethnic problem, but that it is an individual problem only involving racist people.

“None, but maybe in some cases where they were prejudice towards other ethnic group, possibly because of different religious beliefs. It does exist but yeah, it happens, but it’s just because of that,” (K3/Girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 7).

“There are some ethnic groups who don’t like other people’s culture and custom, so they don’t want to befriend with those people,” (K1/Girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 7).

One Kadazandusun girl expressed her thoughts that it is about family problem, and Ling is facing a problem with a racist father.

“Most parents whose daughter has a boyfriend of different religion would always say 'why did you befriend that guy?,’ and so on. It's always parents who forbid their children from having relationships [with someone of different race]. There's no discrimination whatsoever between ethnic groups,” (K2/Girl/16-year-old/Focus Group 7).

6.7.2 ‘Individual Character’

Some young Malaysians, across ethnicities and ages, are against ethnic labelling, such as what happened in the scene from *Gol & Gincu* where the father called his daughter’s boyfriend a parasite. They object to the idea that

the worth of a person can be evaluated by ethnicity. These participants argued that a person's identity lies on who they are on the inside.

"Depends if she is a good person or not. So, if she is good, then even if she is of a different faith, I can accept her," (K12/Boy/14-year-old/Focus Group 8).

This extends to choosing friends. Although some parents may have instilled in their children on the need to maintain social relations from among their ethnicity, some participants disagree with their parents.

Interviewer: "So, Chinese students have no problem mixing with Malay students?"

"If [the Malays] are nice, then we are nice. But if they are bad, then we would too," (C8/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 6).

"But parents have different views," (C9/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 6).

Interviewer: "Really? What would they do? "

"They would scold [us], sometimes whacked [us]," (C9/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 6).

Characteristics cannot be judged from ethnicity, which was what one Indian boy was trying to convey when the group strongly opposed the ethnic labelling of '*kutu*' in the story.

"He can't call him '*kutu*' because a handsome man, shortly haircut, good-looking maybe not in a good job. But people with long hair and not good looking but having good job, maybe he's millionaire or billionaire. You cannot judge the book by its cover. So, maybe the Malay boy is there, maybe he's a millionaire (shrugged his shoulder)," (I3/Boy/16-year-old/Focus Group 3).

These young people made sense through alternative approaches rather than fully depending on pre-given and inherited knowledge of ethnicity and tradition.

6.7.3 'Non-racial Consciousness'

What is interesting in the reception of young Malaysians here is how there are those who did not have any racial reading of the text. This suggested that racial consciousness is not present within them. Rather, they made sense of the text purely based on logic. This occurred when 'parasite' or '*kutu*' was uttered in the film. Many of these young people thought "parasite" referred to the boyfriend's appearance, which indirectly suggested his character as a useless and unreliable person.

Interviewer: "Why do you think the father dislike the boyfriend?"

"It's his look. Like a parasite," (C7/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 6).

"It's his heart," (C9/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 6).

"He looks like a gangster," (C11/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 6).

2. Kadazandusun group (16-year-old)

"It's because of his appearance. Like someone with no purpose in life," (K5/Boy/16-year-old/Focus Group 7).

"Scruffy," (K4/Boy/16-year-old/Focus Group 7).

"That's what the father probably sees," (K5).

In contrast to some other participants, who immediately identified it a racial phenomenon, these participants insisted that the father opposed the boyfriend because of his unkempt appearance rather than his ethnicity. Other evidence of logic/rationality in their conversation about the interethnic relationship was

found in the narratives of young Malay girls, who didn't believe the media's portrayal of racism.

"I don't think all Chinese people are like [the ticketing-clerk].' *Cos* my older sister goes to a school where there is a lot of Chinese[students]. Sometimes, Chinese and Chinese speak Malay. And they befriend Malay people," (M13/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

6.8 Conclusion

What one can conclude from this chapter is the power of the context which consists of the dominant role of parents and family, media, structural and institutional factors, such as class or state policies, ethnic politics and the forces of globalisation that polarises young Malaysians' construction of 'ethnicity.' 'Ethnicity' is firmly constructed from pure cultural attributes of a particular ethnic group, but requires the interplay from all the factors mentioned above. This section shows two types of 'ethnicity' understood by these young people. Those who strongly felt an ethnic identity, and attached themselves to their family and religions, construct their ethnicity along a more primordial approach. In this respect, parents wield a dominant role in shaping their sense of ethnicity. Others, who made used logic and rational thinking in their discussions, depicted a more fluid sense of 'ethnicity.'

However, not all young people subscribe to their parents' ascription of ethnicity. In fact, they actually differ in degree. Their exposure to the outside world through the media has helped them redefine their ethnic identities, away from the official definition. This occurred most among the Malays. Older Malay students disagreed with the official definition of 'Malay,' based on ethno-religious criteria. They redefined the meaning of 'Malay' as an ethnicity, while identifying 'Islam' as a religion, the two not bound together. In this case, they see themselves more as 'Muslim' than 'Malay.'

Another important point to bring to light is how some young people reflexively draw from state policies and ethnic politics to make sense of their 'ethnicity.' This results in a stronger ethnic consciousness compare to those who use logic. Political situations shape young people's ethnic or national consciousness, as was found in Hammock (2006) and Jukraine (2003). What all this suggests is that young Malaysians' ethnicity is best seen as 'situational ethnicity.'

Endnotes

[x] '*Kitabiyyah*' refers to 'People of the Book' which means:

(a) A woman whose ancestors came from the descendants of Prophet Jacob a.s.
(b) A Christian woman whose ancestors were Christians before the Prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).
(c) A Jewess whose ancestors were Jews before the Prophethood of Isa a.s. (Jesus).

Muslim men may marry a non-Muslim woman without conversion provided she comes from among the *Kitabiyyah*, as described above. However, in order to resolve complications that may arise due to differences of faith in marriage, Malaysia decided to follow the Surah Al-Baqarah where both Muslim men and women must marry a Muslim.

[xi] Based on verse 221 ofthe Surah Al-Baqarah of the Holy Quran, which states that no Muslim men and women should marry a non-believer (idolaters) until they believe (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, 1975). Which means that Muslim men and women may only marry a non-believer if they convert to Islam as a sign of their belief in God, according to Islam.

[xii] '*Masuk Melayu*' (Becoming A Malay) – this is a common misperception among the non-Malays, particularly the Chinese, who view those who convert to Islam as becoming a 'Malay' based on the Constitution's definition of Muslims.

[xiii] Filipino in this respect is not referring to those from the Philippines but the Sulok from the South of Philippines, who now form part of the Muslim Bumiputera in Sabah

Chapter 7

Emancipation, Multiple Identities and Imported Television Programmes

7.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, young Malaysians' reported a strong sense of collective identity from 'ethnicity.' Findings from their daily media consumption, on the other hand, show an equally strong sense of individuality. Analysis of their consumption of the media reveals the centrality of imported television programmes above other media in their everyday lives. By capturing both narratives from their diaries and conversations from the focus group interviews, it appears that imported television programmes are an important cultural and political resource, which they use to construct identities, which are fluid and plural.

Foreign media has appeal because it offers young people more alternatives and choices. Their consumption of Western fashion magazines and programmes help them to identify with non-traditional identity markers, like lifestyle, fashion and music. This provides a wider source to draw from for identity formation, so they do not need to necessarily rely on the collective identity of their locality.

Nevertheless, it is imperative to make clear that this situation is not representative of all young Malaysians. Even if their consumption of the media is about promoting an individual self, there are others who construct identities by combining both individual and collective characteristics. This occurs among ethnic minority Malaysians, who forms hybrid identities, combining global popular youth culture from the West with values from their ancestral homeland.

This occurs through their experience of watching imported Chinese and Tamil television films and dramas.

In order to gain some insights on young Malaysians, this chapter will discuss their media consumption patterns from all types of media. It showcases their reception of imported and local television programmes and will also touch on the experiences of a diasporic audience.

7.1 Overview Media Consumption Pattern

On the whole, the scope of the media diary covered all media, but a close examination of the diaries showed that television was the most frequently used and most popular media compared to other forms of media, based on total hours of consumption. Even though they might have been busy with school work at times, students made up for the lost time by watching hours and hours of television once they were free. Essentially, television is the major source of entertainment, leisure and information for the young people involved in this study. Through this, they gain ideas for alternative values and lifestyles.

The consumption of television pointed to several patterns. First, a pattern was found in the consumption for imported and local television programmes. The second was the choice of genre that was differentiated by age, ethnicity and gender. The third was a tendency to use media based on similarity of cultural attributes, like language and religion.

Out of a total of 48 diaries distributed, only 35 diaries were returned and analysed. The diarists were also participants of the focus group interviews, which consisted of 13 boys and 22 girls. The unreturned 13 diaries were due to problems of absence. Participants did not attend school on the collection date, and teachers were unable to collect them at a later date.

The teachers who were assigned to collect the diaries were from the morning session, meaning they had no direct access to students who had been absent. Six out of the 13 unreturned diaries were from the 14-year-old Indian group.

Therefore, the data being presented does not equally represents all young Malaysians, but tries to draw attention to the possible context of media consumption among young Malaysians. Findings were analysed through triangulation. All data presented and discussed is based on the discussions of participants' reception of the television programmes that they watched, and the context of consumption. As mentioned in chapter 4, respondents were interviewed of their media consumption pattern and habits before they were given a media diary.

7.1.1 Media Consumption By Gender, Age and Ethnicity

The fact that television is the most frequently used source of media from across ethnicities, genders and ages corroborates with the findings in Samsuddin & Latiffah's (2009) work described in Chapter 2. This includes both terrestrial and satellite television. However, a slight difference in trend presented. Samsuddin & Latiffah reported that the radio was the second most consumed media, but this study revealed that the new media has taken over the radio. This change is due to the fact that the new media is now increasingly gaining popularity among young Malaysians.

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Media	**Hours & Minutes**
Television	491 hours
New Media	122 hours 35 minutes
Radio	122 hours
Print Media	30 hours 30 minutes

Table 7.1 : Overall Media Consumption Patterns Based on Total Viewing/Consumption Hours

Figures in Table 7.1 show that television is the most frequently consumed media over the radio, new media and print media, based on the total hours of consumption by young people. Young Malaysians spent 491 hours within a period of 14 days watching television, compared to 122 hours spent

consuming both the new media and the radio, and 35 minutes reading print media.

The range of time spent for all media consumption was set based on the minimum and maximum time young people have spent on the media in a day. In this case, it was found that the minimum was less than 15 minutes and the maximum time recorded was up to three hours in a day. The total viewing, listening, reading and surfing hours was the result of the total time of their consumption, which was added up throughout the period of the study. If a participant watched 30 minutes of cartoons every day for 4 days, the total viewing hours for cartoons during that period of study was 120 minutes, or 2 hours, for one diarist. A fan of Asian serial dramas watched two dramas a day for nine days. Each drama lasted an hour, totalling 18 viewing hours for this diarist.

Before proceeding further in young Malaysians' television consumption, it's important to first explore their consumption pattern of other media sources. This gives some insights on young Malaysians' identity as an audience through their consumption of the media. The following discussions of media consumption patterns are divided into total consumption hours based on gender, ethnicity and age.

7.1.2 Gendered Consumption of the Media

Interestingly, there is a marked difference in media consumption patterns in terms of gender.

Media	Male	Female
Television	123 hours	286 hours 10 minutes
New Media	52 hours 50 minutes	45 hours 40 minutes
Radio	48 hours 05 minutes	83 hours 40 minutes
Print Media	16 hours	14 hours 50 minutes

Table 7.2 :Total Consumption Hours Based on Gender

Table 7.2 shows that girls spent 286 hours and 10 minutes watching television and 83 hours and 40 minutes listening to the radio, which is double the amount that boys spend on these activities. However, boys use the new media, i.e. the Internet, and read print media more than girls. In this respect, boys' total hours of consumption of the Internet was about 52 hours and 50 minutes, in contrast to girls who spent about 45 hours and 40 minutes. Similarly, boys reported reading more than girls, spending 16 hours reading newspapers and magazines, compared to girls who reported only 14 hours and 50 minutes of reading during the 14 day period of study.

The high amount of hours viewing television among girls was further explained when analysing the six most widely watched genres. Table 7.2.1 below shows that girls heavily watch all the genres, with serial drama or soap opera hitting the top of the list, totalling 133 hours and 30 minutes. The difference between boys and girls was narrow only through the watching of films. Girls reported watching 48 hours and 50 minutes of films, while boys reported a total of 43 hours and 30 minutes watching films.

Genre	Male	Female
Serial Drama	6 hours	133 hours 30 minutes
Film	43 hours 30 minutes	48 hours 50 minutes
Cartoon & Animes	15 hours 30 minutes	21 hours
Entertainment	8 hours	30 hours 20 minutes
News	7 hours 20 minutes	13 hours 45 minutes
Documentary	1 hours	7 hours 45 minutes

Table 7.2.1 : Comparative Total Viewing Hours Among Gender Based on Genre

Table 7.2 indicates that girls spend less time reading print media, probably due to the fact that they prefer watching news and seek information from television. Girls' consumption of "documentary/magazine" programmes, shown in table 7.2.1, is a total of 7 hours and 45 minutes, compare to boys, who only consumed this genres for one hour throughout the session.

"Cartoon and anime" was the next most frequently watched genre for both genders. Girls watched more of this genre, as indicated in Table 7.2.1, spending a total of 21 hours on the genre. Boys watched six hours less than girls.

The radio was listened to for a total of 83 hours and 40 minutes by girls and 48 hours and 05 minutes by boys. Consumption of print media for boys was slightly higher, amounting to 16 hours compared to 14 hours and 50 minutes for girls. This means that although boys read slightly more than girls, young Malaysians' reading habits are rather limited. Gender differences in the type of media consumed could possibly be linked to boys' preference to computer games as a recreational activity, compared to girls who prefer music and films. An analysis of consumption patterns of the new media in Table 7.2.2 shows the differences of time spent on different activities for both genders.

Table 7.2.2: Patterns of Consumption of New Media Between Gender

Activitiy	**Male**	**Female**
Chatting	6 hours 45 minutes	17 hours 45 minutes
Games	27 hours	7 hours
Finding Friends	-	2 hours
Information	5 hours	3 hours 45 minutes
Watching Films	10 hours	-

Consumption for the new media shows that different genders have different uses of the Internet. Table 7.2.2 shows that girls use the Internet more for communication and widening their social circle. It is a collective activity used to keep in touch with friends, talk about a variety of things and reach out to new friends. For these purposes, girls spent about 17 hours and 45 minutes during the 14-day period. Boys, on the other hand, appeared to be more individualistic, using the new media for individual activities such as playing games, watching films and seeking information about films and animes. Boys spent about 42 hours participating in these activities.

This data suggests the Internet holds a strong interest from both genders for its versatility and interactivity, since both genders actively used it to pursue individual interests.

7.1.3 Media Consumption By Age

Young Malaysians' consumption based on age also revealed a marked difference in consumption. Older students used the media more than their younger peers.

Older students' total viewing hours amounted to 216 hours and 10 minutes, compared to 188 hours and 50 minutes for the younger group, as indicated in table 7.3.

Media	13-14-years-old	16-17-years-old
Television	188 hours 50 minutes	216 hours 10 minutes
Radio	45 hours 40 minutes	68 hours 15 minutes
New Media	45 hours 20 minutes	46 hours 45 minutes
Print Media	15 hours 05 minutes	21 hours 20 minutes

Table 7.3 : Total Consumption Hours of Media Mix By Age

The radio, the new media and the print media were less popular choices, as shown in table 7.3.Older students spent about 68 hours and 15 minutes listening to the radio, significantly higher than the 45 hours and 40 minutes of listening time by 13-14 year old students.

The total consumption hours were higher for older students because of the conditions of their lives. Older students spent more time studying, so the radio enabled them to have entertainment while studying. The younger students were not involved in public examinations, allowing them to spend more time watching television, as they were not overly pressured to study.

This was further exemplified by the television genres that older students preferred to watch. As table 7.3.1 below shows, older students watched more films, cartoons/ animes, news and documentaries, while younger students watched more serial dramas and entertainment/musicals.

Genre	13 - 14-years-old	16-17-years-old
Serial Drama	59 hours 20 minutes	46 hours 45 minutes
Film	31 hours	50 hours
Cartoon	15 hours 45 minutes	33 hours 30 minutes
Entertainment	22 hours 50 minutes	18 hours
News	8 hours 50 minutes	12 hours 15 minutes
Documentary	3 hours 45 minutes	5 hours

Table 7.3.1 : Most popular television genres based on age

This means that different age groups have different preferred forms of entertainment. Film is a one-off entertainment, and older students spent one to two hours watching these at a time. Serial dramas are watched in episodes, and are time-consuming for older students who have limited spare time. Similarly, consumption of cartoons and animes, which last only 30 minutes, has to do with time restraints. Watching cartoons and animes mean entertaining themselves during a short span of time.

Consumption for the new media further shows that older students use the media more for leisure than younger students do. Table 7.3.2 highlights the different patterns of Internet usage by 13-14 year-olds and 16-17 year-olds.

Table 7.3.2: Patterns of Internet usage, based on age

Activity	13-14-years-old	16-17-years-old
Chatting	21 hours 30 minutes	5 hours 45 minutes
Games	7 hours	27 hours
Finding Friends	2 hours	2 hours
Information	5 hours	3 hours 30 minutes
Watching Films	-	11 hours

The Internet is seen as a communication and socialisation tool for the younger students. Older students use it more for individual pursuits of pleasure, such as watching films or gaming. Older students also reported less time spent chatting, which could take time away from studying, as indicated in table 7.3.2.

List of Print Media	**13-14-years-old**	**16-17-years-old**
New Strait Times	0%	3.40%
Utusan Malaysia	8%	16%
The Star	0%	16%
Tamil Nesan	0%	2%
See Hua Daily	2%	2%
Daily Express	2%	0%
New Sabah Times	2%	0%
Magazines	26%	20%
Total	40%	60%

Table 7.3.3 : Lists of print media read according to age

Young Malaysians spend more time reading magazines than newspapers. Table 7.3.3 shows that older students read newspapers more frequently than younger students, but the most frequently read form of print media is a magazine for both age groups.

7.1.4 Consumption By Ethnicity

Differences were found in media preferences among ethnicities. For example, the Malays spent more time reading and watching television compared to other ethnic groups.

Media	Malay	Indian	Chinese	Kadazandusun
Television	138 hours	48 hours 50 minutes	108 hours 30 minutes	83 hours
Radio	6 hours	23 hours 50 minutes	18 hours	67 hours 15 minutes
New Media	12 hours	11 hours 30 minutes	61 hours 30 minutes	11 hours 50 minutes
Print Media	14 hours 15 minutes	5 hours 20 minutes	3 hours 25 minutes	9 hours 30 minutes

Table 7.4 : Total consumption hours of all media based on ethnicity

The Kadazandusun group reported consuming the radio more than any other ethnic group, spending 67 hours and 15 minutes during the reporting period. Chinese students were the highest consumers of the new media, spending 61 hours and 30 minutes on the Internet. Indian students were moderate consumer of the media compared to other ethnic groups. Television was the most frequently consumed media for Indian participants, with 48 hours and 50 minutes reported. The Kadazandusun group divided their consumption of the radio between Malay, English and Kadazandusun radio networks. The least consumed media, which was the print media, was low across all ethnicities, however Malay students reported the highest total hours of reading, spending 14 hours and 15 minutes during the 14-day period.

Genre	Malay	Chinese	Indian	Kadazandusun
Serial Drama	55 hours 20 minutes	30 hours 50 minutes	12 hour	11 hours 30 minutes
Film	17 hours	23 hours	2 hours 30 minutes	13 hours
Cartoons & Anime	11 hours 35 minutes	6 hours	2 hours 30 minutes	19 hours 30 minutes
Entertainment	16 hours 30 minutes	12 hours 20 minutes	10 hours	2 hours
News	4 hours	-	1 hour 45 minutes	8 hours
Documentary	2 hours	2 hours 45 minutes	2 hours 30 minutes	1 hour 30 minutes

Table 7.4.1: Television consumption pattern by genre across ethnicity

Table 7.4.1 above shows the various patterns of consumption of different genres of television among different ethnicities. Malay, Chinese and Indian students watched more serial dramas than any other genres. In contrast, Kadazandusun students reported watching more cartoons and animes, with 19 hours and 30 minutes spent watching this type compared to 11 hours and 30 minutes of serial dramas.

Chinese students watched significantly more films than any other group, viewing a total of 23 hours. Malay students also watched more entertainment/musical programmes than other groups, with a total of 16 hours and 30 minutes. Kadazandusun students watched more television news than Malay or Indian students.

Chinese students were found the most frequent users of the Internet, as indicated in Table 7.4.2. The total hours of consumption recorded was 66 hours and 30 minutes.

Ethnicity	**Total Hours On the Internet**
Chinese	66 hours 30 minutes
Indian	16 hours
Kadazandusun	12 hours 45 minutes
Malays	7 hours 55 minutes

Table 7.4.2: Breakdown of consumption hours of the internet across ethnicity

Chinese students used the Internet for communication in chatting, games, and watching films for pleasure. This shows the Internet is viewed as a means of entertainment.

Activity	Chinese	Indian	Kadazandusun	Malay
Chatting	16 hours 45 minutes	-	6 hour	3 hours 45 minutes
Finding Friends	-	2 hours	-	2 hours
Games	28 hours	6 hours	-	-
Information	-	-	5 hours 45 minutes	3 hours 45 minutes
Watching Films	10 hours	-	-	1 hour

Table 7.4.3 : Lists of internet consumption across ethnicity

Malay students reported mostly 'chatting' and seeking information, and were less preoccupied with playing games or searching for online games. Indian students spent more time playing games, and Kadazandusun use of the Internet was confined to chatting and seeking information. Thus, different ethnic groups use for the Internet for different purposes.

Traditional media, like the radio, was consumed the most by the Kadazandusuns in this study. The total hours of listening reported was 50 hours and 15 minutes, followed by Indian students whose total was 18 hours and 50 minutes.

Ethnicity	Malay Network	English Network	Chinese Network	Tamil Network	K/dusun Network
K/dusun	29 hours 30 minutes	17 hours 45 minutes	-	-	2 hours
Indian	-	1 hours 20 minutes	-	17 hours 30 minutes	-
Chinese	-	2 hours 30 minutes	5 hours 05 minutes	-	-
Malay	2 hours 15 minutes	2 hours 20 minutes	-	-	-

Table 7.4.4: Time spent on the radio across ethnicity

A further breakdown of the radio networks listened to shows a tendency to listen to networks that are based on their own ethnicity. With the exception of English radio networks, due to the universality of the language, respondents reported mainly listening to their own ethnic-based radio network.

On the whole, consumption intersects with other social identities such as gender, ethnicity and age. Yet, one commonality was that television remained the most highly consumed media for all ethnicities. The fact that the total viewing hours of television was 491 hours implies a need to investigate further into what television means to young Malaysians. This also needs to be differentiated by social identities among young people.

More attention will be given to television consumption in this chapter and the subsequent sections.

7.1.5 Consumption Imported and Domestic Television Programmes

One of the most significant trends found in the diaries of all ethnic groups was a marked difference between consumption of local vs. imported television programmes. The assumption that local audiences prefer their own local television programmes to imported programmes was challenged. The findings of Van Der Rijt et al. (2000) showed that young Dutch people preferred their own local popular music television station rather than the American MTV. This study proved otherwise for Malaysians. For instance, young Malaysian Chinese dismissed all local television programmes whether in Chinese or Malay as being of low quality, and considered watching those programmes as a “waste of time,” compared to programmes from Hong Kong (Carstens, 2003: 339).

Other studies such as Strelitz (2002) show that consumption of imported and local television programmes is differentiated by class and ethnicity. White, Indian and Coloured South Africans identify themselves with American music, TV and films compared to African students who watch local serial drama.

A similar situation was found in Gritxi's (2006) study of young Maltese. Young people who comes from the working class are reported to be "comfortable with locally produced programmes," whereas young middle-class Maltese think that the quality of local programmes is not as good as those from the US or Britain (Gritxi, 2006: 110-111). What all this points to is that there is no clear and definite proof that young people prefer local over foreign programmes. This goes to show that consumption of local and imported programmes depends on 'who' is more inclined towards local than imported programmes, and vice versa. It also begs the need to consider the various dimensions of their social realities, ranging from the cultural, social, political and economic factors at the macro level, and their home lives. These young people show different means of using television, to make sense of their identities. The multiethnic nature of this study group leads this discussion to focus on the similarities and differences found among youth of different ethnicities.

A look needs to be taken into the consumption patterns between imported and local television programmes. The daily recordings in the media consumption diaries showed that young Malaysians' consumption of imported television programmes not only includes American programmes from Hollywood, but also a wide range of programmes from among Asia, including Taiwan, Korea, Hong Kong, Indonesia and India.

Imported	Hours & Minutes	Domestic	Hours & Minutes
U.S.A	119 hours 15 minutes	Malay	112 hours 20 minutes
Taiwan	59 hours	Chinese	4 hours
India/Kollywood	47 hours 20 minutes	Tamil	30 minutes
Hong Kong	41 hours 50 minutes		
Japan	36 hours 45 minutes		
Korea	30 hours		
Indonesia	25 hours		
India/Bollywood	5 hours		

Table 7.5 : Comparative Viewing Hours Between Domestic & Imported Television Programmes

Programmes from America are hugely popular among these young people. Total viewing hours for American programmes was 119 hours and 15 minutes, and constituted the largest portion of imported programmes. Television programmes from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, India/Kollywood, and India/Bollywood also comprised a major portion of the television programmes consumed. It is no surprise that these countries have a wide viewership. It was a surprise to find that an Indonesian serial drama was tremendously popular. Prior to the advent of satellite television, Malaysian audiences did not have access to Indonesian programmes, let alone films on television. In the past, Malaysian audiences relied on the US, India, Hong Kong, Japan and Taiwan to supply films.

‘Bollywood’ and ‘Kollywood’ cited in Table 7.5 refer to programmes from India. ‘Bollywood’ popularly refers to the Hindi language film industry, which is located in Bombay (later renamed Mumbai in 1995) (Ganti, 2004), while ‘Kollywood’ or Tamil cinema, is from South India. What differentiates the two, according to Ravi (2008), is that while ‘Kollywood’ is similar to ‘Bollywood’ in terms of production, ‘Bollywood’ serves as the national cinema while ‘Kollywood’ propagates the Tamil cultural identity before the national Indian identity. Young Malaysian Indians, who are mostly Tamil, not only watch and

listen to Tamil songs, but study findings show that they watch, listen to and enjoy Hindi films and music as well.

The marked contrast in consumption between imported with local television programmes raises the question of 'quality' among local television programmes. Young Malaysians in this study complained about the quality of local production companies which they see at not on par with the US, Japan or Korea, which set the benchmark for quality films. High on the list of the most popular genres of programmes watched (Table 7.5.1) were serial dramas. 'Serial dramas' are actually soap operas, but they differ slightly from those produced in the West. Various types of serial dramas exist, and the storyline does not always feature adultery or sexual promiscuity in the lives of the upper class. Serial dramas such as the historical and professional serials from Hong Kong are often about the life of ordinary professional people (Lee, 2004). They usually highlight the trials and tribulations of the life of young urban professionals in a modern setting in Asian countries.

The kind of serial dramas that young Malaysians enjoy do not usually run up to 100 episodes. They are very compact, complete with a beginning, a conflict in the middle of the story and a happy ending. They are popular among young Malaysians, especially girls. Consumption of Korean and Taiwanese serial dramas is popular among Malay girls, while Chinese students prefer watching those from Hong Kong.

Genre	**Hours and Minutes**
Serial Drama	104 hours
Film	89 hours 10 minutes
Cartoons & Anime	68 hours 45 minutes
Entertainment	54 hours 30 minutes
Documentary	13 hours 30 minutes

Table 7.5.1: Most Popular Imported Television Programmes Based on Genre Per Hours and Minutes

Based on total viewing hours, serial dramas from Asian countries like Taiwan, Hong Kong, India/Kollywood and Indonesia are popular among the young people in this study. Total viewing hours were calculated at 104 hours in a span of two weeks, followed by films, cartoons and animes, entertainment/musical programmes and finally documentaries. What this alludes to is that young Malaysians have specific tastes for specific genres of imported programmes.

Further analysis shows that consumption is disparate across ethnicities. Malay students most frequently watch serial dramas from Taiwan, Korea and Indonesia but Indian and Chinese students watched overseas Chinese and Indian serial dramas more. Kadazandusun appear to not watch serial drama as often as the other ethnic groups, and were found to prefer cartoons and animes.

Genre	**Malay**	**Chinese**	**Indian**	**Kadazandusun**
Serial Drama	55 hours 20 minutes	30 hours 50 minutes	12 hours	11 hours 30 minutes
Film	17 hours	23 hours	2 hours 30 minutes	13 hours
Cartoons & Anime	11 hours 35 minutes	6 hours	2 hours 30 minutes	19 hours 30 minutes
Entertainment	16 hours 30 minutes	12 hours 20 minutes	10 hours	2 hours
Documentary	2 hours	2 hours 45 minutes	2 hours 30 minutes	1 hour 30 minutes

Table 7.5.2 : Breakdown of consumption patterns across ethnicity based on genre

Cartoons refer to those from the US, such as *Tom & Jerry* and Disney from the *Cartoon Network* and *Nickelodeon*, which appear on pay-TV Astro. Young Malaysians of all ethnicities also enjoy Japanese animes such as *Slamdunk, Naruto, Doraemon* and *Shin Chan.* The most common animes watched were *Doraemon* and *Shin Chan,* which were usually watched with their siblings as part of a family viewing activity. Most often, it was the younger viewers aged 13-14 years old that enjoyed both animes.

Both these animes are usually funny and very childlike. The younger audience liked *Doraemon* not only for its humour, but also enjoyed the use of magic in the story. In spite of being drawn to cartoons, young Malaysians do so while critically assessing its value. This occurs when watching *The Simpsons* from the US.

> "The Simpsons (Hollywood). This programme is very funny and non-hypocritical. But it is *most* unsuitable for children even though its 'genre' is a cartoon,"
> (M9/Girl/14–year-old / 21/1/2008, own emphasis).

Unlike Gray's (2007) audience, M9 did not connect *The Simpsons* with America or American culture. Hence, this may suggest that young Malaysians do not form preferences of a particular imported programme due to its country of origin. Choices were made on the basis of the quality of content, in which the moral value of the programme was considered. Even though animations are produced locally for Malaysian children, no one in the study group reported watching them.

One important feature in the study of the Malaysian audience is the fact that its multiethnic composition means that consumption of the media is culturally driven. In examining their consumption of imported television programmes, one cannot assume that 'ethnicity' is not significant and that Malaysian audiences are to be treated as homogeneous regarding taste and preference. Rather, while they all commonly watched and preferred imported television programmes from America, they also watched outside programmes from culturally similar countries such as India and China. These other group audiences are what media studies identify as 'diasporic audiences', (Georgiou & Silverstone, 2007). Hence, the Malaysian audience must be seen in two ways – their consumption of American and Asian programmes based on preference and taste, as well as a diasporic audience, consuming programmes from countries having cultural relevance to the local Chinese and

Indian groups from among countries which Straubhaar (1997) terms as‘geo-linguistics’ or ‘geo-cultural’ regions.

Cultural similarity between Malaysian Chinese and Indians means that despite having the access and choice of American films, they continue to watch films from countries where they share the similarity of culture. While there are issues of supply due to the inability of local production to produce quality local programmes, other factors such as the cultural policies of the country, which over-emphasise the culture of the dominant ethnic group of the Muslim-Malays in local media, drives ethnic minorities towards imported Chinese and Tamil films.

American films are more popular among the Malays and Kadazandusun because they are in English, a global lingua franca, which they understand aside from their own mother tongue. The Malaysian Indians and Chinese who are trilingual speakers of Malay, English and their own respective mother tongue, have wider choices. Cultural familiarity remains the main reason in deciding which programmes to watch. This explains why Malaysian Chinese students’ consumption of serial dramas, films and entertainment/musicals is comprised of mostly Hong Kong and Taiwanese productions, and not ones from Japan or the US. The term ‘local’ and ‘imported’ television programmes for the Malaysian Chinese students is actually ‘local’ Chinese and ‘imported’ Chinese programmes.

In this respect, Malaysian audiences are disparate in features because of the multiethnic nature. There are those who watch imported programmes based on genre, while others tend to watch programmes because of similarity in culture. The penetration of imported television into young Malaysians lives is more diverse, which means it comes from not only the West, but also Asia, Southeast Asia and more specifically, from the ‘ancestral’ countries of ethnic minority Malaysians as well.

Country	Malay	Indian	Chinese	Kadazandusun
U.S.A	28 hours 30 minutes	20 hours 30 minutes	16 hours 30 minutes	55 hours 30 minutes
Taiwan	25 hours 30 minutes	3 hours	36 hours	68 hours 30 minutes
Hong Kong	-	-	36 hours 30 minutes	3 hours
Japan	29 hours 30 minutes	-	1 hour	37 hours
Korea	17 hours	-	1 hour	9 hours
India/Kollywood	-	46 hours 20 minutes	-	-
Indonesia	7 hours	1 hour 30 minutes	14 hours	3 hours 30 minutes
India/Bollywood	2 hours	2 hours	-	-

Table 7.5.3 : Total viewing hours of imported programmes based on ethnicity

Cultural plurality brought about by satellite television has led to a differentiation of sub-ethnics among ethnic minorities. Although Mandarin is the official language of Chinese, Chinese as an ethnicity itself consists of various sub-ethnicities like the Hakka, Hokkien, Teochew and many others. Hence, satellite television, such as Astro, has played an important role in nurturing the sub-ethnic identities among the Chinese.

There were a high number of Cantonese films and dramas from Hong Kong for the Malaysian Chinese audience in the 1980s due to the high rental of VCR tapes from Hong Kong films (Carstens, 2003). Based on their diaries, Chinese students who are Hakka and Hokkien speakers, shows that they are now able to watch programmes in Hakka an Hokkien, in addition to Cantonese and Mandarin. Consequently, the daily consumption of young Malaysian Chinese people is a mix of Western, Asian and imported Chinese programmes rather than local shows.

A similar pattern is also found among Indian students. They mostly watch Kollywood and Bollywood films, drama, entertainment and American documentaries or cartoons, but almost never watch local programmes in Malay, except for the news. Although they largely watch more foreign

programmes, in truth, these programmes are only 'foreign' because they are not locally produced, and are in fact ethnically similar.

Chinese and Indian participants only turned to Western or Japanese ‘cartoons’ and ‘documentaries’ when there were no options from their ethnic homelands. Despite the presence of local cartoons and documentaries, neither Chinese nor Indian students reported watching them. Therefore, it is evident that the source of the production of such genres is important, and not just based on availability.

Consumption by age of imported television programmes vs. local programmes showed a higher popularity of the former. But a closer look showed differences, as genre polarised the older and younger students’ consumption.

Country	**13- 14-years-old**	**16-17-years-old**
U.S.A	55 hours 20 minutes	114 hours 55 minutes
Taiwan	57 hours 30 minutes	27 hours 30 minutes
India/*Kollywood*	-	46 hours 10 minutes
Hong Kong	15 hours 50 minutes	21 hours 30 minutes
Japan	14 hours 45 minutes	38 hours 05 minutes
Korea	18 hours	9 hours
Indonesia	18 hours 30 minutes	7 hours 30 minutes
India/*Bollywoo*d	-	5 hours

Table 7.5.4: Total viewing hours of imported programmes based on age

Television programmes from the U.S. were the most popular source of imported programmes among the older group. Older students watched about 114 hours and 55 minutes of American programmes, but shows from Taiwan were more popular for younger students, with a total of 57 hours and 30

minutes. This was due to a popular serial drama from Taiwan being aired at the time this study was conducted.

Japanese programmes are more popular among the older students, because of the attraction to animes among older boys. Younger boys often watched *Doraemon.* Animes popular amongst boys are shown on Animax, an animation channel on Astro. Animes such as *Slamdunk,* which is less childish, are slotted in on Animax. These shows are repeatedly shown, allowing older boys who are fans to indulge often. On the other hand, *Doraemon* and *Shin Chan* are slotted on regular, terrestrial television, thus can only be viewed during limited times. Girls consumed more television than boys, preferring imported television programmes in all the genres. Table 7.5.5 shows girls' higher consumption in all the most popular genres, particularly serial dramas.

Boys' consumption of serial dramas was limited to 5 hours. The boys' consumption of serial drama only one out of 13 boys who recorded having watched serial dramas, resulting in only 2 hours total of viewing time. Serial dramas from India/Kollywood and Indonesia were also sparsely watched by boys.

Genre	Country	Male	Female
Serial Drama	Taiwan	-	54 hours
	Hong Kong	2 hours	24 hours
	Korea	-	22 hours
	India/Kollywood	1 hours 30 minutes	9 hours
	Indonesia	1 hour 30 minutes	10 hours 30 minutes
Film	U.S.A	12 hours 50 minutes	23 hours 10 minutes
	Taiwan	-	1 hour 30 minutes
	Hong Kong	17 hours	5 hours 30 minutes
	India/Kollywood	18 hours	3 hours
	India/Bollywood	12 hours	3 hours
Cartoons	U.S.A	3 hours 30 minutes	16 hours 25 minutes
	Japan	14 hours	13 hours 30 minutes
Entertainment	U.S.A	30 minutes	1 hours
	Taiwan	-	3 hours 30 minutes
	India/Kollywood	1 hour 30 minutes	6 hours
	Indonesia	-	14 hours
Documentary	U.S.A	2 hours 30 minutes	9 hours 30 minutes

Table 7.5.5 : Breakdown of imported TV genres according to gender

The different preference for cartoons between genders was interesting. Girls enjoyed American cartoons, having a total of 16 hours and 25 minutes of viewing time. Boys reported watching these for only 3 hours and 30 minutes. However, animations from Japan were more popular with boys, comprising a total of 14 hours, compared to 13 hours and 30 minutes from girls. This shows a different preference for imported television programmes between boys and girls. Beneath is an example of the kind of reaction girls had towards American cartoons, compared to a boy's reaction to Japanese anime.

> "Actually, I love to watch Tom & Jerry because it is one of my favourite cartoons. I don't know how to describe it, but it was a good and very funny cartoon,"
> (I5/Girl/16-year-old/27/1/2008).

> "Animax is an entertainment channel in Japanese that's being handled by its host Hannah Tan. I always watch this programme because it's very interesting and entertaining especially animes like "Slamdunk" and "Samurai X." From this channel, I get to listen to songs that I like. But there are times, when there is nothing nice on television,"
> (K5/Boy/16-year-old/ 27/2/2008).

In terms of consumption of local television programmes, local Malay television programmes were widely watched by all ethnicities, but the total viewing hours as shown in table 7.5.6 were comparably low compared to imported television programmes.

Ethnicity	**Local Programmes**	**Total Hours of Consumption**
Malay	Malay programmes	41 hours 45 minutes
Indian	Malay programmes	5 hours 15 minutes
	Tamil programmes	30 minutes
Chinese	Malay programmes	9 hours 50 minutes
	Chinese programmes	1 hour 30 minutes
Kadazandusun	Malay programmes	26 hours 45 minutes

Table 7.5.6: Total viewing hours of Local Programmes by Ethnicity

Local Malaysian programmes range from serial dramas, talk shows, documentaries, entertainment shows, religious talk shows, children's and teen's series, reality TV shows, as well as women's programmes such as cooking and fashion shows. It is the Malay programmes that are in abundance. Local Chinese and Tamil shows are not as varied in genres as ones targeted for the Malays. Malaysian Chinese and Indian students watched less local Chinese and Tamil programmes as they prefer the imported Chinese and Tamil programmes. Malay students watch most of the local programmes, as the majority of local Malaysian programmes are in Malay. In addition, local

Malay dramas usually are Islamic dramas. The Kadazandusun, who are also indigenous people of Malaysia and speak mainly Malay, were still among the least to watch local Malaysian programmes.

Ethnicity	**Local Malay Programmes**	**Local Chinese Programmes**	**Local Tamil Programmes**
Kadazandusun	12 hours	-	-
Malay	7 hours	-	-
Indian	3 hours 30 minutes	-	30 minutes
Chinese	-	30 minutes	-

Table 7.5.7: Total viewing hours for news

The only local programmes that young Malaysians frequently watch are the local news programmes, which accounted for 22 hours and 30 minutes of viewing time. The Malay national news was the preferred choice. Indian students, for example, watched the Malay national news most, for a total of 3 hours and 30 minutes, more than the local Tamil news, which they watched for only 30 minutes. Chinese students showed a different pattern, watching local Chinese news in Mandarin for 30 minutes, but watched no other news. Kadazandusun watched the local news regularly, with total viewing comprising 12 hours during the 14-day period of study.

7.2 Imported Television Programmes, Emancipation and Pleasure

Among the contending issues that arose from analysing the media consumption diaries, and also was brought up during the focus group interviews on media consumption, was the overwhelming sense of pleasure and excitement that each participant expressed when watching an imported television programme.

> *"(MTV).* Well, basically I'm a music geek.
> Music is my life, so watching MTV, it can give me
> satisfaction to my music taste. Well, criticism about
> this channel? Emm...I don't have one"
> (M3/Boy/17-year-old/19/1/2008)

> *"(MTV). Very exciting and pleasurable.*
> U You know, very nice. Just try seeing it,"
> (I3/Boy/16-year-old/30/1/2008).

> "Channel E! Is very entertaining. Because I get to see lots
> of new things like clothes, shoes and stuffs that models always
> wear and I get to see who is in the rich actor's top 10,"
> (C8/Girl/14-year-old/2/3/2008).

Having analysed their media consumption pattern, imported television programmes were found to be central to the lives of young Malaysian, regardless of age, gender and ethnicity. The question is, why? What does this mean for young Malaysians? What does it mean for ethnic minorities who consume imported Chinese and Tamil films and drama, and how does it affect their sense of self?

Lemish et al (1998) conducted a study on Danish, French and Israeli children and young people to analyse the embeddedness caused by globalisation in their lives. The study concluded that older children enjoy imported programmes better than local ones. Citing reasons like 'quality, innovation and 'coolness' in those programmes, especially ones from the US, some commonalities have been found in this study. Their narratives captured in their diary and the focus group interviews showed evidence that young Malaysians are constantly contrasting their lives in Malaysia against the outside world when watching imported television programmes. The media portrays notions of 'progress and modernity'.

Although older European children see imported programmes as more advanced and ‘cool’ than young Malaysians, the difference between Lemish et al study with this study is that age did not play a role in terms of preferences for imported programmes.

‘Progress’ is translated into tangible characteristics, such as a more polished script, realistic plots, and quality acting as well as sophisticated production technologies evident in imported programmes. As imported television producers are often coming up with new programmes having different plots and production techniques, young people perceive them to have marks advancement of technology happening outside of Malaysia.

‘Progress’ also relates to abstraction. Values that are constituted within the idea of advancement, such as ‘independence’, ‘liberalism’ and ‘openness’, are perceived as characteristics of modern and advanced nations because of imported television programmes. These values are greatly admired by young people. They attribute the new storylines and plots to the wide amount of openness and creativity allowed.

‘Openness’ to new ideas is a form of ‘democracy’ where creativity is allowed to flow, away from local restrictions of the law. This shows progress and innovation which young Malaysians believe exist in other countries. Another extended meaning of ‘openness’ involves cultural plurality and democracy. Ethnic minority youths in this study reportedly admire Hollywood productions for including non-white characters reflecting the multicultural nature of American society. This also is interpreted to mean ‘progress’ in terms of values and thought.

In addition, ‘progress’ is closely linked to ‘modernisation’. In this context, it refers to alternative lifestyles where one’s lifestyle needs are not necessarily confined to tradition, whether defined by religion or ethnicity. The study group interpreted being ‘modern’ as having choices and freedom of individuality. The ‘plurality of lifestyles’ in Western fashion and lifestyles magazines was

refreshing from the local television programmes that feature only local fashion and lifestyles that they already have knowledge of.

Young people have learned to appropriate Western fashion tastes through magazine shows and global entertainment programmes, incorporating them into their identities. Thus, a 'difference' that marks their individuality can be created. Although imitations of imported television programmes exist in Malaysia, they are not perceived as 'interesting', innovative or bold by the young people in this study. One reason is due to local television stations being bound by laws stipulated by the government to promote local cultures. Thus, the 'values' constituted within local programmes seemed didactic to young people, unlike the less regimented formats of imported programmes.

'Progress', in terms of overseas Chinese and Indian (Kollywood and Bollywood*)* programmes, has led ethnic minorities to construe those programmes as much more advanced than local Malay programmes. Overseas Chinese and Indian programmes are viewed as of better quality than local Malay programmes, imbuing a sense of pride among the ethnic minorities. In this sense, imported programmes from among the Chinese belt and India give them the leverage to feel that they are above marginality. Basically, the 'progress' perceived in imported programmes by young Malaysians highlights four areas – physical development, liberating values, individual choice and the assertion of ethnic minority identities.

The various ideas of openness and progress found in imported television programmes are expressed more aptly, categorising them into one central theme of '*Emancipation*'. An opposite reaction occurred to local television programmes. Reactions to local shows were marked with disdain, sarcasm and acerbic attacks on the storylines. The reception and perception of local television programmes is firmly entrenched with the whole idea of '*Backwardness',* relating to a lack of progress and advancement in all area – technologically, culturally, socially and politically. Table 7.6. captures the various themes found in the diary narratives, focus group conversations and in-depth interviews.

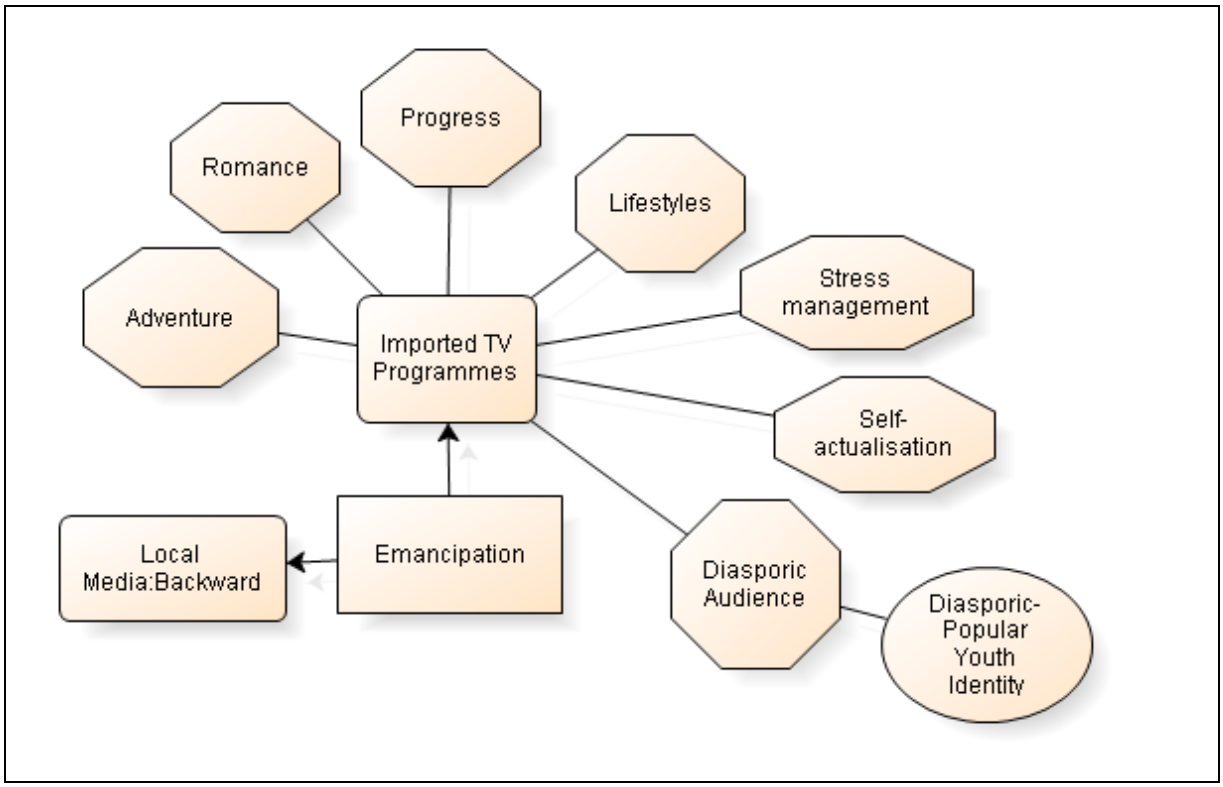

Table 7.6 : Themes Coded Based on Media Diary, Focus Group Interviews and In-depth Interviews

The following section highlights these insights, which were based on the narratives from the diaries and focus group interviews, and has been thematically analysed for a better understanding of their high consumption of imported television programmes. The sense of freedom felt when watching imported television programmes was captured in various nuances. This experience provides insights as to what those programmes impress upon them of the world outside Malaysia.

7.2.1 Theme 1 : 'Emancipation'

'Emancipation' captures the idea of being able to liberate and break oneself free from the chains of normal practices, whether of ethnic culture, religion or social rules. Young Malaysians spoke highly of specific values such as progress, innovation, creativity and cultural plurality in the television programmes that they liked, which indicate personal longing to move away

from the structured and rigid rules of their locality. Additionally, it also means they wish for the ability to construct identities of their own, based on gender, age, taste or political ideals through their selection of a specific media source for pleasure. It is apparent that while they are being dictated various forms of values and norms, young people are using television parallel to what de Certeau's (1987) described as 'tactics'.

While they do not watch imported television programmes that are culturally deviant, they do not watch local programmes either because of a perceived inferior quality. This has become a tool for young people to question their surroundings and the values constituted within by selecting imported television programmes for a variety of reasons.

The notion of 'Emancipation' expressed here spurred the emergence and consolidation of the 'individual self. This form of individualism comes from a desire of young people to express their views without drawing from collective resources such as ethnicity, culture and religion. Moreover, attempts at forging an individual self are conducted through one's own views or actions.

This theme produces several subcategories such as *progress, secret pleasure, adventure, lifestyle, stress management, self-actualisation* and *diasporic identity.* Subcategories of '*progress'*, '*secret pleasure', 'adventure', lifestyles, stress management, and self-actualisation* were coded in narratives that are located in the diaries and interviews, while '*diasporic identity'* was coded based on the content of consumption.

7.2.2. 'Progress'

'Progress' was widely cited as a characteristic of imported television programmes by young Malaysians, and was stated as a reason why they were drawn to it. This characteristic means advancement and moving forward in technological abilities. This perception was found to be the reason for the popularity of American and Asian television programmes. In a focus group

interviews with a group of 14 and 17-year-old Malay students, this reasoning was explained.

> "(Astro-Animax). This is about a Japanese cartoon programme (anime) that has a realistic storyline," (M1/Boy/16-year-old/14/1/2008)

"I like Japanese films because it always focused on a particular theme. Then, it will tell the story based on that theme to the end," (M5/14-year-old/Girl, Focus Group 2).

"We can never guess the ending [in Japanese films].We can predict the ending in some stories. Like people are definitely bored [with it], because the ending is all the same," (M6/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

"I like Animax channel. The techniques used in its animation. They can make it real," (M4/Boy/17-year-old/Focus Group 1).

Technical prowess or superiority in terms of storyline and construction of a logical plot with continuity by imported programmes has led young Malaysians to prefer them. The lack of interesting and engaging storylines in local television programmes draws scathing remarks from young Malaysians.

This criticism was cited in some diaries.

> "*(My Lucky Star/Taiwan).* This story is 'best. Cos the heroine is so funny. And this story is not complicated like Malay, Indonesian or Filipino dramas. Just that, today's episode is rather 'boring' ," (M5/Girl/14-year-old/ 15/1/2008)

> “In the afternoon, there is usually nothing nice on television. It's either Malay or Indonesian drama. Both stories usually have too many problems. I have never liked Indonesian drama ever since *'Bawang Putih, Bawang Mer*ah'. No sense of reality at all. I don't like Malay stories because most of the episodes are so long that I got bored of watching it”
> (M9/Girl/14-year-old/17/1/2008)

> “(Heroes). What a great story. If only Malaysia could have stories like these, it would have been on par with Hollywood,”
> (M2/Girl/16-year-old/20/1/2008)

Poor quality productions are classified as boring, long-winded and lacking real or logical plots. This is often how young people perceive local television programmes. Progress lies not only in terms of technicality, but also the human elements involved. Imported programmes are reported to have more of an emotional impact.

“I prefer Western films because some Western films are very touching. It touches the heart. I like other kinds of films, not just the mushy stuff. Korean films have too many romance, it’s quite boring,” (M8/Girl/14-year-old/ Focus Group 2).

“There is some story [in Western films]. I really liked it.It’s about one family where the children have different surnames. Then the older sister fought with their mum to get her siblings back,” (M5/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

“You mean Grace’s Choice? Yes, that story is really nice. Very profound,”(M7/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 2).

This was further expressed in the diaries. Films or drama that talked about change or transformation, which is often missing from local films and drama gratifies these students. The idea that things can change or have hope to change in fiction form brings pleasure to them.

> "(Why Why Love). Today is *Why Why Love's*
> final episode. The sacrifice made by the older brother
> is so noble even though he knows that he will die if he
> made that liver transplant to save his brother.
> Full of surprises. I thought the younger brother would still
> die but no. Both brothers survive. Best!,"
> (M7/1Girl/4- year-old/17/1/2008)

> "*Guridon Gang .* This story is about a
> man who tries to change the lives of
> prisoners by playing football. This story
> is full of motivation and it's very exciting,"
> (K12/Boy/16-year-old/10/3/2008)

The emotional pleasure derived from imported programmes through gratifying plots is reported to enable an emotional reaction, expressed in a private manner through the diaries. An engaging story that shows all elements of human emotion is viewed as technically superior by this young audience, a feature they use to define the standard of a progress in film-making. This reasoning is stated also as their distaste for local Malaysians television dramas, said to be melodramatic, predictable and didactic in message. Apart from being awed by the production of the content, young Malaysians are drawn to imported television programmes because it disseminates notions of creativity and change. In a focus group interview with Indian students, a preference for America's *National Geographic* was expressed over local magazine programmes.

Interviewer: “What's so interesting about *National Geographic*?”

“It expands the creative side of you,” (I11/Boy/14-year-old/Focus Group 4).

Interviewer: “What about our local documentaries? What do you think of those programmes?”

“I don't like to watch local documentaries either. [They are] all about Malaysia only. I like [learning about] other countries. Expand ,” (I11).

‘Change’ is also seen as parallel to progress. One Indian girl during an interview cited *The Oprah Winfrey* show as one of her favourite show for reasons of change and innovation.

“I liked the way she talks and she gives motivation to all the women and she helps poverty and so on,” (I9/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 4).

Moving beyond one’s world from the geographical and mental confines of Malaysia indicates these particular students’ desire for mobility and adventure. The contrast between Asian or Western programmes with Malaysian ones has shaped the way they understand ‘progress’.

7.2.3 ‘Romance’

‘Emancipation’ also involves a gender element. Found in the diaries of Malay and Chinese girls were reactions to Asian romance dramas.

> “I like watching those [crime-investigative] dramas
> with romance added to it. Most Hong Kong dramas
> [are] always about police and mixed with romance. I love it,”
> (C1/Girl/16 year old/29/2/2008).

Confessions of infatuations for leading actors from Asian serial dramas filled up the pages of the Malay girls' diaries. Their response showed a desire to escape the confines of rules and tradition, which dictate they are too young to be thinking about romance and relationships. Despite the values and rules that were imparted to them, these girls continue to watch romance dramas. These programmes were shown in the evening and not late at night, making it possible for these girls to follow the programmes uninterrupted without scrutiny from their parents.

For Malay girls, a handsome leading actor was often the motivating factor to watch a drama. A story might have a very interesting plot, but that was not enough to draw the girls' attention if the hero was not handsome. The presence of a handsome lead actor and, what is more, his ability to understand women's needs in Korean dramas spice up the story (Kim, 2007).

This factor caused these girls to look forward to seeing the programme every evening. Idolising and developing crushes for television heroes is somewhat similar to the feelings of housewives for radio DJs who Hobson (1980:107) viewed as playing the role of a "sexual fantasy-figure" for these women. Hobson interprets this as 'sexually fantasizing' in the midst of a mundane and lonely life. Television heroes offer a moment of alternative reality that is harmless and discreet. The similarity here also shows that the consumption of the media by the female audience needs to be understood in context of constraints and structures.

If female readers in Janice A. Radway's (1987) study consider reading romance novels as their only 'time' away from the hustle and bustle of domestic chores, these girls see romance serial dramas with 'handsome heroes' as an avenue to escape from a mundane and predictable life. Ina life constricted by school, family responsibility and a controlled social environment, serial dramas with 'handsome heroes' serve as emotional fulfilment and a source of happiness.

> "(*Yoo-Hee The Witch).* Really best! The hero is so handsome. His name is *Jae Moo Ryong.* The storyline is interesting. 'First time', I've seen a Korean story with a very handsome housekeeper," (M7/Girl/14-year-old/23/1/2008).

> "The hero is soo sweet. [He's] willing to console *Yoo-Hee* eventhough she behaves like a witch!" (M7/Girl/14-year-old/27/1/2008).

> "(*Yoo-Hee The Witch*). This story has some elements of comedy and in the beginning, the couple were at odds with each other. Anyway, what is most important is the hero in this story is handsome. Hehe he. Whatever it is, I am willing to buy it's CD if it's out," (M9/Girl/14-year-old/23/1/2008).

Another strong reason why the mention of 'handsome heroes' is found only in the diaries of female Malays is probably because of the cultural expectation of Malay girls to maintain modesty and limit free mixing with the opposite sex. They are expected to live up to these values and wear a headscarf as a way of ingraining Islamic values. The representation of 'traditional Malay-Muslim' values in Malaysian programmes means that feminism, deemed a negative quality, is not incorporated. Strands of feminist ideals such as 'empowerment' for women to be independent from men are woven into the Korean romantic comedy drama *Yoo-Hee The Witch*. Characters like *Yoo-Hee* are limited and are seen as unsuitable in the context of local culture. While there are portrayals of women as active and independent individuals in local Malay dramas, they are usually depicted in a negative light. Unlike *Rui Xi* in *Hana Kimi*, who pursues the hero, the heroine in *Yoo-Hee The Witch* plays an opposite role.

The leading character is a rich, young and highly assertive lady, who uses men to pursue her needs. This sense of empowerment over men excites the 14-year-old Malay diarists, who feel a secret pleasure in the possibility that a woman doesn't have to be passive in her relationships with men.

> "(*Yoo-Hee The Witch*). This story is
> about a girl who is called the witch because
> she really, really hates men! This story is really
> interesting. I'm resolute to watch this every night!"
> (M5/Girl/14-year-old/23/1/2008).

In local dramas, Malay women are rarely portrayed as independent and assertive, because it does not fit with the official definition of the ideal pious woman. Modern career women are often depicted as having failed marriages and the source of teenage social ills among young people due to neglect (Mustafa & Wang, 1996).

Thus, in a way, *Yoo-Hee* challenges the notion of a successful modern day woman, which to young girls represents real contemporary women. As normal teenagers, young Malay girls are aware of the normal attraction to the opposite sex. In the midst of leading their lives with the various cultural roles ascribed to them, their admiration for handsome and heroic actors is a way of living as a normal girl. The gallant and handsome hero in imported dramas is the only route to pleasure they can indulge in without compromising religious and ethnic cultural values. Falling in love with on-screen characters is harmless and often done in secret without knowledge of parents or classmates. Crushes and infatuations for actors also allow them to know what it is like to have strong feelings for someone without having to actually be involved in a relationship.

The escapism that draws young girls to romance dramas allows them to express their own views about the role of women in a relationship. *Yoo-Hee The Witch* tries to change a women's position from a passive partner in a relationship to one who takes charge, and manages to escape social scrutiny.

This type of show also enables young girls to express sexual attraction as a growing adolescent in a private domain. Serial dramas allow the space for these emotions, without risking embarrassment.

7.2.4 'Adventure'

'Adventure' describes excitement over mobility, of crossing boundaries and taking on challenges. This category showed a desire for travel and to know the world. Statements recording in diaries to this effect were also seen as forms of 'emancipation' because it showed a desire to be part of the world outside of Malaysia, away from real life. This was all expressed while watching their favourite imported programmes.

> "(*CSI:Miami)*. I'm really interested in crime investigation dramas. I do sometimes, feel like investigating those cases because it's very exciting,"
> (K3/Girl/16-year-old/3/3/2008)

> "I have always been a fan of *CSI:NY* since I was in form 1. That's why I rarely missed the chance to watch it. Besides, that I always dreamed of going into forensic,"
> (M6/Girl/16-year-old/20/1/2008)

> "(*CSI:NY*). I really enjoyed investigative series 'cos it teaches me to be always thinking ahead,"
> (M6/Girl/16-year-old/27/1/2008)

These young people are drawn to the exciting lives portrayed on *CSI*. Fulfilment from fantasy away from the realities of life, spiced up with romance, offers excitement. These fantasies are not of being *Superman* or *Wonder Woman*, but something assumingly more 'realistic' like *CSI.* These fantasies are used as a source for young people to dream about changing their lives.

An intriguing note is that it was the girls rather than the boys in this study who watched *CSI* for excitement and personal attainment. *CSI* was viewed as providing information about career options for these girls. By choosing a career in forensic science, unconventional for girls in Malaysia, rather than entering into traditionally feminine careers such as nursing, teaching, dancing or modelling, their quest for an exciting and challenging life is apparent. Boys found adventure and excitement watching Japanese animes and action-packed shows. Even though anime is not confined to a specific gender, this study showed a large number of anime fans among boys, both documented in diaries and through focus group interviews.

> "(Astro-Animax) Slamdunk. Best, they are really
> funny"
> (M4/Boy/17-year- old/15/1/2008)

> "(Detective Conan). Exciting, funny,
> tough acts and challenging,"
> (K9/Boy/14-year-old/4/3/2008)

> "This story is called "Arnold" who save his homeland
> from being attacked by invaders. It's very exciting to
> to see a hero saving his homeland,"
> (K9/Boy/14-year-old/8/3/2008)

> "*(Fear Factor*). Adventurous and interesting,"
> (I2/Boy/16-year-old/18/1/2008)

> "I'm watching a Chinese film because I feel
> excited watching Chinese films as it usually
> has lots of fighting scenes and kung fu,"
> (K10/Boy/14-year-old/7/3/2008)

In a focus group interview, boys talked of how anime has a transcending quality that breaks down boundaries and structures.

“My favourite are animes. Japanese cartoons. *‘Cos* it is interesting, it nurtures my imagination,” (K5/Boy/16-year-old/ Focus Group 7).

At that moment, K1 was watching the Japanese version of a Chinese myth – *Journey To The West*. A friend in his group, who also shares a similar interest in anime, stated a preference for another anime called *Slamdunk*. In addition to watching animes on television, young Malaysians turn to new media through anime websites for more anime programmes. A website Chinese students regularly surf is www.crunchyroll.com. This website is for anime lovers, gamers and fans of Asian films from Korea, Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong. If a favourite animes is missed, it can be viewed on a website.

The sense of adventure expressed in various ways has various meanings. C1, a 16-year-old Chinese girl, expresses her love of romance and crime genres, which provides her with imagined adventure, as she tries to understand the process of romance and sexual feelings for the opposite sex. On the other hand, fans of the CSI series revealed using the series as a means to determine possible career options.Boys or men penchant for action and masculine-oriented genres are noted in various studies (McMillin & Fisherkeller, 2009; Morley, 1986), and also found among young Malaysians. Girls found excitement and pleasure through romance and investigating crimes but boys, are less emotionally involved with the programmes that they watched. One girl stated how she sometimes feels like investigating the cases she sees on television herself, which is a stark contrast to the boys who preferred to take a backseat.

Series like *CSI* have also caused Malay and Kadazandusun girls, known for femininity, to desire entering a tough, male-dominated career instead of remaining in feminine careers.

7.2.5 'Lifestyles'

Among the main attractions of imported television are style, music and global tastes. Imported programmes on music or fashion are an important cultural resource for young people.

Through magazine programmes such as *Travel and Living* and channels like *Channel E!,* young Malaysians are exposed to the outside world. These shows portray alternative lifestyles.

> "(*Channel V Countdown*). This programmes shows
> all the 'top' songs in Asia, so I won't be behind time.
> It's a good thing. Today, they played all the fantastic songs,"
> (M9/Girl/14-year-old/19/1/2008).

> "(*Channel E!)* It tells me about the latest fashion
> so I won't be out of date,"
> (C8/Girl/14-year-old/8/3/2008).

> "(*America's Next Top Mode)*. I enjoyed watching
> this show because this week it's about 'photo shoot'.
> This time, the models are photographed as men.
> It's really funny to see how women have to be men!"
> (M8/Girl/14-year-old/19/1/2008)

> "(*Channel E!)* I like watching anything that shows the
> life of a model. When I discovered that there is a lot of
> these programmes on Channel E! It really draws my
> attention, that I never skipped this channel,"
> (C8/Girl/14-year-old/1/3/2008).

Foreign channels like *Channel V/Countdown* and *Channel E!* imbued within these young people a need to be contemporary and up-to-date with appearance and musical taste. These shows represent modern times.

7.2.6 'Stress Management'

Cartoons and animes were the second most frequently watched television programme. They were reported to help in dealing with emotional, mental and physical stress. Preferences for different cartoon and anime shows were reported among different age and gender groups in this study. Older boys preferred watching Japanese animes while younger boys and girls of both age groups watched *Doraemon* and *Crayon Shin Chan*. There were also those who chose cartoons based on language.

Indian students cited American's *Tom & Jerry* as a favourite cartoon. Watching cartoons was seen as an *e*ffective way of releasing mental and emotional tension. This was cited often in their diaries as the reason for watching cartoons.

> "*Tom & Jerry* is a programme that is entertaining to all.
> This programme can reduce one's tension and able to
> relax our mind. And also able to excite the mind and body,"
> (I4/Girl/16-year-old/ 17/1/2008).

> "I switched on the TV at 10 but nothing is interesting.
> And at 10.30, *Tom & Jerry* cartoon played on TV3.
> I sat quietly and never move until the cartoons finishes.
> The interesting thing in this tale is the cat, Tom chases
> Jerry the mouse to catch. But he couldn't catch it.
> Whenever the cat chases the mouse, the cat only becomes
> the victim. That's the most funny thing about this cartoon,"
> (I5/Girl/16- year- old/19/1/2008).

Some Malay and Kadazadusuns enjoy a wide range of Japanese animes. Although Chinese students enjoy animes, reasons why were not stated. These students merely logged what they watched without sharing their views or feelings about the programmes in their diaries.

Boys and girls both used animes to reduce stress, but showed different preferences. The boys preferred adventure, science, *manga* and turn animes, while girls chose animes with lighter plots, such as *Doraemon* and *CrayonShin Chan.*

> "(*Doraemon*). It's a kids' programme.
> Just simply watch it. To ease my mind"
> (M6/Girl/16-year-old/19/1/2008).

> "(*Shin Chan*). It's cartoon. I am just
> merely watching it to overcome this morning's
> stress,"
> (M6/Girl/16-year-old/26/1/2008).

Respondents also watched animes with siblings as family time.

> "(*Shin Chan*). I really like Japanese cartoons
> especially *Shin Chan*. And, I'm watching it with
> my siblings. I never missed it,"
> (K3/Girl/16-year-old/2/3/2008).

Apart from cartoons and animes, some students reported watching comedy series to release stress. Chinese students reported watching a Cantonese and Indonesian series from Hong Kong and Indonesia. One particular Chinese girl reported watching a Cantonese series called *Fantasy Hotel* every night for an hour for almost the whole reporting period.

> " (*Fantasy Hotel).* Funny. Cause me
> like funny. This movie is very funny. So me like to
> see *lah*,"
> (C10/ Girl/14-year-old/7/3/2008).

> "(*Astro Aruna).* Exciting and funny
> if you watch it again, you'd definitely can't stop
> laughing,"
> (C9/Girl/14-year-old/7/3/2008).

7.2.7 'Self- Actualisation'

Consumption of the media is not always about pleasure and escapism. Young people also reporting using it as a tool to enhance knowledge in a range or areas, from linguistics, communication skills, self-presentation, artistic talent and work ethics. Young Malaysians also feel that exposing themselves to English programmes help with proficiency of the language.

Often, American cartoons are watched by young people as a means to improve English skills. Appreciating the humour in those programmes leads to a higher level of understanding. This is in line with Bourdieu (1984:2) who says that "a work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possess the cultural competence."These young people realise their literacy in media text is hindered by a lack of English competency, hence watching cartoons without subtitles certainly help improve their skills.

"It can improve your English," (I7/ Girl/14-year-old/Girl, Focus Group 4).

They also sought to improve their command of the language by listening and learning accent, even of cartoon characters.

"It's funny, the way they talking about. Like English.It's funny," (I7/Girl/14-year-old).

In addition to language, communication skills are viewed as a way to measure self-worth, and as a sign of maturity (Gillespie, 1995).

> "I like the style of presentation (Main Bulletin)
> because its journalists has the attractive
> language skills that attracts audience,"
> (K9/Girl/14-year-old/10/3/2008)

> "I really like BU (*Bulletin Utama*) because
> its presenters have a serious but cheerful face.
> Their style of presentation is clear and easy to understand,"
> (K9/Girl/14-year-old/14/3/2008)

Watching news to learn how to improve one's self-presentation through the way broadcast journalists' present themselves was similar to the account given by Buckingham's (2000) about young people and consumption of news.

Cartoons and animes, curiously, were viewed as playing various roles in bringing self-actualisation to young people. Younger students watch cartoons and animes, not just as a given entertainment for an audience their age, but for more serious reasons.

> "(*Nodame Cantabile)* is a very interesting story
> that also has comedy in it. I really like the main
> character, so damn positive. So far, I have never
> felt tired watching it,"
> (M9/Girl/14-year-old/20/1/2008)

> "(*Nodame Cantabile)*. I really liked it. This story
> fires up the musical spirit in me,"
> (M9/14-year-old/Girl/27/1/2008)

> " (*Nodame Cantabile)* [This show] is really best!
> Full of comedy. But sometimes, this story
> helped me realise not to give up my piano
> lessons,"
> (M11/Girl/14-year-old/20/1/2008)

Fictional and fantasy characters were seen as 'real' human beings with character qualities they admired. These young girls did not see the characters in animes such as *Nodame Cantabile* as trivial stories, but as bona fide beings with lessons to impart.

> "(*Totally Spies*), this programme is very
> entertaining for young people at present,
> as its full of actions. It tells the success of
> three youths in carrying out every mission they
> undertake (We need to be like that),"
> (I5/Girl/16-year-old/ 30/1/2008)

Qualities like work ethic, expressing the value of successfully completing responsibilities, resonates with a 16-year-old Indian girl. She observed this quality in an American cartoon, *Totally Spies*.

7.2.8 'Diasporic Audience'

Consumption of overseas Chinese and Indian programmes among Malaysian Chinese and Indian was prevalent because of a lack of quality at the local level. Findings from this study found that films from India/Kollywood tops Indian students' list of films being watched, totalling 21 hours. Chinese students spent more than 50 hours watching serial drama from Hong Kong and Taiwan. And, spent another 20 hours 30 minutes watching Hong Kong films.

The diary responses showed the true feelings of the young people when watching Indian/Kollywood, Taiwanese and Hong Kong films. The Indian

students stated an attraction to India/Kollywood films because of the idea of good triumphing over evil and a man's struggle in overcoming obstacles in life.

> *"(Minsara Kanna).* This film is about how a guy
> who faces the obstacles in his life and love life.
> And how he overcomes to succeed in his love. Apart
> from that, it's about how this guy succeed in his
> life,"
> (I5/Girl/16-year-old/25/1/2008)

> "(Sun TV/Kollywood). I always watch these
> two dramas because so interesting to watch. That is
> about how a human solve and handle the obstacles,"
> (I4/Girl/16-year-old/21/1/2008)

> "Taiwan TV. Very exciting to watch 'cos there is a lot to watch,"
> (C10/Girl/14-year-old/1/3/2008)

> "Hong Kong drama is (top 10) in among my (favourite) TV shows.
> I get very worried if I had missed any Hong Kong dramas. I really
> like the Hong Kong crime dramas,"
> (C1/Girl/16-year-old/7/3/2008)

While they have no intention to return to India, young Malaysian Indians' consumption of Kollywood films enables them to feel 'Indian.' In a way, they are 'exiles' (Naficy, 1999).Their position as a minority has led them to turn to Kollywood and Bollywood films for solace. Part of maintaining an ethnic or cultural identity has been watching Kollywood films for religious purposes. For example, one girl explained in her diary how she and her family watched a Kollywood film during *Thaipusam*, a religious festivity.

> " My family and I watched "Kanthan Karunai" movie as time passing. This movie is about how Lord Murugan kills the demon. We watched this movie regarding Thaipusam. Because this festival celebrate for Lord Murugan, right?,"
> (I5/Girl/ 16-year-old/23/1/2008)

A similar account of watching film involving Lord Murugan and the meaning of *Thaipusam* was found by another student in this study.

> "It about Lord Murugan, who eliminates all evil elements,"
> (I2/Boy/16-year-old/22/1/2008)

It is said that diasporic identification and connections become stronger because of modern communication technologies, as was found in this study (Gillespie, 2000). Consciousness and the formation of ethnic identity is enhanced particularly when there is a lack of local Tamil Hindu and Chinese television programmes to serve this purpose. For the Malaysian Indian, consumption of Kollywood and Bollywood programmes is not about trans-nationalism, but a means to remind themselves of their ethnicity, living away from their ancestral homeland. This is different from Chinese students, whose consumption took on a form resistance to their perceived marginality.

7.2.9 'Diasporic-Hybrid Youth Culture'

Another significant pattern was forming a diasporic youth cultures, particularly among Malaysian Chinese and Indians. Table 7.5.2 and table 7.5.3 shows a comparison of the genres of imported programmes across ethnicities. It reveals that consumption is not always driven by a need to maintain authentic ethnic identity, but also to appropriate global cultures from Asian countries into their ethnicity through popular culture. Young Malaysian Indian turn to channels like Sun TV to construct a youth culture based on Tamil popular culture. This is not unusual, as a similar practice was found in Ray's study

(2003) on young Fiji Indians' whose construction of youth culture was based on Bollywood, shown over Zee TV channel.

This occurs as a way to promote their ethnicity through contemporary means. Young Malaysian Chinese do similarly. Interestingly, consumption of popular culture from culturally similar countries is much higher than in the West. This indicates that consumption for global popular culture does not effectively occurs between East and West, but from 'local to local' (Siriyuvasak & Shin, 2007:114). Nevertheless, despite its origins in Asia, Asian-pop is not authentically 'Asian'. The music, artists' style, image and performance are heavily influenced by the West.

The combination of Western pop with Mandarin, Tamil, Hindi, Korean and Japanese language results in Asian pop. For Malaysia, the most popular type is *Mando-pop* and *Canto-pop,* which have resulted in the creation of a diasporic hybrid youth culture. Consuming media from diasporic popular culture has become another source of leisure activity at home, as demonstrated below.

> "(Channel V/Mandarin). I always watch this
> programme because it's entertaining when I want to
> take a break from studying,"
> (C12/Girl/14-year-old/5/3/2008)

> "(Channel V/Taiwan). I watched this after school,
> I feel totally relaxed and happy,"
> (C12/Girl/14-year-old/6/3/2008)

7.3 Theme 2: 'Backwardness'

In contrast to imported television programmes, the reception and consumption of local television programmes was of scorn and disdain. Local programmes were described as 'backward' and of poor quality compared to imported ones (Lemish et al, 1998). Although local television programmes are not only in

Malay but Tamil and Chinese as well, the local Malay programmes had a higher number of viewers. Nevertheless, young people who watch local Malay programmes often deride the quality of those programmes.

> "(*Anak Pontianak/ (trans: Vampiress' Child).*
> It's about a modern-day vampiress. The fighting
> scenes were so unreal. So laughable,"
> (M2/Girl/16-year-old/17/1/2008)

Low quality also was expressed in terms of poor storylines. Participants reported often being unable to comprehend the story because of less engaging plots.

> " *Misi XXX* Ray is about an invisible man.
> But, I don't understand the whole story,"
> (K1/Girl/16-year-old/27/2/2008)

> " *(Spa Q)* I use to watch this story when it
> was first shown. Initially, it was interesting
> then eventually, I start to find it's getting boring,"
> (M6/Girl/14-year-old/24/1/2008)

This was echoed during both an in-depth and focus group interview during which media consumption habits were expressed.

"I don't quite know how to say it. But Malay dramas only focus on one thing. If it is serious, then serious all the way. Makes it very boring. But Japanese or Korean [dramas], there's always some humour in it. So, it's enjoyable to watch. Malay dramas do not really show Malaysian identity or some sort. A lot of Malay dramas nowadays talk a lot about people dying. Some sort. Always sad. Its unable to depict anything," (M9/Girl/14-year-old/ in-depth interview).

“Most of the Malay films are too much on [Malay] culture. They're not open for other [cultures]. Western films are more open, but not in Malaysia. For instance, from Hindustani films, we get to see Indian culture, but we can't see their culture in our films,” (K2/Girl/16-year-old/ Focus Group 7).

“Hmmm.I don't understand the story,” (C4/Boy/16-year-old/Focus Group 5).

“The storyline is very lame,” (C6/Boy/16-year-old/Focus Group 5).

“The local stories always act somewhere like [in a] *kampong* (village), and religion,” (C4).

‘Backwardness’ takes on various dimensions for these young people, ranging from technical quality which involves production, the quality of scripts and representation, all of which they find is superior in imported television programmes. Comparisons between Malay and imported Chinese programmes were made by younger Chinese students during a focus group interview.

“Malay films, I feel their actresses can’t act compared to Chinese. If I were to compare with the Chinese, Chinese win hands down. It’s the same with the quality of the film,” (C7/Girl/14-year-old/Focus Group 6).

Interviewer: “So, how about the story?”

“It was also obvious that their fighting scenes was a fake,” (C7).

The intense rejection was not only confined to Malay films and drama, but extended to local music programmes, such as *Melodi,*as well. *Melodi* is a local Malay entertainment television magazine programme featuring the latest information about developments in the local entertainment business, as well as celebrity gossip. The *Anugerah Juara Lagu (AJL*)(Top Song Award) is the highlight of Malay pop music, where the most popular Malay songs are nominated to compete for the Top Song Award.

In a way, AJL is Malaysia's equivalent of America's Grammy Award and American Music Award. Despite the glamour and prominence of this award show, it failed to captivate these diarists.

> "*AJL (Anugerah Juara Lagu*) 22 – boring that I fell asleep.
> *Melodi* (Local/Malay) – still the same every day. BORING!!!,"
> (M9/Girl/14-year-old/27/1/2008)

> "AJL (Local). It's so boring. And the contestants aren't that great compare to the old-timers,"
> (M7/Girl/14-year-old/27/1/2008)

7.4 Conclusion

Findings from this chapter point to the centrality of imported television programmes in the lives of the young people of this study. Examined in terms of ethnicity, age and gender, everyday consumption of the media revolves around watching imported television programmes from a wide variety of genres. Among stated reasons for viewing imported programmes are the creativity, variety and quality of content, which leads to a critical review of local programmes regarding them 'backward' in all aspects.

A process of reflexivity occurs when there is constant contrasting 'outside' with 'inside' worlds among young Malaysians. Imported television programmes mediate notions of 'progress' and 'modernity,' which young Malaysians are using to construct their sense of individual self. Advanced countries are perceived as more liberal because of imported television programmes. As respondents 'imagine' an alternative lifestyle outside Malaysia, they feel a sense of emancipation, as widely expressed in their diaries.

'Liberal' was constituted as the creation of alternative lifestyles based on the latest music, popular youth culture and fashion. These were shown on Channel V and MTV channels and were an important cultural resource used by these young people to form alternative identities. Identities were seen to

have shifted away from collective identities of class or religion. Consequently, young Malaysians are increasingly more concerned in becoming 'modern' citizens in line with the global youth culture.

The meaning of 'progress', particularly from the West, broached questions of a more political nature, like of cultural plurality. Hollywood was praised for featuring a multicultural cast, as a true representation of Western society. Their consumption of overseas Chinese and Indian programmes is also interpreted as counter-hegemonic for ethnic minority youth in asserting the supremacy of their culture and resisting against their marginality, which is reinforced by their lack of representation in local Malaysian television drama and films. In relation to that, the consumption of diasporic media is politically-motivated. Georgiou & Silverstone (2007:34) have explained of the role of diasporic media as "...sites where national and transnational political ideologies and cultural expressions, or counter-expression, of identity are often seen and heard." The question remains, why does 'emancipation' mean so much to them, apart from wanting to be fashionable?

To what extent does the process of reflexivity enable young people of different cultural backgrounds to translate knowledge from the media into their everyday lives? What are the constraints? Which group of young people do so the most, and which the least? Further attempts at addressing these questions will be made in the following chapter.

Chapter 8

Young People, Media And Conformity

8.0 Introduction

After discussing the patterns of media consumption and the centrality of imported television programmes to young Malaysians, this chapter now shifts the focus to looking at the context of young Malaysians' lives regarding media consumption.

This chapter highlights young Malaysians' social worlds–at home and at school, and either with parents or friends. Additionally, this chapter reveals reflections of the participants' socio-economic status. Such findings provide insights into the broader spectre of young Malaysians' inner selves, and what the media means to them. This chapter also discusses the participants' positions as students and as members of families.

Examining home lives illustrates differences between how young people of different ethnicities and religions live. 'Cultural maintenance' and continuity characterise their home lives, but ethnicity has a different impact.

Essentially, this chapter showcases the local cultural context of young Malaysians' lives in relation to their media consumption.

8.1 'Conformity'

In mapping out the themes coded in their media consumption diaries and focus group interviews, it was found that young Malaysians' lives consists of two levels – individual and collective. They are intertwined, and it is through media consumption that one is able to see how these levels of identities sometimes oppose each other.

The high consumption of imported television programmes enabled them to carve out an ‘individual self’, but outside their living rooms they have to assume a group identity.

The construction of their identity stems from their everyday negotiation of religion, ethnicity, family values, family upbringing, as well as institutional factors such as political conditions and the education systems. Some participants recognized the weaving between the social and cultural roles ascribed to them as forms of ‘structure’ within their locality with their own desire of forming an identity based on individual terms. These young people struggle to come to terms with who they really are, and who they want to be, against the collective identity of citizenship, being a filial son or daughter, a student and a follower of a religious faith (Siriyuvasak, 2008). Other groups of youth commented on being ‘in-between’, shifting between tradition and modern, global and local, individual and collective subjects.

However, the intertwining of these situations results in both similarities and differences. Both greatly depend upon the roles and positions assumed by these young people. While they commonly share boredom and stress from school, they are differentiated by ethnic issues, family lives, religions and social status. All these factors were captured within their media consumption diaries and focus group interviews.

In capturing the broad issues that emerged in their media diaries and interviews, ‘conformity’ was identified as the central theme. In all aspects of their lives, young people of different cultural backgrounds ended up having to conform to the various social roles ascribed upon them.

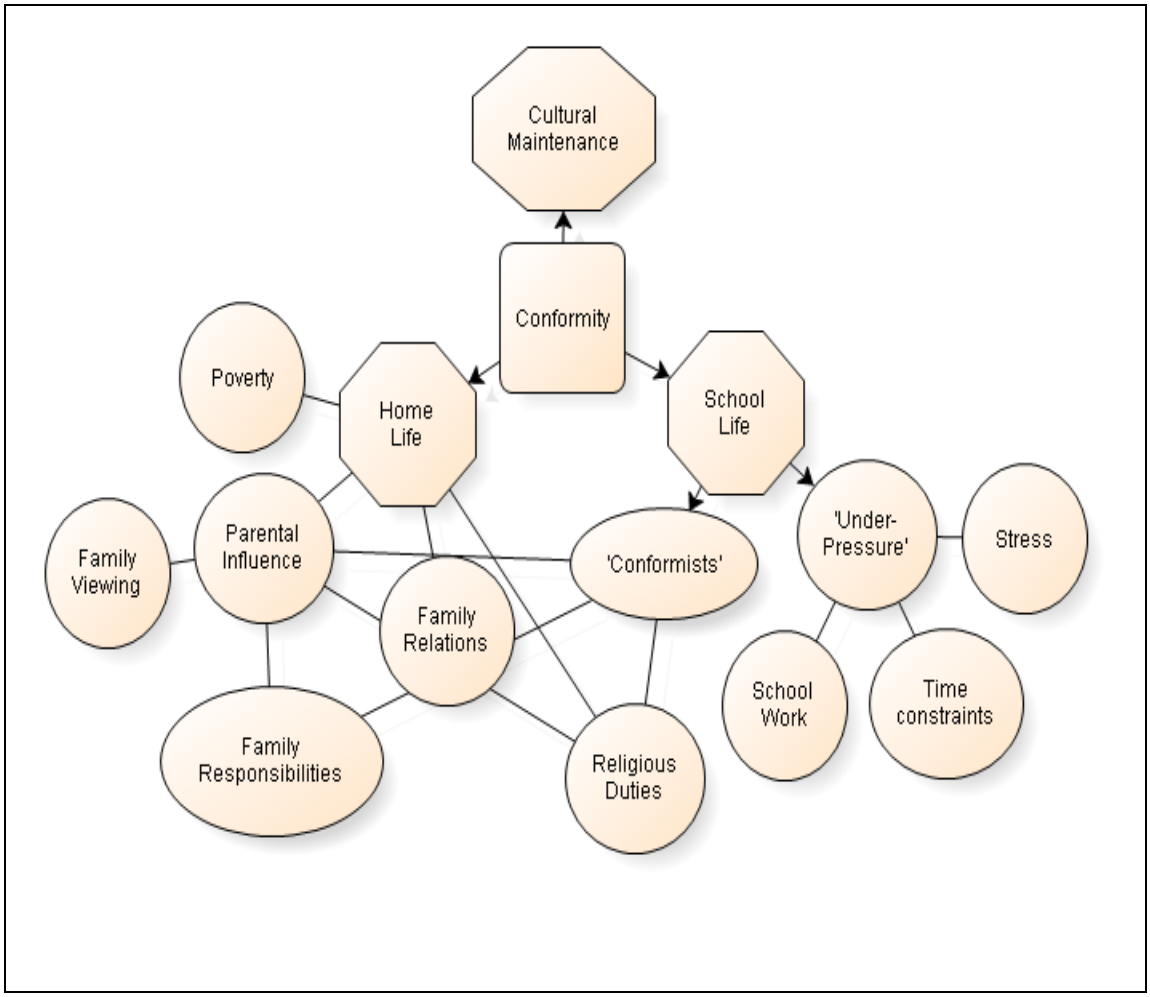

Table 8.1 : Themes Coded From the Context of Media Consumption Dervied From Media Consumption Diary

‘Conformity’, as shown in Table 8.1, resulted in three categories, ‘home life’, ‘school life’, and ‘cultural maintenance’.

8.1.1 ‘Home Life’

Categories of ‘home life’ consist of six subcategories, identified as parental influence, family relation, religious duties, family responsibility, family viewing and poverty.

‘Home life’ revealed the practice of families viewing films together, where a dominant paternal role, either a father or a brother, shaped the way television was watched. This was common among Chinese and Indian students. In most

instances, young people have to negotiate with parents about when and what to consume (Hagen, 2007).

‘Parental Influence’ was the most dominant theme among the Chinese students. In the context of this study, this proved to be a source of conflict for young people. The preservation of ethnic and cultural tradition in the lives of the Chinese students is important to their parents. Parents strive to ensure that young Chinese remain rooted in their ethnic identity.

Besides playing a cultural role, Chinese parents’ strongly emphasize academic excellence, wanting successful lives for their children. Thus, they ensure children spend more time studying than watching television, listening to the radio or enjoying any other forms of media for leisure.

One way to ensure that children become people who adhere to their cultural way of life is by controlling a child’s media consumption. It is not uncommon for parents to control their children’s media consumption through various means (Livingstone, 2002), but in the case of this study, Chinese parents appeared to play a dominant role in the lives of their children. The presence of parents was rarely mentioned in the diaries of other ethnic groups, but often referred to in the diaries of the Chinese.

Commonly, Chinese parents determine the times of the day young people are allowed to indulge in media.

> “Because tomorrow is Monday, so my parents disallowed me to watch, listen, read or surf any media,”
> (C1/Girl/16-year-old/2/3/2008)

> "Tomorrow I got a test. So, I have no time to watch TV *'cos* my dad has promised me that if I got between first to tenth position in class, I will get a new mobile phone,"
> (C1/ Girl/16-year-old/4/3/2008)

In determining children's media consumption, parents decided on suitable days for them to watch television or listen to the radio. Reading magazines or newspapers was also considered to disrupt school life. Promising to 'reward' their children for academic performance was a strategy to keep children away from the media. Rather than allowing them to unwind through the media after studying, the promise of a new mobile phone, for instance, was a symbolic way of getting their children to understand that success does not come without hard work, which sometimes means sacrificing pleasurable activities like watching television.

Chinese parents also determined what type of media children were allowed to use. This was evident in how Chinese diarists consumed news. One girl mentioned when explaining her consumption of a local Chinese newspaper – *See Hua Daily:*

> "My dad always asks me to read the newspaper so that I would be able to blend within the society and become a knowledgeable person,"
> (C1/Girl/16-year-old/10/3/2008)

The reading of Chinese newspapers means maintaining an ethnic mentality regarding cultural values. Blending in with society and becoming a knowledgeable person, in this sense, could direct her to understand her own community and build her 'knowledge' of the concerns and issues affecting Chinese people specifically and the world at large. This is because Chinese newspapers in Malaysia not only report issues in Malaysia and the world in general, but also often play a role in representing the voice and concerns of the Chinese community. Chinese newspapers are also viewed as an important

institution that safeguards the cultural rights of the community (Khor & Ng, 2006). By reading Chinese newspapers, not only will this girl be informed about the concerns of her own community, she will also begin to view national issues from a Chinese perspective. In addition, reading one's own ethnic newspaper does have a cultural function, such as improving written Chinese abilities.

Another unique practice within the Chinese students' consumption of news is that they see newspapers as a context in which to develop a sense of right and wrong in life. C1 expresses her belief that the newspaper offers moral lessons in reports of tragedies or negative events.

> "I get to know about anything that is happening in
> and out of Malaysia. Get to learn moral values on
> not to do bad things as what was reported in the newspaper,"
> (C1/Girl/16-year-old/10/3/2008)

> "By reading newspapers, one could enhance good
> values within oneself. As well as, one get to know
> things that's happening,"
> (C10/Girl/14-year-old/undated)

It is plausible to assume, based on the words of C1, that reading newspapers to help one acquire and enhance good moral values is also influenced by parents. It is also a way for Chinese parents to ensure that their children have a clear sense of right and wrong. Thus, the fact that diarist C10 also views the newspaper as a source of moral values is most likely due to parental influence.

Parents' encouragement of reading newspapers is partly because of an emphasis on education, reasoning that incidences of tragedies or mishaps have a moral lesson to be learnt. Perhaps it's because parents determine what children should consume in the media that so few are able to think independently and give a critical view of issues reported in news. In one

instance, a Malay diarist admitted that her mother expected her to protect her dignity as a woman when she expressed her disapproval of the gossip and lifestyles of celebrities in a local television entertainment programme.

> "(*Melodi).* It's about hot gossip.
> My mum always said, "when you grow up, I don't
> want you to have any of these terrible gossip
> like these. I don't like it." Well, in a way,
> this programme do try to teach me something,"
> (M9/Girl/14-year-old/20/1/2008)

Because parents have drawn the line between what is 'good' and 'bad', young people's active engagement in politics and citizenship is constrained.

Another mention of parental influence was a case when a parent the remote control. Lull (1990) and Morley's (1986) study on family viewing at home found that men always gained control of the remote, but in this study, it was both men and women. Mothers, fathers or both decided what programme to watch, which often clashed with what the children wanted.

> "Today, I went out to celebrate my birthday
> with my friends. So, I came home at 5 in the
> evening. When I got home, my father was watching
> his favourite programme, so I had to joined in
> with him,"
> (C8/Girl/14-year-old/1/3/2008)

> "Every day, from 6-8 pm, I have to watch what
> my father likes to watch – The Spirit of Love.
> It's has already reached 600 episodes and I don't
> think this programmes is ever going to be finished.
> How terribly boring,"
> (C8/Girl/14-year-old/4/3/2008)

The control over the remote involves watching the parents' favourite soap operas as well as news. Power struggles between young people and their parents resulted over the choice of programmes to watch. This form of 'enforced viewing' (Morley, 1992: 141) commonly occurred in the diarist's documentation of their home environment.

> " At first, I watched TV3's *Buletin Utama* because
> I had to watch it with my mum, then I switched to
> watching "One In A Million" (grand finale) on 8TV,"
> (K3/Girl/16-year-old/29/2/2008)

> "TV2- the story is not too bad. TV3- had to watch
> 'cos mum and dad wants to watch (news), so had to
> watch as well. 8TV – as usual, can't missed it,"
> (K3/Girl/16-year-old/5/3/2008)

> "8TV & Hallmark Channel –Has great programmes on!
> TV3 – Had to watch,"
> (K3/Girl/16-year-old/7/3/2008)

This resulted in young people watching news in silent protest with their parents. The account given by K3 shows that she dreads watching news, and preferred watching a local reality TV show, *One In A Million.*

One reason the father controls the living room and the remote control every evening from 6 to 8 p.m. is that he insists on watching two Chinese dramas from Taiwan, *The Spirit of Love* and *Homecoming,* shown on Astro's Chinese channel AEC. What this signifies is that Chinese diarists do not simply watch whatever is 'Chinese', but also question whether programmes are targeted at young or older Chinese people. These two Chinese dramas are soap operas, which are typically heavy dramas with slow-moving plots, and suit the taste of adults. It also means that consumption of ethnic media may be due to gender struggle in the living room. Men often decide what will be watched in the house, which leaves girls and women with little choice to decide.

Previous studies of family viewing found that the father always holds the remote control in the living room (Lull, 1990; Morley, 1986). The enforcement of the patriarchal culture in the form of a 'father' at home contributes to why young Chinese watch programmes that are culturally similar. A new addition to those studies is how patriarchal power may be contributing to maintaining ethnicity at home.

8.1.1.2 'Family Relations'

Home environment also affects patterns in consumption of the media. Participants in this study viewed relations with family members as both happy and upsetting. Happy moments were reported as times when parents took their children for family outings or attended family gathering. Young people found happiness with their families during these times, replacing the need for 'entertainment' through the media.

> "I was unable to spent time at home because I had to attend a relative's birthday. So, I entertained myself at the party. It is also entertainment for me. Peace!,"
> (I4/Girl/16-year-old/30/1/2008)

> "I helped my parents (with their business) today. So, no entertainment. I only needed my parents' attention,"
> (I5/Girl/16-year-old/26/1/2008)

> "I didn't do anything today, because my relative wedding day. I just went at morning, came back at night. I was so enjoying with my friends. I prepare for the wedding. So no time to watch TV,"
> (I4/Girl/16-year-old/19/1/2008)

> "In the morning, we go to church. After praying, we would gather one family at my grandmother's house. It's fun, we get to eat together as family. Its noisy. We stayed at grandmother's till late evening,"
> (K8/Girl/14-year-old/9/3/2008)

Female students frequently shared these parts of their lives in the diaries. I5's comment that her parents' attention and care were more important to her more than the media was particularly revealing.

Consumption of the media is related to the life they experience. 'Entertainment' itself has a very subjective and broad meaning for students. It doesn't necessarily mean music or popular culture, but it refers to anything that brings them joy. As the three diarists related their own accounts of 'entertainment', it was apparent that entertainment is viewed in various ways.

Poor family relations resulted in a different meaning of 'entertainment'.In these cases, young people consumed the media as a means of dealing with this problem. C9 reported using the media to console herself after being scolded by her mum. She channelled her sadness by purposely choosing a film to watch from a DVD.

> "I choose to VCD/DVD today because I want to calm myself down after being scolded by mum. Watching VCD usually makes me happy again because it's a comedy film,"
> (C9/Girl/14-year-old/1/3/2008)

For some students, poor family relations dampened their desire to watch TV.

> "No mood to watch TV. My mum *lah*, suddenly angry there,"
> (C10/Girl/14-year-old/5/3/2008)

> "I got no mood to watch TV 'Cos my mum keeps giving me a 'lecture' (study, study),"
> (K3/Girl/16-year-old/5/3/2008)

In other situations, this subcategory led to an issue of discipline, where parents imposed punishments, including banning them from using the media for a specific time period.

> "Today, I quarrelled with my neighbour's son because he said some nasty things to me. And my mum punished me by barring me from watching TV or surf in the net for five days. My mum is not fierce but my dad is. If I did something naughty, he will scold me but he wouldn't hit me. My dad is nice. But my mum will tell my dad if I do something naughty. That's what I'm afraid off,"
> (I3/Boy/16-year-old/20/1/2008)

Children reported usually obeying their parents, but there were times when they went against the ban and were unable to resist watching their favourite television programmes. One diarist watched TV two days after being banned, by sneaking into the living room to watch television when his mother was away.

> "(Sun Music/TV). I sneaked in to watch when my mum was out shopping (risk),"
> (I3/Boy/16-year-old/22/1/2008)

8.1.1.3 ‘Religious Duties’

Religion is a central part of all young Malaysians’ home lives, whether Muslim, Hindu or Christian. Attending church, Sunday school, mosque or celebrating religious festivities as part of their social and home life was represented in their diaries on a regular basis.

> “I didn’t fill in this diary today because I had
> to pray in church and I went to pray in
> my village’s church which is in *Kg Putatan*
> and we pray between 8.30 or 9 am. After I pray,
> I went to Sunday school so that I learn how to enhance
> my faith and I left at 12 pm but I reached the hostel at 2 pm,”
> (K10/Boy/14-year-old/2/3/2008)

> “It’s Friday night, I go to the mosque as there is the
> recital of Quran,”
> (M1/Boy/16-year-old/17/1/2008)

> “ This morning, I only get to watch one movie because
> at 8.10 am, we had to go to church, that is why I cannot
> watch any more movies,”
> (C8/Girl/14-year-old/2/3/2008)

In various instances, these young people’s diaries reflected religion was a priority above all else, including entertainment from television, the Internet or radio. This shows that their lives are a combination of spiritual and material, this world and the hereafter, which they balance in their daily lives. Parents emphasise the importance of attending church or mosque, and teach their children the importance of religion and praying as constitutive of who they are. The students in this study demonstrated that they continue their religious duties as part of their regular lives. Their sense of religiosity was seen, as none of them protested their religious duties. One these days, they adjusted

their schedules by either foregoing television or watching an earlier film or programme.

Those who attended service in the evening adjusted their TV schedule by watching it in the morning and taking an afternoon nap. The decision to forego afternoon shows implies an understanding that religion is against using the media. One girl actually found 'entertainment' in participating in her religious festivities. This further confirmed the importance of 'religion' to young people.

> "I went to *Batu Caves* and celebrate *Thaipusam.*
> So, there is no other entertainment but
> the *kavadi* and others. Hmmm....Enjoy!,"
> (I5/Girl/16-year-old/23/1/2008)

8.1.1.4 'Family Responsibilities'

Another distinct feature of young Malaysians' lives recorded was sharing of household responsibilities. At a young age, they have been introduced to the idea of gender division in labour through family responsibilities. Girls most often helped their mothers in the kitchen while boys were brought along by their fathers to do manual tasks in the house.

> "I was not able to fill this diary today because
> my dad took me to tear down the walls of
> our house so that we could extend our living room,"
> (K10/Boy/14-year-old/8/3/2008)

> "I just woke up at 10.30 am. After I had breakfast,
> I help my mum to do some housework. I clean my
> bedroom and help my mum to cook,"
> (I6/Girl/16-year-old/26/1/2008)

Apart from housework, there were accounts having to share the family's economic responsibility. Although there were no accounts of Indian or Chinese students having to help their parents in running family businesses, a14-year-old Kadazandusun student, who happened to be from the rural area in the state of Sabah, worked on her family's farm.

> "Because I am only a farmer's daughter, I had to help
> my mum and dad to plant paddy in the fields,"
> (K8/Girl/14-year-old/ 9/3/2008)

> "As usual, I went with my parents to help them
> with their business. So, no entertainment again!
> But that is a good way to spend the time,"
> (I4/Girl/16-year-old/27/1/2008)

The two accounts of family economic activity represent one student from a lower socio-economic status and another with a family business coming from a middle-class background. This reflects class differences between these young people.

8.1.1.5 'Family Viewing'

'Family viewing' takes place when a family gathers to watch a visual compact disc (VCD) as an activity. It was often the 'father' who bought the VCD, and thus decided on the film. These films varied from comedies, religious films and dramas.

> "Today, me and my family watched a VCD (Mandarin)
> that my father just bought. The story is about a poor
> boy whose father always bring in stuffs that he
> rummages from the bin to give his son. Very funny, sad
> and exciting,"
> (C10/Girl/14-year-old/2/3/2008)

Most significant to this study was the fact that the father often bought VCDs of Chinese or Tamil films, but not films in other languages. This contributed to the higher consumption of Chinese films or programmes compared to other ethnicities. Family viewing related to one's own ethnicity occurred in Indian households, with the father determining which day the family would view the movie together.

> "Tamil/Overseas. This is a comedy VCD by episode
> no.7. My dad always buy the comedy VCD every Friday.
> We are so enjoyful to watch it,"
> (I4/Girl/16-year-old/undated)

This form of 'control' by parents may also occur as a subtle means of educating their children about their religion, as in the case of one Indian diarist. This case involved watching an imported VCD featuring *Lord Murugan*, the God, whom the Tamil community reveres.

The practice of watching sacred text on television among the Indian community is a universal practice, through which parents ensure that traditional identity markers such as religion are maintained and imbued in their children. Such practice was also found in Gillespie's (1993;1995) study of British Asian youths in Southall when watching the *Mahabharata.* "Devotional viewing," as Gillespie (1995: 87) calls it, also occurred in this study. Gillespie observed that parents used films or drama based on their ethnicity to teach their children their mother tongue and religious knowledge when there were limited avenues through which they could learn and maintain their cultural identity.

> "My family and I watched "Kanthan Karunai" movie
> as time passing. This movie is about how Lord Murugan
> kills the demon. We watched this movie regarding Thaipusam.
> Because this festival celebrate for Lord Murugan right,"
> (I6/Girl/16-year-old/23/1/2008)

As ethnic minority in Malaysia, consumption of imported Tamil or religious films continues despite no longer considering India their homeland. The lack of a local Tamil film industry means Kollywood is consumed to fill in the void (Ravindran, 2006).

This similarly occurs in Malaysian Indian homes as well. In addition to 'devotional viewing', they also tune in to the Tamil radio network to follow live reports of the celebration of *Thaipusam* at the main temple in *Batu Caves*. Listening to devotional songs on the radio and tuning into the Tamil radio network, *Minnal.FM,* to find out what was happening at the *Batu Caves,* was not something that this girl would have done alone, but was a family activity because of religious obligation for all.

8.1.1.6 'Poverty'

An important aspect of' home life' exclusively found among the 14-year-old Kadazandusun was poverty. These participant's home lives lacked basic amenities that restricted the media available. They lacked access to satellite television and new media at home.

> "I went back to my *kampung (village).* But then,
> in my *kampung* there is no electricity, there
> is only a generator. Pity right? So, if I
> want to listen to the radio, sorry. To listen to the
> radio in my house, we would have to charge
> the car battery, so I seldom get to listen
> to the radio. *'Cos* my dad would be mad,"
> (K7/Girl/14-year-old/26/3/2008)

This indicates a limited opportunity for K7 to enjoy the day listening to traditional media like the radio. Lack of electricity is not the only setback that these young people face. Coming from a working-class background, there are times when they are also have to shoulder various family responsibility at home.

Time spent consuming media is a luxury for them and less important than easing the family burden. Girls willingly gave up watching TV or VCD/DVDs, listening to the radio or reading magazines to help their mother in the kitchen, while boys learned the responsibilities of being the man of the house by joining their father in manual tasks such as rebuilding part of their house. Media consumption took place only in the context of doing other things. Usually, they listened to the radio only as entertainment while they worked.

> "I got a chance to listen to Hot.fm this time
> when my father and I took a break
> (from building the house) to have our
> lunch. That's how I get to listen to Hot.fm,"
> (K10/Boy/14-year-old/undated)

> "This morning, I help my mum at the stall.
> The auntie, in the next stall put on the radio.
> I felt happy when the auntie tuned in to Hot.Fm,"
> (K9/Girl/14-year-old/15/3/2008)

In contrast to the diaries of the other groups, these students did not spend a lot of time on the media. The only time their diaries recorded constant consumption of the media was when they were at a hostel listening to the radio, because that is perhaps the only place where they are not distracted by other responsibilities apart from studying. At home, they are often expected to help their parents. Other students in this study surfed and chatted on the Internet every day for hours, which was not possible for the 14-year-old Kadazandusuns.

Having no electricity at home shows the reality these young people live in. A need to help their parents suggests a "media-poor" home environment (Livingstone, 2002: 241).

This extends to their consumption of imported television programmes. Being working-class youth, they are not fluent in English, as their parents are not professionals or highly educated. Living in rural areas, they either speak Malay or Kadazandusun. Thus, their consumption of alternative sources of entertainment depends upon the availability of Malay subtitles on global television programmes. This was evident during a focus group interview with the Kadazandusun students on their media consumption patterns.

Interviewer: “Do you like Western television programmes?”

K9: “Not really, because sometimes they don’t have the Malay subtitles.”

Interviewer: “Are they hard for you to follow?”

K9:“Yes, it’s different with *Animal Planet*, its got subtitles.”

It is not surprising that the only ‘imported’ television programmes consumed were from Indonesia, since the language is similar to the Malay language, and Japanese animes such as *Doraemon* and *Shin Chan*, because they are dubbed in Malay.

8.2 ‘School Life’

‘Home Life’ represents the various differences involving gender, ethnicity, religion and class. This category provides context for understanding how their media consumption is influenced by their social identities. ‘School life’ is a similar subcategory across genders, ethnicities, religions and socio-economic classes. But, differences in attitudes towards school life were evident in the diary responses.

Many diarists moaned of intense academic pressure from school. Two girls were found to conform to the demands of schoolwork and activities. Therefore, subcategories were identified as students feeling ‘under-pressure’

and ‘conformists’. Those who felt ‘under-pressure’ were the ones who constantly complained of stress, boredom and fatigue regarding the demands of homework, exams and co-curricular activities. They reported boredom in schoolwork, and a desire for leisure. Two girls from different age groups reported viewing school as pathway to ‘education’ rather than just a place or a task. They still complained about the amount of homework they had to do, but complied with their parents’ views of its importance.

8.2.1 The ‘Under-pressure’

One of the most striking points that arose from the diaries was the impact school and its demands had on these young people's lives. An overall examination of their diaries revealed the strain of 'academic pressure' was often linked to young Malaysians' media consumption of foreign television programmes as a means of escaping boredom and stress.

The pleasure and excitement they get from serial dramas or cartoons are in contrast to the immense academic pressure they undergo. The amount of homework they need to complete, even on public holidays, is what makes them feel stressed and unhappy. Their lives revolve around revising for monthly tests or exams, attending extra-curricular activities and attending private tuition for extra help with difficult subjects. A common method of overcoming academic pressure is watching cartoons and Japanese *animes*, serial dramas, crime-investigative series or even films on VCD on the weekends. Their consumption of media for entertainment is constricted on weekdays by homework and tuition. Even during the busy week, they often manage to find a way to escape. When the programme they choose is over, they return to their books. They are trying to balance their need for escape and pleasure with their responsibilities.

This is not to suggest that these young people are lazy or uninterested in school, but to recognise the intense pressure these students feel as a result of the demands to excel in education. Those who were coded as ‘under-

pressure' were further divided into sub-categories, namely 'time constraints', 'school work' and 'stressed'.

8.2.1.1 'Time constraints'

'Time' here refers to how students' time is spent around school, tuition and extra-curricular activities. The constraints these impose mean that these activities prevent them from watching television.

> "Tomorrow, I got a test, so I didn't watch
> anything and listened to any music.
> Furthermore, I got to go for additional maths tuition
> at night,"
> (C1/Girl/16-year-old/3/3/2008)

> "No time. After returning to the dorm, I eat, bathe and study.
> Anyway, exam is just around the corner,"
> (K7/Girl/14-year-old/undated)

> "Couldn't listen to the radio. Watch TV, Astro,
> VCD/DVD, read papers or surf into the internet
> this afternoon 'cos I'm at school. I'm the evening
> session student, we have to go to school from
> 10.30 am to 6 in the evening"
> (K7/Girl/14-year-old/29/2/2008)

The lack of time for the media means an inability to have time away from school. 'Time' is an asset to them, as it means time to socialise and watch television, both which help relieve them of their mental worries of exams and homework.

> “Today, I've got a lot of homework. So got to finish it all. After all, I'm not in the mood of watching today,”
> (M3/Boy/17-year-old/16/1/2008)

> “After house practice, got to get ready for tuition. After tuition, got to do my homework. Besides, the television has already been “conquered,” so that puts me off,”
> (M3/Boy/17-year-old/ 18/1/2008)

> “I don’t have the time [to watch television] as I am currently at school to study. So, in that sense, time does not permit me to watch television. If there is no school, I would stay at home and watch all my favourite programmes but the opportunity is not there to do so [now]. It’s really frustrating. Oh God,”
> (I4/Girl/16-year-old/17/1/2008)

It is the conflict of having to finish all their homework overnight as well as the lack of access to television that exacerbates these young people’s feeling of stress and pressure.

8.2.1.2 ‘School Work’

At times, school life, which consists of homework and class projects, and academic pressure creates enormous stress for some. Students grumbling or lament about the amount of homework they have to do, and some diarists are panic-stricken that school fills their mind.

> "This evening because I have so much of homework and I can say I'm feeling stress or under-pressure 'cos I have so much of homework that I forgot to fill in this diary,"
> (K10/Boy/14-year-old/3/3/2008)

Stress not only stems from schoolwork and tuition classes, but also compulsory extra-curricular activities such as sports practice. Some also shoulder responsibilities at school, such as being school prefects and class monitors.

> "Today, I didn't have the time to listen to the radio because I'm busy on the 29/2/2008. We have Co-curricular Day and after waking up in the morning, we have morning assembly after which we have to clean up our hostel. Then we have our baths and after that, we all have to gather at *Dewan Harmoni* (Assembly Hall) that's why I couldn't fill up this diary,"
> (K10/Boy/14-year-old/29/2/2008)

While most claim to have experienced boredom, anxiety and mental exhaustion, only one diarist shows signs of being unmotivated to watch television due to academic pressure.

> "Today, I've got a lot of homework. So got to finish it all. After all, I'm not in the mood of watching today,"
> (M3/Boy/17- year old/16/1/2008)

> "Not in the mood to do anything. Don't even bother about it,"
> (M3/Boy/17-year- old/17/1/2008)

Seeing the pressures of their daily lives, it is easy to understand why watching serial dramas means so much to these young people.

> "(8TV:7-8 pm/Taiwan) Never give up easily when faced with adversity,"
> (M6/Girl/16-year-old/14/1/2008)

> "(TV3/Indonesian) Don't let anger control oneself
> (8TV/Taiwan) Strive to solve one's problem,"
> (M6/Girl/16-year-old/15/1/2008)

> "(TV9/Indonesia) Always pray to Allah s.w.t for help when in trouble,"
> (M6/Girl/16-year-old/18/1/2008)

One might assume that these young people would prefer television programmes portraying the opposite of their existing lives. Instead, religious or spiritual serial dramas were chosen. Students found they could draw strength from them, and relate lessons to their own lives. Values such as perseverance, self-control, and problem solving and seeking the help from God resonated with these young people in dealing with confinement and isolation. The media, in this respect, served as a useful tool in helping work through their problems.

They draw values from dramas and appropriate them to their own 'troubled' lives as a coping strategy. Other coping strategies described were watching other genres that offered ways of developing inner strength. M1 uses tips on self-motivation given on a breakfast show as a means to enhance her coping skills.

> "This programme (MHI) kind of gives me the motivation and encouragement so I'm more confident and positive thinking in going through my daily life,"
> (M6/Girl/16-year-old/22/1/2008).

8.2.1.3 ‘Stress’

‘Stress’ from school was evident for every young person who participated in this study. Mounting pressure to finish homework left many to feel stressed and depressed, and left little time for them to enjoy life, including watching television.

Different students have different reaction and emotions. I4 was particularly sarcastic about the fact that she had to spend her holiday doing something ‘productive’, which in actual fact meant doing a large amount of schoolwork. The first two lines of her diary protested adult authority by sarcastically describing watching television as a “waste of time” in contrast to doing homework.

> “Today, is public holiday for the Federal Territory (FT) right!
> So, I waste all my time by watching TV, playing and so and so.
> At the same time the teachers gave a lot of homework to do
> during this one day holiday. I started doing homework at 7 pm.
> And I finished it at 11.45 pm. I was doing history notes. So,
> I couldn’t and didn't watch TV, read magazines or whatever,”
> (I4/Girl/16-year-old/23/1/2008)

What she meant was that the reason they were given so much homework during the holidays was to prevent them from doing what teachers consider as ‘wasting time’, such as watching television. Anger and frustration was similarly expressed elsewhere by other students, showing their limited ability in coping with academic pressure.

> “I did not listen or watch anything today because I
> have so much homework to do that needs to be
> completed and I must submit my exercise book and note
> book tomorrow. I feel like “forcing” everything in this

book into my head, so that all the answers will pour
out when we sat for our exam,"
(K10/Boy/14-year-old/3/2008)

"Doing my homework...I'm so angry!! That I cannot
watch any TV at all!!,"
(M9/Girl/14-year-old/16/1/2008)

"Why does the teacher give so much 'homework'?
That I can't watch TV! Enough is enough! Stop giving
us so much of homework,"
(M9/Girl/14-year-old/17/1/2008)

School life affects them very much. They often have to sacrifice watching television for the sake of their schoolwork. Sometimes they also have feelings of guilt when they watch television at night.

"…. I can't watch TV for long at night
'cos I got to study,"
(M1/ Boy/16-year-old/27/1/2008)

"I want to revise for my Add. Maths so
I didn't watch any television. What a waste,
I forgot to watch that Cantonese drama,"
(C1/Girl/16-year-old/6/3/2008)

For the 14-year-old Kadazandusuns who stay in a hostel, life is constantly surrounded by academic pressure and regulations. The hostels have a schedule that sets a schedule for their evenings after school.

"Tired. Today, I have so much of homework to do.
I'm also mad at my friend 'cos while I was listening
to my favourite radio station, she disturbs me,
she change the station. I didn't get to read the newspaper
'cos there's no paper in my room. Because I live in
the dorm, I cannot watch TV because students living in
hostel have to study at night, so I cannot watch TV. If I
want to watch TV, I have to get permission from the
warden. And, I'm lazy to do that ,"
(K8/Girl/14-year-old/28/2/2008)

Young people viewed school life as confining in terms of classroom environment.

"I am at school. Today's class was so boring.
In addition, with each book weighs about 2 kg.
That will break my shoulder!"
(M9/Girl/14-year-old/24/1/2008)

"I am at school and currently studying. Have
to listen to the teacher talking non-stop.
Anyway, there is too much homework to do. Tension!!!,"
(K5/Boy/16-year-old/27/3/2008)

"I couldn't do anything today [with the media]
as I am studying. Having to listen to the teacher
giving a long lecture,"
(K5/Boy/16-year-old/29/3/2008)

8.2.1.4 ‘Conformists’

In spite of the fact that most students complained of stress due to schoolwork, a handful of participants had an opposite view.

This group of students did not resist nor react angrily towards having to do lots of homework. Instead, they adopted a positive attitude and surrendered to the rigidity of school life. Studying and attending classes was not seen as something as an encumbrance, but rather as something larger. They stated beliefs that it was a sacrifice and a long-term investment towards a better and secure future.

> “I have gone to school. So, I was unable
> to spend time at home. I was not able
> to watch any programmes. Because study
> is important. That’s why I have to go to school,”
> (I5/Girl/16-year-old/21/1/2008)

> “As usual, I need to go to school to study.
> I was not able to take a holiday for any
> other reason. Because studies are very important,”
> (I5/Girl/16-year-old/22/1/2008)

> “I have left for school. So, no entertainment
> at home. School is very important. So, I go
> to school because it is my duty to do so,”
> (I5/Girl/16-year-old/24/1/2008)

Those who conformed had a positive attitude towards exams as challenges. They also cultivated a similarly positive view of homework. They found studying as a positive use of their time.

> "No mood. There's nothing interesting on
> television today. Anyway, the TV is now being
> controlled by my younger siblings, watching cartoons.
> Too lazy to read. So, I do my homework, this is the
> best time to do it,"
> (K9/Girl/14-year-old/8/3/2008)

> "I went straight to take my bath after visiting
> my grandmother. Hah!..exam is coming up,
> I must do some revision. I must strive hard before
> I face it (exam). *Chayo! Chayo*!,"
> (K9/Girl/14-year-old/9/3/2008)

K9 was keen on studying largely due to her socio-economic background, which was lower in rank compared to other students in this study. She diligently followed news coverage of Malaysian students who came up top in government examinations, such as the *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (Malaysian Certificate of Education) and *Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia* (Malaysian Higher Education Certificate), the Malaysian equivalent of GCSEs and A levels.

> "I get to know their studying techniques. Their story
> fuel my spirit to succeed. Poverty is not an obstacle
> to success,"
> (K9/Girl/14-year-old/13/3/2008)

> "I get to see those successful students in SPM, STPM etc.
> and make them my idol,"
> (K9/14-year-old/Girl/13/3/2008)

Even though the number of students who had a positive attitude towards school was small compare, it was still a pivotal part of this study in understanding the broader representation of young people. Young people

have varied attitudes, socio-economic backgrounds, cultures and home lives, which produces a more complex audience.

Students in the ‘under-pressure’ and ‘conformist’ categories were also essential, because their attitudes towards school were largely related to their media consumption. The ‘under-pressure’ group displayed a stronger link to the media, often mentioning using the media as a release from the stress of school life. They resented the fact that school was taking time away from their home lives. Watching television was not merely used to release tension, but was also a social activity.

The ‘conformists’ had a different attitude towards the media. They saw it largely as a tool for entertainment. It did not have an overly important place in their lives, so they did not get irritated when they didn’t have time to watch television. Most of the time, they gladly missed television shows to study or perform religious duties.

8.3 ‘Cultural Maintenance’

‘Cultural maintenance’ related only to the 14-year-old Kadazandusun students. Unlike their Chinese and Indian peers who had a choice of viewing imported Chinese and Tamil films, the Kadazandusun do not have a wide cultural space in the Malaysian media. The abolishment of ’Network 3,’ which was the regional broadcast for audiences in Sabah in 1983 (Karthigesu, 1994b), ended the representation of local productions of music and cultural television programmes in the state. No television dramas are in Kadazandusun on Malaysian television, and no television programmes promotes the Kadazandusun’s culture, or any other indigenous culture from East Malaysia. In addition, the Kadazandusun faced a further problem of cultural marginalisation when the state choose to adopt the 'one language, one culture and one religion' policy, where the Malay language and Islam were incorporated into Sabah's cultural identity in the 1970s (Reid, 1997). Kadazandusun families face the problem of a young generation who lacks proficiency in speaking their mother tongue (Lasimbang & Kinanjil (2000).

This has led to Kadazandusun community to fight hard to preserve their culture, led by a group of Kadazandusun leaders or the 'Kadazan intelligentsia' (Francis Loh, 1992).

The young Kadazandusuns' only access to the media is the local radio network in the East Malaysian state of Sabah, SabahV.FM, which is confined to the local Sabahan audience. The media is not only for entertainment and information, but also serves to promote and maintain cultural identity through the constant production of ethnic-based media content. As there is a lack of such programmes representing the Kadazandusuns on TV, the radio assumes the role of promoting and continuance of the Kadazandusun culture for the younger generation. Younger Kadazandusuns' consumption of Kadazandusun radio programmes was mainly to maintain their cultural identity, whether through listening to their favourite Kadazandusun singer, songs or news.

> "Through this network, I feel excited because I can understand the language and the style that was used is something that me and my friends, those who speak Kadazandusun, can understand,"
> (K10/Boy/14-year-old/28/2/2008)

> "I listened to this station (Kadazandusun) because I want to listen to all the news and I think I want to listen to Kadazandusun songs as well as any obituary news or any messages from my parents. Of which, I get to hear all this in comfort away from any distractions,"
> (K10/Boy/14-year-old/3/3/2008)

> "[I tune in to Sabah Vfm] because this is for the Kadazandusun and their songs are entertaining to us (Kadazandusuns),"
> (K9/Boy/14-year-old/Boy/undated)

Each day, young Kadazandusuns negotiate between listening to the national radio broadcast in Malay, as a duty of being Malaysian, and maintaining their ethnic identity by tuning in to Sabah VFM. Thus, in order to understand how this operates, an examination of their listening habits needs to be done. For example, on 2nd March 2008, diarist no.044 listened to Hot.Fm, a national radio network in Malay, between 7 and 7.30 p.m. On the following day, at 6 – 6.20 a.m., he tuned in to the Kadazandusun segment on the radio.

While participants didn't explicitly express their view on the lack of Kadazandusun television programmes on Malaysian television, this cannot be interpreted as a lack of resistance on their part, However, 'power' to react lies in their consumption practices. How they prioritise the Kadazandusun radio network over the Malay national network is a reflection of how 'ethnicity' shapes who they are above all else.

By constantly tuning into this network, the young Kadazandusun's use of the media was obviously aimed at cultural maintenance. The radio helps to familiarize them with to their mother tongue. In this way, popular culture helps to maintain their ethnicity in terms of language. In other studies of young people's media consumption, those from rural areas tend to watch local television programmes to identify themselves with their ethnic identity (Strelitz, 2002).

8.4 Conclusion

The various contexts of their lives and media consumption revealed the cultural context of young Malaysians' lives and the limitedness of cultural globalisation. Imported television programmes provide a wide range of choice and are a source of empowerment for young people to construct multiple identities of their own choice. Nevertheless, this does not mean that they have become truly powerful media consumers. So long as they are still dependent on their parents, the conflict between tradition and modernity, as well as the individual self and a collective identity, will coexist. It is the context of their lives that is characterised by 'conformity' to some extent, and provides the

impetus for them to reconstruct and shift their identities from ones that are deeply rooted in local cultural to ones that are more fluid.

While there are those who happily and readily conformed, such as the ‘conformists’, the majority feels trapped in their lives. It is the confining nature of their lives, which seems to offer no alternatives, that leads them to use the media to perceive the outside world as a better place, believing ‘the grass is always greener on the other side. ’While diaries showed a great deal of rethinking and reworking their identities, they have limitations. It is a question of choice and power. Inequality in socio-economic status, dependence on parents, as well as the collective nature of Malaysian norms and lifestyles, means that while independent young people are able to decide who they are, they are also hindered by these factors. Structural and cultural constraints that are deeply embedded also mean that some young people are not able to make independent decisions.

On the other hand, so long as there is no openness and shift in policy towards a wider cultural inclusion for ethnic minorities and indigenous Malaysians on Malaysian television, overseas Chinese and Indian programmes will continue to become a counter-hegemonic tool for Malaysian Chinese and Malaysian Indian youths. As much as they perceive this to empower them, it will only be at the subjective level, as they will continue to exist on the margins.

Nevertheless, their consumption of the media, particularly the appeal towards programmes from advanced countries, is a form of ‘pleasure’, to which Fiske’s notion of ‘popular pleasures’ as ‘evasion’ (1989) is very helpful. They are obviously subordinated through their positions at home and school, with enormous social roles to fulfil. Hence, their distaste for local programmes, against the pleasure derived from American, Japanese or Korean television programmes, can be interpreted as an act of evasion where they ‘evade’ the reality of their locality by losing and imagining themselves in *CSI* and in Asian romance serial dramas. This is a strategy for dealing with their everyday lives.

Chapter 9

Discussion and Conclusion

9.0 Introduction: Overall Findings Of Young Malaysians' 'Identity'

Before proceeding to conclude this study, this chapter begins by revisiting the research questions and the concepts that had been discussed and used in the earlier chapters.

This study was interested in finding out the kind of 'identity' that emerged among multi-religious and multiethnic youths through their media consumption, and how the de-regulation of the media in Malaysia has played a role. This interest was driven by existing literature on how 'identity' in late modernity is becoming more 'reflexive', 'open', multiple and fluid (Giddens, 1990; Thompson, 1995, Woodward, 1997).

As late modernity has weakened local structures such as class, ethnicity, family institutions and religion in the lives of the local people (Beck, 1992), young people have to turn to other cultural sources such as consumption, fashion or music to form their identities. In other words, forming an 'identity' for young people has become an increasingly 'individual' project, forcing them to constantly rework their biographies every day (Giddens, 1990). Media globalisation also means that young people are no longer exposed to their own local cultures, and have greater choice in constructing their identity. Hence, youth cultures are becoming more plural and hybridised (Nilan & Fiexa, 2006).In dealing with the multiple sources of identity – global and local on hand, constructing an identity is becoming a reflexive process. While most studies have demonstrated the multiplicity and fluid character of today's identity, this study went on further to explore other issues related to identity',

i.e. the tension that exists between ‘solidity’ and ‘fluidity’ in terms of ‘cultural change’ and ‘ethnicity’ due to globalisation.

If this is a global phenomenon, how has this affected those young people where dominant forces of tradition, those of religion, ethnicity, national culture and local norms, have remained deeply embedded in their lives? How does ‘self-reflexivity’ operate in young people? What kinds of identities are emerging out of it? More importantly, what are the differences among young people of different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds? A broad number of findings have been found to reveal similarities and differences among young Malaysians concerning their identity.

Similarities :

1. *Fluid:* Young Malaysians’ identities are similarly multiple, discursive and contradictory depending on situation, which corroborates with Lawler (2008), Woodward (1997), Hall (1992). In addition, they shift from being fixed to more fluid.

   They assumed various social identities, intersecting with each other, involving gender, ethnicity, religion and class. They see themselves as ‘global youth’ and at the same time, as defined by their ‘ethnicity’. Some young Malaysians were also found to be changing the meaning of femininity by drawing more from Western fashion than local. Girls are using American fashion magazines to define their femininity instead of local fashion programmes. They have also blurred the gender division of labour by wanting to be forensic scientists as fans of the American series – *Crime Scene Investigation* (*CSI*) instead of pursuing traditional feminine professions, nurse or teacher, prevalent in Malaysia.

2. *Fragmented*: Their consumption of imported television programmes from satellite television resulted in young Malaysians’ identities to be fragmented into various forms of culture. Theirs were based on lifestyles (travelling), fashion, music, fandom, fantasy (cartoons &

animes) and adventure. ‘Fandom’ represents strong draws towards popular culture. For example, some girls were obsessed with Asian romance serial dramas. Differences of values between the ‘modernist’ and the ‘traditionalists’ or conformists were also fragmented.

3. *Multiple*: Young Malaysians now have more than one identity. One that is based on popular culture or lifestyles, and another representing traditional identity markers. There isn’t a common fixed identity, as identities depend on how each individual sees him or herself. Identities in Malaysia are no longer fixed as ‘Malay’ or ‘Chinese’, but have moved into characterisation by gender, popular cultures such as animes and cyber-communities. In addition, youth identity is an appropriation of West and Asian popular culture, creating a more hybridised youth culture that is not fixed solely from the West or the East, but an amalgamation of it. Examples of this on a wider scale are Canto-pop and *Mando-pop*. In addition, there is now the existence of ‘fandom’ communities for Asian serial dramas among girls of all ethnicity. Sandvoss (2005) propose that the significance of ‘fandom’ to one’s identity is that it is an extension of the self. Girls’ addiction and craze for the ‘romance’ portrayed in Asian serial dramas against the context of their lives has a very significant meaning. In their private sphere, they can admire characters like *Yo-Hee* in ‘*Yo-Hee The Witch’* for being able to stand up against men, yet despise ‘*Rui Xi*’ in *Hana Kimi* when both characters indicated a shift from the typical traditional submissive Asian women to more modern and assertive individuals. Yet the intense dislike for ‘*Rui Xi’* suggests difficulties for these girls to express that part of ‘who they are’ out in the open due to constraints of tradition and local norms which dictates how girls should behave socially.

4. *Shifting Values*: This does not imply a complete abandonment of social relations and local norms. Young Malaysians, in this study, remained rooted. What this study shows is that their values and attitudes have shifted to become more open, flexible and negotiable to outside cultures. A majority of young Malaysians’ dislike the routine, fixed and

ordered features of school life, and express openly a resistance to conforming to it.

Their high consumption of imported television programmes, which offers a variety of choices of represented lifestyles, provides young Malaysians the cultural resources to reflect their lives as Malaysians against those from advanced capitalist countries. Through their mediated experiences, they are constantly contrasting Malaysia against the outside world. The media represents the notion of 'modernity' to them against what they consider of their own surroundings, described as 'traditional' and 'backward'. It also provides them the insight that their ideal self is an appropriation of the contemporary global fashion and popular culture mixed with their local cultural identity. Their admiration for the West and advanced Asian countries like Japan and Korea as 'progressive' suggests a similar 'migratory' life-trajectory as found in Nai (2004) and Kim's (2010) studies. The difference here is that while Nai's respondents are older and eventually migrated to Italy, the young people in this study can only imagine such countries.

Despite, the fluid nature of their identities and how liberating it seems, young Malaysians face tension between 'tradition and modernity'. The individual needs of these young people are in conflict with the demands of the collective, such as school, their home lives, parents and religion. These young people admire and yearn for a life of mobility, unrestrained and by the fetters of rules, norms and routines, but this is in conflict with the reality of school-work, religious duties and household responsibilities. Young Asians who are living with stark cultural differences in a modern world, are often confronted with the problem of dealing with conflicting cultural values of the modern (from the outside world) with traditional values form their home ground (Qureshi & Moores, 2000).

Differences:

1. ‘Ethnicity’ poses differences in identities among Malaysians. Satellite television, through its multitude of foreign Chinese and Indian channels, enable young Malaysian Chinese and Malaysia Indians to forge an ethnic identity and popular youth cultures drawing from ethnic media. This however doesn’t tackle the problem of cultural marginalisation and exclusion.

2. Based on findings drawn from interviews, non-Malay youth still complain of being marginalised by the Malaysian media. Chinese students even complained about the allotment of Chinese programmes being reduced and replaced by Malay programmes. This all means that an increase in overseas Chinese and Indian programmes hasn’t entirely addressed their concerns, as they still resent the lack of representation in the local media. This proved they have stronger feelings of rootedness to Malaysia than to their ancestral homelands. The local situation leads to them feeling ‘dispersed’ or as ‘exiles’ (Naficy, 1999).

   Consequently, the Malaysian Chinese in this study had a stronger sense of ethnic identity elsewhere. Their consumption of the media was almost exclusively ‘Chinese’, largely from overseas. This shows that their ‘ethnicity’ is not completely built from home and family, but also is powerfully influenced by the media. As an “imagined diasporic audience” (Tsagarousianou, 2004; Fazal & Tsagarousianou, 2002; Sökefeld,2006),who have few ties with their ancestral homelands, their experience of watching overseas Chinese and Indian serial dramas and films have helped them make sense of their ethnicities. This has led to feelings of ‘cultural superiority’ among young Malaysian Chinese over local Malay cultures, which dominate Malaysian television. This feeling fits into Cohen‘s (2008) definition of ‘diaspora’, where such a consciousness exists when there are problems with host societies.

While satellite television has decentred young Malaysians' identity from local and national cultures, it has potentially served as a counter-hegemonic tool for young Malaysian Chinese to question Malaysia's national culture, which is predominantly Malay-Muslim.

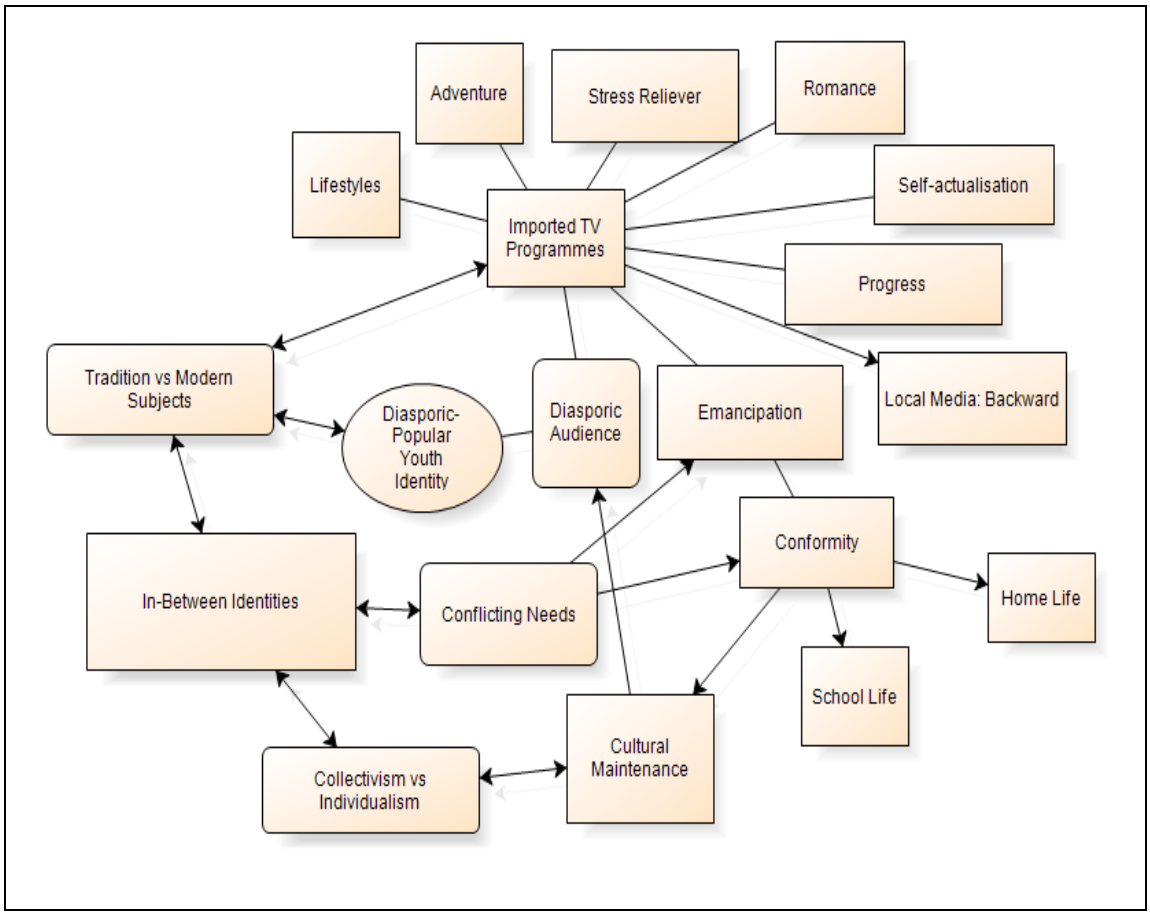

Table 9.1 : Overall Outlook of Young Malaysians' Identity

9.1 Reflections on Theoretical Framework: Rethinking Reflexivity, Constraints and Critiques

While young Malaysians may have shown signs of shifting identities and values in their media consumption, 'reflexivity' was limited. Limits were visible because even though efforts or intentions to break free from structures were demonstrated in their consumption of imported television, 'reflexivity' cannot be seen as liberating. While they often contrasted the outside world with their own, this process was limited. The idea that young people have the choice to

construct their identities through a constant process of reflexivity is rather problematic. The construction of 'identity' cannot be independent of environment and social realities, particularly for young people. 'Reflexivity' is not completely an 'individual project'. An 'Individual' is part of a society, and is particularly influenced in highly collective societies such as that in Malaysia. The consumption of imported television programmes acts as a form of 'evasion' and 'empowerment' (Fiske, 1989) to construct identities against those ascribed on them. This highlights the limitedness of young Malaysians' choice in forming an individual identity.

Three constraining factors have been identified here. The most significant is the dominating power of ethnicity and religious cultures, where disobeying parents or elders is considered a sin. Young people who wish to break away from the structures imposed and enforced by parents dare not push their individuality. It is a question of overcoming a conscience within. The power to carve out their own biographies (Giddens, 1991),is confined only within the private space of their living room and in their imaginations. 'Who they are' is still largely defined by their parents, who set standards for family expectations and cultural practices.

Secondly, being 'young' means they are still dependent upon their parents, economically and socially. Both factors limit 'reflexivity' .Often, participants were happy to conform, and accepted what was set.

Thirdly, resources that provide the impetus for them to think critically and evaluate their surrounding independently were limited. Schools promote conformity. Not doing their homework results in punishment, and doing so is rewarded with education. Only the media, particularly imported television programmes, act as alternative cultural resources promoting independent thought.

Another important point is that not all young people opt for individual lifestyles. Rather, it depends on the kind of belief system they grew up in. Some young Malaysians are drawn to outside 'modern' values, but as in Strelitz's study

(2003), such perceptions are not a commonly felt by all young people when watching imported television programmes. This somewhat challenges Giddens' (1991) view of contemporary societies as 'post-traditional societies that no longer rely on traditional notions of 'fate' and religion. Modern living does not necessarily mean one's disassociation from ethnic customs, values and religious teachings. Rather, young people who uphold traditional lifestyles and values rely heavily on religion and ethnic culture to cope with the rapidly changing world. Apart from the Malays and the younger Kadazandusun group, who draw from their religion, Chinese and older Kadazandusun students displayed a tendency to make sense of themselves by relying on the traditional beliefs of their ethnicities. They contrasted past local practices with the present, i.e. what has become a 'tradition' and what is no longer practised. In doing so, their response towards the modern world and its social practices is cynical.

Young Malaysians view globalisation as eroding noble values of religion and ethnicity. Globalisation poses issues of uncertainty and insecurity to conformists. Apart from being uneven, there are other difficulties in applying 'reflexivity' in non-Western societies. Nilan (2008)found that 'reflexivity', as conceptualised by Giddens, was difficult for young Muslim-Indonesians to apply.

The young people in Nilan's study are used to collective values. They think and act collectively. The act of self-evaluating and constructing their own biographies is alien to them. Similarly, the 'conformists' in this study do not think individually. The constant reference to parents in matters of choosing life-partners and friends suggests that these young Malaysians do not question the lifestyles they inherited.

This does not imply there is no freedom of choice for these young people. There is a different kind of 'reflexivity' that took shape. 'Reflexivity' is a process of self-confronting norms in one's environment, but does not necessarily mean breaking free from the chains of rules and routines, nor is it due to the weakening of traditional institutions. Rather, it is a tool for them to

confront the global social practices and contrast them with their own traditions as a form of cultural critique. In this way, ‘reflexivity’ remained a useful tool in forming ‘identities’.

9.2 ‘Self-Reflexivity’ and ‘Ethnicity’

‘Reflexivity’, however, works differently regarding ethnicity. Media consumption is shaped by how ethnic minorities feel they are represented in the local media. Although minorities remain in a marginal position in Malaysia, watching overseas Chinese and Tamil films on a daily basis helps resurrect young Malaysian Chinese and Malaysia Indians’ sense of pride in their ethnicities.

They become politically aware about their futures and lives ahead. The films are a tool for them to view their own ethnicity and allow them to feel culturally superior to the dominant Malay. While this empowers Malaysian Chinese and Malaysian Indians, the same is not true for the Kadazandusun, whose community is invisible in Malaysian films, television dramas and advertisements, despite being indigenous people with privileges.

The Kadazandusun have to ‘make do’ with their marginality (de Certeau, 1984). In the absence of Kadazandusun television programmes and the exclusively Malay television programmes, young Kadazandusun have their own tactics in maintaining their cultural identity. They increase their consumption of the radio and divide it between the Kadazandusun and the Malay networks. The Kadazandusun network ensures cultural maintenance by allowing them to keep in touch with their language. When it’s off air, they tune in to Hot.Fm, the national Malay radio network for national integration as citizens of Malaysia. For entertainment, they watch Indonesian serial dramas and American as well as Japanese cartoons. They do not watch Malay television programmes.

Their acts of media consumption show a subtle form of ‘reflexivity’ that is translated into ordinary actions. They are well aware of their disadvantages, compared to the Chinese and Indians, and were one of the most vocal groups in this study questioning cultural exclusion in Malaysian media. They also realised the need to create a cultural and individual identity on their own, drawing from available resources.

The findings from this study are parallel to what Anderson (2001) cautioned against, which was too quickly dismissing the primordial approach in the study of ethnicity.

9.3 Implication on the question of ‘Identity’ and ‘Ethnicity’

There is great difficulty in defining ‘identity’ as ‘within’ a person (Lawler, 2008).‘Who we are’ is socially produced, balancing individual desires with social norms (ibid). One’s sense of identity is often dictated by relations with society, and is more apparent among young Asians, who are taught to revere traditional authorities like parents. The notion that ‘identity’ is fluid needs to be re-examined. Based on this study, it is not possible for young people to have a completely fluid identity. For those whose tradition and local cultures are very strong, identity is best described as ‘shifting’ between tradition and modernity. Hence, young Malaysians are most aptly described as ‘in-between’ identities.

It is for this reason that ‘reflexivity’ as a contemporary concept related to identity (Adams, 2006)needs to be reconceptualised to consider the different levels of modernity present in different societies and most importantly, the dominant forces of cultural tradition among Asian societies.

Apart from relating the construction of identity with social worlds, ‘identity’ needs to be seen as a process of constant struggle, contestation and negotiation. Lawler (2008) said that ‘identity’ is not always individually constructed, and this study expands on her point by emphasising the need for ‘conflict’ to be taken into consideration. An important point is that the existing

definition of ‘identity’ suggests one’s sense of self is derived from how others perceived them, which leads to the fact that ‘identity’ construction is based on consensus and conformity. However, ‘identity’ is often a process of struggle, subject to negotiation and contestation depending on the age of the individual. What happens if individuals contest the cultural and social demands ascribed upon them? Such a person is rendered as ‘deviant’ or individualistic.

Another point to consider is the context of society ‘identities’ are constructed within. In a collective society, ‘identity’ always leads to choices between who an individual wants to be and what society demands of him or her. Very often young people feel powerless, and compromise on their own desires. Thus, what emerges is not always representative of one’s true self.

The use of ‘ethnicity’ to define Malaysian society is best described as ‘situational ethnicity’, as suggested by Nagata (1974). While most scholars define ‘ethnicity’ as a group of people who are united by common cultural attributes (Taras & Ganguly, 2008; Eriksen, 2002, Brass, 1991), a form of fixed ethnicity is found in Malaysia. The whole idea of shared common cultural attributes only becomes relevant when it is politicised.

The political landscape evokes ethnic consciousness when communities seek to keep boundaries tight and closed to others. Fenton (2003:3) believes that ethnicity is a “social construction of descent and culture,” but it is more than that. People choose to pursue their ethnicity more so if they are being marginalised.

‘Diasporic’ studies, in this respect, highlight the need for a redefinition of ‘diaspora’. Anthias (1998) brings up a need to define diaspora from the perspective of citizenship and the intersectionality of diaspora with other social identities, like gender and class. Tsagarousianou (2004) terms an ‘imagined diasporic community. However, ‘diaspora’ can also refer to an audience who no longer can be considered as ‘migrant’, but shares similar cultures without ever wanting to return to their ancestral homelands. ‘Diaspora’ also refers to the subjective feeling of identification towards a culture they feel an affinity

towards. It is a subjective feeling of pride for their culture that proves to be most powerful in defining their ethnicity.

9.4 Implication on Malaysian Youth Audience studies and national media policy

This study highlighted the need for a more contextual approach towards the study of Malaysian youth and Malaysian audience studies. It argues for future researchers to also adopt a constructivist approach and engage in qualitative methods in studying young people and media consumption.

Local studies such Ummu Kolsomme (2008), Samsuddin & Latiffah (1999; 2000), Mariah Muda et al (2007) and Zakiyah (2008) lack exploration into the context of social lives regarding media consumption. Consumption of imported programmes was often linked to possible negative Western influences (Ezhar et al, 2009). This study found that consumption of imported programmes had a deeper meaning. Lack of choice, marginality, constraints and control from existing living conditions all drove this type of consumption. There is a need to move away from approaching youth studies and their media consumption from a psychological perspective as well as from the question of morality. By drawing from the fields of sociology and anthropology, a better understanding of young people and their lives can be made. As this study has shown, young people's lives are complex and characterised by intense pressure, and in constant negotiation between individuality and collectivity.

In addition, young Malaysians' lives are inevitably linked with global culture through the media. Hence, as Rattansi & Phoenix (2005) have said, the future direction for youth studies must be in the intersection of the global and local. Without which, such studies would be of little value. These views should not be confined to media studies, but extend to the field of social sciences as well. Findings from this study are not only relevant to the local sociology of youth and media studies, but also to the national education policy as well, where

youth education must take into consideration that building young people's self-worth does not rely solely on academic measures.

In terms of the implication of this study on existing broadcasting policies, the representation of other ethnicities such as the *Bumiputera* of Sabah and Sarawak are clear. As Malaysia is multi-ethnic, a broader representation of ethnicities should become standard.

Secondly, local broadcasting stations and production houses should come up with better quality programmes, particularly documentary and magazine shows. Based on the findings of this study, young Malaysians crave more educational programmes that focus on science, technology, the environment and human geography, as most existing local youth programmes are mostly for entertainment.

9.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, young Malaysians' identities are dynamic, inevitably plural and fluid, with values no longer solely rooted within the local culture and values.

The shift from collectivity to an individual self has led to young Malaysians seeing themselves more as 'in-between' than a 'modern-traditional' subject.

Appendix A – Consent Form

"Globalisation, Multiple Identities and Shifting Values: Young Multiethnic Malaysians' Consumption of the Media "

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

(to be completed after Participant Information Sheet has been read)

The purpose and details of this study have been explained to me. I understand that this study is designed to further scientific knowledge and that all procedures have been approved by the Loughborough University Ethical Advisory Committee.

I have read and understood the information sheet and this consent form.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.

I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in the study.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage for any reason, and that I will not be required to explain my reasons for withdrawing.

I understand that all the information I provide will be treated in strict confidence.

I agree to participate in this study.

Your name _____

Your signature _____

Signature of investigator _____

Date: _____

Appendix B : Media Consumption Diary

Research Instrument

MEDIA DIARY

NAME : ……

AGE : …….

SEX : ……..

RACE : ……..

SCHOOL: ……..

DIARIST NO :……

This diary will be collected on ……

Contact No :- ……

Email address :- .....

Media Diary

How To Fill In The Diary

- I am interested to know how important is the media to you in your everyday activity.
- I would be happy if you could fill in the diary as shown above. Please fill in only when you use it even though it is for a short time.
- Please fill this diary for two weeks – Mon to Sun.
- If you don't watch tv, vcd or dvd, read magazines or newspapers, listen to the radio or use the internet at all, please don't fill in the diary.
- If you miss one day, please don't give up. But fill the diary, the next day.

I will collect your diary at the end of the two weeks at your school on

_____

Thank you

(HARYATI ABDUL KARIM)

PhD candidate
Loughborough University

HOW TO FILL IN THE DIARY

(**SAMPLE)**

(**Morning)**

Week : _____ 1_____

Day (Date) : ____ 21/9/2007_____

	Time start			Time End		
1. Media						
2. Channel (Radio) (Pls state the station & network)	ERA (6 am)			(6.15 am)		
3. (TV/Astro) (Pls state if is a local or foreign programmes)						
4. Name & Section (Magazine & Newspaper) (Pls state if it is a local) or foreign publication)		The Star (Local) (3 pm)			(3.10 pm)	
5. Internet (Pls state if is is a local or foreign websites)						
6. VCD/DVD (Pls state if it is a local) or foreign film)						
7. Language	Malay	English				

Morning

Week : _____ _____

Day (Date) : ____ _____

	Time start			Time End		
1. Media						
2. Channel (Radio) (Pls state the station & network)						
3. (TV/Astro) (Pls state if is a local or foreign programmes)						
4. Name & Section (Magazine & Newspaper) (Pls state if it is a local) or foreign publication)						
5. Internet (Pls state if is is a local or foreign websites)						
6. VCD/DVD (Pls state if it is a local) or foreign film)						
7. Language						

Foreign	Local
(1) Hollywood (2) Japan (3) Hong Kong (4) Taiwan (5) Korea (6) Bollywood (7) Tagalog (Phillipines) (8) Indonesia (9) Thai (10) Arab (11) Others	(12) Malay (13) Chinese (14) Tamil

8 (a) What programme are you watching now (Name & type of programme (Foreign or local programme, please refer to the list above)

_____

(b) Please tell me about the programme you are watching. (What is exciting or interesting about it or your criticism of the programme)

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. (a) What are you listening at the moment : _____
   (b) Why do you tune to this station & programme compare to other stations. How does the radio play a role in your life?

_____

_____

_____

_____

10 (a) What are you reading at this moment?

_____

(b) What made you decide to read this magazine/newspaper compare to other publications?

_____

_____

©. How have reading magazines or newspaper can help you in your life?

_____

_____

_____

11 (a) What are you surfing at this time?

_____

(b) Why do you surf into this website?

_____

_____

12. Please tell me, what VCD/DVD are you watching and why did you choose to watch it at this time?

_____

_____

_____

_____

This question is for why you did use the media today.

13. Why did you not listen to the radio, watch TV, Astro, VCD/DVD, read the newspaper or surf the internet at this time?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Noon

	Time start			Time End		
1. Media						
2. Channel (Radio) (Pls state the station & network)						
3. (TV/Astro) (Pls state if is a local or foreign programmes)						
4. Name & Section (Magazine & Newspaper) (Pls state if it is a local) or foreign publication)						
5. Internet (Pls state if is is a local or foreign websites)						
6. VCD/DVD (Pls state if it is a local) or foreign film)						
7. Language						

Foreign	Local
(1) Hollywood (2) Japan (3) Hong Kong (4) Taiwan (5) Korea (6) Bollywood (7) Tagalog (Phillipines) (8) Indonesia (9) Thai (10) Arab (11) Others	(12) Malay (13) Chinese (14) Tamil

8 (a) What programme are you watching now (Name & type of programme (Foreign or local programme, please refer to the list above)

_____

(b) Please tell me about the programme you are watching. (What is exciting or interesting about it or your criticism of the programme)

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. (a) What are you listening at the moment : _____

(b) Why do you tune to this station & programme compare to other stations. How does the radio play a role in your life?

_____

_____

_____

_____

10 (a) What are you reading at this moment?

_____

(b) What made you decide to read this magazine/newspaper compare to other publications?

_____

_____

©. How have reading magazines or newspaper can help you in your life?

_____

_____

_____

11 (a) What are you surfing at this time?

_____

(b) Why do you surf into this website?

_____

_____

12. Please tell me, what VCD/DVD are you watching and why did you choose to watch it at this time?

_____

_____

_____

_____

This question is for why you did use the media today.

13. Why did you not listen to the radio, watch TV, Astro, VCD/DVD, read the newspaper or surf the internet at this time?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Evening & Night

	Time start			Time End		
1. Media						
2. Channel (Radio) (Pls state the station & network)						
3. (TV/Astro) (Pls state if is a local or foreign programmes)						
4. Name & Section (Magazine & Newspaper) (Pls state if it is a local) or foreign publication)						
5. Internet (Pls state if is is a local or foreign websites)						
6. VCD/DVD (Pls state if it is a local) or foreign film)						
7. Language						

Foreign	**Local**
(1) Hollywood (2) Japan (3) Hong Kong (4) Taiwan (5) Korea (6) Bollywood (7) Tagalog (Phillipines) (8) Indonesia (9) Thai (10) Arab (11) Others	(12) Malay (13) Chinese (14) Tamil

8 (a) What programme are you watching now (Name & type of programme (Foreign or local programme, please refer to the list above)

_____

(b) Please tell me about the programme you are watching. (What is exciting or interesting about it or your criticism of the programme)

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. (a) What are you listening at the moment : _____
   (b) Why do you tune to this station & programme compare to other stations. How does the radio play a role in your life?

_____

_____

_____

_____

10 (a) What are you reading at this moment?

_____

(b) What made you decide to read this magazine/newspaper compare to other publications?

_____

_____

©. How have reading magazines or newspaper can help you in your life?

_____

_____

_____

11 (a) What are you surfing at this time?

_____

(b) Why do you surf into this website?

_____

_____

12. Please tell me, what VCD/DVD are you watching and why did you choose to watch it at this time?

_____

_____

_____

_____

This question is for why you did use the media today.

13. Why did you not listen to the radio, watch TV, Astro, VCD/DVD, read the newspaper or surf the internet at this time?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix C – Excerpts From An In-depth Interview on 'Gol & Gincu The Series'

Inteviewer : "Why do you think the father disapprove of his daughter's relationship with her boyfriend?"

I13 : "Mainly because he is a Malay,"

Interviewer : "So it's the race?"

I13 : "Yeah, it's the race,".

Interviewer : " What makes you think that it's the race?"

I13 : "Because he's a Malay, he [Ling's father] doesn't want his daughter to get into another community,"

Interviewer: " What would be the reason?"

I13 : "I think the Chinese people are quite, they want to hold on ..to their culture, they don't want it to ..you know, probably, she would have to convert,"

Interviewer: " Would a similar scenario would have happen to an Indian girl? What would your parents' fear most [in such a situation]?

I13 : "I think it's more of the religion. Because I'm sure they want me to go on with the religion. So, by getting involve [with a boy of another religion] and everything, it would just break the thing,"

Interviewer : " When the father said 'I know his type, they're all *kutus'.* What do you think he means by that?

I13 : "I think it will be the boy's race probably he [Ling's father] categorise Malays as such. Given by the way, they act towards the non-Malays.

Interviewer : " So, it's nothing to do with his looks?"

I13 : "No, because he [Ling's father] disapprove him [Ling's boyfriend] just by looking at him. By knowing that he is a *Malay*, I don't think that it's because of the way he looks.

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