

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Representation of gender can be sensed almost everywhere, as stated by David Gauntlett, a professor of Media and Audiences at Bournemouth Media School, Bournemouth University, in his book *Media, Gender and Identity*, “magazines, newspapers and adverts all contain images of women and men, and even songs on the radio (or played in shops and cafes) might feed into, or challenge, our ideas about gender” (Gauntlett 36). I personally agree with his statement, as I also have sensed the concept of gender, be it masculinity or femininity, in almost all kinds of media. This fact has led me to finally decide to discuss gender in my thesis. I will limit my focus only to the concept of masculinity, because as a man, I feel more related to the issue. The title of my thesis is *A Semiotic Analysis: Signs of Masculinity on GRAZIA Men Magazine Cover*.

According to an Australian sociologist and expert of masculinity Raewyn Connell in her *Masculinities*, “masculinity is what men ought to be” (Connell 70). This definition presupposes the idea of men that are somehow expected to be possessing some traits that are considered masculine. Dr. Will Courtenay, a professor of Sonoma State University, USA, states in his scholarly article entitled *Constructions of Masculinity and Their Influence on Men’s Well-Being: A Theory of Gender and Health*, that “gender is constructed from cultural and subjective meanings that constantly shift and vary, depending on the time and place” (Kimmel, 1995 quoted by Courtenay 1387). On that account, I understand that both masculinity and femininity are subjects of construction defined by their surroundings.

In her book that I have previously mentioned, Connell has also stated that “*Semiotic* approaches abandon the level of personality and define masculinity through a system of symbolic difference in which masculine and feminine places are contrasted. Masculinity is, in effect, defined as not-femininity” (70). In the above statement, it is implied that any signs that are not considered feminine are to be taken as signs of masculinity.

Being aware that signs can reveal masculinity, I decide to use a semiotic approach as the theoretical framework of this thesis to analyse the signifiers appearing in the data that reveal the concept of masculinity. According to Sebeok in his glossary in *Signs: An Introduction to Semiotics*, signifier is the form of a sign that is used to refer to the referent, that is called signified (156), while

Saussure states that the former is a sound pattern and the latter is a concept (Chandler 14).

In this thesis, I decide to discuss the signs of masculinity in GRAZIA Men magazine cover. I chose a magazine cover as the source of my data as I agree with Gauntlett's opinion that "the magazines are indeed a 'significant site' for discourses of masculinity, which are reflected, reproduced and perhaps manipulated on their pages" (117).

I decide to analyse how the magazines has put the elements of masculinity onto the cover of its first edition in order to distinguish the male version of the magazine from the female version.

The brand name GRAZIA claims itself as "Italy's fashion bible and one of the most prestigious European fashion magazines" (Grazia International). It has been previously famous only as a female lifestyle magazine and has now been published in 22 countries including Indonesia. The publisher of GRAZIA later on decides to publish the male version of the magazine under the name "GRAZIA Men" (ibid.). The official Web of GRAZIA International states that "Grazia Men presents Grazia's easy-chic menswear fashions with interviews and info about celebrities presenting Grazia's menswear style" (Grazia Men).

Hopefully, after reading my thesis, students, especially those of the English Department who choose a similar topic for their thesis, will gain more understanding about how to conduct a semiotic analysis of a magazine cover. I also hope that they will get some information about the elements of masculinity that, in this case, are shown in the cover of the first edition of GRAZIA Men

magazine that was published in Australia, as well as being aware of how GRAZIA Men magazine has tried to show the image of masculinity through some signifiers on the cover that differentiates the magazine from the original female version of GRAZIA.

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### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The problems in this study are formulated as follows:

1. What are the visual and textual signifiers and signifieds of the data?
2. How do the signifiers of the data reveal the concept of masculinity?

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

Following the statement of the problem, the purposes of the study are:

1. to find out the visual and textual signifiers and signifieds of the data.
2. to figure out how the signifiers of the data reveal the concept of masculinity.

### **1.4 Method of Research**

In conducting the research, I read some books about Semiotic theories and about masculinity theories. I also searched through the Internet for a GRAZIA Men magazine cover to be taken as the source of my data. I also searched some academic journals and theories that supported the research. Then I analysed the data and at the end I drew the conclusion of the research.

### **1.5 Organisation of the Thesis**

The first chapter is the introduction consisting of Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research and Organisation of the Thesis. Chapter Two is Theoretical Framework, providing the theories I use in analysing the data. Chapter Three contains the data analysis. Chapter Four is the conclusion. It is followed by Bibliography and Appendix.