

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study aims to investigate the language of songs and music videos in the hip hop genre. It also hopes to conduct an exploratory study of perspectives of the listeners in Malaysia and those in the local hip hop and media scenes regarding taboo language and gender setting in hip hop music videos and song lyrics.

### 3.1 Theoretical Framework

In this study, a mixed methods design is employed in obtaining data concerning the content of hip hop music videos and songs, as well as the perceptions regarding the content among viewers, local hip hop and media representatives. The first method consists of content analysis of selected hip hop music videos and songs. The second method is to conduct a survey with representatives from the local media.

The theoretical framework for this study combines theories on Women's Language, Cultivation Theory and Objectification Theory. This will be presented in the following sections.

#### 3.1.1 Women's Language

In the discussion of Lakoff's (1975) theory of features of women's language, Holmes (2001:286) mentions there are two features that characterise women's speech, "superpolite forms, like indirect requests, euphemisms and avoidance of strong words, like *fudge* and *my goodness*." Taboo language is, however, never a stereotypical trait for women in convention, according to Jay (1999:181), as "women are expected to exhibit control over their thoughts, while men are more free to exhibit hostile and aggressive speech habits. It is also believed that "men curse more often than women,

men use a larger vocabulary of curse words than do women, and men use more offensive curse words than do women" (Timothy 1999:166).

No doubt that both men and women do use taboo words in different ways depending on the context. According to Timothy (1999:165), to insult someone, men and women tend to choose different curse words in which a woman usually uses “*bastard* or *prick* to a man, and more *bitch*, *slut* to a woman”, while a man usually uses “*cunt* or *slut* to a woman and *faggot*, *gay* to a man.”. Similarly, men use more racist and aggressive sexual terms than women. These gender differences are also found in the use of sexual terms, jokes and verbal duels (Timothy 1999:183).

Hence, this study would like to compare how local men and women perceive a list of words collected from lyrics of hip hop songs. If they perceive the words as being negative, these will be indicated as taboo words by this study. In relevance to this research, this study will look at whether a difference exists on the usage of taboo by the identified male and female artistes in their hip hop song lyrics.

### **3.1.2 Cultivation Theory**

Cultivation Theory (Gerbner and Gross, 1967) suggests that a gradual change takes place in people exposed to media content over time, in which they begin to adopt or cultivate similar beliefs about the world presented through the media images or messages. This theory suggests that exposure to television or any form of media over time subtly cultivates viewers' perceptions of reality and can even have an impact on viewers of television.

A cultivation research employing content analysis was conducted by Gerbner et. al (1986:25) whereby from 1969 to 1984, the content of prime-time and children's weekend television programming was chartered. In the study, 2,105 programs, 6,055

major characters, and 19,116 minor characters were analyzed. One significant pattern that was noted in relevance to gender was that men outnumbered women in ratio of 3:1 on television. This may imply that men may seem to be more relevant and women are not presented as main characters and appear to have less than major roles in the programmes studied. In addition, television acts as a medium for socializing people into standardized roles and behaviors (Gerbner, 1986:25). Based on this theory, representation of different genders may impact on viewers depending on how hip hop music videos represent genders and the culture of societies.

This study relates to this theory in suggesting that viewers of music videos may interpret the stereotypical images of the male and female roles created in the videos as real features of men and women in society. This is a form of suggestion and prescription that men and women are to appear and act in a certain way and may be perceived as normal in real life. Therefore, in relevance to this research, this study will look at the perceptions towards gender stereotypes in hip hop music videos.

### **3.1.2 Objectification Theory**

According to the Objectification Theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), women are sexually objectified in that they are seen as bodies or body parts that are meant for the pleasure and use by others. This occurs either in the media or through personal experience (Bartky, 1990). This theory suggests that concepts of gender roles are affected, in the sense women are expected to acquire the standard or a particular physical appearance based on the observation of others, and at the same time being conscious that others are observing them too. According to Bartky (1990), this tends to lead towards inequality between sexes, giving the notion that men are not pressured to achieve the standard physical appearance as compared to women. Women tend to

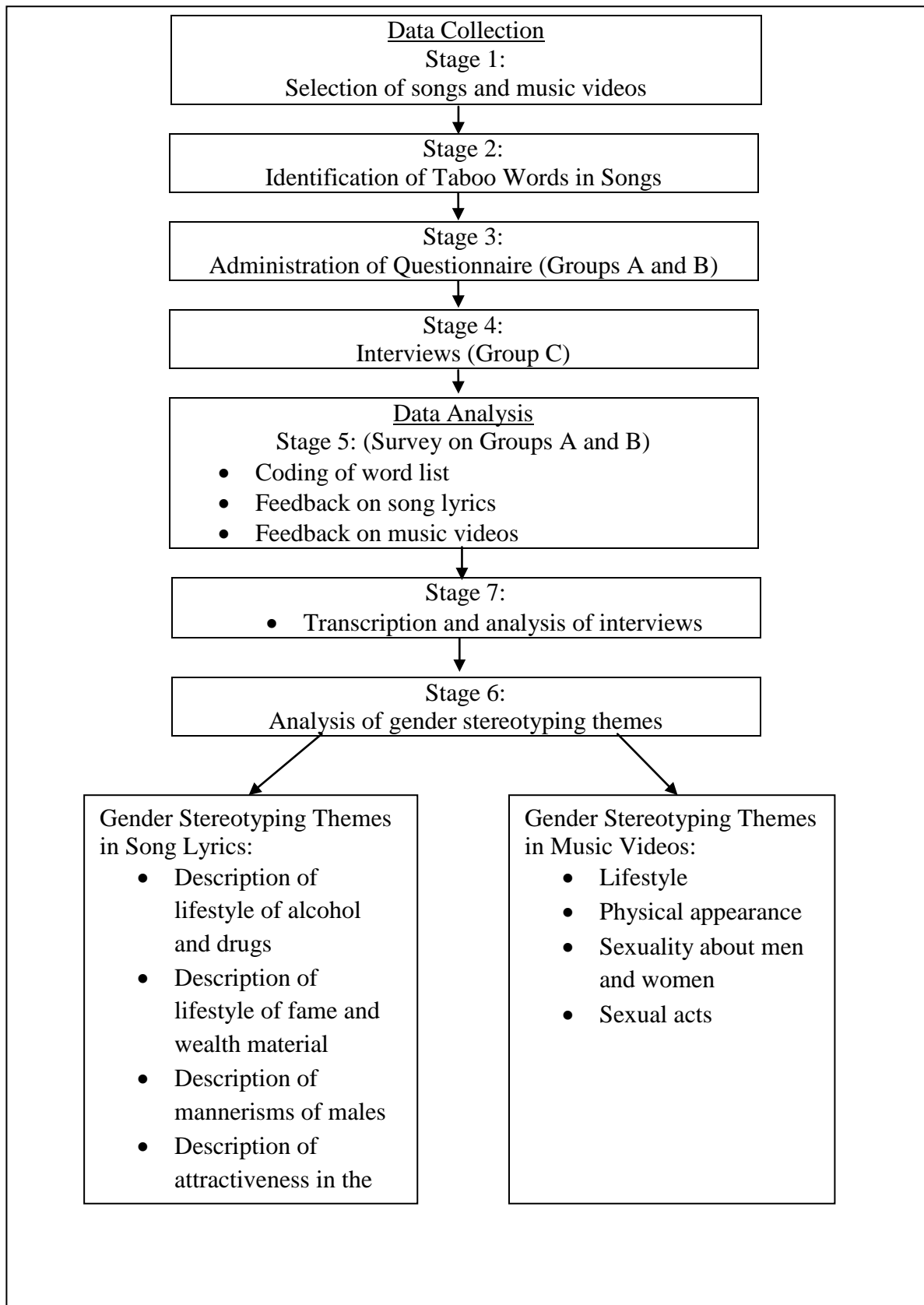
continue believing that their physical appearance is important to themselves and society (Fredrickson and Harrison, 1997).

Research indicates that Objectification Theory is important in understanding how repeated visual images in the media are socialized and translated into mental health problems, including psychological consequences on the individual and the society (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997:82). In light of this theory, repeated visual images portraying the standard for women's physical appearance will influence individuals to reexamine what it means to being sexually desired. This is supported by the notion that music videos are viewed in the way they project sexuality, despite the fact they are already sexual in nature (Cornell, 2000:27). Thus, according to LeMoncheck, (1997:133), exposure to mass media can cause sexual objectification to occur among individuals. Therefore, this study is interested in analyzing whether genders are stereotyped in the music videos, and if they are, to describe the stereotypical features.

This study then would like to investigate whether the above manifestations in the use of taboo language and stereotyping of genders are found in hip hop genre by applying the above theories. It also hopes to gain insight on how the local audience and media industry perceive such 'taboo words' and 'stereotypes' in songs and music videos of hip hop genre.

### **3.2 Research Design**

Figure 3.1 presents the Research Design of the present study.



**Figure 3.1 Research Design of Present Study**

### **3.3 Data**

A total of 20 albums from 10 recording artistes will be analysed for themes and the use of taboo language. Two categories of data, song lyrics (n=139) and music videos (n=20), will be used in the study. These will be triangulated with surveys as explained in the following section.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

Data collection for the present study comprise of three main components:

- i) A total of 139 hip hop music lyrics and 20 hip hop music videos have been selected for content analysis. Data comprising these song lyrics will be divided according to the gender of the artistes. (Refer to Appendix D)
- ii) A set of questionnaire will be administered to 40 respondents who were Master in English as Second Language (MESL) students and 4 representatives from the local hip hop music scene
- iii) Interviews with a total of three subjects from the local media

#### **3.4.1 Selection Criteria**

This section presents the selection criteria for songs and music videos for the present study.

##### **3.4.1.1 Selection Criteria for Songs**

The hip hop song lyrics selected for this study will be based on the albums of listed under the list of Best of 2009 Top R&B/Hip Hop Albums according to sales and data compiled by Nielsen Sound Scan. (<http://www.billboard.com>) From the list, 10 artistes, that is, five (5) male and five (5) female artistes, will be selected

chronologically based on the popularity of the albums as listed in the top 100 Billboard charts to avoid biasness in sample selection.

From these ten (10) artistes, all lyrics of the songs from their albums will be obtained from the following engine websites:

- i) <http://www.lyrics.com>
- ii) <http://www.seekalyric.com>
- iii) <http://www.lyricstop.com>
- iv) <http://www.lyricsmode.com>
- v) <http://www.lyrics007.com>
- vi) [http:// www.6lyrics.com](http://www.6lyrics.com)

#### **3.4.1.2 Selection Criteria for Music Videos**

Selection for the content analysis of music videos will be from the same ten (10) hip hop artistes whose song lyrics have been used. For each of the ten (10) hip hop artistes, two (2) music videos will be chosen. These music videos were produced for the hit singles from the albums of the selected recording hip hop artistes by their respective production companies. Each music video must contain portrayals of both male and female characters with a minimum timeframe of two (2) minutes in the storyline. This will provide a wider scope to analyse the portrayal of male and female characters as required in the present study.

For this study, a total of 20 music videos will be analysed according to gender stereotyping themes and its sub categories. (See Appendix A)

#### **3.4.2 Survey**

Data collection for this study consists of two (2) methods, which are survey and interviews.

#### **3.4.2.1 Instrumentation**

A survey will be conducted among two groups of respondents, which are Group A and Group B.

A survey that will be conducted among Group A respondents will be held in two different sessions while a survey among Group B respondents will be held in one session. These sessions are carried out separately on a different day as to the survey conducted among Group A respondents.

For each session, sections of the questionnaire will be disseminated and collected separately as to assure the respondents have ample time to answer all questions. Each session conducted for the survey will last from 2 to 2 and half hours.

Before the survey begins, the respondents will be briefed that the study looks at the language of hip hop song lyrics and music videos. A cover letter for their consent was distributed together with the questionnaire.

The questionnaire that will be administered will comprise of two main parts. The first part of the questionnaire, Part A, will contain a word list of fifty (50) terms derived from the hip hop music lyrics. Respondents will be asked to rate each word as either negative, neutral or positive according to their perspective. Each word can be rated only once.

In Part B of the questionnaire, respondents will be required to respond to hip hop song lyrics and hip hop music videos from three (3) different artistes. (See Appendix A) A total of three (3) sets of samples will be used in this part of the survey, which are:



- i) Sample 1 (Artiste D, Track 8)
- ii) Sample 2 (Artiste E, Track 5)
- iii) Sample 3 (Artiste F, Track 11)

Only three (3) music videos are selected for the survey after due consideration of the time constraint and length of time available to conduct the survey. These three music videos were selected based on the justification that among all the music videos produced for the singles in ten (10) of the albums chosen for the sample, these music videos portray both male and female characters in the same music video with a minimum of two (2) minutes timeframe in their story line. This will provide ample time for respondents to view characteristics of the males and females as required in the study.

In the first section of Part B, respondents will be presented with the lyrics of the songs from the three selected music videos that they will be watching for the final part of the survey. Respondents will be asked to circle any part of the song lyrics that indicate any of these two elements:

- i) Negative language
- ii) Representation of men or women

Respondents are required to rate only the negative language in the song lyrics as the data obtained will be used to confirm the existence of taboo language that has been pre-identified by the researcher in the selected hip hop song lyrics. The pre-identified words will not be shown to the respondents but will be compared by the researcher.

Respondents are required to only indicate in which words or phrases contain the representation of men or women. The respondents are not required to rate the representations of men or women according to positive, negative or neutral ratings

based on the justification that the requirement of this section was to seek whether there were more portrayals of men or women in general in the sample of song lyrics.

The second section of Part B will be answered by respondents after watching the music videos. They will be asked to describe these characteristics as portrayed by the male and female characters in each of the music videos:

- i) Physical representation
- ii) Role
- iii) Positive elements (physical, personality, behavioural traits)
- iv) Negative elements (physical, personality, behavioural traits)
- v) Rates in terms of gender representation (Positive, neutral or negative)

### 3.4.2.2 Respondents

Respondents for the survey consist of two different groups, which are Group A and Group B. The background of respondents from Group A and Group B are summarised below:

**Table 3.1**  
**Background of Group A and Group B Respondents**

| Group | Background   | Number of respondents | Number of males and females | Number of Respondents According to Age Groups |                       |
|-------|--|-----------------------|-----------------------------|---|-----------------------|
|       |  |                       |                             | Age Group                                     | Number of Respondents |
| A     | Master in English (MESL) students                  | 40                    | 6 males<br>34 females       | (21-25) years                                 | 24 respondents        |
|       |  |                       |                             | (26-30) years                                 | 12 respondents        |
|       |  |                       |                             | (30-34) years                                 | 1 respondent          |
|       |  |                       |                             | (35-39) years                                 | 3 respondents         |
| B     | Representatives from the local Hip Hop Music scene | 4                     | 2 males<br>2 females        | (21-25) years                                 | 1 respondent          |
|       |  |                       |                             | (26-30) years                                 | 2 respondents         |
|       |  |                       |                             | (30-34) years                                 | 1 respondent          |
|       |  |                       |                             | (35-39) years                                 | 0                     |
|       |  |                       |                             | (35-39) years                                 | 0                     |

As shown in Table 3.1, Group A respondents consist of 40 students from the Master in English as a Second Language (MESL) programme. Permission was sought from the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics to administer the questionnaire. The group consists of 6 (15%) males, with ages ranging from 25 to 39 years old. Subsequently, among the male respondents, 3 respondents are Malaysians, 1 respondent is Omani, 1 respondent is Sudanese, and 1 respondent is American.

A total of 34 (85%) respondents in Group A consist of females. In the group, 23 respondents are aged 21-25 years old, and 11 respondents are aged 26-30 years old. Apart from that, 33 of the female respondents are Malaysians, 1 respondent is Filipino, and 1 respondent is Vietnamese. All respondents in Group A can be considered to be proficient in the English language based on their acceptance to the MESL programme by the Faculty. Before the survey was conducted, the respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and are familiar with the hip hop genre.

Group B respondents consist of 4 representatives from the local hip hop music scene. Permission was sought from each respondent to administer the questionnaire. In Group B, two (50%) respondents consist of males, whereby 1 respondent is aged 26-30 years old and another 1 respondent is aged 30-34 years old. The male respondents' occupations consist of an MC (rapper) and a hip hop club DJ.

There are two (50%) female respondents in Group B, whereby one is aged 21-25 years old and the other is between 26-30 years old. The female respondents' occupations consist of an MC (rapper) and a music video model. All respondents in Group B are familiar with hip hop language and culture based on their years of involvement in the local hip hop music scene.

### 3.4.2.3 Interviews

Before engaging in face to face interviews, the subjects will be informed of the purpose and background of the study via telephone conversations. A letter of consent will be distributed to all subjects prior to the interviews.

All of the interviews will be conducted at the homes or workplaces of the subjects at their convenience. Each interview session will last from one to two hours and researcher will seek for permission regarding tape recording each interview session. Note-taking will also be employed to ensure details of the interview are noted and the information captured is accurate, especially if the subjects refuse to be taped.

A semi structured interview guide (Appendix C) consist of three (3) parts will be used in this study. The first part of the interview comprises of demographic questions that refer to information regarding age, sex, educational background, occupational background and years of experience in the media industry. In the second part of the interview, questions will be asked based on the survey analysis results.

Subjects during the interview will be asked their perceptions regarding the current scenario of taboo language usage in the media. The topics will include:

- i ) what determines certain words to be a form of taboo language
- ii) whether certain words can influence the language use of the audience,
- iii) how words as used in hip hop song lyrics can generate market appeal for the local audience.

Subjects for the interview will be given the results of Part B of the survey as conducted among Group A and Group B respondents. The specific sections that will be chosen for the interview with the subjects will be based on the results from the survey findings that show a difference in the highest rated answers between Group A and

Group B. The purpose is to gain their insights as representatives from the local media on the perceptions that Group A and Group B have concerning taboo language and gender stereotypes in the three selected hip hop music videos and song lyrics.

#### **3.4.2.4 Subjects for the Interview**

Subjects for the semi-structured interview for this study consist of three (3) representatives from the local media industry as presented in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2**  
**Background of Subjects for the Interview**

| Subject   | Gender | Age Group       | Occupation         | Years of Involvement in the Media Industry |
|-----------|--------|-----------------|--------------------|--|
| Subject 1 | Male   | 26-30 years old | Journalist         | 5  |
| Subject 2 | Male   | 30-34 years old | Radio DJ           | 8  |
| Subject 3 | Female | 26-30 years old | Production Company | 6  |

Three (3) representatives as shown in Table 3.2 are from the local media industry. Subjects consist of two (2) males and one (1) female. Two (2) male members from this group of subjects belong to the 26-30 years age group and one (1) is from the 30-34 age group. One of the male subjects is a journalist with a total of 5 years experience and one is a radio DJ with a total of 8 years experience in the music industry. The female subject belongs to the 26-30 years age group and has an occupation in a production company with a total of 6 years experience in the television production industry.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

Data analysis for this study is divided into content analysis of song lyrics and content analysis of music videos.

#### **3.5.1 Content Analysis of Song Lyrics**

Content analysis of song lyrics will be conducted for the content of taboo language and the content of gender stereotyping themes.

In the aspect of taboo language, the song lyrics will be analysed according to words and phrases. In the category of taboo words, the sub categories that will be analysed consist of obscenity, vulgarity, slang, slur, epithets, scatology, profanity and miscellaneous words based on the categories of foul language that have been identified in the English language by Jay (1992:4). For each sub category, the words will be divided according to two categories of words, one referring to males, and the other to females and the list will be further divided into positive, negative or neutral gender specified words.

For phrases, the categories that will be analysed consist of sexual connotations, as well as epithets and vulgarity based on the types of taboo language as identified by Jay (1992:4). For each sub category, the phrases will be divided according to the gender of the artistes.

A word list of taboo words from the sample of 139 song lyrics will be used in the survey among subjects in Groups A and B. These taboo words will be selected based on the categories of foul language that have been identified in the English language by Jay (1992:4). Selection of the words will also be verified by the supervisor of the present research.

In the aspect of gender stereotyping themes, the categories that will be analysed consist of:

- i) Description of Lifestyle of Alcohol and Drugs
- ii) Description of Lifestyle of Fame and Wealth Material
- iii) Description of Mannerisms of Males
- iv) Description of Attractiveness in the Physical Appearance of Females

For each category, the gender stereotyping themes will be divided according to the gender of the artistes.

### **3.5.2 Content Analysis of Music Videos**

Content analysis of music videos will be conducted in the form of categorising four main gender stereotyping themes as depicted by the main and supporting characters. For each main category of gender stereotyping themes, sub categories will be used in obtaining more specific data concerning the content of the music videos. The four gender stereotyping themes are display of:

- i) Lifestyle
- ii) Physical Appearance
- iii) Sexuality About Men And Women
- iv) Sexual Acts

In the category of lifestyle, the sub categories of gender stereotyping themes consist of alcohol consumption, smoking of cigar or cigarette, nightclub activity and display of fame and wealth material.

The second main gender stereotyping theme, physical appearance consists of sub categories refer to how characters appear in the videos such as being fully dressed

or scantily clad, types of wardrobe for male and female characters, as well as use of diamond accessories by male and female characters.

The third main gender stereotyping theme, display of sexuality by characters in the video such as acts to attract the opposite sex.

The fourth main gender stereotyping theme, display of sexual acts refer to physical acts of affectionate or sexual acts of the characters in the music video. These categories are used based on the four dimensions of gender stereotypes as cited by Deaux and Lewis (1983), which are traits, role behaviors, physical characteristics, and occupations.

Findings from the survey will counted using a numeration formula of frequency and percentage counts based on the sample size of 40 respondents (N=40). The interview questions that will be asked to Group C comprising of representatives from the local media industry will be based on the difference of the perceptions that exist between Group A and Group B.

## **Summary**

This chapter presented the procedures for data collection and analysis of a total of 139 hip hop song lyrics and 20 music videos of which a survey and interviews are employed as data collection tools.