CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter presents methodological aspect of the current study which examines how women are portrayed in the selected five Billboard's Top 100 Charts songs based on the two orders of signification theory proposed by Barthes (1957). It covers research design, data collection, and data analysis.

3.1   Research Design

This study was descriptive qualitative and interpretative as this study aims to reveal the depiction of women contained in selected songs. It was descriptive as it tries to describe and the result cannot be obtained by statistic procedure or quantitative but through explanation and descriptive technique. It was qualitative because songs or music are cultural product (Harvard.edu) thus it studies things in their natural settings, attempts to make sense of, to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln, as cited in Ospina, 2004). It was interpretative because it is not only trying to cover the denotative and connotative meaning of each song but also reveals the myth lies within. Interpretive studies assume that people create and associate their own subjective and inter-subjective meanings as they interact with the world around them (Orlikowski and Baroudi, as cited in Walsham, 1995).

3.2   Data Collection

The data of this study were five songs from 2015 to 2018 Billboard 100 year-end top charts. The songs are sung by female singers and written by the singers themselves. The songs were selected by implementing purposive sampling method. It is a method to represent a population. Borrowing from Tongco (2007) purposive sampling lies on the choice of the researcher to select data based on the purposes of the study. It is tied to the researcher's objective (Palys, 2008). Since this study's objective is to unravel women's portrayal, the songs must be selected based on four requirements. First, the songs must contain a description of women. Second, the songs must be featured in Billboard's year-end charts. Third, the songs must be sung and written by the singers themselves. Fourth, the songs must be produced within three years period (2015-2018) before 2019. Below is the list of selected songs with each song's further details.

1.   *God is a Woman* **by Ariana Grande (2018)**

Grande is an American singer, actress, songwriter, as well as an activist who actively advocates on LGBTQ rights and Black Lives Matter, mental health awareness, and gender equality. Grande has been named Billboard's 2018 Woman of the Year and was honored at the Billboard Women in Music dinner and awards gala in New York on Dec. 6. 2018. She went through an incredibly successful year for her Billboard 200 chart-topping fourth album Sweetener. She joined with icons such as Selena Gomez, Madonna, Lady Gaga and Taylor Swift have been previously honored as Woman of the Year. As The Billboard's Vice President of Content, Ross Scarano, said in a statement "… she consistently stands up for herself and her decisions in a world that often isn't hospitable to that sort of strength in young women. She's got guts, she's making some of the best music of her career, and she's absolutely deserving of Woman of the Year." This song scored at number 62 on Billboard Year-End Charts also appeared on a few other Year End Charts such as Pop Songs, Dance Club Songs, Radio Songs, and Canadian Hot 100. It scored the biggest streaming week ever for a pop album by a female artist on its release.

2.   *Bodak Yellow (Money Moves)* **by Cardi B (2017)**

Her real name is Belcalis. She is a famous American social media personality, songwriter, singer and former stripper of Trinidadian/Dominican descent. As a singer, the multi-faceted lady created history in September 2017 by becoming the first female rapper to top the Billboard Hot 100 in 19 years with her debut hit 'Bodak Yellow (Money Moves)'. Cardi becomes the first female rapper with two number 1s. Beyond music, she is also actively advocating from her social media accounts on social justice issues such as inequalities both financial and social that occur to low-income communities and people of color. She also gives encouragement for women on body positivity and outer appearances to fully embrace who you are. This song ruled at number 24 on 2017 Billboard Year-End Charts and 54 on 2018 Billboard Year-End Charts of Top 100 Hot Songs as well as appeared on a few other Year End Charts, which are Rap Streaming Songs, R&B/Hip-Hop Streaming Songs, Streaming Songs, Hot Rap Songs, and R&B/Hip-Hop Airplay Songs.

3. *Scars to Your Beautiful* **by Alessia Cara (2017)**

Cara is a popular Canadian singer of Italian descent; her music revolves around Rhythm & Blue Pop with Jazz strong undertones. With her down-to-earth personality, Cara comes across as someone who everybody can connect with, and this is one quality of hers which makes her extremely popular among the masses. She is way ahead of her generation in terms of maturity which reflects in the lyrics of her songs. "Rule Breaker" award was given to this singer-songwriter at 2016 Women in Music event. Cara will receive the designation, which celebrates a boundary-pushing female music star whose approach defies the conventional, at the New York City gala on December 9, before the event airs December 12 on Lifetime. Her song "Scars to Your Beautiful" hit a new peak of No. 15 on the Hot 100 and at number 30 on Billboard's Year End Top 100 Charts and other Year End Charts. With the "Rule Breaker" award, Cara joins a star-studded list of 2016 Women in Music honorees, headlined by "Woman of the Year" recipient Madonna and "Icon" Shania Twain. Also to be awarded at the event are Halsey ("Rising Star"), Andra Day ("Powerhouse"), Meghan Trainor ("Chart Topper"), Maren Morris ("Breakthrough Artist") and Kesha ("Trailblazer"). Day, Halsey, Morris and Trainor will also perform at the event.

4. *Most Girls* **by Hailee Steinfield (2017)**

Steinfeld is an American actress, model and singer. Her strong and confident performance earned her numerous critical awards and many people already got a glimpse of the star she was about to become. Steinfield is set to host and perform at the annual Billboard Women in Music Awards, honoring the standout female stars and executives of 2016. Steinfeld joined Woman of the Year Madonna and Icon honoree Shania Twain at the event, to be held Dec. 9 in New York. The song peaked at number 54 in August and remained on the chart for 16 weeks, and ruled at number 62 on Australian ARIA (Australian Recording Industry Association) Year-End Charts. The critic opinion of the song coming from Jonathan Currinn of Outlet Mag. He wrote that the song's lyrics "are incredibly clever, really proving that Hailee Steinfeld has what it takes to inspire women," and Mike Wass of Idolator wrote that "Most Girls" is "as catchy as it is relatable and inspiring.".

5.   *All about That Bass* **by Meghan Trainor (2015)**

Meghan Elizabeth Trainor is an American singer, songwriter and record producer, who wrote, recorded, performed and produced three independently released albums before she turned 18. Trainor's music is known for its retro style aesthetics. Most of her works revolve around subjects such as modern womanhood, body image, and empowerment. Trainor was honored with the Chart Topper award at the 2016 Billboard Women in Music Awards. The award recognizes an artist who notched notable achievements on Billboard's music charts this year. Trainor is one of several 2016 Women in Music honorees, headlined by "Woman of the Year" recipient Madonna and "Icon" Shania Twain. Also honored that year are Halsey ("Rising Star"), Andra Day ("Powerhouse"), Maren Morris ("Breakthrough Star"), Kesha ("Trailblazer") and Alessia Cara ("Rule Breaker"). This song ruled at number 28 on Billboard's Year-End Hot 100 Charts with other list of appearance on Year-End Charts such as Streaming Songs, Adult Contemporary Songs, Digital Song Sales, Canadian Hot 100, and Twitter Top Tracks.

3.3   Data analysis

In order to obtain in the ways in which women are portrayed, the process of data analysis in this study was performed in a few steps, namely selection, analysis, and interpretation. The elaborations of each step are presented below.

3.3.1   Selection

After all songs are selected from the list of Top 100 Year-End Charts on Billboard from 2015 to 2018, the signifiers in the lyrics of each song were determined. The signifiers were chosen based on the expressions or signifiers that are likely to indicate the portrayal of women. Because the data are songs, some lyrics may occur more than once. Therefore, one particular signifier will be shown once thus this study will not display repeating signifiers.

3.3.2 Analysis

After all signifiers of each song were determined, the signifiers were analyzed through Barthes' two orders of signification (1957) which was determining the denotation, connotation and myth. The elaborations of each step are presented below:

3.3.2.1 Determining the denotation

This first step deals with denotative meaning of signs (first order of signification). The signifiers are interpreted based on their literal meaning. Sometimes the word needs to be defined from dictionaries. In this case, the study will use Cambridge online dictionary, Merriam Webster online dictionary, and Urban dictionary. Different sources of dictionaries are used depending on the words. For instance, the utilization of urban dictionary is needed to define another more cultural and referential meaning to pop culture. A sign then can be produced from the signifier and signified.

3.3.2.2 Determining the connotation

The second step deals with connotative of signs (second order of signification). It investigates connotative meaning of signs. It is generated by the denotative sign and the new signified. The linguistic signs are identified based on the context to reveal the depiction, as stated by Fiske (2002). Since the nature of connotative meaning is subjective, references are required to discover connotative meanings from the signs. Thus the meanings of signifiers are determined through the connection of the signifiers to particular phenomenon in society.

3.3.2.3 Determining the myth

It signifies myths from signs. Myth can be revealed from the combination of two orders of signification. Myth can be seen by analyzing what people believe through the natural and historical aspects. Similar to connotative meaning, references are required to reveal myth because it is more abstract and interpretative.

3.3.3 Interpretation

Interpretation is drawn from the findings of denotative sign (first level of signification) and connotative sign (second level of signification) which then generate myth. By associating textual evidences and cultural phenomenon, these significations have the capability to reveal how women are portrayed in the selected songs.