

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In this world of everyday life, people live their life with their own presumption and consciousness. It is undeniable that the cultural aspect of societies in the form of their cultural products has, more or less, the strong connection to their lifestyle, behavior, or even point of view. One culture product called music, which is the writer's interest, is quite significant in the life of people. Dan Laughey stated in the Introduction of his book *Music & Youth Culture* that "Music is considered by many to be the highest form of art and culture" and it also "epitomise" people "values and tastes" (1). This statement proves the writer's belief that music, as a research subject, is eligible; and the role of the music in both determining and determined by people are actually true.

Music is classified with genre and each genre has always shifting its course so that it would be impossible to patently state that a music genre has been fully analyzed. However, music is apparently more complicated than just a group of genres. These genres of music actually connect each other and create a hybrid genre. Watkins stressed that Lauryn Hills' "*The Miseducation* cut across several genres—including rap, R&B, reggae, soul, and pop—some of her detractors question if it is hip hop" (72). But still he recognized her as "a brilliant symbol of hip hop's phenomenal evolution" (Watkins 73). Other notable example is Beastie Boys who

successfully “blended hip hop with punk, dub, instrumental rock, and alternative, while maintaining the music’s integrity by keeping hip hop at the core of what they do” (Hess 91). And with this, it is proven that this problem is not a rare situation. Regardless to the unsettling problem, the writer still believes that there is still ways to prove some performers’ genre.

Hip Hop is one of many genres that actually brought the study forth. This music genre is started by the marginalized African-American which is linked to the post war era but still reflect the long history of the oppression of their society (qtd. in Gelder 114). This music genre came to the surface with a non-commercial and idealist thought but this naïve attitude changed through the times when it slowly become a national and global phenomenon (115)

This music genre is distinguished by its beat that goes consistently unchanged through the whole song. This aspect is proven to be very important beside the variation of ‘scratching’ and rhyiming. It is said that “The beat truly is important – many newcomers to the hip hop music scene will get attached to songs they hear based on the “beat” the rapper has decided to use in a song.” (Directory M). in this sense, beat is the key concept in determining the Hip Hop music genre.

Not only from the music, has the fashion of Hip Hop also helped it to be distinguished from any other genre. Big glasses, many rings, sneakers with ‘phat’ shoelaces, big gold necklaces and jewellery are common fashion statements of Hip Hop. In terms of female, flashy clothes and miniskirts are presently the hitting trend on the marketsince the current fashion for women has changed from a “tomboyish

look” to a “feminine look” which is sexy and powerful. The feminine hip hop gear include slim pants, short low waist skirts with leggings and boots, low waist jeans and tight singlets clinging to the chest.(Rise of Womanhood)

The long history and the values in this genre have the interesting aspect from which the writer has extracted an interesting issue. It is known that this genre has the strong connection to harsh life that reflected through the terms of gangsta rap that “was born out of the street gang culture of the 1980s,” in which “Artists ... brought gang imagery into their music through stories of gunplay, drug dealing, and avoiding the police”(Hess 187). This violent and criminal feature makes Hip Hop socially and culturally distinctive from other genre. The aspect that made the writer interested in this genre, however, is the female aspect. Hip Hop genre is known as the one that has the most violent attitude towards female. As Watkins said “Gender and sexual tensions have always existed in popular culture, but the gangsta sub-genre took hip hop’s misogyny to the extreme” (Hess 51).

In reaction, this situation has provoked the female hip hop performer such as “Salt-N-Pepa, Queen Latifah, Yo Yo, MC Lyte, and others illustrates... challenge sexism within rap music...”(Hess 200) but somehow the sexual explicit lyric and performance was still attached to their songs. Pussycat Dolls is, then, found in this matter as the appropriate subject.

This Hip Hop performer is seen as having a significant cultural and social influence to world of entertainment. It is true that this band has yet to receive a great achievement such as Grammy but the success of this group even makes a reality show

that called Pussycat Dolls Present: The Search for the Next Doll (Internet Movie Database) which becomes the model role and automatically posing themselves as an iconic figure in the entertainment business.

The reason of choosing this group as a subject is because the name Pussycat dolls that was originally a “burlesque dance revue based in Los Angeles” that was founded by “Robin Antin in 1995” that “grew into an A-list phenomena with a revolving cast of guest celebrities [such as]... Christina Aguilera, Pamela Anderson, Kelly Osbourne, Pink, Britney Spears, Carmen Electra, and Gwen Stefani.” It was then became a professional group of singers by launching single *Don't Cha* (Starpulse.com). This background information creates a certain identity that distinguished them from other female Hip Hop performer. It is the full performance aspect that makes Pussycat Dolls a worthy competitor in the entertainment world. While the others became known for their beautiful voice or their excellent musicality, Pussycat Dolls brings the whole package of entertainment to the audience.

To speak of Pussycat Dolls, there are actually dozens of media as cultural product that can be examine or analyze. The unofficial fan site that the writer found in Google shows hundred thousands of alike WebPages, which is quite interesting to be discussed. The reality show in form of talent search is also pretty significant besides doing study of the Pussycat Dolls lifestyle. But, unfortunately these all interesting aspects related to Pussycat Dolls didn't suits the writer well. To study about things mention above would be the study of stardom, fandom, or even identity and because the writer afraid that he has a limited knowledge and interest in these

issues the writer has only choose to examine the music videos that perform by Pussycat Dolls. It was because the writer has the interest to peal up the gender issues in these music videos.

It was then; another stage of limitation comes forward to the writer's mind. To limit the number of music videos that are going to be examined is the next aim of the writer. It is true that Pussycat Dolls has quite many videos, but not all videos were classified to hip hop genre which is the genre that the writer has established as a subject in this study. The other consideration to limit the music videos was the problem of determining which music video has the worthy aspect to be examined. On this account, the writer (in the following paragraph) will explain why the writer chooses this video

The music video is of course the first hit that Pussycat Dolls have which is *Don't Cha*. The reason to choose this music video is because with this video the Pussycat Dolls has the first chance to become the world's public figure. This video's duration is 4 minutes and 42 seconds (this versions is the downloaded from youtube.com) and directed by Paul Hunter under A&M label. (Pussycat Dolls: Music Videos Don't Cha) This video is in the billboard chart of Hot 100 for the second place at their peak and last for 28 weeks in the chart; the first song and the most successful songs in their career; lasting in the Popular Song Billboard popular chart for 27 weeks and peaking at second place. This video also hit other categories Billboard chart such as Hip-Hop songs in 8th position as the peak and last rather long for 21 weeks; even longer in Radio and Dance/Club Play songs categories (36 and 54

weeks despite that the position less high than other categories). (Billboard.com) The reason to choose this video is this song is featuring Busta Rhymes which represented the entire male feat in many Pussycat Dolls' video. The writer feels the need to insert a male feat because it offers the male gaze in some of Pussycat Dolls' work.

After some consideration, the writer decided to choose only a part of the full music video that represents the video itself to the utmost. This consideration emerges in the limitation of time and effort, while to analyze full version would take much longer time, bigger effort, and most of all creates much thicker pages. In this matter, the chosen part is the last chorus of each music video. This decision is taken because from the lyric itself, each music video always repeats the title. Like in the Don't Cha music video, the chorus also repeating themselves in saying doesn't cha. Philip Dorel defines repetition in music as

an aspect of music where there is a high degree of regularity, with apparently no analogue in speech. Musical phrases are sometimes exactly repeated within a tune without any variation at all, and are often repeated an exact number of times—usually twice, sometimes more.... This kind of exact repetition does not normally occur in speech” (223).

Hennion also said that “At first glance, one can see that it [pop songs] is a genre which borrows from a wide variety of other genres; from poetry it borrows the importance and autonomy of certain key words, as well as the use of meter, verse,

and repetition” (Firth 154). As it was said by these people, it is justified for the writer to use this very part.

Nevertheless, the chorus itself appears more than one time in the music video. This fact force a decision to be made to choose which chorus will be the one. On this matter, the last appearance of the chorus is chosen it is regarded the peak or closure of the video itself which means it is, more or less, the main message that the video wants to deliver.

In this matter, the discourse of celebrity brings intriguing issues. Graeme Turner said there is a “discursive contradiction, relationship between the celebrity and their public. Celebrity [including music performer] is the product of a commercial process but it is worth remembering that the public expression of popular interest can operate, at times, as if it was entirely independent of this commercial process.” (Turner 55). The making of celebrity like spice girl “as a brand rather than a band” is the main point concerned of how they become a celebrity that combine “the discourse between pragmatism and feisty independence, which allowed them to perform, convincingly, a knowing celebration of their own constructedness” (55,56). In this way, Pussycat Dolls follow this kind of celebration. They actually cover themselves both in burlesque and Hip Hop style that make them look over sexualized. The way they dress, which always involve showing cleavage or skin, or just body shape strongly represent the nuance of sexiness. Yet, their positive attitude somehow says that they are having fun in playing the sexy role.

This condition gives the key to one shared point of view for these days society. Because they celebrate the constructedness of themselves and *independently* acting through this constructedness, it is intriguing to know what this mass-consumed media is portraying for the image of nowadays female. This point above would be the starting point of what the study about to do. Through the work performed by this group band, the writer hopes that the new point of view will emerge and stating what is happening in the nowadays females' world; although it cannot be said that this image will represent all of the female in the world.

The constructed values on female image in Pussycat Dolls as a cultural icon are the true intention of this thesis. In this matter, Don't Cha feat. Busta Rhyme music video is chosen to give this study comprehensive information about the female image. The main reason to choose this music video is that it is the most successful song above all other works by reaching second place billboard chart of Hot 100 (Billboard.com). The nuance of Hip Hop is also found in this music video by the featured artist. From these reasons, it expected that the female image which reflects the current genre is found.

This music video is then examined with semiotic Roland Barthes. This specific kind of semiotic allows the writer to get the underlying image of women that portrayed in Pussycat Dolls by searching all message delivered. After the writer get the result from the image, the writer will try to unravel what has been the hidden agenda (to put literally the gender issues) in this image. The further image of the method and theory will be explained later.

In short, this particular study aims to unravel the underlying values of female image in popular society by examining the music videos of Pussycat Dolls, which is a perfect representation of popular image of female and looking for what the society (or at least people in this business) are constructing due to the female image. The writer hopes that this study will open the horizon of values in which the society hold right now resulting the proof of how women is portrayed in popular culture shifting and evolving yet still hold the basic value of patriarchy.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

The writer has formulated the statement of the problems in:

How is the female image constructed in Pussycat Dolls Music Video?

1.3 Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is:

To describe the female image portrayed in Pussycat Dolls videos

1.4 Significance of the Study

What the writer feels to be the significance of this study keep a distinguished and interesting aspect that will be useful to both writer and the reader. The sexual portrayal in popular culture especially in this female performing band-brand is found in many discourses. However, Pussycat Dolls serve the unique sexual power in our time and this is quite worth it to be examined. It was to be expected that this study gives a comprehension explanation about female image that portrayed in Pussycat Dolls' Don't cha music video. This study will be only focusing to extract female

image and then tracking from what gender issues that this image come from. With this focus, the writer hopes that this study contribute to modern society in which the analysis of female image building one more understanding in semiotic theory, gender, and also the Hip Hop issues.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

1. Hip Hop: an urban youth culture associated with rap music and the fashions of African-American residents of the inner city (Wordnet)
2. Misogyny: hatred of women (Wordnet)
3. Myth: a traditional story accepted as history; serves to explain the world view of a people (Wordnet).
4. Popular Culture : - culture that is widely favoured or well liked by many people (Storey 5)
 - The culture that is leftover after we have decided what is high culture (Storey 6)
 - Mass-produced commercial culture, whereas high culture is the result of an individual act of creation. (Storey 6)
5. Semiotics: a philosophical theory of the functions of signs and symbols (Wordnet)