Heard But Not Seen: a Teenage Centric Approach to Music Consumption Research

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ABSTRACT

There are significant problems with published work on youth and music which principally involve methodological approach and data collection. This paper seeks to explore and develop the concept of teenagers designing their own questions, collecting their own data and interpreting their findings to contribute to an understanding of adolescent music consumption. Findings indicate that using a teenage centric approach generates insight into actual behaviour of respondents thus reducing social desirability issues and that the teenage interviewers were able to distinguish differing responses from friends and members of their friendship group.

INTRODUCTION

Talbot (2005) argues that faced with an increasing array of competing ‘lifestyle’ products aimed at young consumers (e.g. television, films, games, mobile technology, and the internet) pre-teens may not be drawn to music as much as they once were. As these pre-teens mature then, there would be a dearth of music enthusiasts negatively impacting upon the sales of crossover acts currently helping the record industry to survive. It is now appropriate and perhaps essential for the industry to consider a more sophisticated way of researching and targeting a youth audience that has historically been regarded as a homogenous group of consumers.

Bennett (2002) indicates that there are significant problems with the existing published work on youth and music and makes an appeal for a more ethnographic approach when researching music. Cohen (1993) also suggests that attempting to place the participant in the context of their “day to day activities, relationships and experiences” (p124) is lacking from existing studies. The significance of contextualising and the inter-relationship between the individual and their environment ought not to be precluded from research studies on youth and music.

This study focuses on what respondents (participants) take into account and not, as with social science, what the researcher may wish to account for in an *a priori* fashion. Pollner and Emerson (2001) suggest that more recent forms of ethnographic research are concerned with ‘living’ the lived order. As such, there is a demand on the researcher to immerse him/herself more deeply into the actual practice or endeavour under investigation. A study is only accessible to those with the competence to participate in it. In this research therefore, it was necessary to interact as and with teenagers. In other words, the researchers attempted to achieve as closely as possible what Pollner and Emerson (2001) describe as “an auxiliary to the practitioner profession or work site under consideration” (p124). Given the age of the authors, it was impossible to interact with the teenagers as a teenager and obtain a fully ethnographic account of their ‘lived’ world.

Even though an ethnographic approach has been identified as having a number of methodological issues and limitations (see for example researcher guidelines: ESOMAR, 1999; MRS 2000), there are a number of positive attributes of employing aspects of this approach notwithstanding calls for this type of method to be employed. These include allowing the adolescent a greater opportunity to engage, design and interpret the research using a language that is familiar to them. As such the interviewer and interviewee will be able to engage in the mutual construction of meaning (Mills, 2001).

Kraak and Pelletier (1998) suggest an adult moderator should be replaced by a trained youth peer to obtain more reliable information and that this information should be collected in familiar surroundings. The trained youth peer (in the practitioner context discussed by Kraak and Pelletier) will typically be asking questions or facilitating activities that have been predetermined by the research teams for the benefit of the client organisation. Similar work conducted by Shermach (1996) discussed the use of peer guides aged 8-19 years who worked in pairs to lead team activities among 4-12-year-olds. Adult moderators behind the scenes, however, fed questions to the peer moderators to address specific consumption issues.

The limitations of these approaches are two-fold: there appears to be no input from the peer moderators in designing the questions and, perhaps as a result of this, the research does not consider what is important to the respondent (only what the researchers or clients think is relevant). Particularly with adolescents, negating the relevance of what is important to them will not facilitate a holistic understanding of their consumption behaviour. This may be particularly relevant in relation to popular music consumption which has traditionally been seen as pertaining to a youth market.

MUSIC INDUSTRY YOUTH RESEARCH

Age, gender and class are the main criteria for presenting statistics and survey findings across a range of market and consumer data produced by the British Phonographic Industry (BPI), the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI), Mintel,1 Keynote, and Euromonitor (2005). However any distinctions that are made between groups within the teenage segment of consumers are limited to only some categories within the main statistical reports provided by these organisations and distinguish between early adolescent age groups (12-14 years) and older adolescents (15-19) with respect to ‘choice of music’, ‘music downloading’, ‘purchasing by outlet’ and ‘music attitude statements’ (Mintel only). All other adolescent consumer data is collapsed into the broader age classification of 12-19 years. This clearly produces a composite and only partial view of the adolescent consumer of popular music and represents a weakness in the industry’s understanding and knowledge of their younger consumers. This research aims to contribute to an understanding of attitudes towards music, listening habits and preferences as well as positing an innovative approach to data collection and as such illustrates that a teenage centric interview method may be more insightful than research methods designed and implemented by adult researchers and traditionally used to elicit data from adolescent consumers.

ADOLESCENCE AND MUSIC CONSUMPTION

Music is known to be important in the social and personal lives of adolescents and as such many researchers have examined the role music has played in satisfying particular emotional needs (strategies for coping), social needs (belonging and identity) and developmental needs (the socialisation ‘journey’) [See Arnett, 1995b;

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1Mintel also segments music purchasing data, retail outlet data and attitude statements by ‘Working Status’, ‘Respondents Own Children’, ‘ACORN’ and ‘Lifestyle’ categories.
Larson et al., 1989; Larson and Kubey, 1983; Levy and Windahl, 1985; Lull, 1987, 1992; Rubin 1994]. What perhaps is less obvious is an understanding of the contradictions teenagers often display relative to popular music consumption and the sometimes seeming inconsistency of their choice and use of music. It is this that would be of most use to the recorded music industry.

**THIS STUDY**

This research therefore attempts to contextualise the data (in relation to what the teenagers believed was most important to them, how they consumed and used music, how often they listened to music and, perhaps most importantly, how they used it to express their identity) in order to move towards a more ethnographic approach by creating an opportunity for greater adolescent involvement in both designing and interpreting their own interviews. This method is akin to that used in the psychology discipline known as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as described by Smith & Osborn (2003). The IPA method considers how an ‘insider’s perspective’ can be obtained when the researcher cannot do it themselves either directly or completely. This approach could be considered an ‘ethno-extension’ method as it builds upon our traditional understanding of ethnography.

Diagram 1 provides an overview of the way in which this research followed both a sequential and emergent approach where later stages in the research were both influenced and informed by previous stages. The initial interviews built on previous exploratory work conducted and published by the authors. This pilot work included conducting a mini-group (a simulated situation in which the teenagers were asked to be DJs playing to selected group of friends) followed by a number of exploratory interviews. As a consequence of the findings from this previous research the author became increasingly aware of the need to employ a more ethnographic approach.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY QUESTIONS**

- Can a greater understanding of adolescent music consumption be achieved by using teenage interviewers?
- Will using a more teenage centric approach provide different results to more traditional methods?
- Are there implications for future studies conducted with adolescents?

**METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH APPROACH**

Initially teenagers were interviewed in a traditional manner to explore their music consumption habits to allow accurate and inclusive personal accounts to be recorded. In-depth interviews were designed to be purposeful, ensuring interviewee time was carefully utilised and interviewer effects were minimised by the use of specific questions (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). The appealing feature of interviews as a research tool is the opportunity for the interviewee to respond in their own words to express their own personal perspectives. As the intention was both to explore music consumption and to allow the researchers to immerse themselves in the phenomena under investigation the in-depth interview approach was considered an appropriate method.

However, in order to employ a more ethnographic approach to the study, the authors then recruited 10 teenagers (all of whom had been interviewed twice for the longitudinal research) to conduct their own research on a close friend and a member of a friendship group in relation to music use, choice and consumption and the way in which this was expressed through identity formation. It has been noted that it is necessary to differentiate the roles of close friends.
and the wider social group and to consider the influence of non-parental adults (Arnett, 1995b; Buyssse and Oost, 1997; Claes et al., 2005 and Vincent and McCabe, 2000). Aggregated findings that consider friendship groups or families as a whole are known to mask the distinct differences between the two. As such, the expert interviews sought to establish if there was a difference between the two groups in terms of music consumption.

While the initial interviews provided breadth and depth of data, allowing the authors to explore the key themes identified in the literature and subsequent issues that emerged from the initial stages of research, a more ethnographic approach could potentially add a further dimension to the overall findings. It is acknowledged that any interviewer (regardless of age) can affect the rate and quality of responses (Singer, Frankel and Glassman, 1983). Yet the draw of a more ethnographic approach, which would afford an otherwise unobtainable insight into the culture, cultural text and sub-text of adolescents (including language short-hand), was appealing enough to find a way in which the research could be conducted by adolescents ranging from 12 years to 18 years albeit with some limitations. It would also offer the opportunity to triangulate the data, that is, “use different kinds of measurements which provide repeated verification” (Miles and Huberman 1984: 234) from the initial interview stage.

CONTEXT

The ‘expert’ interviews were to give another social context in which the research could be conducted. The interviewers were known as ‘experts’ as (a) they were familiar with the context and objectives of the research and (b) they were possibly able to obtain data otherwise impossible for the author to collect because of their age and their position within their friend and peer groups. Additionally, (c) they were given a ‘training session’ on interviewing and they designed their own interviews through tasks (i.e. collage construction) with the authors and (d) they would ‘interpret’ the data.

To maximise the conversational and ethnographic aspect of the expert interview, the questions used in the interview were designed by the adolescents themselves, based on the themes generated within the study’s conceptual framework (See Tables 1a & 1b). Two groups of experts were invited to participate (12-14-year-olds and 15-18-year-olds). These two age ‘groups’ were chosen as Harvey and Byrd (1998) indicate that early adolescence is mostly about acquiring information and experience, while late adolescence is characterised as being a period of identity development in which the information obtained earlier is used to build and consolidate a new identity. As such, the importance of the social context might change over the course of development and this would be easier to determine if these two age groups were used.

As can be seen in Table 1a & 1b the interview questions designed within the given themes by the older adolescent group differ in various ways from the questions created by the younger group. As may have been expected the older group produced on average a greater number of questions under each theme. They tended to be more sophisticated and enquiring in nature. The older group also demonstrated their better understanding of the research and its objectives by positing questions that were designed to explore in more depth aspects related to identity, social contexts and behaviour relating to music consumption and use.

DESIGN

The questions the teenagers asked their friends arose from discussions that centred on collages the recruited experts made together at the start of each ‘training’ session. The teenage researchers were given a variety of music/teenage interest magazines and were asked to generate collages using clippings from the magazines under a number of relevant headings. The adolescents then made up their own questions discussed and agreed within the group. They were then supplied with the materials to conduct the interviews, instructions on ethical issues and means of contacting the researchers in cases of difficulty and/or need for more general support.

Having conducted the interviews with their friends, all of the experts provided an interpretation of their peer interviews. To facilitate the interviews, the experts chosen were provided with the transcripts of the interviews they conducted with their friends and audio recordings of the same interviews. The experts were then asked to go through the transcripts and listen to the tapes after which they were asked to interpret the findings. A tape-recording was made of the experts’ interpretations as they discussed their own interviews. The interpretation of each interview transcript was divided into the 10 themes related to the meaning of music, identity and self expression through music and music listening and consumption. These were identified during the initial phase of research. At each stage, very brief prompts were provided by the researcher and are summarised below:

- In your own words, what did you understand about what your friend was telling you here?
- How easy was it for your friend to answer these particular questions?
- Do you think your friend was hiding anything or did s/he surprise you with anything they said?
- How honest do you think your friend was being?

SAMPLE

Each expert interviewed two friends (a close friend and a member of a friendship group). There are a greater number of female ‘expert’ adolescents (7 female and 3 male experts) but this is because they were more interested in taking part in the study. This interest in the research was a factor in recruitment as the author believed the research process was likely to run more smoothly if the experts were ‘engaged’ with the project. Of course a limitation of using the approach is that those with good communication skills were more likely to volunteer and as such their sample of friends chosen for interview may reflect this. However, as this aspect of the overall research study was both exploratory and experimental, the sampling frame was considered appropriate to meet the objectives of this aspect of the research.

RESEARCH METHOD FINDINGS

The insights, where observed, will be discussed under the headings of Interviewer Effect/Social Desirability Issues and Context, Friendship Type and Stage of Adolescence. To help illustrate the findings relevant quotes from the discussions the researcher had with the teenage interviewers during the self interpretation stage of the study are provided under each heading.

INTERVIEWER EFFECT/SOCIAL DESIRABILITY ISSUES AND CONTEXT

The self-interpretation of the interviews conducted by the teenage expert was extremely insightful—particularly in relation to the methodological contribution. That is, by asking the teenager researchers to interpret their own interviews, a rich context could be added to the basic transcribed words from the interview (Mills, 2001). Courtesy of the ‘personal’ knowledge that the teenage interviewer possessed about their friends, the actual behaviour of the teenage respondent was often used to support the expert’s
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<th>Interview Themes</th>
<th>Early (Younger) Adolescent Sample</th>
<th>Later (Older) Adolescent Sample</th>
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| **1. Things which are really important** | *Questions E1*  
- What is important to you in life generally?  
- Give examples of brothers & sisters, other family, friends, fashion, money, health, lyrics, advice on life, looks and appearance, clothing, etc  
- Do you have a role model? If so, does it affect you in the way you dress, talk and behave? | *Questions L1*  
- Would you listen to music just because it made you laugh?  
- Do you listen to music just because other people do?  
- If you could only take one thing with you to a desert island would it be music related?  
- What is really important to you and why? |
| **2. Places they would listen to music on their own** | *Questions E2*  
- Do you listen to music on your own?  
- If so, where do you listen to music on your own?  
- Would you rather listen to music through headphones or in a room on your own with the door closed and blast it out? | *Questions L2*  
- Do you listen to music in your underwear? Why?  
- Where do you listen to music?  
- If you listen to music alone will it be of a more subdued genre than that which you would listen to amongst companions?  
- Do you need to listen to music to help you concentrate?  
- Do you feel less on your own when you listen music on the bus? |
| **3. Music they would listen to with their friends** | *Questions E3*  
- Would you be influenced by your friends?  
- What types of music would you listen to with your friends?  
- (If female/Male) Is it just male/female artists you listen to?  
- And why? | *Questions L3*  
- Do you dance when you listen to music with your friends?  
- Do you feel that you have to listen to certain types of music to get new friends? Or more better friends?  
- Do you feel more free when you listen to music with friends?  
- Would you sing along to music with friends in public? |
| **4. Music they would listen to with their family** | *Questions E4*  
- Do you and your family listen to music together?  
- Do your parents listen to music they grew up with or do they listen to a bit of both?  
- Do you listen to music with your brothers and sisters? If so what? | *Questions L4*  
- Have your parents influenced your taste in music?  
- Is the music you listen to with your parents the same music you listen to with your friends/or on your own?  
- Do your siblings influence your music taste? How?  
- Would you know your parents’ music tastes enough to buy them a CD for a present? |
| **5. Things that influence or have influenced the music they like** | *Questions E5*  
- Do male or female celebrities influence the music you choose?  
- Do awards influence the music you like?  
- Do your moods influence the music you choose? | *Questions L5*  
- Would you buy a CD just on the recommendation of your friends?  
- Would you go to a concert before they heard a CD?  
- Does fashion and style influence the music you listen to? |
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| 6. Music says something about who they are / what other people are like | **Questions E6**  
  • Does your personality show through your music?  
  • Are you sometimes mistaken for someone you’re not because of the music you listen to?  
  • Does the music you like reflect your attitude towards things?  
  • Does music say something about what other people are like? | **Questions L6**  
  • Do people change depending on what music they listen to?  
  • If someone asked you what bands you like would you only mention bands you thought would make you look good?  
  • Would you think less of someone if they liked crap music? Why? |
| 7. What music means to them and how it makes them feel | **Questions E7**  
  • What does music mean to you?  
  • Do you listen to music for a specific reason?  
  • If you are happy or sad does that affect the music you listen to? | **Questions L7**  
  • Do certain songs remind you of certain people? Why?  
  • Does music make you feel individual?  
  • If you were depressed could music cheer you up?  
  • If there are problems in your life do you listen to music that makes you feel sad? |
| 8. Music that’s in                                    | **Questions E8**  
  • In your opinion what music do you think is in?  
  • What about these styles: R’n’B, Hip Hop, Rock, Pop or Indie | **Questions L8**  
  • Even if you didn’t like a band, would you stalk them just to say you had met them?  
  • Would you avoid music cause everyone else likes them? Why?  
  • Do you listen to or watch programmes that promote music e.g. Popworld, CD UK, TOTP? |
| 9. Music they listen to that’s cool                   | **Questions E9**  
  • Do you think the music you listen is cool or not?— What kind of music is that?  
  • Do you follow the crowd or do you just listen to music you like? | **Questions L9**  
  • Is retro music more cool than modern music?  
  • Define cool? What makes music cool?  
  • Is cool music different to good music? |
| 10. Things they buy or own that show others the kind of music they like | **Questions E10**  
  • Does your style or the way you dress show your personality to others?  
  • What do you buy or own that shows others the kind of music you like— examples: clothing, hair styles, ring tones, CDs, the way I dress | **Questions L10**  
  • Would you wear PVC trousers/clothing even if it made you feel really uncomfortable because they linked to your music?  
  • Would you dress like members of bands you appreciate?  
  • Would you wear clothes to advertise bands you are into? Why? |
interpretation of the interviews. The following quotes from the researcher’s discussion with the teenage interviewer during the self interpretation stage of the research help illustrate this point:

(Key: R—Researcher T—Teenage Interviewer)

R - Do you know her brothers and sisters and her family? (See Questions E4, Table 1a)
T - Yes, I’m staying with them in 11 days

R - So do you agree that’s how your friend behaves when she’s with her family?
T - Yes because I do know that she does listen to music with her family. I mean that’s very honest, she didn’t cover anything up there. I would have thought some people would have been a bit maybe embarrassed or they didn’t really want to say they listened to The Lighthouse Family, Tina Turner. Obviously she laughed when she said Tina Turner because maybe she thought, oh that may be quite funny for somebody else. Maybe she was trying to make a joke of it as if to say, well I do listen to it but maybe if I make it into a joke or try and make it funny, then maybe they won’t take it that way.

This reduced the impact of interviewer effect and addressed some of the social desirability issues in relation to the responses provided and gave the findings from the interviews a context and meaning that the researcher would have found extremely difficult to obtain on their own merit. Again, quotes from the self interpretation stage of the research help illustrate this:

R - This is your close friend responding to question 5 (See E5, Table 1a). What did you understand about what your friend was telling you here?
T - There is a lot to say about that one. When I said, do [music] awards influence the music you like? It was a very quick response, she said ‘yup’. I don’t think she does, I just think she said it just because she said yes to the first question, yeah they do and then she kind of yup, yup. I think she was just trying to get through it, I don’t think that’s particularly true. I don’t think she was being honest and obviously the last one I had to keep prompting her, you know hand movements and whispering.

R - This is the response from your other friend to question 5. Tell me about this. How honest do you think your friend was being? (See E5, Table 1a)
T - Well she took a bit of a pause when she answered. She’s very into watching like soap awards and soaps and all that and obviously like celebrity things, you know like Celebrity Love Island and all that. But I think that’s very true, I don’t think celebrities do influence her at all because she likes different types of music, she’s not one of those people that just has one, you know like R and B for example and that’s all she listens to, she listens to like heavy rock and if her sister wants to listen to pop she’ll quite happily listen to that. So she was being quite honest.

FRIENDSHIP TYPE

The teenage ‘expert’ interviewer indicated that closer friends were less nervous when being interviewed and the interviewer was more inclined to challenge the answers of the closer friend. This may also somewhat explain the inconsistency of music use and choice as closer friends may feel more comfortable choosing and using their preferred music when they are more confident in the company they keep (situational consumption). During the self interpretation stage the following teenage interviewer commented:

R - Tell me about this response to question 7 from your other friend (not close friend) (See L7, Table 1b)
T - When I asked what does music mean to you and how does it make you feel, instead of saying, oh it means a lot to me, she just said, I kind of relax and be myself and just go completely mad. I think she went for the ‘feel’ bit of the question rather than the actual question, she just kind of focused on the, how it made her feel rather than what it means to her.

R - When you were listening to her answers what did you think?
T - Well I could tell that she was trying to expand rather than tell me what she felt. I think maybe the questions were too long or she didn’t understand which part she had to answer. I think she goes off the point a lot, so I said if you’re upset would you want to listen to the lyrics and she said, the lyrics have something that maybe relate to what happened in your day, say you had a fight and there’s maybe a lyric or two that kind of sound like what happened in your day, or do you listen to the tune, if it’s like really angry type of music. But she went on to say that she liked singing, yes she does but that wasn’t the question. She was using her body language, again she was moving around a lot. I think at one point her head was like there and you know the tape player was over here, so I had to kind of say like, sit up, can’t hear you, she was using body language as if to say, oh I’m a bit nervous.

Perhaps one of the most interesting ‘expert’ findings relates to the differences that the teenage experts perceived between their close friend and the member of their friendship group. The teenage researcher was more readily able to identify instances of multiple selves (Goffman, 1963) in the member of a friendship group, but less able to do so for the close friend. It’s possible that the close friend expressed fewer ‘selves’ generally, but a more likely explanation may be that the close friend only showed a ‘particular self’ to the teenage interviewer or that the teenage interviewer only chose to see the ‘self’ of the respondent that most reflected who they thought their friend was (and as such allowed the teenage interviewer to position themselves socially within a larger friendship group).

R - So, your close friend’s response to questions 8 and 9? Tell me about this answer. (See E8 & E9, Table 1b)
T - She says R&B is cool and then she was trying to think of something else to say because she realised she kept saying the same thing and then she repeated what I said, I said so a bit mixed and she was like, yeah a bit mixed. Then I said, do you follow the crowd and then she kind of huffed, I think she was trying to make a point–‘I don’t follow the crowd, I listen to music I like’. I think you know when I said that, she was kind of, I listen to music I like. I think she gave me, not a frown exactly but just maybe a look…you know do you follow the crowd type of thing and she kind of went ‘No I like the music I like’, you know evil eyes.

STAGE OF ADOLESCENCE

Although a reduction in socially desirable responding has been noted already as one of the key benefits to be gained from a
teenage centric approach, more sensitive and personal aspects of music consumption were still difficult to ascertain within the teenage peer interview stage. The self interpretation stage of the research provided further insight into the differences between younger and older adolescents with respect to music consumption, self concept and self identity.

As noted earlier, Harvey and Byrd (1998) have indicated that subtle but important differences exist between early adolescence and late adolescence with regard to identity development. Findings gathered during longitudinal depth interview stage of the study revealed that peer group influence appears to be more intense for younger teenagers and it seems more difficult for adolescents in this age group to “commit” to what music they liked as opposed to what they disliked. As Hogg & Banister (2001) suggest, the reason for this may be that the negative aspects of consumption choices carry significant meaning in creating personal, social and cultural identities. This also emphasises the social significance of music. Indeed sharing music is very personal for this younger age group and knowledge of other peoples’ music taste is considered intimate. As a result this is likely to be a subject area that is more difficult to explore and identify even within the peer interview research stage.

The longitudinal interviews also suggested that older teenagers were more philosophical about music tastes and were far less likely to display any anxiety about listening to music publicly or privately. The following quotes from the self interpretation stage, firstly with a younger teenage interviewer followed by an older teenage interviewer help to illustrate further the value of this research method in offering greater insight into particularly sensitive or personal aspects of the research:

R - Tell me about this answer. How honest do you think your friend was being? (See Questions E1, Table 1a)

T - I think she hesitated here, I think she was thinking of how to say it. I think she was….well not quite embarrassed but quite shy of saying that she didn’t have a role model, I think it’s because she was a bit doubtful about saying too much, and saying no I don’t have one. She probably just thinks that because I asked her that, that most people have one maybe and she thought, oh I don’t have one and she was trying to think whether she should say yes and just think of one, or say no.

R - Do you think your friend was hiding anything, did he surprise you with his answer at all? (See Questions L1, Table 1a)

T - Not really, I think he knows what he likes and doesn’t really mind being open about it. He’ll put up with my music coz we have that sort of understanding you know. As a rule most people are going to be more open-minded when they’re with their friends because they’ve got to put up with other people’s music taste. Normally, if the friends are close enough and there’s no real option of escaping it, then that can lead to mutation I guess.

TRADITION VERSUS INNOVATION

The first reason for employing an ‘ethno-extension’ approach was to ascertain if a more teenage centric approach would provide a deeper understanding of music consumption and use than that obtained by the researchers alone during the initial teenage interviewing stage. It has clearly been identified above that there are specific advantages to recruiting teenagers to conduct research and interpret findings. The second research question was whether a traditional approach would provide different findings to those obtained by the researchers. This triangulation (teenage ‘experts’ exploring music choice, use and consumption) however supported the initial findings of the longitudinal in-depth interviews that identified that those raised in blended and single parent families used music to build bridges, intensify relationships or exclude family members and that teenagers raised in ‘intact’ or traditional families were more eclectic in their music tastes.

Interestingly, ‘shared knowledge’ between the friends made questions about specific music tastes (from teenager to teenager) obsolete and were considered ‘unnecessary’ or boring by respondents. This may indicate that using both a traditional research approach and a more ethnographic approach in combination will yield greater understanding of the subject in question as a more holistic view is likely to be achieved.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This methodological approach contributed to a richer understanding of the themes within the research as the teenagers wrote their own questions in their own words. This automatically provided a more teenage-centric piece of research design and would potentially elicit a different response to the questions posed by the authors. This approach also afforded significant methodological contributions including: (a) insight into actual behaviour of respondents thus reducing the ability of the teenager to self present an alternative reality, (b) the teenage researcher was able to recall ‘body language’ used during the interview and the implications this had for what was being said and (c) the differences in perception between close friend and member of a friendship group. The contribution made by this method also encompassed the fluidity of the interview and interviewee credibility in terms of trust and familiarity. Finally, their understanding of the context of the responses given by their friends (personal knowledge) allowed the interview to evolve in a more ethnographic fashion through greater contextualisation of the discussion, much of which was recorded in the transcript. Future researchers ought to be encouraged to employ aspects of ethnography where a full ethnographic approach is unattainable given the positive and cohesive results from this particular study. Ethical issues, however, are paramount and the design and context of the study ought to be fully considered and approved before research is commenced.

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