

SAGE Research Methods Cases

Above the Drum: A Study of Visual Imagery Used to Represent the Changes in Hip-Hop

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Above the Drum: A Study of Visual Imagery Used to Represent the Changes in Hip-Hop

This case seeks to add to the growing research on the hip-hop culture and the importance of visual images in qualitative research. This study explores the use of visual imagery as a tool for describing the changes that have led to hip-hop culture's transformation to the hip-hop industry while also providing an interpretation of the impact of hip-hop-influenced visual imagery on two educators. Participants selected a text, film or video, book or image that spelled out the journey that the participants traveled within hip-hop from its inception to today. The use of imagery, incorporated into in-depth interviews, extended the dialog with participants, and evoked deeper comments about their backgrounds, pedagogy and the connection to hip-hop. The participants are educators who are knowledgeable about hip-hop culture from a multi-decade perspective and view themselves as lifelong members of the hip-hop community.

Learning Outcomes

This case began with the goal of understanding a complex issue, the hip-hop phenomenon, and provides an interpretation of the impact hip-hop–influenced visual imagery has on two educators who are part of the hip-hop community. Additionally, this study offers insight into the unique data produced from the use of visual imagery. At the conclusion of this case, you should

- Understand the application of conversational partners as a method in research
- Understand the significance of participant selection in qualitative interviews
- Be able to compare and contrast the use of film and print images in image-elicitation
- Have a better understanding of how various visual images can generate rich discussion in a qualitative study

Introduction

Hip-hop is an international cultural phenomenon that influences millions of people. Jeff Chang (2005) identified four recognized and widely accepted tenets that converged to create the original hip-hop culture: (1) deejaying, (2) rapping, (3) breakdancing, and (4) graffiti art. Deejaying refers to the use of turntables to play music while people dance. Rapping involves rhymic talking about various subject matters, accompanied by music. Breakdancing refers to a particular type of dancing, typically using rap music. Graffiti art describes a particular type of letter writing or drawing usually done with spray paint or marker pen, typically on a flat surface or wall. Graffiti art is often created in public spaces. Members of the hip-hop community are diverse and include doctors, lawyers, and other successful individuals who grew up not only listening to hip-hop but also living it (Russell, 2006).

Hip-hop culture, commonly defined as a collection of cultural art forms (Chang, 2005), includes the sights and sounds of rappers, deejays, graffiti artists, and breakdancers. However, as hip-hop culture became more accessible to mainstream America, the number of economic opportunities increased for business and record companies to profit from the creative talents of hip-hop inventors, entrepreneurs, and artists. Music produced by rappers and deejays, art created by graffiti artists, and dances created by breakdancers were transformed for mainstream consumption. The introduction to mass-produced music and the take-over of large record companies fueled the transformation from the hip-hop culture to the hip-hop industry. Essentially, the hip-hop industry developed from the mass production of hip-hop culture as a means to market the creative art form for profit-making and mass production (Murray & Neal, 2012). The hip-hop industry is defined as the manufacturing of various elements found in hip-hop culture (Asante, 2008; Clay, 2003). The influence of large business corporations and record companies resulted most notably in changes for rappers, the individuals who create hip-hop music. Many hip-hop rappers benefited financially from the mainstream production of rap music and took advantage of successful cross-over opportunities which result in multiple revenue streams (Chang, 2005). The present study presents two educators' view of the transition of the hip-hop culture to the hip-hop industry.

Research Methodology

To prepare for this study, I reviewed literature that revealed hip-hop as a radical artistic expression. I utilized the review of literature to argue that hip-hop was born out of a larger urban black experience that incorporated an array of visual images that can serve as data in qualitative research. In this study, visual data refer to any kind of visual material.

The research question, ‘what visual image(s) represent(s) the changes that occurred in hip-hop culture?’ explored how educators used visual images to express their connection to hip-hop culture. This research project, conducted in June 2008 with two former colleagues who were self-identified members of the hip-hop community, examined the influence of the changes of hip-hop from a cultural phenomenon to a business. The research design selected in this study honored the creative aspect of hip-hop while offering insight into a movement that touches the lives of people across the world. As a researcher, my goal was to understand how members of the hip-hop community were influenced by the change from hip-hop culture to the hip-hop industry. The nature of the research topic, the interviews, and even my relationship with study participants all influenced the extent to which participants told their stories.

One of the most important aspects of designing interview formats is to select participants who are knowledgeable and experienced in the area of your research; therefore, my task was to find interviewees who could provide useful information about hip-hop culture. To begin my research, I located two adults, who were knowledgeable about hip-hop culture from a multi-decade perspective and who viewed themselves as lifelong members of the hip-hop community. Participant recruitment occurred using a combination of purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990) and convenience sampling (Merriam, 1998). Purposeful sampling is one that selects participants based on the researcher's knowledge of a population and the purpose of the study. The subjects are selected because of some specific characteristic(s). In this study, I purposely selected the participants based on their ability to give inside information about the hip-hop phenomenon as determined by our previous interactions and communications concerning hip-hop related issues. Convenience sampling is a group of people who are convenient to study due to factors such as geographic location, connection to topic,

or previous assembly for other purposes (Merriam, 2009). For purposeful sampling, I created a list of individuals I knew who met the defined criteria of being an adult member of the hip-hop community who performed or produced hip-hop music, listened to hip-hop music at least three times per week, or purchased hip-hop music and paraphernalia on a regular basis. For convenience sampling (Merriam, 1998), I focused on individuals who I knew and who I could access geographically. The combination of both the purposeful and convenience sampling methods allowed me to take advantage of my personal knowledge of individuals with expertise in the subject matter (Arcury & Quandt, 1999; Patton, 1990).

The first participant, Mr T, a middle school mathematics teacher in an urban school system in the Atlanta, Georgia, worked in both alternative and private school settings. Born in Virginia but raised in the hip-hop culture in Atlanta, Georgia, Mr T is very active in the hip-hop community and frequents concerts, parties, and spoken word cafés featuring hip-hop artists. The second participant, Dr G, is a poet, activist, and literacy professor in a university in the southeastern United States. Her research interests include motivating African American males, hip-hop pedagogy, African American literacies, preparing teacher candidates, and reversing underachievement. Originally, from Chicago, Dr G resides in Alabama. The participants and I had previously discussed a love of hip-hop culture and our shared hip-hop identity as educators. This familiarity most likely influenced the way that the participants choose to tell their respective stories.

Research Methods

Qualitative research methods provide the opportunity to use multiple data sources to generate data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), and consequently, by employing qualitative research methods, I gained a more complete picture of two educators' perspectives on the changes that occurred within hip-hop community. I chose the following research methods to incorporate as much of the participants' voices as possible: narrative inquiry, image-elicitation, and conversational partnership.

Narrative inquiry is a methodological approach that explores narratives (stories) (Polkinghorne, 1988) and focuses on relationships, between the researcher and the

researched (Polkinghorne, 1995). In this study, narrative inquiry was used to inquire about participants' views of the changes that occurred within hip-hop culture. Narrative inquiry uses stories, pictures, and life experiences as the unit of analysis to research and understand the way people create meaning in their lives. The nature of this study warranted a small number of participants to capture the in-depth stories closely and to carefully analyze manageable data.

Data were collected through image-elicitation interviews which included cultural artifacts such as musical lyrics, photographic images, and film that represented the sights and sounds of hip-hop. The image-elicitation interviews were conducted using conversational partnership and analyzed with narrative analysis. The collection of data began with a discussion of a text, film, video, book, or image that the participants viewed as representing the changes in hip-hop culture. Prior to the interview, participants were asked to select a text, film or video, book or image that represented the changes in hip-hop culture. One participant selected a film to represent the changes that took place within hip-hop culture, while the other participant selected a journal article. During the image-elicitation interviews, participants were asked to articulate their rationale for selecting a particular depiction of hip-hop. The visual imagery provided by the texts that participants selected became the focus of the informal interviews. The data that emerged from this study spanned an array of genres and mediums. The participants' stories contributed to the body of research about hip-hop culture and identities.

I resolved to use an informal, open-ended interview structure to provide flexibility. The informal interview structure offered a more conversational element to the interviewing process (Merriam, 1998). Each member of the hip-hop community 'experiences' hip-hop differently and therefore has a distinctive story to tell. Hip-hop has developed a signature sound in various regions of the United States. Mickey Hess (2010) provides a guide to understanding the various sounds of hip-hop in America based on geographic region. For example, East Coast hip-hop represents New York City, the birthplace of hip-hop culture, as well as New Jersey (Brick City Club music) and Baltimore, Maryland (Baltimore Club). West Coast hip-hop, also known as Gangsta rap, includes sounds commonly referred to as G-Funk (Los Angeles, California), Mobb music (San Francisco bay area), Ratchet or Jerkin' (Los Angeles), Chicano rap (East Los Angeles, California), Northwest hip-hop (Oregon and Washington). Midwest hip-hop includes signature

sounds described as Horror-core, Chopper, or Ghetto house (Chicago, Illinois), and Ghettotech (Detroit, Michigan). The sounds of Southern hip-hop are known as the Dirty South and are associated with music from Atlanta, Georgia (trap music), Miami (Miami bass), Memphis, Tennessee (Crunk), and New Orleans, Louisiana (Bounce music). For convenience, I selected the southeast region of the United States, home to southern hip-hop, as the setting for this research.

Conversational Partnership

Using the approach of a conversational partnership (Rubin & Rubin, 2005), I conducted the interviews in locations where the participants felt at ease. Mr T's interview took place in the participant's home as he viewed a hip-hop film, and Dr G's interview took place in a jazz lounge. Understanding that people relate to each other within a cultural context, I assured my participants that they were free to express themselves without any academic or social restraints. In qualitative research, the researcher is often a participant, rarely adopting a neutral stance. Having already established friendships with the study participants, I cultivated a closer relationship during data collection.

Narrative Analysis

The interviews were videotaped, transcribed, and examined with narrative analysis. Narrative analysis is based on narrative thinking, uses data collected in a narrative form, and produces knowledge of particular situations from a particular person's point of view (Polkinghorne, 1995). According to Polkinghorne (1995), hearing a person's perspective is critical to understanding that person's experience. Narrative analysis allowed me to retell the participants' stories as described by Creswell (2005). It is important to demonstrate what narrative *thinking* means within the context of this study: It is a process that involves reading raw data (the things a participant said) and attempting to glean the participant's meaning in order to enhance the participant's perspectives, and then analyzing these for common themes. This study also incorporated an analysis of the videos and photographs the participants chose and presented as well as the body language that the participants displayed.

Image-Elicitation

Sarah Pink (2004) argues that visual data are not inferior or secondary document used in qualitative research; instead, they should be valued as vital to analyzing data. Image-elicited interviews have the potential to add value and depth to research data and bring about data which may have been overlooked through questioning alone (Harper, 2002; Pink, 2004). Images have a connection to the memory that predates verbal connection. Patricia Harper (2000) contends that images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness and supports the use of visual data to prompt the interviewee's memory of specific events or experiences. When used in interviewing, visual data have the power to extend the dialogue, providing participants with multiple ways of expressing meaning. Exchanges that include images typically produce more distinctive information than exchanges based on verbal exchanges alone. For example, visual images have a connection to the memory that predates verbal connection. In this study, each participant selected a visual image to represent the changes that have occurred within hip-hop culture.

Image-Elicitation with Written Text

In this study, Dr G selected a written text as the image that represented hip-hop culture. The journal article, 'Fly Girls, Bitches and Hoes' by Joan Morgan (1995) served as the visual image or focal point of the image-elicited interview. As a data source, 'Fly Girls, Bitches and Hoes' proved to be authentic, credible, and representative to the phenomenon being studied: hip-hop. Although the participant provided her personal copy of the text for the interview, the document, written in 1995, was readily available electronically with reviews from numerous scholars and proved to be authentic and genuine. The document also satisfied two components of credibility: trustworthiness and expertise. The author, Joan Morgan, is a well-established writer with two critically acclaimed books written about hip-hop from a feminist perspective.

'Fly Girls, Bitches and Hoes' was written as a love letter to hip-hop, personifying hip-hop as a man. Morgan attempted to explain why she is still in love (with hip-hop). She

compared her love with hip-hop to an abusive relationship between a battered woman and the man who abuses her. Morgan's (1995) text refers to the complex relationship that women experience as part of the ever-changing hip-hop experience. For instance, Morgan questioned how black women have transitioned from being referred to as fly girls, a positive reference in the hip-hop community, to being referred to as bitches and hoes, a negative reference. The participant, Dr G, connects Morgan's text to this study's research question, 'what visual image(s) represent(s) the changes that occurred in hip-hop culture?' and to a subsequent research question, 'How are members of the hip-hop community influenced by the change from hip-hop culture to the hip-hop industry', as Morgan's text represents the battle women who love and support hip-hop experience as they maintain their love affair with a culture that, at times, seems to hate them. In the text, Morgan argues that her love of hip-hop is challenged as hip-hop artists, predominately male, increasingly incorporate misogynistic lyrics, referring to women as bitches and hoes.

Image-Elicitation with Video Data

Mr T addressed this study's research question with his selection of a film to represent the changes that occurred in hip-hop culture. The documentary film *Block Party*, written by comedian Dave Chappelle, was the subject of image-elicitation and analysis for Mr T's interview. Throughout the interview, the film served as a focus of conversation as Mr T expressed his views about how hip-hop has changed since the 1970s. Each artist who performed on the film seemed to spark a new direction in Mr T's story. The visual image of an artist reminded him of different aspects of hip-hop: the distinction between first- and second-generation hip-hop artists, mainstream and underground audiences, and real hip-hop versus gimmicks.

Findings

The findings are organized as they relate to the study's guiding question: What visual image(s) represent(s) the changes that occurred in hip-hop culture? Participants provided insightful comments and opinions about the changes that occurred in hip-hop.

The data revealed in the interview spelled out the journey that participants traveled within hip-hop from its inception to today (Merriam, 2009). After reading through the participants' responses, one theme emerged: real hip-hop. While discussing the changes in hip-hop culture, both participants referred to real or true hip-hop, as if distinguishing one aspect of the culture from another. Naturally, I inquired as to what real or true hip-hop is. Both participants reported that hip-hop is different from rap, indicating that rap music is a part of hip-hop. Rap music is one of four recognized elements of hip-hop culture along with graffiti, breakdancing, and deejaying. Rap is probably the most recognized part of hip-hop, and the terms are sometimes used interchangeably. Both participants described hip-hop (music) as music that incorporates lyrical significance, relevant to politics or societal challenges. The participants described rap as being music focused on the beat or baseline:

Real hip-hop to me is, of course it's about skill it's about lyrics, it's about subject matter, and I think every rapper I listen to back in the day, even up to now had something to say worth listening to. (Mr T)

In true hip-hop, the lyrics are first. (Dr G)

The film *Block Party*, filmed in New York City, the birthplace of hip-hop music, was used as a visual image during the image-elicitation interview with participant Mr T. The film *Block Party* has double significance in hip-hop culture, as it was designed to connect hip-hop origins as an art form, performed freely within the community. Specifically, the film replicated the rapper and deejay elements of hip-hop which included rappers performing or rhyming in the park or in local neighborhoods 'on the block'. Mr T's analysis of this connection is evident in the following excerpt:

It [the film] represented hip-hop to me even though I am not from New York, he [Dave Chappelle] did a concert or block party on the streets of New York it was free, it was in Brooklyn with some of the hottest artists out at the time. To me it just exemplified what hip-hop is, where it started, a block party, you know Kool Herc in the park. (Mr T)

As I watched the film *Block Party* with the participant, Mr T, I had the opportunity to see his excitement as he experienced nostalgia when a particular song came on and

he shared with me what was going on in his life at that time. At various points in the interview, Mr T would recite a rap lyric along with the artist currently performing in the film. On other occasions, Mr T would excitedly recall controversy that surrounded certain albums released during his high school or college years. Mr T seemed pointedly disturbed by hip-hop music he describes as a 'gimmick', accusing artists of focusing too heavily on the beat instead of the lyrics. Mr T often used the film to support his view of what hip-hop is.

As the artist, Dead Prez, appeared on the film, Mr T shared why he describes the group as being casted into the category of underground artist, unable to attract a mainstream audience or receive heavy rotation on mainstream radio stations:

Because they are like the most revolutionary group I have ever heard. And the stuff they say is honesty, I do not want to say over the top, but America does not want to hear it. Like one song they did here in this concert is 'turn off the radio' telling people to turn off mainstream radio, turn off that bullshit. America doesn't want to hear that, they don't want people to speak out against what is really going on. (Mr T).

The following interview excerpt illustrates Mr T's thoughts on the significance of hip-hop lyrics and the real hip-hop artists who performed during the film. The participant played the film in the background during the interview referring to it periodically to emphasize a point:

This movie came out when Dave Chappell was at the top of his career basically and everybody was on such a Dave Chappell kick that they would see anything that he did but people were fooled by *Block Party*. They thought it was Dave Chappell comedy and it was not. It was a concert. Kanye West, Jill Scott, Dead Prez, The Roots, Erykah Badu, everybody, and he got the Fugees back together. So me and my friends go to see it, I am in the movie theater trying to stay in my seat. (Mr T)

Mr T was visibly excited about seeing the various artists perform in the film. When retelling his experience watching the film in the movie theater, Mr Thomas sat on the edge of the couch as he explained his experience in the movie theater watching *Block*

Party. The impact hip-hop music has on Mr T was further evidenced by his excitement and continuous reference to the lyrical ability of each artist in the film.

Whether referring to early hip-hop as old school or the golden age, both participants clearly saw a distinction between the predominate style used by artists of the 1980s compared to styles used today. Dr G expressed her belief that hip-hop's transcending nature has created a new style of music that emphasizes beats and catchy one-liners as opposed to deep, well thought-out lyrics. In a comparison between early rap television shows like *Yo MTV Rap*, Dr G reminisces over the free-styling abilities of the guest to compose a rhyme on given subjects. She refers to these artists as architects because of their ability to create a work of art in their rhyme. In contrast, she states that rap television shows now feature artists who have limited lyrics but have a dynamic beat. Mr T echoes Dr G's sentiment with the following excerpt about new artists:

Now it's (hip-hop) about coming out with a gimmick, something cute they will play in the club. When I was young, I would write rhymes but I knew that I could not rhyme like Chuck D even on my best day so, in a sense I looked up to them as superior, being talented. This generation does not care 'bout talent, it's about having a swagger, being marketable, being handsome; it turned into a business. (Mr T)

Another common element that wove through each participant interview was the idea that radical hip-hop artists do not receive mainstream acceptance or recognition. Mr T's comments about the rap duo Dead Prez and Dr G's view on hip-hop exemplify the belief that there is a division between mainstream artists and underground artists within the hip-hop community:

Hip-hop is the only vehicle where you might see what you call a radical.
(Dr G)

When asked whether there were still hip-hop artists talking about real political issues, Dr G responded similarly to Mr T, noting that real hip-hop artists are underground:

There are hip-hop artists talking about what is really going on but they are under the (mainstream) radar. (Dr G)

Mr T and Dr G agree that the rap group Dead Prez offers a view of society that is alternative to mainstream perspective. The ability to examine and critique texts that offer alternative perspectives to dominant ideologies such as 'Fly Girls, Bitches and Hoes' (Morgan, 1995) or *When Chicken Heads Come Home to Roost* (Morgan, 1999) can be accomplished with the use of critical literacy. Dr G, an advocate for the use of critical literacy in relation to popular culture in the classroom, described how she used hip-hop in her work with college students:

I took a stand on literacy and attempted to [introduce hip-hop texts to] a group of young people, freshman male who were in developmental studies reading classes. It got around campus that I was the hip-hop lit teacher because I took hip-hop texts to use with them in my class. Whether it was from the *Source* magazine or Kevin Powell, or something from *Chicken Heads* (Morgan, 1999), I took something from *Pimps Up, Ho's Down* (Gertten, 1999). I took something from *That's the Joint* (Forman & Neal, 2004) and I used it to teach. We were able to see reading growth because the text was engaging, the text was the hook and ultimately I taught them to read more critically. (Dr G)

In her text, Morgan referred to the 'fly girl' era of hip-hop. 'Fly girl' was used as a term of endearment within the hip-hop community in the early- to mid-1990s. A fly girl was valued and beloved by the community. Interestingly, Dr G referred to the same 'fly girl' era as incorporating more positive hip-hop images than the current era:

You gotta make the money because that is a part of what hip-hop is now, a business. What you see today, no, you don't see a 'Salt n Pepper', I think female representation; we had Sweet Tee, Queen Latifah, and MC Lyte. You had people you could pick from, who do I want to listen to now? (Dr G)

Dr G remarked that there is currently a lack of female representation within the hip-hop community. Although female hip-hop artists such as Bahamadia, Apani B Fly, Jane Doe, Raven Sorvino, and Psalm One still exist, they are primarily 'underground' hip-hop artists. Underground hip-hop music is often independently produced outside

of commercial, mainstream record labels (Alexander-Smith, 1993; Henderson, 1996; Morgan, 1995).

Popular culture can be formulated to deal with a number of social, cultural, and economic issues. Music lyrics from popular culture can provide unconventional points of view and voices often silenced in traditional textbooks (Lloyd, 2003). Using popular culture values students' life experiences and lends itself to in-depth discussions of socio-political context sometimes hidden within texts (Akintunde, 1997).

Hip-hop music, often referred to as the representative voice of urban youth (Alim, 2002; Rose, 1991), is a legitimate text that should be used for critical literacy. Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2002) argue that hip-hop text can be analyzed for critical commentary offered in lyrics of socially conscious rap artists. Artists like Lauryn Hill, the Fugees, Public Enemy, Mos Def, and Common write songs that challenge listeners to question economic and social realities and push for social justice. Analyzing rap lyrics affords students the opportunity to engage in discussion about implicit and explicit meanings embedded in text (Haygood, 2002) as demonstrated in Dr G's use of controversial terms *bitch* and *hoe*. Giroux (1988) argues that critical educators must consider elements of popular culture like hip-hop music as serious sites for critical literacy. Interestingly, the participants, both educators, one in middle school and the other in higher education, found solace in two songs that harshly scrutinize the US public educational system. Dr G quoted a song by the artist Askia that specially addresses the 2002 No Child Left Behind Act, while Mr T quotes lyrics from Dead Prez:

There is this young cat, I think his name is Askia, he had one of the most profound statements about schooling that I have ever heard. He talked about the No Child Left Behind. In Askia's lyrics, he said how you would rather put me in the special education class, you would rather come through here and not educate me and he sees what's going on in school, and that's oppositional transcripts and he had to tell somebody about it. People used to say hip-hop is black CNN. (Dr G)

Dead Prez have this one song and as an educator I love this song, God knows it's over the top. It goes, 'these schools don't teach us shit, people need freedom, we trying to get all we can get, all my high school

teachers can suck my dick teaching me these white man lies, straight bullshit!' They aint never gonna get on the radio, once they say that its over for them in mainstream, you can't come back from that. (Mr T)

According to the participants, Dead Prez and Askia's lyrics illustrate a frustration with the indoctrination of youth in many US public schools.

Summary

The combination of conversational partnerships and narrative inquiry worked successfully as methods in this study. The use of conversational partnerships established a relaxed and cordial environment in which to conduct the interviews. As a fellow member of the hip-hop community, I recognized that I held bias about hip-hop music produced outside of the New York metropolitan area. However during this study, I presented myself as a non-expert attempting to learn more about hip-hop and how it has changed through the eyes of educators. During the interviews, I focused on *hearing* the participants as they experienced hip-hop as opposed to interjecting my personal experiences into the stories that they shared. Conversational partnerships afforded me an opportunity to listen intensely to the details that the participants shared and note which topics, issues or images evoked more emotional response or excitement. Narrative inquiry, structured using conversational partnerships, encouraged participants to share their 'stories'. I wanted to use a creative method such as narrative inquiry to capture the voices of members of the hip-hop community. As qualitative methods, both conversational partnerships and narrative inquiry supported the study design.

Qualitative research methods allow the use of in-depth interviews (Levy, 2006) and enable the collection of empirical knowledge from people who are familiar with the intricacies of hip-hop culture. Rubin and Rubin (2005) discuss the effectiveness of designing interview questions that evoke vivid descriptions and elaborate responses from the participants. In this research, the content of the interview was contingent upon the participant's personal knowledge and experience but also focused on the unique perspective of adults actively and intimately involved in the music and culture of hip-hop. As the movie and article were used to spark conversation about the research topic, changes in hip-hop culture, they both served as the content on which the interviews

centered. Lindsay Prior (2003) stated that documents are both receptacles, containers of content, and agents, susceptible to exploitation. As a receptacle, the film contained a wealth of imagery in hip-hop culture. As an agent, the article does not prove or disprove the significance of hip-hop or the changes that have occurred since its inception, but it is valuable data because of its significance to the participant who selected it as representative of the changes in hip-hop. The participants shared their feelings about hip-hop culture and the meaning that they associate with the images that they selected to represent the changes in hip-hop.

I selected image-elicitation as a method in this study to support hip-hop culture's vast cultural expressiveness; however, a challenge to using image-elicitation was that one participant selected a written text as a visual image, and the other participant selected a film (moving images). Hip-hop is a cultural phenomenon full of sights, sounds, and images that have been viewed, shared, and critiqued internationally (Chang, 2005). As participants discussed the changes that occurred within hip-hop culture, I wanted to encourage dialogue that might not be shared without the use of a visual (hip-hop) image. I considered providing the visual images to use in the interview; however, I wanted to maximize the participants' personal experiences within the culture and decided to allow the participants to select their own visual representation. Although the written text was an article with a visual image on the cover of the journal, the majority of the connection to the 'image' was text based. This presented a slight challenge during the interviewing process as I anticipated a still image would be selected for both participants. Using a film as the visual image during the interview generated a very different line of questioning than did the printed text. At various points, the film was paused or replayed as Mr T emphasized a point or wanted to simply see an artist perform a song, I used Mr T's verbal responses as well as his non-verbal actions as part of the analysis for this research. While reflecting on what was said, how it was said, and what was not said, I generated and developed my own understanding of the changes in hip-hop culture. As I continuously reviewed and analyzed the interview data, I listened for excitement expressed by the participants, as well as for fear, hesitation, and reservation, to help me understand the story the participant was telling. For instance, as Dr G explained why she listens to the rapper Jay-Z, she recited the lyrics from one of his songs and ended by exclaiming that Jay-Z's 'CD is ridiculous'. The emotion that Dr G revealed implies that hip-hop has become a 'voice' for a mature

audience. In her explanation, she talked about the scholarship that exists within hip-hop and how it transcends generations, ethnic backgrounds, and racial barriers. Using the film *Block Party* and the article 'Fly Girls, Bitches, and Hoes' as visual data provided rich, thoughtful interviews. Although using visual images is not the only method for generating rich and thoughtful data from interviewing, it served as a profound method to discuss a phenomenon that incorporates an abundance of visual imagery.

Exercises and Discussion Questions

- 1. How might the use of conversational partnerships influence the way that participants answer questions?
- 2. What other research methods might generate rich data about hip-hop?
- 3. How does the use of visual imagery influence the type of data collected?

Further Reading

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