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We Made This Song.

The Group Song Writing Processes

of Three Adolescent Rock Bands

by Vicki Thorpe

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Abstract

In garages, practice rooms and classrooms, young people are composing music in rock and pop bands; engaged in working together in the shared enterprise of group music making. This study aims to contribute to scholarly knowledge through describing, analysing and interpreting the collaborative compositional processes (song writing) of three teenage rock bands. A theoretical model was developed and is applied to an analysis of the compositional processes of each group. Communication within each of the bands is analysed in terms of musical, non-verbal and verbal communication. The teaching and cooperative learning that occurred within each of the bands is presented, and each band is described in terms of a community of practice. An analysis of the compositional processes reveals that the three bands employed similar methods to generate ideas and construct their songs. However, when the data are viewed from a number of other theoretical perspectives, it is clear that two of the bands composed collaboratively, working together within mutually supportive, highly focussed and respectful communities; and that the third band's songs were the work of a single composer, achieved through the cooperation and participation of the other band members. The young people in all three bands were highly engaged in self-directed music learning, finding meaning and identity in the process.
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To my friend Kathryn Smith
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