Girls Rock! Best Practices and Challenges in Collaborative Production at Rock Camp for Girls

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Introduction

On a sunny Sunday in July 2013, Rock Camp for Girls Montreal (RCFG) was at renowned local recording studio Hotel2Tango. Saturday night at RCFG featured the showcase concert in which six bands made up of girls ranging in age from 10-17 performed. During the five-day summer camp leading up to the showcase concert, the campers learnt an instrument, formed a band, and wrote an original song together. Some of them had never picked up an instrument before the camp. At the Sunday recording session, the previous night's nerves and excitement have quieted, and the atmosphere is calm and cozy. One volunteer has brought bagels and cream cheese, and another has baked a pie. Campers snack and hang out, waiting their turn to record. Some watch Demi Lovato videos on YouTube on the computer in the lounge. In the recording studio, volunteers help campers with their set up, one asking her band if

everyone feels comfortable. The recording engineer who has volunteered his time to work with RCFG communicates with campers from his booth through their headphone monitors, and I am tickled to see one camper's eyes light up in amazement as she hears his voice in her headphones. After the last band is done recording, we wait for parents to pick up the last campers, and the recording engineer leaves, telling us to close the door behind us.

This opening anecdote of the concluding day and recording session at the summer camp suggests some of the potential of moving towards more collaborative modes of production such that women and in particular young girls may have increased participation in the music industry. However, the presentation of this cozy scene belies the underlining challenges, not only of organizing a summer camp with a set goal of content production, but also of moving from individual-based to collaborative modes of production more generally. Here, I operationalize the concept of the 'community of practice' (CoP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998, 2010) in order to analyse these possibilities and challenges. RCFG might be understood as an alternative CoP that forwards collaborative modes of cultural production with clear and explicit means of participation, in opposition to the individualised navigation of informal and often inequitable routes of accessing cultural production in creative industries employment. Primarily working with Wenger's (1998) main characteristics of CoPs of mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire, in this case study of RCFG, I chronicle how these characteristics set up RCFG as an alternative CoP, as the camp seeks to reconfigure the exclusionary nature of these characteristics in more traditional CoPs, in particular in terms of gendered participation in music scenes. The sense of mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire at RCFG can be read to stem from the desire to foster female empowerment and widen access to music scenes, but these characteristics of RCFG as an alternative CoP can also be odds with existing policy structures, as well as individual desires and rationales for participation at the camp, posing challenges for the implementation of the tenets of RCFG on a broader scale.

Miell and Littleton note that the rise of interest in creative collaboration stems from a desire to support these initiatives and create improved opportunities for creative work: 'whilst there is an agreement about the value of trying to establish supportive contexts for collaboration, there is also a recognition that any attempts at intervention need to reflect the requirements and preferences of particular groups and communities. There is no simple agreed formula that can be applied to promote creativity' (2004, pp. 1–2). In what follows, rather than attempt to determine a normative CoP 'formula', I instead seek to articulate the particular requirements and preferences of RCFG as a CoP, and question how and if these requirements/preferences could be implemented on a wider level.

Theoretical context: Creative industries and communities of practice

As a concept, CoPs have been forwarded to capture horizontal 'learning by doing' in the company of other, more seasoned practitioners. While the concept was originally articulated through examples of craft-based modes of employment, including midwifery and tailoring, it has been used to map the characteristics of a wide array of groups and locales, such as virtual and online communities, second-language learners, and more formalised workplaces, including those in the creative industries (Cox, 2005; Contu, 2013). Though the organizing features of CoPs vary across iterations, emphasis on learning as it relates to identity formation through a community remains a key theme across conceptualizations. The earliest outline of CoPs, developed by Lave and Wenger (1991), forwards the concept of 'legitimate peripheral participation', which outlines how newcomers to a community are integrated and socialised within that community through observation and by initially taking on simple, low-risk tasks, before gradually taking on a more central role. Though this model of CoPs might suggest an apprenticeship type-model of learning, the proposed concept emphasises informal rather than formalised routes into the community, driven by the task at hand rather than set agendas. Wenger's later (1998) articulation of CoPs presents a definition of the concept in more precise terms, suggesting that CoPs are formed through mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire (pp. 72–3). As such, CoPs are united by and driven by a clear purpose or joint enterprise that is sustained over time through the relationships and norms of mutual engagement, and that produces a common set of resources, or a shared repertoire.

The CoP concept might be readily applied to work in the creative industries, as routes into employment in these fields are often informal or based in networks (Campbell, 2013; Oakley, 2006). Wenger's work has been critiqued for its inattention to power dynamics and structural forces that constrain individual agency and ability to gain access and learning through a CoP (Cox, 2005). These critiques have also been made of work in the creative industries more generally, as the informal and network-based modes of entry reproduce and exacerbate dominant patterns of workplace inequity. Conor, Gill and Taylor (2015) provide an overview of how the creative industries have been championed as seemingly open employment avenues for all based in merit and talent, but in fact have less equitable employment profiles than labour markets on the whole. As an alternative CoP, RCGF seeks to create access and forward collaboration in order to widen participation in male-dominated music scenes.

Though gender imbalance in music scenes have long been noted, in 2015 this inequity came to the forefront, as seen in the viral edits of British music festival posters, which were photoshopped to remove all the bands that did not have

any female members (BBC News, 2015). The results were visually shocking: the posters went from having dozens of bands listed down to handfuls. The experiment has been reproduced for Canadian and American music festivals, resulting in similarly empty posters (Cannon, 2015; Teo, 2015). In 2016, the Canadian Juno Awards nominees for artist of the year, album of the year, rock album of the year, rap recording of the year and dance recording of the year, were all men. On Twitter, female Canadian musician Grimes took note of the absence of women nominees in these categories, as well as for 'engineer or producer of the year etc.', and linked the lack of recognition with lack of participation: 'I can't help but feel that if women were equally rewarded for technical work they would feel inclined to participate more' (Thiessen, 2016). In response to the Juno nominations, Amy Millan of the band Canadian band Stars started the hashtag #JunosSoMale, referencing the #OscarsSoWhite hashtag, which highlighted the lack of racial diversity in the 2016 Oscar nominations (Bell, 2016). Given this continued problem of gender inequity in the music industry, I will investigate below how the mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire of RCFG might foster conditions to forward greater inclusion of women in music scenes.

Historical context: Riot Grrrl and female-led music scenes

The existence of girls' rock camps may be one of the most long-lasting legacies of riot grrrl, an alternative and subcultural movement of the 1990s that initially centered around Olympia, Washington but diffused nationally and internationally, and that sought to claim space for women in the music industry through female-led bands, but also through taking control of the means of production and dissemination (Downes, 2007; Marcus, 2010). Riot grrrl was a response to male-dominated punk scenes: though these scenes may have intended to provide resistance to mainstream musical practices, they often reproduced hegemonic gender norms that created unsafe conditions for the participation of women (Gottlieb & Wald, 1994; Kearney, 1997; Leonard, 1998). Hesmondhalgh's (1999) analysis of 'indie' as a musical genre notes that the legacy of punk rock as a movement was a form of music that set out to organise itself around an alternative set of operating principles, and '[transcend] romantic notions of musical creativity' (p. 37) and move away from the 'cultural myth' of 'the isolated genius [as] hero' (p. 35) and from musical practices based in 'competitive individualism' (p. 55). Hesmondhalgh notes, however, that even within communities intending to operate with counter-hegemonic practices, exclusionary barriers to participation reasserted themselves, and ultimately bands associated with the indie movement reproduced conventional norms associated with rock and roll musical performance, with 'bands consisting of four or five young men playing guitars and drums' (p. 46).

In his articulation of CoPs as 'social learning systems', Wenger (2010) suggests that entering into a CoP 'translates into a regime of accountability' or 'a

way to honor the history of learning of that community' (p. 187). As a musical formation, punk famously abandoned the notion of in-depth accountability as a rite of passage into musical production, instead suggesting that learning three chords is sufficient for starting a band (Laing, 1985). Battle's analysis of the Montreal music scene underscores 'the left-leaning, progressive and community-minded politics of indie music scenes in general, and particularly, those in the Montreal indie music community' (2009, p. 85). Nonetheless, Battle also notes the inaccessible and elitist nature of this scene (p. 109), suggesting that even when a regime of accountability is problematized by a CoP, other exclusionary barriers to participation may be erected.

Riot grrrl not only saw the rise of female-identified people playing in bands, such as Bikini Kill, Bratmobile, Heavens to Betsy, and so on, but more broadly gave rise to teen girl empowerment with a do-it-yourself feminism centered around cultural production that 'can be seen in the emergence of a polymorphous infrastructure of grrrl-related cottage industries that include the production of not just music, but zines, stickers, crafts, mixed tapes, and alternative menstrual products' (Piano, 2003, p.254). Though the riot grrrl movement pointed towards the widespread involvement of girls in acts of creativity and the creation of networks around these forms of cultural production (Huq, 2006), rather than adulation of performers in bands, media focus became centered on key individuals, in particular Kathleen Hanna of Bikini Kill, as figureheads or spokespeople for the movement, eventually leading to a refusal of riot grrrls to engage with the media and to the demise of the movement under the banner of the riot grrrl name (Marcus, 2010). Ali (2012) comments on the intention of Hanna and others in the movement to work towards a model of rooting the individual within a community framework, invoking Sarah Hoagland's (1988) concept of *autokeny*.

Though CoPs might offer a lens to foreground the self within this community framework, the focus in Wenger's work remains on the individual's learning and trajectory into the community, rather than on an alternative, community-based mode of identity. Wenger's (1998) articulation of CoPs emphasises the characteristic of sustained mutual engagement, yet sustaining a community-based or collaborative model of identity poses challenges. Chronicling the rise of third-wave feminism (in which riot grrrl can be situated), Heywood and Drake (1997) comment on the difficulty of sustaining community-oriented models of the feminist self within the larger individual-centric culture: 'despite our knowing better, despite our knowing its emptiness, the ideology of individualism is still a major motivating force behind many third wave lives' (1997, p. 11). Despite the demise of riot grrrl as a network of female-led bands, Schilt and Giffort (2012) profile other indicators of the longevity of riot grrrl, as women involved in this movement have founded and volunteered with local girls rock camps, which can be seen to continue some of the community-focused mode of the riot grrrl movement through a dual focus on collaboration and personal empowerment at these camps.

Research methods

RCFG has existed since 2009, and emerged out of the movement of girls' rock camps initiated by the Rock 'n' Roll Camp for Girls founded in Portland, Oregon in 2001. Girls' rock camps now exist across the globe: Girls Rock Alliance, the international coalition of rock camps, includes more than 50 camps. I was involved with RCFG as a volunteer coordinator and member of the Board of Directors from 2011–13, and my case study of this organisation is based in participant observation, in particular at the 2013 summer camp, as well as semi-structured interviews with volunteers. Participant observation involves the researcher in a dual role: engaging in activities while also observing them (Spradley, 1980, p. 54). This type of methodology and dual role brings specific ethical concerns and necessitates openness and transparency with the intent to observe, as well as the purpose and impact of the research (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002; Jones, 1996). Prior to the beginning of the RCFG 2013 summer camp, I sought approval from the organisation's Board of Direction to conduct research. After the Board voted in favour of my proposal, I distributed a 'Letter of Information' to volunteers and parents of campers via email (access to these email lists was granted by the Board). This 'Letter of Information' notified participants in the summer camp of my intent to conduct research with the summer camp. The letter to volunteers also stated that they may be contacted for interviews about their experiences.

The joint enterprise (Wenger, 1998) of RCFG as a summer camp might be the focus on campers collectively writing an original song in bands, but more broadly, the joint enterprise of RCFG can also be understood as the feminist project of creating more inclusive music scenes and widening access to musical production through the maintenance of an alternative CoP. Discussing the 'duality' of CoPs as a balance of creative and constraining forces, Wenger (1998) identifies a participation/reification duality, arguing that participation in practices produces reified artifacts. In my analysis here, I draw on the RCFG *Volunteer Handbook* as a reified artifact that both reflects and shapes the mode of participation of volunteers and campers at RCFG.

Rock Camp for Girls Montreal as collaborative CoP: Widening access and participation

The RCFG model is based in female mentorship for girls, with all technical and musical instruction being led by female-identified and gender non-conforming people. In my interviews with RCFG volunteers, many of these volunteers referenced existing dynamics in the music industry and their own experiences of marginalization as driving forces behind their desires to volunteer their time with the organization. As such, these experiences form one of the bases of joint enterprise in the CoP. One volunteer, Alex,[1] comments:

> In the world we live in, there is a low number of successful minority figures in the music industry. Whether you identify as a girl, as queer, as transgender, as black, etc., I believe it is hard to find a place in such a heteronormative and "masculine" industry. For instance, I constantly face discrimination and judgment when doing something as simple as buying a guitar in a music store. I do believe that the music industry should be a safer space and a more open-minded and diversified sphere. Rock Camp for Girls definitely plays an important part in such a movement and I want to be a part of it (Alex, personal communication, 2013).

Though one premise of RCFG is to address this lack of visibility and participation of female musicians, RCFG works towards the goal of empowerment through music rather than mastery of an instrument or performance itself. Technical skill can often be a mechanism of exclusion from participation in music scenes, and rather than only offer a corrective that merely seeks to repair this skill deficit, RCFG also seeks to foster alternative means of participation.

   Collaborating with others is one part of working towards this goal of widening access and participation to musical production. RCFG's mandate states that the camp 'fosters the promotion of self-esteem, skill-building and critical thinking skills for girls through collaborative music composition and performance. We supplement the music component of Rock Camp for Girls Montreal with workshops based on feminist and anti-oppression frameworks that provide girls with a space for critical examination and empowerment' (Rock Camp for Girls Montreal, 2014). Youth will inevitably enter into musical production with various levels of knowledge and expertise. Media education scholars have sought to address pervasive competitive individualism in cultural production, and advocate moving towards collaborative modes of production when working with youth as a means to widen access to cultural production, such that it can be more equally spread (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994; Jenkins, 2009; Sefton-Green & Sinker, 2000). Buckingham (2003) notes the difficulties of setting up a school curriculum that moves away from the Romantic notion of the individual creator, suggesting that collaborative production might be 'desirable and necessary' but is also accompanied by challenges as students 'come to the classroom with different levels of expertise and knowledge about the media, and with different motivations towards production.' Foremost of the challenges that Buckingham addresses is gender, citing the example of boys intimidating or excluding girls with specialist musical expertise or knowledge (pp. 129–30).

   While rock and independent or counter-cultural forms of music sometimes operate around insider knowledge and subcultural capital, RCFG is based in explicitness and clarity in order to demystify music and music-making in the attempt to create an inclusive environment in which everyone feels comfortable to participate and contribute. Miell and Littleton (2004) comment that

'inherent in contemporary approaches to collaborative creativity is an emphasis on studying the processes involved rather than a sole focus on examining the quality of the product of creative endeavours' (p. 1), and this movement from product to process is also found in the operations of RCFG in the attempt to create conducive conditions so that all girls at the camp feel empowered to participate. Fostering these conducive conditions can also be read as the joint enterprise of the camp: while volunteers facilitate the creation of this environment, the camp also seeks to bring campers on board such that there is a shared investment in the creation of this inclusive environment.

Typically, the first day of camp features a group agreement exercise, where campers suggest parameters of conduct for the week-long camp in order to create a welcoming and respectful environment for everyone. Campers all agree to these parameters, and these terms are posted in the camp space to serve as reminders. In community-based settings, group agreements are used to foster co-operation, to create a safe space, and to make the maintenance of this safe space the responsibility of the group rather than the responsibility of facilitators (Girls Action Foundation, 2009; Seeds for Change, 2013). Though the campers lead the suggestions for the group agreement, a volunteer facilitates this session and sometimes needs to intervene. Jesse chronicles that:

> I remember last year, one of their suggestions was, "don't listen to Justin Bieber", and I sort of flagged that one when I saw it, and said, "well, I don't know if we can all agree [to not] listen to Bieber, because I happen to like Justin Bieber, and that's ok. And I'm sure lots of other people here also like Justin Bieber. So it's important that you can express your opinions about these things, but you don't make other people feel bad about their personal preferences." And they were a little "ok, yeah." And it's that sort of thing that we set from day one that I think contributes to the idea of a safe space (Jesse, personal communication, 2013).

This example of Bieber initially being denigrated in front of the group points to the need for intervention when creating an inclusive space rather than merely allowing campers to self-facilitate. While Wenger (2010) characterizes much of the learning in CoPs as horizontal, occurring between peers, he also suggests the need for 'vertical accountability' in the maintenance of CoPs, such as 'decisional authority' and 'policies and regulation.' He comments 'another common mistake is to demonize vertical accountability and romanticize local engagement in practice. A self-governed community is not heaven. It can reproduce all sorts of undesirable things, such as racism or corruption' (p. 192). The RCFG *Volunteer Handbook* also sets out explicit policies to create inclusive conditions, including a camp rules that prohibit racist, homophobic, or otherwise discriminatory behavior or song lyrics.

The RCFG *Volunteer Handbook* also has suggestions for talking about music in an inclusive way by referring to types of sounds like 'a fast song, a slow song,

a heavy song, a noisy song' rather than genres or bands that can 'make some campers with less musical experience feel alienated or not as cool' (Rock Camp for Girls Montreal, 2012, p.37). This inclusive language problematises the notion that CoPs will necessarily have or create a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). Rather than organizing itself around a common musical repertoire of genres or examples of music, and seek to bring newcomers into this shared knowledge, RCFG seeks to sanction diverse levels of musical knowledge and experience. As such, this inclusive language can be seen as part of the shared repertoire of the camp rather than an accrued knowledge of musical history or musical skills. Though skill development does happen during the summer camp, this is limited in scope due to the week-long duration. Indeed, the *Handbook* stresses there is no 'correct' way of playing music, suggesting 'encouraging the player to find her own way' rather than demonstrating how the instrument should be played (p. 36).

This inclusive language also shapes the suggestions for volunteers about how to talk about the song that the campers are writing together. Though musical instruction might advocate finding one's own way rather than mastery of a skill, there is also a desire for 'everyone [to be] on the same page' (p. 37) in the songwriting process. The *Handbook* suggests that campers collectively name different parts of the song with references like 'the zombie verse' or the 'spaghetti verse' so all band members can contribute to the songwriting process. Large flipchart paper is a common teaching tool at RCFG, so that everyone knows where the band is in the composition and performance process. These mechanisms that attempt to get everyone in the band involved suggest a move away from a model of a principal individual songwriter who comes to rehearsal with parts of a song already written or a model of the vocalist being responsible for lyrical composition. The RCFG model suggests that any or all band members might be involved in any stage of the songwriting process.

Though RCFG has the word 'rock' in its title, the above list of different types of songs or sounds suggest a broader definition of musical production at RCFG, and the camp actively encourages the exploration of other genres of music, suggesting that 'it's not "Rock Camp" in the sense of "rock n' roll" as much as the idea that "girls rock"!' (p. 39). In the band I worked with in 2013, the two vocalists were heavily invested in angelic, soprano singing, while the bass player professed her love for death metal. The happy medium that was struck in this band was that the bass player would do backing vocals in the style of 'death growls' or deep guttural grunts, producing a song that intermittently mixed different genres together. Apart from death metal, exploration of other musical genres at RCFG primarily means an openness to pop music. While much of the understanding of countercultural or alternative spaces comes with a preconceived notion of an opposition to mainstream or commercialized forms of production, the RCFG model of collaboration is based in meeting people where they are at and validating existing interests.

McRobbie and Garber's (1975/2006) analysis of what has been termed the 'bedroom culture' of girls suggests that giving visibility to the activities of girls within youth and subculture studies means engaging with girls' commercial and pop-oriented music sensibilities. These commercial and pop sensibilities continue to be associated with feminine musical interests, and continue to be denigrated in the twenty-first century (Bray & Kiek, 2013; Pelly, 2013). At RCFG, pop music is often mobilised as part of the shared repertoire of existing musical knowledge, and is incorporated in music instruction. Jaime, who volunteered as a keyboard instructor in 2013, chose to teach how to play the keyboard through having her group play along to Carly Rae Jepsen's 'Call Me Maybe.' She comments:

> It surprised me, my first year at Rock Camp, how poppy everything was … But it makes sense, because that's what those campers are listening to, right? The reason that we chose ["Call Me Maybe"], we chose it on the second or third day, we chose it just because it was so prominent at camp, and people were using it in workshops … That Carly Rae Jepsen song is fun, because it has a really prominent riff that is the tune of the song. So you don't really hear the guitars so much. You hear this really prominent keyboard riff, and it's actually only three notes. And you can actually play it just with one hand. So it's easy for the campers to figure out. We just help them. And then we could listen to the song and we could all play along. (Jaime, personal communication, 2013)

Here, the simplicity of the songwriting – a sometimes maligned feature of pop music – is cited as leading to empowerment due to the ease of playing and learning something that is abundantly present in the contemporary musical landscape.

Though pop music may be prominent at RCFG, this does not mean that rock has been abandoned. Jesse comments that vocals are taught through collective singing, and as such it is important to choose songs that:

> everyone knows or kind of knows or one they can listen to and be like, "yeah, I like that" … One of the songs we did in my first year was "Cherry Bomb" by the Runaways, and they love that. It's a really rocking, attitude … it's anthemic. They can scream along with that. We also do "I Love Rock N Roll", Joan Jett—a lot of Joan Jett happening in vocals. We did Lady Gaga, "Telephone". (Jesse, personal communication, 2013)

Through the week of camp, vocalists also work on learning a song at home to bring and perform for their vocal instruction group. Asked what type of songs campers pick, Jesse states:

> they are almost always top 40 type radio songs. Songs that they hear at home, on YouTube … One of them sang 'Part of Your World' from *The*

> *Little Mermaid* last year; I couldn't even handle that. I was crying the
> whole time. So music soundtrack type of songs.

Giffort's (2011) case study of Girls Rock! Midwest found that volunteers
recognise 'multiple ways of being feminist and doing feminism' (p. 579),
and put a feminist approach into practice through 'doing' feminism with
empowering activities rather than 'telling' about feminism. Similarly, in this
vocal instruction example, a camper's decision to bring in a song from Disney –
hardly a bastion of feminist consciousness raising – is celebrated rather
than critiqued. The purpose of RCFG is not to suggest to campers that the
music they already know is artificial, commercial, inauthentic, or inferior,
but rather to celebrate and validate their interests while broadening them
with workshops like 'Girl Rock History', about the history of women in music
across genres.

   Pop music also spills over into the way that music is sometimes created by
bands at RCFG, and in some cases, may reconfigure what 'original' might mean
in terms of musical composition. Mentoring her band, Morgan, a band coach,
comments:

> We were stuck trying to find some kind of chorus, and one of the sug-
> gestions that I made to my band is that in my own writing practice,
> when I get stuck, sometimes it helps for me to have a place-holder lyric
> or melody until I figure something else out, so I suggested that maybe
> they use something like that to hold the place until they found some-
> thing that they liked or they thought would work, and then [Lady Gaga's
> "Paparazzi"] was what they came up with. I think that for them, for
> many of them, pop music is the point of access into music, because it's so
> available, right. I think it was great. I was like, "by all means" (Morgan,
> personal communication, 2013).

   Through the week of RCFG, this band sang the chorus of 'Paparazzi' while
they were writing their own song, eventually changing the lyrics but keeping
some of the vocal phrasing and melody of Lady Gaga's piece. At RCFG, the
expanded and reworked notion of shared repertoire can be read as an attempt
to create inclusion in the CoP, while in more traditional CoPs, shared reper-
toire may act as an exclusionary mechanism. Wenger (2010) comments 'learn-
ing as the production of practice creates boundaries, not because participants
are trying to exclude others (though this can be the case) but because sharing a
history of learning ends up distinguishing those who were involved from those
who were not' (p. 182). Though Wenger suggests there is an 'unavoidability'
of boundaries of practice, at RCFG, part of the terms of the joint enterprise
is expanding what a shared repertoire or boundary of practice might typically
look like in music scenes rather than assuming they are unavoidable, as a
shared history of learning has historically led to the exclusion of women from
these scenes.

Challenges in collaborative modes of cultural production at Rock Camp for Girls Montreal

Though validating interests and an openness to working with existing material to reconfigure concepts of originality might be means to foster greater collaboration, access, and inclusion within a CoP, this model is not without its challenges. Some of these challenges are interpersonal. At RCFG, band coaches facilitate an environment where the entire band participates in the decision-making process regarding songwriting, but a predisposition towards collaborating is not always universally found across the campers. Charli, a band coach, comments on her experience of working with bands in which one member is blocking decision making, 'just saying no to everything and wanting to have all the ideas and absolutely blocking every other possible option', and then having to work creatively to allow this camper to see 'the necessity for collaboration and for making compromises, whether this is speaking with the camper one-on-one or getting the band to allow the camper who is blocking to work on certain parts of the songwriting alone.' Working with the youngest group in particular, made up of 10-year olds, Charli says:

> I would try to get the campers to come up with one thing that they wanted to be in the song and then we would work together, with the group, to find things that the other people could play while they were playing that thing that they liked, so it was like each person contributing something they felt was pretty cool and special. (Charli, personal communication, 2016)

This requires 'lots of patience, both from me and from the campers' amidst an environment of 'people losing their patience, or not listening.' Hesmond-hlagh and Baker note the sex segregation in creative industries work where men occupy more prestigious creative roles and women are assigned work that is seen to have a 'need for consensual and caring communication, and coordination' (2015, p. 34). Here, with Charli's description of the effort required to achieve consensus, we might observe that these qualities are neither innate not necessarily found across all girls, which poses difficulties in working collaboratively. While the joint enterprise of the camp might be defined as collaborative songwriting while also creating more inclusive conditions in music scenes more broadly, competing individual desires may still manifest in these collectively-driven enterprises.

Working collaboratively is also challenging with competing interests and desires with regards to how time might be spent during the summer camp. Charli comments:

> [songwriting] is hard, because a lot of the time a lot of the campers would spend their whole year looking forward to camp and they would become very invested in how the song was turning out, they

had a lot of hopes about how it was going to be. (Charli, personal communication, 2016)

Returning to the keyboard instructor Jaime's decision to use 'Call Me Maybe' as a teaching tool, Jaime also comments that:

> Of course not everybody likes that kind of music, and there's always one camper in the group who is going to be totally resistant to the pop music, and is more into stuff that I've never heard of, or punk … more obscure stuff. That's an older camper, usually. But then there's not a whole lot we can do to accommodate their tastes. Just in my experience, those campers who are not really into the pop, and they'll just be kinda cool, and "no, I don't want to do Carly Rae; I'm more into this really obscure punk band." But then they don't want to suggest anything either. So I'm like, "you're going to go along; we're going to practice this." So it's not the most inclusive pedagogy, but we only have 45 minutes, so we just have to pick a song and learn it. (Jaime, personal communication, 2013)

Though pop music may have a prominent role at RCFG and a prominent role in the lives of the campers, it is not a universal meeting ground where everyone feels included. We also see this in the Bieber backlash in the example from the first day of camp above. Thornton (2005) suggests that subcultural capital manifests itself through asserting power through knowledge and tastes, and this dynamic can be at play at RCFG in spite of an explicit intention of acceptance and inclusion in the joint enterprise.

These competing interests with regards to how time is spent is also challenging for the formation of sustained mutual engagement in the CoP. Though RCFG organises various activities year-round, and many campers return to the camp year after year, the summer camp is only a seven-day event, and only five of these are spent on learning an instrument, forming a band, and collaboratively writing a song. In his discussion of UK-based music youth arts programs, Rimmer (2009) gives an overview of the divergence between the policy structures that give rise to these programs and which are often focused on performance and other quantifiable outputs that can be used for program evaluation and assessment on the one hand, and on the other hand young people's interests in joining and participating in these programs, which may not stem from a desire to compose and perform an original song.

To date, RCFG has been self-funded, and does not need to meet government funding requirements to produce a certain output. At RCFG, it would seemingly be accepted if a band wanted to perform a cover song or didn't want to perform at all. The pressure of time and output remain at RCFG, even if they are not externally mandated. Charli remarks that 'campers would have anxiety attacks about not being able to finish in a week.' Campers not only sometimes struggle with collaborative songwriting but also sometimes struggle with overcoming stage fright and the internalised need to be perfect that many young

girls feel, but only have five days to do so. Charli notes that 'there's internal barriers to looking stupid or not being good enough to justify drawing attention to yourself. I feel like that is very girl-specific.' Vocalists in particular are:

> most likely to feel scared to even start, scared to make any sound at all because the sound would be the wrong sound. They'd prefer to stay in this fantasy space where they would talk about what it was going to be like but would never feel comfortable to take the risk of going there. And so the work would be to break down their barriers and help their group encourage them until they felt comfortable. (Charli, personal communication, 2016)

This limited time at RCFG and at-times large task that forms the joint enterprise may compromise the formation of shared sense of sustained mutual engagement amongst the campers.

Collaborative cultural production and intellectual property

Beyond these interpersonal and time challenges, collaborative modes of production that favour a model of cultural hybridity may be at odds with intellectual property laws that govern musical production and dissemination. These issues notably emerge with multi-million dollar lawsuits or other high profile cases when musicians feel others have used their material without permission or acknowledgement (Grow, 2015; Kreps, 2015; O'Connor, 1999), but these issues also emerged in RCFG's small-scale and community-based mode of collaborative production. Morgan, the band coach who worked with the band whose composition involved reworking a Lady Gaga song, notes that this issue of permission to use others' material arose in band discussions, and resulted in a discussion on the evolution of music history through appropriation of existing forms:

> I think all music is just building upon existing patterns, to use that pattern and incorporate it in a new way. I think that sometimes we get really caught up in the idea of originality, particularly when it comes to pop music. I think that's often one of the biggest criticisms of pop music, is that it all sounds the same, or whatever, it follows a particular formula, but I think the formula is just a base to jump off from. The campers were a little bit concerned about, "well, aren't we ripping this off?" And then we ended up having a conversation about how, where does pop music come from? Contemporary pop music. It comes from rock and roll; it comes from blues; it comes from jazz. All of these things are just building on top of each other anyway. We ended up having this really great conversation about music history. (Morgan, personal communication, 2013)

RCFG as a whole would generally support this philosophy, insofar as the camp supports its campers in their musical journeys and musical exploration generally. Indeed, the first day of RCFG typically features a 'Superstar Songwriting' workshop that seeks to demystify songwriting and show campers that it is possible to write and perform a song in a compressed amount of time. In this activity, workshop leaders model how to choose a song, find its karaoke track on YouTube, and rewrite its lyrics to express a new theme. This workshop is connected with the feminist mandate of the camp of empowerment through learning by doing and being able to create while using critical thinking, as campers are encouraged to consider the message of their chosen song and rewrite the lyrics to reflect a more positive theme.

As the ephemeral process of the five-day camp gets fixed on tape in the recording process, this approach to songwriting that validates making use of existing forms enters the industrialised and monetised area of cultural dissemination. RCFG initially intended to sell these recordings for fundraising purposes for the camp, but the recording engineer who was volunteering his time intervened in this process, raising questions about the potential distribution of revenues earned from the sale of these CDs. The recording engineer asked if the bands would be entitled to some of the profits, if the bands could also sell their songs, and if they did, if they would be obligated to give some of their revenues back to RCFG. He raised the possibility of one of the songs becoming a YouTube sensation and selling 20,000 downloads through the RCFG website. Though difficulties of both reaching an audience in a crowded digital environment and earning a sustainable income as a small-scale cultural producer have been noted (Byrne, 2012; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Taylor, 2014), this possibility of 20,000 downloads is not altogether absurd. Beyond these concerns of revenue sharing, the recording engineer asked if the fundraising CD might compromise the sense of mutual engagement through joint enterprise at the camp should the bands felt they were being 'used' to create content that RCFG would use for its own means. Over time, these discussions eventually led to the development of a non-exclusive licensing agreement, so that the terms of RCFG using campers' songs would be clear and mutually agreed upon; the organisation also stepped back from the idea that the songs would be sold for its fundraising purposes, and instead would use the material for the purpose of promoting the camp.

In the licensing agreement that RCFG uses, campers have to attest that 'works are original works and that these do not infringe upon any copyright belonging to any third party.' While the camp works to foster collaboration and sanctions reworking existing forms, these philosophies are at odds with intellectual property laws. Chanock (2009) notes that 'the world of property law seeks one true version or definition of matters which the world of cultural studies acknowledges to be subject to plasticity, hybridity, and change. Bringing these two worlds together is a formidable challenge' (p. 187). Discussing the learning that happens in CoPs, Wenger (2010) asserts that 'learning produces

a social system' and that this learning forms a 'practice that can be said to be the property of the community' (p.181). The reality of collective ownership is, however, much murkier in intellectual property structures. In her discussion of divergence between small-scale/independent music labels and existing copyright structures, Piper (2010) notes that 'community interest, inclusion, altruism and action out of a non-monetary interest play little role' in copyright laws (p. 425), but these concepts may be important to a small-scale and collaboratively-based mode of cultural production, including the community-minded project of RCFG.

The 2012 revision to the Canadian Copyright Act makes provisions to sanction 'user-generated content' (UGC) such as fan fiction or other forms creative reworking of existing content. This revision specifies that the user-generated content must be 'non-commercial' in nature to be exempted from copyright infringement. Murray and Trosow (2013) comment that 'as a practical matter, this may be a difficult distinction, as the commercial / non-commercial nature of use might shift over time. What happens is the UGC begins as a wholly non-commercial project, such as school project or a hobby activity, and it subsequently enjoys a measure of success?' (p. 146). This possibility could potentially apply to a RCFG production, starting as a non-commercial summer camp project that reworks an existing form, and that could go on to enjoy commercial success. Concerning the copyright structures that surround UGC moving into a commercial arena, Murray and Trosow remark that 'we will have to watch how the practice develops in this area' (p. 147). Though a CoP might favour horizontal or collaborative learning through joint enterprise, the broader reality of the larger culture remains individually driven in terms of property law structures.

Conclusion

In 1975, McRobbie and Garber argued in defense of the bedroom culture of girls, suggesting that studying commercial interests could be a way for the field of subculture studies to register the activities of girls, as these subjects lacked visibility in a field focused on the spectacle of supposedly resistant activities of young men. More than 40 years later, the musical interests of young girls may still be overlooked and denigrated as overtly commercial. Working with rather than against these commercial interests is part of how RCFG seeks to foster collaboration, but this process is not without its challenges, as existing policy structures collide with practice, and the realities of a week-long summer camp with a set goal of content production may limit the transformative potential of creating alternative communities.

Though CoPs may have been conceptualised as spaces of horizontal learning, these communities may reinforce rather than dismantle dominant structural forces of power and inequity. This pattern is also found in the creative industries, which have been championed as more accessible employment routes based in

talent, but in fact exacerbate labour market inequities. As an alternative CoP, RCFG's sense of mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire aims to foster a model of collaboration that is less male-centric and potentially more open and inclusive. As such, this collaborative model in the CoP seeks to widen participation to include more girls and young women in musical production. In a still starkly male and individual-centric music industry, RCFG's practices offer some possibilities for opening pathways for women to take centre stage. However, collaborative modes of production alone cannot intervene to remove systemic barriers to entry to creative work or address lack of equity in the creative industries writ large; as such, continued work needs to be done at the policy level and in the creative industries to move towards greater gender equity.

Acknowledgements

Notes

[1] Pseudonyms have been used for Rock Camp for Girls Montreal volunteers. In keeping with Rock Camp for Girls' Montreal's emphasis on moving towards gender-neutral language (e.g. using the term 'campers' rather than 'girls'), an effort has been made by the author to choose gender-neutral names as pseudonyms.

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