

LONG HOT SUMMER: JEWISH CAMP MUSIC, THE CREATION OF COMMUNITY AND LIFE-LONG VALUES

E. Kent

Department of Music Education, Boston University, College of Fine Arts,
Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Temple Isaiah, LA, USA

Each summer thousands of adolescents attend Jewish summer camps. Previous studies (Sales & Saxe, 2003; Zeldin, 2006) acknowledged the centrality and importance of group singing as part of the summer camp experience. In this presentation I examine how music at Jewish summer camp functions as music education and ultimately assists in the creation of a distinct musically constructed community. By using the concepts of hospitality, welcome and redemption as developed by Franz Rosenzweig, Emmanuel Levinas, and Jacques Derrida I argue that “camp music” creates a ritual and musical system that instills within campers a system of life-long values and ethics. Using data collected through interviews, focus groups, site visits and the analysis of song texts, I show that “camp music” forms the center of the summer camp experience and creates a community of memory that is retained well after the summer ends. Through song campers learn the Jewish concepts of *tzedakah* (charity), *gemilut chassidim* (acts of loving kindness) and *tikuun olam* (healing of the world). I will also argue that this idea of community and community music expands on ideas initially presented by Higgins (2012) and Veblen (2008).

As campers mature and move to other created communities, both Jewish and non-Jewish, they bring with them and utilize the values imbedded in the songs and music from camp. A brief survey of the ways those ethics contribute to life choices illustrates the implications of music education practices for other temporary residential experiences. Finally, the conclusion will suggest ways in which this research could be adapted for public, private and religious school use.

References

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