

**Youth Culture Lesson**  
**Finding Teachable Moments in Culture**  
**From *YouthWorker Journal* and YouthWorker.com**

**Changing Their Tune**

Teens' Musical Tastes Influenced by Peers

By Paul Asay

Posted: March 30, 2010

**What Happened:**

For teens, few things are more important than music. Whether it's Miley Cyrus, Lady Gaga or Lil Wayne, musicians have a knack for speaking to the essence of youth; and songs often can convey a teen's mood or outlook better than a book full of words.

So it may surprise some people that teens sometimes don't much like the music they download or buy. In fact, it can really stress them out.

Researchers recently studied a horde of youth between the ages of 12 and 17, forcing them to listen to music while scientists scanned their brains. The scientists played musical clips by no-name artists and asked them to rate the tunes. Then they had the teens listen to the same clips again—this time giving half of them information about how popular the music was, according to their peers on MySpace.

Source: Neuroimage

Many of the teens changed their opinions on a second listen, and that's natural: Some music just grows on you. However, teens who knew something about the song's popularity were far more likely to change their tune than those who didn't; 79 percent of those teens altered their opinion to conform to the majority opinion. **In other words, if lots of people seemed to like the song, the teens decided they did, too.**

The brainwaves of these teens showed heightened activity in regions of the mind that deal with stress and pain. When youth thought they were out of step with their peers, it bothered them—sometimes a lot. So they changed their minds to feel better.

It's true that few things are more important to teens than music, but one of those things—at least for some youth—is what other teens think of their musical taste.

**Talk About It:**

What kind of music do you listen to? What kind of music do your friends like? Is it pretty much the same? Where do you differ?

Do you have any “guilty pleasures” when it comes to music? Stuff that you like to listen to but wouldn't necessarily admit?

A little peer pressure can actually be a good thing—if you have good friends. We count on our friends to tell us what’s socially acceptable, which can help us grow up and fit into society better. Can you think of a time in your life when you learned something about how to behave from your friends?

We all know, though, that peer pressure can get way out of hand. When is peer pressure bad? Have you seen people pressured to make bad decisions by their friends? Were there any bad consequences?

**What the Bible Says:**

“He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm” (Prov. 13:20).

“Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?” (Luke 6:39).

“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night” (Ps. 1:1-2).