

The positive impacts of active music participation for infants

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This research was conducted by **David Gerry, Andrea Unrau** and **Laurel J. Trainor** at **McMaster University, Canada**.

Summary

To understand the developmental impact of active participation in music, this study worked with two groups of six-month old infants who attended music-based sessions with teachers and their parents. One group participated in *active* music activities, while the other had *passive* exposure to music. The study concluded that the group that attended active music classes demonstrated greater improvement in their knowledge of Western music tonality, social behaviours, and use of communicative gestures.

‘Infants can engage in meaningful musical training when appropriate pedagogical approaches are used’

34 families took part in all stages of the study (20 in the active groups and 14 in the passive groups). The active music classes involved a ‘curriculum that emphasizes movement, singing, playing percussion instruments, and building a repertoire of lullabies and action songs.’

In the passive sessions, music was played in the background whilst parents and infants engaged in a range of non-musical activities. In all of the three areas investigated – sensitivity to Western tonality, social-emotional development, and communicative development – the active group were found to have made greater improvements than the passive group at the end of a six-month period.

Further research is needed into the developmental impact of active music engagement on infants

The research suggests that appropriate music tuition can generate positive outcomes for infants, both in terms of musical sensitivity and social interaction. The authors suggest that 'the infant brain might be particularly plastic with respect to musical experience'. They recommend that further investigation be carried out into the function of repetition, the impact of the quality of music used, and the role played by parents in observing their children. The research underlines the importance of parents playing an active role in infants' encounters with music.

This summary is by **Richard Mason, King's Knowledge Exchange Associate**

Keywords

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