

# YOUNG CHILDREN'S MUSICAL WORLDS: MUSICAL EXPERIENCES AND MUSICAL PREFERENCES IN THREE-YEAR-OLDS

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## Background

Musical preferences are influenced by a range of individual, social and musical influences, some common within a given culture and others specific to individual cases. Musical preferences are also highly context-dependent, and the interaction between individual, social and musical factors needs to be more carefully considered. Data is lacking in the earliest stages of development of musical preferences, when children begin to make conscious choices about the music they like.

## Aims

- 1) To explore young children's demonstrated musical preferences for a range of musical styles, establishing the individual, social and musical factors that influence these preferences;
- 2) To examine the range of young children's everyday experiences of music in "real" time, coded in terms of individual, social and musical factors;
- 3) To explore the relationship between these everyday experiences of music and the demonstrated musical preferences, investigating similarities and differences between individual, social and musical factors.

## Method

Fifty children aged 3 to 3.5 years will participate in two studies. The first is an experimental study of musical preferences, involving an interaction between researcher and child using four extracts of music selected to manipulate familiarity (general and specific) and complexity. Total time spent playing each extract will be taken, as a proportion of total playing time, as indicating degree of preference. The second captures young children's real-life experiences of music using an experience-sampling methodology, collecting data over a week from the caregivers of all participants in a range of different situations.

## Results

The study took place in early 2003 so results are currently unavailable. Pilot data from the experimental study indicates that 2-3 year olds have both general and specific preferences for music, and this approach will enable an interpretation of how children's earliest musical choices are affected by individual, social and musical factors.