

MUSICAL PREFERENCES OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

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Background

Children start to develop their individual musical preferences already prior to puberty. In elementary school age an openness for different styles of music can (still) be observed, which Hargreaves (1982) has called “open-earedness”.

Aims

This study deals with the following questions: To what extent does open-earedness still exist with elementary school children? How does it change in the course of the elementary school years?

Method

By means of a questionnaire specially developed for elementary school pupils, children were asked their opinion on various musical genres. A total of 591 children (300 m, 291 f) between the ages of five and thirteen rated their likes or dislikes of eight short pieces of music (approx. 1 minute) of different styles (classical music, pop music, contemporary avantgarde and ethnic music).

Results

The results show that age related changes in preferences regarding all types of music are highly significant ($p = .000$, Kruskal-Wallis). With increasing age, all kinds of music were judged more negatively. All in all, pop music received the most positive evaluation. The age of seven or eight seems to denote a boundary, the transgression of which is marked by a rapid decrease of open-earedness. Boys and girls differ significantly in their ratings of all types of music. Girls tend to evaluate pop and classical music more positively than boys, whereas examples of contemporary avantgarde and ethnic music gain better acceptance with boys.

Conclusions

The results show that especially the first two years of elementary school as well as preschool education should be used for manifold music experiences so that children become acquainted with the widest possible range of music.