



Well-being and singing in parent-infant music courses

mothers belonging to two different social/age groups

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Purpose of study

The objective of this study was to evaluate how parent-infant music classes would benefit young mothers frequenting a support group for young mothers at a community center. The quality of life or mental well-being of new mothers has received increased attention in recent years because new mothers are at risk for developing depression and because the mental health of mothers is shown to be linked to the physical health of their infants in the first year (Zhou, Wang, and Wang, 2009).



New mothers and subjective well being

Several measures have been developed and devised for the purpose of isolating factors that constitute the perceived well-being of individuals. One such measure is the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) (Tennant, Hiller, Fishwick, et al., 2007). A shorter version of the scale (SWEMWBS), containing 7 items was chosen for measuring the subjective well-being of the mothers in the present study.

- I've been feeling optimistic about the future
- I've been feeling relaxed
- I've been thinking clearly
- I've been feeling close to other people
- I've been able to make up my own mind about things
- I've been feeling useful
- I've been dealing with problems well

Non of the time Rarely Some of the time Often All of the time

Musical parenting

Studies on infants' musical abilities and perceptions have indicated that infants are capable of musical learning (Trehub, 2006) and have musical preferences (Ilari, 2009). Viewing infants as capable learners and listeners of music has implications for the development of infant-parent music classes and on musical parenting in general. In fact, musical parenting of toddlers and infants has received increased attention among researchers (Custodero, 2006; Custodero, Britto, & Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Ilari, 2005). Intuitively, most parents seem to sing with their infants (Ilari, 2005) and toddlers (Custodero, 2006).

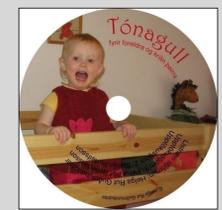
Participants

The participants in this study were twelve mothers of infants under the age of one year. Six of the mothers were 19-23 years-old, randomly selected from a group of mothers who participated in a free infant-parent music course at a community center. The other six were mothers who participated in a brand-name infant-parent music course paid for by them. The age range of the latter group was 35-41 years.

All of the participants received parent-infant music courses taught in Reykjavik, Iceland, by the same specialist using identical material. Both groups received a complementary book and musical recordings (CD) containing the course material.

The group of the younger mothers was taught at a community center where young parents meet once a week. The group of the older mothers was taught in a University music classroom equipped for parent-infant music classes.

N = 12
Mothers (Age 19-23) n = 6
Mothers (Age 35-41) n = 6



Interviews with mothers



Interviews were conducted after the music courses had ended. The mothers were visited and interviewed, one at a time, in their own homes and asked to fill out two short questionnaires.



Singing questionnaire for parents

- 1) I sing very often when I am alone
 - 2) I frequently sing when I am alone
 - 3) I sometimes sing when I am alone
 - 4) I never sing when I am alone
- 1) I enjoy singing with others very much
 - 2) I often enjoy singing with others
 - 3) I sometimes enjoy singing with others
 - 4) I don't feel comfortable singing with others
- 1) I sing for my child very often
 - 2) I sing for my child occasionally
 - 3) I rarely sing for my child
 - 4) I never sing for my child
- 1) My child reacts very strongly to singing
 - 2) My child sometimes reacts to singing
 - 3) My child does not react strongly to singing
 - 4) Not sure
- 1) My child reacts very strongly to music
 - 2) My child sometimes reacts to music
 - 3) My child does not react strongly to music
 - 4) Not sure

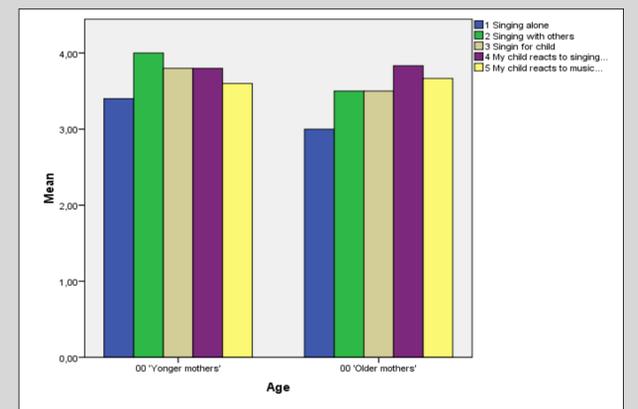


Findings

No differences were found between the two groups of mothers in terms of subjective well-being. The average subjective well-being was nearly identical and high for both groups ($m = 28.6$ and $m = 28.3$) The highest possible score = 35.

Singing confidence was on average higher among the younger mothers than the older mothers. However, this was not statistically significant.

The interviews indicated that the courses were perceived as beneficial to the young mothers and the infants to a similar extent as to older mothers who regularly participate in such classes with their infants.



References

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