

The effects of lullaby education on infant vocal development

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Abstract

Background to the research or performance/installation

Singing development in infants is characterised by increasingly sophisticated interactions with environmental and maternal sounds (Welch, 2006). The earliest vocal behaviour is crying, with infants displaying an increase in vowel-like sounds and babbling in the early months. There is existing evidence to suggest that the development of this early language development is positively related to the amount of time devoted daily to singing by mothers.

Interdisciplinary issues

This paper presents findings from a structured postnatal intervention programme aimed at teaching new mothers lullabies and nursery songs. The paper presents important practical and theoretical findings beneficial to parents, early years practitioners, health visitors, and community musicians.

The issue/hypothesis under investigation

The purpose of the present study was to examine whether a structured programme to encourage parental singing had a positive impact on infant vocal development. This paper adopted a mixed-methods approach to examine the interaction of maternal and infant vocal play on the subsequent development of early vocal and language activity. The primary hypothesis advanced is that a structured short course in lullaby and nursery singing will facilitate the initiation of early vocal development in babies.

Findings/description

Findings from the present study supported the hypothesis, demonstrating that such intervention programmes were able to positively benefit early infant vocal development, and facilitate mother and baby communication and interaction. Qualitative findings also supported the use of lullaby singing in facilitating maternal bonding, a factor which mothers with post-natal depression found to be particularly helpful.

Conclusions/future directions

The first year of life is characterised by increasingly diverse vocal activity. Findings from the present study support the use of such an intervention programme. The present study has examined a small pilot of such a programme, although further studies are required to examine the possibility of such programmes being made available to a larger number of new mothers.