

Music lessons boost children's self-esteem

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This research was conducted by **Eugenia Costa-Giomi** at the **University of Texas at Austin, USA**

Summary

The study looked at 117 nine year olds in Montreal, Canada who were not from privileged backgrounds. Half were given a piano at home and music lessons for three years; the other half constituted a carefully selected control group. The lessons were provided in school by professional teachers following a standard curriculum of technique and repertoire. The results indicated that 'there are specific benefits associated with piano instruction, especially the development of self-esteem' and the authors of the paper were confident that those benefits could be attributed to playing the musical instrument.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that music can make children happy

The research began from the premise that many children report that formal music lessons make them feel happier, more productive and more self-confident. However, because of the kinds of children most likely to receive such lessons, it was not clear whether these positive impacts resulted from their privileged backgrounds or the music lessons themselves.

The children took a range of tests before and after the programme

All the children completed standard tests for motor skills, maths and language ability, musical aptitude and self-esteem. The tests took place before, during and after the three year period. The rise in self-esteem was not affected by the child's gender, their parent's income etc. There were no statistically significant

effects on the other aspects of the children's performance (maths, language motor skills). Unsurprisingly there was an increase in their proficiency in playing music.

Something to keep in mind

Although the increase in self-esteem was attributed to the music lessons, the authors caution that it was not entirely apparent which elements of the lesson caused the effect (it may have been individual attention with an experienced teacher, the privilege associated with having a piano at home, teaching material, aspects of playing the instrument).

Keywords

piano music self-esteem Canada control group children experiment

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