

**MUSIC EXPERIENCES FOR TODDLERS IN DAYCARE:
AN AUSTRALIAN STUDY**

**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

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Dedication

For my mother who taught me the value of scholarship and my father who shared with me his love of music.

I hereby certify that this thesis is the result of original research by the author.

Reference to relevant published and unpublished work by others is acknowledged in the text. This work has not been submitted for a higher degree at any other university or institution.

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This thesis has been prepared in APA style in accord with the *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (4th ed.) as required by the Institute of Early Childhood, Macquarie University.

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Louie Suthers

SYNOPSIS

This study investigated music experiences for toddlers in an Australian daycare centre. Music is an area of the early childhood curriculum that is often limited in scope or almost absent for the toddler playrooms in some settings as practitioners often feel ill-equipped to plan and implement appropriate experiences. The goal of this investigation was to determine the kinds of music experiences that were appropriate for toddlers, practicable within demands of a busy playroom, and potentially feasible for staff in daycare centres, without specialised musical training, to implement.

A Toddler Music Program, based on research literature and current good practice in early childhood music education, was developed by the researcher. The Program was then implemented by the researcher and the staff team in a daycare playroom for ten months. Qualitative data related to the implementation process were collected as the toddlers participated in a variety of music experiences: music as part of care giving routines, play involving music, and sociable music experiences. Field notes collected during the project were used in compiling a series of vignettes to illustrate how the toddlers and also the staff members in the playroom responded to these types music experiences. Additionally an evaluation of the program and its implementation was undertaken using qualitative methods. The evaluation examined the impact of the program on the children, staff and parents in the centre.

The evaluation highlighted many benefits of this new approach to music for toddlers in daycare playrooms. There were positive outcomes for the children and staff involved. The importance of a planned musical environment and the role of parents in supporting toddlers' musical growth are also examined. Some implications for practice in Australian daycare centres and directions for future research were also considered.

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