**What influences children's choice of musical instrument?**

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**Abstract**
The purpose of this study was to focus on improving instrumental tuition retention by considering what influences children's musical instrument choices through an action research project which involved surveying, interviewing and providing sound clips for groups of children in Year 2 and Year 6. The project was undertaken in a Primary School in X, United Kingdom. I researched children's preferred choice of musical instrument and the reason(s) for this choice. The main group of children involved in the study had yet to begin instrumental tuition which was provided free by the local council. Contrasts were made with another group of children who had been given an opportunity to choose from three instruments for free tuition. The findings explore the effects which influence instrument choice and how this information could improve the number of students continuing with instrumental tuition at a post-primary level.

**Introduction**
According to Sinsel, Dixon and Blades-Zeller recognising and acknowledging the factors which are 'influential in students' instrumental preferences'' are crucial if we are intent on lessening 'instrument dissatisfaction' (1997, p. 390 – 91). The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (2014) state that 69% of children play a musical instrument, 36% of whom receive instrumental tuition. 46% of those who quit did so because they 'lost interest'. 30% of players never took lessons because they 'wanted to play music just for fun' (Fig. 18 and Fig. 20 p. 19). Students are often persuaded to choose instruments which are convenient or instruments that are cost effective. Sinsel *et al* (1997, p. 400) argue that influences such as 'parental pressures' or music educators who 'are concerned about balanced instrumentation in high school ensembles' may result in a child choosing an unsuitable musical instrument. Their suggestion, therefore, is that instrument satisfaction could be improved if consideration was given to 'gender association' and 'self-identification', resulting in 'better student-instrument matches'. (Sinsel *et al,* 1997, p. 400)

During my initial teacher training programme I decided to undertake a small research project and consider the question: "What influences children's choice of musical instrument?" My research was carried out in a mixed sex Non-Denominational School in the X, a large, multi-cultural borough. The school follows the X music system, a scheme run and funded by the local council which provides free musical instruments and tuition to children in the Borough between Years 5 and 7. Each child in Year 5 and Year 6 has to chose an instrument and undertake free tuition in that instrument for those two years. There were also whole class fluto-phone lessons for Year 3, and whole class Ukulele lessons for Year 4. The children I observed and questioned had yet to engage in any of these activities, an important aspect of my research.

I first began to assess gender influences and consider whether gender influenced the choices of the children I was working with. I also considered that parents' influence on choice should be examined further (Abeles, 2011). Finally, I sought to observe the importance of sound and timbre. I carried out the main body of my research with a relatively large group of 6 to just-turned 7 year olds, followed by

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an interview with a group of Year 6 children. My first step in the project was to consider my research questions, outlined below, and how they should be approached.

**Research Method**

*"Action research is research that is undertaken by practitioners... for the purpose of helping to develop their practice"* (Thomas, 2013, p. 146).

Maksimovic (2010) argues that it was the work of John Dewey as early as 1910 which opened the door for the term "action research" to evolve. The term itself was first coined by Kurt Levin in 1938 with Maksimovic (2010, p. 119) further suggesting action research, 'in which teachers are active participants', has its origins rooted in the work of both Levin and Dewey. Action research starts with identifying a problem and is a cyclical process (McGrath and Collins, 2013). Thomas (2013, p. 147) states that the 'central aim is *change*' and that the focus is on 'problem-solving'.

The "problem" identified by the Associated Board of the Royal School of Music (ABRSM), as mentioned in the introduction, was the percentage of children who discontinue or fail to begin musical instrument tuition. My question, therefore, is "What influences children's preferred choice of musical instrument?" As the question itself was quite broad I decided to focus on three key aspects which I consider important in figuring out what the influencers are. With support from secondary reading (Sinsel et al, 1997; Hallam *et al*, 2008; Pickering and Rapecholi, 2001; Mills, 2009) and from my own experiences and interests the three aspects I considered are:

- Gender: Does gender continue to influence a child's choice?
- Family: Do parents have a role to play in the child's decision?
- Sound: To what extent are timbre and sound influential on the decision?

The strengths and weaknesses of Action Research projects have been documented. Dickens and Watkins (1999 p. 127) suggest that the lack of 'definitive approach' to action research contributes to its weakness as a research paradigm; the weakness being that action research has never evolved into a 'unified theory' and instead encompasses different characteristics and definitions. By the time of his death Lewin had left the definition of Action Research open ended, allowing for his predecessors to attach their own views and definitions to the term (1999, Dickens and Watkins). In contrast Thomas suggests (2013, p. 148) that the strength of action research is it can take any form, depending on the preference of the researcher.

Considering data collection, I considered the two Qs: Quantitative and Qualitative research. Quantitative research is 'research using numbers' (2013, Thomas, p. 116), 'numbers, quantities and facts' (2013, McGrath and Coles, p. 77). In contrast qualitative research is that which does not concern itself with numbers (Thomas, 2013, p. 116), where McGrath and Cole share Cohen et al's definition suggesting that qualitative research creates theories as opposed to verifying them (Cohen et al., 2011, cited by McGrath and Cole, 2013, p. 77). During the project, I explored existing theories verifying the factors which influence instrument choice, and used this evidence and research further to draw my own conclusions on the factors which influence children's preferences.

Thomas (2013, p. 116) recognises the differences between the two methods and argues against the use of the two terms due to 'unnecessary' and 'unwelcome oppositions' between varying types of research. Instead he celebrates the compatibility of the two. McGrath and Cole (2013, p. 77) support this by highlighting the commonality of both approaches when it comes to educational research.
Furthermore, Hogan, Dolan, and Donnelly (2009) state that it can be useful to mix the two methodologies in order to reach a more complete view of social phenomena. By examining words and actions of their subjects, qualitative researchers investigate culture, society and behaviours through a versatile approach. Qualitative research removes itself from numbers and instead 'the data remains

at the level of words' (2009, p. 4). Creswell (2003, p. 4), however, argues that although research projects can encompass both methods, researches tend to incline toward one over the other. He also further suggests that the study may begin by the examination or gathering of quantitative data but may progress to qualitative methodology by examination of certain cases or individuals (2003, p. 16). As Thomas (2013, p. 116) states the most important inquiry is that which best addresses and answers the research question.

With this in mind, I considered employing both qualitative and quantitative methods. The survey first presented tested pre-existing theories (Cohen *et al,* 2011, cited in Creswell, 2003, p. 16) on gender (Sinsel *et al*., 1997; Hallam *et al.,* 2008; Pickering and Rapecholi, 2001). I then converted the results into statistics. I also gathered the Year 6 X music scheme data and presented a graph with the information. The effect of sound and timbre was also quantified and presented in the form of a graph, showing the pre and post audio test results. In terms of qualitative data, both the Year 2 students and the Year 6 students were interviewed and the focus was on their words, opinions and views. This, in particular, lent itself to the discovery of the extent of parental and sibling influence on the children's choices. The methods, in effect, complemented each other (Thomas, 2013).

Before undertaking the research project, and indeed presenting a proposal, I familiarised myself with the 'Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research' as outlined by the British Educational Research Association (2011). As my research concerned itself with the children's views alone I deeply considered Articles 16 to 21. The research proposal was presented to the Head Teacher, who acted as 'those who have responsibility for the welfare and well-being of the participants', and research was not undertaken until the research aim was fully explained, understood and approved (BERA, 2011, p. 7). Article 21, in particular, was one I considered greatly; to 'minimize the impact of... research on the normal working... of participants', (BERA, 2011, p.7) and each interview, survey and auditory test was short, concise, and accessible. Each method of data collection was done in an open area. The purpose of research along with confidentiality and the right to withdraw were explained to the children and adults. My project adheres to the 'Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research' as outlined by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011).

**Literature Review**

The DfE (Department for Education) (2011) and the DCMS (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport) published a National Plan for Music Education entitled 'The Importance of Music' with a promise to continue funding music education at significant levels (2011, p. 4). One of the new achievements outlined in the plan was that all children should receive the opportunity to learn a musical instrument and that children would experience 'Whole-class ensemble teaching programmes' for at least one term (2011, p. 5). The report, furthermore, reported on the growth in the number of children receiving instrumental lessons weekly from 438, 772 to over 1. 15 million (2011, p. 6). The issue with this document and "promise", however, is that the instrument list provided to schools does not take children's preferences into account. There are also schools throughout the country who continue to have no access to music tuition or facilities. Furthermore, classroom teachers are not being involved in musical education training and are therefore excluded further from vital discussions on musical education, including discussions with children on the "appropriateness" of instrument choice.

As mentioned in the introduction a study carried out by Sinsel, Dixon Jr., and Blades-Zeller (1997) argues the benefits of knowing what influences children's choice of musical instrument. The article focuses on "psychological sex-type" and uses the Boldizar's 1991 Children's *Sex Role Inventory* (cited in Sinsel *et al,* p. 390) to survey 108 children from two different primary schools in the United States. Following the inventory the children were given a survey of nine instruments and their preferred and least preferred were discovered (p. 390). Sinsel *et al's* research is prefaced with recognition of the 'cultural opportunity' given to pupils in primary schools to learn instruments at a young age, yet they also note the possibility that the all too common drop-out rate recorded in instrumental learning could

be as a result of 'instrument dissatisfaction' from incorrect instrument assignment (p. 390). Children's decision to choose an instrument because of their age, intelligence, personality, environment (Kuh, 1980; Wapnick, 1976 cited in Sinsel et al, p. 391) or novelty (Geringer, 1971 cited in Sinsel et al, p. 391) is considered. The findings of the report provide 'further support for the idea that there are strong beliefs among children with respect to the gender appropriateness of certain musical instruments' (p. 399). The report suggests that if further steps were taken to expose children to a 'variety of models of instrumental performers' their 'traditional musical instrument stereotypy' may lessen (p. 400)

Sinsel *et al's* closing argument which suggests that 'successive generations' may blur gender-based distinctions between musical instruments (p. 400) may be considered in light of more recent research on the subject. Pickering and Repacholi (2001) examined the possibility of modifying children's pre-existing biases toward instruments, based on gender-stereotypy. The study considered whether children's preferences could be altered by presenting 'instruments played by gender in-appropriate musicians' and, furthermore, whether the child's age and/or gender could change the intended result (2001, p. 623). Sinsel *et al* fail to provide a model by which these gender-based distinctions could be blurred and while Pickering and Rapecholi's suggestion is valid, the effect of their suggestions has yet to be examined.

More recently in 2008 Hallam *et al* set out to discover whether gender-based instrumental choice had changed at a time where 'there is greater gender equality in most aspects of life in the United Kingdom'. (p. 1) Data was gathered from 150 music services across England to form the basis for this article. What was discovered was that the gender bias continued to exist and was 'relatively consistent' across all educational ages and grades (p. 1) Abeles (2008) highlighted the role of the parents in instrument selection and suggests that it could benefit from further investigation. The Associated Board of Royal School of Music argues that the cost of tuition is often a barrier which results in children, and adults, failing to begin and/or continue instrumental lessons (2014, p. 11). Hallam *et al* propose that the influence on children, particularly those at primary school level, may be affected by the undertaking of an instrument by an older sibling (Davidson and Borthwick, 2001 cited in Hallam *et al*, 2008) and furthermore argue that children will continue to be influenced by family where issues over instrumental costs do not arise (2008 p. 9). Parents' themselves may even consider whether an instrument is 'sex-appropriate' for their child (Abeles & Porter, 1978 cited in Sinsel *et al,* 1997, p. 391).

Though the research I carried out is similar to, albeit much smaller than, that of Sinsel *et al*, Pickering and Hallam *et al*, it is important to note the differences between the studies. Firstly, the children in the study were older than the children with whom I carried out my research. Pickering and Repacholi suggest that although there is a lot of evidence that children from Grade 3 onwards are "gender-typed" in their instrument choice, the effect of gender on the choice made by children of a younger age has not been as well documented (2001, p. 624). According to ABRSM the average age for children to begin instrument tuition is 7.6 years (2014). I would argue that we must examine and take account of these children's choices and the influencers long before children begin to engage with instrumental tuition. Furthermore, the instrument choices I presented to the children differed from previous studies. I included the guitar in the survey as this is one of the instruments presented to the children in their final two years. I also allowed the children to add a "favourite" instrument if it was not included in the survey. I did not want the children to feel restricted by bias, to be limited to what I *thought* they would choose, or the choices presented in previous studies. The only instrument which arose that was not included on the survey was the piano. Certain children chose it as their "favourite" and therefore it was included in the research results.

My study was concerned with a relatively small group of children who had not yet embarked on their musical careers, but who were in a school that offered much musical opportunity. Janet Mills (2009) argues for the importance of early exposure to a range of different instruments, enabling the children to become familiar with sight and sound. Furthermore, Mills states that most children attend their

first instrumental lesson having never engaged previously with the instrument they are about to undertake (Mills, 2009, p. 153), which could contribute to early disengagement from the instrument. The purpose of my auditory test was to examine whether the children's 'favourite instrument' and 'favourite sound' correlated. If a child attends a musical lesson of their preferred instrument without truly understanding the sound or implications of the particular instrument, will they truly engage with the instrument in the long term?

**Analysis**

My first method of data collection was a short survey which was read to 28 Year 2 students. A list of twelve instruments was presented; flute, oboe, clarinet, alto saxophone, French horn, trumpet, drums, tuba, trombone, guitar, violin, cello. Each child was asked one to one, so to eliminate peer influence, to choose their favourite instrument. The results were quantified, yet the children were asked "Why?" they chose the particular instrument, lending to the qualitative method. Furthermore, the children were given the freedom to suggest a "favourite" instrument which may not appear on the survey. Once each child had chosen their favourite instruments, the data was gathered and I generated statistics in order to examine, in relation to literature discussed above, the extent of gender-typed instrument bias. I counted the amount of children which chose each instrument and, in a class of 28 pupils, the results were as follows, ranked from most desired to least desired: Guitar 35.7%, Drums, 25%, Violin 17.9%, Trumpet 7.1%, Piano 7.1%, Flute 7.2%, Oboe 0%, Clarinet 0%, Alto Saxophone 0%, French Horn 0%, Tuba 0%, Trombone 0%, Cello 0%. Following this, the statistics were then grouped into male and female, with 17 girls in the classroom and 11 boys (Fig. 1).

Their gender was compliant with that registered to the school, the shortcomings of which will be discussed in my limitations. Out of the 17 girls, the instruments chosen as "favourites" or "preferences" were the flute, trumpet, drums, guitar, violin, and piano. The statistics were as follows; Violin 29.4%, Drums 23.5%, Guitar 17.6%, Trumpet 11.8%, Piano 11.8%, Flute 5.9%. The Oboe, Clarinet, Alto Saxophone, French horn, Tuba, Trombone and Cello were chosen by 0% of the girls as their preferred instrument.

The 11 boys only chose three of the twelve given instruments. The results were as follows; Guitar 63.6%, Drums 27.3% and Flute 9.1%. The oboe, clarinet, alto saxophone, french horn, trumpet, tuba, trombone, violin, cello and piano were chosen by 0% of the boys as most preferred instrument (See Fig. 1).

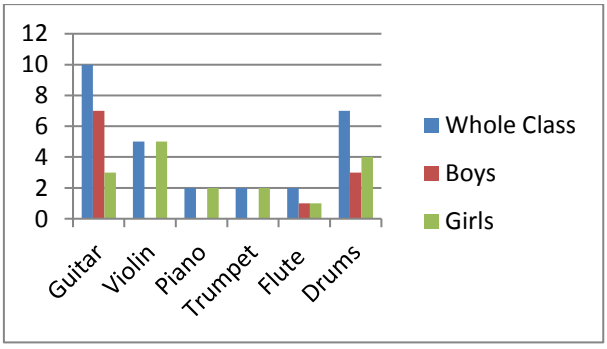


**Figure 1.** Year 2 Preferred Instruments.

In order to consider whether the gendered instrument bias was across Year groups I also analysed the X music scheme data of the Year 6 group and gathered statistical information similar to my analysis of the Year 2 class. The results were, however, more contained, as each child could only choose to undertake the study of 1 of 3 instruments; trumpet, guitar, or clarinet.

In Year 6 overall 36.4% studied clarinet, 32.7% guitar, and 30.9% trumpet. Out of a Year group of 55 pupils, 18 took guitar lessons; 66.6% girls, 33.3% boys. 20 children studied clarinet; 80% girls, 20% boys. 17 pupils from the year group studied trumpet, 35.3% girls, 64.7% boys. (See Fig. 2)

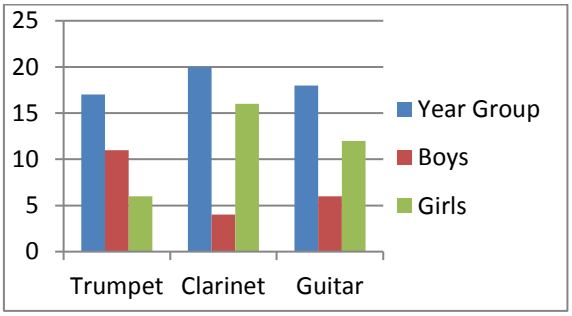


**Figure 2.** Year 6 Instrumental Tuition.

Following the statistical analyses of the Year 2 class and the Year 6 X music scheme reports, I conducted a short interview with each child in the Year 2 class. The questions for the interview were pre-determined however due to perceived difficulty in reading the questions and writing the answers, in certain cases, all of the interviews were done verbally. Before beginning the interview I asked to children to reinstate their favourite instrument, considering *test-retest* reliability (Thomas, 2013). The children were asked six questions and I transcribed the children's answers as they discussed their views and opinions. I used the constant comparative method, as suggested by Thomas (2013), to analyse the findings; using 'codes - abbreviations, names, marks and colours' to describe 'important facets' (p. 235).

Next, I interviewed a small group of Year 6 students. The interview questions were open-ended, allowing the interviewee to divulge as much or as little information as they wished, with just one closed questions requiring a "yes" or "no" answer. The purpose of this interview was to gather further data and information on the influences affecting choices in children already exposed to instrument tuition and to consider whether similar themes in Year 2 and Year 6 were similar. I chose both a girl and a boy to represent each instrument studied. Therefore there were 6 children involved in the process.

Finally, I presented the original group of Year 2 children with an auditory sample of each of the instruments discussed in the original survey. This method addressed the issue of sound and timbre. Each child listened to short excerpts of the instruments and chose their favourite, without visual or verbal cues. I suggested that there was a significant change in pattern between the original instrument choice and the choice after listening to audio (See Fig. 3.).

This survey was done with 27 of the original 28 children. One child struggled to identify their favourite sound therefore in order to reduce any discomfort, and in compliance with Article 20 (BERA, 2011, p. 7) the child was excluded from this survey. Their contributions to the project remained in the initial survey and the interview outcomes. The coding system I employed allowed me to identify their answers from the initial survey and exclude them from the comparative analysis of the pre- and post-audio results.

When analysing the findings I considered the influence of gender in light of the secondary reading I had engaged with. Similar to the findings of Abeles and Porter (1978, cited in Sinsel *et* al), Sinsel *et al* (1997*)* and Hallam *et* al (2008), I found that the girls were interested in a wider range of instruments than the boys. The boys limited themselves to three instruments in the initial survey, in particular the guitar and drums. The most preferred instrument by the girls was the violin. The same choices were noted by Pickering and Repacholi (2011, p. 632), suggesting that gender continues to contribute to

instrument choice. The Year 6 X music scheme data was more difficult to analyse, as the children had only three instrumental tuition opportunities to choose from. The noticeable difference was between the number of boys engaging in trumpet lessons compared to girls (Fig. 2.).

Following this, I addressed the influence of family in a child's decision. Not only do parents play a role in choosing instruments, consciously or sub-consciously, but siblings and even wider relations affect the child's choice. When asked if any member of their family played an instrument 57% of the Year 2s answered "Yes". 50% of these children's' preferred instrument corresponded with the instrument played by the stated family member. Siblings (43. 8%) were amongst the highest percentage of family members who the children mentioned as instrument players, followed by parents (31.2%), and finally by wider family, such as uncles, aunts and cousins (25%).

The role of the family was also evident through the Year 6 interview process. The group were asked the same question as the Year 2 children. 66.6% answered 'Yes' to the proposed question, 100% of whom cited immediate family members. Child 1 stated that their "Mum plays piano" and their "sister plays clarinet", Child 2 chose the guitar because their "family inspired [them] to play". Child 4, a trumpet player, stated that their "brother used to play trumpet" and "sister plays piano". Child 3 stated that no family member played an instrument. Child 5 said that their "brother plays guitar", whereas Child 6 stated that their sister has a piano "but she doesn't play it".

Although the children had a choice of only three instruments through the music scheme the influence of family is still quantifiable, one of the aims I considered at the beginning of the project. Another important question asked was "If you could choose another instrument what would it be and why?" I wanted to consider whether, given a broader range of instruments to choose from, the children would pick an instrument played by a family member. In answering this question, Child 2 chose the clarinet, which was available through the X music scheme. She currently studied guitar through the scheme, and their reason being that she had been learning it since the age of 6. More importantly all of their family, siblings and parents, also played guitar. I asked why they would choose the clarinet if they had another option the child stated "so I could play a different instrument than my family". Child 5, a clarinet player, said they would choose the guitar as their second choice because their "brother plays it and makes it look easy. I want to be better than him". Themes of competition and difference, or wanting to be individualised from siblings, were notified, something which was not apparent in the literature. Child 6 was the only one interviewed who considered peer influence. They stated that they chose the clarinet because they wanted to be "different. Everyone [in Year 6] chose the guitar... I wanted to try something different". Furthermore, Child 6 said their next preferred instrument was the piano, again because they wanted to "try something different".

Considering the above results and the certainty of the influence of parents and siblings as well as gender, the final question looked at timbre and sound and children's choice. After analysing the results of the sound test, only 15.4% of children's favourite 'sound' correlated with their initial choice of instrument. Abeles and Porter (1978, cited in Hallam *et al,* 2008) suggested that children may change their preference when the instruments are presented to them in a different manner; either aurally and/or visually. There is a clear indication, as evident in the Figure 3, that this is indeed the case. Although the girls chose from a wide range initially there was an increase in their choices after the auditory test. Similarly there was a significant change in the boys' choices. They chose from a wider range when the instruments were presented aurally.

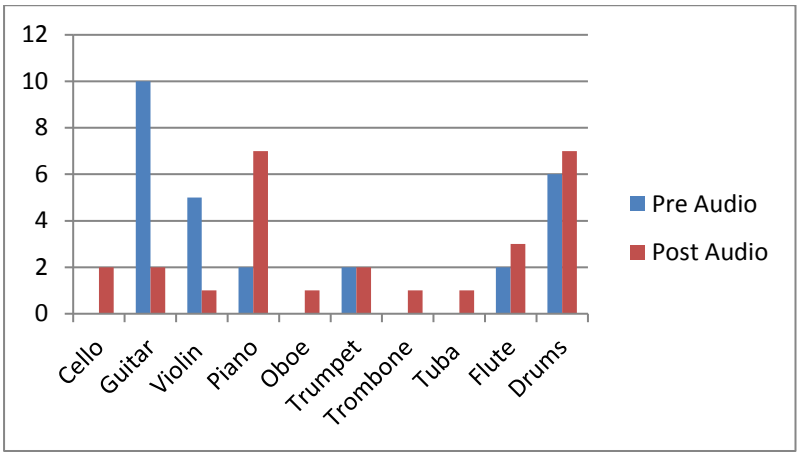


**Figure 3.** Pre and Post Audio Analysis.

What I observed from both the survey and the sound test, in particular, was a certain lack of knowledge of instruments. During the survey process children were often unaware of many of the instruments by name. Likewise during the auditory sample the children did not recognise many of the presented timbres. Even the children most confident in their 'favourite' instrument initially were unable to identify the instrument amongst the 13 different sounds. Indeed some children could name certain instruments that were heard. Child W chose the flute as their favourite sound, giving that reason that 'flutes are nice and gentle'. Child T identified trumpet and reminded me 'I don't like the Trumpet'. Others identified instruments incorrectly – however the instruments were closely related and from the same family, particularly brass and woodwind. Child BB chose the Tuba as their preferred sound and gave the reason "I like it because I like trumpets". Child AA chose trombone saying "it's like a trumpet", and Child H chose the oboe stating it "sounds like a flute". Overall, however, the children seemed limited in their knowledge of musical instruments.

The limitations of my project, at this point, must be considered. Firstly, I did not have the time to conduct my own research into the children's gender, to consider what gender or "sex-type" they identified with. Rather, I conducted my analysis on the back of the previous research, mentioned above, and assumed their gender from what was presented in the school register. Furthermore, albeit giving the children an option to add any instrument to the survey the whole discussion consisted of an examination of Western instruments, an issue which Hallam *et al* (2008) highlights in relation to large-scale explorations of gender-stereotyping musical instruments. Secondly I attempted to recover multiple sources of influence, which perhaps may have been my biggest downfall. The amount of data and information collected could lend itself to a larger scale project. For the time allocated to this project I believe I would have been better served focusing on one of the three sub-questions that I presented. Considering this, I would love to focus on the influence of siblings and family in instrument choices moving forward. Thirdly the reliability of the auditory examination is questionable. Explained by Thomas (2013, p. 138) as the 'extent to which a research instrument... will give the same result on a different occasion', I question whether the children would in fact choose the same instrument twice if they were to hear the sound sample a second time. The instruments in the sample played different melodies which again could affect choice. Given more time, I would present the children with the different sounds on multiple occasions.

Moving to the strengths of my project, I employed the triangulation method, what Thomas calls, 'different methods of looking' effectively (2013, p. 145-146). My research consisted of questionnaire, statistics, interviews and auditory observation. These were accessible to the children with whom I conducted my study with and allowed for the child's voice to be heard and documented. Furthermore, as mentioned above, two different age groups were observed in my study. Throughout the eight weeks of placement and prior to the undertaking of my project, I developed a good rapport with the

children and therefore, in compliance with BERA guidelines the children were 'put at ease' and protected from possible 'distress or discomfort' (p. 7). My one on one discussion with the children ensured that each child had a chance to partake in the questionnaires and interviews allowing me to reduce the possibility of peer influence (Pickering and Repacholi, 2001, p. 625). For the same reason, and due to time constraints and lack of particular instruments, I abandoned my original plan to introduce children physically to the musical instruments. I wanted to continue to engage with the children individually, without distraction.

**Conclusion**

Drawing back to the overall research question 'What influences children's musical instrument choice?' and considering my three main questions, I feel that there are multiple influences which sway children to choose particular instruments, but that gender, sound and timbre and family are amongst the biggest influencers. When considering the children's gender and their instrument choice, the statistics were consistent with those found in the studies discussed throughout this project. Through qualitative research I found that the influence of parents continues to prevail but even more so children chose instruments, or avoid instruments, due to the influences of older siblings. The impact of enabling the children to *listen* to the recordings suggests that sound and timbre are, perhaps, the most influential factors on instrument preference and, therefore, Mills' (2009) suggestion that children should be exposed to instruments as soon as possible is more evident than ever.

In undertaking this project I learned about the importance of educational research. It is not only important but vital for continued professional development. It is crucial to understand current developments in research education and to consider our role as teacher's in this field. The more aware we are of current developments the better able we will be to provide the children with a well-rounded, engaging and diverse educational experience. Going forward, I must consider engaging children in all aspects of music education, and introducing them to a wide variety of musical instruments as early as possible and at every available moment. I must also consider gender bias', not only in music but also in English, Drama and other creative arts subjects. Gender bias' should be considered and challenge; children should be introduced to the profiles of professional players, both male and female, and role models should be given for the children to engage and identify with. Discussions should centre on children's ideas of instruments and their players and any gender bias could be dispelled. Children should be given an opportunity to engage with music regardless of whether they get the opportunity to undertake instrumental tuition or not, regardless of their previous engagement, and regardless of their social background. And that music education should be rich, diverse, and as free from outside influences as possible.

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