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## **Performing as Family: Parents' Roles in Babies' Music Education Experiences**

*Natalie Alexandra Tse*  
*National Institute of Education, Singapore*

### **Abstract**

This paper discusses the observations and analyses from a case study examining the creation and presentation of a sonic experience for babies 18 months and under in Singapore. The research inquiry, "what is the role of parents (&/the family) in a sonic experience for infants 18 months and under", was met by a unique phenomenon where the researcher performed multiple roles in a multi-sensory sonic experience - as performer, mother and wife, and has implications for music education in parent-child relationships.

The family dynamics of the performing trio is discussed through John Bowlby's theory of attachment, as well as Mary Ainsworth's notions of the 'strange' versus the 'familiar'. The researcher noted that she was not only a performer in the presentation of the sonic experiences, but also a mother responding to her own baby's needs as part of the performance. This was similar for the researcher's co-performer – the baby's father – who performed in response to his baby's needs, resulting in a choreographic presentation by the trio that reflected Ellen Dissanayake's conception of 'mutuality' through 'rhythm and modes', where there was synchronicity in the researcher and her co-performers movements. It was also postulated that the responses by the researcher's baby resonated with other babies and their families as an expansion of 'mutuality' to 'belonging' that reflects a sense of communal resonance amongst the participants. Amongst parent-child dyads in the participants, it was also noted, in line with notions of attachment theories, that parents served as secure bases for their babies to establish familiarity with the sonic environment, sonic objects as well as performers. Thus, the research asserted that the intersubjective interactions between parent-child directly affects the experience of their babies in a sonic environment.

Such research results demonstrate the importance of parent's roles in their babies' sonic experiences. For babies as young as 18 months and below, their attached caregivers are their first experiences of music education. This research implicates that parents' familiarities and comfort levels towards sonic experiences affect their babies' experiences, as discussed through theories of innate intersubjectivities and attachment. This paper asserts the importance of sound in a baby's life with socio-emotional implications and demonstrates how parents form their babies' first encounters of socio-emotional communication through early music education experiences.