

Conceptualization of Musical Elements in Sighted and Blind Children

In our present study, we investigate the conceptualization of basic musical relations in blind ten-year olds. The children were exposed to ten diametrically opposed musical stimuli (high and low tone, quick and slow succession of pitches, major and minor chord, etc) and asked to verbally describe what the first and what the second part was like. The antonym or antonym-like descriptions were then classified into higher-order conceptual categories. A preference for spatial relations was prevalent. While sighted children's descriptions were generally more elaborate, the comparison of antonymic responses proper between the two groups reveals few, if any, differences. This might suggest (1) that the complex linguistic capacity developed by that age has helped blind children create concepts similar to those of their sighted peers, but also (2) that the abstract domain of music is primarily conceptualized through spatial, rather than visual, modality.