

# Putting lullabies to bed: The effects of screened presentations on lullaby practices

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## Abstract

Lullabies have existed since ancient times, and are sung across all most all cultures to soothe babies and lull them to sleep. As screen media use pervades contemporary familial lives, it is perhaps inevitable that lullabies have been adopted and adapted as repertoire. This recording of lullabies in audiovisual modes has transformed the ways in which these songs are learned, transmitted, experienced and used within young children's lives. As part of a larger study investigating music and screen media in the lives of young children, this paper reports on evolving lullaby practices in the lives of Australian children. Using an ethnographic methodology, content and production of, and responses to, lullabies presented via YouTube, Apps and television have been analysed. Findings indicated that lullabies presented via YouTube clips and Apps tend to be economically produced, and demonstrate a lack of understanding of young children's social and/or developmental needs. Televised lullabies tend to function as signals for settling, rather than for lulling babies and young children to sleep, and their use plays an increasingly significant role in families' everyday routines.

**Key words:** lullabies, early childhood music education, musical interactions, audiovisual music

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## Introduction and theoretical framework

Lullabies are perhaps the best-known genre of music for infants, and have been traditionally sung by parents and carers to soothe, calm, and lull babies to sleep, fostering an emotional closeness, and forming an association between music, comfort and security (Baker & Mackinlay, 2006; Mualem & Klein, 2012; Trehub, 2002). As screen media have come to play increasingly significant roles in the daily routines and musical lives of babies and young children, lullabies have been adopted and adapted as screened musical repertoire. As part of a larger study investigating music and screen media in the lives of young children, this paper examines this repertoire through analysis of the content, production

and responses to several pieces of screen media featuring lullabies. In so doing, it addresses the following questions:

- In what ways are lullabies and their associated performance practices altered or transformed through presentations as screened media content?
- How have screened presentations of lullabies affected musical interactions within families?

The study uses an ethnographic methodology to analyse and describe lullabies presented via YouTube, Apps<sup>1</sup> and television, and considers

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1. "Apps" are self-contained programs or pieces of software designed to fulfil a particular purpose; an application, especially as downloaded by a user to a mobile device (Oxford Dictionaries, 2013).

the implications of the ways in which babies and young children experience and respond to these presentations through a sociology of childhood lens. In so doing, it recognises children as active agents in the construction of knowledge and meaning, and emphasises the currency of children's *being* within the social category of childhood (Morrow, 2011).

As young children interact, play and negotiate, they process and interpret the experiences and objects with which they are involved. Young children's daily routines and practices, together with their reciprocal interactions and negotiations, form the raw materials for their social participation and their developing conceptualisations and understandings of the world around them (Kampmann, 2014). Their familial routines, which increasingly incorporate screen media use, provide a framework within which family members can interpret, produce and display sociocultural knowledge. Although viewing and engaging with mediated lullabies constitutes a musical experience in itself, many children integrate these experiences into their broader everyday musical lives in processes of interpretive reproduction and ensuing social construction. As part of these processes, experiences with mediated traditional repertoire may be viewed as "cultural rehearsal" (Burn, 2014, p. 14), whereby cultural texts such as mediated presentations function by representing "a world through which viewers can participate in practices of identification similar to practices in which they might engage in their daily lives" (Boessen, 2006, p.137).

## Related literature

Lullabies have been described as "intimate, aural communications between caregivers and infants" (Unyk, Trehub, Trainor & Schellenberg, 1992, p.16). Although lullabies exhibit variety in stylistic features, particularly cross- culturally, Trehub and Trainor (1998) identify several similarities that result from the intended audience and function of the songs. Lullabies are typically short in

length, with a slow tempo, and a limited pitch range. The simple, repeated melodies are sung freely, and often semi-improvised, using a soft voice, and have been described as "soothing, smooth and airy" (Rock, Trainor & Addison, 1999, p. 532). They often feature descending melodic lines, portamento effects, and sometimes a stylised representation of sighing or weeping. They include humming and syllabic vocables as well as words, and sometimes include the baby's name or terms of affection (Trehub & Trainor, 1998). However, Rock, Trainor and Addison note that infants' reactions may be influenced by familiarity with musical styles and differing individual temperaments, negating the application of universal features to lullabies, and indicating that babies might exercise selective agency through the responses proffered to lullaby singing.

A baby's reception of a lullaby usually incorporates hearing the mother's voice while feeling its vibration as the head rests on the mother's chest; smelling the familiar scent of the body; and stimulation of the vestibular system through rocking, bouncing or spinning. Young (1995) terms this "multi-sensorial and multi-dimensional, involving perception through all body faculties" (p. 51).

These performances, characterised by "music-like" qualities within the vocalisations, in combination with "dance-like" gestures and facial movement, have been described as "communicative musicality" (Malloch et al., 2012, p.2), and found to both facilitate and promote multimodal interactions and communication between mothers and their babies (Creighton, Atherton and Kitamura, 2013). Malloch et al., (2012) also note the critical importance of these sensitive, musical interactions on the baby's social, emotional, and cognitive development. Similarly, Levinowitz and Adalist-Estrin, (2000) posit that musical interactions between parents or caregivers and infants contribute to the provision of sensory stimulation; rich language and music experiences; the opportunity for the infant to practise imitation

and skill mastery; and memories of music as a positive source of nurturance. Together with Ilari (2005), these authors also assert that it is essential for music educators to understand the impact that these musical interactions have on children's music learning, as the adults act as both transmitters of musical culture, and as practice partners of children's learned musical signs (Adachi, 1994).

Young (2003) suggests that meaningful musical development can unfold naturally when parents and caregivers play, talk, sing and dance with their children. Further, adults joining in these interactions often provide motivation for children to communicate, providing the "generative potential for expressive, affect-rich, multi-modal/multi-media events which are performed across time in space" (Young, 2005, p. 297).

The quality and quantity of everyday musical interactions with babies and young children have been greatly modified through the development and widespread use of modern-day technologies (Kaya & Ozgut, 2016; Sulkin & Brodsky, 2013; Young & Gillen, 2007). While music-based devices have possibly increased the frequency of musical engagement and activity, there is also concern that they may be used to enhance stimulation as a substitute for human presence and interactions with caregivers (Baker & Mackinlay, 2006; Sulkin & Brodsky, 2013; Young, 2008). Trevarthen and Malloch (2002) warn that the special relationship between mothers and babies can be "lost sight of in a culture that does not value time just 'hanging out' without a particular goal or achievement in mind" (p. 14).

## Methodology

This case study, conducted in Sydney, Australia, between 2012 and 2014, is qualitative in nature. The sample for the study included families with young children, composers of televised lullabies, and examples of screened lullabies. Purposive sampling was used to invite a number of families with children under the age of six to participate in the study. Sixteen families

consented to participate. These families all had some association with a local school at which I was employed. This was significant, since my presence in their homes for data collection required an element of trust which was facilitated through this association. Purposive sampling was also used in the recruitment of two composers of screened lullabies, each of whom was identified through analysis of their compositions. Both purposive and theoretical sampling were used in the selection of Youtube clips, Apps and televised lullabies for analysis. While many were selected through searching of sites, others were referred to or discussed by study participants. Searching the YouTube site with the term "lullabies" yielded over nine million results. The first 25 resultant clips were analysed. Similarly, searching the term "lullabies" yielded over 300 Apps. I selected the first ten Apps for iPhone and iPad that were specifically for babies, were free,<sup>2</sup> and had the word lullaby included in their titles.

Data for the study were collected via observations of families with young children in their home settings, and semi-structured interviews with parents of these children as well as with two composers of lullabies, each of whom was commissioned to write lullabies for children's television. These semi-structured interviews allowed for the collection of spontaneous, individual narratives from the participants in response to questions generated through theoretical concepts (Galetta, 2013). While pseudonyms have been provided for the families, the composers' names have been provided, with permission, through identification with their music.

Ethnographic content analysis of several pieces of screen media featuring lullabies enabled the description of phenomena that are embedded within screened presentations, as well as data

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2. Although these Apps were free, it is noted that many free Apps (including these) have quite limited repertoire or features, with more sophisticated or extended versions available for purchase.

triangulation. In this study, ethnographic content analysis involved the reflexive analysis of screened media in a cycle of data collection, analysis and reconceptualisation. Using this approach, constant discovery and comparison were used to delineate categories as well as narrative description.

## Discussion

Consistent with traditional western child-rearing practices (O'Neill, Trainor & Trehub, 2001), the mothers participating in the study were the primary carers of their children, and also the main performers of lullabies in their families. The lullabies they sang were mostly of traditional English nursery rhyme repertoire, and were often part of familial histories, recalled from their own childhoods, and conveying specific, emotive messages in processes of communicative musicality (Custodero, Rebello Britto & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Data collected early in the study attested that *Rock-a-bye Baby* was the best-known and most widely performed lullaby across the participant families. During a focus group interview (March 19, 2012), Maggie stated that her baby, Katie, "always settles when I sing *Rock-a-bye Baby*". For Katie, familiarity with both the song and her mother's singing practice contributed to the settling effect of the singing. Although Maggie sang the lullaby as part of a personal musical interaction with her baby, she also recounted using mediated presentations within daily care routines:

*Katie has been very fussy with her bottle since she was 8 weeks old. The only way we can get her to drink is to watch The Wiggles Nursery Rhymes DVD or walk or rock her singing Dr Knickerbocker or Rain, Rain Go Away.*

As Maggie spoke of Katie's responses to musical stimuli, there was a lack of distinction between her references to mediated and personal presentations within her family's routines, evidencing the adoption and integration of mediated presentations of traditional songs

into daily care and music-making practices. This inclusion of mediated lullaby repertoire was noted by another participant mother, Elaine, who stated that

*I'm really glad that I learnt some new lullabies from watching TV with Mariah. When she was little, I only knew Rock-a-bye Baby. Now that I have spent so much time watching TV with her, I feel like I have learnt some new ones to sing with the new baby, when he arrives (Interview, May 18, 2013).*

Another mother participating in the focus group interview, Rachel, alluded to the multimodal nature of lullaby performance as she stated

*I can remember humming the tune to Twinkle Twinkle to Jake when I was up with him at night or he was unsettled. I would get right up close to him so our cheeks were touching and it seemed to settle him.*

Together, Rachel and Jake were involved in a process of cultural rehearsal, taking a song with which they were both familiar, and adapting and reworking its presentation to evoke a desired response from the baby. Jake's responses to Rachel's humming and the vibrations on his cheek signalled his preferred mode and style of performance, and influenced future performative interactions, thereby displaying his selective agency. Although babies and very young children may lack the developmental traits to function entirely independently as social actors, their agency is facilitated and evolves through their individual responses within communicative processes with their parents. As part of this process, the parent reads the infant's signals, and adapts the musical performance until it stimulates the desired response. As exemplified in Maggie's and Rachel's comments, these messages are peculiar to particular mother-baby dyads, reflecting the mother's known and rehearsed repertoire, the ways in which it is shared, and the baby's individual responses.

During a visit to one family home, I witnessed two-and-a-half-year-old Amy singing to her

six-week old baby brother who was lying in a bassinet in the living area of the home. The words “go to sleep, baby” were heard several times during the improvised song. Other words were unrecognisable, or were syllables lacking obvious semantic content. Elements of repetition were obvious in this music sharing, which was described as “quite typical” by the mother. The singing began and ended quite suddenly, and recurred intermittently as the child flitted between playing with toys, chatting with her mother and me, and watching television (Observation, March 15, 2012).

Children’s familial interactions form a basis for their developing social understandings of other people’s needs, feelings and intentions (Mayall, 2002). Amy’s singing to her baby brother demonstrated her negotiation of a new relationship, as well as the development of her identity as a sister. She was also contributing to what Qvortrup (1985, p. 142) referred to as “socially necessary activities” that maintain and advance social orders. Mayall (2002, p. 65) terms this “family work”, whereby each family member, despite age, contributes to the socialisation of the family through socially useful and necessary things, thereby participating in and building and promoting social relations (Mayall, 2012). Amy had observed both her mother and grandmother singing to her baby brother, and interpreted these musical practices, before reproducing her own manner of helping with the care of the baby.

## Lullabies on YouTube

YouTube, the world’s most prominent video-sharing web site, was founded in 2005 and has grown exponentially in popularity and use since that time. YouTube is classified as a social networking site because users can share and view videos, as well as comment on the work of others (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009; Jones & Cuthrell, 2011; Molyneux, O’Donnell, Gibson & Singer, 2008). Searching the YouTube website with the term “lullabies” yielded hundreds of results. Clips were surprising in content and presentation,

since very few included singing as musical content, even though lullabies are typically sung by carers as part of personal interactions with babies and young children. Most clips consisted of well-known pieces such as *Brahms’ Lullaby* or *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* performed by electronic sources. Although some clips included audio of authentic instrumental or orchestral performances of slow, quiet pieces of music, such as the Second Movement of Mozart’s Flute and Harp Concerto, K 299 (Relax Your Baby, 2014), recordings of high art music feature complex harmonies, rhythms, dynamic changes and a lack of predictability, setting them apart stylistically from lullabies (Baker & Mackinlay, 2006).

The visual aspect of the vast majority of clips consisted of a series of electronic special effects, with bright, moving colours and patterns, seemingly unrelated to the music. Other clips included animated images, or a succession of still images, most commonly toys such as building blocks and teddy bears. Such images might be viewed as representations of early childhood that have been socially constructed and widely distributed across various media over many years. Their inclusion in screen media presentations provides an associative link that may aid in making the media appear to be suitable for young audiences.

The titles of most clips in the first few pages of search results included a highlighted number indicating the length of time the clip would run, implying value in a clip lasting several hours, and possibly connoting that a baby would sleep or be amused for this length of time, for example, “★ 4 HOURS ★ Lullabies for Babies – Brahms Lullaby – Music for Babies – Lullabies for Children” (Lullaby World, 2013a). This would seem to discourage personal interactions with the child.

The *babyrelaxchannel* (Baby Relax Channel, 2013), boasting more than 50 clips, contains many unsubstantiated claims relating to the use of music with children, such as “after listening to classical music, children can do certain spatial tasks more quickly, such as putting together a

jigsaw puzzle" (Baby Relax Channel, 2013). This claim demonstrates the ways in which producers manipulate commonly held beliefs derived from empirical research to promote their products, in this case, parents' acceptance of popular media's reporting of the highly publicised "Mozart Effect"<sup>3</sup> (for example Winterman, 2005). In explaining social representation theory, Bangerter and Heath (2004) contend that theories' such as the 'Mozart Effect' are diffused and evolved to meet the needs of social groups, in this case the promise of the intellectual development of children. Social representation theory "links society and individual, media and public" (Höijer, 2011, p.3), as ideas are communicated and transformed, and collective cognition is generated into what is perceived as common sense. These representations then fuel further production and consumption of media.

While the *babyrelaxchannel* uses classical music to accompany videos featuring endless visual effects, the audio content of many other clips primarily consists of electronic pieces, offering bland musical expression, supposedly to lull babies to sleep. One such piece from the *lullabyworld* channel, boasts "★ 2 HOURS ★ Baby Mobile Playing Brahms Lullaby in Real Time – Lullabies for Babies" (Lullaby World, 2013b). This clip has looped audio and video of a rotating mechanical mobile, as might be viewed by a baby lying in a cot. The quality of the clip's definition and the unsteadiness of the image suggest that it has been filmed and produced by an amateur, rather than professional, cameraman. One might question the reasons for filming such an event, or indeed for assuming that an Internet audience might be interested in viewing it. This reasoning may be influenced or limited by the producers' own experiences or conceptions of lullabies,

and will also be dependent upon the ways in which they conceive of their imagined audiences. Motivation for disseminating such a clip on a global site like YouTube may also vary between users. Channels such as *babyrelaxchannel* stand to profit financially from advertising featured on their video clips, while individual contributors may be motivated by social aspects such as an interpersonal desire for inclusion, affection and control (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009). The capacity to track views of the clip, as is enabled by YouTube, and to read viewer's comments or even discuss the clip with viewers, may add to the satisfaction of these contributor desires.

As a social networking site, YouTube not only provides the infrastructure to facilitate extensive distribution (Croteau, 2007), but also "illustrates the speed with which social networking innovations can achieve widespread penetration and utility" (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009, p. 317). One clip that I viewed, ★ 2 HOURS ★ ROCK A BYE BABY Lullaby – Lullabies for Babies – Music for Children" (Lullaby World, 2013c), appeared to be quite typical in its usage of electronic sound sources and visual special effects, and just ten weeks after posting, had been viewed 70,280 times, confirming the site's wide usage.

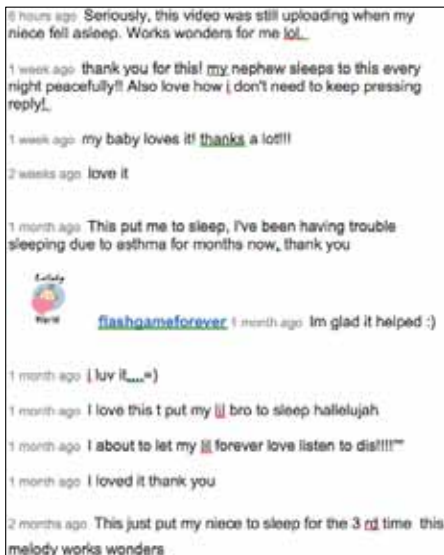
As part of the participatory culture encouraged by and through the site, account holders are able to post comments about YouTube video clips, providing feedback to contributors, and thereby exerting some power over the potential success of the clip. YouTube contributors who interact with their audiences are more likely to retain subscribers to their clips and gain more views (Chau, 2010). Posted comments are crucial to the operation of the YouTube community and site (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009). Subscribers can offer feedback in the form of a simple click to 'like' (👍) or 'dislike' (👎) the clip, or may leave written comments. Berg (2012) claims that within social media sites, boundaries become blurred between those who speak and those who listen, and between those who perceive

3. A paper by Rauscher, Shaw and Ky (1993) proposed that college students showed significantly better spatial reasoning skills after listening to Mozart's sonata for two pianos (K448) for 10 minutes, than after listening to relaxation instructions designed to lower blood pressure, or to silence. This became known as the "Mozart Effect".

and what is perceived. She claims that issues such as conformity, social desirability, reciprocity, and anticipated impact can influence individual audience members' comments and responses. These processes of interpersonal communication and participatory discourse contribute to ongoing social constructions, determining belief content and structures, as is acknowledged in social representation theory (Höijer, 2011). Consequently, YouTube holds potential to influence and transform presentation and perception of traditional modes of music-making, such as lullabies.

Figure 1 shows a small portion of the comments appearing on the YouTube web page for the clip mentioned above. Apart from *Lullaby World*, who posted the clip on the site, contributors' names and photo identities have been removed. Those posting comments include not only parents, but also aunts or uncles, and brothers or sisters, demonstrating the range of people influencing musical practices and experiences in young children's lives.

**Figure 1: Comments from a YouTube page.**



This aspect of YouTube usage may be viewed as being the reciprocal use of media to satisfy interpersonal needs, and the use of interpersonal communication to satisfy media-related needs (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009). Through these mediated interactions, YouTube audiences satisfy contributors' needs for attention and control, thereby fuelling further video production, as well as influencing viewing choices and musical experiences of fellow audience members. It is therefore concerning that music clips with potential to supplant traditional musical interactions between infants and their carers, and that promote bland and musically undifferentiated electronically manipulated repertoire are disseminated to vast audiences across this popular medium.

## Lullaby Apps

Lullabies are also presented as Apps for mobile devices. The production and use of mobile Apps continue to rise dramatically as they are adapted for both smartphones and tablets. Apps incur relatively low costs for development, marketing, distribution and support, as well as relatively low capital to begin production. This has resulted in a huge Apps market with many excellent products "but where low-price goods of dubious value abound" (Anthes, 2011, p.16).

I obtained several Apps through a search of the term "lullabies", yielding over 300 results. In order to gain an overview of their claims and features, I chose the first ten Apps for iPhone and for iPad that were specifically for babies, were free<sup>4</sup> and had the word lullaby as part of their titles (see Appendix 1). These Apps, together with descriptions and claims offered by their producers, bore several similarities with the Youtube lullabies.

4. Although these Apps were free, it should be noted that many free Apps (including these) have quite limited repertoire or features, with more sophisticated or extended versions available for purchase.

The claims made by the App producers are often based on parental testimony such as “Great! Helps our kids – and us – fall asleep” Catherine J. (mother from New York)” as noted on the *Baby Sleep TV App* (Concappt media, 2013a). They also allude to educational benefits espoused through popular media, for example “Listening to classical music gives your child a sense of psychological comfort, and discloses intellectual ability of your child” (Bogatyrev, 2013). This is another example of the ways in which exposure to classical music is afforded value for young children through unsubstantiated claims via social representation.

Other Apps also offer dubious solutions, as exemplified by the statement, “With this wonderful App, your baby will fall asleep gently and quietly” (Concappt media, 2013b). A lack of understanding or regard for the significance of the parent-child interactions inherent in traditional lullaby performance is also evident through the claim that “the controls are so easy to use that a 2 year old will quickly learn to use this App themselves” (Angelsong Creations, 2012), which suggests that the child will be selecting and controlling the lullaby recording without parental involvement. Overall, advertising for these Apps was found to be reliant on unsubstantiated claims that appeal to parents’ educational aspirations for their children; proposes false needs and then offers counterfeit solutions; and fails to acknowledge children’s developmental abilities and requirements (Brooks, 2014; Buckingham & Scanlon, 2005).

Electronic sound sources are the most common timbres used on the Apps, possibly since they are the most economically viable means of producing sound tracks. However, the *Dreamtime Lullabies App* (Bogatyrev, 2013) uses orchestrated Classics as its soundtrack. With the exception of *Rockabye Baby Plus* (Angelsong Creations, 2012), few of the Apps include singing. The latter App features an unaccompanied adult female singing *Rockabye Baby*, as might be heard during a traditional performance of lullabies. Several of the Apps are enabled for repeat playing. This feature may mean that the parent is not required to re-start the App,

consequently seeing them even less involved in personally preparing the baby for sleep.

Although the Apps include the term “lullabies” in their titles, several include repertoire that would be more accurately described as play songs such as *Ten Little Indians* and *Skip to My Lou*. As well as including play songs in its repertoire, the *Lullabies Pro Karaoke App* (Speedwell eBusiness Solutions, 2011) presents energetic versions of lullabies that would seem to be stimulating rather than relaxing for young listeners. Although this might indicate a disregard for typical stylistic features of lullabies as purported by Trehub and Trainor (1998), it might also be viewed as an acknowledgement of both the wide variety of stylistic and performance traits of lullabies, and the corresponding plurality of young children’s responses to these songs.

The extensive availability of lullaby Apps provides parents with alternative avenues for lullaby use. The duplication of several Apps for use across both iPhone and iPad devices extends potential audience, resulting in economic viability of production. Free Apps tend to function as “teasers”, serving to introduce Apps that must be purchased in order to access all features. Although several of the mothers in my study possessed tablets, and all used smartphones, none of them had used Apps with lullabies. “We only use Apps for the kids if they get something to do or something to learn” said Joanna. “I don’t know what you would get from a lullaby App. There’s not really anything to do, with lullabies, is there?” (Interview, May 23, 2014).

## Televised lullabies

Lullabies recorded on Apps or YouTube clips are a readily available resource for parents and caregivers, accessible at almost any time. Although television scheduling has not traditionally accommodated lullaby presentation, extended viewing hours across dedicated children’s channels have resulted in lullaby presentations being screened at young children’s bedtimes, in timeslots that were more



traditionally reserved for adult news and current affairs programs. These children's programs sometimes incorporate lullaby repertoire, resulting in the introduction and adoption of new lullabies and associated practices in families' night-time routines.

A study participant who was the father of young children told me of his family's adoption of *Hoot's Lullaby* as an important part of their bedtime routine. Screened nightly on the dedicated children's channel, ABC4Kids, this lullaby became a shared singing practice for the family during the program's screening each evening. The lullaby was also sung by either or both of the parents at the children's bedsides, and usually replaced traditional lullabies in this family's evening routines (Interview, March 10, 2012).

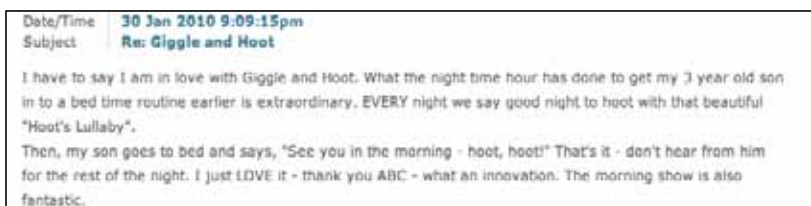
The adoption of mediated music into children's musical experiences has been investigated in several studies of school-aged children (for example, Bishop & Burn, 2013; Marsh, 2008). Bishop and Burn (2013, p. 108) propose that "once media resources have been absorbed into children's repertoire, they will be passed from child to child in exactly the way that folkloric material is transmitted". In the case of very young children, whose relationships usually centre on family members, these transmissions may also occur within the home setting as digitised repertoire is recalled, repeated and rehearsed away from the screen with siblings and parents. Through these shared musical experiences, family members facilitate children's developing agencies by modelling and responding collaboratively, scaffolding the use of rehearsal mechanisms.

A comment on the discussion board on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) website confirmed the adoption of *Hoot's Lullaby* into family lullaby repertoire via regular viewing (see Figure 2).

These comments indicate the way that young children may use mediated music within familial routines to aid in the construction of social meaning. Practices such as the nightly co-viewing of the visual music clip provide a predictable structure, guide behaviour, and support children's involvement as social agents. The child's mimetic ritual of the phrase "See you in the morning – hoot, hoot!" allows an opportunity for the child to rehearse and demonstrate emerging and developing language and memory skills, while assimilating televised conceptions into his own life. Daily utilisation of the lullaby within the night time routine constitutes a regular music experience for the child, while reinforcing the music's settling and signalling function, and may provide an emotionally positive experience for the child when shared with other family members. This sense of routine is supported through the visual aspect of the clip, which incorporates images of characters featured in programs screened across the day on the channel, while reflecting the overall mood and lyrics of the song. The effects of these images as an advertising tool, reminding the child to watch again tomorrow, cannot be ignored.

These routines and rituals are unique within particular families, and reflective of familial identity, culture and values (Spagnola & Fiese, 2007). For some study participants, *Hoot's Lullaby* became the families' sole lullaby experience, while

**Figure 2: Discussion board comment. (ABC, 2010).**



for other families the song widened their lullaby repertoire, and was selected for occasional use.

*Sometimes I choose the bedtime song, and sometimes the kids do. It's like a bedtime story, you know? Sometimes they have a favourite one that they ask for all the time, and then we all need a change. It's the same with lullabies.* (Joanna. Interview, May 20, 2013).

The composition of *Hoot's Lullaby* was commissioned by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) in 2009, after network producers attended a concert featuring Australian singer-songwriter, Lior. Lior was asked to compose the lullaby as a settling song for children, "not to go to sleep with, but time to relax and get settled and ready for bed, a time to reflect on the day" (Interview, May 7, 2014). In this sense, the intended musical function of the lullaby is to serve as a signal within viewing routines as they occur within families' daily routines, rather than to lull the child to sleep. It might serve to signal the end of children's daily television viewing, as it did for two families in my study, or as a signal to physically move to the bedroom from the family room, as it did for another family.

Consistent with Corsaro's (2011) theory of interpretive reproduction, as children observe, interpret and then respond to these mediated lullabies within their familial routines, they are granted access to shared understandings of belonging within their families. It is with these shared understandings that children construct meaning. These routines also provide frames within which young children might contribute to or participate in reinventions or reproductions of the cultural practices that surround and encompass their lives. In so doing, they are integrating screened content, repertoire and performances into their own everyday, familial cultures.

Lior outlined several influences on the lullaby's composition. Provided with only a short time frame by the ABC producers, he first sought inspiration for lyrics from his two young children.

This consultation not only acknowledged and respected their agency and ideas, but was also intended to facilitate the composition of a song relevant to their needs and interests. Lior attended his daughter's kindergarten class, and asked several children about lullabies, but was disappointed that this only resulted in "clichéd stuff" that was not suitable for his composition (Interview, May 7, 2014). This suggests that Lior intended for there to be some difference between traditional lullabies and his own composition. Following further research into lullabies using Internet sources, that also failed to provide motivation, Lior was finally inspired by a melody his wife recalled having been sung by her grandmother during her own childhood. A snippet of this recalled tune became the song's opening melodic theme, demonstrating the long-term effect of musical interactions between a parent or grandparent and a child, since Lior's wife recalled not only this melody from her own childhood, but also its association with her grandmother, and with being comforted. In this respect, the melody served as a tool with which Lior's wife could negotiate the distance between her own musical childhood and her conception of contemporary childhoods.

Although Lior is a professional adult composer who was creating a lullaby in an audiovisual format for a specific purpose, the compositional process he described whereby the fragment of a known melody forms the basis of a new song, bears some resemblance to processes of appropriation and transformation described in ethnographies of children's playground songs and games (Marsh, 2008; Bishop, 2014), and highlights the ways in which children's songs may be transformed and disseminated across time and geographical space. Lior's composition might also be viewed as constituting an early stage of what Marsh (2008, p. 185) terms "cycles of appropriation and reappropriation" through the "conscious borrowing" (Marsh, 2006, p. 18) of the melodic fragment. These cycles of appropriation involve

the integration of musical and other elements of children's songs and play into mediated presentations by producers of popular culture. The resulting products are subsequently adopted by audiences and transformed to meet their own particular needs.

*Hoot's Lullaby* shares both similarities and differences with traditional lullabies. In its visual music clip format, the song is longer than some traditional lullabies, such as *Rock-a bye Baby*. However, it should be noted that songs such as *Rock-a-bye Baby* are seldom sung only once in live performance (Focus Group Interview, March 19, 2013). *Hoot's Lullaby* has repeated melodic phrases, and a wide pitch range of a minor 10th. A modulation brings unexpected harmonic progressions that might make it difficult for inexperienced singers to perform accurately, particularly when unaccompanied. This unexpected modulation also breaks the "lulling" effect of the song, perhaps as a signal to begin the next part of the night time routine.

Although the lyrics of *Hoot's Lullaby* offer a positive allusion to night-time and dreams, they only refer to the child impersonally, as is necessary when the song is sung to a wide audience of television viewers. Lior's quiet, soothing vocal tone is expressive, and accompanied by guitar and strings, which were chosen for convenience and economic viability as much as for desired timbre (Interview, May 7, 2014). The obvious distinction between the song and more traditional lullabies lies in the performance mode, and the lack of personal interaction required through screened presentations.

As well as being televised, *Hoot's Lullaby* is available for viewing on demand via Internet streaming or on YouTube,<sup>5</sup> making it easily accessible for use within familial routines, supplementing or replacing personal musical interactions. Other versions of the lullaby are

available via CD, DVD, musical toys and books. Ilari (2011) notes that contemporary parents tend to rely on electronic and digital versions of music such as these, viewing them as educational and valuable because they have been produced by professionals, and lacking confidence to deliver live renditions themselves.

Like *Hoot's Lullaby*, *Sweet Dreams* was commissioned by ABC producers, and composers Paul Kingston and Cain Horton were required to write the song within a very short time frame. Although this song shares some characteristics with traditional lullabies, it is performed in a faster tempo, with syncopated rhythms and a bright ukulele accompaniment. When I discussed the composition of this lullaby with Cain Horton, I suggested that this upbeat style was quite different from many lullabies. His reply acknowledged children's individual responses to music, and their agency to select "what works for them. You know, it's different courses for different horses. There's nothing to say that brighter can't be soothing too" (Interview, May 12, 2014). Babies' and young children's individual responses to music experiences exhibit a degree of agency, as they communicate their acceptance or rejection through their behaviours. These responses may vary between children, or across time by the same child.

Kingston and Horton were shown the video aspect of Lior's *Hoot's Lullaby* as an indication of the type of animation that would be used, and as inspiration for their composition. Horton stated that each of the two lullabies fits the animation (Interview, May 12, 2014). Although the composition of the two songs occurred quite discretely, each of the lullabies uses repeated melodic phrases, and lyrics that affirm the child's comfort and safety throughout the night. After 16 bars, both of the lullabies modulate in key and use quite similar melodic contours to close the song. As noted in relation to *Hoot's Lullaby*, this modulation may provide an aural alert that the song (and indeed the program) are ending, confirming its use as part of a routine.

5. For example, at <http://livetvu.com/channels/australia/video-australia/abc-kids> and at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CwOxL2rv1Mc>.

These recently composed lullabies, intended for televising, demonstrate the ways in which lullabies are evolving through their incorporation into daily television scheduling, and subsequently into familial routines and music-making practices. It is significant that their intended function has been identified as settling, rather than lulling to sleep, thus transforming practices associated with lullabies through this format. The potential for dissemination to wide audiences of young children through both screening and sale of associated merchandise also differentiates these lullabies from those of oral tradition.

## Conclusion

The recording of lullabies in audiovisual modes has transformed the ways in which these songs are learned, transmitted, experienced and used within young children's lives. The most obvious, and perhaps the most significant distinction from traditional lullaby practice is the removal of personal interaction with parent or carer as part of the musical experience, and therefore, the implied exclusion of the parent or carer as performer of the lullaby.

Newly composed lullabies for screening in televised productions, as exemplified by *Hoot's Lullaby* (Lior) and *Sweet Dreams* (Kingston and Horton), depart from traditional lullabies in several ways, including their performance by male voices with instrumental accompaniments, and the use of generic, rather than personal lyrics, directed to a broad, unseen audience of viewers. The televising of lullabies has also transformed the function of these songs from lulling a baby to sleep, to settling a child, or acting as a signal within familial routines such as a child's bedtime. For many families, these lullabies supplement the repertoire passed down from one generation to the next, offering broad choices for selection, and multiple presentation modes. However, it is important that they supplement, rather than substitute, traditional lullaby practices, and the intimate and personal musical interactions inherent therein.

Other screened lullabies, in the form of Apps and YouTube clips, pose a greater threat to the shared multimodal nature of traditional lullaby presentation through both implicit and explicit suggestions that these audiovisual recordings of lullaby repertoire might replace the need for parents to be present at all in a young child's experience of lullabies. The parental testimonies used to market the products are uninformed, yet influential, and often include claims to offer solutions to problems or issues associated with parenting. While there are exceptions, these presentations tend to be economically produced, and indicate a lack of understanding of young children's social and/or developmental needs.

However, in considering lullabies disseminated across YouTube, it is important to reiterate the vast number of clips available, as well as the extensive variations in repertoire, musical and audiovisual quality, as well as the portrayals of lullabies contained therein. The discerning user might learn new lullaby repertoire, view modelled musical interactions between babies and carers, and incorporate co-viewing into existing musical practices in positive ways.

As babies and their families experience, interpret and reproduce various aspects of screened lullabies, they reassign both musical and social meaning, and the ways in which the songs are learnt, performed and shared have been, and continue to be, transformed. For young children, "the distinction between songs from media culture and those from traditional stock . . . is not made by [them]. In that moment, the song is an undifferentiated part of their culture" (Jopson, Burn, & Robinson, 2014, p. 38).<sup>6</sup>

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6. Although this statement was made in relation to older children, my research indicates that it is equally relevant to younger children.

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## Appendix One

### Lullaby Apps for Content Analysis

App	Producer	For iPhone	For iPad
Baby's Lullabies	Concappt media	✓	✓
Baby sleep TV	Concappt media	✓	✓
Lullabies	Relaxation Technologies Studio	✓	✓
Lu Baby Sleep: Lullabies	VicoSoft		✓
2012 Sweet Nighty Baby Music Box Lullabies	Chiu chih yung		✓
Dreamtime Lullabies	Maxim Bogatyrev	✓	
Lullabies pro Karaoke	Speedwell eBusiness Solutions		✓
Goodnight -Lullabies for children	Kiwi Labss.r.l.	✓	✓
Baby Sleep: Lullabies	VicoSoft		✓
Rockabye Baby Plus	Angelsong Creations		✓
iLullaby		✓	✓
My Baby: Lullabies	Dokodapps	✓	
Lullaby music	Pxl apps	✓	✓
Baby lullabies songs	Marjan Trajoski	✓	✓
Lullaby songs for babies	Stojan Pesic	✓	✓