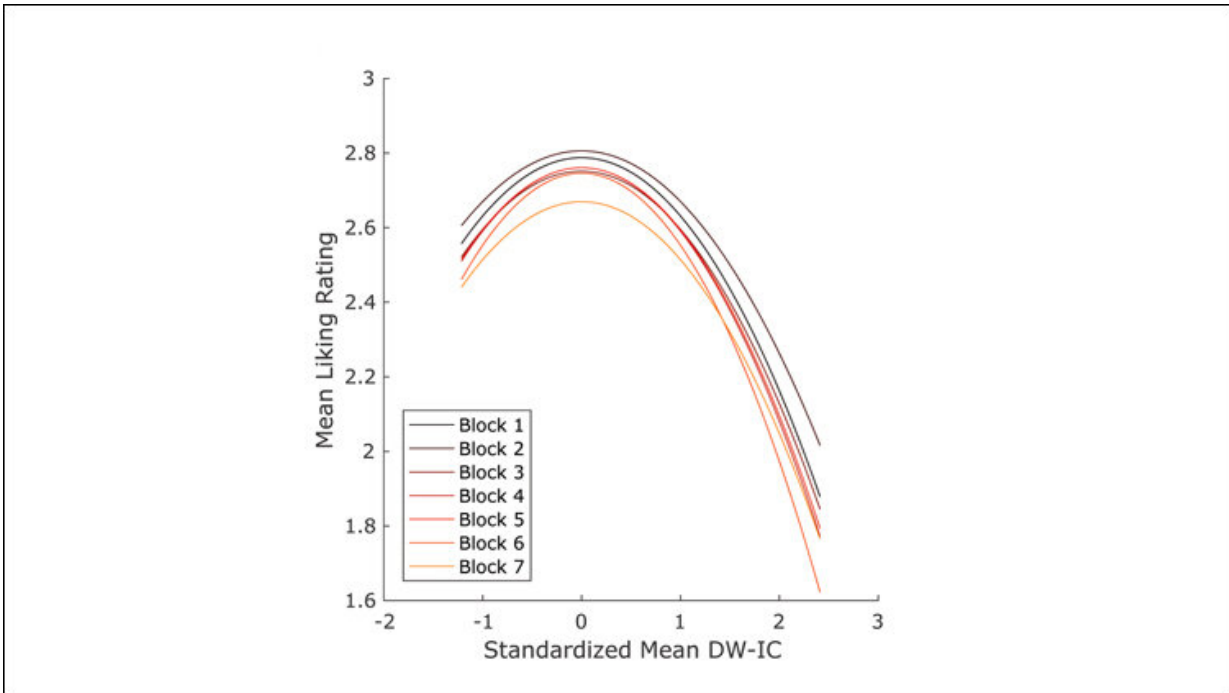


The brain's favorite type of music

October 21 2019



Predictability and uncertainty in the pleasure of music: a reward for learning?
Credit: Gold et al., *JNeurosci* (2019)

People prefer songs with only a moderate amount of uncertainty and unpredictability, according to research recently published in *JNeurosci*.

Scientists have long struggled to understand why activities of little apparent evolutionary value, like listening to music, bring so much pleasure. Previous studies have linked listening to and making

predictions about [music](#) with activation in reward centers of the brain but have produced conflicting results on how musical predictions and surprises relate to pleasure.

Gold *et al.* employed a [mathematical model](#) to determine the predictability and uncertainty of musical fragments and then asked listeners to rate how much they liked the songs.

Listeners preferred songs of medium complexity, such as those that counterbalanced uncertain expectations with ultimately predictable musical events. Conversely, songs affording more certain expectations could contain more surprising musical events and still be liked.

More information: Predictability and Uncertainty in the Pleasure of Music: A Reward for Learning? *JNeurosci* (2019). [DOI: 10.1523/JNEUROSCI.0428-19.2019](#)

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